

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 26 October 2006

Session 2

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 26 October 2006

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

Young People and Families

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): Good morning. The first item of business is a debate on motion S2M-4999, in the name of Patrick Harvie, on young people and families.

09:15

Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): One of the first debates that Parliament held after the 2003 election was on young people. It followed an election campaign that had been dominated by the subject of antisocial behaviour and was shortly before the introduction of Executive legislation to address that issue, so it was understandable that several Labour members took the opportunity that the debate presented to talk about the antisocial behaviour of a minority of young people. However, that topic did not come to dominate the debate and many members of all parties spoke passionately about the creativity, energy and positive spirit of young people in Scotland, as well as about the pressures that they face.

Television coverage of the debate that night was, however, introduced by a predictable sequence of images, which consisted of slow-motion footage from closed-circuit television cameras that showed only the very worst behaviour that could be attributed to young people. Although we have disagreed consistently with the Executive about the contents of the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Act 2004, we have never accused members of deliberately reinforcing that link—of attempting consciously to tar all young people with the brush of antisocial behaviour. However, on national television that night, the effect was there for all to see—it has remained the case ever since.

The first distorted stereotype of young people is that they are antisocial, disruptive and criminal; in the language that is sometimes used by people who should know better, they are “hoodies” or “neds”. The second stereotype is that of the angelic innocent—the vulnerable child who is in need of constant protection from predators of every vile description. Both stereotypes are, of course, based on some truth. The first becomes powerful in relation to the disruptive or offending minority of young people and the second in relation to the shocking, but mercifully few, cases of tragedy through abuse, neglect or violence. It is

entirely right that government at all levels aims to address both those extremes as effectively as possible, even if politicians disagree about the right course of action.

What of the lives of the rest—the majority—of our young people, who fall between those two stereotypes? We have brought the debate because of a concern—which is felt not only by us, but by members of other parties and by parents, professionals and young people—that young people’s lives are too often impacted on by policies and systems that are designed to deal only with the extremes of life and which react only to the stereotypes that I described, with the result that the spontaneity, freedom and, even, the risk that are normal and necessary parts of growing up can be lost.

Our motion begins by acknowledging some of the many factors that can influence young people’s development. In particular, I emphasise the importance of relationships with peers, family members and adults. We regard the justice-led approach to problem behaviour as defeatist—when all else has failed, all we can do is make an order and threaten punishment. However, relationships are not easily amenable to court orders, and we reach too often for that option before all else has failed.

We need only look at the report that was published this week on funding of children’s social work services, which shows that the acute need for such services outstrips core funding by some 60 per cent. I do not wish to take away from the Executive’s provision of money to encourage more integrated working, but the core services remain woefully underfunded.

Voluntary sector services have achieved impressive results, but still struggle because of short-term funding. I am talking not only about the ill-fated Airborne Initiative that the Executive so irrationally decided to axe, but about other programmes that are provided by organisations such as NCH, Fairbridge and Barnardo’s and the 800 voluntary family and support services. That work is reducing reoffending rates, saving taxpayers’ money and giving young people reasons to make better choices in their lives, so why do we take those services for granted? We would not expect other bodies that are engaged with such problems, such as the police and the courts, to put up with insecure funding, but we expect it of the voluntary sector, despite its distinguished record of success.

The Institute for Public Policy Research, which is a Labour think-tank, has expressed concern about similar issues. It has coined the term “paedophobia” to describe a society in which adults are increasingly fearful of young people and perceive them to be a menace or a threat, even

when they are simply hanging around with friends, which young people have always done and, I hope, will always do.

Fear is also generated by the second stereotype: many adults are afraid to step in to look after other people's children because they are worried that they will be perceived as a threat. The result of both fears is unwillingness to engage with young people, which exacerbates the poverty of the relationships between the generations.

The IPPR is correct to say that neither condemnation nor absolution will do us any good. We must recognise the social, economic and cultural changes that have taken place in society and, instead of bemoaning the present, we must face up to it. That is why we end our motion with an appeal to the Executive

"to develop a comprehensive strategy for supporting families and young people"

that is designed to meet today's needs.

Members of all parties want the best for Scotland's young people, their families and their communities, but it should be clear by now that a further justice-led response to problem behaviour will only give us another dose of authoritarian measures that will distract us from the need for longer-term solutions and, crucially, from the need to foster positive relationships, which will do more good than any court order. I ask members to support the Scottish Green Party's motion.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises that children and young people are shaped by their relationships and experiences at home, in their schools and communities, by the physical space they find themselves in and by their economic circumstances; understands the absolute importance of these factors at the centre of healthy development; acknowledges that families and young people need support from time to time and that communities, public services, local authorities and the Scottish Executive share a responsibility to meet this need; regrets, however, that public debate in Scotland has increasingly reduced children and young people to simplistic stereotypes, either as innocents to be protected or as problems to be contained; in particular regrets that the tone of debate on antisocial behaviour has distracted attention and resources from the need to address the wider issues in young people's lives; believes that where problems such as youth disorder have arisen local communities are best placed to decide on the appropriate response; therefore rejects the idea of forcing local authorities to use specific antisocial behaviour measures against their better judgement, and calls on the Executive to develop a comprehensive strategy for supporting families and young people.

09:22

The Deputy Minister for Education and Young People (Robert Brown): I was incredulous as I listened to Robin Harper's description of the Executive's policies for children and young people. The challenge of enabling

every young person to have opportunities in life, to fulfil his or her potential and to enrich our society is central to what I am in politics for. I believe that it is also central to the vision of the Scottish Parliament and of Scottish ministers. The Government has put children and young people at the top of its agenda, so this morning's debate is a timely opportunity to identify what we have achieved and where the continuing challenges lie.

Our vision for Scotland's young people is for all of them to be nurtured, safe, healthy, achieving, included, respected and responsible. We want them all to be confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens. There is an extent to which such phrases are a mantra that ministers repeat when necessary, but they arise from the national debate on education, and they strike chords with professionals, parents and young people and give direction and purpose to our programmes, policies and practice in support of children and young people.

Since 1999, we have made a difference for young people in numerous ways. In education, more than 12,000 newly qualified teachers have entered our schools since the introduction of the teacher induction scheme in 2002, and we are well on course to achieving our target of having 53,000 teachers in the workforce by next year, which is central to our ambitions for the system. That is to say nothing of the provision of a cadre of classroom assistants to support that teaching.

We have reformed and modernised our schools on an unparalleled scale since the launch of our "ambitious, excellent schools" programme two years ago, and we have begun the transformation of schools through our leadership and chartered teacher programmes and the establishment of 27 flagship schools of ambition, more of which will follow.

Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP): There is concern about the facilities that young people can use. How does the minister feel about the public-private partnership contracts that lock young people out of schools and mean that they cannot take part in youth activities because the rents are too high?

Robert Brown: The truth is the opposite of that. PPP is a method of funding that takes into account the long-term usage of schools. It is one of a number of methods of funding capital expenditure that exist in our society. To a substantial extent, PPP has dealt with the neglect that followed the activities of the previous Administration. Throughout Scotland, many new schools have been built that would not have been provided without PPP.

Young people have new opportunities both in school and out of school. They can learn a musical instrument or try different sports, for example through the club golf initiative. Moreover, young people and voluntary organisations have benefited from more than 800 volunteering places that Project Scotland has offered since May 2005.

We have not shirked the challenges and the difficult questions: we have developed a strategy that supports young people who are not in education, employment or training in making a success of their lives and we are taking action to improve the educational outcomes of looked-after young people and give them the chances that they deserve.

Through the local action fund, we have also provided £5 million for new facilities such as skate parks, midnight football and youth cafes, to keep young people away from crime. There are now 1,500 more support projects for young carers than there were in 1999.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I do not want to take anything away from the many achievements that I am sure the minister will—given the chance—spend another four minutes listing, but I wonder whether he will reply to the point behind our motion and my colleague Robin Harper's opening speech, which is about how the perception and stereotyping of young people can harm their place in society in the years to come.

Robert Brown: I am not entirely sure that the stereotype to which Mr Harvie refers has not, in fact, been enhanced by seeking to debate—as we are this morning—a motion that is based on a fallacy. I also point out that the Green motion is a policy-free zone that neither makes any suggestions nor provides any answers to the questions that Mr Harvie has raised.

The reality is that the Executive is doing positive things for young people. I wish sometimes that the Greens would acknowledge more than they have the extent to which policies for young people in Scotland have changed. We have introduced a massive programme of action.

Robin Harper: Will the minister give way?

Robert Brown: No. I have already taken two interventions.

Scotland is at the leading edge in empowering young people. We do not just talk about them: we talk to them, involve them and—most important—we listen to them. We engage with the Scottish Youth Parliament and support dialogue youth and Young Scot. Last summer, we hosted the inspirational world youth congress in Stirling, and our schools are enlivened by pupil councils and by groundbreaking peer mentoring and buddy schemes.

Next week, our consultation on the national youth work strategy will end. Many young people have contributed to it and have told us what is important to them. I have been impressed by their vision, passion and ideas and am determined that our youth-work strategy will be fully focused on delivering the best possible outcomes and opportunities for those young people.

High-quality informal learning activities let young people enjoy themselves as they develop confidence and skills, so a youth-work approach has succeeded in engaging many young people who might find more formal learning difficult, or who have had problems in the past. Some of the organisations that we support carry out excellent work in giving young people new opportunities and a brighter future.

We have provided more than £120 million to support community learning and development and youth work delivered through local authorities. We also provide funding for voluntary youth organisations' headquarters. As Mr Harper rightly acknowledged in his opening speech, the uniformed organisations and the voluntary youth-work sector in general do a tremendous job. This year, we have also allocated additional funding to improve facilities for young people.

This Scottish Government has made its commitment; it has put in place the structures, the funding and the programmes. We know that we rely on teachers, youth workers and others in the field to give life to our vision, but our commitment to and our ambition for young people are unlimited because they are our future. We welcome Parliament's support for our work and the chance to hear members' individual perspectives in the debate.

I move amendment S2M-4999.2, to leave out from "that children and young people" to end and insert:

"the vital importance of all young people being able to fulfil their potential; pays tribute to the contribution young people across Scotland make to their families and communities; knows the importance of the family in providing support and guidance for young people; welcomes the fact that child poverty has been reduced by over a quarter in Scotland, that the Scottish Executive has introduced universal nursery education for all three to four-year-olds, that the Executive has seen record levels of investment in schools and teachers, that more of our young people are going on to higher and further education, that youth unemployment is at a record low and that more parents are in work and have access to support and childcare; recognises further that some parents require extra support to bring up children, that decent families and young people need to be safe and protected in their homes and communities, that young people supported by and having access to good quality youth work opportunities have an important role to play in improving their communities, and reiterates the determination of this Parliament to stand up to antisocial behaviour, to end child poverty and to provide every child and young person with the best possible start in life."

09:28

Derek Brownlee (South of Scotland) (Con): I must say that I did not react to Robin Harper's speech with incredulity. Although I did not agree with all that he had to say, his contribution was thoughtful and measured. The minister might have been better served by taking the same tone in his speech.

Robin Harper's comments on the role of the voluntary sector, which the minister touched on to some extent, were very important. Too often in this country, we take the view that Government knows best and has all the answers. However, individuals, families and voluntary groups can make a much greater contribution to the development not just of young people and families but of society as a whole.

In my amendment, I seek to spell out what I feel are the more important themes with regard to young people and families. In fact, they are the same themes that apply to any other group in society. After all, in debates such as this, there is a danger that we focus too much on the differences between groups instead of on what binds us. Issues such as the safety of individuals in our society and employment and educational opportunities are matters of concern not just for younger generations, but for all generations.

The biggest thing that any Government can do for young people is provide them with educational opportunities. In this country—as in, I concede, other countries—the education system is simply not helping a hard core of young people as much as it needs to, so we must look very carefully at how we can improve opportunities for the bottom 20 per cent of pupils.

We need to look at employment opportunities for young people. As we all saw yesterday when we were lobbied by physiotherapists, too many people are spending time in training without getting the employment opportunities that they need to progress and to go on to live the lives that their parents created for them.

Last year, the think-tank Reform published a very interesting report on the so-called iPod generation. Some members are Thatcher's children—in other words, they spent their formative years under a Conservative Government. I see Alex Johnstone raising his hand, but I was not really referring to him.

Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): The member mentioned Mrs Thatcher. Did not she say once that unemployment was a price worth paying?

Derek Brownlee: In their 18 years in power, the Conservatives gave unprecedented opportunities to young people. Indeed, the record of the last

Conservative Government was significantly better in that regard than the record of the Executive that Mr Rumbles has consistently supported.

The Reform report highlights differences between the generation that was born after 1975 and the preceding generation with regard to opportunities to buy their own homes and to build up pensions and retire. The generation before mine had such opportunities, thanks in part to the Conservative Government of the time. However, that is not the case for my generation, thanks to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's changes to the tax system, which make it more likely that retirement incomes will be significantly reduced; thanks to increases in house prices and stamp duty for average house buyers, which make it more difficult for first-time buyers to buy somewhere, never mind meet the mortgage payments; and thanks to the Executive's changes to public services, which mean that they are not of a standard that young people and others have a right to expect.

Instead of coming up with some strategy for young people and families, the Executive needs to focus much more on the basic issues that affect all generations. Frankly, I feel that the minister is rather complacent. He would do better to listen to some of the effective points that Mr Harper made than to sit back, fold his arms and reflect on a job that he seems to think has been done.

I move amendment S2M-4999.1, to leave out from first "regrets" to end and insert:

"believes that the most important duties of the Executive towards young people are to provide them with better opportunities for education and employment, a safe environment with affordable housing in which to live and public services which are efficient and effective, and calls for a greater focus from the Executive on delivering improvements in public services and providing opportunities for young people, families, and everyone else in Scotland."

09:33

Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP): A stark warning that society is demonising its children has been issued only this morning. A leading Scottish political figure has said that Scottish society is at

"a very dangerous tipping point"

because adults are turning young people into hate figures. That figure was not Robin Harper; it was not my colleague Kenny MacAskill; and it was not any of the Conservatives. I hate to tell the Executive that it was Ewan Aitken, the Labour leader of the City of Edinburgh Council. In that regard, Derek Brownlee was right to accuse the minister of complacency.

As members recall, Ewan Aitken was until very recently the Convention of Scottish Local

Authorities' spokesperson on education and young people. However, this morning, he is quoted as saying that

"the nation's youth was being 'demonised' and that it was vital to address the misconception that most of them were up to no good".

In that respect, I welcome the fact that the Greens have raised the debate, because we do young people a disservice if we do not address their very real concerns. No one underestimates the problems that are caused in our communities by persistent young offenders' antisocial behaviour. However, as I said, we do young people a disservice by not reflecting the wider issues and the longer-term implications of a policy that deals with the symptoms rather than the causes of the malaise in our society.

In my brief time, I want to focus on early intervention. Yesterday, Parliament debated the Education Committee's report on its early years inquiry, which concluded that if we want to tackle society's problems and try to change it for the better, we have to consider early intervention. The same applies to justice issues. A study by the Glasgow children's reporter shows that 40 per cent of persistent young offenders aged 15 had first been referred for care and protection at the age of eight.

There is a sense of urgency and alarm because we have seen 55,000 children and young people referred to the children's reporters this year. The care and protection figures have escalated, and I know that the minister has acknowledged the problems, but referrals for criminal behaviour have actually remained fairly static. If we accept that those who are vulnerable and are under care and protection have a tendency to become persistent young offenders later, and if we do not tackle the mismatch between the escalation of the care and protection figures and the other issues, we are storing up problems for the future, because once a young person is in that cycle it is difficult to get him or her out.

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): I am certainly not going to argue with Fiona Hyslop about the number of referrals, but does she appreciate that the number of referrals for protection has gone up because the facilities and social work capacity exist in communities to ensure that those cases are captured, whereas in the 1970s and early 1980s they would not have been captured or referred, so the support packages would not have been put in place to help those young people?

Fiona Hyslop: I appreciate the point that Jeremy Purvis makes; I said that the increase in numbers is complex. However, one of the concerns that we have heard from children's reporters is that they have to refer cases back

because social workers and police are referring cases in the first place because they see doing so as a passport to getting services. That is where the pressures and constraints are.

Because of the Executive's focus on youth offending as an issue for social work, social workers' career prospects are better in criminal justice than they are in child protection social work. Vacancies for child protection workers exist for longer than do those in other areas. Committees of Parliament have suggested that it might be appropriate for all social workers to have mandatory child protection sessions, because of the shortages in child protection. When we consider the demonisation that takes place and the concerns that have been raised by some child protection cases, we can understand social workers' anxieties about specialising in child protection.

