

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 21 September 2006

Session 2

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 21 September 2006

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

Greener, Fairer Scotland

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The first item of business is a debate on motion S2M-4810, in the name of Annabel Goldie, on a greener, fairer Scotland.

09:15

Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): It is my pleasure to lead the debate. Climate change is one of the biggest challenges facing the world today, although it is often seen as an issue that is far removed from voters. That is understandable, because if someone is on a waiting list for hospital treatment, is intimidated by antisocial behaviour or is worried about how they will pay their council tax, global warming does not tend to be an immediate threat for them. Although most of us care about the environment, it is not always high on our personal agendas because of the many other issues in our lives, which is unfortunate.

Global warming is sometimes seen as a middle-class issue or as an issue for people who can afford to buy environmentally friendly products that cost more, or for those who are not affected by the day-to-day health, education and law and order issues that perplex others. However, global warming affects us all, regardless of wealth, religion, education or location. If we do not address the problem, we will all suffer the consequences. It is important that we address the problems in our public services, that we try to make our economy more vibrant and that we try to provide better opportunities for all, but we cannot ignore the impact that we have on the environment.

The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Rhona Brankin): The member says that the issue should be at the top of people's personal agendas and that we cannot ignore the impact that we have on the environment. Will she tell us how many times the Conservatives have raised the issue—which she says is one of the three key issues—during First Minister's question time in the Parliament?

Miss Goldie: In my time as leader of the Conservatives in the Parliament, I have felt obliged to raise the plethora of pressing problems that I have just referred to, which thanks to Labour

and the Liberal Democrats currently perplex the lives of many people in Scotland. As I said, those issues are one reason why the environment is not always to the forefront of personal vision.

Carbon dioxide and other gases warm the surface of the planet naturally by trapping solar heat in the atmosphere. That is essential, because it keeps our planet habitable but, by burning fuel such as coal, gas and oil and by cutting down trees, we have increased dramatically the amount of carbon dioxide in the earth's atmosphere and, as a result, temperatures are rising.

Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): Will Miss Goldie take an intervention?

Miss Goldie: I would like to make progress, if the member does not mind.

The atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide has increased by a mammoth 31 per cent since 1759, which is an unprecedented rate of increase in the past 20,000 years. As a result, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the increase in carbon dioxide has contributed to an increase in global surface temperatures of 0.6°C during the 20th century. The IPCC also estimates that, by 2100, temperatures may be as much as 5.8°C higher than they were in 1990. One of the difficulties is that such information just flows over people's heads without the practical impact being taken in, which is obvious from the casual chitchat that is going on among members of other parties. The figures may not seem much of a difference, but when we consider that European Union scientists agree that a change in temperature of more than 2°C would be catastrophic and would put 3 billion people at risk of flooding, as melting ice caps caused sea levels to rise, we can begin to understand the potential impact.

Al Gore has recently attracted a lot of positive attention—rightly, I think—for the film “An Inconvenient Truth”, in which he warns of the terrible consequences if global warming continues unabated. The film predicts that deaths from global warming will double in just 25 years, to 300,000 people a year; that global sea levels could rise by more than 20ft as a result of the loss of shelf ice in Greenland and Antarctica, thereby devastating coastal areas worldwide; that heat waves will be more frequent and more intense; that droughts and wildfires will occur more often; and that the Arctic ocean could be ice free in the summer by 2050. Given that the changes would fall within the lifespan of some members, the estimates begin to be an alarming prospect. More than a million species worldwide could be driven to extinction by 2050.

Maureen Macmillan: Tomorrow, when Miss Goldie meets the Tory candidate for the Ross,

Skye and Inverness West constituency, Mr Hodgson, will she give him the same lecture? She will be aware that Mr Hodgson is a well-known campaigner against wind turbines. Will Miss Goldie ask Mr Hodgson to change his mind, or will she deselect him?

Miss Goldie: Unlike Mrs Macmillan's party and the Liberal Democrats, my party has always acknowledged that a balance must be struck in the provision of renewable energy. I am sure that I am not the only member whose mailbag is bulging with the legitimate concerns and objections of people who see areas of Scotland being absolutely inundated by forests of wind turbines. My party has made it clear that, where enormous wind turbine developments are proposed, a moratorium should be introduced and the schemes should continue only if there is no local objection to the scale of the proposals.

There is no hiding from or ignoring global warming—the evidence that it is already happening is overwhelming and undeniable. Glaciers are melting and the number of category 4 and 5 hurricanes has almost doubled in the past 30 years, from an average of 10 a year in the 1970s, to 18 a year now. At present, we live with the threat of hurricane Gordon. Category 4 and 5 hurricanes made up about 20 per cent of all hurricanes in the 1970s but, in the past decade, they accounted for about 35 per cent of the storms. At least 279 species of plants and animals are responding to global warming by moving closer to the poles.

Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): Does the member accept that her supposed environmental credentials are undermined by her party's support for new nuclear power stations? Will she explain how the production of nuclear waste in Scotland and the diversion of funding from renewables to nuclear power would be good for Scotland's environment?

Miss Goldie: My party has been clear that, at the end of the day, nuclear power may be part of the balanced provision of energy. Unlike the Scottish National Party, we believe that there is an obligation to ensure that the demand for consumption of energy can be met responsibly. My assertion is that we must investigate urgently all possible forms of alternative generation of energy, particularly renewables, which is the issue on which I am trying to focus in my speech. The thrust of the motion in my name is about going right back to individuals. The Scottish National Party believes that the enormous political panacea of an independent Scotland will be the Celtic utopia that we have all been awaiting, but I am not kidded and hundreds of thousands of voters in Scotland are not kidded either.

Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Will the member take an intervention?

Miss Goldie: No, I have been generous and I would like to make progress.

Despite the inescapable and alarming factors that I have mentioned, we do not need to be resigned. Global warming is a huge issue with massive implications for civilisation, but the good news is that, by our efforts, we can contribute to solutions, which is the point that I made in response to Mr Lochhead. Indeed, we have a moral obligation to do so. We can work together and share responsibility between individuals, government and business, to ensure that the next generation enjoys a sustainable planet.

For Mrs Brankin, I will be the first to admit that the Scottish Executive has made progress in cutting emissions from Scotland. Under the Kyoto protocol, Britain, led of course by a Conservative Government at Westminster—a fact that our opponents conveniently forget—committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 12.5 per cent below 1990 levels by 2008-12. Creditably, Scotland has already met that commitment. The latest statistics show that emissions from Scotland were 14 per cent below 1990 levels, an achievement of which we should be proud. I acknowledge that the Executive has played a part in that achievement. Businesses saw a drop in their emissions and removals by 41 per cent, which is another encouraging development.

We need to be aware of the increases in energy, transport and residential emissions. They highlight the need to change attitudes about the environment and to convince people to do a great deal more individually to help solve the problem of global warming.

I never cease to be astonished at the illustrations of what relatively simple changes to a domestic regime can achieve for energy conservation. If every household in the United Kingdom replaced just one 60W bulb with a new energy-saving light bulb used for three hours a day, that would be the equivalent of planting 10 million new trees. If every UK household filled the kettle with only the amount of water actually required, we would save enough electricity to power more than 50,000 homes for a year. That gets right down to matters under personal control. Those examples clearly illustrate the difference that each of us can make on a daily basis to protect the environment and, by saving energy, individuals obviously save money on their energy bills, which is a win-win scenario.

I accept that there is a limit to what Governments can do to change attitudes, but I believe that political leadership has a role and that the Executive can help to encourage such changes.

Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): I accept that Government can play a role and that individuals can play a role. What would Annabel Goldie expect her friends in business to do to help combat climate change?

Miss Goldie: I have already referred to what I think is a very impressive statistic: businesses have managed to drop their emissions and removals by 41 per cent. That is a pretty impressive performance. That is why our motion concentrates on personal responsibility.

Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): Will Miss Goldie give way on that point?

Miss Goldie: I wish to make progress.

My party has called on the Executive to expand the Scottish community and householder renewables initiative to encourage households, communities and small businesses to install modern energy creating and saving technologies. That will have the triple benefit of cutting energy bills, reducing CO₂ emissions and giving new small-scale renewable technologies a boost. Examples of technologies that would be eligible for funding under the Conservative eco-bonus scheme include hydroelectric generation, solar panels, roof or micro wind turbines, ground heat systems and wall and roof insulation. Under our proposals, households would be able to apply for a grant of up to 60 per cent of the total cost of their project, up to a limit of £4,000. We propose to double the previous 30 per cent limit, as we believe that those grants should be able to reach more households. We also wish to encourage community schemes. Communities would be able to apply for a maximum grant of £10,000 for a feasibility study and a maximum grant of £100,000 for a capital project.

Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green): Will the member take an intervention?

Miss Goldie: I am sorry—I really want to make further progress.

We would extend the eco-bonus scheme to allow small businesses, too, to apply for a maximum grant of £4,000 for 60 per cent of the total cost of their small renewable project. I hope that that illustrates to Mrs Gillon how we view the eco-bonus scheme working. I applaud the scheme's principle, and it has been a sensible way to start providing political leadership, but we would try to take it further—to households and communities. We would make £12 million per annum available for our eco-bonus scheme, which matches the Executive's total spending to date and triples its current annual spend. I believe that the eco-bonus scheme will help address cultural attitudes and raise awareness, as well as encouraging the public to assume personal responsibility for contributing to a sustainable Scotland.

Returning again to Mrs Gillon's point, we should recognise that many businesses are helping to change the way in which we think about the environment. For example, Sainsbury's is now using biodegradable packaging, and Tesco is encouraging shoppers to reuse polythene bags. Those developments are important, if small, steps towards improving our environment.

To help heal the planet fully, we need seriously to consider new ways of developing energy. Wave power, small-scale hydro and decentralised energy all have great potential to offer us, but they require a lot of research and development. That was recently affirmed to me by a businessman who works in that field. Research and development into new ways to reduce carbon emissions is vital. I was sorry to see that the Executive had performed a U-turn on its promise of a business rates cut for companies engaged in research and development.

That brings me to my final point: politicians and double standards. [*Laughter.*] I suggest that there is a certain candour in any politician being prepared to accept the perception that many people have of politics and politicians as a whole. The braying laughter from the Labour and Liberal Democrat ranks is a mocking reflection of those parties' hypocrisy, duplicity and manipulation over the past seven years.

It would be totally unacceptable for MSPs to call on businesses and homes to help the environment when the Parliament itself is apparently energy inefficient. In March this year, thermal images of this building, which were commissioned by the BBC, showed that the Parliament is losing heat. It is certainly not losing any heat from Mr Tavish Scott and Mr Lyon, whose incessant chattering is adding to the already present hot air in the chamber. It is well known—indeed, it is visible every night—that a great number of lights are left on in the Parliament around the clock. How many televisions, computers and Telewest boxes are regularly left on standby? That is a waste of energy. I am not calling for the appointment of a parliamentary inspector of gadgets, as the Presiding Officer will be relieved to learn, but I point out that each of us has a responsibility to ensure that our offices and the Parliament itself are energy efficient.

I wanted to use the debate to outline the threat that we all face from global warming. It is imperative that we encourage everyone to work together to contribute to a sustainable Scotland. If, as we sit here in Edinburgh in September 2006 having what I hope will be a genuinely constructive and helpful debate, we do not translate what we know now into a personal and collective change in lifestyle, we are contemplating a Firth of Forth where the Isle of May could disappear, a Scotland

where shoreline settlements could regularly become the victims of tidal flooding—and where that could become the rule, not the exception—and a Scotland whose familiar physical face, which many of us have taken for granted, could suffer ugly and unwelcome change.

My party believes in trusting people. I believe that the Scottish people want to protect their planet for future generations, which is why the Scottish Conservatives are committed to enabling every individual to play their own part in meeting the climate change challenge.

I move,

That the Parliament notes that, along with global poverty and terrorism, climate change is one of the three great challenges facing mankind; recognises that there needs to be a greater shared responsibility among government, business, individuals and families to meet this challenge; believes that combating the threat of climate change will require fresh ideas and radical thinking and, therefore, that the concept of decentralised energy should be seriously pursued; recognises that if we are going to achieve a sustainable Scotland we need to address culture and attitudes to raise awareness and encourage the public to be proactive and to assume personal responsibility for contributing to a sustainable Scotland, and calls, therefore, on the Scottish Executive to expand the Scottish community and householder renewables initiative to incentivise households, communities and small businesses to install modern energy creating and saving technologies as an important first step.

09:32

The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie): It was instructive that, in response to the intervention by my colleague, Rhona Brankin, the leader of the Conservative party admitted that she had not raised this issue in the chamber before. It is almost the first time that she has raised it at all. While much of what she said was admirable, it is a pity that she did not listen to the debate that we all participated in earlier this year, when we launched the Executive's strategy on climate change with "Changing Our Ways: Scotland's Climate Change Programme". This Labour and Liberal Democrat coalition made clear its commitment, and other parties contributed to the debate as we spelled out the major problem that we face. Most of us in the chamber are already familiar with the facts that have suddenly come to the notice of the Conservative leader.

As for politicians and double standards—well, well, well. David Cameron's new car, in which his chauffeur follows behind his bicycle, emits more carbon dioxide than nine out of 10 of the top-selling cars in Britain. That is very much a case for braying laughter. That is indicative of exactly the point that Miss Goldie was making: double standards by the Conservatives. No one could have made that point more eloquently than Miss Goldie and David Cameron.

The Conservative motion takes 100 words before it gets to the Tory solution to climate change. It is perfectly admirable in as far as there is no question that households and individuals need to do more and do it better. However, not only has Miss Goldie not been listening to what we have been saying; she has forgotten that, over two years ago, the Executive launched the do a little, change a lot campaign. If Miss Goldie had been listening she would know that we talked about using energy efficient light bulbs and switching off televisions. I am sorry that it has taken her two years, but I would never wish to condemn someone who converts to the cause after a long period.

The issue that we face is as serious as Miss Goldie suggests—there is a big challenge. In putting together the changing our ways programme, we have sought to address not just one aspect of that challenge. If one is going to use the sort of rhetoric that appears at the start of the motion, one cannot just single out individual points to address. If one is going to make a commitment to dealing with climate change, one has to present a much more comprehensive programme than that which is on offer from the Conservatives—or any other party.

Mr Ruskell: I want to leave aside the sideshow of the Tories for a minute. Is the minister happy that he has set a target in the climate change programme that could be met even if emissions in Scotland go up? Does that make sense?

Ross Finnie: Mark Ruskell has made that point before. It is technically possible to do that, but when we publish the other aspect of the emission measurement, it will clearly be silly for us to do so. Once we have the two figures it will be impossible. We are committed to having a vibrant, low-carbon economy. A change must be made. We must have a sustainable economy and break the link between crude economic growth and the efficient use of our resources.

It is also a question of fairness. We need to reduce our global impact. Scotland's environment is an important national asset that we must use in responding to the challenge. The changing our ways programme provides a serious response.

Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP): I agree that a comprehensive set of measures are required to tackle climate change. However, is the minister confident that the Scottish Executive has given all the support that it could to the development of a broad suite of renewable energy forms, such as tidal and wave power? By any objective analysis, the Executive has somewhat dropped the ball in the development of such technology.

Ross Finnie: I do not accept that. I would argue that we have seen the other side of the coin. We

have not dropped the ball or reduced our commitment—including our financial commitment—to the resource centre in Orkney. Since we set our initial ambitious target of 40 per cent renewable energy, there has been a radical change in the economics of wind power. It has never been the Executive's policy to go single-mindedly after wind power. That has been more to do with the economics of putting in wind power than the commitment that we have made to the research and development needed in other areas.

We have identified our Scottish share of commitments. As Mark Ballard—sorry, Chris Ballance—said, we have set a target of achieving 1 million tonnes of carbon savings over and above the Scottish share of the United Kingdom's Kyoto commitment of 1,700 million tonnes by 2010, which I think is an ambitious target.

It is also about working together. We need not just Government, but individuals and industry to contribute to tackling climate change. The challenge to industry and commerce is enormous. The prospect of a total change in public opinion on the need to address climate change offers huge opportunities to our young people and those in academia, research and development and manufacturing. The green jobs that could emanate from our pursuing the kind of strategy that we have set out offer huge opportunities to Scottish business. All that would be good for the economy, the environment and tackling climate change.

Our programme commits the Executive to an ambitious carbon savings target. It sets the strategic framework to mainstream climate thinking into key policy areas in the Executive. It commits us to total carbon savings from all energy efficiency measures in our Scottish energy efficiency strategy as a further contribution to the Scottish target. It commits us to develop further the renewable heat strategy and a biomass plan to ensure strong market development on heat, not just on electricity.

Shiona Baird: Will the minister support my Home Energy Efficiency Targets (Scotland) Bill, the first part of which would just bring us into line with England and Wales?

Ross Finnie: I can be as British as anybody else, but my ambitions are higher than bringing us into line with England and Wales.

Our programme commits us to continue to improve energy standards and our building regulations, which we have already done. It commits us to determine what contribution we have to make to improve even further what we are doing, having already shifted the balance of spending in our transport policy to public transport, which we will take further in the much-awaited national transport strategy.

Let us not forget the contribution that Scottish business is already making to the largest emissions trading scheme in the world—the EU emissions trading scheme, which started last year. That is the sort of radical action to which business can continue to contribute in making efforts to make the significant reductions in global emissions that are needed to avoid damaging climate change.

Sustainable development is at the heart of our programme. As Annabel Goldie said, it cannot be left to somebody else. We all need to participate in it, because the choices that we make as individuals and the actions that we take as politicians, business people, public servants, volunteers, consumers and citizens are all important. That is why we place so much emphasis on education and learning and on creating an atmosphere—for children at an early age and right through their education—to influence their thinking so that they understand better what they require to do if they are going to play their part in combating climate change.

We can take opportunities to put on the statute book acts of Parliament that can improve greatly our approach to sustainable development. The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 is one such example.

Climate change is a major problem. The Executive has recognised that for some time, not, as the Conservative party has, just this morning. We have taken the time and trouble to prepare the changing our ways strategy, which is based firmly on the principles of sustainable development. "Changing Our Ways: Scotland's Climate Change Programme" sets out a comprehensive package of measures that are designed to combat climate change. Climate change is a huge problem that will not be overcome tomorrow but which requires sustained and committed action by politicians, to which the Executive is committed.

I move amendment S2M-4810.3, to leave out from "mankind" to end and insert:

"the planet; recognises that the Scottish Executive has already embodied fresh ideas, radical thinking and a uniquely Scottish approach in its response to this challenge in *Changing our Ways: Scotland's Climate Change Programme*, and welcomes the significant initiatives that the Executive has taken to increase the level of renewable energy generation, improve the energy efficiency of new buildings, boost microrenewables, reduce energy poverty and increase investment in public transport, the introduction of strategic environmental assessment and the promotion of sustainable development across its policies."

09:43

Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): The Scottish National Party members welcome the debate, but I am sure that we are not the only

ones in the chamber in a state of shock because the Tories, for perhaps the first time in seven years, have lodged what at first glance appears to be quite a sensible, pro-environment motion. Perhaps we are seeing the new Tory party, seven months before next year's vital Scottish elections. Perhaps its next debate will be about saving the fox in Scotland or the case for more land reform. The Tories have even adopted a tree as their new logo. However, one thing is for certain: their tree will not bear any fruit at next year's elections, because the people of Scotland will see right through them and judge them not on this debate or on what they say in the next seven months but on what they said in the first seven years of the Parliament.

Maureen Macmillan: Has Richard Lochhead noticed that the Tories' tree logo for Scotland leans a little to the left, but the one for the rest of the UK leans a little to the right?

Miss Goldie: I suggest that if anyone is authorised to comment on the new logo, it is me. I say to Mrs Macmillan that, interestingly, the Scottish tree does not point to the left, nor does it lean excessively to the right. It is also bigger than the other tree and, I suggest, represents a visible verdant robustness, which I think will be enticing to all who see it. I am glad that the logo has attracted such interest and justified such attention.

Richard Lochhead: I thank the member for her explanation. Members have also noticed that the shade of green on the Tories' logo north of the border is a bit darker and more sinister than the shade of green on the logo south of the border. Perhaps that speaks volumes.

We all know that the Tories are not quite ready yet to park their four-by-fours and that their green policy is not much greener or fairer than it was.

The Tories' motion is undermined by their commitment—which they have emphasised in previous debates on energy and the environment—to build new nuclear power stations in Scotland. The motion mentions the need to decentralise energy in Scotland, but they want new nuclear power stations to be built here.

The motion also talks about finding extra funds to install microrennewable technologies in Scotland's residential sector, which most parties would support. I think that Murdo Fraser was in the news earlier this week calling for £12 million to go towards microrennewables. However, the Tory party wants to spend £2.5 billion at least on each new nuclear power station—that is not to mention the billions of pounds that would be required for cleaning up the waste. If the SNP had a choice between spending £2.5 billion on a new nuclear power station and putting that money into renewables, we would certainly choose to do the

latter, because that would be better for tackling climate change and for Scotland.

Next year's elections are not just concentrating Tory minds; as this week's news shows, they are also concentrating the minds of the Liberal Democrats. Seven years into devolution, the Deputy First Minister and Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning, Nicol Stephen, has finally said that he supports tidal and wave energy for Scotland. Scotland has had a big opportunity that it has taken him seven years to wake up to and he has done so only after the outcry that occurred when wave technology that was developed in this country was exported to Portugal before it had been deployed in Scottish waters.

Ross Finnie *rose*—

Rhona Brankin *rose*—

Richard Lochhead: I will take an intervention from Mr Finnie.

Ross Finnie: When we launched the target of generating 40 per cent of energy from renewable sources, all the accompanying documentation made it clear that wave power and wind power were an integral part of our approach. We did not discover wave power and wind power just last week.

Richard Lochhead: The minister can publish as many glossy documents and use as many warm words as he wants to, but it is action that matters. The Portuguese have beaten Scotland in deploying technology that was developed on Scotland's own doorstep.

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): Does the member acknowledge the results of the British Wind Energy Association's consideration of wave energy? I agree that such energy has great potential, but the most optimistic forecast is that, by 2020, only 2.1 per cent of energy will be provided by tidal and wave energy. What would the SNP do about the energy gap?

Richard Lochhead: I do not know how the member has the brass neck to talk about a potential energy gap in Scotland when Scotland currently produces six times as much energy as it uses. If we play our cards right, there is no chance of there being an energy gap in Scotland.

Nicol Stephen has said that he will meet the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets this week—seven months before the next elections—to discuss the charging regime that discriminates against Scotland's fledgling renewables sector. The SNP has been calling for such discussions for the past two years, but he has decided to meet Ofgem and stand up for Scotland's renewables sector only this week.

We can all agree that climate change poses a threat to Scotland and the rest of the planet and

that human activity is behind that threat. We can also agree that, in Scotland and on the rest of the planet, energy is the biggest emitter of harmful emissions. That is why energy issues are so tied to environment issues in parliamentary debates and why such issues are dominating today's debate.

Scotland is lucky. Of all the European nations, it has the biggest potential to make a disproportionate contribution to tackling climate change because of its renewables and clean technology potential. It can make a contribution by developing carbon capture so that harmful emissions are stored under the North sea; by developing clean-coal technology, which is currently being exported from Scotland to other countries around the world—we should be using it here—and by taking advantage of our massive renewables potential, which we must do. We have failed to do that in the first seven years of the Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition Government. There is a massive golden—indeed, green—opportunity for Scotland and we must get our act together. Not only will taking advantage of that opportunity help us to tackle climate change and reduce harmful emissions; it will create thousands of jobs for the Scottish economy.

Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green): Will the member take an intervention?

The Presiding Officer: I am afraid that the member is in his final minute.

Richard Lochhead: I apologise for not taking Chris Ballance's intervention. However, I have already taken three or four interventions.

We welcome Nicol Stephen's recent statement that 100 per cent of electricity in Scotland should be produced from renewable sources, but we must be much more ambitious. [*Interruption.*] I see the minister reacting—he should let me finish the serious point that I am making. Electricity use represents only 20 per cent of our energy use. We must tackle heating and transport fuel issues. For example, biocrops have the potential to meet 20 per cent of our transport fuel needs, but the minister is doing virtually nothing to develop that potential. A huge opportunity has been missed. Scotland has the potential to become an all-renewables nation by 2050. Addressing heating and transport fuel issues as well as electricity issues must be a greater priority of all the parties that are represented in the Parliament.

I have been generous in taking interventions and am now running out of time. I will therefore conclude by saying that all the parties that are represented in the Parliament must accept that Scottish society must make huge sacrifices to tackle climate change in the years ahead—indeed, the behaviour of society and political parties must

change. We must all recognise that the sacrifices that we must make to tackle climate change are nothing compared with the cost that we will pay if we do nothing to tackle it. We will have to pay an horrific price if we do not take radical action now to tackle climate change.

The Tories' motion is pro-environment and difficult to disagree with. Perhaps this is the first sign, in the year before vital Scottish elections, that all the parties are reaching a consensus that tackling climate change is the number 1 priority of Scotland and the planet.

I move amendment S2M-4810.1, to insert at end:

"believes that the building of new nuclear power stations would undermine Scotland's efforts to tackle climate change, and recognises that, to make an effective contribution towards the global campaign to tackle global warming, our Parliament requires the powers of other independent nations including responsibility for energy and fiscal policy."

09:51

Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green):

That the Tories are apparently getting serious about climate change is significant because it amplifies the signal that the next election will focus heavily on energy and climate change. It is great news for the Green party that even the Tories are trying hard to appear green. They are hanging on to our coat tails. I say to everyone else that they should keep talking up climate change and the environment, which are vital political issues that cut across everything. However, the voting public are not stupid—they know that talk is easy and that action is what counts.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): Does the member acknowledge the contribution that John Selwyn Gummer made to the debate as early as the 1990s? That contribution embodies the Conservatives' position then and now.

Shiona Baird: Was that when the Tories continued to build roads and tear down public transport facilities?

The record of the main parties in the Parliament leaves a great deal to be desired, but we accept that political consensus is needed so that there can be much more serious action on climate change. That is what we have tried to obtain in campaigns for legislation. However, there is not a single Tory MSP among the 40 MSPs from six parties who have supported my proposal for the Home Energy Efficiency Targets (Scotland) Bill, which I introduced to the Parliament yesterday. Now is their chance to demonstrate their change of heart. They should, with the minister—who has said that he will set a much more ambitious target—help me to get that important bill through the Parliament.

I applaud the Tories for backing more cash being made available for microrenewables. That is a simple and basic step. More than 66 MSPs, from every party in the Parliament bar one, have signed the proposals for bills to promote micropower that Sarah Boyack and I have made. Guess which party's members have not signed the proposals.

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): Will the member take an intervention?

Shiona Baird: I must continue.

We agree that decentralised energy in Scotland is a huge priority, but the Tories are shooting themselves in the foot with what they say about nuclear power stations—they may, of course, want to put one in every street.

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): The member referred to decentralised energy. How does the Green party's policy on that square with its stated policy of renationalising Scotland's utilities, including energy?

Shiona Baird: Mr Purvis is so predictable. It is surely sensible that a national monopoly such as the national grid should be run in the public interest.

Moving on from the Tories, I must say something about the recent apparent increase in green rhetoric from many corners. The rhetoric is good, but we can judge politicians only by their actions. The Lib Dems promise to have 100 per cent of Scotland's electricity generated from renewable sources by 2050. That is a laudable aim but, judging from comments that were made on the radio this morning, I think that it is obvious that many Lib Dem activists do not realise that it refers only to electricity, which accounts for just 20 per cent of our total energy consumption. The real challenge is to reduce our oil addiction, and that is only ever mentioned by the Greens.

We need much more serious action now. It is serious action within the next four years that matters if we are to avoid runaway climate change. There must be joined-up thinking and serious urgency and we must tackle energy use overall, not just electricity. As Menzies Campbell stated recently, there is little point in developing renewables if we just build more motorways and fly more aeroplanes. He was criticising the Tories and Labour, but his criticism should have been aimed at Nicol Stephen who, according to Friends of the Earth Scotland, made the most environmentally damaging decision since devolution.

Tough action on traffic growth is a critical move to curb climate change. We need to move away from motorway building and rail schemes that simply get more people to bigger airports. It is time

to make some hard choices with public spending, but I see no sign of that from the present Government. We must also remember that it was the Lib Dems, along with the SNP, the Tories and the Scottish Socialist Party, who campaigned against congestion charging. That exposed their true colours. I give credit to Sarah Boyack for being one of the few Labour MSPs to join us in condemning that strange alliance.

There are some positive things going on. However, were it not for the strong presence of Greens in the Parliament making a difference to move things our way, I suspect that we might have seen even less progress. At last, an improvement in the support for marine power appears to be coming. Why do we not have it now, though? We no longer have the luxury of time.

Our proposed bill on climate change targets is the kind of bold commitment that ministers need to make—not the pseudo-target of the Executive's "Scottish share". Carbon emissions have not been reduced since Jack McConnell became the First Minister. Even David Cameron backed legislation to set a target of a 3 per cent year-on-year reduction overall. If ministers can set a target for the number of teenage pregnancies or the suicide rate and if David Cameron can set a target for the reduction of carbon emissions, why cannot the Scottish Tories do that? Perhaps they should stop campaigning against wind farms and listen more to their leader.

We welcome the fact that the environment is moving further up the political agenda. If voters want serious action, they will vote for a party that really means it. Only the election of more Greens will ensure that crucial shift from rhetoric to reality. We will keep pressing the other parties to shift from their luxurious pre-election rhetoric on climate change to much more serious Government action. If we are handed the responsibility of holding the balance of power after the next election—to which we are positively looking forward—we will ensure that that is what happens. I urge all members to support the amendment in Mark Ruskell's name, which I will move.

I move amendment S2M-4810.2, to leave out from "notes" to end and insert:

"recognises the seriousness of climate change and the grave threat which it poses to humanity; notes the reality, as evidenced in the latest report from the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, that it is vital to implement a major new programme of action to cut carbon emissions within the next four years if we are to play our part in keeping global temperatures below dangerous levels, and calls on the Scottish Executive to adopt a target for a 3 per cent year-on-year overall reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and to take action to achieve this target including reducing road traffic levels, bold energy efficiency measures, promoting micropower technologies and decentralised energy generation, the rapid expansion of renewable energy and the carbon proofing of all Executive

decisions and policies to ensure a consistent rather than contradictory approach to emissions reduction."

Jeremy Purvis: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I wonder whether you can offer guidance to the chamber on potentially misleading comments by Green members. They stated today that it is not the Green approach to renationalise public utilities in Scotland. However, according to the *Official Report*, Mark Ballard said:

"We believe that the most effective way to deliver basic utilities such as electricity is through state provision."—[*Official Report*, 12 February 2004; c 5896.]

Is there an opportunity to correct what has obviously been a misleading statement this morning?

The Presiding Officer: You have made the point and clarified the matter simply by raising it, Mr Purvis.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green) rose—

The Presiding Officer: Do we have another point of order or can we get on with the debate?

Mr Ruskell: No, let us just get on with the debate.

The Presiding Officer: Let us get on.

09:59

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): We have had both ends of the political spectrum this morning—sanctimony and hypocrisy. It is interesting to see that the Conservatives have discovered recycling. Last week, when David Cameron came up here, he talked about Britishness and the number of relatives that people have in other parts of the UK—recycling what Gordon Brown had said the week before. That is indicative of an approach to politics that is driven by public relations. David Cameron is, essentially, a PR man. He does not believe in what he says; he simply finds the best bits of everybody else's speeches, wraps them all together, puts his green tie on and tries to convince us that somehow he is being serious.

Parroting arguments in pale imitation of sustained engagement with issues such as climate change does nobody any good. That is especially true considering the fact that, as Ross Finnie said, the actions of the Conservatives belie everything that they say. Whether in the Tories' objections to pylons or the point that Ross Finnie made about David Cameron's car being driven behind his bicycle, the actions and the words are completely separate.

Phil Gallie: Does Des McNulty acknowledge that John Major's Government in the 1990s took the lead on CO₂ emissions at Kyoto and achieved far more than the Scottish Executive has? Going

back further, does he recognise that, in the 1980s, the Tory Government introduced efficiency schemes that helped people to insulate their homes to save energy? Surely the Labour Executive and others are simply following the example that has been set by the Conservatives.

Des McNulty: It was Mrs Thatcher who spiked wind farm developments over a lengthy period—a practice that is still being followed by individual Tory MSPs.

Annabel Goldie talked about carbon emissions doubling since 1759, the time of the Government of William Pitt the elder. That does not take us much further forward in identifying the tasks that we face now. I worry about all the commitments to strategies and targets that we get from all the political parties. I cannot remember how many strategies Ross Finnie mentioned in his speech—I gave up counting when it got to 15. We need to recognise that rhetoric must be followed not so much by Government action but by action that engages people. Unless people begin to change and begin to be persuaded by these arguments, instead of being hit over the head with them, we will not achieve the significant change that we want.

I was going to make the point that was made earlier about the new Scottish Tory logo, which is bigger, has a darker shade of green and leans less to the right than the English Tory logo. That attempt to reposition the party does not cut much ice or persuade me that it will solve the problems or provide the engagement that is needed.