Early intervention can work. I recently visited the Blackford Brae project, which is run by Barnardo's Scotland. That facility deals with young people, many as young as primary-school age, who are in fear of exclusion. It also saves the state money, because it helps young people to stay in mainstream education and tackles their antisocial behaviour when they are very young. If it is not tackled when they are young, the result can be overcrowded prisons and other pressures later.

I wonder about the minister's comments and about his willingness to trot out the Executive's successes. I wonder whether the Liberal Democrats really want to be part and parcel of an Executive that uses such antisocial behaviour rhetoric, as opposed to action. I see some interesting grimaces on Mike Rumbles's face, but I seriously believe that the minister's comments belied his sense of discomfort. Perhaps we will get a Labour minister with responsibility for justice to sum up, or perhaps the Liberal Democrat minister will be able to tell us in his summing up speech what he really thinks.

09:38

Mrs Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab): I apologise for coming in slightly late, Presiding Officer, and for missing part of Mr Harper's speech.

I welcome the opportunity to debate young people and families, so I congratulate the Green members on their choice of subject. I intend to focus my comments on how we, as policy makers, can support families and benefit our children and young people. However, I cannot go on without looking at the second part of the Green motion. I do not understand why the Greens seek to defend those whose actions make other people's lives a misery. I do not see children or young people as

victims or villains. The only people I ever hear speaking in such clichéd terms are members of the Scottish Green Party. I want to ensure that people can live their lives in peace, and I am proud that the Labour Party has championed respect for others and has backed that up with legislation. The Greens—and, it seems, Ms Hyslop—need to realise that people cannot just do what they want, and that considering others will make for a better society.

I return to my original point.

Robin Harper: Will Mary Mulligan give way?

Mrs Mulligan: I will not give way just now.

The Children in Scotland briefing states that parents and families are key to ensuring that childhood is a positive and nurturing experience. Children prosper best where they have a stable family life—we all agree about that. I am attracted to Children in Scotland's notion that national parenting and family support strategies should be developed. Some families clearly face more challenges than others, but I challenge any parent in this chamber to deny that they could, at some point, have done with a little more support and advice. Few people are supported by extended families these days, as we live away from such families. The problem is that there is a stigma associated with looking for support because it is not the normal thing to do and we do not know where to go, so most people struggle on.

At a recent meeting of the Parliament's cross-party group on children and young people, we heard about the helpful idea that services should be available from birth. Parents are most receptive at that time, but that needs to be the start of support, not the only support. Children and families can face challenges at any age, and we need to establish a range of supports that families can dip into when they need them.

The mapping of the present services should show what needs to be done. I have recently been involved in such an exercise, following the Justice 1 Committee's consideration of the Family Law (Scotland) Bill. I was appointed as reporter to the committee on family support services, particularly in respect of distressing situations of family dispute or breakdown. I will give my report to the committee first, but there are two brief points that I would like to make today.

First, one of the most disturbing things for children and young people is animosity between adults in a household during the acrimonious breakdown of a relationship. Therefore, relationship counselling, mediation and sympathetic legal advice and support are crucial. Such services exist, but they are at risk and there is concern about their future provision. Secondly, once a relationship has broken down, particularly

where there is acrimony, one of the most important services is the contact centre. Only in a few cases should a child's right to contact with both mother and father be denied. Contact centres are a practical way of providing contact and re-establishing relationships between adults while focusing on the needs of the children. My report should be available by Christmas, but I hope that we will see those services being supported well into the future.

The motion starts well, but it is spoilt by the ridiculous assertions about antisocial behaviour. We need to consider whether there needs to be some way of ensuring that couples understand the responsibility that they take on when they become parents; Scottish Marriage Care's REACT—relationship education and counselling team—project is an apt way of offering such assistance. Too often, we hear about the right to have a child, but not that there is recognition of the responsibility that goes along with it and which will give the child a stable and loving home. Parents are the primary carers, but Governments need to provide support.

The Tories' amendment flies in the face of their record of huge youth unemployment, with endless schemes such as the youth opportunity programme and the youth training scheme, massive repossession of houses while interest rates were at 15 per cent, and unemployment and homelessness that led to family break-ups—all from the party that claims to be the party of the family.

The best that politicians can do is recognise and celebrate the role that parents play. By supporting parents, we can ensure that our children and young people have the happy and healthy lives that we want for them.

09:43

Eleanor Scott (Highlands and Islands) (Green): I will continue the debate by asking members to consider the relevance of our social and physical environment to the behaviour and experience of young people. As Robin Harper said, the Institute for Public Policy Research described the current popular attitude as paedophobia. As a society, we seem to be scared of sharing our space with young people. We are fearful of them if they are our own and fearful of them if they belong to someone else. We squeeze them indoors, out of harm's way, and try to stop them making use of public spaces. If we take a moment to think about it, we will all recognise that the lives of young people today are constrained in ways that we would not have been happy about when we were young people.

Of course, some young people will want to break out and rebel. At this point, I will tell a story from

my own village. For a while a few years ago, a lot of young kids—boys in their early teens—were skateboarding in the small car park in the middle of the village, which was clearly inappropriate. They were making impromptu jumps out of oil drums and planks of wood, which was dangerous for other users of the car park, and they were a bit noisy. One elderly resident, who was also a community councillor, crossed the road to speak to them one day. The boys told him that they did not have anywhere else to skateboard. He said, "What would you like?" They explained that they would like a dedicated skateboarding area. He suggested that they come to the community council, and they did. I was on the community council at the time. Those 14 and 15-year-olds gained a huge amount of respect as a result of the way in which they presented their case to the community council. Their proposal was taken forward and they got their skateboard park. The point of the story is that if we cross the road, go to the young people and talk to them, we will often find that underneath the noisy exterior, and notwithstanding behaviour that is inappropriate for a public area, is a 14 or 15-year-old who is worthy of respect.

At the moment, our towns and regions seem to be competing to see which of them gives out the greatest number of antisocial behaviour orders or installs the greatest number of CCTV cameras. Those with the highest tally win applause on the front pages of the press. Instead of that, our communities in our towns and regions should be competing to see which can successfully include, not exclude, the greatest number of people.

Young people need space—physical, social and emotional—in which to discover who they are and what they want. Research from the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment shows that starting a community garden and a residents association did more to reduce crime in a London tower block and reduce the fear of crime among its residents than did building security fences, installing CCTV and concreting over a nearby outdoor space. Others may insist that being tough only means creating barriers, making dispersal orders and even giving custodial sentences, but the facts show otherwise. Rather than banishing children we should be encouraging them to step out into the world, engage with others and learn about themselves.

In my region, the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers runs a scheme called the Highland youth environment heritage programme, which offers young people who are struggling academically the chance to receive training and to socialise on local conservation projects. So far, more than 1,167 volunteer hours have been clocked up. Young people who complete the programme are encouraged to join local

conservation groups so that they mix with a wide range of people in their community or even move on to set up their own conservation projects.

Highland Council has led the way in engaging young people in the planning process. It recognises that for the planning process to be beneficial to and respected by the whole community, its plans for urban and rural areas should respond to the needs of the whole community, including young people. That may seem an obvious statement to make but, when we make policies and plans, the views and experiences of young people are often overlooked. The Executive has attempted through guidance and advice notes to build a systematic approach to engaging with young people, but it has not done enough to ensure that those ideas are put into practice.

Under-18s make up 22 per cent of the Scottish population. We cannot get anywhere by vilifying them and ignoring their views. We need to make spaces that we as adults can share with young people. A strong policy on supporting young people and families is important, but it is up to the Executive to ensure that it does not leave young people in a policy ghetto.

09:48

Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): Today's debate is an opportunity to examine the chasm between Executive rhetoric and delivery. It allows us to focus on young people as guardians of our nation's future and not as the cause of our present problems. It suits too many on the Executive benches to characterise young people as dark creatures of the night. Mike Rumbles may gesticulate, but that serves only to confirm the correctness of the reference.

I turn to the motion and the amendments and the intention behind them. The Executive amendment retains but four words from the Green party's substantive motion. It seeks to delete

"acknowledges that families and young people need support from time to time"

and insert

"reiterates the determination of this Parliament to stand up to antisocial behaviour".

It seems that every time we discuss our youth, the Executive seeks to insert negative references to antisocial behaviour. It is as if youth and antisocial behaviour are partners in the same dance. As long as that continues to happen, we are sending unhelpful messages to our youth: we are telling them that they should be disconnected from the mainstream of Scottish society and life.

I respect Robert Brown's championing of youth issues, but he does our youth a disservice and

reveals his inner convictions about the merits of youth by the words that he gets sucked into using, perhaps by his Labour partners or, more simply, as the result of drafting by civil servants who are not sufficiently sensitive to what needs to be done.

The way we deal with antisocial behaviour is ambiguous. At the heart of the ambiguity is the sense that we view the whole issue as essentially a criminal justice issue but, by virtue of the way in which charges relating to antisocial behaviour have been incorporated into law, in essence antisocial behaviour is dealt with by the civil and not the criminal law. If people commit crimes, we should use the criminal law to address that. Our use of the civil law fudges the whole issue.

What has been missing from the debate so far is the issue of children as victims. The reality is that the overwhelming majority of actions that come under the charge of antisocial behaviour are perpetrated by adults, not children. I refer to antisocial behaviour that results from drinking, drug taking, deprivation and violence. The BBC has on its website a helpful discussion under the unhelpful heading "Are Scotland's young people demonised?" Dave from Glasgow comments:

"In some areas we are into the 3rd generation without +ve family role models. As a voluntary youth worker in inner city Glasgow I have known and worked with kids whose parents (& grandparents) set an awful example ... If this is the environment for people in their 'impressionable years' then what hope is there."

The answer to parliamentary question S2W-28897, which I received yesterday, reinforces the real difficulties that kids experience. My question was

"how many people have been found guilty of committing an offence specifically involving child victims in each year since 1999",

which is the year the Executive came to power. It may surprise members to hear that the latest figure was 545, which is 50 per cent higher than the figure for 1999, which was 368. There has been a steady increase year on year. We do ourselves no justice—and we do youth no justice—if we do not accept that children as victims should be at the core of the debate. Children should not be demonised as the cause of the antisocial behaviour difficulties in society.

The Presiding Officer: Wind up, please.

Stewart Stevenson: Robert Brown said that the debate

"is based on a fallacy."

Of course, many of the things that the Executive does to invest in and support young people have the support of the SNP, but I say to the minister that we have to judge the Executive not by what it does but by what it achieves. On the measure of the answer to my parliamentary question, we are not achieving nearly enough.

The Presiding Officer: Please close.

Stewart Stevenson: The present relationship between the Executive and youth can be characterised as one that is based on trust and understanding: the Executive does not understand youth and youth do not trust the Executive.

09:53

Frances Curran (West of Scotland) (SSP): Congratulations are due to the Greens for launching a roll-back of the media's disproportionate representation and the Executive's stereotyping—as we saw in Mary Mulligan's contribution—of young people as yobs and neds.

Mrs Mulligan: Will the member take an intervention?

Frances Curran: No. I do not have time to take one.

If the Executive and Labour members think that that is not the case, they are in denial. They need only to open their newspaper to see that that is what they are doing. A survey that was undertaken for Kathleen Marshall, the commissioner for children and young people, was much more accurate in taking the views of young people on how they feel they are perceived by society and what they want. The survey, which was returned by 16,000 young people, showed that their top priority is things to do. However, absolutely no political will is attached to that demand.

Robert Brown's speech was straight out of a Disney movie. What he said about the facilities that are being provided for young people is a complete fantasy. His words have nothing in common with the reality on the ground. In its briefing for the debate, Children 1st said:

"We already know what is most effective in helping to stop young people from offending and from 'antisocial behaviour'—young people-designed, well-resourced, accessible youth work provision."

Earlier this year, I spoke at the play schemes annual general meeting. Adults in lots of working-class communities give up their time free of charge to run play schemes with activities for young people during the summer and Christmas holidays. The big advantage of play schemes is that they are run by adults who know the young people in their area: they live in the same street or round the corner and play with their own kids. They are involved with the young people. The entire meeting was spent discussing funding. People cannot get minibuses and because the services are privatised they do not have free transport on First Bus or First ScotRail to go to Ayr for the day. They do not know where to go, they do not have any support and no one is funding

them. The play schemes are cheap, because they are run by volunteers in the communities, but they are folding all over the place.

Four months ago, I attended a public meeting at Renton community centre, which was attended by 200 adults and young people who were there to discuss how to save the centre, which is in a deprived community. Just for good measure, Labour-run West Dunbartonshire Council was going to close the library across the road, too—bingo. The young people and adults at the meeting put their hands up and voted to occupy the centre, because if they lost it they would lose all the activities that are provided there, such as youth clubs and tae kwon do and majorettes clubs.

There are no spaces for young people in our communities. It is impossible to find a place to use in the evening that does not cost a fortune. School lets cost £30 per hour. It is impossible for the community volunteers who organise the football clubs and beavers and cubs groups to find a place to use. My son's beavers group was cancelled last week because the room had flooded and the floor was damaged. Guess what? There was nowhere else to go in the community—and my community is not the worst.

The two young 13 and 14-year-old girls who live above my office in Paisley say, "What can we do? We've nowhere to go." They are always hanging about in front of the building, because there is absolutely nothing for them. Eventually, we managed to get a youth club in the school for one night a week.

Helen MacKenzie, who set up families united, was a candidate for Scotswoman of the year at last Monday's event. However, 1,000 drug users cannot get a penny from the council or even space in a church hall for a drop-in centre. Those are the people at whom the Executive aims its antisocial behaviour policies. The way in which Executive members are presenting the issues is an absolute disgrace.

The report from the Institute for Public Policy Research, which will be published in November, says that we need structured youth work but that we cannot force young people to get involved. We could solve the problem by making every school playing field, school hall and gym hall available free of charge. If we did that, volunteers who care about their communities would organise activities for young people. That is the type of policy that the Executive should propose in the debate.

09:57

Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab): The first think-tank that I want to mention is made up of the 56,720 constituents of Glasgow Springburn, whom I represent. Such people are missing from a

debate in which the Greens make constant reference to think-tanks and organisations that do not reflect society.

The vast number of organisations that I have represented since I became an elected representative in 1993 do not demonise young people. The vast majority of young people in our communities—99.9 per cent of them—are good, hardworking people from hardworking families that should be commended for supporting them.

We have talked about the tiny minority of people in some communities in Scotland who have been allowed to rule those communities. Mary Mulligan referred to such people. The Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Act 2004 was passed to deal with the tiny minority of people who cause difficulties, such as the problems that the Dennistoun community in my constituency experienced. Since a dispersal order came into effect in Dennistoun on February 13, I have received e-mails, letters and telephone calls. The vast majority of the community supports the use of the dispersal order and is delighted with the result.

Robin Harper: Will the member give way?

Paul Martin: I will come back to the member.

We have heard from the database of excuses, but we should challenge the people who say that there is nothing for young people to do and who do a disservice to the people who support the clubs that Frances Curran mentioned. There is a wide range of activities for young people in Dennistoun. I printed off from the Dennistoun online website a list of the activities that volunteers, churches and many organisations provide in the community. The volunteers need support. We should challenge the parents and young people who say that there is nothing for them.

Mike Rumbles: Will the member give way?

Paul Martin: I will come back to the member.

That is the challenge—

Patrick Harvie: Will the member give way?

Paul Martin: I will come on to the Green party.

We should ensure that parents channel young people into the activities that are available.

It is intriguing that the Green party claims to be the champion of young people. I read carefully the 2003 Green manifesto, which cost £2.50, but I found no reference to children and young people—[*Interruption.*] I heard someone say, "What about the Labour Party?" The Labour manifesto did not contain as many pages on young people as it should have done, but it had four more pages on the matter than the Green manifesto had. Perhaps the issue will have more

coverage in future. Our manifesto talked about how we would support young people.

Patrick Harvie: The member was talking about dispersal orders before he moved on to manifestos. The problem with dispersal orders is not dispersal; it is what happens after dispersal. Where do the young people go? Is Paul Martin confident that the young people who have been dispersed in Dennistoun are using the facilities that he mentioned? If they are not doing that, where are they?

Paul Martin: I assure Patrick Harvie that I would not want the young people simply to be dispersed to other parts of my constituency. The focus of the dispersal was on not just challenging unacceptable behaviour but identifying the young people who are at risk in the community. I will not give confidential details, but one 11-year-old used to spend every night of his life outside the G101 Off Sales shop in Alexandra Parade. I do not want young people to spend time outside off-sales shops. As a result of intervention, that individual and others have been channelled into more constructive activity. That happened because there was a dispersal order; there was no other way of channelling that young person into more effective and constructive activities.

Mike Rumbles: Will the member give way?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): I am sorry, but Mr Martin must sum up.

Paul Martin: If other parties continue to oppose the use of dispersal orders and other measures in the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Act 2004, they should say so in their manifestos. They should tell the people of Scotland that they oppose dispersal orders—

Mike Rumbles: They do not work.

Paul Martin: I will stand again on the Labour Party manifesto, which is in favour of defending the majority of people from the minority—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must finish. I call Jeremy Purvis.

10:02

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): I will address what the Green motion describes as “youth disorder”. For the benefit of Stewart Stevenson, who likes accuracy, I should say that the Green motion and the Executive amendment each refer to the matter. However, the Executive amendment refers to considerably more policies that are being delivered than have been mentioned in speeches by members of non-Executive parties.

Shortly after I was elected, I spoke to young people at the young people’s forum in Midlothian,

which is a pioneering project that brings together local government agencies, the police, youth workers and—most important—young people. The young people told me the results of police surveys on the needs of young people and older people in Penicuik, in my constituency. Some older people told the police that they wanted better street lighting, to reduce the fear of crime that they feel when young people are hanging around in dark streets. The young people also said that they wanted better street lighting, to reduce their fear of bullying from gangs in the town centre. When we speak to constituents, we find that they have shared needs and concerns, even though misconceptions about other generations sometimes underlie valid concerns. We must guard against pigeonholing when we develop Government policy for any generation.

It is therefore vital to put young people at the heart of decision making. Liberal Democrats want to establish a Scottish youth justice board, which would be different from the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales in one important regard. The board for England and Wales is responsible for taking forward Government policy on youth crime, but we want young people to advise ministers and report to the Parliament on youth justice policy, which would be the first time that young people were entrenched in the decision-making framework of the Government and the Parliament. That approach would mean that when proposals for legislation were made, Executive strategies were developed and the Parliament debated the issues, young people’s voices would be listened to.

The Scottish youth justice board would be a non-departmental public body with the ability to develop its own policies and approaches to young people and justice. It would advise on policy and on the operation of and standards for youth justice. It would also allow young people themselves to audit gaps in service provision. They could be involved on a regional or local basis or be members of the Scottish Youth Parliament. Young people do not need us to give them a voice; they have a voice. What they need is a formal Government and Parliament setting where that voice is listened to.

Tomorrow morning, I will be at the school heads team conference in Galashiels, where all the heads from all the schools in the Borders get together to discuss youth issues. The heads are not the head teachers but the head and deputy head boys and girls and those who run their own student groups within the schools.

We have a generation of confident, inquisitive, entrepreneurial, eloquent and skilled young people. They are not Thatcher’s generation, but the future generation of Scotland, of which we should be proud.

Although I do not necessarily disagree with the tone of the Green motion, it does not offer solutions. The UK Government has established youth offender panels in England for young people who have committed relatively minor offences, which are positive and involve community volunteers. Liberal Democrats in Scotland want to pilot Scottish youth justice panels. The panels would not in any way undermine or sit uncomfortably with the children's hearings system—I say to Mr Stevenson that that is a civil rather than criminal law approach to some offending behaviour.

We want to build on the English panels and on ideas from the Red Hook community justice center in New York, where young people are involved in hearing about and suggesting solutions to other young people's offending behaviour. Sanctions include community service, letters of apology, attendance at skill-building workshops, participation in conflict resolution or work on understanding alcohol and substance misuse. Young people who have previously been involved with the youth courts in New York are actively encouraged to take part. We have to bear in mind compliance—more than 91 per cent completed the sanctions that the young people imposed.

Our approach would involve young people. We would listen to them and they would be part of the solution. Solutions from other parties have been sadly lacking this morning.

10:07

Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab): As is not uncommon, I find myself agreeing with a lot of what Robin Harper said. He was absolutely right to identify what young people need to develop properly and to acknowledge the role of the voluntary and statutory sectors in the provision of services for children and families. However, he offered a partial and slightly misleading analysis of what he saw as the problem and failed absolutely to suggest how services should be developed in the future.

I agree that dispersal orders and antisocial behaviour orders should not be used as a first resort, but nobody has ever said that they should be. In addition, none of the Green speakers indicated how they would deal with the small minority who cause problems for other young people, which Paul Martin identified.

Fiona Hyslop said that we should listen to the concerns and hear about the experiences of young people, with which I agree totally. According to ChildLine Scotland, the biggest problem for youngsters who contact it is bullying: 31 per cent of all the referrals to ChildLine Scotland last year concerned bullying by other young people. We

need to acknowledge that. That ties in totally with what Labour members said during the passage of the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Act 2004—although other members might not have heard it—which was that young people are disproportionately the victims of antisocial behaviour.

I resent any suggestion that I have ever demonised young people. My record both before and after I came to this place shows that that is not the case. I do not think that any of my Labour colleagues have ever demonised young people. That does not mean to say that they have not at times identified the difficulties caused by the small minority. Just because we condemn or criticise the behaviour of some young people does not mean that we are saying that the whole of that group exhibits the same behaviour. People have to differentiate between those two things.

I am slightly confused by the fact that the motion relates to findings from a left-wing think-tank, as Robin Harper indicated in his opening speech.

It is important to acknowledge that some young people are the victims of serious abuse. We cannot sweep that under the carpet or pretend that it is not happening; we have to deal with it. Fiona Hyslop is right that early intervention might be the way to do that.

I see young people not as victims or louts but as a cross-section of society and we have to recognise them as such. It concerns me when we pigeonhole groups in the way that some members have done this morning. Young people are not a homogeneous group, nor are older people or the vast majority of adults. We have to acknowledge that they are individuals in their own right. The motion does us no good by trying to pretend that people can fit only one of two stereotypes.

10:11

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): I find myself standing on the same ground on which I often stand in Green debates: that of having a shared agenda but reaching different conclusions. There is a great deal to commend in Robin Harper's speech. I agree that there is a problem in that the policies put forward by the Scottish Executive seem to have demonised young people. They have dealt with some extreme circumstances in extreme ways. There is no better evidence that the Executive also believes that than the reactionary way in which it has dealt with the accusation. We have heard negative contributions from the Executive parties today, although it has to be said that the two parties have made very different contributions—perhaps there is more of that to come.

It is one of the Conservatives' priorities to put forward policies that will deal with the problem. We

have already heard Stewart Stevenson quoting Dave of Glasgow. I would like to quote young Dave Cameron of Witney in Oxfordshire.

Stewart Stevenson: Who he?

Alex Johnstone: The leader of the Opposition in Westminster. When David Cameron went public with his views, which were described as “hug a hoodie”, they were portrayed as controversial, but he was highlighting the point that lies behind the Greens’ motion: the people who are being demonised by legislation such as the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Act 2004 are not the people we seem to think they are. They are the young men and women of tomorrow. They will be the taxpayers and—my God—even the Conservative voters of the future.

Mrs Mulligan: Will the member take an intervention?

Alex Johnstone: No, not at this stage. I have to get through this.

I would like to highlight one or two points that have been made in the debate. Many members have mentioned the important role that the voluntary sector has to play. I was delighted to hear Frances Curran praise the voluntary sector, because members of her party have failed to do that in relation to other issues in the past. It is important that we remember that the voluntary sector has a huge contribution to make and that Government resources, when available, can often stretch a lot further if they are directed through voluntary sector projects than if they are delivered through mainstream, nationally controlled systems. The additional motivation for those who work in the voluntary sector, which Frances Curran mentioned, is an advantage.

I cannot let this debate pass without returning to a discussion that was initiated largely by an intervention from Mike Rumbles, on the demotivation that young people experience as a result of unemployment. Yes, there have been problems with unemployment in the past, some of which were associated with policies of previous Conservative Governments. However, the statistics appear to indicate that if we get another four years of this Executive we could have more unemployed people in Scotland than we had when the Conservatives demitted office in 1997. That trend is further underlined by the fact that, today, we have an underclass of young people who cannot find employment in the jobs that they are qualified to do and find themselves instead working in relatively menial jobs. The physiotherapists who came to Parliament yesterday are a good example of that. Many of them are well qualified but cannot find work.

The truth is that our amendment has the same objective as the motion, but reflects a

Conservative view. The amendment suggests that we have perhaps put too much effort into ASBOs and funding public services when some of the money that has been spent in that way would have been better spent on increasing the economic opportunities for young people who want only a toehold on the ladder that we have been able to climb.

10:15

Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP): It has sometimes seemed that we are participating in parallel debates. The Green party’s benign motion and the equally benign speech by Mr Harper were met with some vehemence and vitriol from the Executive parties. I have to contrast the Tories’ moderate amendment and speeches with the quite illiberal comments from both parties on the Executive benches. That is unusual and surprising, but is a sign of the times that we find ourselves in.

I am aghast that there should be any suggestion that anyone in this chamber supports outrageous and bad behaviour. I disagree with many of the things that Mr Harvie and others have said about criminal justice, but I have never suggested that any member of this Parliament champions bad or outrageous behaviour. Frankly, it is wrong for political parties to suggest that that is the case, even if there is an election on the way. They should be addressing the debate, not making such suggestions.

Listening to Mr Brown explain his position, I was reminded of Harold Macmillan’s claim in the 1960s—I was not particularly conscious of it at the time but have since read about it—that we had never had it so good. According to Robert Brown, we are now living in an absolutely fantastic world in which Scottish youngsters have never had it so good. I have to say that Harold Macmillan did not manage to sell that message in the 1960s and Mr Brown will not manage to sell it in the 21st century. We know that that is not the reality.

Youngsters are being stereotyped. That is unacceptable and it has to change. Nobody tolerates the bad behaviour that goes on in places such as Dennistoun, Bridgeton and so on. It is unacceptable and cannot be condoned—it must be condemned because it makes people’s lives intolerable. However, we must remember that that behaviour is exhibited by a small minority of youngsters. The overwhelming majority of youngsters in this country are a credit to themselves, their communities and their families. We must support them, not run them down.

Further evidence that we do not live in a fantastic utopia is the fact that the statistics on child poverty are shameful for a modern,

progressive, oil-rich country in the 21st century. To be patting ourselves on the back when a third of our kids are born into poverty is totally unacceptable.

We have to accept that societal changes have made matters more complicated. We have seen kids lose their innocence, never mind their right to roam. Things are a lot more difficult for youngsters, even though material conditions might have greatly improved for the two thirds of our youngsters who are not born into poverty. There has been a loss of an element of latitude. When I was a child, my elders adopted a "boys will be boys" attitude to behaviour that was, frankly, quite often outrageous and unacceptable. Certain behaviour was viewed as a rite of passage but that is no longer the case. It is immediately met by police intervention, a report to the children's panel or a referral to court.

We live in a car-owning democracy in which many people object to children playing football on the street. Blow me; some people even view it as a crime. Often, police have to intervene because the children are endangering themselves by playing football in the street, but there are individuals who believe that their right to use their prized possession outweighs the right of any child to play. That has to be addressed, although the issue of the provision of facilities is more appropriately dealt with elsewhere. The fact is that, although there might be more material benefits for children, there is also a great deal more hardship.

We need to have respect. I accept that and am on record as saying so. However, I believe that we are much better off thinking about encouraging responsibility. Our society needs people to take personal responsibility. People must accept that they have obligations as well as rights and that unacceptable behaviour will be challenged and punished. Equally, our society and Government must recognise that we have a social responsibility to our communities. Frankly, too many of our children are born to fail. The world of "Cathy Come Home" exists today, as it existed 30 or more years ago. We need to praise our youngsters and encourage good behaviour rather than simply tackle bad behaviour. The attitude of the Executive parties today was shameful.

10:20

Robert Brown: This has been a short but interesting debate. It was particularly interesting to hear Kenny MacAskill's speech. If there was ever an example of someone trying to sit on both sides of the argument, that was it.

Earlier, I outlined our vision for young people and the programme with which we have given it

substance and have tackled the challenges, many of them difficult and with a pay-off that comes only in the longer term. I was at pains to stress that it would take a lot of time to get to grips successfully with some of the challenges. I reject absolutely the allegation that has been made by one or two speakers that the Executive has become complacent on this issue. A large proportion of the time of ministers in my department and others is spent on dealing with the not in education, employment or training group, looked-after children, fostering strategies, the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Bill and similar issues that are central to the challenges that we face.

The Greens talk about a strategy. I have nothing against strategies but they must add value. As a number of speakers have said, there is nothing in the Greens' motion that helps with the production of programmes and policies to deal with the issues that they are concerned about. It is full of woolly sentiments—some of them, no doubt, admirable. In contrast, the Executive's policies in the past eight years have been comprehensive and thorough and have increasingly been making a difference for young people.

Scott Barrie talked about young people being a cross-section of society.

Fiona Hyslop: Government statistics show that there has been a 10 per cent increase in the number of persistent offenders. Does the minister think that the policy of ASBOs and dispersals has achieved anything?

Robert Brown: I will refer to the point that Fiona Hyslop made about the figures for young people coming before the children's panel. It is true that there is a close connection between people who are in need of care and protection at younger ages and those who get involved in trouble and truanting at later ages. That is the central issue, in terms of the challenge, that we need to be careful about.

The central thrust of the Greens' position seems to be that the Scottish Executive's firm stand on tackling antisocial behaviour is simply an attack on the rights of young people. In fact, it has always been our aim to set young people free. It is not only the elderly who are scared to walk the streets at night; too often, the victims of antisocial behaviour are young people. The young suffer at least as much as anyone else, as a number of people have recognised, not least Stewart Stevenson.

Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Robert Brown: I am sorry, but I must make progress.

Some young people have nowhere to go

because their playground is littered with broken bottles and they are scared to leave their street or their area in case they are attacked by a gang. It is young men and women who are most likely to be caught up in a fight in a city-centre pub. Young people have told us that they want us to stand up for them and to tackle these problems. They want facilities and opportunities—and we are investing significantly in them—but they also want a safer society.

How often have we seen situations in which territorial rivalries prevent young people accessing local facilities or in which young people are attacked walking home? This week, I heard of a young girl who was badly beaten. Her offence was to have moved to another area, which meant that she was viewed as a traitor to the territorial aspirations of the people with whom she had lived previously. That sort of attitude is the reality that we sometimes face on our streets. The vast majority of young people in Scotland are a credit to their families, their schools and their communities but we have to recognise that the behaviour of a small percentage—about one in 200 young people—continues to be a persistent problem. That is why we have had to make significant investment in local services to tackle the causes of some of the problems and to tackle youth offending and antisocial behaviour. That investment includes significant resources to prevent youth crime and to divert young people from trouble in the first place. There is no question about the connection: young people who were neglected or abused as young children are at the greatest risk of having mental health problems, of becoming homeless or of getting into trouble. That has all sorts of implications for how we tackle the causes of offending. However, it does not and cannot mean that violent and purposeless crime can be ignored, that community and personal lives can be devastated or that other young people should not be able to walk the streets in safety.

The appalling life circumstances of some young people make it imperative to have child protection structures in place to weed out the few people in child care positions who are a threat to young people, while remembering that 95 per cent of child abuse occurs at the home; to support and encourage good parenting; and to support good families, as a number of members have said. The questions of parental drug and alcohol addiction and of domestic violence are central to some of those issues.

That does not, as the motion suggests, relate to a simplistic stereotype; it is about real, lifelong suffering by vulnerable young people, the most vulnerable people in our society, to whom we do a significant disservice if we do not recognise that. The Executive's approach to young people is enabling, empowering and life enhancing. It is

designed to widen opportunity and to develop confidence and skills. Young people are our futures. We have made substantial strides, and I ask the support of the Parliament in recognising those significant achievements while focusing on the major challenges that remain to be tackled before all our young people can fulfil their great potential.

10:26

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): This has been an interesting debate, and I am quite pleased with how it has gone, even when it came to the contributions that I disagreed with. Kenny MacAskill was quite right in parts of his speech, even if he disagrees with my fine contributions to the justice debates that we have held in this chamber. He put his finger on the point about the parallel nature of the debate. We have a set of issues here that are generally debated strictly in justice terms. Now we are debating them in terms that the Deputy Minister for Education and Young People can respond to. I think that that is a positive thing. In future, I hope that we debate the issue more often in these terms, rather than in justice terms. There is a tension between the two agendas, and not always a healthy one.