We need cleaner beaches and we need better arrangements for recycling, which people must use for getting rid of their rubbish. We need opportunities for people to install more efficient heating systems such as condensing boilers rather than the boilers that they have at present. We need practical schemes to enable people to do that. It is regrettable that we are only at the start of that process. We need a sustained process of engagement over 10 or 15 years that will enable ordinary people to make positive ecological choices. It seems to me that it is the Government's role to facilitate that process by encouraging and enabling ordinary people to act in a greener way. That argument spans all the political parties. It is not a task for the Labour Party any more than for the Greens, the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats or the SNP; it is a task that we must share across the Parliament and across society. If we do not engage with the people whom we seek to represent, we are all talking in a vacuum.

It is crucial to recognise that climate change is not just a Scottish or UK issue, but fundamentally an international issue. Given the level of emissions that is being produced by China, India and other rapidly industrialising nations in south-east Asia

and given what is going on in Latin America and eastern Europe, if we focus only on what is happening in our environment and in our tiny political system, the world will warm up regardless of what we do.

However, that does not mean that we should simply say that there is nothing that we can do about climate change and take our Cortinas to the supermarket as usual. Of course we have to change what we do, but the world needs to think about the major economic forces and the dynamics of economies and change its direction of travel on issues such as population pressures if we are to deal with the increasing temperatures in the Arctic and the Antarctic and the desertification of previously green areas of north and west Africa. All those things are happening rapidly, and I get fed up with parties saying, "We're better than you are," and all the name-calling that goes on.

Mr Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Des McNulty does that, too.

Des McNulty: I realise that I engage in that myself from time to time. I must confess that pointing out the error of the Conservatives' ways has become a habit.

The fundamental point is that we have to engage not only with the people in Scotland whom we represent but nationally and internationally to change attitudes and values. That will be a difficult task.

10:06

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): The debate has been interesting so far, although it has been high on rhetoric and low on policy. In fact, if it had not been for Annabel Goldie's clear statement of Conservative policy in this area, we would have heard very little about any policy at all.

Mr Ruskell: Will the member give way?

Alex Johnstone: I would like to press on.

I note in passing that, unfortunately, George Lyon and Tavish Scott have left the chamber. Their contribution to the debate was made up entirely of words of one syllable.

The only party that is entitled to take a reasonably light-hearted approach to this matter is the Green party. After all, its members' hearts must be flying high at the moment, because they have managed to move the political agenda in the chamber and in Scotland into the area that is their primary reason for existing. We make no apologies for following them into that area, because we realise that it will form the agenda for the future.

However, we must not make the mistake of thinking that this battle can be fought entirely

through rhetoric, not on policy. We might be following the Greens' agenda, but we disagree fundamentally with them about how best to achieve its aims. I suppose that those differences could be described as the traditional ones between the right and the left. We as Conservatives will always seek to ensure that the policies of the right—which are, of course, the right policies—are put forward to achieve our broad aims.

That is where our eco-bonus scheme proposal comes in. I should point out that this is the third time in a row that energy and the environment have been chosen as the subject for Conservative party business. We have nothing to learn from other parties in that respect and the fact that the issue is not raised more often at First Minister's questions perhaps reflects his interests more than it reflects the interests of those who are asking the questions.

If we are not very careful, policies that are designed to achieve shared aims such as a reduction in global warming might have negative effects. For a start, we need the kind of economic growth that will keep our public services fully funded. Moreover, we also need to consider whether any energy policy that we develop will threaten the fuel security of the least well-off in society.

Our straightforward, honest and down-to-earth policies, such as the eco-bonus, will ensure that our industries and the least well-off in our society are able to participate in the revolution that must take place. Although it will provide only a small amount of money at the start, it is certainly a great deal more than has been made available so far. I should also point out that our policy aims to achieve much the same thing that Shiona Baird and Sarah Boyack want to achieve with their bill proposals. Shiona Baird was somewhat unjust in dismissing the Conservatives' attitude to those bill proposals. She is right to say that no Conservatives have as yet signed her bill proposal but, after discussions, we are now moving towards the position that is set out in Sarah Boyack's bill proposal. In fact, some Conservatives have already signed up to it. We believe that what Ms Boyack is trying to achieve is essentially much the same as what we are trying to achieve with the policies that we have set out this morning.

I am concerned that certain parties in the chamber are moving in a direction that will have genuinely dangerous long-term effects for our economy. I did not hear the speech that Nicol Stephen made south of the border; I have only read the reports of it in the Scottish press. Those reports might be inaccurate—it is conceivable, after all, that some Scottish journalists might write something that is not 100 per cent true—but his

proposal seems to be that, by 2050, 100 per cent of electricity will be sourced from renewables. That is dangerous because we need policies that ensure that we do not suffer the consequences of variability and that, when we flick the switch, we get the power that we need at a price that we—including the least well-off—can afford to pay.

We have to be responsible about how we achieve these aims. I believe that we can move towards 100 per cent carbon-free electricity generation using existing means and technology that is being developed in Scotland.

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Alex Johnstone: I am sorry; I am just finishing.

I believe that such generation might—or, indeed, must—include clean-coal and nuclear technology. That is the route that we must consider if power is to remain affordable and if the country is to grow in the way that most of us want it to grow.

10:13

Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): Like many members, I welcome the Tories' decision to debate climate change once more. Indeed, like Richard Lochhead—and I have to say that I am seldom to be found in the same camp as Mr Lochhead—I thought that the Tories' motion contained some sensible statements. I was particularly drawn to the part of the motion in which the Tories set out their belief

"that combating the threat of climate change will require fresh ideas and radical thinking".

I read on, looking for the "fresh ideas and radical thinking"; I was sadly disappointed.

In fact, during the debate, the Conservatives have not set out many "fresh ideas" or much "radical thinking". However, boys, there is still time.

Mr Brocklebank: What are the member's ideas?

Karen Gillon: I did not lodge the motion, the point of which is to set out

"fresh ideas and radical thinking".

The motion also mentions the need to involve and invoke change in communities, so I will highlight some examples of what is happening in my constituency. For the past two years, Biggar rotary club has held well-received eco-forums at which a wide range of organisations has informed and educated the community about issues such as solar panels, heating, energy conservation and using local food and produce.

People are beginning to take the issues seriously. In the fantastic world heritage site at

New Lanark, which I am proud to represent, there is a radical new heat-pump system, which converts the energy that is generated from the Clyde into heating for the public buildings. The system represents the third time that energy from the Clyde has been used in New Lanark: it was used to power the mills and in the Bonnington hydro scheme, which heats all the homes in New Lanark. Action is being taken.

On public transport, the Executive invested in the Larkhall to Milngavie railway line, which has attracted patronage levels that are 40 per cent higher than projected. People have been encouraged off the roads and on to public transport and congestion on roads into Glasgow has been reduced.

The first wind farm in Scotland was built in Clydesdale, at Hagshaw. There is also the wind farm at Black Law. Unlike the Conservatives, I think that wind energy plays a part in the energy mix in Scotland—[*Interruption.*] If the Conservatives agree that it does, why do they oppose nearly every wind farm application, not on the evidence that is presented but because local people say, "Not in my back yard"? We must take a pragmatic approach. A party that is serious about leadership must sometimes do what is right and not what is popular. The Tories will have to learn that lesson the hard way.

Phil Gallie: The member mentioned the Bonnington hydro-electric scheme on the Clyde. In the early 1900s it was a Tory Government that gave the nod to such schemes, which shows that the Tories were in on environmental change at an early stage.

Karen Gillon: Some members might suggest that Phil Gallie was involved in setting up those schemes. That is not true, although he has played his part. The Bonnington scheme has been well received by the community and people from further afield.

I am concerned about the Conservatives' approach. What will they do when people start objecting to the installation of solar panels and mini wind turbines? Will the Conservatives be big enough to stand up and say, "These things are important. We will support them and defend the right of communities to install them"? People do not like change, so they will object. Will the Conservatives have the guts to put their money where their mouth is?

The Executive could do more. We have embarked on one of the biggest school building programmes there has been in Scotland, but up to now we have missed an opportunity to ensure that some of those buildings are as energy efficient as they could be and use alternative fuel sources in the way in which I would like them to do. Will the

Executive consider the guidance to local authorities and meet the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to consider how better to use that opportunity to change the nature of the energy that our schools use? I would welcome the minister's comments on the matter. I have a boy in primary 2, who has got the message through his school and his nursery. He changes things at home. If young people can become involved in the process, we will have a much better future.

I welcome the fact that the Conservatives have come to the table. We should work with them and members of all parties to ensure that our children grow up in a world that is safe, sustainable and fair.

10:19

Frances Curran (West of Scotland) (SSP): I was bemused when I read the Tories' motion. I tried to imagine how its call for the decentralisation of energy production sits with current Tory energy policy. I envisage an election campaign next year in which a Tory manifesto commitment is, "Every community should have a nuclear power plant."

I support the Scottish community and householder renewables initiative, but it is a small part of a big solar panel. Green investment is crucial—[*Interruption.*] Is that not what we are discussing? The big question is how we find the money for green investment. Al Gore calls for a tax on polluters and the Lib Dems support that approach. Are the Tories in favour of such a tax to secure green investment?

However, such policies are not the answer. There is an elephant in the room, which is the real problem. As long as it is possible to make billions of dollars in profit by producing a barrel of oil for \$7 and selling it for \$60, energy consumption around the planet will change little. The pursuit of the world's oil supply is the dominant theme of domestic and international policy of our times. Billions of pounds of taxpayers' money—our money—subsidises the battle to secure oil. We debate renewables initiatives and we count the pennies for green investment while handing over billions of pounds to support and protect the oil companies as they scour the world for the last of the oil reserves.

If members doubt what I am saying, they should remember that the war in Iraq is a war for oil, as we all know, and that the first thing that the Americans did was to remove Iraq's oil from public ownership and hand it over to the oil companies. This year, the UK Government put £800 million of taxpayers' money into the war chest to pay for the Iraq war. The Scottish Executive has invested £3.6 million in community renewables schemes in a three-year period and Annabel Goldie attempted

to look green by talking about investment of £12 million, but even that is a paltry sum. We demand green investment while emptying the coffers to underpin the oil companies and their profits. The war for oil in Iraq has cost £6.4 billion. If we had not spent that money on war in Iraq, it would have been lying in the coffers—what could have happened if Scotland had used its share of the money to invest in renewables? We could make an enormous difference.

The Scottish community and householder renewables initiative, which the Tory motion mentions, represents nothing more than a green photo opportunity for ministers. It does not tackle how we make a step change from a fossil-fuel-based economy to a green economy. No member can claim that they want to prioritise green investment and tackle climate change while supporting wars for oil. Such politicians' double-speak fuels the cynicism that corrodes the reputation of the Scottish and Westminster Parliaments and leads to the belief that politicians just spin to cover up their real positions. The Tories' motion, which signals their apparent conversion on the road to Kyoto, is utterly cynical.

If we are to take the issues seriously, there must be change. Labour and the Tories cannot support wars for oil and the profits of the oil and gas companies—we are paying through the nose for gas—while claiming to be green.

Phil Gallie: Will the member give way?

Frances Curran: I am about to finish.

The debate is more about public relations and getting David Cameron's nice, touchy-feely image into the media than it is about how we secure 100 per cent energy production from renewables in Scotland.

10:24

Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP): I agree with much of Frances Curran's analysis, although I do not necessarily agree with her solution. The Conservative motion acknowledges some of what she says in that although it does not refer to war, it mentions terrorism, which ties in with her comments. If there is to be a successful, sustainable future, not just for Scotland but for the world, people must stop fighting each other. An enduring image of both Iraq wars was that of oil wells being set on fire, which did nothing for the environment. I agree with Frances Curran that the wars in Iraq have been all about oil.

We have a carbon economy that it will take us time to change. I hope that we will move to a hydrogen economy, which will give us a sustainable future. I hope that there is consensus that although we are some way off that at the

moment, we can take steps to make the transition easier. As Des McNulty spelled out, although we probably share a common view of how we want to achieve sustainability, we always revert to tribal loyalties and our party-political positions to define the differences between us.

In addition to the proposals in the Tory motion, we must consider what we as individuals do and the climate that we create. We have a major problem with consumerism and a mountain of personal debt funds the consumption of goods that we might not need. Overconsumption in the form of obesity is obvious among some of us. I commend one of our colleagues on the way in which he has addressed the problem over the summer when I say, well done, Mr Johnstone. We need to address such problems if we are to move towards a less selfish and consumerist society.

Globalisation does nothing for the environment. Although we have managed to reduce significantly industrial emissions in this country, we achieved it by exporting the jobs and the pollution.

Patrick Harvie: I am interested in Mr Adam's two themes—the transition away from oil and consumerism. How does that square with the SNP's election slogan "Support the SNP's drive for cheaper petrol"?

Brian Adam: I had hoped that we could get away from petty party-political point scoring in this debate. We all enjoy it—I enjoy it—but I had hoped that in light of the Conservatives' motion, which most of us can support despite any little wrinkles that we see in it, we could move away from scoring cheap political points.

We must achieve security of energy supply and secure the supply of food, which is part and parcel of the same thing.

Ms Rosemary Byrne (South of Scotland) (Sol): The member speaks about basing energy production in Scotland. Does he agree that developing clean-coal technology to cut carbon emissions and using home-produced coal rather than coal that is brought from China, with all the transport that that entails, would be a way forward?

Brian Adam: Absolutely. We need to think globally and act locally. The current drive towards globalisation is totally counter to that, as is our funding of consumption through borrowing. We need to have a total change of attitude. That will come from individuals, but there is certainly a role for Government as well.

There is no great dissent from the specific proposals in the Conservatives' motion. We must move away from big power plants to produce energy locally through combined heat and power plants, microrenewables or an expanded Scottish

community and householder renewables initiative. All those initiatives are great. We need to accept that we cannot continue as we have been. If we are to build up our local energy supply bit by bit, there is no place for new nuclear plants. We can bridge the energy gap with clean-coal technology and by changing the fiscal regime. In Scotland, renewables obligation certificates are one way in which we can move wave and tidal power up the agenda instead of relying on onshore wind farms.

10:30

Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD): Ms Goldie's motion starts with a bang and ends with a whimper. It says that

"The three great challenges facing mankind"

demand fresh ideas and radical thinking, but the Tory response is to put more money into an existing initiative that the Lib Dem-Labour Executive put in place. Still, it is an important first step in the right direction from the Conservatives, but let us look at some of their environmentally backward steps.

Step 1 is unequivocal support for new nuclear power. Step 2 is a moratorium on wind farms. Step 3 is the launch of a massive road-building agenda, reminiscent of the biggest road-building programme since the Romans, which Margaret Thatcher trumpeted in her time while wreaking havoc on public transport. She deregulated buses and privatised the railways and we are still paying for that today.

Alex Johnstone: I ask the member to consider her exaggeration of Conservative policy, her outline of which bears no relation to my understanding of it. Does she support the construction of the Aberdeen western peripheral route, which will be the biggest single road project to be carried out during the next session?

Nora Radcliffe: That project is part of a retrospective attempt to remedy the lack of transport infrastructure that is a legacy of the Conservative years. The western peripheral route should have been built 30 or 40 years ago.

I hope that the next Tory manifesto will reverse that backward progress and improve on the green rating of the party's previous manifestos. Friends of the Earth gave the 2003 manifesto zero out of 10, which was one point fewer than in 1999. I say in passing that the Liberal Democrats got eight out of 10 for their manifesto, but it is too easy to mock. We should welcome the fact that the message about global warming and climate change is reaching so far.

Liberal Democrats in Government are delivering the policies that will begin to tackle and manage climate change. We have more renewable energy,

the biggest ever investment in recycling, tighter building regulations, more radical strategic environmental assessment and more ambitious energy-efficiency measures than south of the border. Scotland's climate change programme sets an ambitious target to exceed our share of UK carbon savings by an additional 1 million tonnes by 2010—a big achievement over the Scottish share.

Mention has been made of Nicol Stephen's recent announcement of his ambition to meet 100 per cent of Scotland's electricity needs through renewable energy sources by 2050. The Lib Dems' green switch supports decentralised energy, microgeneration in every building, making marine power a reality, North sea offshore wind power and developing the grid to allow offshore and island generation, all supported by cost-effective storage technologies.

Nicol Stephen announced details of a £20 million investment in the Executive's clean energy strategy, which aims to make Scotland the renewable energy powerhouse of Europe and help to tackle climate change.

Mr David Davidson (North East Scotland) (Con): On Nicol Stephen's announcement about expanding the grid, how exactly will he do that and where will the money come from? The matter is critical for Scotland. I am told by those who know best that we are talking about several billions of pounds. In which year will Nicol Stephen spend that money?

Nora Radcliffe: I cannot give Mr Davidson a detailed answer. Obviously, many of these matters are reserved to Westminster, where many of our MPs are pushing to achieve the changes that will enable Scotland's potential to develop.

From the sidelines, the Scottish Green Party tells us what we should be doing; in the coalition, we are doing those things.

Having listened to Miss Goldie and Ross Finnie, I am sure that the chamber will support the Executive amendment. It outlines how we must move forward and the policies and initiatives that will persuade and encourage people and support and facilitate the concerted action that will be needed of every sector, business, organisation and individual if we are to achieve a greener, fairer Scotland that makes its contribution to tackling the three great challenges that we all acknowledge.

10:36

Mr Alasdair Morrison (Western Isles) (Lab): Like many in the chamber, I am having difficulty reconciling the tone and content of Annabel Goldie's motion with press releases and speeches that her colleagues have delivered over the years.

I applaud Alex Johnstone for his defence of Annabel Goldie's speech, but it proved only one thing—that Mr Johnstone is losing more than weight.

In December last year, my fellow Highlander, Murdo Fraser, the deputy leader of the Tories, said:

"Current Scottish Executive policy regarding wind farm applications is clearly inadequate and is actually damaging the future of our renewable industry."

He then called for a moratorium on the development of wind farms where there is any local opposition. I am sure that my friend will not object when I describe that as rampant populism. It shows a complete disregard for our environmental future.

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

Mr Morrison: I am delighted to allow Mr Fraser the opportunity to recant.

Murdo Fraser: Does the member accept that the Parliament's Enterprise and Culture Committee's unanimous, cross-party report on renewable energy—published more than two years ago, I believe—made the point that the concentration on onshore wind was damaging the development of other renewables?

Mr Morrison: I fondly recall the publication of that report, but I was referring to Mr Fraser's own statement when he demanded a moratorium on all wind farm development where there is any local opposition. That is a completely unsustainable position.

The Conservative motion combines words about the environmental challenge facing the world with a call to expand the Scottish community and householder renewables initiative. It does not seem to appreciate that it was the partnership Government here that set up such grants and continues to invest in them.

Alex Johnstone: Will the member take an intervention?

Mr Morrison: I would like to continue on this point.

The nationalists have appeared in the chamber with their usual air of smugness. Mr Brian Adam wants us to embrace new politics and not to become involved in party-political point scoring. Of course he does—because he does not want us to expose their hypocrisy when it comes to renewable energy and a host of other things.

When the nationalists make statements on renewable energy, they often fashion them to suit their audience. They are always trumpeting the prospect of Scotland becoming Europe's green

powerhouse, but how can they expect Scotland to achieve that—or to get anywhere close to it—when they always look for the short-term opportunistic advantage?

Christine Grahame is another leading nationalist who constantly demands a moratorium on all wind farm developments. She does not appreciate that, if we are to be leaders in the renewable energy revolution, we will have to underpin our manufacturing and research base across all technologies. In no part of Scotland are such legitimate aspirations more amplified than in my constituency of the Western Isles.

Richard Lochhead: Will the member take an intervention?

Mr Morrison: Yes, Mr What's-his-name.

Richard Lochhead: My name is Lochhead, and Mr Morrison will be hearing lots more of it in the years ahead, not to mention that of Mr Allan.

In recent months, Prime Minister Tony Blair, Labour back bencher Elaine Murray and the Executive have been rejecting wind farm applications. Does the member accept that that illustrates that wind farms have to be correctly located? Does he accept that the Labour Party seems to have signed up to that? As ever, the member is expressing his hypocrisy when he speaks on this issue.

Mr Morrison: I am always delighted to be given the opportunity to amplify nationalist hypocrisy. What the member was referring to there was our sensible and coherent approach to wind farm development. The member's party's approach is to advocate a populist moratorium and to fashion statements depending on the audience.

The Arnish yard in my constituency is a manufacturing yard. It is operated by a young Scottish company and, sadly, it is experiencing several challenges. The two most advanced pieces of renewable technology built recently in Britain were built in the yard—the Ocean Power Delivery technology and the Beatrice field technology. The viability of the yard exercises every one of us involved in the regeneration of Arnish. Therefore, I am pleased that the Scottish Executive—through Nicol Stephen, Allan Wilson and their agencies—is treating the future of the yard with the seriousness that it deserves. The Executive acknowledges that if we are to remain at the forefront of the renewable energy revolution, yards such as the one at Arnish must be regarded as national assets.

The future of the yard does not depend on handouts from the public purse, but it does require a healthy order book. As I say, Camcal and its workforce have built the most advanced pieces of renewable energy infrastructure.

Right across government—including the Scottish Executive and the United Kingdom Government—we must ensure that companies such as Camcal are able to compete and to bid for work. We all thought that the work would be there and that, by this stage, the market would be more developed than it is. All arms of government will have to ensure that the planning system takes account of the fact that it is unacceptable for applications for onshore and offshore developments to take for ever and a day to be granted.

Another obvious advantage in my constituency is the abundance of wind energy. That potential will never be realised unless we have an interconnector that will take the electricity to market. The UK Government recently reaffirmed its commitment to capping the cost of transmitting electricity. That commitment was secured by coherent and consistent lobbying of Government and the regulator by representatives from the Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland.

While I am on the topic of hypocrisy, I want to highlight another nationalist deficiency. When asked to comment on the capping of electricity charges, the nationalist MP for the Western Isles, Angus Brendan MacNeil, said that he was “neutral” on the issue. How can any right-thinking person be neutral on something that would give his own constituency such an advantage?

I conclude by restating the phenomenal potential in the Western Isles. I urge Scottish ministers to continue working with their UK counterparts to help us to realise that potential.

10:42

Mr Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): When Thomas Edison founded his Edison Electric Light Company back in the 1880s, he did not set out to sell people electricity, and he did not even set out to sell them light bulbs. His purpose was to sell them light. A century or so later, that philosophy has become the key to an alternative way of thinking about how energy is used, rather than about the method of supply. That way of thinking has become known as the end-use approach to energy planning.

What might be described as the conventional direction for energy over the past 50 years has been onwards and upwards—the production of ever more fuel and electricity. Because of the long lead times of power stations and oil and coal fields, demand has been forecast decades in advance and supply has been designed to meet that supposed need.

The devastating environmental impact of those conventional views of our energy future has led many experts to accept that there is no solution to the energy dilemma on the supply side of the

equation and that the only answer is to consider the demand side. The basic premise is efficiency. In other words, it is cheaper to save a watt of electricity than to generate one. I am sure that few members would disagree with such an approach.

Because we are voicing such arguments, Scottish Conservatives are being accused of jumping on Dave's green bandwagon. The truth—certainly in my case—is rather different. Everything that you have just heard from me was contained in a television script that I wrote back in 1990 for a series of programmes on Channel 4 called "The Energy Alternative". Some might say that to use those arguments again is to carry recycling to a ridiculous extreme, but arguments, too, deserve to be recycled, especially when their time has come. Let no one think that Conservatives have been slow to argue for energy conservation and effective renewables—some of us have been doing so for decades.

When Margaret Thatcher opened the Hadley centre for climate prediction and research back in May 1990, she said:

"Discharges of carbon dioxide and CFCs, if unabated, will go on accumulating in the atmosphere and will not easily be reversed. Even the most urgent measures now can't repair the damage of the past. But action now will prevent the problem from becoming acute."

Was action taken? The answer is yes and no.

When Mrs Thatcher spoke, oil was in abundant supply and Brent crude was selling at less than \$20 a barrel. As of yesterday, the corresponding cost was \$62 a barrel. During the present crisis, oil prices have peaked at about \$80 a barrel. When the cost was \$20 a barrel, the energy argument was not being driven by economic pressure.

Something else changed in 1990—by November of that year, Mrs Thatcher had left office. John Major's Tory Government introduced important energy efficiency initiatives, including the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995, which was designed to produce an overall improvement of 30 per cent in the efficiency of homes by 2010, at a cost of £350 million—[*Interruption.*] Ross Finnie and other members might well jeer, but Conservatives need not be ashamed of their role in energy conservation. Did we do enough? I argue that Governments of all persuasions could have done much more. The prospect that the lights might go out concentrates minds wonderfully.

I return to my analogy of Thomas Edison's light bulb. Every day we turn on an inefficient light bulb in an inefficient building, somewhere there is a power plant from which a plume of pollutants shoots into the sky. Those pollutants are carried up into the atmosphere; they warm the globe, heat the earth and help to create the climate change

problem of which we are all aware. We must break that cycle: we can break it at source by not using inefficient light bulbs.

In most industrialised countries, buildings use up well over half the energy that is delivered to consumers. I am talking about buildings of all kinds—houses, factories and offices. Domestic houses use up almost two thirds of the total. Most of the energy is used simply for space heating and supplying hot water; in other words, we are spending money on centrally heating neighbourhoods.

There is nothing new about energy-saving measures such as long-life light bulbs, house insulation and double and triple glazing. There is also nothing new about the use of mini solar panels as roof shingles, which returns energy savings to the customers who have them and who can watch their meters going backwards. I filmed that happening in New England 20 years ago. What we have lacked until now has been the will to develop renewable and waste technologies that are appropriate for this country. Denmark and the US were 20 years ago promoting wind technology—much of which was invented in the UK—and northern European countries were developing biomass and solar technologies, while we continued to squander the great gift of nature that was North sea oil.

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

Mr Brocklebank: I am just coming to the end of my speech.

I am proud that the Scottish Conservatives are launching an eco-bonus policy that aims to promote greater energy efficiency and appropriate development of renewables, especially microrenewables. It is right that we should provide incentives for people to make the expensive initial investment. Green energy is a technology whose time has come and Scotland is particularly well endowed with energy alternatives, so it is up to the Scottish Parliament to give use of microrenewables every encouragement. If I am spared, I do not want to be recycling the same arguments again sometime in the mid-2020s. I have much pleasure in supporting the motion.

10:48

Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): I begin by congratulating the Tories, who are obviously at the beginning of a journey. I hope that that journey is real and that they genuinely accept the realities of climate change—although I suspect that, when it comes to actions on the ground, it will take them longer to shift into the right mode.

It would be hard to disagree with anything in the Conservatives' motion. No right-thinking person could do other than agree that more decentralised energy would be good. Decentralised energy can make a significant contribution to reducing Scotland's ecological footprint. However, if we are ever to achieve one-planet living—instead of consuming resources at our present rate, which if everyone did the same, would require three earths to meet our needs—a massive change will be necessary in our attitudes to how we run the country, how we act as businesses and organisations and how we behave as individuals and communities.

As far as government is concerned, I can think of no time during my lifetime when a UK Government has had a coherent, strategic and deliverable energy policy. Annabel Goldie's cheap aside about the "Celtic utopia" tells me that the Tories have not changed: they are still anti-Scottish by nature and do not have enough faith, ambition or confidence in their people. I believe passionately that if we want to deliver a well-constructed energy policy, the necessary fiscal and policy powers must be vested in the Scottish Parliament. I have no doubt that we could deliver the changes that are required more successfully and on a much accelerated timescale. It is obvious that a unity of purpose exists among members that would allow us to make significant progress.

I congratulate Nicol Stephen on what he said this week about Scotland being able to get 100 per cent of its electricity from renewable energy sources by 2050, but he must accept that that will be possible only if all fiscal and energy policy powers are transferred to the Scottish Parliament. I must caution him—if he speaks to the energy industry, he will find that all the easy gains have already been made. From here on in, it will get much harder to meet the target that he has set. That is true of wind farms and offshore wind, in particular.

I turn to the Talisman Energy project for the North sea, the scale of which illustrates how we can deliver significant changes in how we do things in this country. I visited the Methil yard during the summer and was stunned by the size of the project that is being put together there, which involves a wind turbine blade that is the size of two football pitches put together. That massive project has huge potential for Scotland, but there is a blockage in the system. At this stage, the UK Government has the power to grant permission for the project to go ahead, but the chat in the industry is that the Government is considering devolving responsibility for it to the Scottish Parliament. That would be a good thing—let us hope that the Government gets on with the devolution of those powers so that we can get the job done and ensure that the wind farm is put in

place. I would like the minister to tell us whether the devolution of those powers to Scotland is a genuine possibility.

We must also be realistic about the Beaulieu to Denny power line, which is attracting a great deal of criticism up and down its route. Talisman is quite clear that without that line, it will not be able to deliver its project in the North sea. Investment might make it possible to develop alternatives to the line, but at the moment it is the only vehicle we have. I accept that mitigation measures need to be put in place—undergrounding and route diversions will be required in some areas—but we should not kid ourselves that campaigns against the line in parts of Scotland will do the country's offshore wind energy industry a huge disservice. I have tried to be as honest as possible with people to whom I have spoken in the Stirling area—I have said that although I am prepared to help them on mitigation issues such as undergrounding, we must accept the principle that if we are to deliver the changes that are necessary, the new line is essential.

Unfortunately, we do not have a great say—other than through the planning process—in many of the issues that Parliament likes to talk about and influence, including those to do with the national grid. I will finish with a plea. If the Conservatives are serious about what they say in their motion, and if Nicol Stephen is serious about delivering the target that he outlined this week, they should realise that the only way that we will be able to achieve those objectives is for us to be able to do the work ourselves and for that to happen soon.

10:54

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston)
(Lab): I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate, despite my reservations about its sponsors' new-found green credentials. Despite Ted Brocklebank's words, the recent attempts by the Conservative leadership at a Damascene conversion to environmentalism have been as transparent during their rebranding as they have been funny to watch, with David Cameron chartering a private plane to Norway to wedge a few words about melting glaciers in between his camera poses, not to mention his notorious bike ride to work with the accompanying press pack and chauffeur-driven car for his briefcase. There is also the recent logo change, in which the blue torch—which I presume had to be dumped because it was gas powered—has been changed to a fuzzy green tree.

In the words of Robert Macfarlane, writing in *The Guardian*, Cameron and the Tories have

"turned green faster than the Incredible Hulk."

That conversion is of a party whose voting record on green issues was, before the most recent

European elections, judged by Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth as the worst not just in Britain, but in the whole European Union. As late as January 2005, the current Tory leader and sometime environmental evangelist voted against the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, and he continues to decry Labour's climate change levy as a stealth tax on business. However, for the purposes of today's debate, I am prepared to give our colleagues on the right the benefit of the doubt. I am sure that today's debate is not an attempt by them to glean some of that promised Cameron public relations sheen, but is simply an expression of their commitment to the climate change cause.

I actually agree with the Conservative motion that global warming is—along with global poverty and terrorism—one of the three great challenges that we face, but I differ in my analysis in that I believe that the three challenges are fundamentally linked and equally exacerbated by rampant global capitalism, which puts profits and market freedom before everything else. I was interested to see on "Newsnight" last night a piece by George Monbiot, who writes in his recent book, "Heat: How to Stop the Planet Burning", about a network of fake citizens groups and bogus scientific bodies that are funded by big business to help to create the impression that doubt about climate change is widespread. He also wrote in *The Guardian*:

"While they have been most effective in the United States, the impacts of the climate-change deniers sponsored by Exxon and Philip Morris have been felt all over the world ... It is fair to say that the professional denial industry has delayed effective global action on climate change by years, just as it helped to delay action against the tobacco companies."

The Conservatives must recognise the role of their big business friends in delaying action on the issue. We did not, however, hear much about that today.

As a Labour member, I welcome the motion's recognition of the Scottish community and householder renewables initiative because, as Alasdair Morrison said, it was the Executive that set up that scheme and has consistently invested in it, with the most recent boost taking the fund to £3.7 million a year. I am pleased to hear that support will be forthcoming for Sarah Boyack's proposed energy efficiency and microgeneration bill. That will make a change from the kind of nimbyism that has been displayed by Murdo Fraser in respect of wind farms and which was reiterated today by Annabel Goldie, who suggested that her party is in favour of promoting renewable energy, but only when nobody complains.

I agree with Murdo Fraser on the view that the current pace of change necessitates a more

strategic and co-ordinated approach by Government. One specific area of concern that I want to mention is to do with private finance initiative arrangements for public services. Across the country schools, hospitals and other public facilities are, as Karen Gillon said, being built in partnership with the private sector. That is becoming part of the problem, because many investors are reluctant to take on the associated risks or the current costs of installing renewable energy technologies. A recent review found that

"Due to a 'risk premium' PPP is not currently seen to be an appropriate vehicle for encouraging renewable energy systems,"

and that, as such, consideration should be given to ensuring that those projects can access the funding. Given that use of the facilities is often tied down by 20 or 30-year contracts, I am concerned that such arrangements will also preclude future change and development and I fear that, through PFI, the Government is denying itself an opportunity to lead the way on renewables via the public sector.

In its fourth report of 2006, on the biomass industry, the Environment and Rural Development Committee expressed concern about how the structure and funding of public-private partnership and PFI projects can allow for inclusion of renewable energy projects such as biomass systems. If we miss the opportunity, we will be left with an unacceptable energy emissions legacy. That must be addressed.