I was disappointed that Robert Brown began by talking about his incredulity at the terms of Robin Harper's opening speech. He ended by accusing us of making a direct and deliberate attack and of suggesting that the Executive seeks to undermine the rights of children and young people. As Robin Harper said, we do not accuse the Executive of directly and deliberately attacking, demonising or seeking to stigmatise young people. Mary Mulligan accused us of defending those who make life intolerable for others. Scott Barrie resents being accused of demonising young people. I understand why people resent any implication that they are being accused of demonising young people. We do not make that accusation. Do the Executive parties, for their part, understand why those of us who disagree with their policies resent the accusation that we are seeking to defend people who carry out antisocial behaviour or that we are creating stereotypes merely by bringing the matter for debate in the chamber to discuss the consequences?

I am sorry to say that, in part, the Executive amendment sounds much like the article by Hilary Armstrong in this month's *Parliamentary Brief*, with its long list of glowing achievements. I am sure that the Deputy Minister for Education and Young People, like ministers in all Governments, would like Opposition members to see only achievements and never criticise. The criticisms that we bring today are largely about unintended consequences, and they are directed at our society as a whole, not just at Government.

Robert Brown: We accept that there is an issue of tone in the debate. Nevertheless, there are still significant issues at its centre about antisocial behaviour and the difficulties that young people face as victims, which Stewart Stevenson discussed. Some of us are concerned that the Green party seems not to recognise the reality of that or to give us the benefit of their proposals for doing something about it.

Patrick Harvie: We have always recognised the reality of that. Robin Harper's speech made many references to the Executive's underfunding of children's social work services and to the contribution that the voluntary sector can make. It would be able to make more of a contribution if it had secure funding.

Derek Brownlee forced us to consider whether we are Thatcher's children or the iPod generation. He framed that distinction largely in economic terms. Without wanting to take away from the importance of the economic aspects of Derek Brownlee's argument, I am sure that he will agree that there is such a thing as society. I regret that the Conservative amendment seems to imply that the Executive's duties do not apply or relate to social or cultural factors. Like the Executive's amendment, the Conservative amendment removes the issues about how young people are perceived. That is to be regretted.

Fiona Hyslop cited Ewan Aitken, who has spoken about the danger of young people being turned into hate figures. I very much agree that none of us wishes to ignore the harm that is done through antisocial behaviour. I think that Fiona Hyslop understands our argument that, if young people continue to be perceived as not being welcome on our streets and not feeling part of society, the problem is likely to become worse, not better.

Frances Curran—albeit at a slightly higher pitch than I personally find comfortable—spoke about the funding problems for community groups, activities and facilities. As an adult in Glasgow with some money to spend and with access to transport to the city centre, I have a choice of a myriad things to do and places to go. If I did not have that choice, I think that I might behave quite badly sometimes.

Stewart Stevenson spoke about children as victims, and I agree with that. I would add that, when discussing issues around bad behaviour and crime, as politicians we all sometimes ignore the nuances and imagine that there is some rigid distinction between victims and offenders. That is not always so; it is not always cut and dried. I have been both, and I think that many other people have been both. Sometimes, we forget that important aspect.

I return to Scott Barrie's comments. He seemed to imply that bringing the problem of negative perceptions and stereotypes of young people for debate—as Labour's think-tank, the IPPR, has done—is somehow to create or reinforce the problem. He went on to focus on family support services, which was much more welcome. Referring to Mary Mulligan's contribution, I would like more of the Executive's contributions in this area to focus on the improvements that could be made if we were able properly to fund such services.

The last speaker I will mention is Paul Martin. I am sure that he will enjoy reading the Scottish Green Party's manifesto for 2003 much more closely and noting that it mentions policies relating to children on seven occasions and policies relating to young people on six occasions. If he wants, we could sit down with a cup of coffee later and I could point those out to him.

Would the Executive view success in terms of working with people—COSLA used those terms in *The Herald* today—rather than merely counting the number of orders that are passed? Or would it instead measure success in the narrow terms that Manchester City Council has used? It was bragging that, last year, it had one in 20 of its entire population under an ASBO. That is no kind of success that I can recognise, and I urge all members of all parties to agree that we should move forward on this issue with compassion and trust as our driving forces.

Climate Change (Road Traffic)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-5005, in the name of Mark Ballard, on climate change and road transport.

10:34

Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): The debate is focused on a truth that is simple and which cannot be ducked, however politically unpalatable it might be. Agreement is now widespread on the dangers of climate change, and road transport is of course one of the major contributors to Scotland's total greenhouse gas emissions. It is almost entirely in the Parliament's power to decide on the future of the road transport infrastructure in this country. If we are serious about climate change, that must be reflected in the decisions and positions that we take on transport policy.

Road traffic growth is not a new problem—Governments have grappled with it for the past 20 years. In the 1980s, the Tories went hell for leather on the biggest road-building programme since that of the Romans. In the huge public backlash that followed, new Labour in 1997 and then the Scottish Executive pledged to reduce or stabilise traffic levels. Famously, John Prescott even promised that within five years fewer journeys would be made by car.

However, the fuel protests then took place and the Government took fright at being seen as anti-car. One by one, the Tory roads came back. Road schemes that Sarah Boyack froze when she was the Minister for Transport and the Environment, such as the Dalkeith bypass, were suddenly defrosted by Tavish Scott. Despite a predicted 27 per cent increase in road transport, the Executive is now talking about abandoning national targets to stabilise or reduce road traffic.

I am not saying that climate change and road traffic are easy to tackle, but simply planning for more of everything—more trunk roads, road bridges and rail stations—is fantasy politics to which no hard choices are attached. That is a scatter-gun approach of contradictory policies that certainly fuels gross domestic product, which I have no doubt delights the Executive's friends in the Confederation of British Industry, but which does little to gear us up economically to the challenge of being a low-carbon economy in the decades that are ahead of us. Making our economy even more structurally dependent on the most inefficient transport modes when fuel prices will go through the roof again and again in the years to come is economic ineptitude.

Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): Mark Ruskell talks about ineptitude. We know that he is against road building, but did he just say that he is against new railway stations, too? Will he explain that?

Mr Ruskell: I am absolutely not against new railway stations. I said that we are against a transport policy that goes in all sorts of different directions at once. To tackle road traffic reduction seriously, policies need to be joined up and to be consistent, not contradictory. The problem with the Liberal Democrats in government in the past eight years is that their policies have not achieved that.

I will be positive for a moment. I congratulate the Executive on allocating an additional £91 million to genuine public transport improvements between 2005 and 2008, but Mike Rumbles must realise that a backward step has been taken, because ministers have also launched a massive road-building programme with an additional £143 million for new motorways and trunk roads in the same period.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): Do the Greens accept that, as the RAC Foundation for Motoring argues, motorways are substantially safer than dual carriageways and dual carriageways are substantially safer than single carriageways? A strong case can be made for making roads safer on the basis of saving lives—80 young people were killed on our roads last year, for example—which means upgrading roads such as the A9 to dual-carriageway status.

Mr Ruskell: I absolutely agree that we should invest in safety. We should invest in junctions such as that at Ballinluig on the A9 and we should redirect some money to that. However, is Fergus Ewing honestly telling me that the safety record of the A9 south of Perth to Dunblane is good? It is not, although that road is dualled. If he thinks that dualling the whole A9 would produce a dramatic safety increase, he obviously has not driven on that road recently.

We must face up to the reality of some of the investments that the Executive has made under its road programme. The public inquiry reporter said that the M74 extension would increase climate-change emissions without delivering significant economic growth, yet Nicol Stephen not only gave the extension the go-ahead but described it as a sustainable development. It is clearly not that. It is right that Friends of the Earth has now branded Mr Stephen the politician who has made the worst environmental decision since devolution took place.

We do not need the M74 extension, but we need a Glasgow crossrail scheme. We do not need an Aberdeen bypass, but we need an Aberdeen

crossrail scheme. We need to free up the dozens of pinchpoints that Network Rail has highlighted and we need realistic investment in Waverley station so that it can host new services that stop at towns that should never have been taken off Scotland's rail map. We do not need a second Forth road bridge; we need one road bridge and options to extend its life should be considered and acted on now. The clamour in the Parliament to support the Forth Estuary Transport Authority in gaining a doubling of the road capacity across the Forth, which would blight Fife and Lothians communities and would lead within 20 years to exactly the same congestion problems as exist now, is irresponsible.

We are on the verge of having a new transport strategy for Scotland. The environmental assessment makes grim reading, as transport comes second only to energy on the amount of greenhouse gas emissions in Scotland. Between 1990 and 2003, those sectors were not only the largest sources of emissions but those with the highest growth. Why should transport take the lion's share? If it continues to grow, what sectors will compensate so that we can meet our targets?

The Greens have repeatedly made the case for serious action on climate change. The Executive parties and all parties in the Parliament have adopted some green rhetoric, but their record on taking action and making the tough choices is poor. If we are serious about tackling climate change and about Scotland becoming not just the best small country in the world but the most efficient small country in the world, we need to tackle traffic growth—full stop. We need to make hard choices and we need to spend our finite resources with vision and common sense.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes growing public and parliamentary recognition of the threat posed by climate change; notes that cuts in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions of 60% to 90% are necessary to stabilise climate change within a generation; notes that transport, excluding aviation, accounts for 19% of Scotland's climate change emissions, over 97% of which comes from road transport, and that road traffic is predicted to grow a further 27% by 2021; recognises that without reducing traffic levels it will be impossible to reduce Scottish greenhouse gas emissions to a level consistent with the need to address climate change; further recognises the need for urgent political action within the next four years to achieve year-on-year reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, and calls on the Scottish Executive to set year-on-year overall greenhouse gas reduction targets and interim targets to reduce road traffic levels.

10:41

The Minister for Transport (Tavish Scott): Climate change is a serious challenge that faces Scotland, the United Kingdom and the world of

which we are part. Political parties in the Parliament must decide whether they live in the real world or in some green utopian ideal.

Scots travel in this country and beyond. To deny Scots travel—that is the unwritten and unspoken approach that the Greens advocate—would not be to act in the real world. If we are to convince people that they need to consider their lives and the choices that they make from an environmental perspective, we must take the issues seriously and not as a university debating society would treat them.

Yes, transport has an environmental impact. It contributes to carbon emissions in Scotland, England, France and every other country. The Government does not follow a no-roads policy; no Government does, not even several in Europe of which Greens are part.

Travel is not bad, as the Greens argue. Can we make better travel decisions? Yes. Do we need investment in Scotland's roads? Yes. In the current financial year, the Government is spending 70 per cent of the transport budget on public transport. The Greens never give us credit for that.

We will continue to invest in the road network—buses need roads—but we will also invest for road safety. I agree with Fergus Ewing about that. The investment in road improvements to reduce casualties led to a rate of road accidents in 2005 that was the lowest since records began 50 years ago. That includes a 57 per cent reduction in the number of children killed or seriously injured. The number of road fatalities is below the European Union average and the current trend is falling. Significant reductions took place in casualty numbers in 2005—the number of casualties was down 4 per cent and the number of serious casualties was down 5 per cent to the lowest figure since 1952. However, there is still much to do.

The A830 Arisaig improvement eliminated a single-track lifeline road and bypassed a fragile local community; 11 per cent of the benefits of that are from road safety. The section of the A78 from Ardrossan to Saltcoats bypassed three Ayrshire towns, which removed congestion and local pollution and produced benefits of which £14 million are from road safety. The section of the A1 from Haddington to Dunbar bypassed East Linton as part of our development of east coast links with England. Of the total benefits from that, 30 per cent are from accident savings. The M77 to Kilmarnock replaced a notorious stretch of single carriageway and is predicted to generate benefits of which 28 per cent will be accident savings.

An horrific fatal accident occurred at the Symington junction some days ago. We have been examining that junction, which I have

personally looked at. I discussed the accident this morning with Strathclyde police and, following their advice, we plan to introduce 50mph zones in that area and to consider any other appropriate measures for the junction. I will also review with Transport Scotland the current trunk-road programme, with a view to bringing forward work on Symington and Bogend toll.

We will do work in other areas of Scotland. The Dalkeith bypass, which the Greens oppose, will take heavy traffic out of Dalkeith town centre. The Glendoick and Kinfauns junctions and the final grade separation on the A90 between Perth and Dundee will eliminate accidents that result from drivers having to cross the dual carriageway; 55 per cent of the benefits from that will be in road safety.

The Government takes sustainability seriously. We focus on safety, access and the environment. Some 70 per cent of our transport investment is being spent on public transport.

Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green) *rose—*

Tavish Scott: That massive investment provides quality alternatives to the car. Rail passenger journeys rose to 72.9 million in 2004-05, which is the highest level of rail passenger journeys in 40 years. Mr Ballard might want to comment on that.

Mark Ballard: I am happy to welcome the increase in the number of rail passenger journeys and to support the Executive putting more money into public transport, but will Tavish Scott say something about the predicted 27 per cent increase in road traffic levels, which will vastly overshoot the target that has been set? The issue is not the money that the Executive is making available but the outcome of increasing road traffic levels.

Tavish Scott: The recent transport statistics show stable traffic growth, which I hope the Greens welcome. It is clear that our switch in spending has helped.

Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green): Traffic levels are already at their highest-ever level.

Tavish Scott: The Greens are again crying, moaning, whingeing and groaning. When we do something positive, they still do that.

The challenge is to investigate new fuel-production technologies—clean fuels and hydrogen, for example, must be investigated. The north-east Scotland transport partnership, for example, is currently investigating the feasibility of a hybrid hydrogen fuel cell bus, which I strongly welcome.

In our national transport strategy, which is to be launched later this year, we will spell out our full approach to a transport network that is fit for the 21st century. However, transport is only part of the wider picture on climate change. This year, the Government launched Scotland's climate change programme, and members are already familiar with the it's our future campaign, which is a sustainable development campaign that is now being broadcast on television and radio. However, a safe, reliable and accessible transport network is pivotal in delivering sustainable development, which is exactly what the Government is delivering.

I move amendment S2M-5005.3, to leave out from "welcomes" to end and insert:

"supports the Scottish Executive's record investment of 70% of the transport budget in public transport; notes the significant investment in Scotland's bus services, which rely upon a modern road infrastructure, and in the rail network, where the Executive has already opened the Larkhall to Milngavie line, all with the aim of improving the environment; further supports the Executive's investment to reduce road deaths and casualties, improve safety on roads outside schools, and provide attractive, integrated and affordable public transport alternatives, and welcomes the Executive's climate change programme and sustainable development campaign."

10:47

Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): The Scottish National Party welcomes this latest of the debates on climate change in recent weeks. There is now political consensus on the matter in the chamber. The Conservatives sponsored their first debate on climate change in the chamber a few weeks ago. We know from daily media coverage that climate change is a clear and present danger to Scotland and the rest of the world. It is good to have such political consensus, which is one good thing that the Scottish Parliament has delivered—there would have been no such consensus pre-1999. I hope that we can now have a sensible debate on the impact of climate change on Scotland and how to tackle it.

Despite the political consensus on the threat that climate change poses, there will be political disagreement in the chamber about how to tackle that threat and reduce Scotland's carbon footprint—indeed, we have already heard such disagreement. We must accept that we do not live in a low-carbon Scotland. Therefore, our challenge is to get society from where it currently is to the point where it is a low-carbon society and to address how society in Scotland can transform its behaviour to reduce our carbon footprint.

We know that the highest emissions in Scotland are from the energy sector and the transport sector, which is the subject of today's debate, and land use. However, it is not helpful for the Greens

to walk around the Parliament with sandwich boards that say that the end of the world is nigh and to suggest that the only way forward is to close down Scotland's airports, not build any new roads and shut down the oil industry—that tends to be the Green party's message in the chamber. Such proposals will simply cause economic dislocation in Scotland's communities and will not win support from the people of Scotland for environmental policies or do anything for Scotland's environment. We must have a sensible and rational debate and plot a way forward for Scotland that its people can sign up to.

Of course the SNP accepts that the transport sector is responsible for emissions that cause global warming and deteriorating air quality, particularly in many of Scotland's urban communities. We must address that important issue. The Parliament must do what it can to encourage the people of Scotland and the Scottish business community to change their behaviour. We must encourage people to take up alternatives to cars and ensure that we have a sustainable public transport system for the 21st century.

I live in Elgin. At most times of the week, it is extremely difficult—indeed, it is virtually impossible—to get from Elgin to the Parliament by public transport. It is much more tempting for me to use my car. Doing so is much easier, quicker and more efficient, although I try to use trains whenever I can. We must ensure that alternatives exist for the people of Scotland so that they can use the public transport system.

Our public transport system must be integrated. An issue that I raised recently is that if a person is travelling from Glasgow through Aberdeen to Inverness, Moray or somewhere else in the Highlands, the train from Glasgow arrives in Aberdeen 60 seconds after the Inverness connecting train has left. We are light years away from having an integrated transport system in Scotland, but if we want to tempt people out of their cars, we must create such a system.

A clean transport fuels strategy has enormous potential for cutting our emissions from transport and creating thousands of new jobs in Scotland. Opportunities exist to grow biocrops to fuel our cars, and biodiesel plants have been set up in Scotland. The Government's schemes to convert our vehicles so that they could use clean fuels collapsed because the European Union stepped in and said that the schemes were illegal. The European Union has said that tackling climate change is important, but it has then said that the schemes to use cleaner transport fuels that were in place in Scotland were illegal for competition reasons. The situation is ludicrous and must be tackled at the European level. A clean fuels strategy in Scotland could create thousands of

jobs. We should remember that it is the fuel in cars that causes emissions, rather than the cars themselves, or roads.

I move amendment S2M-5005.2, to leave out from "within a generation" to end and insert:

"recognises that a range of measures are required to reduce transport emissions, including a clean transport fuels strategy and provision of sustainable alternatives to road transport, and further recognises that the energy sector accounts for the greatest proportion of emissions and that Scotland has enormous potential to develop cleaner and renewable energy to reduce our carbon footprint."

10:51

Mr Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): This is an important debate, as

"climate change is the most severe problem that we are facing today, more serious even than the threat of terrorism."

Those are not my words but those of the UK's chief scientific adviser, David King, in 2004.

Mark Ballard was right to remind us in the motion that nearly 20 per cent of Scotland's carbon emissions come from transport, excluding aviation—the bulk of those emissions come from road transport. Assuming that the Greens do not really think that the developed world will give up motor cars and flights, the main way of avoiding the problems that are associated with growing road and air transport appears to be developing more emission-friendly motor cars and aeroplane engines; there is also a need to persuade more people to use public transport. However, there is little temptation for me and many others to abandon our cars in travelling from the part of Fife in which I live to the Parliament and back because the trains are so unreliable—Richard Lochhead and others have spoken about that unreliability. We have been told that improvements are coming, but it seems that I have heard that for a long time. Mark Ruskell referred to the fact that we do not seem to have a strategic integrated transport plan. Trains do not link up with our buses or our airports. Again, improvements are promised, but we must live and do business in today's world with our current transport systems.

We should all get involved in car-share schemes—I commend the Minister for Transport for his reported excellent personal example in that respect. I am not one of those people who object to Ross Finnie jetting off around the world no fewer than 13 times last year to have talks with his environment and fisheries counterparts. The suggestion that he should get on his bike to go to Brussels or walk to Atlanta is not sensible or practical. Businessmen who are trying to compete in an ever more competitive world tend to shake

their heads at some of the transport solutions that the Greens have offered.

Mark Ruskell criticised the Tories for our road-building programme. Of course, the Greens are well known for their aversion to new road-building projects, but buses use roads. The most recent figures show that 449 million passenger journeys on local bus services are made each year in Scotland. The only way to attract more people out of their cars and on to buses is by providing high-quality roads. My remarks apply to both local and long-distance bus services.

Mark Ballard *rose—*

Mr Brocklebank: I would like to take an intervention but, unfortunately, I have only four minutes.

It is dangerous for the Greens to ignore the urgent need to upgrade Scotland's road network on the basis of safety and the economy. Bad roads cause more emissions as a result of cars having to stop and start again.

Mark Ruskell again dismissed the idea of having a new Forth road bridge. However, he has been quoted as saying:

"If the Forth Bridge is genuinely going to fall into the sea and there's no strengthening work that can be done ... then of course, it will have to be replaced."

That does not address the issue that the economy of the whole of the east of Scotland largely depends on having assured road and rail links across the major firths. People's livelihoods depend on the movement of goods up and down the country. It would be nice if a greater volume of goods were transported by rail, but the capacity for doing so simply does not exist. In that connection, it was a serious mistake not to plan the Borders rail line so that it could carry freight. The existing rail infrastructure could be massively improved at a relatively low cost. As a result, there could be more high-speed services on key routes, such as the Edinburgh to Glasgow and Edinburgh to Perth routes and perhaps south of Aberdeen.

Why do we not go further and consider the possibility of the eco-friendly maglev—magnetic levitation—system, which already operates in the far east? The train runs on a monorail, which it does not touch, as it is raised by magnetic propulsion. Air provides the only friction that the train must overcome. The system is incredibly fast and cheap. Are we considering that for the new links to Scottish airports? I do not know.

Attacking people who drive four-by-fours captures a few headlines, but is that not more to do with perception than reality? Instead of attacking four-by-fours, surely it is better to invest in biodiesel plants and help Scotland's farmers to grow valuable emission-friendly crops for biodiesel

manufacture? Why does the Executive not talk to Westminster about lowering the road tax on the new breed of hybrid cars? Why has it always got to be the stick rather than the carrot?

I give the Greens credit for stimulating this transport debate. We fully support David Cameron's call for a climate change bill with meaningful and realistic future targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. In the short term, however, it would be hugely damaging for our hard-pressed Scottish economy to drastically penalise those who use our roads, railways and air routes.

I move amendment S2M-5005.1, to leave out from first "notes" to end and insert:

"believes that, along with global poverty and terrorism, climate change is one of the three greatest challenges facing mankind today and therefore supports David Cameron MP's call for a Climate Change Bill to be included in this year's Queen's Speech to establish year-on-year targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by at least 60% by 2050 and to establish an independent monitor to report to the UK Parliament on Britain's progress in meeting those annual targets and to audit government policy to assess whether we remain on track to hit future targets; acknowledges, however, that ongoing investment in the Scottish road network remains vital for public safety, cutting congestion and to protect both small businesses and remote rural communities in particular; further acknowledges that more must be done to encourage modal shift from road to rail for both passenger and freight traffic, and therefore calls on the Scottish Executive to ensure that those road and rail projects of greatest importance be prioritised for investment, specifically a new Forth crossing, the refurbishment of Waverley Station, the completion of the central belt motorway network and the upgrading of many important trunk routes alongside increased efforts to move more freight from road to rail."

10:55

Bristow Muldoon (Livingston) (Lab): I advise the chamber that I have to leave before the closing speeches because I have to meet a visiting school group, so I apologise to the closing speakers.

A debate on the impact of road transport on climate change is important. Scotland should be seeking to improve the sustainability of its transport systems. However, the Greens' credibility on the issue is considerably damaged by their continued non-attendance at the Local Government and Transport Committee. According to my memory, members of the Green party have only twice attended the committee since the 2003 elections. I know that they will complain that they do not have a voting place on the committee, but every member of the Parliament is entitled to attend any committee that is held in public and when non-voting members attend my committee, I normally endeavour to give them an opportunity to ask questions. Only this week, Tavish Scott gave evidence to the committee about the Executive's

transport policy. He was very closely questioned by politicians from all parties except the Greens.

What has the Scottish Parliament been doing to improve the sustainability of our transport systems and tackle climate change? The minister correctly identified that, in some circumstances, it is necessary to invest in roads to improve their safety, to ensure that they operate efficiently and to take heavy traffic away from residential areas. Scotland is therefore not going to move to having no roads and no roads investment.

Equally, Richard Lochhead was right—that is something that I do not say too often—in identifying that we need to create opportunities for people to travel by public transport and leave their cars at home. That is why I believe that we have been pursuing the correct agenda. The minister correctly identified that we have been investing in new public transport links such as the proposed new links to the airports, the reopening of the Larkhall to Milngavie line and Edinburgh crossrail. In future, the Airdrie to Bathgate line will reopen—I know that my colleague Mary Mulligan would want that to be highlighted.

In addition to investing in rail, we have been investing in buses, mainly through making them free for our older people. That has injected a massive amount of investment into the bus industry, which has seen an increase in the number of new buses being bought and the first growth in the number of people travelling by bus for about 40 years. At the same time, the number of people travelling by rail has increased in recent years.

More broadly, climate change is not just about how Scotland deals with transport issues. We need to recognise that we have to have a global impact if we are serious about changing the climate. In that regard, I draw attention to the efforts of the Labour Government to put climate change right at the top of the international agenda. Labour committed Britain to the Kyoto protocol and put climate change on the G8 agenda. In terms of meeting our obligations on climate change, the United Kingdom Government is on course to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 23 per cent from 1990 levels by 2010, which is double our Kyoto target. We are one of only two countries in the pre-accession EU 15 to be on track to meet our Kyoto target. However, we need to go further than that and try to ensure that those countries that did not sign up to the Kyoto protocol do so.

I will conclude because I know that I have only a short time. The Scottish Executive has a strong record on rebalancing transport policy towards greater sustainability, which is resulting in a renaissance for public transport. At UK level, the Labour Government is an international leader in

the tackling of climate change. The global need to tackle climate change demonstrates another reason why Scotland benefits from being part of the union and the UK's international influence on climate change.

11:00

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):

There has been a lot of talk about offering carrots rather than sticks. I think that Scotland would move towards sustainable transport better if we could get in a Government strategy recognition that we are miles behind and that many simple things can be done by using the resources that we have, such as making our transport network that much better.

Let us take the example of railways and the potential for electric railways powered by infinite and easily available renewable resources. We could easily have an electric rail service on the east coast route from Aberdeen; it would work far more efficiently and there would be lower carbon emissions. Is that the kind of target that the minister has been talking about? No; he has been talking about suburban lines and the central belt. Large sections of Scotland north of Perth and west of Aberdeen have never been invested in to any degree. Perhaps we should start to think in terms of electric railways in those large parts of Scotland where there are huge electricity resources. That might seem a bit futuristic, but it is quite practical.

The rail infrastructure will continue to have bottlenecks such as those that we have on the Fife circle, so we need to undertake the kind of planning and programmes that the Irish have undertaken in their £30 billion programme for rail and roads that is opening up lines all over the country, not just in the suburban areas. I hope that the debate gets some answers to such questions and I thank the Greens for raising these matters. We really have to use the carrot and not always the stick.

Another interesting development is the installation under tarmac surfaces—roads, airport runways, transport yards or supermarket car parks—of a water heating system that creates energy to heat the road or reduce the heat on it and heat water for nearby buildings. The costs of running major roads could be reduced by installing such heating systems as they are now doing in the Netherlands. Companies in this country, such as Invisible Heating Systems Ltd in Ullapool, are involved in that kind of work, but it is in its infancy. The Carbon Trust needs to back that kind of approach because it could lead to the creation of modern roads that do not suffer so much from wear and tear and so have reduced maintenance costs. We do not have any of that kind of thinking permeating transport at present.

I realise that we cannot compare ourselves directly with the likes of Sweden. Bristow Muldoon is happy to say that Britain has great influence in the world in dealing with climate change. Sweden is trying to become a carbon-free economy by 2020. That is the kind of ambition—thinking big—that we need in Scotland, but it is totally lacking in the responses to this debate so far.

It is important for those of us who live in the far-flung parts of the country to get the kind of investment that balances road and rail needs as a prime necessity in order to make our economy work in future. Clean fuels can make a contribution, but we have to make an effort. On the bottleneck issue, surely we cannot continue to condone people travelling or commuting alone in a car; we have to find ways to sort that out. This is a short debate, but I hope that I have made a positive contribution to it.

11:04

Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green): We have already heard how road transport contributes approximately one-fifth of all our carbon emissions and that that figure is set to rise to almost one-third during the coming decades. Tony Blair says that we need to reduce carbon emissions by at least 60 per cent by 2050, but scientists now estimate that the true figure is a 90 per cent reduction by 2030.

Over the past couple of years, there has been an almost seismic shift in the political landscape regarding climate change. All parties are now trying to outdo one another in their greenness. We welcome that. However, we do not have the time to wait for actions to catch up with fine words.

Something that has not changed is politicians' apparent fondness for high-profile, glamorous projects. One such white elephant is being planned in the region that I represent. It is a monument to unsustainability and a victory of vanity and spin over common sense. The Aberdeen western peripheral route will drive a dual carriageway through an international school, homes, farms and the vital countryside around Aberdeen. Its backers claim that it will reduce congestion, cut journey times, reduce air pollution and deliver safety benefits, but we all know that the chosen route will do nothing to cut congestion and air pollution where reductions are needed most—in the centre of Aberdeen. Any journey time reductions are likely to be fleeting at best, because the predict-and-provide model of road construction ensures that the AWPR will become just as congested as the roads on which it is designed to ease pressure.

The road's backers also claim that it will reduce carbon emissions in the centre of Aberdeen, but

they will not tell us how much extra carbon dioxide the road will be responsible for elsewhere. Taxpayers have a right to know the full facts and would rightly be appalled to learn that more than £16 million has already been spent on the project, even before the route was finalised. The voters need to know that, in complete contradiction to the Liberal Democrats' greenwash, it was a Liberal Democrat minister who discarded all five routes that had been the subject of public consultation and announced a completely new route that had been neither consulted on nor properly assessed.

Tavish Scott: For the record, I indicate that the five routes were not discarded. The route that was chosen is a combination of two of the routes. Perhaps Ms Baird will confirm that that is the factual position.

Shiona Baird: The final route was not properly consulted on—the evidence is there to show that.

Since then, Mr Scott has been remarkably reticent about the criteria that informed his decision and about the escalating costs, although I understand that about £5.5 million has already been spent so far this year.

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

Shiona Baird: No, I am nearly out of time.

There are many projects that desperately need funding—none more than Aberdeen crossrail, which is languishing in the sidings, awaiting endless reviews and feasibility studies. The sustainable transport study for Aberdeen that the Scottish Office produced in 1998 found that traffic levels in the city could be reduced by 29 per cent by 2011 through a low-cost combination of measures, including parking controls, extended bus priority measures and improvements to walking and cycling routes. Those may not be the glamorous, big-budget schemes that are so beloved of politicians, but they are the schemes that will deliver genuine improvements to our transport infrastructure. That is where the money should be going—not on a white elephant that will do no more than allow our ever-expanding car population to create more traffic congestion.

Everyone acknowledges that we need to reduce significantly carbon emissions from transport. If the Executive is serious about climate change, it needs to show leadership by not only keeping the targets for traffic stabilisation but strengthening them by having meaningful interim targets. I urge all members to support the motion in Mark Ballard's name.

11:08

Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab): The issue that we are debating is important for us all.

In the global context, Scotland is part of the problem and must be part of the solution. As a developed nation, we have a moral responsibility to reduce our carbon footprint, and we can demonstrate to others by our actions and results that that can be done sustainably. I believe that the Scottish Executive is making an invaluable contribution to meeting that challenge.

The profound injustice of climate change is the distribution of its environmental impacts and social consequences. Developed countries have been and still are responsible for most human-generated greenhouse gas emissions, but the poorest countries are likely to be most vulnerable to its effects. Our work in the Parliament is important and affects the big picture.

However, I take issue with the Greens and others in the chamber. Mark Ballard and Ted Brocklebank said this morning that there is no integrated transport plan and that there are no intermodal developments. It is important to bear in mind that not long ago David Cameron's team in the Westminster Parliament did not even turn up to vote for climate change and air passenger levies. Only a few weeks ago in the chamber, the Greens and others voted against one of the most important intermodal and integrated transport proposals for the east of Scotland that we have seen in decades—the new proposed railway hub at Edinburgh airport.

Mr Ruskell rose—

Helen Eadie: The member can sit down. He really needs to listen to the views of the people of Scotland on the second Forth road bridge, which will not be simply a new bridge, but a replacement bridge. If he has not seen the presentation by the bridgemaister, I urge him and other Green party members to see it urgently. It is vital for Scotland that we make progress and get a new Forth crossing now, not in two or five years' time. We need to make that decision now.

The Greens are living in fantasy land. I accuse Mark Ballard of being Scotland's equivalent of Nero—fiddling while the Forth road bridge burns out from corrosion. He is guilty, and so are the Greens as a whole. Plainly, they have not recognised the crucial issues that politicians are being called on to address on behalf of Scottish business and society.

From its first days in power, the Executive has constantly promoted travel behaviour change and modal shift to more sustainable forms of transport. When the Executive came to power, the first rail freight access grant in 18 years was awarded. Twenty-nine projects received grants, which will remove more than 26 million lorry miles from Scotland's roads. In the north of Scotland, £600,000 was awarded to enable Safeway and

other local companies to use rail freight and to remove more heavy goods vehicles from the roads. A £13 million fund is available to pay for projects that reduce the impact of transporting timber by road.

I could provide members with pages and pages of figures that I have prepared, but unfortunately time does not permit me to do so. However, I will say that buses need roads and that one of the best things that the Scottish Executive has ever done was to introduce the free Scotland-wide bus travel scheme for elderly and disabled people from 1 April 2006. Scotland is the only part of the UK with such a scheme. The total number of bus journeys that were made under concessionary travel fare schemes increased from about 103 million in 2001 to about 145 million in 2004-05.