I welcome the Scottish Executive's efforts to ensure a more joined-up approach through the consultation on planning policy and renewable energy, and I hope that that will also help to marry the pace of change and development with the target of generating 40 per cent of Scotland's electricity from renewable sources by 2020. I also welcome the commitment that is evident in the fact that, among other achievements, 70 per cent of Scotland's transport budget is spent on public transport. The role of public transport in tackling climate change is important, but we need better regulation of the bus and train industries if we are to ensure that Scotland has an adequate and cohesive transport network. I wonder whether I can take it from the Tories' new-found enthusiasm for environmental issues that they agree with that. Can we expect an apology for their disastrous transport decisions in the past?

The motion is all very admirable, but the Tories would have to commit to action that would involve rooting out Thatcherite conservatism by, for example, imposing rigorous environmental taxing and detaching themselves from their big business buddies, rather than what we see today, which is simply promoting a return to 19th century genteel Tory paternalism. I support the Executive's amendment.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh): We come to the closing speeches. I call Mark Ruskell.

11:01

Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): It has been an interesting debate on a greener, fairer Scotland. Annabel Goldie kicked off the debate by calling for a greener Parliament. I can tell the Tories that after next year's election there certainly will be a greener Parliament, because there will be more Green MSPs sitting in this chamber, and we will be taking seats off the Tories in the regional lists.

Murdo Fraser: I doubt that very much.

Mr Ruskell: If not votes. *[Laughter.]*

I can tell the Tories now that their policies on the environment have not changed since the days of the Scottish Office, when they had colourful characters such as Allan Stewart, who famously had to leave office because he wielded a pickaxe against anti-roads protesters in Glasgow. We now have a new generation of Tories who are prepared to wield the pickaxe again. We have Murdo Fraser, who is—

Phil Gallie: Will Mr Ruskell give way on that point?

Mr Ruskell: No. I am sorry. Annabel Goldie did not let me in.

Phil Gallie: Stand up and be counted.

Mr Ruskell: We have a new generation of Tories ready to wield the pickaxe again. Murdo Fraser is against every single proposed wind farm in Perth and Kinross, and the overall position of the Tories is in favour of a moratorium on onshore wind developments across Scotland. That is a measure that would cripple the renewable energy industry and the wealth creators who are generating economic growth in our country, and it is a completely unbalanced approach to renewable energy. It goes against Murdo Fraser's own position—he signed up to the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee's report, which acknowledged that onshore wind has a significant role to play in generating renewable electricity in Scotland.

Murdo Fraser: We have never said that we have a blanket opposition to onshore wind. If Mr Ruskell had done his research, he would have found out that on 2 February 2005 I lodged motion S2M-2365, which welcomed a wind farm proposal. Why did he not bother to look that one up?

Mr Ruskell: Murdo Fraser's definition of the word "moratorium" and my definition are slightly different. I think that he should look at a dictionary. He is calling for all wind farms to be halted right

now. That would damage the Scottish economy; it is a case of "Say one thing, do another"—which brings me on to the Liberal Democrats. *[Laughter.]*

We have had lots of excited Liberal Democrats rushing around this week talking about eco-taxes. Where were the Lib Dems when the City of Edinburgh Council was talking about introducing its own eco-tax through congestion charging? We have also heard the minister and Nora Radcliffe talking proudly about the Scottish share target—a target that could be met even if emissions go up. It does not make sense, so I urge the minister to turn it into something that we can debate because, at the moment, the target is ludicrous. Lib Dem tax policies have also been discussed this week. If pollution goes up, which might happen with the target, their policies would result in more public funding coming in. Perhaps that is the Lib Dems' intention.

If the Lib Dems are going to introduce the stick of eco-taxation, they must also introduce the carrot of investment—in public transport services, for example—to allow people to make the transition to more sustainable choices. We will not get that by investing in the M74 or in the Aberdeen western peripheral bypass. There are stacks of other projects, besides the Airdrie to Bathgate rail line and the Waverley rail route, that are queuing up—

Patrick Harvie: Such as Glasgow crossrail.

Mr Ruskell: I am grateful to Patrick Harvie for mentioning the Glasgow crossrail project. There are projects queuing up waiting for public transport infrastructure funding, including the Leuchars to St Andrews rail route in Ming Campbell's constituency.

Ross Finnie: The Greens are always asking people to adopt a greener approach, but as soon as anyone produces sensible policies that will tax pollution, the Greens tell us that that is the wrong approach. They then go on to ask for more public spending. The Greens are being most inconsistent. They do not want the taxation, but they want the public spending, so there will be a great gulf. They are even less credible than usual.

Mr Ruskell: What we are saying is that we need hypothecated eco-taxes that solve the problem and which are not relied on for mainstream public services. This week, the Executive has cut the top rates of income tax—the taxes of those who can best afford them.

Over there, laughing, I see pro-privatisation Purvis—*[Laughter.]*—who will no doubt rise in a minute. Jeremy Purvis has to resort to spurious points of order to get his message across. To answer his question, the Green position is clear. A natural monopoly, such as the delivery of an electricity grid system, should be run in the public interest. I am not ashamed to believe that; it is the

right way forward. Mr Purvis is wrong. It does not matter whether it is a national grid or a decentralised system; it can still be run in the public interest, unlike electricity generation, in which some form of competition is useful. No party in the chamber wants to break up Scottish and Southern Energy and turn it back into the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board—apart from the SSP perhaps.

Patrick Harvie: And Solidarity.

Mr Ruskell: And Solidarity. Well, who knows?

I wish the Lib Dems luck in taking votes off the Tories next year, but they should not pretend that they are a green party.

What has surprised me in the debate is the positive contribution from the Labour Party. Karen Gillon and Elaine Smith talked about the positive action that can be taken at local level.

The school building programme has been a huge issue, which the Greens have been involved in. Des McNulty talked about the international leadership that is required. Let us not pretend that the issue of the environment can be solved by some sort of cosy consensus. We need vibrant debate, but we also need to make hard choices about where we spend public money, based on the reality of what needs to be done. We do not need rhetoric and marketing from political parties.

11:07

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): On Mr Ruskell's point about electricity, I did not make a spurious point of order. I was quoting Mark Ballard from the *Official Report*. He said that the Greens

"believe that the most effective way to deliver basic utilities such as electricity is through state provision."—[*Official Report*, 12 February 2004; c 5896.]

In March 2005, I asked his colleague Patrick Harvie whether he favours state control of electricity prices, to which he replied:

"Off the top of my head, I say that I will be happy to discuss that with my colleagues."—[*Official Report*, 16 March 2005; c 15382.]

He did not have a clue what the situation was.

Mr Ruskell rose—

Jeremy Purvis: I shall give way to the Greens in a moment, but I wish to get on to the motion, which concerns the launch of the Conservatives' green agenda.

There is uncertainty about the green credentials of the Conservatives. I am not sure what shade of green their tree is and I am certainly not sure what species it is.

Mr Ruskell: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Mr Purvis is misleading the chamber.

When Mark Ballard talked about the delivery of electricity he was talking about the national grid, not utility companies that are concerned with generation.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I did not hear the earlier point of order, so I shall not rule on whether it was spurious. That one certainly was.

Jeremy Purvis: Ms Goldie said that the green credentials of the Conservatives reflect robustness, but Parliament is uncertain which direction the tree is blowing in the wind: is it to the left this week and the right next week? We do not know whether the tree is deciduous. Will the policies fall off each autumn? There are questions over the depth of the shade of green, the dubious origin and the tilting in the wind. However, the £40,000 that the Conservatives spent on their logo aptly sums up their policies. I think it is a job well done.

Karen Gillon highlighted the differences that communities, individuals and Government can make. In my constituency, the schools that are newly built through PPP will have biomass heat and power, and there is real promotion of microrenewables schemes. There is also massive investment in public transport to attract people in rural areas out of their cars. The roads party, which is how the Conservatives have championed themselves, have clearly used that method of transport to reach Damascus. Whatever happened to the Conservatives being the self-styled motorists' party? Mrs Thatcher called the environment a "humdrum" issue, but apparently it is no longer so.

My colleague Nora Radcliffe pointed out that the Conservative motion calls for fresh ideas and radical thinking. The problem, however, is that none of the Conservatives' radical thinking is fresh, and anything that is fresh is not radical. The Conservatives' 2005 manifesto claims that

"A commitment to safeguarding our environment lies deep in Conservative thinking."

We might well ask what that deep Conservative thinking constitutes.

Not 60 words away from the statement about deep environmental thinking, the same manifesto says:

"A Conservative Government will end Labour's war on the motorist."

Roads alone are not the answer, which is why the Labour-Liberal Democrat Executive has the biggest investment programme in public transport in Scotland for 100 years. More rail journeys are being made in Scotland, while growth in the number of car journeys is being stemmed for the first time in a generation.

I will quote Mr Cameron, in a friendly chat with Friends of the Earth during his leadership campaign. He said:

"We could all do more, and I would not paint myself as some sort of environmental saint. ... I cycle to work".

Perhaps Mr Cameron could start by cycling to work without, for once, being trailed by a high CO₂-emitting car carrying his shoes. The shoe chauffeur is obviously stylish and I guess it constitutes fresh thinking. Mr Cameron voted against the climate change levy, calling it a stealth tax on business. So we see the truth.

The Conservatives remain

"all talk and no action."

Those are not my words, but those of Conservative MEP Caroline Jackson, describing the Conservatives' new environmental policy. She predicts that

"in the general election I suspect that we will roll back from ... this."

I do not doubt it.

Let us consider the Conservatives' record in Government: on their watch, emissions of CO₂ increased by 50 per cent in the 1980s; motor vehicle traffic increased by 75 per cent over the final term of their office; there were 2 billion fewer bus passenger journeys; and recycling levels flatlined, while in the rest of Europe they rocketed.

No doubt Mr Cameron will have something else to apologise for when he comes to Scotland again—nuclear power stations. On 17 January, Alan Duncan, the Conservatives' energy spokesman, said in the House of Commons:

"I have had an instinctive hostility to nuclear power. I treat it with profound suspicion."—[*Official Report, House of Commons*, 17 January 2006; Vol 441, c 779.]

Not long after that, on 9 March, the Conservative motion in the Scottish Parliament—which has no power over nuclear policy—said that we should have new nuclear policies now. In May, challenging the front bench about the difference between the UK and the Scottish approaches, Mr Fraser said:

"The Conservatives believe in Scottish solutions for Scottish problems."—[*Official Report*, 4 May 2006; c 25268.]

Ultimately, we know that, apologies or not, the Conservatives have not changed. They will not take action, nor will they take tough decisions on the environment when they are presented with the opportunity to do so. They will oppose sitings for wind energy and other renewables.

The Conservatives seem to agree with some aspects of Scottish National Party policy. In *The Scotsman* in 2003, Fergus Ewing said that wind farms are "visually obtrusive" and therefore not a

"truly green form of renewable energy".

That is a rather bizarre definition. Al Gore should not be fearful of anybody competing with his analysis of energy needs. The SNP's whole economic policy is predicated and is totally dependent on oil.

The Greens—the other socialist party in Parliament—seem to be rather concerned to hide the fact that it is their policy, in their manifesto, to renationalise Scottish Power, Scottish Gas, Scottish and Southern Energy, British Telecom, First ScotRail and all Scottish bus companies. There will be no money left for renewable energy or any other policy; Scotland will be bankrupt. The Greens have said that they would pay compensation for all of that, to a total of £22 billion. There is only one party with real, achievable and bold ambitions, and which is taking action now and for the future: the Scottish Liberal Democrats.

11:14

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):

Increasingly, this debate will form the backdrop to every election. We are talking about a global emergency, not some passing phase. We are talking about something that all parties had begun to embrace before the debate, but the Conservatives, in taking the steps that they have taken today, are providing the opportunity for us to fine-tune the way in which we all go forward.

There are a lot of rough edges in the Conservatives' arguments, at the heart of which is the one about the way in which the growth in demand for energy and electricity is dealt with. That must be tackled, yet it is the matter on which the Tories say the least. Indeed, some, like Alex Johnstone, have trumpeted the fact that there would be increased demand for electricity, which we take for granted in this day and age.

Alex Johnstone: Will Rob Gibson give way?

Rob Gibson: In a moment; I have not finished my point.

We must moderate our behaviour, but the Tory party has not stated how we should do that.

Alex Johnstone: Does Rob Gibson accept that the statement of mine that he mentioned—which I stand by—is based on the assumption that, in a post-fossil-fuel economy, electricity will have to play a much larger role in energy sourcing, including public transport in many cases? As a consequence, although we can cut total energy demand, the proportion of electricity and the actual need for it are likely to go on rising. That is why we must consider the total amount that we will need in the future.

Rob Gibson: I do not accept that, because hydrogen power and other sources—about which we have not talked in any detail today—will fill the energy gap in transport, which is one of the biggest energy users.

Electricity will have to be available for many uses, but the Tories have yet to face up to energy efficiency, which has not been discussed in the debate to any great extent. In the Parliament, we have asked before now about the use of money for investment in energy. Experts have suggested that, if we put the money that it would take to build a nuclear power station into energy efficiency, we would reduce carbon emissions seven times more. That is the kind of equation that the Tories have yet to face; it is one of the rough edges that they have not dealt with as the debate has developed.

In his opening speech for the SNP, Richard Lochhead pointed out that Scotland has one of the biggest potentials in Europe for the production of green power. It is important to remember that we have not discussed how other countries have tackled green energy production through combined heat and power. Sweden, Holland and Denmark—which, unlike Britain, have not had large amounts of oil in the past 25 years—moved on apace to create local energy in large measure by combining heat and power. The problem with electricity production is that, when we create coal-fired or nuclear power stations, we create heat. Sweden, Holland and Denmark have harnessed that heat, but I have heard nothing from the Tory party about that form of local delivery, which the SNP is happy to embrace.

When we hear about biomass plants being built into PPP schemes for schools, we realise how slow the Executive has been to force the pace on biomass. The banks in Scotland used not to accept such investment, whereas the banks in Sweden, Holland, Denmark and other European countries embraced it years ago. We have a long way to go to catch up with regard to energy efficiency and the way in which we use combined heat and power.

As I said, transport is one of the biggest energy users. It is interesting to contrast today's news that the state of California is lodging a law suit against the motor car manufacturers for the polluting effects of motor cars with the Liberal Democrats, who are in government in Scotland, telling us that rural motorists would be hit by their proposed rise in road tax and the way in which they would administer it. In Scotland, our total policy for ensuring that people can travel around must be based partly on public transport, but we must also ensure that people who live in rural areas can drive their cars at reasonable cost. Countries such as Norway, which has total control of its energy policy, ensure that fuel is not dearer at one end of the country than it is at the other.

Ross Finnie: Rob Gibson may have been listening, but he clearly has not read the excellent document that the Liberal Democrats launched this week. Will he admit that he has not read it or that, if he has, he has totally misunderstood it? In the sections that deal with road fuel and aviation, there are clear references to exemptions for people travelling in the Highlands and Islands and rural areas. There are explicit references to doing exactly what he has asked us to do.

Rob Gibson: The rural pensioners who have to pay car tax are not mentioned in that document, and they will be hit the most.

Mr Finnie has told me in the Parliament that we cannot produce more than 40 per cent of our energy from renewables in Scotland, but now his party's policy is a far higher target. The SNP welcomes that.

Ross Finnie: That is absolute nonsense!

Rob Gibson: It is not; I will give Mr Finnie the facts later.

The emergency is global, but we need a Scottish energy strategy, which needs to be delivered locally. We need to change the ROC proposals to ensure that our offshore energy supplies can be harnessed quickly, but there has not been a co-ordinated approach to that. Far too many of the powers over energy and climate change issues are reserved. As the SNP has said before, we could be much more efficient if we had those powers in Scotland so that we could devise a concerted strategy. The debate shows us that there are many elements in different parties that would allow us to draw together, but the most important step that we can take is the big step of controlling energy policy in Scotland. We cannot control our energy output until we have a Scottish energy strategy, which is why the SNP's amendment is essential to this interesting debate.

11:21

The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Rhona Brankin): Well, well, well. Goodness me—a Conservative debate on the environment. That is fine. I am delighted by that, and I am even more delighted that Annabel Goldie lodged a motion that quotes Tony Blair:

“along with global poverty and terrorism, climate change is one of the three great challenges facing mankind”.

I welcome that conversion, but actions speak louder than words. As has already been noted, David Cameron voted against the climate change levy in the House of Commons. Indeed, on 6 February 2006, the Tories in the House of Lords watered down legislation that proposed a legal duty on company directors to consider the impact of their actions on communities and the

environment. The Tories' conversion is late and it remains to be seen whether their actions will speak louder than their words.

Dave Petrie (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

The minister has mentioned twice that actions speak louder than words, but will she offer some words of comfort to the islanders of Tiree? The island is arguably the windiest place in the UK and arguably self-sustainable in renewables, but the islanders cannot get wind turbines because their order is not big enough.

Rhona Brankin: It is interesting that Dave Petrie has raised wind energy, given the Conservatives' appalling record on it. One of the reasons that it has been difficult for the islanders to get wind turbines might be demand. We welcome the fact that there is demand for wind turbines in Scotland; I hope that the Conservatives welcome that too.

As Ross Finnie indicated in his opening speech, the Executive is embodying fresh ideas, radical thinking and a uniquely Scottish approach to tackling sustainable development and climate change. That includes a wide range of innovative policy solutions, some of which I intend to touch on.

Rob Gibson: Will the minister give way on that point?

Rhona Brankin: I would like to get into my speech, but I will take an intervention later.

Our reliance on energy to run businesses, deliver public services, heat homes, transport goods and provide services means that energy provision is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in Scotland. The residential sector is the largest energy consumer, followed by the transport and industrial sectors, and we have witnessed significant increases in energy use in the residential and transport sectors over the past decade. That leads to increased carbon emissions and tends to drive energy prices higher.

Therefore, a priority in responding to climate change is to reduce demand for energy, and one of the easiest and most cost-effective means of reducing carbon emissions is to improve energy efficiency. That is why we are developing the first energy efficiency strategy for Scotland, which will take stock of where we are and outline where we want to be and what we need to do to get there. It will take a more holistic approach and discuss how microgeneration can help to cut emissions from buildings. It will outline a range of financial, administrative and regulatory measures that are aimed at offering better advice and support to the domestic, business and public sectors. Everybody has a part to play in helping to reduce carbon emissions, but we need to ensure that the right information, advice and support are available.

Rob Gibson: On microgeneration, the minister, like me, might be concerned about the delay in processing applications, applications not being acknowledged, and people having to go to London for answers. Will she investigate why it is not possible for people to get microgeneration schemes into their homes much more quickly?

Rhona Brankin: I do not make any apologies for our policy on microgeneration. If the member has specific issues that he wants to raise with me, the minister responsible and I will be happy to look at them.

We have allocated £16 million to the SCHRI. The initiative has been hugely successful, which is why we are committed to extending it until 2008.

Alex Johnstone: Will the minister give way?

Rhona Brankin: I would like to continue. I can take an intervention later.

Demand reduction will not be enough. We need new thinking about how we generate and transmit energy, and new technologies have a role to play. Our commitment to renewable energy and the clean energy programme is clear. We know the scale of our renewable resource—nearly 10 times our current peak demand—and we have challenging targets to meet: 18 per cent of electricity generation to be sourced from renewables by 2010 and 40 per cent by 2020. We are on track to meet those targets, and we are commissioning research to inform a future review of them.

Several members mentioned diversity of supply, which we need to encourage to promote security and to maximise economic development potential. Hence, the focus of the clean energy programme will be on marine, biomass and hydrogen generation as well as on the Scottish community and householder renewables initiative.

The initiative was established in 2002 with the intention of increasing public knowledge and awareness of the benefits of renewable energy. It has been a success; more than 1,000 projects have received grant funding and an interim review that was done last year showed that the initiative has been successful in helping the development of the small-scale renewables sector in Scotland. That is why it is valuable. As I said, we are committed to funding the SCHRI until March 2008, by which time we will have invested just under £16 million.

Our developing energy efficiency strategy will take account of the contribution that microgeneration can make and the measures that will promote an increased uptake of the technology.

It is our ambition to establish Scotland as a world leader for wave and tidal energy

development. Marine generation is a relatively untapped source, and Scottish companies can be at the vanguard of the industry. That is why in 2004 we established the European Marine Energy Centre in Orkney, which is first of its kind in the world.

That is also why we are consulting on changes to the renewables obligation to ensure that long-term funding exists to encourage developers to locate in Scotland. We have just published formal consultation on amending the obligation to support marine generation, which is in line with the conclusions of the UK Government energy review but is more radical. The proposal is for the marine supply obligation in Scotland to bring enhanced revenue to the sector from April 2007. Over 20 years, it could be worth up to £700 million to the sector.

We are undertaking a strategic environmental assessment of parts of our coastline to help steer wave and tidal energy developers to the best areas for device deployment. Results are due early next year.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You have one minute, minister.

Rhona Brankin: We are supporting biomass in Scotland; earlier this year, we announced funding of £7.5 million for the sector. A biomass support scheme presently under development is one plank of the biomass action plan. Those are hugely important actions. There is also the potential for Scotland to be a world leader in the development of carbon capture and storage.

We are not just targeting energy use in homes, offices and businesses, because fuel use in transport is also a key contributor to climate change. That is why, of the £1 billion that we are spending on transport, 70 per cent will be spent on public transport.

It is hugely important for us to develop renewable energy. In my last minute, I want to say that the issue is not just about climate change. The Tories have had a miraculous conversion in relation to climate change, but climate change is not about only one idea.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The minister must close.

Rhona Brankin: A climate change programme such as ours brings together a raft of commitments across the policy agenda. It is a complex issue that requires concerted actions and we are committed to delivering them.

In conclusion, I repeat my question to the Tories: if they truly believe that climate change is one of the three challenges facing mankind, why is it that, in 112 meetings—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must close there, minister.

11:30

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

This has been a wide-ranging debate, and in the time available to me I would like to respond to some of the key themes that have been referred to in the past two hours or so.

It is fair to say that all political parties now recognise the threat of climate change and the danger that it presents to mankind. The Scottish Conservatives deliberately chose the environment for our debating time today because we feel that it is such an important subject. We are proud of our record in addressing the issues. As we have heard from numerous members, it was under a Conservative Government that the UK started to support international action to tackle climate change. Although the current UK Government has pronounced regularly on the importance of the issue, the rhetoric of ministers is failing to translate into Government action in a way that matches up to the scale of the challenge.

We believe that it is the responsibility of Government, business, individuals and families to meet the climate change challenge. It should not just be about dictating to individuals and businesses how they need to change their behaviour. Government should be giving a lead, and it should also be responding to the genuine and growing public demand for action. We want to encourage and incentivise people to do the right thing rather than force them down a road that they do not wish to go down. That is a difference between us and some of the other parties in the chamber. We want to go with the grain of public opinion.

Undoubtedly, energy policy will be a major component in developing an environmentally friendly approach. We in this party understand that we must reduce our reliance on CO₂-producing energy production. We are keen to see an enhanced role for renewables, but that does not mean covering every hillside in Scotland with 400ft-high wind turbines, which is the road that some people want to go down.

We must have a balanced approach to energy production, and there is scope for all sorts of renewable energy. However, we have to ensure that we are not putting at risk our precious landscape and our vital tourism industry by building wind farms in inappropriate sites. On Tuesday night, I attended a celebration at the Fulford Inn, just outside Crieff, to mark the rejection of the Abercairny wind farm application. If ever a wind farm was being proposed for the wrong place, surely that was it. I am delighted that

ministers rejected the application on the advice of the planning reporter.

Patrick Harvie: I am a little puzzled by what Murdo Fraser just said. He seemed to imply that there is a role for onshore wind farms. Is he now saying that he does not support the moratorium that the Tories previously called for?

Murdo Fraser: Mr Harvie has clearly not read our policy. We have said that we will support a moratorium on onshore wind farms where there is substantial local opposition until we have a new planning strategy from the Executive that properly balances the interests of tackling climate change with those of the tourism industry and local communities. We do not have that at the moment, which is why we support a limited moratorium.

We should be investing in other renewable technologies, such as biomass, wave and tidal power. The point that I have made continually in the chamber for many years is that current Government policy incentivises wind power to the detriment of those other technologies. As I pointed out to Alasdair Morrison, that exact point was made by the Enterprise and Culture Committee in its report on renewable energy two years ago, yet we still see a headlong rush to build huge onshore wind factories across the land. Surely it is time to bring a halt to that madness and ensure that our efforts go into investment in newer technologies.

Rhona Brankin: The member says that both the Conservatives and he personally support wind power. How many applications for wind power development in his region has he supported?

Murdo Fraser: I did not object to the application for the wind farm at Fintry in Stirlingshire. If the minister had checked the *Business Bulletin*, she would have found motion S2M-2365 in my name supporting the construction of a wind farm on Salisbury Crags in Edinburgh—for me, that is the perfect site to put a wind farm.

We should encourage microgeneration. The public and small businesses are greatly interested in microrenewable schemes such as rooftop turbines, solar panels and ground-heat systems. The Conservative eco-bonus scheme, which we announced this week and to which several members have referred, would provide much greater incentives than exist at the moment for individuals, small businesses and community groups to go down that road. We know that the demand exists, and the Government's role should be to stimulate and support that. If demand for the technologies increased, the entry costs would reduce in time.

Our eco-bonus scheme would also cover energy efficiency. We need to tackle the problem of poorly insulated homes that waste heat, which adds to CO₂ emissions and, given the rising cost of

energy, increases fuel poverty. A package of measures to encourage energy efficiency should be an essential part of any environmental strategy for the Government.

Several members have drawn attention to the impact of transport. One quarter of carbon emissions comes from the transport sector and concerns centre on road traffic and aviation. I do not accept that the only way to tackle vehicle emissions is simply to stop building new roads. Many necessary road projects need to be completed and we should remember that tackling bottlenecks and reducing congestion may in many cases help to reduce pollution. An important point is that as technology and time move on, vehicle emissions will reduce. The cars of today are much less polluting than those of 20 years ago. The development of biofuels and hybrid vehicles means that it might not be long before vehicles produce much less pollution than the cars of today do.

Public pressure is forcing change. As people become more environmentally conscious, car manufacturers must respond to demands for vehicles that run on fuels that are not as polluting. It is not inconceivable that, 20 years from now, we could have private cars that have little negative impact on the environment. Frankly, it would be ridiculous to find ourselves in that situation and realise that, 20 years before, we had scrapped all road-building projects—as some members would have us do—and left ourselves with a thoroughly inadequate road network.

Jeremy Purvis: I acknowledge the member's points about emissions. Would an increasing scale of vehicle excise duty for cars that have the highest emissions help? Does he support that Liberal Democrat policy?

Murdo Fraser: After this week's party conference, I do not trust anything that the Liberal Democrats say about tax. The problem is that what Mr Purvis proposes is an extremely blunt instrument. We cannot take the simplistic approach of trying to price people out of their cars. For hundreds of thousands of people who live in rural areas, the car is the only viable means of transport. To adopt the attitude that someone who drives a four-by-four must pay more tax completely disregards the interests of rural areas, where many people must have a four-by-four to get around because of the nature of the roads.

Ross Finnie: Will the member give way?

Murdo Fraser: I am sorry—I am running out of time and I need to make more points.

People who live in rural areas must have cars, because public transport alternatives do not exist and are unlikely to be created. Of course, we will continue to support public transport projects, such

as the Edinburgh trams and new rail links, whenever there is a sensible business and economic case for them.

We should remember—it is an important point that should not be missed—that by far the most popular form of public transport is the bus. Bus travel has grown exponentially since the previous Conservative Government decided to deregulate it. We now see ventures such as Megabus, which provides extremely low-cost travel between cities, helps to reduce congestion on the roads and moves commuters around at affordable rates. In case anybody has missed it, I point out that buses need roads on which to travel, so just to say that we will stop building roads is a neanderthal reaction to the environmental problem that does not address wider issues.

I will briefly mention farming and food. Last week, my colleague John Scott spoke in the chamber on the local food is miles better campaign, which is about reducing food miles, on which public concern is growing. As with the growth in organic produce and fair trade produce, if there is public demand, large companies must respond to protect their profits. That is exactly what Tesco has done by introducing an incentive scheme to reduce plastic bag usage, which is a better way forward than the plastic bag tax that was proposed by Mr Pringle, whom we may not see for a few days.

There is much public interest in environmental issues. The Government's role should be to give leadership and, yes, to set targets. It should encourage people to do the right thing and reward them for doing so. The eco-bonus scheme that we have talked about this week would do just that. Only the first step is being taken, as the Government, individuals and businesses in partnership have much more to do if Scotland is to be the world leader in tackling climate change that I am sure we all want it to be. The Scottish Conservatives will play a full part in shaping the debate in the months and years ahead.

Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

General Questions

11:40

Additional Support Needs

1. Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab):

To ask the Scottish Executive what powers it has to ensure that a local authority contributes fairly to the education of children with additional support needs who attend school in another local authority area. (S2O-10605)

The Deputy Minister for Education and Young People (Robert Brown): Section 23 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 gives the Scottish ministers the power, on a reference from a local authority and in the absence of agreement between the authorities concerned, to determine the level of contribution that a home authority is to make towards the cost of a pupil's education in another local authority area.

Mr Macintosh: Does the minister agree that an unintended consequence of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 is that some local authorities might not be supporting children with additional support needs whom they previously funded? Does he agree that, given that we are talking about sums of more than £250,000 a year in some cases, the situation is unfair not only on some local authorities, such as East Renfrewshire Council, but particularly on parents and families, who do not wish to be caught up in disputes about funding between local authorities when they are worried about their children's education? Will the minister commit to working with me and the local authorities concerned to resolve the issue in East Renfrewshire, the many other pending cases and those that might arise in the future?

Robert Brown: I think that the issue arises not from the 2004 act but from the 1980 act, which has been in place for many years. The central issue is young people's welfare. I expect all local authorities to make appropriate and adequate arrangements for all children in their schools, whether they are placed with them or otherwise. Under the 1980 act and the 2004 act in particular, parents have substantial rights. When necessary, they can enforce those rights in various legal and administrative ways.

We expect local authorities to agree the circumstances in which one authority should make contributions to another. If they cannot agree, the Scottish ministers will determine the contribution

under section 23 of the 1980 act. When we make determinations, we expect local authorities to implement them.

As Ken Macintosh suggested, several cases are pending between Glasgow City Council and East Renfrewshire Council, which we hope will be resolved directly. Officials are working closely with the two authorities on that, against the background of the central considerations that I have made plain.

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): I ask the minister again to consider rucksacking—if I may use that term—which is a solution that I have proposed before. It would mean that the care package and funding would follow the child, although they might have to be tweaked in another local authority. That would eradicate the conflicts between local authorities and would be a far simpler solution. Will he kindly investigate that?

Robert Brown: I am not sure that Christine Grahame's proposal is as simple as she suggests. As she knows, local authorities receive a substantial and non-ring-fenced amount to spend on education and additional support for learning. When placement requests or other arrangements are made between local authorities to educate children from one local authority in a different local authority's area, provision is available to enable contributions to be made. That is where the issue has arisen. The question is how to resolve the issue, rather than taking the broader and somewhat different approach that Christine Grahame suggests.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): To what extent do parents of children with additional support needs have a choice as to whether their children should go to a special school, whether it is in their own local authority's area or further afield?

Robert Brown: As Lord James Douglas-Hamilton knows from his involvement in the passage of the 2004 act, parents have substantial rights in relation to the placement of their children. Local authorities can refuse a placement request only in some circumstances that are set out in legislation. That arrangement works fairly well. The 2004 act supplemented arrangements by making provision for mediation and early decision making in local authorities.

Ms Rosemary Byrne (South of Scotland) (Sol): Does the minister agree that one of the major reasons why children with additional support needs have to attend schools in local authority areas other than those in which they live is to gain access to an educational psychologist? Often the situation is confused, and assessment and review

meetings are delayed. Will the minister look into the matter and report back to us on his findings?

Robert Brown: I confess that representations have not been made to me on the issue that Rosemary Byrne raises. If the member has particular concerns, I would be more than happy to discuss them with her. I do not think that placement in other local authority areas is the issue per se. There have been problems with the supply of educational psychologists, although numbers have gone up substantially during this session.

Sporting Attainment

2. Michael Matheson (Central Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive how it intends to improve sporting attainment. (S2O-10562)

The Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Patricia Ferguson): The Executive, through sportscotland, will continue to provide financial and other support to athletes and sports governing bodies to ensure that our elite athletes are able to reach the highest possible level of attainment. The Executive is also revising the current sports strategy, sport 21, to ensure a renewed focus on improving elite performance and increasing participation.

Michael Matheson: I am sure that the minister agrees that access to good sporting facilities has an important part to play in improving sporting attainment. Can she explain why, after seven years of the Labour-Lib Dem Executive and 10 years of a new Labour Government at Westminster, the "National Audit of Scotland's Sports Facilities" shows that 74 per cent of our football pitches, 51 per cent of our tennis courts and 57 per cent of our athletics tracks are not up to standard, and 50 per cent of our indoor facilities are worn out? What will she do to address those issues, or is the report another example of why people are running out of patience with the Executive?

Patricia Ferguson: We were party to commissioning the report, because we needed to get that kind of information. It provides a snapshot of the condition of facilities at one point in time. However, we must make clear from the outset that the way forward is not to upgrade every facility that is in need of renovation. We need to decide on the right quality and mix of facilities that we need across the country to provide people with opportunities to participate in sport and to meet the needs of our elite athletes. The report highlights a number of facility issues, such as the need for robust maintenance regimes and the need to take a strategic approach to the planning, location and development of sports facilities to meet demands that change frequently and fast

because of changing demographics and sporting trends.

Dave Petrie (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I agree with the argument that has been made about sports facilities. Does the minister agree that far more emphasis on extracurricular and core-curricular sport in schools is crucial to improving sporting attainment?

Patricia Ferguson: Absolutely. That is why we have asked schools to provide young people with two hours a week of good-quality sporting opportunity and why we are investing £12 million a year in the active schools programme, which has already delivered 86,000 hours of quality activity for young people in schools.

Antisocial Behaviour Roadshow

3. Margaret Jamieson (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether the targets set for its antisocial behaviour roadshow were met. (S2O-10599)

The Deputy Minister for Justice (Hugh Henry): Attendance at the antisocial behaviour roadshow exceeded our expectations. We are delighted that the roadshow enabled more than 6,500 people in communities across Scotland to seek face-to-face advice on antisocial behaviour from local experts. That resulted in more than 800 referrals for action in specific cases.

Margaret Jamieson: The minister will be aware that 130 new referrals were made during the Kilmarnock visit. Of those, 92 were from areas of East Ayrshire that do not have community wardens, including areas in the constituency of the Minister for Justice. Does the minister agree that we should consider expanding community warden schemes and giving wardens powers to issue fixed penalties for dog fouling and litter, which would aid our communities to combat antisocial behaviour?

Hugh Henry: Margaret Jamieson raises a number of issues. I agree that the introduction of wardens throughout Scotland has been an outstanding success. Despite the criticisms of other political parties that are represented in the chamber, we have been proven right in pursuing that option. Local communities have responded positively and wardens are welcomed wherever they are deployed. I regret that if people vote Conservative at the next election there is a danger that wardens in Scotland will be scrapped. In the real world, in South Ayrshire, there is a Conservative administration, and people need to know about the dangers of voting Conservative.

The member raised the issue of powers to award fixed-penalty notices. Over the coming years, we need to have a debate about the evolution of wardens, which have proved to be a

success. It would be inappropriate to think that in five or 10 years' time, wardens will be doing exactly the same job that they do at the moment. We need to build on the success that has been achieved. However, there needs to be a mature, detailed debate about the best way of moving wardens on to the next phase of their activity, once they have achieved initial success in their local communities.

Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con): In view of the Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition's failure to cut crime by 10 per cent, does the minister agree that priority should be given to ensuring that police and councils have the resources and support that they require to tackle youth disorder and that parents take responsibility for the supervision of their children, rather than passing new laws that alone will do nothing to address the problems associated with antisocial behaviour and youth offending?

Hugh Henry: Margaret Mitchell shows a considerable degree of confused and muddled thinking. On the one hand she says that she does not want new laws, but on the other she wants new requirements to be placed on parents, presumably through new laws. She should make up her mind about what she wants to do.

We have made available considerable additional resources. There are now well over 1,000 extra police in Scotland. We have introduced wardens and have invested extra money in tackling antisocial behaviour and youth disorder. The member may criticise our failure to meet certain targets, but we have at least started to measure the extent of the problem, so that we can deal with it. The Conservatives were never prepared to do that.

Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP): The minister is correct to say that immediate action needs to be taken to protect communities from appalling behaviour. However, we need to ensure that there is a long-term solution, rather than simply a short-term fix. What steps are taken at roadshows and elsewhere to ensure that, after an antisocial behaviour order has been granted, steps are taken to tackle hard-core youth unemployment, poor facilities and a lack of opportunities for personal and social development?

Hugh Henry: Kenny MacAskill raises an issue that he has raised consistently in the past. He is right to say that we need to examine some of the issues that underlie antisocial behaviour. However, I also disagree with him. As Cathy Jamieson and I have said time and time again, some of the worst manifestations of antisocial behaviour do not come from young people who are unemployed. It is a disgrace to suggest that simply because someone is deprived and

unemployed they will behave in an antisocial manner. If a young person is unable to access a job, they should be helped. However, in the past couple of weeks my colleague Allan Wilson has referred the Parliament to some of the statistics relating to youth unemployment, which has fallen dramatically throughout Scotland. There are now more opportunities than ever for young people to get a job. Although some are still struggling to get one, the fact that so many young people come from Poland and elsewhere to work in this country shows that jobs are available at record levels. There are people with underlying literacy, numeracy and addiction problems. We need to work with them.

Youth Disorder (Glasgow Springburn)

4. Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab):

To ask the Scottish Executive what progress is being made in tackling youth disorder in the Glasgow Springburn parliamentary constituency. (S2O-10602)

The Deputy Minister for Justice (Hugh Henry): Local councils, the police and other agencies have a responsibility to work together, using the powers and resources that have been made available to them, to prevent and tackle antisocial behaviour, including youth disorder. I expect agencies to redouble their efforts to make joint working a reality. There is a good range of multi-agency action in place in the Springburn constituency, including in Springburn park and Dennistoun, where joint work since last November has helped to improve the situation.

Paul Martin: Does the minister, like me, believe that it is important that we deal with the perpetrators of youth crime, but also that we provide information to the vast majority of young people, who have constructive and positive lifestyles? Will the minister ensure that they are provided with information on local youth services, to ensure that they can continue those lifestyles?

Hugh Henry: It would be inappropriate for the Parliament or the Scottish Executive to specify in law what should be done on that locally. However, Paul Martin touches on an important issue. Local government is responsible for telling people in local communities exactly what is available to them. Local authorities should consider imaginative ways in which to communicate that information, such as websites, text messages to target groups or leaflets and posters. There is no point in developing a range of facilities throughout Scotland if people do not know about them. We need to tell people about the facilities and give them the opportunities, but, as Paul Martin said, if people persist with antisocial behaviour despite those opportunities, action must be taken.

Trunk Roads (Signage)

5. Roseanna Cunningham (Perth) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what plans it has to evaluate the impact of Transport Scotland's decisions on the community and economic life of towns and villages whose main streets form part of the trunk road network. (S2O-10558)

The Minister for Transport (Tavish Scott): Transport Scotland uses the Scottish transport appraisal guidance process to determine the best solution to evidence-based transport problems. The STAG process is a multimodal framework approach that covers key criteria for the assessment of proposals, which include economic issues as well as matters of accessibility and social inclusion. The current strategic transport projects review is being undertaken in line with STAG.

Roseanna Cunningham: Is the minister aware that Transport Scotland's guidelines on signage on trunk roads, which are restrictive, to avoid distracting people who are driving at high speed, are also being applied in communities such as Crieff, where the trunk road becomes a 30mph high street? Is the minister aware that Transport Scotland has refused permission to hang banners for a walking festival in October, which were made with an Executive grant? Does he agree that the inflexibility will impact negatively on similar communities throughout Scotland and that, in the circumstances, other communities would be best advised to pursue a don't ask, don't tell policy?

Tavish Scott: I am sure that the member will agree that road safety must be the priority of the agency to which the Parliament has given responsibility for those roads. I am happy to consider the impacts of signage where speed limits change—the member makes a fair observation about that—but it is important that, in constructing policy, we keep road safety to the fore.

Property Law

6. Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will support legislation to regulate the subdivision of property. (S2O-10608)

The Deputy Minister for Justice (Hugh Henry): Legislation is already in place to regulate the subdivision of property. The Title Conditions (Scotland) Act 2003 provides a framework to assist the owners of properties that are to be subdivided. Using those rules, an owner can impose conditions on a subdivided property, covering matters such as maintenance and repairs. The Tenements (Scotland) Act 2004 provides default rules for all flatted property, including subdivided property, on the maintenance

and repair of common parts of the building. There are no plans to introduce further legislation on that.

Pauline McNeill: I express surprise that Hugh Henry answered the question, as I did not know that the matter was within his remit. However, I am always delighted to get an answer from him.

Local councillors and community councils in the west end of Glasgow have raised concerns with me about the large number of flatted properties that are subdivided internally to maximise rent revenue. The process can include shifting kitchens and bathrooms, rearranging rooms and even removing supporting walls. If the matter is within the minister's jurisdiction, will he accept my representation that all internal alterations in flatted properties should be subject to planning consent to ensure that any change of use of a property from an ordinary flat to a commercial concern is done with consideration for the impact on everyone who lives in the tenement, particularly families? I am concerned that we are losing families from the area because of the overprovision of rental properties.

Hugh Henry: The issues that Pauline McNeill raises cross portfolios. There is a requirement under planning law to examine the overprovision of certain types of accommodation in some areas. Houses in multiple occupancy need to be considered carefully. As far as building regulations are concerned, owners can take steps with the interiors of their properties, subject to planning permission, building warrants and restrictions in title deeds.

In some parts of Scotland—particularly in the major cities—people with responsibility in local authorities need to work co-operatively using the existing powers, taking into consideration the best interests of the community. Unfortunately, there is no easy solution. What Pauline McNeill describes often takes place within the existing rules. I am sure that, whatever rules are introduced, there are those who will seek to use them as imaginatively as possible. Unfortunately, that often impacts adversely on the local community. I hope, however, that the local authority can continue some of the work that it has already started.

First Minister's Question Time

12:01

Cabinet (Meetings)

1. Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Scottish Executive's Cabinet. (S2F-2438)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): The next meeting of the Cabinet will discuss issues of importance to Scotland.

Nicola Sturgeon: On Monday this week, the Deputy First Minister said categorically:

"we do not need new nuclear power stations in Scotland."

Does the First Minister agree?

The First Minister: First, and as I have said before, we will not agree to or even consider any new nuclear power stations in Scotland until the issue of nuclear waste is properly resolved. That is a very important issue indeed. Secondly, there are currently no applications for new nuclear power stations in Scotland, so the question does not arise.

I suspect that we have the capacity in Scotland to meet our energy needs through a massive increase in the use of renewable sources. I was delighted in the summer when the United Kingdom energy review agreed that as a priority, not only for Scotland but for the whole of the UK, and agreed to support us in that endeavour. At the same time, and as I have said in the chamber before, given the importance of energy supply for domestic households and businesses in Scotland, it would be silly of us at this stage to rule out any option forever.

Nicola Sturgeon: So the First Minister remains firmly perched on that fence. I remind him that the final recommendations on nuclear waste management were published by the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management two months ago. Last year, the First Minister said:

"the handling of nuclear waste will be resolved when we see the recommendation ... from the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management." [*Official Report*, 12 May 2005; c 16826.]

Now that he has seen the recommendations and has had two months to read them, what possible reason can there be for him not to give a very clear view on new nuclear power stations, especially since the Deputy First Minister has had absolutely no difficulty in doing so? Will the First Minister, for once in his life, give a straight answer to a straight question? Does he think that there should be new nuclear power stations in Scotland—yes or no?

The First Minister: I have said it before and I will say it again—consistency is a virtue that the Scottish National Party could learn—that I do not suspect that new nuclear power stations will be required in Scotland. However, I am not prepared to rule that out forever, because we do not know the balance that will be achieved through the investment that we are making in renewables and other sources; we also do not know the impact of international events on the energy that is sourced from elsewhere in the world for Scotland and the rest of the UK. It is utterly irresponsible of the SNP to regard Scotland as an isolated place that is in no way connected to events elsewhere in the world.

I am pleased that Nicola Sturgeon wishes to ensure that, at all times, she is off the fence on these issues. I will ask her a straight question. If the outcome of the deliberations on the CORWM report is to secure a solution for the long-term disposal of nuclear waste, and if that solution is to place the nuclear waste of the whole of the United Kingdom, including the nuclear waste from Scotland, in a location in the north-west of England, would we go and ask for it back under her plans for an independent Scotland?

Nicola Sturgeon: I do not even understand the question, let alone know what the answer is. The SNP is clear that, because there is no solution to nuclear waste, we think that there should be no nuclear power stations. That is pretty clear. I do not know why the First Minister cannot understand it.

If the First Minister is not swayed by the views of his Deputy First Minister, let us try the views of his Minister for Environment and Rural Development—after all, he is the responsible minister in this area—who said on Sunday:

“We can meet our energy needs without nuclear power.”

Given that the Deputy First Minister and the Minister for Environment and Rural Development can give a clear view, is it not about time that instead of hawing and waffling the First Minister actually came clean and told the people of Scotland exactly what is his position on new nuclear power stations?

The First Minister: Ms Sturgeon should practise what she preaches. Let us get a clear answer to a clear question. The reality is that even if there are no new nuclear power stations in Scotland and the SNP manages to close those that currently exist, there is and will be nuclear waste in Scotland and in the UK. If that nuclear waste is disposed of in the north-west of England, would Ms Sturgeon’s plans for an independent Scotland mean that the waste produced here in Scotland would have to be returned to Scotland—yes or no?

Nicola Sturgeon: No. Of course they would not mean that. That is absolutely ridiculous. I am saying that if one does not have a solution to nuclear waste, it is totally irresponsible to suggest that we create even more nuclear waste. That is the question that the First Minister cannot answer. Is it not the case that what we have here is the First Minister yet again sitting on the fence, scared to jump one way or the other? On the one hand, he has Labour back benchers who agree with me that nuclear is not the way forward, but, on the other hand, he has Tony Blair and Gordon Brown pushing nuclear at every single opportunity. Instead of having the courage to say what his view is, the First Minister cowers in the corner as usual, saying nothing at all. Is it not about time that we in Scotland had a leader with the courage to lead?

The First Minister: I am interested in Ms Sturgeon’s answer. Somehow along the way either the nuclear waste is going to evaporate and disappear, which I think most of us know is never going to be the case, or the new independent Scotland’s neighbours in England are going to agree voluntarily to keep all our nuclear waste forever, so none of Scotland’s waste will be disposed of in Scotland. Ms Sturgeon has to answer the questions about the number 1 policy of the SNP. We know what the SNP stands for: it stands for independence. In an independent Scotland, we would need to dispose of our own nuclear waste. If Ms Sturgeon wants the policy of this country to be “Let’s have it back”, she should be honest about that.

Prime Minister (Meetings)

2. Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Prime Minister and what issues they will discuss. (S2F-2439)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): I expect to meet the Prime Minister next week in Manchester. I have no idea what we might discuss, but I am sure that our discussions will, as ever, be friendly and fruitful.

Miss Goldie: The First Minister will be aware of the Health Committee’s report on free personal care, which was debated in the Parliament yesterday. The committee highlighted major problems and reaffirmed the sad fact that the majority of councils in Scotland still operate waiting lists for free personal care. He promised the Parliament in June that he would sort that out. He referred to “clear procedures”. What are they and what has happened?

The First Minister: As I outlined at the time, the initial stage of those clear procedures is for ministers to meet the authorities that require scrutiny and in which action is required. That happened in the case that was highlighted at the

time, which I think was Argyll and Bute Council. Discussions are continuing with that authority about the action that it has to take to ensure that it delivers the policy as outlined and meets the absolute rights and requirements of the elderly people who live in that area. Exactly the same procedure will be followed in other cases.

Miss Goldie: This is September, and vulnerable older people are stuck on waiting lists for care that they have been promised. They do not give a fig about petty squabbles between the Executive and councils—what matters is what is happening on the ground and, unfortunately, there are fundamental problems with delivering the policy. Does the First Minister accept that if the policy is to be fully delivered, more money will have to be made available? Does he agree that caring for those frail people would be a better use of resources than bailing out Scottish Enterprise or trying to relocate quangos and agencies around the country at enormous expense?

The First Minister: I hope that people who live in Tiree, Dundee, Inverness, Ayrshire, Aberdeen, Fife, Benbecula and other parts of Scotland who have benefited from the relocation of jobs will hear loud and clear that Annabel Goldie's rebranded Conservative party does not believe in the relocation of such jobs from Scotland's cities.

I want to be absolutely clear—as Lewis Macdonald was in the chamber yesterday—that the demands of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the financial requirements that were outlined in the independent study of the costs of free personal care have been met in full by the Executive in its budget packages. Therefore, the issue that Annabel Goldie has raised does not arise. The councils have the money that they requested, all of which should be spent on free personal care, and they should be delivering that care to the old people in their areas who require it and have the right to it.

Miss Goldie: Old people in those areas would far prefer to have that care delivered than a relocation of agencies and quangos because the debacle has continued for too long and is absolutely unacceptable. The irony is that what is happening is avoidable.

Is the First Minister aware of table 8.03 in the Executive's draft budget document, a copy of which I have with me? The table highlights the fact that £76 million is lying unallocated in the Health Department's budget for the current year—it is sitting unused in the Executive's coffers. Will he make a commitment to use at least some of that resource to implement free personal care? The money is there—will he use it?

The First Minister: I do not have that table in front of me, but what Annabel Goldie has said

sounds like complete rubbish. The Conservatives spend most of the year criticising us for overspending in the health budget and for spending too much money on the health service in Scotland. We are trying to recover from the many years of underinvestment in the health service under the Conservatives. Our investment continues and is one reason why waiting times in the health service are lower than they have ever been. It is also why we can afford to fund free personal care, which was, of course, not available under the Conservatives.

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): There is one question from a back bench this week.

Mr Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab): Further to yesterday's successful drugs raid in my constituency as part of the Scottish Drug Enforcement Agency's operation folklore, what is the Scottish Executive doing to assist the police to ensure that communities are protected from the misery that is created by organised crime?

The First Minister: We are expanding the remit of the Scottish Drug Enforcement Agency in order to develop a wider serious crime agency, which will have the best facilities and equipment and more officers. It will also have the co-operation of officers in Scotland's police forces, the number of whom is currently higher than the record levels that existed in 2003, at the start of this parliamentary session—the number throughout Scotland has now topped 16,000. Those additional police officers will continue their work with the national agency to make such arrests.

Furthermore, by penalising those who make a profit from drugs and serious crime and reinvesting those penalties back into the communities that are affected, not only will we have a further deterrent to crimes being committed by the big criminals in the drugs and serious crime world in Scotland but we will show communities that we are determined to help them to recover from the impact of the activities of those individuals in the past.

Competitive Advantage

3. Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP): To ask the First Minister how the Scottish Executive intends to give Scottish business a competitive advantage. (S2F-2443)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): From the platform of the success and stability of our United Kingdom economy, we in Scotland will build long-term competitive advantage by improving the supply side of the Scottish economy and investing in skills and transport infrastructure through boosting capital budgets for further and higher education by 300 per cent and revenue

budgets by 23 per cent; cutting business rates; attracting fresh talent; creating dozens of new international air routes; building new and better roads; buying new trains; and building new railways, including a visionary new rail route between our capital city and its airport.

Alasdair Morgan: Given the fiasco over the Executive's plans to help firms that are investing in research and development by cutting business rates, does the First Minister not wish that the Parliament had the full financial powers of a normal parliament, like those of so many of our small, successful neighbours? Does he not wish that he was able to produce policies that would work to give our businesses a competitive advantage?

The First Minister: I said last year that we would consider carefully how we could use the rates system to assist R and D-intensive companies that could benefit from further assistance. We continue to look at that issue. In addition, the figures that were published this week show not only that research and development in Scottish companies is at a far higher level than it used to be because of our investments and the entrepreneurial culture that is developing in Scotland, but that it is now at a higher level than in any other part of the United Kingdom. That is something of which we should be proud, instead of moaning about it as the SNP did again this week.

To help Scottish businesses, we need decent transport links. Mr Morgan says that he wants Scotland to have the things that a normal country might have. I will read out a list of some of the countries that have a link between their capital city and its airport: Brussels, in Belgium; Copenhagen, in Denmark; Stockholm, in Sweden; Oslo, in Norway; Athens, in Greece; Madrid, in Spain; Vienna, in Austria; Zurich, in Switzerland; Rome, in Italy; and Bucharest, in Romania. Dublin, in Ireland—which the SNP likes to quote as an example—is not on that list yet. Dublin does not have such a link, but it is going to get one. The Government in Ireland has plans to give Dublin a link and it is being supported by the parties in Ireland.

The SNP's announcement today that it is against the Edinburgh airport rail link is one of the most disgraceful not just anti-Edinburgh but anti-business statements that the SNP has ever made. I want Scotland to have the facilities of a normal country—the railways of a normal country—and we are going to deliver them even if the SNP votes against them.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Does the First Minister accept that it does nothing for the credibility of the Executive to announce with great fanfare a policy such as the cut in business rates for companies that invest in R and

D without first checking whether that policy could be implemented? Can he tell us who is to blame for that incompetence? Is it the civil servants or the ministers?

The First Minister: We said last September that we would consider carefully the implementation of such a scheme, and we continue to do that. It is important that we are able to help R and D-intensive companies, and it is because we have made that a priority that we have seen such a dramatic increase in the research and development that is being carried out by Scottish companies. Scotland and Scottish companies are now leading the way for the rest of the United Kingdom, which is good news for Scotland. I am afraid that, whatever rebranding we get from the Tories, their same old policies would not have delivered that.

Youth Crime

4. Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Executive is doing to tackle youth crime. (S2F-2450)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): Over the past three years, youth justice has been transformed in Scotland. We have increased investment in youth justice from £3.5 million in 2000-01 to £63 million this year. The number of offences that are being committed by persistent young offenders has dropped in the past two years. Scotland's secure estate for vulnerable and troubled young people will increase to 125 places by 2007. We have given local agencies the powers to take strong and effective action to reduce antisocial behaviour, including the introduction of antisocial behaviour orders for under-16s, parenting orders and electronic tagging. We are providing support for localised action and initiatives to divert young people away from crime by investing in education, sports and other initiatives. We have a very good record so far, but our work is far from over and there will be more.

Paul Martin: Does the First Minister, like me, welcome the progress of a dispersal order in the Dennistoun area of my constituency? Does he recognise that, despite an unprecedented level of legal remedies and funding being available to police and local authorities, they continue to produce what I refer to as the unacceptable database of excuses as to why they are not able to deliver legal remedies? Will he name and shame those police forces and local authorities and consider imposing financial penalties on them if they are unwilling to use the available funding?

The First Minister: Paul Martin's point is legitimate in certain cases. I stress that the powers that the Parliament has passed provide local

authorities and police forces across Scotland with powerful new tools to tackle antisocial behaviour locally. They should be using them—and, in many cases, should be using them more.

However, having criticised Strathclyde police and local authorities in the Strathclyde area in the past, I must congratulate them on introducing the first dispersal order in the north side of Glasgow. I hope that a second order will be introduced either in Paul Martin's constituency or elsewhere in the near future and that this marks the start of the wider use of those powers in the Strathclyde area. Local people expect those powers to be used—indeed, they demand it—and when the agencies deliver, those people will benefit.

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): Does the First Minister welcome the figures that were published in the summer that show that the number of young people sentenced in Scotland for crimes and offences has fallen by a third over the past 10 years? However, does he also recognise that the majority of victims of youth crime are young people themselves? What support will the Executive give young victims of crime to ensure that, first of all, the entire generation is not stigmatised and, secondly, we do not let down young people who are victims of offences?

The First Minister: I could not agree more. Our investment in facilities, educational opportunities and other initiatives for young people is designed partly to divert those who might get involved in youth crime from that very course and partly to provide incentives and opportunities for the vast majority of young people who are not involved in youth crime and antisocial behaviour. I meet such young people from across Scotland almost every day, and they deserve our encouragement and support.

I am happy to look into the specific support that is available for young victims and will ensure that Mr Purvis receives a detailed reply on the matter. However, I must point out that one of the main incentives for tackling antisocial behaviour and youth crime is to protect young people across Scotland who are so bullied and abused by a minority that they are terrified to go out at night or to enjoy the facilities in their communities. Certain parties in this chamber have constantly refused to take that seriously. However, we in the parties in the Government and Executive are proud to say that we take it seriously.

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): Is the First Minister aware of correspondence dated 30 June 2006 between Scottish Children's Reporter Administration principal reporter Margaret Cox and Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland spokeswoman

Assistant Chief Constable Maureen Brown in which Ms Cox states:

"Earlier this year, SCRA sought a funding increase of approximately £20M over 3 years to enable the Reporter service to cope with the anticipated increases in referrals. ... However the Scottish Executive has taken the view that limited resources available have to be directed to referral reduction"?

Does that not represent a fundamental shift in ethos and policy that places at risk children who would otherwise have been picked up by the children's hearings system? Does that not run contrary to the advice of experts in the field who have repeatedly said that early intervention is the key to reducing the number of referrals and that, by trying to get the statistics right, the Executive is not getting it right for every child?

The First Minister: Christine Grahame should read the letter—and, in particular, the passage that she has just quoted—a little bit more carefully. The whole purpose of early intervention and investment in education and youth opportunities in Scotland is to reduce the number of referrals to the youth justice system, which is the substance of the passage on which she has based her criticisms.

It is right that we direct the majority of our investment not only into education and other opportunities for young people but into measures to tackle the causes of youth crime and antisocial behaviour and, indeed, into family support. After all, in many cases, the responsibility lies not with society or the individual young person but with the young person's parents or those who look after them.

At the same time, we must properly fund the children's hearings system. We know that, if it had money to give, the SNP would give a great deal to anyone who asked for it. However, that is not the role of Government. It needs to decide priorities, and we have decided that one priority is to increase in real terms the budget for the children's hearings system. We have done that consistently, and will do so again.

Football Banning Orders

5. Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): To ask the First Minister how the new football banning orders will improve crowd behaviour at the forthcoming old firm game. (S2F-2448)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): Football banning orders will have a positive impact on Scottish football as a whole. Abusive behaviour can lead to individuals being banned from matches and from places where fans gather in Scotland, the rest of the United Kingdom and internationally for up to 10 years. I have no doubt

that banning orders will act as a deterrent against violent and abusive behaviour.

Donald Gorrie: That is encouraging. Will the First Minister say whether the Executive, the police or the prosecuting authorities could take further action to help the management of the clubs, who are making genuine efforts to deal with the small minority of fans who cause trouble, but have particular difficulty in enforcing better behaviour at away matches?

The First Minister: The member makes a valid point. We have learned—in particular from our action on tackling drug dealers in Scotland, which Charlie Gordon mentioned—that close co-operation among prosecutors, police forces and other agencies involved in Scotland can reap real dividends in ensuring not only that people are identified but that they are quickly tracked through the system, which deters people from reoffending. That will be as important in the context of our football grounds as it is elsewhere.

In relation to sectarianism and violent and abusive behaviour more generally among football fans, the media and sometimes politicians and others tend to focus attention on the big stadia, the big games and the big crowds. However, as Donald Gorrie says, in many cases the behaviour of away supporters—particularly the supporters of some of the bigger teams—at some of the smaller grounds in Scotland is particularly disturbing. Therefore, co-operation with police forces outwith a club's area will be essential. The Minister for Justice will continue to discuss those matters with the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland.

Genetically Modified Rice

6. Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): To ask the First Minister what action is being taken in relation to the sale of GM-contaminated rice in Scotland. (S2F-2453)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): The United States authorities informed the Food Standards Agency on 21 August about the possible contamination of US long-grain rice with GM material. The Food Standards Agency has made clear to food retailers and food manufacturers that retailers are responsible for ensuring that the food they sell does not contain unauthorised GM material and has commissioned a survey to ensure that batches of affected rice are not entering the food chain.

The European Commission took action on 24 August to prevent the placing on the market of long-grain rice from the US unless it is accompanied by an analytical report that certifies that the lot is free of unauthorised GM rice. The European Food Safety Authority published an

assessment on 15 September, which concluded that there was no "imminent safety concern".

Mr Ruskell: That is interesting, but contaminated rice is still reaching supermarket shelves in Scotland. When the FSA called for the dye Sudan 1 to be withdrawn, it gave as its reason the fact that the dye is "illegal in foods". The unauthorised GM rice is also illegal in foods under European Union law. Is the First Minister aware that the law is being broken in Scotland? To paraphrase Mr Fraser, is that the fault of civil servants or of ministers?

The First Minister: There might be the odd civil servant or minister working in the supermarket at weekends, but I have my doubts.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): There will be next year. [*Laughter.*]

The First Minister: I appreciate that comment.

I want to make a serious point about members who make accusations in the chamber about the law being broken. If members have evidence that the law is being broken, they should give it to the police and the police should take action. That is the normal way to behave in society and I hope that members of the Green party and other parties who think that the law is being broken will deliver their evidence to the appropriate authorities. I am certain that in those circumstances action will be taken.

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Does the First Minister agree with the EU Commissioner for Health and Consumer Protection that illegal GM rice should not appear in our supermarkets under any circumstances? If so, as the Food Standards Agency has refused to give instructions, will the First Minister intervene to protect Scottish consumers from that rice, which is on our shelves?

The First Minister: I just said what the Food Standards Agency has done. It has made it clear to retailers and food manufacturers that food retailers are responsible for ensuring that the food that they sell does not contain unauthorised GM material. It is vital that they do that. Government ministers cannot go around taking things off supermarket shelves.

If there is evidence that retailers are not carrying out the absolute requirement on them to ensure that food on the shelves is not unauthorised, that should be given to the appropriate authorities and action should be taken against the retailers. The Food Standards Agency has made it very clear that it is the responsibility of the retailers to make sure that the food on their shelves is authorised.

The Presiding Officer: As we started late, I will allow one last question.

Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD): I believe that validated testing of imported US rice that might be contaminated has not showed any positive results. However, I note that the European Commission has urged member states to intensify testing of products in the market as soon as possible. Is there scope for Scottish laboratories to be given some of that work?

The First Minister: That might well be a possibility, but I am not certain. However, if it is possible for Scottish laboratories to be commissioned to do additional work as a result of actions taken throughout the European Union, we would welcome that.

12:31

Meeting suspended until 14:15.

14:15

On resuming—

Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Environment and Rural Development

Recycling

1. Mr Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how much recyclable household waste, sorted for recycling by householders and collected by local authorities, goes to landfill. (S2O-10607)

The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie): The Scottish Environment Protection Agency's figures show that less than 10 per cent of the material that is regarded for data purposes as collected for recycling or composting is disposed of. That material is not included in the published recycling and composting rates for municipal waste in Scotland.

Mr McNeil: That is hardly an enlightening response to someone who is not an expert on the matter. Although I am confident that much progress has been made on recycling, it has been reported to me that plastic containers that my constituents in Inverclyde take the time to wash and sort for recycling still go to landfill. After 18 months and £11 million from the Executive, does the minister think that that is acceptable and does he agree that much more needs to be done?

Ross Finnie: To help Duncan McNeil with my first answer, I say that in 2004-05 a total of 538,900 tonnes of recyclable material was collected, of which about 51,000 tonnes—the 10 per cent that I mentioned—had to go to landfill. Because we knew that the member had asked the question, my officials inquired of Inverclyde Council whether it has a particular problem with materials being sorted and collected and then going to landfill; the council assured my officials that it does not. However, now that the member has alerted me to the situation with plastics, I will investigate the matter further.

Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green): Is the minister aware that in other parts of the developed world landfilling has been reduced by 70 per cent via intense efforts to increase recycling and composting and without the use of incineration? Will the minister assure us that every effort will be made to develop a genuinely sustainable waste policy that does not rely on unsustainable, wasteful and polluting incinerators?

Ross Finnie: As the member knows, the waste strategy, which has enabled us to go from a pathetic recycling figure of 6 per cent only a few years ago to nearly 25 per cent now—we will reach 25 per cent this year—makes it clear that the first and prime target is to recover all material that can be recycled. The member mentioned the developed world. She will be acutely aware that almost all the major players in Europe, which have much better levels of recycling than we have, use combined heat and power systems and some form of incineration to deal with the residual element. I am very much against any suggestion that we should give an easy remit to local authorities or industry and not an absolute requirement to recover every fragment of recyclable material before other options are considered. However, I cannot rule out options for dealing with the residual element, particularly given that the technology may improve and that we must reduce landfill to the minimum.

Scottish Rural Development Plan (Modulation)

2. Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive whether Scotland is able to set its own modulation rate to fund the Scottish rural development plan. (S2O-10576)

The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie): The draft voluntary modulation regulation currently allows for only one rate of voluntary modulation per member state. The Executive is pursuing that point with the European Commission and member states as the negotiations progress.

Richard Lochhead: I welcome the fact that the minister is pursuing the issue. Will he acknowledge the widespread feeling in the farming sector that the modulation rate that is set should be the one that is best for Scotland, given that the recent reform of the common agricultural policy was intended to give more flexibility to our ministers to ensure that such deals are the best for Scotland? Is it the aim of the minister's end game to ensure that he has the right to set a modulation rate that is the best for Scotland?

Ross Finnie: The moment that the European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mariann Fischer Boel, and her officials tabled a revised proposal for modulation we—and, indeed the United Kingdom—made it clear that the present arrangement, which gives us the right at a sub-member-state level to set a modulation rate, is the one that we wish to pursue. This is a complicated matter because the commissioner is also looking at other member states and is apparently concerned that the existence of wide variations and the use of voluntary modulation could constitute a renationalisation of the CAP. We do not share that

view and have made it clear to the Commission that we wish to have the status quo, which gives us the absolute power to set an individual rate, as we see fit, here in Scotland.

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): Can the minister confirm that if he uses the power to raise the level of modulation, should it be granted, it will not be used as an opportunity to remove money from the current budgets and put it into areas that would divert it away from the current recipients? In other words, will he ensure that the same people get the opportunity to earn the same money for doing different things?