The charges that have been levelled against the Executive are simply not true. If time permitted, I could regale members with pages detailing all the important moneys that have been made available, the strategies and policies that have been introduced and the real happenings that have taken place to develop new public transport measures. The need for behavioural change is being impressed on the people of Scotland. We are all changing what we are doing and we will continue to change. That is why I will support the Executive amendment this evening.

11:13

Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): This is a strange debate. Mark Ruskell argues not only that the Greens are opposed to all new roads but that they are now also against all new railway stations. When I gave him the opportunity to set the record straight, he would not take it. The message for next year is clear: vote Green for no upgrading of roads to save lives, and vote Green for no new railway stations, such as the station at Laurencekirk in my constituency. How bizarre.

In its motion today, the Green party says that less than 19 per cent of Scotland's climate change emissions come from transport.

Shiona Baird: Will the member take an intervention?

Mike Rumbles: I have only just started my speech.

The Greens say that it will be impossible to reduce emissions to meet the challenge of climate change if we do not tackle road traffic levels—how bizarre. I would have thought that Green party members would recognise that we need to tackle all sources of emissions, instead of focusing just on road transport. What about the remaining 81 per cent of climate change emissions that have nothing to do with transport issues?

Mr Ruskell: If transport emissions continue to grow, which sectors of the Scottish economy does the member think should pick up those increases?

Mike Rumbles: Most of the 81 per cent of emissions to which I refer are domestic. That is the issue on which we should focus. The Greens cannot tell us why they are not focusing on the main causes of greenhouse gas emissions.

The Green party opposes every major new trunk road building programme in Scotland, including the much-needed western peripheral route around Aberdeen. I know that that new road development will badly affect residents who live close to the route, but every Aberdeen city and Aberdeenshire-based MSP and MP recognises the need for the road, whereas Dundee-based Shiona Baird does not. That says everything. It will relieve traffic in the city and, more important, it will save lives by ending the rat runs on the rural roads in my constituency.

While all the city and shire MSPs support the bypass, despite having different opinions on the best route for it, only the flat-earthers in the Green party oppose it. If it were left to the Greens, I suppose that we would all end up with a horse and cart.

How often do we hear the Greens advocating their nationalist cause of independence for Scotland? That is curious, as they seem to have so much in common with the SNP, especially on road transport projects.

Fergus Ewing: And the Edinburgh airport rail link.

Mike Rumbles: Fergus Ewing is shouting from a sedentary position. I can just about imagine a Cabinet meeting scene involving Fergus Ewing as transport minister discussing his plans for more and bigger roads throughout Scotland—never mind more and cheaper air routes from every airport in the country—with his Green counterpart, whoever that would be. I wonder how they would get on.

How often do we hear the Green party advocating its socialist cause of renationalising the railways and, while we are at it, nationalising all our public utilities? I am reminded of the pledge to nationalise all means of production and control, as advocated by other left-wing and nationalist parties in Scotland. I wonder what planet the Greens are on—do they ever bother to cost out their fantasy policies?

I welcome the Scottish Executive's positive record on its transport programme as outlined by the minister in today's debate. It is clear that there has been an historic shift in investment towards public transport and that the Government has delivered more trains with more capacity,

abolished the Skye bridge tolls, established cheaper lifeline flights to the islands, introduced free national bus travel for older people and is delivering much-needed improvements to our national road and rail network.

We need to tackle all Scotland's climate change emissions and not just focus on the less than 19 per cent of emissions caused by transport. The Greens should be the green conscience of this Parliament. Instead, as their motion and today's debate testify, they are seen as an ineffective and extreme party that is not ready to take part in the governance of this country.

11:17

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): In an ideal world the Greens' transport policies might make sense. If Scotland were not a nation of 5 million people but a city of 5 million on a continental plain, we could decide to have such policies and probably make them work. The problem with the Greens' policies is that Scotland does not conform to them.

Scotland is a diverse country with a diverse geography. Its main cities are spread out over hundreds of miles and people's need to move between and around them is made more difficult by geography.

Scotland's economy depends more on transport, and on road transport in particular, than do many other comparable economies, including that of Sweden with which positive comparison has been drawn today. Scotland needs more roads and more road improvements. Ignoring climate change and carbon emissions for a moment, there is great demand and great necessity to improve road links, for example to Inverness from Elgin, where road transport is still difficult, as we have heard during the debate. We need to improve road connections to Stranraer, to benefit not only the south-west but Northern Ireland, which depends on those connections for access to ferry services.

We need the Aberdeen western peripheral route. The clear economic gap between the north and south extremes of Aberdeenshire is caused simply by the difficulties of getting lorries and cars past the obstruction that is Aberdeen. The case is clear: we can improve Scotland's economy by improving transport, and roads will always be a key part of transport links.

As members from many parties have said, a clear and present danger is associated with carbon emissions and global warming. We all admit that climate change is here, but we have a difficult fence to sit on. Scotland cannot afford to take more radical measures—at least, not at this stage—yet we need to take action. For that reason, we need to look at a range of ideas and technologies, some of which are a long way off.

We heard good suggestions from Rob Gibson today about how road construction and maintenance could be made cheaper through the use of new technologies. We heard Ted Brocklebank speak at some length about the availability of technologies such as magnetic levitation and how that might make rail travel more efficient, but that is a very long way off.

What we can do is look at moving away from using fossil carbon as our source of energy on the roads. The first thing that we need to do is consider biofuels, because that technology is the easiest for us to grasp and include in our systems now. Roads are not the polluters and neither are cars; the polluter is the fuel that we put into our cars. Moving to biofuels is not easy to achieve. If we are to use a much higher level of biofuels, decisions must be made outside this Parliament about the level of taxation to which such fuel is subjected. In many other European countries, arrangements have already been reached under which, by virtue of lower levels of taxation, biofuels compete with, or are even more competitive than, the fossil fuels that they replace. The opportunity to introduce cyclical carbon-based fuels to power our cities' bus systems and make them carbon neutral is not beyond us.

I praise the Scottish Executive for the actions that it has taken so far to support the fledgling biofuel industry in Scotland. The first bullet that we all have to bite is considering how we can divert yet more resource to that important fledgling industry. It would benefit us as consumers, our country's environment and even our farmers. Let us have some radical decisions on how we can divert those resources.

11:22

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): I am told that it is easy to be negative, so let me eschew that approach, as always. On Monday this week I had the pleasure of cutting the ribbon at a ceremony to celebrate the launch of six new Stagecoach bus services; I also had a pleasant chat with Scottish Natural Heritage staff at their new headquarters in Inverness. This evening, I will travel to my constituency by rail—I congratulate First ScotRail on receiving the accolade of UK public transport operator of the year. Many commercial companies in Edinburgh and other cities provide excellent public transport and it behoves us to recognise the good work that they and their staff do.

The Greens urge us in today's debate to adopt targets in order to tackle climate change. My good friend Mark Ballard and I agree about a great many things, as members heard in yesterday's freight debate, such as the folly of spending £1 billion on a rail link to Edinburgh airport when that

money could be used to update the whole Scottish rail network, including, as Alex Salmond announced at our conference, the SNP's pledge to cut rail journey times from Inverness to the central belt by 45 minutes.

We have much common ground, but in responding to the debate, my serious point is that although the Greens say that we should adopt targets, they have not—to my knowledge, over nearly four years of the current parliamentary session—explained to us how those targets can be met. Although the Greens set objectives, they do not spell out how they should be fulfilled. I think that that is fair criticism. In that way, they do not take an entirely responsible approach to politics. If they wish to be in government, as we do, they have to say what they will do and how they will do it.

If I was a Green party MSP, I would say, if I was being honest, that fuel tax is not high enough. I accept that it takes a leap of imagination to imagine me as a Green MSP—I struggle myself. However, the tax on diesel in the UK has been the highest in the 25 European Union states for the past three years, so we are contributing to the environment. Indeed, the more fuel a car consumes, the more tax is paid. It is reasonable to point out that Scotland, Europe's leading oil producer, is paying through the nozzle at the pump for the privilege of driving on the goat-tracks that we call our roads.

The Greens do not say that fuel tax should be doubled or trebled, that people should be banned from going on holiday to Majorca or that there should be a car tax of £1,000, £2,000 or £3,000. If they were being honest, they would say that those are the kinds of measures that they believe in their hearts would have to be imposed. I will postulate why they do not say that: it is because they have perhaps become a slightly grey party. They know that, if they tell the truth about what they believe needs to be done, the votes will disappear like snow off a dyke. That has been the fundamental failure of our good friends in the Green party over the four years of this session of Parliament.

11:26

Tavish Scott: This has been a good and at times enlightening debate. Parliament can agree that the challenges posed by climate change are immediate and demanding, and I respect the range of views that have been presented. The debate comes down to, on the one hand, those who take decisions and are rightly held accountable for them, and, on the other hand, the no-roads—and therefore no-buses and, as Mike Rumbles would have it, no-horses-and-carts—policy of the Green nationalists.

The Executive is tackling emissions from all sectors, including the transport sector. We have set an ambitious target to exceed Scotland's fair share of UK carbon savings by 1 million tonnes of carbon by 2010. Of course, different sectors will have different scope for making carbon savings and for applying devolved policies. Our aim is to meet the Scottish target in the most sustainable way, by maintaining flexibility in the contribution of the different sectors.

Helen Eadie was right to point to the Tory record. The Tories have some way to go before we will take them seriously on these issues. After all, it was only last year that John Redwood—who, I am told, is a leading thinker in the modern Conservatives—said that it was not clear that human activity is changing the climate. David—or Dave—Cameron wrote the 2005 Tory general election manifesto, which mentioned climate change only once. Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace have said:

"This manifesto gives the impression that the environment will not be safe in Conservative hands."

The Tory MEP Caroline Jackson has called David Cameron's environmental policy review

"all talk and no action"

and she has said that

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

With the greatest of respect to Ted Brocklebank, who has made a spirited effort to move his party forward on these issues, I suspect that his party still has some work to do.

I greatly admire Fergus Ewing's brass neck. For a moment, I thought that we were not going to have the benefit of his contribution to this environmental debate, because it is not territory on which he is particularly comfortable. After all, he has spent some time trashing public transport projects all over Scotland. He has U-turned—although "handbrake-turned" might be a better expression for Mr Ewing—SNP policy on Edinburgh trams and the Edinburgh airport rail link. As we constantly remind the Greens and the SNP—who are in coalition on this issue—the airport rail link is not just for Edinburgh but, as Helen Eadie rightly said, for the whole of Scotland.

Fergus Ewing: Does the minister agree with TIE, which has said that BAA's reasonable request for an indemnity against the losses that might arise if its runway has to close means that the project is no longer deliverable?

Tavish Scott: We will deliver the project. No matter how much Mr Ewing's party whinges, and no matter how much he exaggerates—as he does, day in and day out—the issues that have to be dealt with in any capital transport project, we will

deliver that project. It is time for Tarmac Fergus to come clean on what other public transport projects the SNP would cancel.

Mr Ewing has a problem. He says where he would save money, but Mr Salmond, his leader and boss, has already committed the SNP to a bullet train—an uncosted bullet train, members will not be surprised to hear—between Edinburgh and Glasgow. That is Mr Salmond's on-the-record commitment, but there are no costings for it. At the general election, we look forward to that kind of spending commitment being made very clear indeed. It is time for the SNP to come clean. It cannot promote rail on one hand and oppose it on the other.

Alex Johnstone: Did the minister interpret Fergus Ewing's remarks as suggesting that the bullet train will be going to Inverness as well?

Tavish Scott: I take that as a helpful contribution to the debate. I am sure that the SNP will consider the point carefully as it develops its policies.

Rob Gibson made a serious point about rail procurement. We will unveil an unprecedented investment in new rolling stock, and we are adopting the latest technologies—that, to some extent, deals with Ted Brocklebank's fair point about newer and cleaner fuels in respect of carbon emissions.

The only point on which Mr Gibson came unstuck was the Irish example. The Irish are promoting a fast rail link to Dublin airport, so Mr Gibson might want to go over there and change his mind—and SNP policy again—on the airport link to our capital city.

I finish by considering the Green nationalists. My party is occasionally accused of being a bit sanctimonious, but the Greens do sanctimonious far better than we ever could. Let me give just one example. I am pleased that Chris Ballance has returned to the chamber, because I have here the *Carrick Gazette*, a paper that I read regularly. On 29 June 2006, Chris Ballance said of Maybole that "a by-pass would transform the quality of life of residents."

When Mr Ballard sums up for the Greens, he will have to explain why, on one side of the south of Scotland, it is all right to support a bypass, but on the other side, at Dalkeith, that is not all right.

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

Tavish Scott: No. Mr Ballance said what he said and I am very grateful that he is on the record on that point.

What we need from the Greens is a little clarity—which I am sure Mr Ballard is just about to provide—and a little less hypocrisy on road policy.

11:32

Mark Ballard (Lothians) (Green): We have just been asked by the Minister for Transport for a little less hypocrisy. The hypocrisy in this debate has been fairly clear to see.

Mark Ruskell and Shiona Baird laid out the challenge that we face from climate change. According to Tony Blair, we need a 60 per cent reduction by 2050; according to the latest scientific research, we need a 90 per cent reduction by 2030. We have heard fine words from all sides: Bristow Muldoon talked about his commitment to the Kyoto process; Ted Brocklebank went so far as to give us a quotation to the effect that the most important threat that we face is climate change; and Richard Lochhead has set ambitious targets for the SNP of 2.5 per cent reductions in CO₂, rising to 3 per cent.

There has been good rhetoric, but the reality is that—no matter how much we welcome extra spending on public transport—we face a 27 per cent increase in road traffic levels by 2021, according to the latest Audit Scotland report. The projections completely overshoot the Executive's targets. If we are serious about tackling climate change, and if we are serious about making 60 or 90 per cent reductions, it is no good ignoring the fact that road traffic levels are shooting up.

There are lots of fixes that people can come up with. Richard Lochhead and Alex Johnstone mentioned biofuels. According to figures that I have seen, it would take about two acres of oilseed rape to grow enough biofuel for the average family car. There are about 30 million family cars in the UK, so we would need to devote 60 million acres of the UK to oilseed rape to produce enough biofuel just for those cars—and more for buses and heavy goods vehicles. The SNP objects to wind farms being placed on Scotland's hills; I wonder what its response would be if every hill in Scotland had to be covered with a thick yellow carpet of oilseed rape in an effort to do something serious about replacing petrol.

Jeremy Purvis: Will the member take an intervention?

Mark Ballard: No, I am sorry; I do not have enough time. I will come to the Liberal Democrats in a moment, and hope to give the member an opportunity then.

We heard from Ted Brocklebank that bad roads give rise to higher emissions. That may be true, but I say to him that we are talking about a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions of between 60 and 90 per cent. Fixing the potholes will not give us that reduction.

Mike Rumbles talked about the other sources of carbon dioxide in Scotland, such as lights. He

might not have noticed, but the Scottish Parliament does not have power over whether people switch lights on or off in their own homes, although we have power over transport infrastructure. The Parliament decides what transport infrastructure we will have in the future. Therefore, it is incumbent on us to deal with that issue.

Shiona Baird covered very well the fact that it is always quite easy to justify new roads by quoting safety and congestion figures. However, I return to the fact that we need a 60 to 90 per cent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions.

Jeremy Purvis: On the specifics of roads and being very straight, the Green party seems to support the bypass in Ayrshire but opposes the bypass in Midlothian. Can Mark Ballard explain why? While he is at it, can he explain whether the Green party will support a Selkirk bypass in my constituency?

Mark Ballard: A comparison was drawn between my opposition to the proposed Dalkeith bypass and my colleague's support for the proposal in his area. We must remember that, when the Dalkeith bypass project was frozen by Sarah Boyack, she promised a multimodal study to find the best way of reducing congestion in Dalkeith. We have not had that multimodal study; instead, that road programme has been defrosted. The key issue is that we should seek the most effective way of dealing with genuine congestion problems in places such as Dalkeith. We need to make some hard decisions.

Despite what Mike Rumbles seems to think, in general we support new rail developments. However, along with my good friend, Fergus Ewing, I have opposed the Edinburgh airport rail link because it is the wrong rail proposal. In general, we oppose the massive plans for motorway expansion that are proposed by other parties, although there may be exceptions for safety reasons. Mark Ruskell mentioned the Ballinluig junction as a good example of a place where limited work may be necessary for safety reasons. Nevertheless, it is all too simple to take the easy option of building more roads.