Ross Finnie: We are quite constrained in what we can do in terms of modulation. If we accept the analysis that a substantial proportion of Scottish agriculture is still incapable of surviving without subsidy, it does not make sense to simply and in an unfettered way transfer funds from pillar 1 to pillar 2, because that would simply remove what is, to many people in Scottish agriculture, an essential support. However, people must prepare for the fact that it might not be in existence by 2013.

I do not think that the money can be given to every area on an annual basis. We have a rural development policy that seeks to improve and enhance rural Scotland over a five or 10-year period and I think that that means that individual farmers have to look to the longer term. If all I do is take X per cent from someone and give it straight back to them, I doubt that that will make a substantial material difference to the fabric of rural Scotland.

Nuclear Safety (Marine Environment)

3. Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive whether its Environment and Rural Affairs Department was advised at the time about any risk of impact on the marine environment from serious and significant “nuclear safety events” at Faslane and Coulport, which are reported to have significantly increased in number, and, if so, what information it received. (S2O-10550)

The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie): The Environment and Rural Affairs Department has received no such information.

Ms White: I am not just surprised but disgusted by that answer. The minister is telling me that he is not aware of 45 serious incidents in 2004-05, which is double the number of serious incidents in previous years, or of the fact that 13 of those 45 incidents were directly related to Trident nuclear submarines. Will he ensure that he is advised of such events in future? Further, does he support a referendum on Trident nuclear missiles?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh): You are entitled to answer the first of those questions, minister.

Ross Finnie: I think that I am obliged to do so.

There are clear arrangements in place between the Ministry of Defence and the Scottish Executive whereby, if there is a serious event that would affect public safety, public health or the environment, it would be reported to us. I am not suggesting for a minute that there have been no incidents; I am saying in a straightforward way that, in accordance with the arrangements in place, which are to do with whether any such events could have a material impact on public health, public safety or the environment, we have been advised of no such incident.

Environmental Footprint (Local Authorities)

4. Mike Pringle (Edinburgh South) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive how it is assisting local authorities to reduce their environmental footprint. (S2O-10571)

The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie): The Scottish Executive is helping local authorities to reduce their environmental footprint through a range of initiatives, including the Scotland's global footprint project, the sustainable Scotland network, updated guidance and toolkits on the sustainable development element of the duty of best value, waste audits and support for energy efficiency and renewables.

Mike Pringle: What action is the Scottish Executive taking to reduce its own footprint, especially by means of reducing its use of flights within the United Kingdom?

Ross Finnie: In the regular business of my department, it is imperative that ministers and officials regularly meet ministers from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, particularly in relation to the European aspects of agriculture, fisheries and the environment. Those meetings, almost without exception, are now conducted by conference rather than by either party taking a flight north or south. In a variety of ways, including the use of modern technology, the Executive is trying hard to reduce its footprint.

We also have an experiment going on. At Victoria Quay, we have a monitor that shows ministers and, more particularly, members of staff the CO₂ emissions that are being produced. That information is monitored and staff can contribute to reductions. If the experiment proves successful, it will be rolled out to other public bodies.

Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): The minister is probably aware of the many

local authority-supported community transport initiatives that exist throughout Scotland and, in particular, the A to B initiative in Aberdeenshire. However, he will note that those are not covered by the pensioners' travel card. Will he speak to his colleagues in the Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department to ensure that local authorities have the opportunity to make a bigger contribution to reducing their environmental footprint by bringing such initiatives within the concessionary travel scheme?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I think that that question is just about allowable, minister.

Ross Finnie: I am grateful to you again, Presiding Officer.

As the member says, there is a wide variety of different projects. I am happy to look into their accessibility. In fact, some of the projects are specifically designed for elderly persons. The one that the member mentions might not be covered, but I am certainly happy to look into the matter.

Organic Agriculture

5. Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green): To ask the Scottish Executive what measures it is taking to support organic agriculture and to meet demand for organic food. (S2O-10617)

The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Rhona Brankin): We are implementing the organic action plan, which includes a range of actions and support measures that are aimed at the sustainable development of the Scottish organic sector. For example, we have significantly increased and extended the grant support that is available to farmers who wish to convert to organic farming. We have also prioritised organics under our processing and marketing grant schemes and increased the provision of advice, including market advice, to organic producers and processors. We work closely with organic stakeholders to ensure that our support is effectively targeted.

Mark Ballard: The minister will be aware that many farmers are frustrated by the outcome of their applications to the organic aid scheme and wider programmes such as the rural stewardship scheme. Is she seeking to increase the resources that are available for organic farming and other rural stewardship schemes? Is there any prospect of increased funding for those schemes in the short or long term?

Rhona Brankin: Organic farmers have been prioritised during the past seven years and they have enjoyed a high success rate with applications to the organic aid scheme. Although the success rate is lower this year, the amount of funding that has been allocated—£11.3 million—is considerable. It is twice the amount that was

committed last year and it is considerably more than was allocated in any previous year.

I continue to work closely with the organic stakeholders group to ensure that we are targeting the resource effectively and that we have a strong organic sector in the future.

Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP):

In planning ahead, is the minister happy that there is sufficient capacity in the organic dairy industry? I heard a rumour that a major supermarket chain might be about to change all its dairy lines to organic, which would use up the entire Scottish organic milk supply.

Rhona Brankin: Clearly, we need to keep these things under review. The ranking questions about organic support will be kept under review because we need to be able to consider the implications of moves towards or away from dairy production. I need to be able to ensure, with the organic stakeholders group, that we get the support to the right producers.

Pollution (Mobile Crushing Plants)

6. Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what controls are available to prevent pollution from the activity of mobile crushing plants used to crush demolition arisings for the purposes of recycling. (S2O-10583)

The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Rhona Brankin): A mobile plishing cra—I am sorry.

David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con): The minister should put her teeth in.

Rhona Brankin: I assure the member that my teeth are in.

A mobile crushing plant used to crush demolition arisings for the purposes of recycling would require a part B mobile plant licence under the Pollution Prevention and Control (Scotland) Regulations 2000 (SSI 2000/323), which would include conditions on controlling any emissions to the environment.

Fiona Hyslop: It is rather difficult to say.

I am sure that the minister agrees that no contaminated waste should be recycled as part of the arisings. However, how can she be sure that the materials are separated properly in the first place and that no contamination is spread by the operation of mobile crushing plants that are not licensed in Scotland but are imported from elsewhere?

Rhona Brankin: I would be concerned to hear that and interested to have information about any specific instances of what the member is referring to. I am not able to comment in full because I am not aware of those instances.

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency should be contacted if there is a problem with the operation of a mobile plant. If planning conditions appear to have been breached or there is statutory nuisance, the local authority should also be informed. The risk to human health, plants and animals from dust, for example, is the reason for the conditions that are placed on operators under the PPC regulations. If the member writes to me with specifics, I will be happy to respond.

Dairy Industry (Dumfries and Galloway)

7. Dr Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it has any concerns about the effect of milk prices on the dairy industry in Dumfries and Galloway. (S2O-10613)

The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie): I share the concerns of those who are worried about the level of returns being made by many milk producers, whether they are in Dumfries and Galloway or elsewhere in Scotland. The milk price is determined by a number of factors including the proportion that is sold as fresh milk and the proportion that is sold for processing into added-value products. In both cases, purchasers of raw milk have to acknowledge that long-term continuity of supply will be guaranteed only if producers receive a reasonable return.

Dr Murray: The minister will be aware that milk production throughout the United Kingdom is at a 13-year low and that prices for milk products have risen substantially, but those price increases have not been reflected in the prices that are being paid to producers. The minister has indicated his concern that processors such as Arla Foods Ltd in my constituency, which has invested significantly in a new processing plant, might risk losing their production base if they do not pay more for the raw materials that they receive from farmers. The minister is clearly concerned about this matter. How might the Scottish Executive input into any discussions with the processors to resolve the issue?

Ross Finnie: We have debated this hugely complex issue at considerable length in the chamber. The member said that milk production is at an all-time low but the fact is that, during the past 20 to 30 years, milk production in Scotland has reduced by only a small margin. The total amount produced has not decreased by very much; indeed, the fact that there are fewer farmers and dairy cows is more to do with the efficiency of the Scottish milk fields and the use of better genetic and other techniques.

We have also had extensive discussions about the relationships between the farmer and the processor and between the processor and the

ultimate purchaser, which is the supermarket in most cases. However, we must bear in mind a point to which I referred in my first answer. In Scotland, a huge percentage of milk is sold simply as raw milk whereas, on the continent, a far greater proportion is sold for processing into higher-added-value products. Many of the discussions that I have had with the industry have been about how to achieve greater vertical integration, which would give our milk producers the opportunity to supply milk for those higher-added-value products.

Alex Fergusson (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con): I entirely agree with the final part of the minister's answer. However, to illustrate Elaine Murray's point I am holding up a 250ml carton of milk that I just purchased in the Parliament's canteen for 20p—some might say that is a major investment for me. That 20p for a quarter of a litre is probably 2p more than any dairy farmer is paid for producing a full litre. The enormous disparity between the farm-gate price and the shelf price is the essence of the problem. What representations has the Executive made to the various inquiries that have taken place and are taking place on the issue? What measures has the Executive taken to bring about a more equitable distribution of the funding that is available through the chain at present?

Ross Finnie: We are all impressed that Alex Fergusson made such a major investment so that he could make his point so tellingly. No doubt his colleagues will have a small whip-round to help him out on that.

Speaking seriously, however, I am concerned about the role of the processors. In my submission to the Competition Commission, I said that the commission's inquiry needs to look not only at the supermarkets but at what is happening back down the chain. There are clear instances of prices in Scotland being set in a way that suggests a rather curious similarity between each round of negotiations involving each of our supermarkets and processors. Although 1p or 2p may keep disappearing from the chain, the negotiations are between the processor and the supermarket and the farmer is never engaged in that process. In highlighting that issue at some length to the commission, I have asked the commission to look right across the chain rather than just at the specifics so that we can, if possible, get some transparency about precisely what is happening in those negotiations. We need to know why such a cosy relationship seems to exist at the top end of the chain and why all price movements ultimately get passed down to the farmer. That is the key point that I made in my submission.

Health and Community Care

Mesothelioma

1. Mr Stewart Maxwell (West of Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive when the number of cases of mesothelioma is expected to peak in Scotland and how many people are expected to be diagnosed in each of the peak years. (S2O-10560)

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Lewis Macdonald): The average annual number of new cases diagnosed in Scotland between 1991 and 2003 was 183. Estimates derived from projections of mortality for Great Britain as a whole suggest that the number of new cases of mesothelioma in Scotland may peak at around 195 to 245 per year some time between 2011 and 2015.

Mr Maxwell: As the minister will be aware, the Scottish medicines consortium has approved the use of Alimta, whereas the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence has rejected its use south of the border. Professor Nick Thatcher, who is professor of medical oncology at the University of Manchester and consultant oncologist in medical oncology at the Christie hospital in Manchester, has stated:

"Alimta and cisplatin is the only licensed treatment for mesothelioma patients and has been shown not only to increase quality of life but also to extend life".

Does the minister agree with Professor Thatcher's view that Alimta has been shown to increase quality of life and extend life? Does he accept that, even in the peak years, the cost of prescribing Alimta in Scotland is estimated to be in the high hundreds of thousands or low millions of pounds, out of a health budget of many billions of pounds? Therefore, given that people in Scotland suffer disproportionately from mesothelioma, does he agree that Alimta should continue to be prescribed in Scotland, in line with the SMC decision and irrespective of any decision taken by NICE?

Lewis Macdonald: Clearly, all such decisions must be informed by the scientific evidence and by the scientific expertise of those involved. Although NICE has made a determination, I understand that it has not yet considered appeals against that determination. I do not expect to receive advice about what should happen in Scotland until that process is completed. We will, of course, take due cognisance of that advice when it comes.

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): The minister will be aware that I wrote to the Minister for Health and Community Care on the Alimta issue some months ago, but I want to ask about a related issue. Is the minister aware of the good work that is being done by Clydebank

Asbestos Group and Clydeside Action on Asbestos to support people with mesothelioma by helping them to access benefits and support? Is he aware that that work is being considered by Macmillan Cancer Support, which has developed a pilot for cancer sufferers more generally? Will the minister agree to meet Clydebank Asbestos Group, Macmillan Cancer Support and myself to discuss how some of the beneficial work that is being done has broader applicability?

Lewis Macdonald: The work that has been done is indeed widely recognised. I am aware of Des McNulty's on-going interest in the issue and I will be happy to meet him to discuss those matters in the way that he suggests.

Chemotherapy Patients (Wigs)

2. Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will instigate a review of policy in respect of the provision of wigs to patients undergoing chemotherapy. (S2O-10627)

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Lewis Macdonald): We are currently reviewing policy on the provision of wigs. From 1 April, we reduced the cost of the basic modacrylic wig to £6.65 to bring it into line with prescription charges for other items. A short-life working group has been established to consider the matter, including questions related to patients who are undergoing chemotherapy.

Margo MacDonald: I declare an interest as the patron of the Scottish Breast Cancer Campaign.

I congratulate the Executive and the health boards on making the supply of wigs to chemotherapy patients much more satisfactory. Will the minister include in his review an examination of the Edinburgh-based organisation Wig Bank and the service that it operates? The non-profit-making service is run by a chemotherapy patient, who also offers advice and support of a unique nature to people who wish to use the service. Although, as I have conceded, the provision of wigs is now much more satisfactory, they have to be dressed, and they sometimes have to be changed in some way—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is arguing her point rather than asking a question.

Margo MacDonald: Could we have something running in tandem with that service to make it better?

Lewis Macdonald: I would be happy to examine Wig Bank, to which Margo MacDonald refers. Clearly, we want there to be a range of provision. I am pleased with her comments about the improvements in the basic provision, which are important. I am happy to ask my officials in the

short-life working group to consider the work in Edinburgh to which she refers.

Dental Services (Western Isles)

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Alasdair Morgan will ask question 3.

Members: Morrison

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I beg your pardon. It is Alasdair Morrison. I was distracted by Mr Morrison's search for a console to enable the sound engineer to give him sound.

I point out that it is poor practice not to be present in the chamber in time to ask your question. Mr Morrison, are you ready now?

3. Mr Alasdair Morrison (Western Isles) (Lab): I am indeed. I apologise to the chamber for my delay.

To ask the Scottish Executive whether it can give an update on dental services provision in the Western Isles. (S2O-10610)

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Lewis Macdonald): Yes. NHS Western Isles purchased the Bayhead dental practice in Stornoway last year and has since extended the premises by adding a further surgery. New patients are now being registered, opening hours have been extended and a mobile dental unit is now in place.

In addition, the board's salaried service has recruited two additional dentists and seven new dental nurses have been appointed as part of the board's plans to improve oral health in the Western Isles.

Mr Morrison: I am delighted with that response, so I am almost inclined not to ask a supplementary. Given the success of what has been achieved in the Western Isles, does the minister recognise that the same set of principles, procedures and practices can be translated to other parts of the country?

Lewis Macdonald: Yes. We are clear that the way in which dental services are provided will vary from community to community. In the Western Isles and Shetland, dental services are provided principally in premises that are owned by national health service boards and are delivered by dentists who are employed by NHS boards. That is clearly part of the right way to deliver dental services in the islands and elsewhere in Scotland. At the same time, we continue to encourage dentists who own their own premises to continue to provide NHS services. For that reason, we have put in place a significant range of extra incentives and rewards for dentists who continue to treat all categories of NHS patient.

Dave Petrie (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

Although the minister's news is welcome, can he comment on the overall shortage of dentists and orthodontists throughout the Highlands and Islands and outline the action that he proposes to take to alleviate the critical situation?

Lewis Macdonald: I am glad to take the opportunity to do that and to report on a number of initiatives. We recently introduced the bursary scheme for dental students, which we announced in the dental action plan in spring 2005. I am delighted to say that the scheme is now in place for students who are starting their studies in the current academic year. It will provide significant additional financial support to dental students in exchange for a commitment to continue to work in the NHS in Scotland for a period of years after their graduation. We believe that the scheme, in addition to the existing support for rural practices through golden hellos and other incentives, will make a significant difference to the supply of dentists in the Highlands in years to come.

Junior Doctors (Training)

4. Shona Robison (Dundee East) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive whether there will be a reduction in training posts for junior doctors under the modernising medical careers initiative. (S2O-10557)

The Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Andy Kerr): No, there will be no change to, and therefore no reduction in, the number of training posts in August 2007, when the final phase of modernising medical careers is implemented.

Shona Robison: Does the minister appreciate that there is widespread concern among junior doctors about the new training proposals in the modernising medical careers initiative, correspondence on which is filling all our mailbags? To alleviate some of those concerns, will the minister give a clear commitment to an expansion of consultant numbers, not only to ensure that the current pool of senior house officers has a realistic chance of progressing to consultant grade, but to seize the opportunity to absorb the pool of senior house officers over the next three to five years to help sustain health services throughout Scotland?

Mr Kerr: The member finished in the right place, because we should design our health care services for the needs of patients, not for the needs of any individual organisation or those who work in the national health service.

I have given reassurance that we will continue to increase—as we have done throughout devolution and this partnership Government—the number of health care professionals in our health service.

The job of the national health service is to provide services to communities and patients. The workforce planning that we carry out is precise in its approach. I reassure the member that we will continue to increase the numbers of all health care professionals in the health service. For example, we have increased the number of consultants who work in the service.

MMC will produce better-trained practitioners in our health service. The British Medical Association Scottish junior doctors committee was represented on the MMC delivery group and it is represented on the specialty transitional boards. It is involved in every part of that work and that will continue to be the case. The member can rest assured that, although the final figures are yet to be announced, there will be sufficient training opportunities in the future for those who are coming through the service.

Eleanor Scott (Highlands and Islands) (Green): The minister is right to say that the health service exists to provide a service for patients, but surely it also has a duty to adhere to good employment practices? There are real concerns among junior doctors about how the modernising medical careers initiative will roll out. There is a singular lack of information. Scotland is one area under MMC, so there is a fear that junior doctors could be sent anywhere in Scotland for their next post, irrespective of where they choose to work. How will the minister reassure those doctors and deal with their real fears, which have resulted in an online petition—it had 600 supporters when I last looked—asking for the roll-out of the modernising medical careers initiative to be postponed?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I think that the minister has got the sense of the question.

Mr Kerr: First, would “anywhere in Scotland” include places such as the Highlands, where we want our professionals to develop their careers and be exposed to the services that are being provided in remote and rural parts of Scotland? Our desire in that regard fits exactly with our healthy living strategy.

I find it odd that, according to the argument in the member's question, somehow our job is to provide specialty training for anybody who wants it in a particular area, which should be in line not with the needs of patients but with people's career choices. I also find odd the suggestion that we should allow people to work wherever they want. The health service is a national service and our job is to ensure that opportunities are available nationally.

I remind members that the same arrangements will exist under MMC. There has always been competition for consultant posts and there have always been choices for those coming through the

training system about where they will work in the future. That will continue under MMC. However, we will have better-rounded and better-trained professionals in the service.

I reiterate that the point is to align the needs of the national health service with the needs of those who are being trained. We want to ensure that that alignment is in the best interests of patients, and I am certain that that will be the case. I repeat that the BMA junior doctors committee has been integrally involved in our planning process.

In a recent letter, the BMA in Scotland said that it appreciated that MMC is a significant change. The BMA has been working with us up until recently, when it began to express concerns about the process. Members can rest assured that the chief medical officer for Scotland will deal with those concerns. I am sure that the outcome will be well-trained, confident individuals working here in Scotland.

We must recognise that, as the BMA has said, we have got our act together in Scotland and MMC is working much more effectively here. Because we are carrying out the process much more effectively, there is a danger that we may see doctors from other parts of the United Kingdom coming to work in Scotland. I do not want that to happen. I want a UK-wide arrangement because we work in a UK market. However, we need to ensure that the service is aligned so that patient needs and training come together in the proper manner. That is what we will do.

General Practitioner Services

5. Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP):

To ask the Scottish Executive what its plans are for the development of GP services. (S2O-10575)

The Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Andy Kerr): We are committed to the development of GP services to reflect the priorities of the delivering for health programme. We see GPs as significant players in shifting the balance of care by working in partnership with other primary care providers such as community pharmacies, dental practices, optometrists and NHS 24.

Mr Swinney: Given the spirit of the minister's answer to my colleague Shona Robison that the health service should be configured to meet patients' needs, does he have any concerns that the worthwhile, laudable and supportable objectives that he wants GPs to deliver will be hindered because there might not be enough of them in the future? Is the minister concerned that the number of training places for GPs in Scotland has remained static at 280 and that, with the advancing age of our GPs, 30 per cent of whom are over 50, not enough GPs are being trained to

deliver the services that the minister wants to deliver?

Mr Kerr: We need to get the context straight for the public and the Parliament. Resources devoted to GP services in Scotland have increased by 48 per cent and a further £12.6 million is going into the system. We have more GPs now than we have ever had.

I remind members in the chamber and those people listening outside that the new relationship with our GPs is based on the quality and outcomes framework—the deal negotiated between the Executive and GPs. It is not about head counting the people in their practices; it is about the positive benefit that they bring to their patients. That is how we reward our GPs these days.

We want to plan carefully with GPs and others the shape of the future health service. There is a responsibility on every health board in Scotland to ensure that everyone has access to a GP. I am absolutely confident that that will happen because of the investment that we have made and the increased numbers of GPs and those in training. I disagree with the numbers offered by John Swinney.

Let us put GPs in context. Although they are key providers in local communities, the health service is not just about GPs; it is also about community pharmacists, optometrists, dental services and all the other allied health professionals who play key roles in our community health services.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Question 6 is withdrawn; the member is unwell.

Care Home Provision (Highlands)

7. John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive whether there has been any progress in improving care home provision in the Highlands. (S2O-10565)

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Lewis Macdonald): I understand that Highland Council has recently approved the commencement of a care home procurement exercise to secure 168 comprehensive and flexible care home places for frail older people. The council is currently refurbishing a number of its care homes in rural locations to ensure compliance with statutory requirements.

John Farquhar Munro: The minister will be aware that because of recent decisions by Highland Council, many people in rural communities are concerned that it will not be possible for them to be cared for near their homes and families. Does the minister agree that,

wherever possible, care for the elderly must be delivered and provided as locally as possible?

Lewis Macdonald: The principle of access to care is important, but the way it is delivered is a matter for local authorities rather than the Executive. However, because we are responsible for the health service, we are cognisant of the problems for those people who are leaving hospital in the Highlands and looking for a place in a care home. We will work with Highland Council to address the issues when it brings them to our attention in detail, which I understand it intends to do in the near future.

“Review of the Scottish Diet Action Plan”

8. Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): To ask the Scottish Executive when it will publish a response to NHS Health Scotland’s “Review of the Scottish Diet Action Plan”. (S2O-10623)

The Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Andy Kerr): The review considers complex and important issues concerning food and health in Scotland. I am considering it carefully and will respond in due course.

Robin Harper: Does the minister acknowledge that the review of the Executive’s diet action plan shows that, overwhelmingly, targets are not being achieved? For example, Scots are getting only half the fruit and vegetables that they need for good health. The review concludes that Executive resources and initiatives are spread too thinly. What does the Executive intend to do about that?

Mr Kerr: Dietary targets were set in 1996. Since then, our partnership Government has done a great deal to improve the diet of our communities. Cultural change takes time. However, we are working in schools with the hungry for success campaign, in nurseries on diet and curriculum, and in workplaces with Scotland’s health at work. There is also the legislation that Peter Peacock is introducing.

The member is right to say that the targets that were set in 1996 have not been met. However, since devolution, the partnership Government has begun to tackle some of the biggest challenges. It is not just about Government and policy; it is about partnership working and individuals making choices for themselves.

Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill: Preliminary Stage

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):

The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-4809, in the name of Scott Barrie, that Parliament agrees to the general principles of the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill, and that the bill should proceed as a private bill.

14:55

Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab): One of the tasks I have to perform in the Parliament is to cajole, threaten, persuade, sweet-talk and even blackmail Labour members into serving on private bill committees—not always the easiest task. On this occasion I have had a taste of my own medicine regarding the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill Committee—not only serving on it, but convening it. If it is true that another member of the committee agreed to serve in exchange for a members’ business debate, I think that that member probably sold themselves a bit cheaply. However, in spite of how we all got here, I thank the other members of the committee and, in particular, the clerking team, led by Jane Sutherland, for all their hard work over the past few months.

The committee published its preliminary stage report last week and agreed, by a majority, that the general principles of the EARL bill should be agreed to and that the bill should proceed as a private bill. That decision is reflected in the motion lodged in my name, which I hope that Parliament will agree to today. Two members of the committee dissented from the report, and I hope that during today’s debate the chamber will be able to hear from both Jamie McGrigor and Christine Grahame why they were unable to support the recommendations in our report.

I remind the chamber that, for private bills, the process is quasi-judicial, and that members not only act impartially but are seen to act impartially. In essence, the committee has three tasks at preliminary stage: consideration of the general principles; consideration of whether the bill should proceed as a private bill; and preliminary consideration of objections. I will comment on all three in my speech this afternoon.

The bill was introduced on 16 March 2006 and, during the preliminary stage, 48 admissible objections were lodged. The bill seeks to provide the promoter, TIE Limited, with statutory authority to build a new railway station at Edinburgh airport and to construct 16km of new railways to connect the station to the national railway network, with connections at Winchburgh, Dalmeny, Gogar and Roddinglaw.

The general principles of the bill are: to stimulate economic growth not only in the Edinburgh city region but throughout Scotland; to assist in delivery of social inclusion to Scottish towns and cities through direct access to the airport; to assist with further growth of Scottish tourism through direct access; to offer a sustainable public transport alternative access to Edinburgh airport, which in turn will reduce congestion and provide environmental benefits; to assist towards providing a sustainable basis for growth at Edinburgh airport; and to facilitate a public transport interchange hub at the airport.

Given the limited time available, I will comment on the committee's views on two of those general principles—economic growth and social inclusion.

Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): No one in this chamber would dispute that a link to the airport is a good thing—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order. Mr Crawford has the floor.

Bruce Crawford: However, the committee's report says:

"The Committee therefore remains exasperated that at this stage it can only confirm that the Scottish Executive will provide funding but not at what level nor whether such funding will be sufficient to meet the estimated cost of construction."

There is then a sentence ending as follows:

"the Committee has major concerns that the Bill could be passed without the level of funding attributed to each source being identified."

The levels of funding have never been identified. In such circumstances, how on earth can the committee recommend to Parliament that the general principles of the bill be agreed to?

Scott Barrie: Mr Crawford should have waited. Further on in my speech I will turn to the issue of funding, and I will address the very points that he raises.

As regards economic growth, connectivity is the key. EARL will link 62 stations across Scotland directly with the airport. That offers a massive potential for growth in the Scottish economy, and I draw members' attention to the promoter's calculation that EARL could directly and indirectly create up to 3,600 jobs. It is further estimated that 1.7 million car journeys could be removed from the roads, which will benefit businesses and local communities through efficiency gains, increased productivity, shorter commuting times and shorter business travel times.

However, the amount of benefit that is delivered will depend on the frequency of EARL services, which will be vital in ensuring that benefits are spread throughout Scotland. It is envisaged that there will be eight trains an hour in each direction,

serving Glasgow, Dunblane, the Fife circle and the north of Scotland. The committee is concerned that Network Rail will not be able to commit to the proposed timetabling until the RailSys modelling has been completed later this year. In evidence, Network Rail stated that it was reasonably confident that the operating timetable was viable, but the committee is deeply concerned about any doubts over the operating timetable because without full connectivity, the economic benefits of the project will not be spread throughout Scotland. In the light of those concerns, if the bill proceeds, the committee intends to take further evidence from Network Rail on the viability of the promoter's proposed operating timetable.

Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP): Will the member give us some idea of what impact that operating timetable would have on the east coast main line services than run from Aberdeen to the south of England? Will there be an effect on journey time? Will those services be able to go on the EARL route?

Scott Barrie: As I indicated, until the RailSys modelling has been completed later this year, we will not know such details. That is precisely why the committee wishes to take further evidence from Network Rail, which should address the points that Mr Adam made.

Although the committee agrees with the promoter that EARL is not a social inclusion project per se, it believes that the project can assist with the delivery of social inclusion through the connectivity that it will provide. Edinburgh airport predicts that the number of jobs at the airport will increase from 2,400 to around 9,000 by 2030. Many of those jobs have the potential to be filled by people who are socially excluded. Although we believe that the delivery of social inclusion will be assisted by EARL, we think that a more structured approach must be taken to ensure that the socially excluded are properly targeted for the new jobs that may be created at the airport.

Mr David Davidson (North East Scotland) (Con): Would those jobs be created if another solution to providing a rail link to the airport was adopted?

Scott Barrie: I will deal with alternatives to the scheme later in my speech.

As the House of Commons Transport Committee's report on ticketing and fares recognised, fare levels have important implications for wider transport strategy, environmental policy and regional development. Public transport fares have a crucial role to play in determining whether socially excluded people can afford to access jobs. The committee was worried that it received conflicting evidence on whether premium fares

had been considered when the economic case for EARL was calculated.

The committee would strongly oppose the adoption of a premium fares policy for EARL because that would impact disproportionately on people travelling from outwith Edinburgh, would jeopardise the filling of jobs by the socially excluded and would not lead to the development of Edinburgh airport as a transport hub. The committee took some reassurance from the fact that both the Minister for Transport and Transport Scotland said that those factors will be considered before the fares policy is finalised, but I cannot stress strongly enough the committee's total opposition to the adoption of any premium fares policy.

I know that Charlie Gordon will cover tourism, air passenger growth and—crucially—rolling stock, as they relate to the bill's general principles, so I will not deal with them now.

Part of the committee's consideration of whether the bill should proceed as a private bill involved an assessment of whether the accompanying documents were adequate to allow for proper scrutiny of the bill. Parliament's standing orders require the promoter to set out whether alternative ways of meeting the bill's general principles have been considered and, if so, why the approach that is taken in the bill was adopted.

The committee is aware that there has been extensive debate about whether there should be a station at the airport or whether it would be preferable to put a station on an existing rail route, which would be served by a bus or another form of transport to the airport. I turn to Mr Davidson's point. The committee considered rigorously all the evidence that it received on alternative ways of meeting the bill's objectives before we reached our conclusions.

The promoter explained to us that Sinclair Knight Merz was commissioned to undertake a full review of the options for a heavy rail link. From an initial eight options, five were then progressed through a detailed Scottish transport appraisal guidance assessment. As a result, the runway tunnel option was selected. Central to that decision was the desire to avoid lengthy time delays on the Queen Street to Waverley service. The runway tunnel option, according to SKM, also offered the smallest environmental noise and vibration impact, only a small addition to some journey times and the highest net profit value.

Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP): Will Scott Barrie give way?

Scott Barrie: No. I think that I have taken enough interventions. I really need to get through my speech.

The committee examined a number of alternatives proposed by witnesses: the Gogar option; the Roddinglaw removal option; and the sacrificial spur option. However, it unanimously rejected those options, as they would result in reduced connectivity, reduced patronage, a significant increase in other rail journey times and, with the latter option, no direct access to the airport at all.

The Turnhouse option was also rejected by a majority of the committee for similar reasons—reduced patronage, fewer interchange opportunities, reduced decongestion benefits and inferior connectivity, particularly with Edinburgh Park.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): You have one minute left.

Scott Barrie: On all the criteria, all those options were shown to be inferior to the benefits that would be gained from the runway tunnel option. It is calculated that for every £1 spent on the current EARL project, £2.16 would be returned. That is a much higher public benefit to cost ratio than in any other transport project considered by this Parliament to date.

It is clear that, in considering alternative ways of meeting the policy objectives of EARL, the committee went further than was needed, and not only agreed that the information provided met the requirements of standing orders but looked at and rejected the other alternatives. There is sufficient evidence, including the 105-page STAG appraisal and the 148-page SKM report, to show why the Turnhouse option is inferior to that which is being proposed. For the Conservative amendment to suggest that there is insufficient evidence is simply not true. Perhaps the Conservatives have not read all the evidence, but that does not mean that that evidence is not there.

As I have already indicated, our report covers alternative schemes at some length. To be fair, Jamie McGrigor has dissented from one of the paragraphs in the report; unfortunately, it is the paragraph that sets out the factual position arising from the STAG appraisal of the alternative that he supports.

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

Scott Barrie: Okay, Presiding Officer.

The STAG appraisal showed that Jamie McGrigor's preferred option was inferior, with reduced patronage, reduced opportunities for a public transport interchange and reduced impact on congestion; it also precluded connections to Edinburgh Park, thereby reducing the economic benefits of the scheme.

Regarding the funding of EARL—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: No, Mr Barrie. Regarding the end, maybe.

Scott Barrie: Presiding Officer, I took three interventions, and the funding—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I do not care how many interventions you have taken. You have now spoken for 12 minutes, and you were allowed to make an 11-minute speech.

Scott Barrie: It is unfortunate that I am unable to talk about funding, but perhaps I will be able to intervene on somebody who has intervened on me.

On the basis of what I have said, I ask that Parliament reject the amendment in the name of David McLetchie, and that the motion in my name be agreed to.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill and that the Bill should proceed as a Private Bill.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind members that, if I ask them to stop, that is exactly what I mean. A considerable number of members wish to speak in the debate, and I am trying hard to give them all six minutes, 11 minutes or seven minutes. If members have any argument about that, I suggest that they take up the matter with their business managers.

I call David McLetchie to speak to and move amendment S2M-4809.1. You have seven minutes, Mr McLetchie.

15:09

David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con): A visitor to Scotland from abroad would undoubtedly regard it as surprising that there are no rail links servicing the existing airports at Glasgow and Edinburgh. The same visitor might wonder why two international airports have been developed from the modest beginnings of Turnhouse and Abbotsinch—yes, I am that old—as opposed to building a single international airport approximately half way between our two major cities. However, those decisions were made in the past. In this Parliament, we do not start with a blank sheet of paper and we live with the consequences of such decisions. One consequence is the lack of rail connectivity, which the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill and its Glasgow equivalent, the Glasgow Airport Rail Link Bill seek to remedy. On that basis, both projects are welcome.

The principle and strategic importance of a rail link are not matters for debate—except of course to the flightless dodos of the Green party, who seem to object to anyone getting on a plane at

all—but what are legitimate matters for debate and cause for concern are the cost of the project, how it is to be funded, the failure of the promoter, in my judgment, adequately to consider alternative routes to that prescribed in the bill, and a host of other issues identified by the committee in its excellent report. Indeed, I congratulate the committee on the robust scepticism that permeates virtually every paragraph of its report. That should be seen as a reprimand, not only of the promoter but of the other public agencies and bodies that have been, or should have been, involved in the presentation of the project to Parliament for approval.

Having read the committee's report and the STAG assessment, I am far from convinced that the Turnhouse option has been properly explored. In pure funding terms, the cost to the taxpayer would be barely a quarter of the cost of the runway tunnel option, which is the route set out in the bill and which is presently costed at between £550 million and £650 million. The Turnhouse option was not considered at all by the Scottish Executive when it announced that it favoured the runway tunnel option back in March 2003. The Turnhouse option was subsequently the subject of a STAG 1 assessment that was commissioned by the promoter. In my opinion, the assessment is based on some highly dubious assumptions. In particular, the figures relating to journey times and consequently the projections of passenger numbers and passenger revenues, are based on an assumption that a lengthy, circuitous bus journey would be required from a station at Turnhouse rather than a direct transfer from the station to the airport terminal. I cannot believe that it is beyond the wit of man to devise a safe and secure manner in which that could be done—such things are features of virtually every other international airport in the world, where people get on and off buses all the time. If that could be achieved here, it would transform the comparative figures and analysis in the STAG report.

The Minister for Transport (Tavish Scott): I suggest that David McLetchie speak to BAA about buses because its position is clear: it will not allow buses to flow through the airport to his proposed station. Will he accept that what we are seeking to achieve is a transport interchange and that a bus journey to a train station some hundreds of yards away is a very different thing from what happens in other capital cities, where one can go straight into a train station under the airport?

David McLetchie: I do not dispute that there are projects that are desirable. We can have the full monty—the expensive, extravagant option—or we can have a more modest project that fits the bill and the pockets of the taxpayer. The Turnhouse option that has been so dismissed does not depend on optimistic assumptions about rolling

stock replacement, which underpin the whole runway tunnel proposal. The committee was right to seek further information on the issue, which has been complacently brushed under the carpet by the promoter.

Let us bear it in mind that the Edinburgh airport rail link is but one of a number of major rail projects that have been approved in principle by the Scottish Executive and will be funded substantially by the taxpayer. The committee was right to draw attention to the number of those projects, their cost and congestion in terms of timescales for completion. Let us not forget that, apart from those rail projects, there are significant demands on the public purse arising from major transport projects such as the M74 extension, the Edinburgh tramlines and the Aberdeen bypass, as well as the dark financial cloud hanging over us all in the possible requirement for a second Forth road crossing, which would have truly enormous public expenditure implications.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): The Scottish National Party also supports an alternative rail link from the airport to the city, but not the Turnhouse link. Does Mr McLetchie agree that the flaw in his amendment is that he is asking the promoter—which has already considered and rejected alternatives—to start afresh and consider alternatives? Would it not be better for Network Rail to be given that task, working with BAA?

David McLetchie: That would certainly be a possibility, but if Mr Ewing looks at my amendment, he will see that I ask the promoter and the Scottish Executive to collaborate in providing the Parliament with further information before we take a final decision.

We have been spending money like there is no tomorrow, but the truth is that tomorrow always comes and it could be a day of reckoning. I said in the final stage debate on the Edinburgh Tram (Line 2) Bill that there was little justification for having both a tram service and a rail link to Edinburgh airport, particularly in light of the excellent bus service that Lothian Buses provides. I remain of that view, but I also believe that we need to consider whether there is a more economical option—such as the Turnhouse option—for the rail link. If we do not ca nnie with such expenditure, other projects might come under threat when budgetary constraints eventually force the Scottish Executive to prioritise its spending. On the face of it, the Turnhouse option would cost £400 million less than the runway tunnel option, and that could make all the difference as to whether other important projects, such as the Borders railway, ever see the light of day.

As the minister pointed out in his intervention, the runway tunnel option is the best design for giving travellers access directly to the terminal, but sometimes the best is the enemy of the good. We need to consider the wider implications, which is why I commend to the Parliament my amendment, which calls for further evidence on those important considerations before we reach a final decision on the bill.

I move amendment S2M-4809.1, to insert at end:

“but, in doing so, considers that inadequate information has been provided to the Parliament on the funding of the project and on alternative methods of establishing a rail link to Edinburgh Airport, and requests that further information is provided by the promoter and the Scottish Executive on these matters in the course of the Consideration Stage.”

15:16

The Minister for Transport (Tavish Scott): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in support of the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill this afternoon. I thank Scott Barrie, the committee and all who were and continue to be involved in the process on the Parliament's behalf and to its benefit.

It is good to have a lively debate on a project that is extremely important for all of Scotland, not just our capital or the area around it. The bill is about our vision for a Scotland in which the nation's airports have good public transport links and Glasgow and Edinburgh have rail connections from their airport terminals into the rail network. With the EARL project, Edinburgh, a great European city, will have a rail service like those of Oslo, Helsinki, Copenhagen and Stockholm. Ireland—a country that we all watch—is following our lead in planning a rail link for Dublin. I am disappointed that the Opposition does not follow our drive and vision for Scotland.

The Edinburgh airport rail link will connect the airport with 62 stations throughout Scotland, from Fife to the Highlands. Highlands and Islands Enterprise considers the link to be so vital that it has planned its rail strategy around the fact that Inverness businesses will have direct access to a major airport. Moreover, business at Edinburgh airport is predicted to grow over the next 25 years from 8 million passengers in 2004 to up to 23 million by 2030, so viable and sustainable public transport alternatives are a must. I find it extraordinary that the Opposition parties do not recognise that reality and are opposing our public transport proposals.

The Edinburgh airport rail link will provide a sustainable alternative. The committee has found that the 78 per cent of people who used a car or taxi in 2003 will reduce to 56 per cent in 2026, by which time 22 per cent of travellers will use the rail

link, according to the conservative modelling that has already been done.

Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): I draw the Parliament's attention to an entry in my register of interests.

Is the minister aware that runway 30/12 is little used and that the long-term plans are that it be sold and at least half the land sold off for commercial purposes? Is he aware of the key opportunity that that provides to create a terminal-based link to the rail network without the substantial cost of a tunnel? Should we not seriously consider that as a key option?

Tavish Scott: The Scottish National Party tries to say that it is not against the bill, but it is, and that intervention proves it. Yes, I have read the master plan—that is the point of Stewart Stevenson's question—and, yes, we could delay and delay, which is the SNP's and the Conservatives' position. That is an option for the Opposition, but not for the Government. The rail link will remove 1.7 million car trips from the roads, reduce traffic congestion around the airport and the west of Edinburgh and tackle the environmental and negative economic impact of congestion, but the Opposition is against investing in public transport links to Scotland's airports.

The runway tunnel is the only rail option for the airport that represents value for money and meets our transport objectives of promoting economic growth and social inclusion and creating sustainable transport alternatives. The Opposition can oppose them, but those are the Government's objectives.

Let me tackle the issues that the committee has raised. On rolling stock, Transport Scotland will introduce a new fleet of modern trains to the Scottish network. I would have thought that that was something to applaud in our vision for rail, but again the Conservatives find it a negative factor. The trains will deliver new and improved services from 2009 as Scotland's major rail investments are delivered. The rolling stock programme will also take into account the issues raised by the committee on the internal cabin layout of the new trains that will serve the airport. They will have luggage space and be easy to access.

I accept that tunnelling is a vital part of the project, but let me give two vital facts in dealing with the nonsense spoken by the Scottish National Party. First, the gradient of the tunnel will be no steeper than at Glasgow Queen Street station, despite what the SNP said this morning.

Fergus Ewing: Will the minister give way?

Tavish Scott: No. That is the answer. Mr Ewing said this morning that the gradient will be steeper, but he is factually wrong. I am putting on the

record what the position is, and if he does not like it, he can take it up with someone else.

Secondly, BAA tunnelled successfully under a live taxiway at Heathrow in building terminal 5 and under the runway in producing the Piccadilly line extension. Such projects happen. They are complex in engineering and design terms, but they can be done—and so can the Edinburgh airport rail link.

The decision on fares will be made by Government and delivered through the ScotRail franchise. Before the devolution of rail powers last year, fares policy sat with the Strategic Rail Authority. Its work was often based on data from the rail network across Britain. We want to ensure that decisions about future fares are made on the basis of the most relevant and robust Scottish data. We will look at fares policy across Scotland, meeting rail passenger needs.

Mr Barrie did not quite have time to deal with costs and funding. The Edinburgh airport rail link has a positive economic case and a developing and positive business case. The benefit cost ratio is 2.16 and the benefits are estimated at £1.35 billion over the 60-year programme. Those are facts that the Opposition dismisses in lazy soundbites.

As with all major projects, Transport Scotland must ensure that the project is on time and on budget. The release of Government money is dependent on a robust business case, now and in the future. As I laid out in a statement on 16 March, the Edinburgh airport rail link will cost £497 million in 2004 prices and between £550 million and £650 million in outturn prices, depending on the rate of industry inflation. I reiterate the point. As with other major capital transport projects, the airport rail link must remain within its budget. It will not be another Holyrood, and I despise the SNP scaremongering to that effect. The form of contract will be completely different from the one used for Holyrood.

We are the major funder of the project. Transport Scotland is in discussions with BAA about its contributions to both the Edinburgh airport rail link and the Glasgow airport rail link. Those commercial discussions will conclude shortly, and we will inform Parliament of their outcome.

On 16 March, the SNP front-bench members did not oppose the project. They called it an important investment. Indeed, Kenny MacAskill has said that the proposed rail link—[*Interruption.*] He was transport spokesman at the time, so Mr Crawford might want to pay attention. Kenny MacAskill said:

“the proposed rail link to Edinburgh airport is of fundamental importance and must be delivered ... It opens up endless opportunities for improved rail services that are

long overdue. That's why the project must proceed and, moreover, why the most radical and visionary option must be pursued."

And the SNP is against it today.

The Government will have nothing to do with the hypocrisy, U-turns and spin of the SNP. Today is the day to support the project, and I encourage members to do so.

15:24

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): I have the distinct feeling that the minister doth protest a little too much. There are four reasons why the SNP believes that the scheme is wrong for Edinburgh, for the rail network, and for Scotland.

First, the costs of the project are currently estimated at more than £600 million, which is a rise of 20 per cent. In truth, the costs are unknown, rising and excessive. Secondly, in our view, the scale of expenditure on transport projects would be much more effectively invested in other means in our transport network. The SNP has committed its support for proceeding with the necessary works—formally called Waverley 2—that would increase the number of paths per hour in Waverley station from 28 to 32. The Executive toyed with that proposal before ditching it. Unless that increase is ordered and happens soon, the rail network may face gridlock within a few short years.

Secondly, we believe that the proposals that Network Rail made recently in its rail utilisation strategy offer a far better and more prudent investment for the whole rail network in Scotland. Network Rail has identified 44 gaps, bottlenecks, pinchpoints, infrastructure works and improvements to signalling and platforms all over Scotland and 44 options for sorting them out, at a price tag of £300 million.

For one half of the colossal sum of £609 million that the Executive proposes to spend on the Edinburgh airport rail link—[*Interruption.*] I know that the minister does not like what I have to say, but he will have to listen. For half that sum, we could have an improved network for the whole of Scotland, including longer trains for the Glasgow to Edinburgh link that would cut that journey by eight minutes. We could cut the time from Inverness to Perth, Glasgow and Edinburgh by 45 minutes through an investment of £50 million. We could make improvements throughout Scotland as identified in the rail utilisation strategy. That would deliver what we believe is needed for the whole of Scotland and for all rail users throughout Scotland, who are frustrated by delays, cancellations and problems because our rail network is at or close to capacity.

Thirdly, BAA runs Scotland's busiest airport. It will require indemnities and guarantees to be built into the bill against the possibility that its runway will have to be closed. Will the minister give those indemnities? In any event, how could he? The cost to the nation of the loss of our major airport would be incalculable. We know from the Prestonpans experience that Network Rail considered just the potential risk of subsidence through mine workings to be such that it required to spend £50 million.

The fourth reason is that we do not believe that the alternatives to the EARL scheme have been considered. We want Network Rail to consider those proposals with BAA. Network Rail is the licence operator; it has the expertise and it knows best how to deliver a new route from A to B.

I will deal with three main flaws in the EARL proposal. The first is the tunnel. The key reason why the project is so expensive is that it requires the construction of a tunnel under a live runway. That is simply a colossal risk. According to one source who was involved in the preliminary investigation, disused mine workings are thought to be in the vicinity of the airport. Can the minister, Transport Scotland and the Scottish Executive give a cast-iron guarantee that the risks that are involved in constructing the tunnel—and in the whole project—will not lead to further cost hikes?

Secondly, we know from the evidence that the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill Committee heard from Ron McAulay of Network Rail that the rolling stock—diesel multiple units—that is required for EARL to work does not exist. He said:

"As far as I am aware, there is no version of this train running on the network yet."—[*Official Report, Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill Committee, 20 June 2006; c 173.*]

The trains do not exist. I will ask the minister a question and I will take an intervention from him, although he did not take one from me. If the trains do not exist, how can he say—as he did on the radio this morning—that the costs are capped at £497 million? We do not know how much the trains cost, because they do not exist.

Tavish Scott: Come on then—the member said that he would give way.

Stewart Stevenson: Fergus Ewing keeps his promises.

Tavish Scott: I am grateful to Mr Ewing for giving way. If he has talked to Ron McAulay and Transport Scotland, which he says he has, he will know that we are procuring new rolling stock throughout the rail network. That is part of the 2009 exercise. He should know that and I am sure that he will be prepared to share his knowledge with the chamber.

Fergus Ewing: I have discussed the matter with Network Rail. The rolling stock strategy has not

yet been rolled out, so we have no idea what it will cost.

My colleague Bruce Crawford will put the case for the urgent requirement to order an additional crossing of the Forth, given that the Forth road bridge may be closed to lorries by 2013.

If over the past seven years we MSPs have learned anything about public sector projects, it is that it is imperative to have proper management of risk and a prudent and cautious approach to the expenditure of vast amounts of public money. Tavish, we will not be lavish with public money. We will pursue a prudent, frugal and sensible approach for all Scotland, with an alternative rail link to Edinburgh airport and a modernised, upgraded rail network for everyone in Scotland.

15:30

Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): Like previous speakers, I welcome today's debate and the committee's work. It has produced an excellent report that considers the extent to which the proposal will meet the objectives of the EARL project. I will devote most of my speech to those objectives and to the extent to which the project potentially contributes to the development of a rail network in Scotland that will meet our future needs.

I strongly support the committee asking difficult questions. Its job is to do that and to identify the issues on which it wants more information. I refer in particular to finance, assurances on operation throughout the Network Rail system, rolling stock, the frequency of services to the airport station and, crucially, fares.

Fares are central to the vision of the project. The first time that I heard a presentation on the project, I asked why it was called the Edinburgh airport rail link, because it is so much more than that. EARL gives 62 stations in Scotland access to Edinburgh airport, but it also gives rail travellers greater access across the central belt. Crucially, it provides us with the opportunity to relieve congestion in and around Edinburgh, the city region and central Scotland generally. It provides an interchange in an area that will be one of the most congested parts of Scotland over the next two decades. That is already evident. There are no reliable journey times for people travelling through the area to the airport by car, and we must provide a better alternative.

The project will not be dedicated only to the airport. For that reason—and because the service will be affordable, as Scott Barrie pointed out—it is not comparable to the Heathrow express or the Gatwick express. It is not an exclusive service, but brings the rest of the rail network into Edinburgh airport and provides a transport hub and

interchange. There should not be exclusive fares for the service.

Today's debate should be about how the project relates to our overall national vision and how we build on the investment that there has been over the past few years. We can see the benefits that have come since the Parliament was established. New stations have been opened and new routes have been opened or are planned. I refer to the Larkhall to Milngavie line, the Airdrie to Bathgate line, the Waverley line and the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine line. Longer platforms have been built and there are more trains. Over the past decade, the number of trains passing through Waverley station has increased by 50 per cent. Crucially, the number of passengers is on the up and is continuing to grow. We know that wherever we open new rail services, people will use them far more than those making the preliminary calculations expected.

This is an on-going debate, but I despair at the approach that the SNP is taking today. It was appropriate for the minister to quote Kenny MacAskill, because from day 1 of the Parliament, the SNP has changed its mind on transport every six months. The lesson from everywhere else in the world is that we need first to get our strategy and ambition right, then to have a political debate about top priorities and then to get on with things. We cannot swing about on every project or be opportunistic.

When we debated the Transport (Scotland) Bill in 2000, the SNP did not want buses, which were a mode of transport for the last century, but more trains and trams. We then put trams on to the agenda, because that was the right thing to do, but the SNP decided that it wanted heavy rail rather than trams. Now that we are proposing heavy rail access to the airport, it does not want that project either. That is no way of engaging in political debate. It is not good enough, because we need to get on with things. We are catching up with other European countries.

I welcome the support that the First Minister gave to the project in the chamber today. Jack McConnell acknowledged the project's importance to the development of the economy, not only in Edinburgh, but in the whole of Scotland. We cannot achieve sustainable economic development only through the car. We must think about the long-term implications of projects. The committee report's analysis of carbon emissions is particularly good. We must bring such methods into our normal thinking.

I agree with Mr Ewing that we need to expand Waverley station. We also need faster and more frequent trains on the east coast main line; increased capacity on our key commuter routes; and probably new services between Edinburgh

and Glasgow. The committee report points out that the Edinburgh to Glasgow line is nearly at capacity. The project is not the only one that we need, but it is part of the revolution in the Scottish railway network that the Parliament is leading and overseeing.

The project will make an important difference. Why are we even thinking about building thousands more car parking spaces at Edinburgh airport when the area is already overcongested? We know that people need to get to the airport from Fife and the rest of Scotland. I hope that Bruce Crawford will mention the potential alleviation of congestion on the Forth bridge as a result of the project. The rail link is not an alternative to proper road access over the Forth, but it is one way in which to relieve the pressure there.

Edinburgh airport will be a key part of Scotland's future, so we must ensure that people can get there sustainably. I strongly support the links to the airport by bus and tram, but the project will provide accessibility for people throughout Scotland. Now that we have a new transport agency, we must give political direction, ask tough questions and ensure democratic accountability. We need TIE, the transport agency and Network Rail to do their job as the technical experts and to ensure that the project works. The debate is crucial. We must go ahead with such projects, particularly this one.

We all agree that the process for dealing with such projects is daft. My heart goes out to the private bill committee members. I am glad that we will have to oversee only a few projects but, at present, we must scrutinise them. We will have to return to the finance and operational issues that the committee has raised. However, it is utterly rich of David McLetchie to criticise us for a radical set of transport infrastructure proposals when, for 18 years under the Tories, nothing happened and we fell behind the rest of Europe. The bill is a chance to catch up and we should take it.

15:37

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): I thank my colleagues on the private bill committee, which turned out to be not so bad after all, and Scott Barrie for his light chairing. I make it plain that I speak as a member of that committee, which, as Scott Barrie said, is quasi-judicial. I am therefore constrained to consider and take a view on the specific proposal in the bill and not to compare the required investment with that required for other rail or other transport projects. That is a policy matter for the current Minister for Transport and the next one—it is not for me.

I will try to bring a little more light to the matter and a little less heat by referring to the committee's report. The evidence to the committee led me to conclude that the project is a bad one that is ill thought out, with funding that is not guaranteed and a lot of ifs and buts. The committee shared those concerns. We really must go back and think again, because public money cannot go into the project as it stands.

I will quote some terribly important comments that the committee made. The committee commented on the importance of the timetable to the delivery of the project. However, the report states:

"Given the confidence of the promoter that the proposed timetable could be delivered it was with some alarm that the Committee heard from Network Rail that it was 'reasonably confident that it might be a possibility'."

Damned by faint praise. On the economic benefits, paragraph 32 states:

"The Committee therefore remains at present uncertain as to whether the potential economic benefits will be distributed across the whole of Scotland at the scale indicated by the promoter."

Other paragraphs of the report deserve to be quoted. On the fares policy, the committee found many contradictions on whether there is to be a premium fare and that issue is still not resolved. Such a fare would hit on the head the social inclusion aim, among others. One key point about the Edinburgh airport rail link—I agree with Sarah Boyack that the name is strange—is whether the trains will run early in the morning and late at night. Paragraph 68 states:

"The Committee expressed concern regarding the way in which EARL will meet the needs of those business tourists travelling either early in the morning or late at night, particularly given some trains do not begin operating until 7 am".

What did Network Rail say about that? The committee's report tells us that it said that any extension of these operating hours would prove to be "extremely challenging". I think that that means that it cannot do it.

When the committee has such views in front of it, it has an obligation to be straightforward. I am interested not in policies, but in what was put before me as a member of the committee that was taking the evidence. I will give you further examples from the report. Paragraph 72 says:

"The Committee agreed that it had some concerns about the ability of the EARL scheme to deliver each of the components of reliability, journey time and quality identified by the promoter as benefits of EARL."

On rolling stock, paragraph 78 says:

"the Committee is extremely concerned that the best intentions of the promoter may be undermined by decisions on rolling stock made with other considerations in mind."

Paragraph 81 says:

"The Committee is disappointed that key decisions on the rolling stock for EARL are still some way off ... In addition, the Committee has serious concerns as to whether, given the number of decisions to be made prior to procuring rolling stock, the timescales for decision taking can be achieved."

Those are not light words and they are the unanimous view of the committee. Serious concerns have been expressed by the committee.

John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab):

Is this the same Christine Grahame who went over the top to support the case for a railway station for Stow, which might serve a few dozen passengers? Is she now nitpicking through the committee's report in an attempt to deny passengers who want to access Edinburgh airport a direct rail link?

Christine Grahame: That is an extremely insulting intervention. I sat as an objective member of the committee. The statements that I am reading out are from the report and are supported unanimously by the committee; they are not my words. If we add up the statements, we can see that substantial concerns are being expressed.

The submission by VisitScotland was slight; to call it tepid would be too kind. The report says that VisitScotland declined to give oral evidence, which meant that we could not even question it about its evidence. Paragraph 84 says:

"The Committee is astonished at the lack of engagement by VisitScotland in what, the promoter contends, is a rail link which would bring tourism benefits to the whole of Scotland"

and paragraph 85 continues:

"In considering the promoter's assertion that EARL will assist in tourism growth across Scotland, the Committee remains unconvinced whether this policy objective will be achieved."

Scott Barrie: Does Christine Grahame accept that, although the points that she makes might be valid, it would be best to let the bill continue to the next stage, given that the committee has said that it will re-examine the points that she is raising?

Christine Grahame: Having heard the evidence and listened carefully to the questions of members who know much more about railways than I do, I am of the opinion that the problems that I have mentioned, particularly those relating to rolling stock, cannot be remedied. The flaws are so substantial and fundamental that, on behalf of the Parliament and the public purse—remember, the projected cost is £608 million—I believe that the project should not proceed. We have to be straight about this. *[Interruption.]* If Labour members think that I have no integrity on that committee, they should report me to the Standards and Public Appointments Committee. I assure them that I sat and listened to the evidence—which they did not

do—and I came to an objective view. I am expressing my view, for what it is worth. If they are not listening, that is not my problem. Further, if the project goes ahead, that is not my problem either and it is not my party's problem.

The issue is whether this particular bill represents the appropriate way in which to proceed. That is what I have to consider. My impression, based on the concerns that I have mentioned—which were extreme and unanimous—is that the bill should proceed no further.

15:44

Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD): I

welcome the opportunity to speak in this debate on behalf of the Liberal Democrats and as the member for Edinburgh West, which includes Edinburgh airport and is one of the most congested areas—if not the most congested area—in Scotland.

I thank Scott Barrie and the committee for producing this excellent and thought-provoking report. I have to say that I agree with some of Christine Grahame's points of concern. However, I take issue with her solution, as I think that we should allow the committee to continue with the robust job that it is doing on our behalf and on behalf of the people of Scotland.

From day one, there have been misconceptions about the scheme, not least because of its name. The name—Edinburgh airport rail link—focuses on only one of 62 stations that are linked by the project. I wonder whether we would be able to count on the SNP's support if we started to call the project the Montrose to Edinburgh airport rail link, the Aviemore to Edinburgh airport rail link or the Perth to Edinburgh airport rail link.

We should consider what the project offers. The rail link will connect 64 per cent of the Scottish population to Edinburgh airport. It offers estimated economic efficiency benefits of nearly £920 million over 30 years; improved employment opportunities; reduced congestion; the removal by 2026 of 1.7 million car journeys; better air quality; and, crucially, an interchange opportunity for rail, bus, coach, taxi and aeroplane passengers, which will increase the demand for public transport and represent real opportunities for my constituents to use the airport hub, even if they are not getting on a plane.

The project is good for Edinburgh but it is also good for Scotland. It is good for tourism, for the environment and for business. That is why business wants it. The project includes a connection to Edinburgh Park in my constituency, which has a railway station but does not have a

connection on the Glasgow to Edinburgh line, which is a concern that I have taken up in the past.

We should make no mistake—Edinburgh airport will continue to grow even if there is no rail link. I have queried the passenger numbers, but without the link passengers will still come in their millions. They will come in their cars, on already congested roads. Even if I am right—that has been known occasionally—and the passenger numbers are not as high as predicted, they would have to drop by 55 per cent to take the project's benefit cost ratio from 2.16 to 1.

We have to set the project in context. The Executive is delivering rail and other public transport projects the length and breadth of the country, many of which have the Parliament's support. I compare that with the negativity, lack of vision and breathtaking hypocrisy that the SNP displays on the issue. As Christine Grahame said in her speech, she dissented, partly on the ground of cost, from supporting the progression of a project with a benefit cost ratio of 2.16—that is, there are benefits worth £2.16 for every £1 that is spent. We can compare the project with another project that is close to both our hearts. The Borders railway has a benefit cost ratio of 1.21—that is, there are benefits worth £1.21 for every £1 that is spent. If the Parliament had turned down the Borders railway on that basis, who would have been shouting the loudest?

Christine Grahame: Yes, but my role with the Borders railway is completely different. I had to sit on the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill Committee as an objective member. Is the member disputing that the conclusions that I quoted—and others—are the committee's unanimous conclusions? Are they not, cumulatively, serious reservations?

Margaret Smith: Just wait.

The project is challenging and the committee rightly said that it wants to hear more evidence on a number of issues. It also highlighted the importance of decisions that are not in the promoter's hands, including the provision of rolling stock that is fit for purpose. I applaud the committee's views on ticket prices and its intention to take further evidence on a range of issues, including evidence from Network Rail on the timetabling issues that Christine Grahame mentioned. I raised a number of those concerns in several meetings with local community groups, TIE and BAA, and in correspondence with the committee.

Time constraints do not allow me to go into detail on the concerns about routes that many of my constituents in Ratho, Carlowrie and Roddinglaw have raised, but I will raise on their behalf some concerns about the consultation that the promoter undertook. Some of the promoter's

practices were identified as the result of a freedom of information inquiry. The committee made some robust comments on the consultation. It said that mistakes were made and that some of the practices were "misjudged", including the lack of engagement with seven community councils. I ask the minister to take on board the issue of consultation in the Transport and Works (Scotland) Bill.

My other major concerns are covered, to some extent, in the report. I take a great deal of comfort from the committee's scrutiny to date on rolling stock, alternative routes, tunnelling under the airport and the funding of the project. The runway tunnel option meets all the policy objectives but it remains a source of concern for people. I note that Her Majesty's railway inspectorate and Network Rail are working with the promoter to ensure that the tunnelling is safe and does not have an adverse impact on the operation of Edinburgh's international airport. I note, too, that the committee says that it has no greater concern about safety there than anywhere else on the network. However, I put it to the minister that it would be prudent to have the maximum possible involvement from BAA, given its experience of delivering airport projects and its clear and direct interest. It is reasonable and necessary for there to be an agreement between BAA and TIE on the matter.

BAA has a key role to play in the financing of the project, given that it stands to gain a great deal from the link. Although I understand the need for commercial confidentiality, we need to be clear on that as soon as possible.

On a different issue, I have sought and been given assurances from BAA that decisions about funding support will be taken in Scotland and not in Spain.

This project can deliver real benefits for Edinburgh and Scotland and I hope that the Parliament will allow the committee and the assessor to make progress with their scrutiny. I hope that the Parliament has the vision—sadly lacking in the SNP—to continue the project.

15:50

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I welcome the opportunity to speak on the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill, having spent the past few months as deputy convener of the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill Committee. As members will have seen from the committee's report, I am unable to endorse the project as it stands. I say that with some regret, because I believe that there is a strong case for connecting Edinburgh airport to the national rail network.

As the report explains, Edinburgh airport is becoming an increasingly important transport hub. It is predicted that, by 2030, between 21 million and 23 million people will be using the airport—up from 8 million in 2004. It is therefore essential that we invest now to ensure that public transport links are in place to cope with future demand.

Unfortunately, the fact that the case for a rail link is so strong makes it all the more tragic that the tunnel option that is being presented to us today is not the correct one. I do not make that statement lightly; I do so for several reasons, some of which are highlighted in the committee's report. The chief reason is the committee's concern over funding. Paragraphs 268 and 269 of our report say that

"The Committee therefore remains exasperated that at this stage it can only confirm that the Scottish Executive will provide funding but not at what level nor whether such funding will be sufficient to meet the estimated cost of construction",

and that

"the Committee has major concerns that the Bill could be passed without the level of funding attributed to each source being identified."

I have to ask how we, the Parliament, can lend our support to the bill as it stands when we cannot be confident about how the project will be funded. That is doubly significant in the light of the plethora of heavy infrastructure projects on the Executive's books, meaning that cost overruns and delays are a real possibility if the funding is not 100 per cent robust. As our report makes clear,

"a delay in any one of these ... projects could have a major impact on the ability of EARL to begin operating in 2011."

Ultimately, with the cost of the tunnel already estimated at up to £650 million, even a slight cost overrun could put the whole project or other projects in jeopardy. Members may call me pessimistic, but I cannot help feeling—based on the Executive's past record and in the light of the scale of the project—that the final bill for the tunnel could well exceed the figure that the promoter has been circulating in recent days.

Scott Barrie: Will the member take an intervention?

Mr McGrigor: Not just at the moment.

We should not fall into the trap of believing that an Edinburgh airport rail link means that we have to have the massive project that is being debated today—the rail link need not equate with the tunnel option. Having sat on the committee, I do not believe that the Executive or the promoter have done sufficient work on considering alternative schemes, in particular on what has come to be called the Turnhouse option. I simply cannot accept paragraph 144 of the committee's report, which states:

"on the basis of this appraisal the Turnhouse option does not offer superior benefits to that proposed within the Bill."

The appraisal being referred to is the Scottish transport appraisal guidance 1 appraisal that the promoter carried out on the Turnhouse option. That document is flawed, so it is not, I regret to say, credible for the committee to dismiss the Turnhouse option purely on the basis of that appraisal. The appraisal is flawed on several grounds; David McLetchie spoke about that in detail. It is sufficient for me to say that it is all but impossible to read the appraisal and not be struck by the fact that it is less the objective assessment of the options that it should be and more a deliberate shooting-down of the Turnhouse option, based on some extremely dubious assumptions.

Those assumptions include the claim that it would take 41 minutes to get from the city centre to the airport terminal if there were to be a station at Turnhouse that was connected to the terminal by shuttle bus. That claim is ridiculous. Given that trains currently take only 9 minutes to get from Waverley to South Gyle, it is safe to say that a train could get to Turnhouse in 10 minutes. If a shuttle bus could use a designated bus lane around the perimeter of the airport, it could easily get to the terminal in 10 minutes, which means that the total journey time for the Turnhouse option would be about 20 minutes—a mere four minutes more than using the tunnel option.

The promoter claims that a shuttle bus would need to use public roads because the airport is a restricted area—hence the claim about the 41 minute journey time—but I simply do not accept that a designated bus route could not be created around the airport's perimeter. To do so would certainly not be as difficult as constructing a tunnel under the runway. Even if the bus had to use the A8, it would not take as long as the promoter claims. A total journey time of 25 minutes—not the 41 minutes that is claimed in the appraisal—would be more realistic.