I support the Executive entirely in its decision to give local authorities the right to introduce congestion charging. A Labour-led local authority tried to do so but faced a barrage of opposition—easy and irresponsible opposition—from the Liberals, the SNP, the Scottish Socialist Party, the Tory party and even surrounding Labour councils. Introducing congestion charging is the kind of hard choice that we have to make if we are to achieve a 60 to 90 per cent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions.

Of course, it is welcome that the Executive is spending more on public transport, although I

could argue with Tavish Scott about the way in which roads are treated differently from rail in the budget and about the inclusion of road haulage modernisation funds and air route development funds in the public transport figure. In the end, however, the debate comes down to the 27 per cent increase in road traffic levels and the requirement to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 60 to 90 per cent.

We all need to face what Al Gore has called “An Inconvenient Truth”—that business as usual is not an option. We cannot continue to do everything that the Tories describe in their amendment. Ted Brocklebank seems to want everything from the completion of the central belt motorway network to the upgrading of trunk routes, the shifting of more freight to rail and more investment in public transport. The reality is that we have hard choices before us—tough decisions that we have to make about what we are going to invest in.

In answer to Fergus Ewing, I say that we need to support congestion charging, not oppose it as his SNP colleagues did. We also need to support massive investment in rail infrastructure, the pinch-points in which have been mentioned. We cannot do that at the same time as making the investment in roads that other parties are talking about. We have a choice about what investments we are going to make in the future.

The time has come when we can no longer wriggle out of the requirement to make a 60 to 90 per cent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions. We can no longer pretend that business as usual is possible. We cannot continue to build more new motorways. I ask members, please, to support the motion in my name. Let us make progress towards the targets for the reduction of CO₂ emissions and use the Scottish Parliament’s powers to take the steps that are necessary to tackle the problems of road transport. There is no other option: there is no way off that twin hook.

Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

General Questions

11:40

Air Discount Scheme (Western Isles)

1. Mr Alasdair Morrison (Western Isles) (Lab):

To ask the Scottish Executive how many eligible residents in the Western Isles have registered for the air discount scheme and how many have used the scheme since its introduction. (S2O-10877)

The Minister for Transport (Tavish Scott):

Since the introduction of the air discount scheme on 18 May 2006 and up to 30 September, 25,698 residents in the Western Isles—93 per cent of the eligible total—had registered for the scheme and 3,458 residents had used it.

Mr Morrison: I thank the minister for that encouraging update. I am sure that the minister will have seen and heard some of the more churlish remarks that the Scottish National Party has made about a scheme that it cannot bring itself to welcome or endorse. I ask the minister for an update on some of the understandable technical issues that were a feature of the scheme at the outset. Further, I ask the minister and the Executive to give serious consideration to a ferry discount scheme for which eligibility would be based on the residency criterion that has been used so successfully for the air discount scheme.

Tavish Scott: I am happy to address the specific points that Mr Morrison raises. I am aware that we have been able to sort out the operational issues with bookings for the Eastern Airways service to Aberdeen. I hope that that is of assistance to Alasdair Morrison’s constituents. I am also happy to consider his point regarding the application of the residency rules to ferries. We are encouraged by the success of the air discount scheme, which appears to have been a successful mechanism in encouraging travel opportunities for local people, and we will reflect on Alasdair Morrison’s comments. I share his concerns about SNP members who opposed the scheme and continue to send me letters saying that they are against it. I find that disappointing, given the scheme’s success.

Jim Mather (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):

The good news is that we welcome the good sense of the people of the Western Isles in taking up the offer, but we regret the poor grace of the member and the minister on the issue. Will the Executive undertake a study to compare the net economic impact of the scheme with that of a

public service obligation, which could benefit the residents to at least the same extent as the current scheme does and attract more investment, more visitors and more jobs to the Western Isles? If the Executive will not do that, can the minister tell us why?

Tavish Scott: If that was a U-turn, I guess that we must welcome it. The fact is that I have received letter after letter from Mr Mather and his colleagues saying that it would be better to have a public service obligation. That is the SNP's position. While we are helping people in the islands—the numbers illustrate that—the SNP has opposed the scheme time and time again. We reviewed the entire proposal and the different mechanisms that were available to us properly, and the Government came to a decision. The SNP should have the good grace to welcome it.

Dave Petrie (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Does the minister agree that such initiatives should be given much wider publicity and should be extended to incoming flights, to encourage much-needed growth in tourism in such remote areas?

Tavish Scott: It is nice to see Dave Petrie with us today. We welcome him back to the chamber. I respect his remarks on the need to advertise constantly to ensure that people are aware of the benefits of the scheme and the ease with which they can use it. In response to his point about people who do not live in the islands and do not, therefore, qualify for the scheme under the residency rules that govern it, I say to him that we are operating the scheme in a similar way to many others that operate throughout Europe. Those are the rules under which we must construct and operate the scheme, and that is the current position.

Property Factors (Regulation)

2. Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it has any plans to regulate property factors. (S2O-10870)

The Deputy Minister for Communities (Johann Lamont): We are developing proposals for a national voluntary accreditation scheme for residential property managers. The aim will be to encourage owners of houses with common parts to appoint property managers by giving them confidence that scheme members will meet high standards.

Paul Martin: Probably like many other members, I have received a significant number of complaints about the standard of service that my constituents receive from property managers. Will the minister meet me to discuss the matter further and to discuss the possibility of regulating property management factors? Will she also consider how

best we might manage common areas that local residents have the responsibility of managing in the face of severe challenges?

Johann Lamont: I would be delighted to meet Paul Martin, given his expertise in rooting into what happens in local communities and formulating the policy challenges for the Executive. I am sure that what he has to say will be informative and will help us to shape policy on a matter that is important for local communities.

The accreditation scheme is voluntary on the advice of the housing improvement task force. We felt that people would be able to engage with it and that it would give them confidence.

The maintenance of open spaces is important. We have addressed the matter through the Title Conditions (Scotland) Act 2003 and the Tenements (Scotland) Act 2004, but Paul Martin may wish to note that we are currently consulting on draft Scottish planning policy 11 on sport, recreation and open space. In particular, we are considering how planning conditions can be attached to new developments to address the maintenance of open space. He might want to respond to that consultation by 3 November, but I am more than happy to meet him to discuss the issues further.

Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): Is the minister aware of concerns, which are similar to Paul Martin's, about the management of common land in my constituency? I ask her to take those into consideration. Is she also aware of the concerns of residents and home owners in retirement complexes who, despite the passage of the Title Conditions (Scotland) Act 2003, are still having difficulty with the management of their properties?

Johann Lamont: I am aware of the issues that Kenneth Macintosh raises. I recognise that they are not specific to Paul Martin's constituency and that we have probably all experienced them in our communities. Some of them are to do with people not treating their responsibilities as obligations, which needs to be addressed at an earlier stage through planning consents.

There have been discussions with Hugh Henry, the Deputy Minister for Justice, on the points that Kenneth Macintosh makes on the Title Conditions (Scotland) Act 2003, but I am more than happy to pursue them further if we can help to resolve the concerns, particularly those of people in retirement complexes, who might find the additional stress of dealing with maintenance issues unacceptable.

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): Question 3 has been withdrawn.

Air Route Development Fund

4. Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green): To ask the Scottish Executive whether environmental or economic considerations are given greater weight when making decisions on routes to support through the air route development fund. (S2O-10810)

The Minister for Transport (Tavish Scott): All proposed route development fund air routes are appraised against a range of operational and economic benefit criteria. The environmental component of the appraisal of new services includes two indicators of environmental impact: aircraft noise and carbon dioxide emissions.

Chris Ballance: The minister's reply is somewhat at variance with the statement from the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport on Radio Scotland last night that, although the balance was delicate, the economic issues should be given priority. We now have a Government pledge to introduce a climate change bill, so if the Minister for Transport is committed to increasing aviation emissions through the route development fund, what sector does he propose should cut its carbon emissions so that the balance of emissions does not continue to rise?

Tavish Scott: As we have just debated, tackling carbon dioxide emissions requires a balance across the different transport sectors and across Government policy. I hope that Mr Ballance is familiar with the fact that, in considering the carbon dioxide emissions for air transport, we examine aircraft emissions and emissions from surface transport. Of course, he does not help his argument by opposing the Edinburgh airport rail link—as does the Scottish National Party—which would help considerably in that regard.

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): The line is wrong.

Tavish Scott: It is particularly disappointing that the Greens and SNP members, who are all screaming and shouting from a sedentary position, oppose the arrival of overseas visitors to Scotland—2.4 million in the past year, which is a 50 per cent increase since 2001 and the highest figure that has ever been recorded. The Executive welcomes that, but I see that the SNP and the Greens oppose it.

Railway Improvements (Inverness to Aberdeen)

5. Eleanor Scott (Highlands and Islands) (Green): To ask the Scottish Executive what plans it has for improving the railway line between Inverness and Aberdeen. (S2O-10813)

The Minister for Transport (Tavish Scott): Later this autumn, we will publish our rail policy

document "Scotland's Railways" as part of the national transport strategy. It will examine a number of options for improving the route between Inverness and Aberdeen.

Eleanor Scott: The minister might be aware that there were recently reports in the local press in the Inverness area that the much-needed expansion of the commuter train service between Elgin and Inverness has been put in doubt because the line does not have the capacity to carry any more trains because it is only a single-track line. Does he agree that a single-track railway between two of our major cities is not fit for purpose in the 21st century and that it should be at the top of his list for improvement? Whatever he announces later this autumn, will he undertake to put in place improvements to that route to get traffic off the A96 and on to the railway line, where it should be?

Tavish Scott: I assure Eleanor Scott that that is part of the "Scotland's Railways" approach to planning for the railway sector and network throughout Scotland. It is our intention to encourage and develop commuter lines to Inverness. There is strong pressure for that and there are strong arguments for it in relation to encouraging people to use public transport, as opposed to the car. The link that she mentions is important in that context.

The other day I noticed a comment in *The Press and Journal* that it is important to share in this context. It illustrates that

"the Highland capital is almost unrecognisable from a decade ago—during which time city status was achieved and new housing, offices and industrial units sprang up with alarming regularity ... Its transport links are improving".

We are making some progress, as *The Press and Journal* recognises, and we will continue to do so.

Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): Is the minister aware of the timetabling problems that passengers who are travelling north face with connections, such as one Glasgow train arriving in Aberdeen 60 seconds after the Inverness connection has left? Passengers who want to make that journey face a two-hour delay waiting for the next Inverness train. Does he also recognise that FirstScotrail blames the timetabling problems on the fact that the route between Aberdeen and Inverness is a single-track line and does he agree that that means that it should be a priority for upgrading?

Tavish Scott: That is a perfectly serious point and we will examine the issue. I meet FirstScotrail regularly to discuss those and other issues, as does Transport Scotland. I undertake to look into the matter, but I hope that Mr Lochhead supports the general theme of the Government's expenditure on railways, which involves tackling

and providing for enhancements in the network. That can make a considerable difference in encouraging people to use public transport as opposed to the car.

The Presiding Officer: Question 6 has been withdrawn.

Schools (Funding)

7. Mr Kenneth Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how the additional funding to improve school facilities will directly raise the standard of education delivered within our schools. (S2O-10872)

The Deputy Minister for Education and Young People (Robert Brown): A wide range of factors bears on educational attainment, and improved school facilities help to create a learning and teaching environment in which young people get the best opportunities to realise their full potential.

The Presiding Officer: Minister.

Mr Macintosh: Thank you for the promotion, Presiding Officer.

Is the minister aware of the work of Thornliebank primary school's pupil council, members of which are visiting the Scottish Parliament today and, I hope, listening to the minister's response? They recently successfully lobbied my local authority, East Renfrewshire Council, for a multi-user games area to be built in the school playground. Does the minister agree that such sporting facilities not only encourage all our children to lead healthier and more active lives but will help to tackle the problem of rising obesity in Scotland and, I hope, help to produce the athletes of the future, perhaps in time for the Commonwealth games coming to Scotland?

Robert Brown: I join Kenneth Macintosh in welcoming the children of Thornliebank primary school to the Parliament. He may be aware that, a few weeks ago, Peter Peacock, the Minister for Education and Young People, announced an additional £30 million for the schools fund for 2006-07—that is the capital grant—which increases the fund total to £131.35 million throughout the country, of which I think about £600,000 is available in East Renfrewshire. It has been suggested that the money could fund all sorts of capital projects, such as energy efficiency measures, canteens, enhanced sports facilities and playgrounds.

The Executive is very much aware of the importance of supporting all sorts of activities in schools, and the need for such investment is being taken forward. We are conscious of the bid to host the Commonwealth games and of the wider issues of obesity and exercise and diet in schools.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): Is the minister aware that the number of pupils who are studying higher in the three sciences has fallen by 8,000 since 1997? Will he consider giving much more priority to investing in school science facilities to address the decline?

Robert Brown: There has been quite a bit of investment in school science in the recent past, as well as the support that the Scottish Executive Enterprise, Transport and Lifelong Learning Department has given to the science centres. As Lord James Douglas-Hamilton is aware, the matter has rightly been the subject of debate in the Parliament from time to time. The Scottish Executive is committed to supporting science as a major driver of Scotland's economy.

Gender Proofing

8. Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what plans there are to improve the gender proofing of policies across departmental portfolios. (S2O-10862)

The Deputy Minister for Communities (Johann Lamont): The duty to promote equality of opportunity between women and men, as introduced by the Equality Act 2006, is expected to come into force in Scotland in April 2007.

As a public authority, the Executive, along with its agencies, is subject to that duty. Key parts of the new duty are ensuring that all new key policies and activities are assessed for their impact on gender equality and making arrangements to review key existing policies. We believe that effective equality impact assessment is key to equality mainstreaming and to the delivery of the gender duty and the other public sector equality duties. The Executive has been developing an equality impact assessment tool and guidance, which will be made available to all Executive officials to enable them to assess the impact of their policies across a number of equality strands, including gender.

Marlyn Glen: I acknowledge the progress that is being made, even though the duty has not yet come in. Will the minister outline how departments are to be further encouraged to take a more uniform approach to equalities reporting, because at the moment different approaches are still being adopted?

Johann Lamont: It is key that we ensure that there is discussion throughout the Executive rather than just within departments. I know that members of the Equal Opportunities Committee will challenge the Minister for Communities, Malcolm Chisholm, when he discusses the budget with them in due course and talks about the practicalities of how that can be delivered.

Underlying our desire to get the budgets right is our desire to get the policy right. Today we mark the second anniversary of the establishment of the domestic abuse court and the assist service, which has liberated people to use their talents to support women who are dealing with domestic abuse through the justice system, so that they get justice and are not victimised further. We should recognise the need to put in place the budgets to match our policy commitment. We will talk about assessment tools and all the rest of it and will ensure that Executive officials talk to each other, but our commitment and energy to deliver equality for women will drive the budget—it will not be the other way round.

Neighbourhood Wardens

9. Janis Hughes (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab):

To ask the Scottish Executive whether it has any plans to increase the number of neighbourhood wardens in light of their performance in tackling antisocial behaviour in our communities. (S2O-10865)

The Minister for Justice (Cathy Jamieson):

Community wardens play a key role in our strategy to tackle antisocial behaviour. They help to make our communities safer by providing a visible presence in our communities, reassuring residents and working with the police and other agencies to take back our streets from the minority of people who engage in antisocial behaviour. Funding from the Executive has allowed every council in Scotland to operate a warden scheme and there are now well over 550 wardens patrolling our streets. As with all policy areas across the Executive, decisions on future funding to tackle antisocial behaviour, including provision for community wardens, must await the outcome of the spending review.

Janis Hughes: I am sure that the minister will agree that although we all accept that wardens are not a replacement for police officers, their visible presence on the streets can make a significant contribution to crime prevention. The award to a group of wardens from Renfrewshire at last night's standing up to antisocial behaviour awards ceremony is testament to the good work that they can do in tackling crime proactively.

Will the minister assure me that she will do everything that she can to ensure that when the spending review has been completed, funding for a significant number of community wardens in our communities will continue, because that will help to make our streets safer?

Cathy Jamieson: I am glad that Janis Hughes mentioned the standing up to antisocial behaviour awards that took place last night and the success of the Renfrewshire Council wardens in achieving one of the awards in the above and beyond

category. The awards recognised the extraordinary efforts of ordinary citizens, both young and old, in communities throughout Scotland to reclaim our streets from the minority of people who cause problems.

Whenever I go to places where wardens are in operation, people want their presence to continue. That, together with the fact that areas that do not have wardens would like their provision to be extended, means that the Executive was right to introduce them, despite the opposition that came from certain quarters. I will do everything in my power to ensure that we reap the benefits from those schemes.

Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab): Does the minister agree that junior warden schemes such as the one in Abbeyview, which also received recognition at last night's awards, have a key role to play in our communities and should be encouraged throughout Scotland?