It has been suggested that the Turnhouse option would mean that there was less connectivity than the tunnel option. However, if we constructed a small chord between the Fife line and the Winchburgh to Dalmeny branch, the Turnhouse option would provide direct connections to all the stations that would be connected by the tunnel option, with the exception of nearby Edinburgh Park station, which will be served by the tram anyway. If connectivity to the rest of Scotland is the point of the project, why are we getting so worked up about a slightly longer journey time into the centre of Edinburgh?

The Turnhouse option could be up and running within a very short time; the tunnel is five years away at best and I believe that even that timescale is optimistic. Therefore, I urge members not to

endorse this flawed, massively disruptive and very expensive scheme, so that we can instead refocus our efforts on developing a better alternative.

15:56

Bristow Muldoon (Livingston) (Lab): I congratulate the committee on its work to date and welcome the progress that has been made in consideration of the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill. When the link is completed, it will represent a major and ambitious development and enhancement of the rail network in Scotland.

Edinburgh and Glasgow airports are the main airports that serve the majority of the Scottish population but, unlike most major airports in England and—the First Minister highlighted this during question time—airports in many European cities, Edinburgh and Glasgow airports currently have no direct rail links. The limited availability of public transport options not only puts more pressure on the roads around the airports but acts as a disincentive to tourists and businesspeople who travel to those airports.

The Edinburgh airport rail link is an ambitious project. It aims not only to provide a connection to the city of Edinburgh—as other members, including Sarah Boyack, highlighted—but to link Edinburgh airport to all Scotland's cities. The project will provide people in each of our cities with the opportunity to access flights from Edinburgh airport, but it will also allow tourists from all over the United Kingdom and Europe to access direct rail services from Edinburgh airport to other tourist destinations. Dundee, Stirling and Glasgow are among the total of 62 rail stations that will have direct services to and from the airport.

In many of our previous debates on transport issues, broad agreement has been reached about the need to improve Scotland's connectivity to the rest of the UK, to European cities and to destinations further afield. Therefore, it is surprising that the Scottish National Party has chosen to oppose the progress of the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill to consideration stage. If the Executive parties had abandoned support for the rail link, I can just imagine the wails that we would hear from the nationalist benches. We would be accused of lack of ambition and it would be said that we were not able to undertake such projects because we do not have the powers of an independent nation or because we do not have the resources. However, we are using the powers and resources that are available to the Scottish Parliament to progress the most ambitious project that has been seen in Scotland for decades, but the party that lacks the ambition to back it is the Scottish National Party. The so-called National Party lacks the ambition to provide Scotland's capital with the sort of connectivity that other

capitals take for granted. Given that that comes on top of the SNP's opposition to the Edinburgh trams, it is clear that the nationalists have no interest whatever in equipping Edinburgh with a 21st century transport system.

Such opposition is even more bizarre because the project will benefit not just Edinburgh but a huge swathe of Scotland, including the 62 stations to which I referred. Having strongly supported the establishment of a station at Stow, where there is a community of 600 people and where patronage levels will be 10 people per day, the SNP will now oppose connecting 62 stations across Scotland to Edinburgh airport. The airport already serves 8 million passengers a year—that number will grow considerably in the decades to come. The SNP's position would deny further inward investment opportunities to Scotland via Edinburgh airport.

Unless they defy the SNP whip today, Bruce Crawford will vote against a rail link from Stirling to Edinburgh airport, Fiona Hyslop will vote against a rail link from Linlithgow to Edinburgh airport and Tricia Marwick will vote against a rail link from Fife to Edinburgh airport because they lack the ambition and vision that would take this country forward. The SNP has badly miscalculated on this occasion and I expect each of those communities to ask serious and hard questions of the nationalists.

A point that has been missed in the debate is that this is preliminary stage consideration of the bill. Committee members have rightly raised concerns that must be addressed by the minister, the promoter and professionals in the industry. Those questions can be addressed and will be returned to at subsequent stages of the bill process.

We should support the bill today because of the general principles that it will introduce. We should support it because of the contribution that the link could make to increasing the number and proportion of passengers who access Edinburgh airport by public transport, because of the opportunities that it provides to air passengers to access direct rail links to all of Scotland's cities as well as many major towns, and because of the contribution that it can make to economic growth not only in Edinburgh, the Lothians and Fife but the whole of Scotland.

Of course, some stakeholders have expressed legitimate concerns, the most significant probably being those that were expressed by BAA, which is the operator and owner of the airport. Its concerns are important, but instead of killing the bill at this stage, we should allow it to continue. I know that the promoter is confident that it can apply the necessary technical and engineering expertise to ensure that BAA's concerns are taken fully on board.

The rolling stock issue is also important. The minister has already stated that a major programme of rolling stock renewal and procurement is under way. The minister, Transport Scotland and the railway industry have co-operated on that programme. We must be given more detail on the situation at the subsequent stages of the bill, but the fact is that that programme is under way.

Some members have expressed concerns about cost, but Margaret Smith made the important point that the project is not only about cost. It is also about the benefits that it will produce for the Scottish economy. As Margaret correctly pointed out, the project has the best benefit to cost ratio of any public transport project that Parliament has considered. Members who reject the project on the basis of cost should also have rejected every single previous project.

Parliament should endorse the motion in Scott Barrie's name, which will allow the bill to complete the first stage of the parliamentary process. The bill will equip Scotland with a transport project that it fit for the 21st century and it will equip Edinburgh airport and the Edinburgh economy with a 21st century transport interchange. We should reject the lack of ambition and the opportunism of the Tories and their tartan cousins.

16:03

Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green): I am in the strange situation of being a Green who agreed, in a transport debate, with almost everything that Fergus Ewing said. The strength of the case against the proposal is demonstrated by the fact that it has provoked opposition from around the chamber and from such different political perspectives.

The debate is not about airport expansion—I will have that argument with David McLetchie on another occasion. I do not believe the projection that there will be 23 million passengers using Edinburgh airport—that will never happen, but we will always need an airport.

Members would expect me, as a Green, to argue in favour of enhancement of the rail network and another public transport option for travellers to and from Edinburgh airport, but the project does not represent value for money and it should not be a priority for public transport spending.

As has been outlined, several cheaper alternatives have not been adequately appraised. There is already a bus service, and there will be a tram link, to serve the people of north and west Edinburgh as well as the airport, but EARL will not do so. As the committee states clearly in its report, major costs are associated with EARL, not only in monetary terms but for the rail network. It will

increase journey times for the Aberdeen service by up to six and a half minutes. We cannot let that happen but, as can be seen from the committee's report, the promoter has not convinced the committee that it will not happen. We have received weak promises from Network Rail about the impact of the EARL proposal, with the diversion of the major lines from Edinburgh through a tunnel under Edinburgh airport and the wider impact that that will have on everybody else who travels across Edinburgh.

Sarah Boyack: My intervention will be brief. I accept Mr Ballard's point about the marginal increase in journey time. However, does he accept that there will be a significant benefit for passengers travelling between Fife and Glasgow of 15 minutes less travel time, which could encourage more people to use the train?

Mark Ballard: My dear friend Fergus Ewing referred to pinchpoints and the cheap alternative. When line repairs were being done, I travelled on the existing line from the Forth rail bridge towards Glasgow, which is currently not being used. If we want direct services between Fife and Glasgow, we should re-open that line for a few million pounds instead of spending £600 million on the EARL project.

The potential benefits of EARL to the Scottish economy have always seemed to me to have been vastly overstated—that view is backed up by the committee report. The proposed frequency of services to the north of Scotland will be inadequate, as the report says, for realising the kind of benefits that TIE talked about. Furthermore, claims that EARL will attract inward investment also appear to have been overstated.

It seems to me that EARL is very much an Edinburgh project that is being dressed up to appear to be of benefit to the whole of Scotland. There are public transport priorities in Edinburgh that are much more pressing than EARL: for example, there is the Waverley station upgrade, which members have mentioned; the proper funding of the Edinburgh tram scheme to include a tramline 3; and the re-opening of the south suburban railway. If those priorities were realised, they would meet the needs of people in east-central Scotland much more effectively than will EARL.

That does not mean that we do not need to improve public transport to Edinburgh airport. There will be the trams, which will bring a light rail service to the airport. However, like many members, I have travelled on the train from Edinburgh to the Forth rail bridge and have passed Edinburgh airport and its runway, travelling a few metres away from the boundary. We should put a cheaper alternative to EARL in that location.

Scott Barrie: Will the member give way?

Mark Ballard: I am sorry, but I have already taken one intervention and the Greens get only one speech in this debate.

A Turnhouse rail stop would be a cheaper alternative. That proposal is considered in the committee report and it is argued that it would have fewer benefits than the EARL proposal. However, given that the Executive cannot find up to £500 million to upgrade Edinburgh Waverley and that TIE costed a Turnhouse station at £114 million, the benefits of having a Turnhouse station and a full upgrade of Waverley would vastly outweigh the benefits of an expensive tunnel beneath the airport. Let us consider the priorities and what will deliver value for money.

Similarly, there is discussion in the report of the Gogar interchange with tramline 2. I welcome the fact that Parliament has made a commitment to tramline 2, which will connect the centre of Edinburgh with the airport. Let us integrate a system with tramline 2, which would allow money to be released for the Waverley upgrade, create a station at Gogar and reduce delays in other rail journeys. It would also, as I said, integrate with the tram scheme and the existing systems of transport out to the airport, and be preferable to the expensive vanity project that is EARL.

Despite my normal inclination to support public transport and to regard everything that Fergus Ewing says with extreme scepticism, I actually find myself in agreement with him because in value-for-money terms the EARL project does not stack up. Let us not spend millions on this scheme while better projects go unfunded. I urge Parliament to reject the EARL proposal.

16:09

Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): Not for one moment do I underestimate the scale and complexity of the task that faced the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill Committee. I think that it produced a good report, despite the fact that it was faced with a considerable task in attempting to draw together all the different strands of technical information and environmental, social, economic and funding matters. From my reading of the report, the committee seems to have been faced at times with a rather confusing and contradictory picture.

Although I respect absolutely the decision that the committee members have reached in supporting the proposals that are before us, I cannot honestly say that I feel the same as they do. In asking Parliament to support the bill, they are asking us to take a leap of faith into crucial unresolved matters. Worse still, they are asking us to leap into an information void.

I believe that our job, as parliamentarians, is to scrutinise things properly and give them rigorous examination, especially the legislation that is brought before us. The proposals in the bill simply do not stand up to scrutiny. To Sarah Boyack, I say that we should not lower the bar of examination and scrutiny just because a proposal seems on the face of it to be attractive and has support.

There are many questions that remain unanswered. Is the promoter's proposed timetable deliverable within the current network constraints? Is the proposal to extend the rail network's operating hours realistic? Can rolling stock of the required quantity and quality be deployed? I heard what the minister said about that earlier. Will the fares structure that is being considered attract customers and ensure greater social inclusion? The committee explored all those questions and it can take further evidence on them. I accept that. Nevertheless, there are two aspects that should have set the alarm bells ringing and on which no firm conclusion was reached.

First, the project will disrupt Edinburgh airport during construction and in the long term to such an extent that the proposal is unsustainable—as was made clear by the managing director of Edinburgh Airport Ltd during his oral evidence when he said that he objects to the proposals. The written evidence from Edinburgh Airport Ltd is also salutary. It states:

"Regrettably, contrary to any impression which may be created by the Promoter's Memorandum, there is a lack of agreement between the parties on many of the substantive issues contained in the Bill. In EAL's view this increases the financial, technical, safety and operational risk to both the Promoter and EAL. EAL consequently has serious concerns that the Promoter has failed to appreciate the interface issues and project risks associated with constructing and operating Edinburgh Airport Rail Link ("EARL") within an operational airport."

That is pretty fundamental. That is not an issue that we can go on discussing; it is fundamental to the project.

Given such serious concerns, unless the minister can tell us different—as he seemed to hint earlier in an aside to me across the chamber—I cannot see why today, in the current environment, BAA would want to invest additional resources in this development.

In effect, we are being asked to sign a blank cheque—something that I, for one, am not prepared to do. There is no firm funding line. The Executive may say that there is an overall budget, but no one knows who is going to fund that budget.

Bristow Muldoon: Does Mr Crawford think that it would be prudent management of public resources for the minister to commit to an amount

of investment when financial negotiations are still going on with potential contributors to the scheme? Would not that be the minister showing all his cards at once?

Bruce Crawford: The standing orders of Parliament state that promoters are supposed to provide all the financial details before a project even gets to stage 1. With that in mind, I am surprised that the project has managed to get this far.

Yesterday, I attended a meeting of a Fife alliance of businesspeople and Fife Chamber of Commerce at which we discussed the future of the Forth road bridge. At that meeting, the bridge master made it absolutely clear that, regardless of what happens now, the bridge will close to heavy goods vehicles in 2013. There is no doubt in my mind that that is the direction in which we are going. Many of the businesspeople who were at the meeting said that, if that happened, it would be a catastrophe for the Fife economy—I think that we all know that that is a fact. Businesses are already deciding not to locate in Fife and to relocate elsewhere.

If Scott Barrie asked the businesspeople to whom I spoke yesterday where the money should be spent as a priority for Fifers, they would say that it should be committed to a new Forth bridge instead of to a project that has shown itself not to provide value for money.

Scott Barrie: Will the member take an intervention?

Bruce Crawford: I have only 10 seconds left. Otherwise, I would have taken an intervention.

My position is clear: I will not support a project that does not offer value for money. I support the idea of a link to Edinburgh airport, but I want Scotland's money to be used on priority projects. We have to sort things out now, before Fife and the east of Scotland suffer an economic catastrophe with the closure of the Forth road bridge.

16:15

Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab): I support the general principles of the bill and I will enthusiastically support Scott Barrie's motion this evening. I congratulate everyone who has brought us to this point in this exciting and ambitious project.

When the project was first announced, I could scarcely believe my ears. I have dreamed about this link—as have other Fifers—for many years. I was at the meeting yesterday with Fife Chamber of Commerce, and the views that Bruce Crawford expressed were not the views of Fife Chamber of Commerce, which is on the record as wanting the

Edinburgh airport rail link, as it has for many years. The Fife people want it too, but Bruce Crawford has not represented the views of the Fife people today. People in Fife have campaigned for decades to have an airport link.

Bruce Crawford: Will the member give way?

Helen Eadie: I say to Mark Ballard, who has left the chamber, that people from Fife pass the end of the runway in trains and ask why they have to go into the centre of Edinburgh and then get a bus back out to catch a plane. It is nonsense. Edinburgh is suffering from congestion, and the bridge is suffering from congestion. The way to reduce that congestion will be to provide a rail link directly to the airport. That rail link will provide for the whole of Scotland and not only for Edinburgh. That is where Mark Ballard is so fundamentally wrong.

Mark Ballard: Will the member give way?

Helen Eadie: This is not an Edinburgh project—it is an all-Scotland project. The SNP simply wants to divide Scotland. In *The Herald* today, Rob Robertson wrote:

"An executive led by the SNP would scrap the current proposals for the Edinburgh airport rail link and instead focus investment on improvement to Scotland's existing railway network, the party said yesterday."

The SNP is silent on what it would do regarding the Glasgow airport rail link. Is its policy for Scotland's future social and economic development about dividing west coast people from east coast people? That is what the SNP's move today is about. That is what the party is trying to do. Bruce Crawford pretends to be a Fifer, but he is never a Fifer. The views that he has expressed would never be supported in Fife.

Fergus Ewing, on Talk107 news this morning, said that he wants everyone to travel into Edinburgh as well—he wants people to go to Waverley and then back out to Turnhouse. That is bizarre logic. Thousands of people will think that politicians have gone mad today if we vote for the SNP's solution.

By developing the Edinburgh airport rail link, we will immediately slash the number of cars that head over the Forth. Not only that, we will slash the number of people who go into the city centre, which has been badly congested for a long time.

The Conservatives' hypocrisy about cost is breathtaking. It is preposterous for the Tories to suggest a shuttle bus. When the Tories were in Government, the area that Scott Barrie and I now represent in Rosyth had the biggest hole in the ground at the dockyard. It is still there, and it is the most expensive hole in the ground ever built by any Government. It cost £20 million and it does nothing for anyone. It is a reminder of the Tory

legacy of decay, degeneration and disappointment.

We will not take lectures from the Tories. We asked them to develop the A8000 link to the airport and they refused. It took this Government—the Scottish Executive—to get that link. The Tory legacy was absolute standstill in Scotland's economy. Businesspeople across Scotland will judge us all today on whether or not we support the optimum solution and provide a direct link to the airport.

It is tremendous that the new station will be the hub at the centre of the spokes. It will mean much easier access to jobs—and not just to those at the airport. People in Fife will be able to go from Inverkeithing station to the airport and then on to Linlithgow or Falkirk. It will provide great opportunities for everyone in Fife.

I am delighted by the positive measures that the Executive has taken on transport. The EARL project will be a major development and I applaud the work that is being done by the numerous people throughout the country who are connected with the bill to enable Scotland to become a leader in the provision of intermodal connections, which will offer efficient travel to businesses and to the people of Scotland.

Like other members, I have campaigned for the link over many years, both as a councillor and as an MSP. I have also served on a private bill committee, so I know that concerns are raised—we have heard about some of them today—and solutions are found. In general, everyone works constructively, if they have the political will to do so. Bruce Crawford needs to take a leap of faith because it is obvious that he has no faith in the people of Scotland. It is time that the SNP had faith in the people of Scotland. Today the SNP is demonstrating astonishing paucity of ambition on behalf of Scotland and, in failing to support Scotland's future economic development, is acting as a destructive force. The EARL project is an ambitious, wonderful and exciting development, and I cannot praise enough everyone who is involved in it. I will support Scott Barrie's motion.

16:21

Donald Gorrie (Central Scotland) (LD): I was one of the people who tried to get a central Scotland airport in the early 1970s. The idea got very little support among any of the parties because of the habitual parochialism of the Scottish people. That was sad, and the proposal has gone.

At one time, it would have been a sensible idea to have an airport beside the Fife railway line, but once the airport was built where it was, that idea became daft because there is no point in dropping

people off at the edge of the airport, on the other side of the runway from where everyone else is.

There needs to be consistency in the study of transport infrastructure; unlike other Government policies, it cannot be changed every six months or every year. We must try to get better cross-party support for an agreed policy. The Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill Committee has produced a good report and has tried extremely hard, but people are opposing the proposal on the wrong basis. The opponents of the project are arguing as if the vote on the bill's general principles is a vote on whether to allocate the money to build the scheme, which is not what we are discussing.

If we agree to the bill's general principles, we can go on to improve the proposal in ways that I will discuss shortly. EARL will be one possible way of spending our money in the future because we will have a proper scheme. The alternative is to scrub the scheme, in which case it will go down the plughole and that will be it—we will not be able to consider the idea for years and years. The whole argument is based on the total misapprehension that we are voting today on whether to invest our money in the EARL scheme, when we are voting on whether to progress with it and refine it.

I hope that the bill can be improved in a number of ways. For example, the committee said that it supported the idea of a train link from Edinburgh airport to Glasgow airport, which seems to have got lost at some stage. That is a great idea. I will again bore the minister on the subject of Glasgow crossrail, which I think should be built and would fit in very well with EARL.

As other members have mentioned, a good aspect of the scheme is that it would create a proper transport interchange; it would not just provide a railway to the airport. People would be able to go all over the shop. The advocates of the Turnhouse option ignore the fact that people find attractive transport that means that they do not have to change too often. Under the EARL proposals, people would get off the train and go straight on to an escalator, which would take them to the aeroplane. It is a big disincentive to be dropped off at a bus stop that is a mile away from the terminal—people simply will not use such a scheme. In addition, the Turnhouse option would not allow people from Edinburgh Park and elsewhere to get to the airport and would ruin the interchange idea.

We want to progress with examining the proposal carefully, as there are still many unanswered questions. We are not signing blank cheques; we are trying to conduct a real study of the funding, the costs and the benefits. Are the benefits realistic? Much of that future stuff is open to argument, and I am sure that the committee will

examine the costs and the benefits. The question of frequency of service must also be examined. If we are to make good use of the infrastructure, a frequent service must be provided. The hours of operation, the delays to other travellers and the rolling stock and luggage must be considered. Even the practicality of getting bicycles on the train—something that annoys many people—must be examined. There must be a proper way of carrying bicycles, perhaps by bringing back the luggage van.

How the rail link integrates with trams must also be considered. I know that the two modes are supposed to have a different public, but we must examine that question carefully. We must also scrutinise the engineering efforts and find out whether the tunnel has hidden problems. If Scotland, with its history of engineering, cannot build a fairly short tunnel, we are in big trouble. I would have thought that we could surely do that, but the committee should examine that question and all the other points that have arisen.

The committee has done a good job, but we should insist that there is really good co-operation and exchange of information. The performance of bodies such as VisitScotland, as outlined in the report, seems to be poor, and we must really put the squeeze on those organisations, as well as on BAA and Network Rail. We should support the bill at this stage and put our faith in the committee to strengthen its sinews and to get stuck into all those difficult questions. Then we can decide whether or not to go ahead with the proposal.

16:27

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): I commend the proposal for a strategic air link at Edinburgh airport. I also express my astonishment and disappointment at the small thinking on the Opposition benches. When the First Minister coined the phrase “the best small country in the world”, I told him that it would get him into trouble, but, to his credit, he put the emphasis on best, not small.

The air link development proposal represents big thinking and a determination to act on it. What Donald Gorrie said is absolutely common sense. We do not have to go for every jot and tittle in the committee report just now; we will adapt and amend the proposal, so the fact that there are queries about details such as luggage racks should not rule it out. The debate on the development has also shown the Tory benches to be full of skinflints. They talk the talk on financial autonomy, they think big, but they do not walk the walk. Everything that they said was about the cost of the project; they said nothing about the benefit or the bravery of it. The faint hearts on the SNP benches timidly say that there should be a link, but

not the one proposed, and that we need a cheaper option because we do not have the money. Sadly, the last point is true. We probably do not have all the money that we need, but the money is there; it is just that we do not have it.

I address these remarks to colleagues on the Labour benches. Just yesterday, it was announced that the oil and gas sector in the North sea has produced a £20.6 billion turnover—an increase from £8.7 billion in 1998. Somebody is getting the money, so why should the windfall that is going to the Westminster Treasury not come here? It should represent a windfall for us, for investment capital that is needed for strategic projects such as the Edinburgh airport rail link. If this Parliament—not a party in it, but the Parliament itself—demanded even a twentieth of that windfall, we could pay for the Edinburgh airport rail link project and for all the other projects that Fergus Ewing and Mark Ballard mentioned, because we all know that those schemes need attention as well. The money is there and I bet that, if we set out to get it, we would.

I was surprised that the SNP spokespeople accepted the constraints of devolution. I was not surprised, I suppose, that they thought that we could not manage the project better than the Parliament project was managed, but I think that we could. We have learned a lesson. I echo what Donald Gorrie said about not being able to tunnel, after all the experience that Scottish engineers have had of tunnelling all over the world, so I discount that objection and believe that the tunnelling difficulties could be overcome. As I mentioned, the change from the £1 billion windfall would also pay for all the other projects.

Bristow Muldoon said that the SNP lacked ambition and that the link could be done—he is wrong. It's the election, stupid! It has nothing to do with luggage rails, tunnelling or project management and everything to do with where constituency seats might be picked up. I hate saying it, but it is true, so we should just accept it. I look forward to picking up the project again once we have passed that wee hurdle.

As members know, I am determined that Edinburgh's position as the capital should be recognised by everyone in the Parliament. I came here today in case there was *puir-moothed* talk about Edinburgh having loads of money and not needing any more. This is not about Edinburgh. What Helen Eadie said is true: this is about Scotland. It is about our future, our ambition, and our confidence, so act on it.

16:31

Mr David Davidson (North East Scotland) (Con): For the avoidance of doubt, my colleague lodged his reasoned amendment, which I whole-

heartedly support, because we believe not that Edinburgh airport should not be connected to Scotland's railway system—the Conservatives have said for years that it should—but that there are different ways of doing it. The infrastructure investment required is critical. Work has not even started on a new Forth crossing and if we could save the £400 million that would appear to be available if we used the Turnhouse option, we would have a good chunk to get the bridge started. The bridge and the railways are strategically important not just for the east coast of Scotland but for the Highlands through Inverness. If we are to consider the big picture, we must be responsible. It is simple.

The report is full of questions. The language of the report says, "We haven't had enough information." Even those that support the report agree that that is what it says. In his introduction, Scott Barrie went on about questions having to be answered. All the Conservatives' amendment says is, "For goodness' sake, if we're going to go on, let's make sure the questions are brought to the chamber and answered." What has never been mentioned is the potential for a second runway at Edinburgh. Is the tunnel priced to go under one or two runways? We do not know. If it goes under two, the engineers have already acknowledged that there will be another problem of gradient.

I have been on site several times. Many members talked as if they have never been to the airport site and seen how simple it would be to make a bus link to the Turnhouse site, which is already inside the airport perimeter. It is not as if we would be sticking something on the outside. According to BAA, the site is a redundant area of its airport facility. Why can we not build a guided busway or whatever? It does not have to be in a tunnel. People do that in other parts of the world. There is an overhead railway to get to the railway station from Miami airport and nobody minds moving baggage to it. It is amazing: we are talking about only a few hundred metres and a properly designed, low-level entry/exit bus, which would save millions to put into something else. Moreover, if we had the short little link, the railway would still connect to the same 62 stations.

The STAG 1 report was a cursory dismissal, without proper content and proper analysis—which is what the Conservatives are talking about—to ensure that we get an airport link. However, we also have to connect up. Fergus Ewing was right to talk about other projects around Scotland. Many people in my area, the north-east of Scotland, use Edinburgh airport, as do many other people. We have to go into town and come back out again, which is not convenient. We are told that a tram system will deal with Edinburgh Park. That hints at a blank cheque. From the way in which the minister spoke earlier, I suspect that he has

information that the rest of us do not have. He was so committed in advance of the introduction of the bill that he must have information. Will he tell us where the money will come from? Will it stop something else? Does he have a blank cheque or a hidden funder somewhere that we do not know about? Is it a Gordon Brown gift? We do not know.

The rolling stock issue has only been touched on, but it is a serious issue. According to those in the railway industry who know best, the necessary rolling stock is not even designed, never mind available, and nobody knows how much it will cost. Of course, the bill's proposal excludes some of the current rolling stock that could be used at Turnhouse as long as a better baggage-handling facility was added to it.

We must consider the runway disruption, the airport disruption and the security that would be necessary at the airport during construction. That is not to mention the fact that there was a partial collapse of the runway tunnel at Heathrow. It had to be repaired, which meant that a runway had to be shut down. That is never even mentioned.

We need to have all the agencies on side and to have all the facts. A bus link would work. I ask the minister to open up his heart and tell us the truth. Does he have the money? Does he know what the design will be? Will there be a second runway at Turnhouse? Will the design as currently priced work? He does not know, and if he does not know, why does he appear to support the proposal?

The Conservatives want an Edinburgh airport rail link; we have always argued for one. The debate is about how we can provide it affordably, quickly, sensibly and without risk. If the minister is so good at planning, I ask him to tell me whether there is capacity in the construction industry to deliver all the projects that the Executive is supposed to deliver by 2011 or 2012. Are there enough people around to do it? Will any local jobs come out of the projects? Will they all be funded at exactly the same time? Those are the questions to which the people want answers. We will not prevent the bill from going ahead at this stage, but we will prevent it if we do not get the answers that the Parliament deserves.

16:36

Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP): It has been an interesting and robust debate. We had a robust report placed before us—in fact, it is probably among the most robust reports that we have seen. Having read the report, I agree with my colleague Christine Grahame, who arrived at a different set of conclusions from those reached by the majority of the committee. I find it difficult to understand how that majority arrived at the conclusions it did after drawing up the report, as

there are so many reservations throughout. Indeed, the committee agreed to make its recommendation only with a series of caveats. I am glad that it has included them, but those caveats and the specific parts of the report where concerns are raised have led me to the conclusion that the bill does not deserve support.

Scott Barrie: Will Brian Adam give way?

Brian Adam: I will give way in just a minute, but I ask Scott Barrie to let me develop my argument.

It is clear that all parties recognise the need for an Edinburgh airport rail link. We are debating whether, in the light of the report, the rail link that is proposed in the bill is worthy of support. The report's evidence is clear that it is not. The proposal has been drawn up without getting the main players' whole-hearted endorsement. There is no whole-hearted endorsement from Network Rail, which will have to deliver the railway. There is no endorsement from the airport's owners—in fact there is an objection from them. As the rail link is intended to provide for improved access and connectivity for tourism, whether business or otherwise, it is significant that there is no endorsement from VisitScotland. The committee makes most of those points.

I have some sympathy with the Conservative amendment, but my reservation is that it continues to ask the promoter to come up with alternatives. As the promoter has dismissed the alternatives and arrived at the conclusion that the current proposal is worthy of support, I find it hard to understand why involving it would lead to a different conclusion.

Mr Davidson: To put it simply, we suggest that all the information should be provided. The matter will have to return to the Parliament, where the decision will ultimately be made, but we all need the information to make that decision. Brian Adam could still stop the bill if he did not like it and the information did not stack up, but we do not have the information at the moment.

Brian Adam: I whole-heartedly accept that we do not have the information. It is clear from the report and from what has been said by the minister and other supporters of the proposal that they do not have the information. Network Rail is charged with the responsibility, so I believe that the minister can engage with it and ask it to come up with plans. For example, how does the rail link fit in with Network Rail's proposals for the rest of the network? It has to deliver for the whole of Scotland.

It is interesting that the promoter is anxious to tell us that the project will serve all of Scotland. How will the project help to develop services for Aberdeen? Aberdeen also has an international airport. Will the link draw people away from that

airport? Is it designed to do so? We have four significant international airports in Scotland. Edinburgh is one of them and it is probably going to be the most important, but we should not put all our eggs in one basket. I hear Mr Rumbles making his usual rumblings in the background, but the price that we will have to pay in the north-east is in increased journey times. That will not encourage people in the north-east out of their cars and on to the trains.

I accept that there will be benefits to other parts of Scotland, but the position that the promoter presents to us is not substantiated. That is precisely what Scott Barrie and his committee have told us.

Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD) *rose—*

Scott Barrie *rose—*

Brian Adam: I will give way to Mr Rumbles.

Mike Rumbles: Just for clarification, is Brian Adam really saying that the Edinburgh airport rail link would have a detrimental effect on Aberdeen and the north-east?

Brian Adam: Absolutely, precisely because evidence from the committee and the promoter shows that journey times will be longer. Indeed, the catchment area for the airport will be expanded to cover 3.2 million people as opposed to the current figure if the rail link is built as planned. It is not just about one issue.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh): You should finish quickly, Mr Adam.

Brian Adam: In that case, I am happy to draw my remarks to a close by saying that Margaret Smith got it wrong in suggesting that the SNP does not have a vision. Fergus Ewing explained clearly our vision of the future, and we do not have the tunnel vision that she has.

16:43

Tavish Scott: After Brian Adam's summing up, the one point on which I am sure we can all agree is that the debate is about which parties have a vision for Scotland. Which parties believe that the rail link is a strategic investment for the country and that a direct rail investment for the entire country is the right project at the right time? The Labour and Liberal Democrat parties and Margo MacDonald articulated fairly the arguments in favour of the project. The arguments that we have heard from the Opposition parties against the project do not pass muster.

In many ways, Helen Eadie reflected my views and the core of the argument about why the project is the right one. She said that that it needed to be the hub at the centre of the spokes.

That was an eloquent expression to describe why the Edinburgh airport rail link is so important not just for Edinburgh—despite the SNP turning its back on our capital—but for the north-east and, indeed, for the whole country. That is why, when we vote on the general principles of the bill, we should vote in favour of the project.

Let me pick up a couple of important points on particular aspects of the proposal. Members were right to ask about the rolling stock, and I hope that everyone will welcome the introduction of new rolling stock to the Scottish network. There will be a new fleet of modern, high-specification trains that can deliver our future timetable aspirations and provide the opportunity for enhanced services to other routes in the network. That should be a good thing for Scotland. It is astonishing that some oppose that and make fun of it, as Mr Ewing did.

I respect members who raised serious issues about the runway tunnel option, but I hope that they recognise that the evidence that was given to Mr Barrie's committee showed that that option would ensure that the highest number of trains could serve the airport—eight to 10 per hour in each direction—and that a higher percentage of passengers would access the airport by train if we used that option rather than any other. Crucially, the option would offer interchange opportunities that would produce quicker journeys between Fife and Glasgow, easier commuting to business centres in west Edinburgh and an increase in rail connections throughout Scotland.

David McLetchie *rose—*

Tavish Scott: I am happy to give way, but those are important matters that Mr McLetchie will want to consider.

David McLetchie: Those considerations are important. However, will the minister acknowledge that although the benefit cost ratio of 2.16 cited for the project with the runway tunnel option was described as the highest of any project considered, the STAG assessment of the Turnhouse option gave no benefit cost ratio? If we are to appraise the alternatives, it might be an idea to have a benefit cost ratio for Turnhouse, which would allow us to compare the true value for money of those two options.

Tavish Scott: As we discussed at question time this morning, the STAG assessment includes not just the cost benefit ratio but the other factors that I have described, which it is important to recognise.

I was surprised by David McLetchie's speech. He is after all a conviction politician, and I expected utter clarity from him and his party about whether they support the general principle of providing the airport rail link—they cannot have it both ways. It would be astonishing if David

Cameron came up to Scotland during the election campaign and apologised for a lack of clarity from the Tories, but perhaps we will hear that.

I was particularly astonished that the Conservatives were not clear about their position. After the statement on the capital programme on 16 March, Murdo Fraser said:

"we are falling behind with our infrastructure"—[*Official Report*, 16 March 2006; c 24055.]

He went on to say how important this project is. I simply do not understand why the Conservatives do not support the bill's general principles.

Members made fair points about timetabling not just for EARL but throughout Scotland. The opening of the airport rail link provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to review Scotland's rail timetable and to ensure that it meets needs throughout Scotland for the next 10 years. The rail link is a positive potential development in achieving the outcome that we all want.

I listened carefully to Christine Grahame's arguments, but I say gently to her that she did not pick up the one argument that someone in Galashiels would surely put to her. If she supports the Borders railway line and wants people to use the new Waverley line between Galashiels and Edinburgh Waverley, why does she want to prevent people from catching a train to the airport after that?

Christine Grahame: I made it plain that I was talking about the particular project and solution that are before us. The debate is not about whether a rail link should exist between Edinburgh and its airport, but about whether the particular proposed link should proceed. We must have clarity, because we are dealing with public funds.

Tavish Scott: The debate is about the link to Edinburgh airport—it is about the general principles. I would have thought that that was pretty obvious, even to the SNP.

We heard a fascinating speech from the Green nationalist behind me and saw his cosiness with Mr Ewing. Mr Ewing must welcome Mark Ballard being such a good close personal friend. The political pact that is being formed must be of great importance to Mr Ewing. The logic of Mark Ballard's argument was bizarre. We want to invest in the tram, which the SNP opposes, and in the heavy rail link, which the SNP and the Greens oppose, because the link will be not just for Edinburgh, as Mark Ballard argued that it should be, but for the whole of Scotland. That is the overriding argument that we want to make.

I will finish with some bad news for Mr Ewing from the leadership election manifesto of his leader—the one down in London. Mr Ewing trotted out many figures in his speech and said that we

need to be very careful with money, which is a new policy for the Scottish National Party. In his leadership election manifesto, Mr Salmond called for £4 billion to £6 billion of investment in rail, including

“a train link between all three central belt airports”.

I am not sure how Mr Salmond’s position sits with Mr Ewing’s speech. I fear that Mr Ewing may not be the SNP’s transport spokesman for long. We may get Mr MacAskill, which would be a good thing for us all.

I support the motion.

16:50

Mr Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab):

Scott Barrie opened the debate by confessing that he has to cajole, threaten, persuade, sweet-talk and blackmail Labour members into serving on private bill committees. I leave members to guess which method was deployed in my case. I have suffered while serving on the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill Committee, and now it is members’ turn.

I will focus on a couple of general principles and address some of the detailed issues that were raised in the debate. On the general issue of tourism, the Executive’s white paper “Scotland’s transport future” notes that tourism is due to expand by 50 per cent in the next decade. For every 1,000 tourists who used the Edinburgh airport rail link, up to eight full-time equivalent jobs would be supported in the tourism sector. The value of tourism to Scotland is due to be about £13 billion by 2030. The promoter asserts that EARL will unlock several tourism markets, including business tourism for conferences and the short-break market, which is growing strongly. However, the key for that market is that people should be able to access destinations within three hours’ travel of the airport. The promoter contends that improved reliability, journey time and the quality of the project will assist us to meet the needs of the short-break market.

The committee was astonished by VisitScotland’s lack of engagement with EARL. According to VisitScotland’s written evidence, it is the

“lead public sector agency for tourism”

in Scotland and its role is

“to provide leadership and direction for the development of Scottish tourism to ensure we leverage the maximum possible economic benefit”.

However, it chose not to give oral evidence and belatedly submitted written evidence on the general principles of the scheme, which is supposed to bring tourism benefits to the whole

country. The committee will bring its concerns to the attention of the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, with a view to encouraging more joined-up working between the operator of EARL and VisitScotland.

The committee has concerns about whether the operating times of the scheme will serve the needs of business travellers. For example, the first train from Fife is scheduled for 7 am. We acknowledge that the promoter has analysed peaks of demand at Edinburgh airport and is confident that EARL’s operating hours—between 5 am and midnight—will meet demand. As has been said, Network Rail explained that expanding those hours would be extremely challenging.

The committee agreed that the potential to enhance the business case for EARL through extended operating hours may have been missed, given the current operating timetable. If Parliament agrees to the general principles of the bill, we will return to the issue at consideration stage and seek evidence from Network Rail and the promoter on the ability of the rail timetable for the scheme to meet the needs of all airport passengers. The frequency of services could also have an impact on the potential short-break market and, combined with the reduction in reliability that will be experienced on some services, it could limit the market to Lothians and Fife.

On the quality of trains, we remain concerned that rolling stock for EARL has yet to be procured or even specified. Transport Scotland acknowledges that the operation of EARL could be delayed if additional rolling stock is not procured timeously. A number of issues relating to EARL rolling stock have not been resolved. They include the need for additional luggage capacity, the ability of rolling stock to tackle steep gradients, through a tunnel, at the proposed airport station and the fact that the tender for procurement of additional rolling stock will not be completed until the end of 2007. We remain concerned that, in balancing the competing demands for additional capacity on services such as Edinburgh to Glasgow with providing more luggage space on EARL services, there is a danger of having inappropriate or inferior rolling stock.

We heard evidence that the view in the United Kingdom Government’s white paper “The Future of Air Transport” and Edinburgh airport’s view is that passenger numbers at the airport could rise to between 20 million and 26 million by 2030. That is double the growth that could be predicated using the gross domestic product figures. It was not within the committee’s remit to examine the sustainability of or the predictions on future air travel, but we were reassured by the promoter’s modelling, which suggested that the predicted growth in passenger numbers would need to fall

by 55 per cent before EARL's benefit to cost ratio was seriously hindered.

The committee agrees that, although EARL will facilitate a public transport hub interchange at Edinburgh airport, it will not in itself deliver that. I could make several other points on the scheme, but colleagues, including the minister, have touched on them. Therefore, in my remaining time, I will address some points that were made during the debate.

David McLetchie, in speaking to his amendment, said that he would not have started from here, with two central Scottish airports. That is certainly what was said to the man who was lost—"I wouldn't have started from here." We might add that we would not have started from here procedurally. In essence, we are administering the fag end of a parliamentary procedure that was introduced into the 19th century Westminster Parliament by the Tory landowning class to prevent railways being built. Doesn't it show?

Mr McLetchie was complimentary enough to say that the committee was made up of sceptics. We showed a healthy scepticism and gave the promoter a severe examination. We should be allowed to continue that important work. I do not understand Mr McLetchie's amendment, which asks for information that the committee has made clear it must have before it in the next stage of its deliberations. In essence, David McLetchie has said that there is not enough information. However, on the desk beside me, there are a couple of thousand pages of information. Mr McLetchie does not think that that is enough, which leads me to speculate that Edinburgh lawyers must have a system of payment that is based on piece-work.

Fergus Ewing said that the costs of £620 million are excessive and unknown—of course, they cannot be both. I gather that he thinks that the scheme is too dear. He does not want Edinburgh airport to be connected to 62 other stations in Scotland; he wants it to be connected only to the city of Edinburgh by a cheap and cheerful scheme, so that other cheap and cheerful schemes can be built in other parts of the country. He identified issues that the committee has already identified, such as the fact, to which I referred, that the required rolling stock for the scheme does not yet exist.

Christine Grahame quoted extensively from the committee's report, which is fine but, in view of the fact that the benefit to cost ratio for the Borders rail line is not particularly strong, it was imprudent of her politically to go in so hard against the Edinburgh airport rail link. Jamie McGrigor said that we did not get enough information about the Turnhouse alternative, but there are 105 pages of

information on that—I do not know whether he read them and what he quoted from.

When it comes to the Greens, I could not eat a whole one, but if their opposition to the scheme was successful, they would ensure that the pre-eminent means of access to Edinburgh airport would be the motor car. I rather thought that that might be a pity.

Bruce Crawford said, correctly, that we have to make a leap of faith on the scheme at this stage. He was right that we are early on in the life of the scheme. However, he was wrong when he said that our standing orders do not allow the fairly basic financial detail to be acceptable at this stage.

Donald Gorrie was right—that is a first for me. Margo MacDonald was right as well. It would not be the first time that Gordon Brown has hit the oil producers with a windfall tax, so we do not have a problem with that in principle.

To break out of my quasi-judicial shackles for a moment, I point out that the big political story of the day is the coup d'état in the SNP, carried out by Fergus Ewing against Kenny MacAskill, which saw the SNP turn its back, in a parochial, pork-barrel way, on the development of Edinburgh and Glasgow city regions as the twin engines of economic development in Scotland.

Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill: Financial Resolution

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The next item of business is consideration of motion S2M-4796, in the name of Tom McCabe, on the financial resolution in respect of the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament, for the purposes of any Act of the Scottish Parliament resulting from the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill, agrees to any expenditure of a kind referred to in Rule 9A.14.3(b)(ii) of the Parliament's Standing Orders arising in consequence of the Act.—[*Tavish Scott.*]

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

Decision Time

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): There are seven questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S2M-4810.3, in the name of Ross Finnie, which seeks to amend motion S2M-4810, in the name of Annabel Goldie, on a greener, fairer Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Mr Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)

Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (Sol)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Ind)
 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)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (Sol)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Watt, Ms Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 67, Against 49, Abstentions 3.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The second question is, that amendment S2M-4810.1, in the name of Richard Lochhead, which seeks to amend motion S2M-4810, in the name of Annabel Goldie, on a greener, fairer Scotland, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (Sol)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (Sol)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Watt, Ms Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 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)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)

Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gordon, Mr Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Ind)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 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)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 28, Against 81, Abstentions 10.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The third question is, that amendment S2M-4810.2, in the name of Mark Ruskell, which seeks to amend motion S2M-4810, in the name of Annabel Goldie, on a greener, fairer Scotland, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gordon, Mr Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)

Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Ind)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 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)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (Sol)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (Sol)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Watt, Ms Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 12, Against 82, Abstentions 25.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The fourth question is, that motion S2M-4810, in the name of Annabel Goldie, on a greener, fairer Scotland, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Mr Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)

Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (Sol)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Ind)
 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)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (Sol)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Watt, Ms Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 66, Against 52, Abstentions 1.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament notes that, along with global poverty and terrorism, climate change is one of the three great challenges facing the planet; recognises that the Scottish Executive has already embodied fresh ideas, radical thinking and a uniquely Scottish approach in its response to this challenge in *Changing our Ways: Scotland's Climate Change Programme*, and welcomes the significant initiatives that the Executive has taken to increase the level of renewable energy generation, improve the energy efficiency of new buildings, boost microrenewables, reduce energy poverty and increase investment in public transport, the introduction of strategic environmental assessment and the promotion of sustainable development across its policies.

The Presiding Officer: The fifth question is, that amendment S2M-4809.1, in the name of David McLetchie, which seeks to amend motion S2M-4809, in the name of Scott Barrie, on the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Ind)
 Petrie, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 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) (Sol)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)

Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 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)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (Sol)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)

Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 Watt, Ms Maureen (North East Scotland) (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 22, Against 96, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The sixth question is, that motion S2M-4809, in the name of Scott Barrie, that the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill and that it should proceed as a private bill, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (Sol)
 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)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)

McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (Sol)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Ind)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Watt, Ms Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 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 69, Against 30, Abstentions 20.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill and that the Bill should proceed as a Private Bill.

The Presiding Officer: The seventh and final question is, that motion S2M-4796, in the name of Tom McCabe, on the financial resolution in respect of the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (Sol)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Davidson, Mr David (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Miss Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gordon, Mr Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)

Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Ind)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 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)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (Sol)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Watt, Ms Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 84, Against 29, Abstentions 3.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament, for the purposes of any Act of the Scottish Parliament resulting from the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill, agrees to any expenditure of a kind referred to in Rule 9A.14.3(b)(ii) of the Parliament's Standing Orders arising in consequence of the Act.

Elgin Bypass

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):

The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S2M-4632, in the name of Maureen Macmillan, on the Elgin bypass. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes the continued strong public support for an Elgin bypass; believes that a bypass is necessary to relieve the increasing problem of congestion in and around Elgin; welcomes the Moray 2020 strategy which recognises that, in order to enhance the area to attract inward investment, government dispersals and growing businesses, local transport links need to be transformed, and therefore believes that both Moray Council and the Scottish Executive should give a commitment to re-examine the case for an Elgin bypass.

17:11

Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I thank the minister for being here tonight after such an arduous afternoon and those members who have stayed behind. I know that Richard Baker has to leave quite soon, because he has a train to catch and some constituency engagements. I am glad to see that Peter Peacock is here, although he cannot take part in the debate, because he is a minister.

It is almost three years to the day since the late Margaret Ewing led a debate on the need for the Elgin bypass and was promised congestion-relieving measures and better pedestrian protection. From his own recent visit to Elgin, the minister can judge how ineffective those measures have been. The campaign for a bypass continues, and the local newspaper *The Northern Scot and Moray & Nairn Express* and Elgin councillors, particularly the Labour members led by Sandy Keith, have been at its forefront.

Elgin is bisected by the A96 trunk road, which links Aberdeen and Inverness. That link is becoming increasingly important, with the development and diversification of the energy industry. The road is notorious for the obstacles that are placed in the way of good journey times and for the levels of driver stress that it causes. It is more like a country road at times, with its tractors and combine harvesters.

Traffic on this important trunk road comes to a standstill when it reaches Elgin, which the minister saw for himself on his recent visit. The road has 16 major junctions, nine roundabouts, four stacking lanes, a bus station that opens directly on to it, a new Tesco opening directly off it, and a large number of heavy goods vehicles using it. There are not enough pedestrian crossings for

public safety, but more would impede the flow of traffic still further.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): I concur with Maureen Macmillan's comments about the A96. Does she agree that there should be a long-term objective to dual the A96 along its length between Aberdeen and Inverness, and that although it might take 20 years or more to achieve, we should nonetheless put party politics aside and agree the common objective?

Maureen Macmillan: We all have dreams and aspirations for different projects in Scotland, and we might not all be able to realise them even in 20 years. However, if the member listens to the rest of my speech, he will get some idea of where I stand.

According to figures obtained over five days, almost 20,000 vehicles pass through Elgin every day. Two thirds of them are local traffic, but one third—between 6,000 and 7,000 vehicles per day—head beyond Elgin and go west towards Inverness and beyond or east towards Buchan, Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen city. Those are significant numbers, and they bear comparison with the numbers of vehicles using the A9 bypasses at Pitlochry and Killiecrankie, for example.

Elgin deserves better than that. It is an ancient and beautiful city that is being strangled by traffic. Highlands and Islands Enterprise Moray and Moray Council have great aspirations for Elgin. As can be seen in the 2020 vision for Moray, they are striving to invigorate Elgin with new business creation, better-paid employment, a growing population and a thriving tourist trade, but that will all be constrained by the present infrastructure. We cannot expand the economy of Elgin in particular and Moray in general without dealing with the A96.

A lot more attention must be paid to the A96 and to the rail links along the A96 corridor. I hesitate to mention the Orton loop to the minister, because it has been about to be dealt with for several years. I hope that we will get some news of progress.

The A96 is a vital link between north and north-east Scotland, especially for the engineering interests around the Moray firth that need good links with Aberdeen. People can travel by dual carriageway from Edinburgh to Aberdeen much more quickly than they can travel from Inverness to Aberdeen, despite the relative distances on the map.

At the end of the previous debate on the Elgin bypass three years ago, the then Minister for Transport, Nicol Stephen, made a commitment to address the short-term congestion problems. However, those problems are now worse than

ever because of a sea change in traffic levels and an undoubted increase in the volumes of through traffic, including HGVs, travelling from Inverness to Aberdeen.

Moray Council wants much closer co-operation with Transport Scotland and a real commitment to develop solutions that provide extra capacity for the A96, but that cannot be provided on the current route. We know that A96 corridor studies are in progress but, for the people of Moray, the corridor studies seem to creep along as slowly as the traffic through Elgin. How long will the people of Elgin have to wait for the decision to build a bypass? Indeed, how long will it take for anything to happen once that decision is made? The present, now congested, relief road took 45 years to come to fruition. We do not want to wait 45 years for the situation to be remedied.

I ask the minister for more than warm words. I ask him for a real commitment to Moray and Elgin. I ask him to agree that a bypass is necessary and will happen, so that planning can begin without further delay.

17:17

Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): I congratulate Maureen Macmillan on securing tonight's debate. The issue is of vital importance to Elgin and Moray, which I have the privilege of representing. I recognise the role of my predecessor, Margaret Ewing—who sponsored the previous debate on the subject, to which Maureen Macmillan referred—who was a strong supporter of the community-based campaign to secure a bypass for Elgin.

The parliamentary campaign for the bypass started when an 8,000 signature-strong petition was submitted to the Parliament by the Elgin bypass committee, which was led by *The Northern Scot and Moray & Nairn Express*. After working its way through the system in Parliament, the petition was closed in May this year. Since then, the bypass committee has been extremely busy prosecuting its case and taking it forward. It secured a visit by the Minister for Transport to Elgin. The minister will notice his picture here on the front page of *The Northern Scot*. During his fantastic visit—which I hope he enjoyed—the minister saw at first hand the traffic problems in Elgin. The headline in *The Northern Scot*, which organised the visit together with the bypass committee, reads "Bypass plea makes its mark on minister". I hope that that is the case. Perhaps we will find out at the end of the debate.

I pay tribute to all the community campaigners who have run the campaign for so long, including the business community and Moray Council. However, I pay particular tribute to the hugely

respected editor of *The Northern Scot*, Pauline Taylor, who has put so much personal effort into the campaign. The bypass committee is as busy as ever. Although the petition has been closed, the minister will have learned from his visit that the case for a bypass in Elgin is stronger than ever.

Elgin is not only the biggest community in Moray without a bypass, I am told that it is the biggest community in Scotland without a bypass. At the most recent census, Elgin had a population of 22,000. At the moment, the city is undergoing major developments, with on-going house building and major retail developments in the pipeline. Within the next few years, there will be major refits of the neighbouring RAF bases at Kinloss and Lossiemouth. As the minister and the rest of us can imagine, the traffic levels in the years ahead will increase non-stop, given those projects that are in the pipeline.

Moray and Elgin need a transport system that is fit for purpose and fit for the 21st century. In response to the minister's visit a few weeks ago, Pauline Taylor said that Elgin is

"a mediaeval city trying to cope with 21st century traffic".

That sums up the situation. I know that the minister is sympathetic to that viewpoint.

I live in Elgin—I am perhaps the only MSP who lives in Moray—so I share the experiences of my constituents day in, day out. However, the bypass would benefit not only the residents of Elgin but, as Maureen Macmillan said, the people who use the A96, on which Elgin sits. The A96 is the route between Aberdeen, the oil capital of Scotland, and Inverness, the Highland capital. Hundreds of thousands of commuters in Scotland are familiar with the traffic jams and notorious bottlenecks on the A96. The first bottleneck in my constituency is Fochabers, which is notorious. I know that the minister is aware of the situation there: we have the go-ahead for the bypass but we have to wait for the inquiry, and there are various delays. I hope that in his closing speech the minister will address the situation in Fochabers. The other bottleneck is the subject of this debate, which is Elgin itself. Anyone who travels through the north of Scotland will be familiar with both bottlenecks.

I will address the reasons why we must have the Elgin bypass, why we must upgrade the A96 and why we must deal with the other bottlenecks.

The Moray 2020 strategy, which Maureen Macmillan mentioned, was published a while back. At the time, there was a threat to the RAF bases, which thankfully has since been lifted. The strategy recognises that although we have a lot going for us in Moray—our community spirit, our iconic industries and businesses, our fantastic natural environment and our quality of life—the area faces many significant challenges,

particularly economic ones. As outlined in the strategy, those economic challenges are illustrated by the fact that three quarters of the young people in Moray leave the area. One thing that we must do is retain our young people in Moray. Three quarters of 17 and 18-year-olds leave Moray to pursue a career elsewhere or to further their education. Very few of them come back to Moray. We must address that problem and change the situation.

The economic challenges are best illustrated by the many examples in the strategy. A lower number of graduates work in our local economy than is the case in most places in Scotland and we have fewer jobs in the private sector—the figure is well below the national average. There is a need for diversification, because most jobs in Moray relate to the food and drink sector, the two RAF bases or the public sector. The focus of the strategy is to bring diversification to the local economy.

The number 1 priority on which the whole community—the business community, residents and everyone else involved in the debate—agrees is that we must upgrade the transport infrastructure. That is seen as the key to securing economic progress for Moray in the 21st century. It is seen as the make-or-break issue, which is why this debate is so important.

We cannot have an A96 upgrade without having the Elgin bypass, as dualling the A96 would not make sense without it.

This evening we are looking for, first, an acknowledgement that the current state of the A96 is unacceptable and that it needs to be upgraded. Secondly, we want the minister to acknowledge that the upgrade should include a bypass for Elgin—I hope that he was persuaded of that during his recent visit. Finally, I would like an indication of the timescale for decisions on the Fochabers bypass, the Elgin bypass and the upgrade of the A96.

If the minister gives us some good news this evening, I promise to get him a nice Speyside malt to reward him for his fantastic news—I am talking about a dram, not a bottle.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Lochhead should close, before he digs himself in any deeper.

Richard Lochhead: We should bear it in mind that a fraction of the £600-odd million that has been talked about for the Edinburgh airport rail link would solve many of our problems in Moray, which have been left to wither on the vine for far too long. I hope that we get some good news from the minister this evening.

17:23

Dave Petrie (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I congratulate Maureen Macmillan on securing this most worthwhile debate. Annabel Goldie and I look forward to heading up to her part of the world at the weekend.

I am delighted to be given the opportunity to speak on such a worthy cause. The city of Elgin follows the fine tradition of many of our Scottish cities by being small in scale but perfectly formed. It is the main centre in Moray but is struggling to cope in a 21st century world. As is the case in many of our cities, the infrastructure in the centre of Elgin was not designed to cope with the demands of our modern day way of life. However, as has been mentioned, most of those cities have a bypass in place to help them to cope; Elgin does not. The recent spate of floods in the city has added to the woes of Elgin residents and the strain on its road network. I, and the Conservative party that I represent, whole-heartedly support the introduction of a modern city bypass, which would vastly improve the transport network in Moray.

More than 18,000 vehicles run through Elgin every day. It is estimated that a bypass would remove up to a third of them, including a significant number of HGVs, which our existing roads were not designed to take. A city such as Elgin needs to be given the infrastructure to develop, otherwise it will be swallowed up by terminal decline and competition from neighbours such as Inverness. If companies feel that they do not have access to a transport network that functions well, they will simply locate elsewhere and take their valuable investment with them.

Many local businesses in the Elgin area are of international renown—for example, Walkers Shortbread and Johnstons of Elgin. The Elgin area also has two of the most strategic Royal Air Force bases in the country. Many of the HGVs that service the businesses and bases are almost too big to negotiate the road network, and their efforts to do so cause traffic to grind to a halt. We value our businesses' continued commitment to Moray and it is important that we show our commitment to them by allowing them conditions in which they can thrive.

Throughout the Highlands, the tourism industry is healthy and commands a dominant position. Cities, towns and villages throughout the region benefit from the flood of tourists who come to marvel at our world-famous scenery and friendly welcome. If we are to encourage tourism in Elgin, we must ensure that tourists who go there do not leave with the impression that life in Elgin is a traffic-ridden rat race, with streets clogged with smoke and traffic jams—if, indeed, tourists decide to stop at all.

A city bypass would demonstrate a commitment to the region and an acknowledgement of the value of what it has to offer. However, the argument for a bypass goes further. As other members have said, the issue is not just the need for an Elgin bypass, but the need for an urgent upgrade of the A96 in general. My party has been calling for that for years now. The Labour Government missed an opportunity when it axed our infrastructure upgrade plans in 1997.

The A96 has regularly been voted into the top five of the most unpopular roads in Scotland and its safety record reflects that reputation, being the fifth most dangerous road in Scotland, despite some £8.9 million of Executive money having been spent on improvements in recent years. What we need is a solution, not a sticking plaster, which is why I want to see a commitment to a full upgrade of the A96, not just temporary remedial measures here and there.

In a recent survey by HIE, 80 per cent of respondents deemed the A96 to be unsatisfactory or worse. Equally disturbing, the survey found that the A96 was viewed as constraining Moray's ability to benefit from the expansion of companies from the Aberdeen hinterland. Nearly a fifth of businesses felt that the A96 represented a constraint to the development of their business in general. That may be a relatively low figure, but if a fifth of an area's businesses are being held back, how does the Executive expect that area to compete in the global economic climate? It is no wonder that we have a situation in which population numbers in the Highlands and Islands are declining and many locals are in despair over a faltering economy, traffic chaos and a lack of affordable housing.

I am pleased that my party, and my predecessor, Mary Scanlon, in particular, have done so much to highlight and campaign on the issues surrounding the A96 and an Elgin bypass. I whole-heartedly add my support to the motion. It is important that the Executive shows its commitment to having a 21st century road infrastructure to serve a 21st century Scotland. I might add that the Conservative party acknowledged the need for that when we were in Government. Its absence in Moray is holding back the social, economic and environmental development of the whole region. With such an apparent consensus on this most serious issue, it seems incredible that the Executive has still not woken up to it.

17:28

Eleanor Scott (Highlands and Islands) (Green): I am afraid that I am not in accord with the "apparent consensus". We last debated this topic three years ago; I was a lone voice then and

I expect to be a lone voice today. I probably risk damaging in its early stages the fragile relationship that my party has with the Scottish National Party transport spokesperson, but there you go.

In 1978, I was working in Elgin as the casualty doctor in Dr Gray's hospital. At that time, the A96 went right through the main street of Elgin. Everybody had campaigned for the ring road that was just beginning to be built then, which would solve all their problems—of course, it did not, because ring roads never do. Trying to build our way out of congestion with new roads does not work. Sooner or later we must tackle that problem.

Dave Petrie said that we need "a solution, not a sticking plaster". However, to me, a bypass is a sticking plaster; the solution is to reduce the level of traffic. Maureen Macmillan and others said that the rail network in the Moray area needs to be upgraded as well—that is so true. We have a two-lane road that some would like to be made into a dual carriageway—that would not be one of my priorities—but we have only a single-track railway, which has been neglected and has suffered from underinvestment. It is not fit for purpose and needs to be upgraded. We need to consider other modes of transport and to get traffic off the roads, instead of trying to find ways to transport it more quickly round the edges of our cities.

We must integrate public transport better so that it becomes more usable. Members have talked about all the local traffic around Elgin, which is partly due to there being no integration of transport either in timetabling or spatially. Buses to Elgin arrive a mile and a half away from the station. Elgin has a nice, newish station and not a bad train service, considering the constraints under which it operates. The line is inadequate, the trains are small and there is often standing room only, but at least there are trains.

However, a student from Burghead or Garmouth who was getting the train back to university in Aberdeen would arrive by bus in Elgin and have to lug their luggage a mile and a half to the station. That is just not on. People drive in Elgin because the public transport there has not been integrated—as usual, we are not joining the dots, but we should approach the issue from that point of view.

I do not regard Elgin as a town that is bisected by a main road; I have sympathy with towns such as Fochabers, which genuinely are so bisected. The ring road at Fochabers was built to take the traffic out of the main street. We must ask ourselves whether we are going to go down the route of serial bypass building, so that, when each one ceases to be a bypass and is simply a road around which more development has happened, people will ask for another bypass further out.

Sooner or later we must bite the bullet and address traffic reduction.

We cannot build to accommodate an ever-increasing, climate-damaging, unsustainable mode of transport that is just not going to be feasible in the 21st century. We must start to shift transport to more environmentally friendly modes and consider the reasons why people make journeys, so that they do not have to drive long distances to access services. In short, we must try to get traffic off the roads, not build more roads to carry that traffic.

17:32

The Minister for Transport (Tavish Scott): I thank Maureen Macmillan for the thoughtful way in which she introduced this evening's debate. I also thank Richard Lochhead, David Petrie and Eleanor Scott for their speeches, much of which I agreed with. I have one or two thoughts on them that I would like to share.

I drove along the A96 many times in my former employment, so I appreciate the points that Maureen Macmillan and Richard Lochhead made about the change along the entire length of the road. I was usually travelling from Aberdeen to Inverness but, on occasion, I had to drive all the way from Scrabster to Aberdeen. I appreciate the points that were made about the change in the road in recent times, which is possibly the important issue in the debate. Eleanor Scott might argue that that relates to general traffic growth, and there is no doubt that there has been traffic growth in the area. I will come on to that. We had a discussion with Moray Council about whether that is a strategic or a local issue, but I acknowledge the points that Maureen Macmillan and Richard Lochhead made.

In response to David Petrie's remarks, I advise members that—as I understand the figures—far from falling, the population of the Highlands and Islands is rising at this time. If he was making a specific point about Moray, however, I take that on board.

I say gently to our colleagues on the Green benches that I could not agree more with the point that Eleanor Scott made about interchanges. I work as hard as I can on what we can do to improve interchanges in villages, towns and cities. However, I do not think that, having voted against an interchange half an hour earlier, as the Greens did this afternoon, they can argue for better interchanges in Elgin. We need to be consistent in how we approach policy.

I accept Maureen Macmillan's point about it taking 45 years to build the existing relief road in Elgin. That was a fair observation. This august institution has been here for only seven years or

so; therefore, we have a number of years to get things right. I take the point that she made seriously.

I learned much from my visit to Elgin in August. I had not seen *The Northern Scot*, but I had seen the cuttings. To Mr Lochhead, I say that the picture that I was in was one of the better ones. I acknowledge how direct but fair Pauline Taylor was in expressing the views of the campaigners. I found it interesting that a powerful advocate for her area is also the editor of the local paper. It would certainly be interesting if the same was true on my own patch.

I took the campaign group's arguments seriously and I accept what members have said about the consistency of the campaign group's message. There has been strong local support for the project—members have mentioned the strong leadership of the late Margaret Ewing, who was the local MSP. There has also been a steady stream of correspondence from members of all parties, and plenty of parliamentary questions as well. I attach considerable importance to those representations on how we should best resolve Elgin's traffic problems in conjunction with the good people of Elgin and Moray.

A benefit of being able to attend the meeting at Moray Council was that we were able consider short-term actions to improve the town now. We agreed on three such actions; I will go through them quickly. First, I wanted to ensure that there were good lines of communication between Moray Council and Transport Scotland. That is now happening; a liaison officer in Transport Scotland has specific responsibility for Elgin and Moray. I am sure that members will welcome the opportunity to speak with him.

Secondly, Moray Council has said that further work is required to analyse the traffic problems. I agree, both from the perspective that Maureen Macmillan and Richard Lochhead gave me this afternoon, and from the perspective that Eleanor Scott has given me. There are now regular meetings between Transport Scotland and Moray Council officers to consider such an analysis.

Thirdly, Moray Council asked for improved traffic counts on the A96 and at other specified locations in the Elgin area, so that we can analyse the data and understand traffic movements better. That is now happening. Those were the three things that I was asked to do and I am pleased that they are all moving forward.

Transport Scotland is developing relationships with local councils through the regional transport partnerships. It is now meeting the Highlands and Islands transport partnership and the north-east Scotland transport partnership on the trunk roads directorates so that work is fully explained and

relationships are developed. That is important, and such a relationship is evident in our Aberdeen to Inverness corridor study steering group, on which Moray Council is represented and plays a full and active part.

This is a good time to be debating the issue, because we are in the final stages of completing the national transport strategy, which will provide a rational, objective and structured policy framework to guide future national and strategic investment programmes. When we present the strategy to Parliament, I do not think that anything in it will cause Richard Lochhead or Maureen Macmillan any worries: on the contrary, they will be able to see the helpfulness of the arguments within the strategy.

Closely linked to the strategy will be the strategic transport projects review, which will identify and prioritise our national investment programme for the future beyond 2012. I appreciate that that is not quick enough, but I have to be straight with colleagues about where our programme is now—by definition, that programme is full in relation to spending—and about what we can do in the future.

We will make progress by taking a corridor-by-corridor approach. In this case, that is the Aberdeen to Inverness corridor—or the Inverness to Aberdeen corridor, depending on how one sees it. The review will take into account the points that Maureen Macmillan and Richard Lochhead have raised about Elgin, but it will also take into account the fair point that Eleanor Scott made about the comparison between journey times on road and rail. The review will assess such things properly, robustly and correctly; that is the right way to ensure that the Government of the day will make the right decisions.

We will ensure that HITRANS and NESTRANS assist us with identifying options in the Aberdeen to Inverness multimodal corridor study. I assure members that I am ready to take decisive steps to ensure that we provide a fair share of future investment to the Highlands and the north-east. We will do that responsibly, based on a rigorous and objective assessment of what is required and how it can be delivered over time with the resources and budget that will be available to us.

Rome was not built in a day, but nor should it take 45 years. The solutions to Elgin's traffic problems must be addressed. We are putting the right mechanisms in place to ensure that we identify rational and appropriate measures to tackle the problems and, in that context, to identify our priorities for future investment. I will keep Parliament updated on our progress towards that objective.

Meeting closed at 17:39.

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