Cathy Jamieson: I certainly agree with Scott Barrie. I have visited the area that the Abbeyview junior wardens serve and had the opportunity to meet them again last night. The scheme is highly successful, particularly as it allows young people to focus on issues such as citizenship and how they can contribute to their communities. That is vital in getting across the message that our children and young people are almost inevitably the victims of antisocial behaviour.

First Minister's Question Time

12:00

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): Members will wish to join me in welcoming Eileen Bell, who is the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly. [*Applause.*]

Prime Minister (Meetings)

1. Nicola Sturgeon (Glasgow) (SNP): To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Prime Minister and what issues they will discuss. (S2F-2491)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): I, too, welcome the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, and wish her and her colleagues in all the parties in the Assembly well in attempting, over the winter and in difficult circumstances, to implement the agreement reached two weeks ago at St Andrews. [*Applause.*]

I also welcome to the VIP gallery the world-champion Scottish curling team. We are very proud of them and their result. [*Applause.*]

In response to Ms Sturgeon, I have no immediate plans to meet the Prime Minister, but I will be happy to discuss curling with him when I do.

Nicola Sturgeon: I echo all of the First Minister's opening remarks.

Yesterday, the First Minister asked how the Scottish National Party would deal with nuclear waste. I ask him to listen very carefully to this: Scotland should deal with our own—and no one else's—nuclear waste; it should be stored above ground and close to source; and under no circumstances should we have new nuclear power stations to generate even more waste. Is that position not far more responsible than the First Minister's daft notion of turning England into his nuclear waste dump?

The First Minister: At long last, we get some honesty from the SNP. I am very pleased to endorse the statements that were made yesterday by our own Minister for Environment and Rural Development and, in London, by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. I want to be very clear with the chamber and the people of Scotland that we endorse the principle of voluntary agreement in relation to the disposal of nuclear waste. As it is likely that there will be no volunteers in Scotland to deal with such waste but that there might indeed be volunteers in local authorities in England, if the SNP is saying that we should impose it on the people of Scotland instead, it is wrong and is, in fact, being very irresponsible.

Nicola Sturgeon: My position is clear; the problem is with the First Minister's position. He seems to be suggesting that Scotland can abdicate responsibility for our share of the waste that his Government and previous Tory Governments have generated. I do not think so.

Let me put it this way:

"Scotland ... creates much of the nuclear waste in Britain"

so we

"have a responsibility to deal with"

it;

"those who suggest that we do not are highly irresponsible."—[*Official Report*, 16 June 2005; c 18072.]

Those are the words of the First Minister in the chamber just last year.

Dealing with our own waste is not the issue. Is it not the case that, under Labour plans, the real risk is that all the United Kingdom's nuclear waste could end up here in Scotland? After all, we know that half of all the suitable sites for deep disposal are in Scotland. If that turns out to be the proposal—the First Minister knows that that is a possibility—would he consider that to be a dividend of the union or does he, like me, think that giving this Parliament the power to stop that happening would be a very big independence bonus?

The First Minister: The Parliament has powers over nuclear waste, and we are exercising them with great care and responsibility. We have agreed with the UK Government that, under the arrangements recommended by the independent scientists and experts and implemented by both Governments, nuclear waste will not be disposed of in areas where it is not wanted.

However, it is absolutely clear that, after 20 years of saying that it was against the imposition of nuclear waste here, the SNP has now made a U-turn and, unlike everyone else in the chamber, proposes as its party position to impose such waste on communities in Scotland. That is a shockingly irresponsible position, for which I am sure the SNP will pay the price.

Nicola Sturgeon: Yesterday, the UK minister did not, and would not, rule out Scotland as the site for all the UK's nuclear waste. That is the reality. The difficulty of dealing with nuclear waste is just one of the reasons why an SNP Government will not sanction new nuclear power stations. The First Minister has said repeatedly that he will make no decision on new nuclear power stations until the issue of waste has been resolved, but now that he has accepted the Committee on Radioactive Waste Management's so-called solution and now that he thinks the issue

is resolved, I assume that he can finally give us an answer to this question: is he for or against new nuclear power stations?

The First Minister: We know that the SNP's policy on new nuclear power stations is irresponsible, just as its policy on nuclear waste is irresponsible. Many issues have still to be resolved on nuclear waste, but at least some of the issues are now clear. The Executive parties support deep disposal; the SNP supports leaving waste on the surface. The Executive parties support a voluntary arrangement inside the UK for a community to volunteer to accept the nuclear waste; the SNP wants to impose it on Scotland. The SNP's policy is irresponsible and threatens the future of Scottish communities; the Executive parties are tackling the issue responsibly and now have a solution for the future.

Nicola Sturgeon: The SNP's position is backed by the Liberals, the Greens, Friends of the Earth Scotland and Greenpeace to name just a few. It is a responsible position. Is it not the case that the First Minister's position is now, frankly, just embarrassing? He will not say whether he is for or against new nuclear power stations, and because he does not have any good arguments against independence he resorts to desperate scaremongering and, in this case, crude anti-English posturing. Could that be why more and more people in Scotland think that it is time for a new First Minister—one who is up to the job?

The First Minister: There is some irony in the fact that the leader of the SNP, Alex Salmond, whose sums do not add up, will speak tonight to auditors in Scotland. If Ms Sturgeon wants to talk about independence, we can talk about that all day long. If she wants to talk about what we would lose as a country by losing the union dividend, I am happy to do so. Billions of pounds of public expenditure would be lost to Scotland. The trade and economic integration that exist between Scottish businesses and businesses south of the border would be lost as a result of losing the union dividend. Family ties would also be affected by losing the union dividend. SNP members, no matter how much they shout, cannot deny that the union dividend would be lost to Scotland. SNP members had better start debating that issue. If they do not want to debate it, we certainly do.

Cabinet (Meetings)

2. Miss Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): To ask the First Minister what issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Scottish Executive's Cabinet. (S2F-2492)

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

Miss Goldie: I would have thought that, at its next meeting, the Scottish Cabinet might want to discuss hospital cuts, the lack of parenting orders, or perhaps Margaret Curran's trip to New Zealand to see how minority government works. Be that as it may, I turn to the First Minister's lecture in Haddington earlier this week. Does he accept that this Parliament is young, that some mistakes have been made and that there is room for improvement, but that the idea of scrapping devolution after only seven and a half years to go down the road that is advocated by Mr Salmond is fraught with uncertainty and dangerous for the future of Scotland?

The First Minister: The biggest danger of separatism would clearly be to lose that union dividend. Across the United Kingdom, we benefit from the pooling of resources and from the additional public expenditure that is provided to Scotland. We would lose the integration of family and business ties that makes us stronger together, and we would be weaker apart. We would lose our stable economy—one of the great benefits of the union dividend—the common inflation target, common interest rates, common currency and the integrated single market. In all those areas and many others, there is a benefit to Scotland from being part of the United Kingdom. However, there is also a benefit to Scotland from the Scottish Parliament making decisions on the matters that are devolved to it. By using both of those benefits, we have the best of both worlds.

Miss Goldie: Does the First Minister accept that the Parliament would have benefited from an official Opposition that actually offered opposition, such as my party—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order. We have to hear the question.

Miss Goldie: Surely an official Opposition should do that instead of continually sniping about affairs that are not in the gift of the Parliament.

Is the First Minister aware that, in seven and a half years, the nationalists have opposed only six of his Government's bills? Does he agree that, if we had had an official Opposition that offered sensible, moderate, constructive comment on devolved issues, devolution would have been strengthened?

The First Minister: I am trying to work out who Miss Goldie might be referring to. I agree absolutely with Annabel Goldie. The policies of the SNP would be an economic and social disaster for Scotland. The worst thing that could happen in the Scottish Parliament would be for the SNP to have any power or influence.

It is incumbent on the other Opposition parties in the Parliament to be consistent. They should not only talk tough on crime, but should vote for the

proposals that we are bringing forward to ensure that action is taken on antisocial behaviour and crime. They should not only talk about the importance of the economy, but should support the many ways in which the Executive is growing the Scottish economy and its population. I refer to growth in, for example, tourism numbers, inward investment and research and development. The other Opposition parties should support the Government when it does the right thing. They should give us the backing that we need to make Scotland prosperous and successful.

Miss Goldie: It is clear that the first seven and a half years of devolution have not met the expectations of the public. That is largely because the Executive has failed to deliver what the public want. The solution is neither to abolish the Scottish Parliament nor to isolate ourselves by leaving the United Kingdom. Does the First Minister agree that Scotland's problems of skills shortages, shocking drugs abuse, hospital cuts and high taxes are caused not by the institution of the Parliament but by his Executive? Does he also agree that it is time for a new form of devolved Government, one that will make the Scottish Parliament work much better to deliver on the real priorities of ordinary people in Scotland?

The First Minister: As I said before, I agree with Annabel Goldie that the SNP policy of creating a separate Scotland would be a disaster for Scotland, economically and socially. At the same time, I remind her that, as a result of the policies of this devolved Government, we have not only improved attainment in our schools and skills in our country but have gained recognition for doing so outwith Scotland. Not only do we have the lowest waiting times on record, but we have achieved a reduction in drug deaths.

Scotland has seen not only growth in every year since devolution began but, as we heard only yesterday, the highest-ever tourism figures. Last week, we heard that Scotland has the highest growth in research and development and inward investment jobs in the whole of the United Kingdom. In addition to all that, we have an increasing population: we have reversed the brain drain and are seeing a net increase in inward migration. In all those areas, the policies of this devolved Government are making a difference to Scotland today. We are doing all that within the powers of devolution and we are doing it well. That is why both Opposition parties will not win in the election next May.

The Presiding Officer: I will take one constituency supplementary.

Mr John Swinney (North Tayside) (SNP): In 2002, the Scottish Executive agreed that the Ballinluig junction on the A9 in my constituency should be upgraded to a grade-separated junction.

It also said that the upgrade should be done by 2005; despite that, work has not even commenced on site. Yesterday, there was another fatality at the junction. Will the First Minister join me in expressing our condolences to the family of the gentleman who lost his life? What action will he take to tackle the lengthy delays that his Executive has caused by failing to tackle the problem on time?

The First Minister: First, I am sure that all members join me in sending condolences to the family of the gentleman who died. The family's situation should be our primary concern today.

Secondly, the improvements to the junction are currently out for tender. They are therefore on stream and will be delivered. Although there have been delays in the past, as John Swinney rightly said, some of those delays might well have been for good reasons. The imperative today is to ensure that the tender process is concluded and that work begins and is completed as quickly as possible.

Secretary of State for Scotland (Meetings)

3. Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Secretary of State for Scotland and what issues he intends to discuss. (S2F-2497)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): I have no immediate plans to meet the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Robin Harper: The First Minister will have read Professor Arthur Midwinter's report on the gross underfunding of children's social work services. Professor Midwinter concludes:

"What is clear is that the status quo is a recipe for instability and uncertainty over the funding, provision and effectiveness of children's social work services, which are vital to the well being of children in need of care and protection."

Does the First Minister agree?

The First Minister: I do not agree with Professor Midwinter's report, for a number of reasons. For example, the report did not include the provision of: £65 million in the changing children's services fund; £60 million in sure start funding; £33 million in grant-aided expenditure for the children's services development fund; £12 million for fostering; £6 million for looked-after children's education; and the provision of £5 million in GAE for young people leaving care. If the report included all those figures, not only would the gap that it identified be filled but the amount of resource would be even higher than the amount that Professor Midwinter identified as being required. I am sure that Professor Midwinter will consider those figures and ensure that an

accurate report is prepared, so that committees of the Parliament can consider the facts.

Robin Harper: Those figures do not refer to core funding. The First Minister's reply does not disguise the fact that there is a gap of nearly 60 per cent in core funding. The number of children in need of care and protection has increased, so costs of community and residential care have increased. Professor Midwinter says in paragraph 23 of his report:

"There is little point in ministers flagging up the 'ways' to improve service if they fail to provide the 'means'."

Does the First Minister agree? Does he also agree that the failure to "provide the 'means'" is imposing intolerable stresses on the children's hearings and social work systems? He wants another set of figures to be produced, but 75 per cent of Scotland's councils disagree with him.

The First Minister: I will spell it out again, in summary. Professor Midwinter claimed that there is a £160 million gap, but the amounts of money that I listed total £181 million. Therefore, even if we accept the figure that Professor Midwinter says is required, we are already providing at least £20 million more across Scotland. I hope that that assures members that we are committed to funding children's services properly.

Funding does not exist in isolation. We also need measures that ensure that we assist children who are vulnerable or in trouble. I am disappointed that this week the Green party has again opposed the measures that are required to deal with antisocial behaviour in communities throughout Scotland. The Green party is out of touch with public opinion and with reality. I am sure that on such a serious issue the Parliament supports the Executive and not the Green party.

Prisoners (Home Leave)

4. Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what guarantees can be given that public safety will not be compromised by the proposed home leave for inmates of open prisons at Christmas. (S2F-2500)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): All prisoners in open prisons must have been assessed as presenting a low risk to the public before being transferred there. Almost all will have some entitlement to home leave throughout the year as part of their rehabilitation programme. However, no one will be allowed home leave without a rigorous safety assessment.

Marlyn Glen: I thank the First Minister for his reassurance. Does he agree that all political parties should be consistent in supporting that policy, instead of having a knee-jerk reaction to misleading press reports?

The First Minister: I agree absolutely. There are members who claim to support systems for rehabilitation but who are quick to criticise them as soon as there is an opportunity to get themselves in the headlines. I would hope that all members would desist from such practices.

Stewart Stevenson (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): I am sure that the First Minister agrees that one of the most important elements of rehabilitation that the prison service can deliver relates to drug abuse, which takes the majority of prisoners into prison.

The Presiding Officer: Is this a question about home leave, Mr Stevenson?

Stewart Stevenson: In that context, in relation to open prisons, does the First Minister support my view that prisoners who are being released for home leave should be tested for drug abuse before they leave and after they return, to ensure continuity of rehabilitation from drug abuse?

The First Minister: If we were to implement the Scottish National Party's policy on prisons, that would be difficult to achieve. The SNP published its policy proposals, entitled "Our policies for a safer Scotland", in which it says clearly that it would introduce new sentencing options, including weekend prisons. For Mr MacAskill, who is Mr Stevenson's boss, to say last week that society has deemed that those people should be punished but that they are not being punished over the festive period because a limited number of prisoners are being allowed home, when, in fact, the SNP wants many more prisoners to be allowed home every single week of the year, is sheer hypocrisy. The Scottish National Party's policies would have more credibility if it was consistent and did not jump from having one policy statement in its policy document to grabbing headlines on another occasion.

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): Does the First Minister agree that the home leave system is an important part of rehabilitation services, but that there are flaws with regard to services that begin in prison—open prisons in particular—but do not carry on in the community? Will he develop the proposal to establish in the community setting the equivalent of link centres in prisons, which are designed to co-ordinate and ensure that rehabilitation services are properly administered, given that there is currently a gap in such services in the community?

The First Minister: I understand that that matter is being considered by justice services and I am sure that the Minister for Justice would be happy to provide details as discussions progress and reach conclusions.

Farepak

5. Roseanna Cunningham (Perth) (SNP): To ask the First Minister whether the Scottish Executive will ensure that an assessment is made of the social and economic impact of the collapse of the hamper firm, Farepak, particularly on those in our communities who will be worst hit, and what measures can be taken by the Executive to mitigate their loss. (S2F-2494)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): Obviously, I express my sympathy for all those who have suffered loss and disappointment as a result of Farepak going into administration. I understand that United Kingdom ministers have launched an investigation into the circumstances surrounding that, and have met the British Retail Consortium and Farepak's administrators to see what can be done for those who have lost money. I have therefore asked the Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning, Allan Wilson, to contact the Department of Trade and Industry to get an assessment of the extent of the problem in Scotland and, having done that, to report to Parliament in due course.

Roseanna Cunningham: I think that the First Minister will agree that the misery that thousands will experience in the run-up to Christmas is an absolute disgrace. I welcome, as I am sure everyone else does, the DTI investigation, because if there has been wrongdoing it must be uncovered. I look forward to the results of the conversations that the First Minister will have in respect of the impact.

Does the First Minister agree that there is an absolute necessity to get in front of the problem before it becomes manifest in rent arrears, missed council tax payments and increasing debt, not to mention losses in the high street? Can we in this Parliament at least impress on organisations such as councils, housing associations and banks the need to start working with individuals from the outset in order to help them deal with the problem that has developed, so that it can be better handled by everybody?

The First Minister: All the suggestions that Roseanna Cunningham made towards the end of her question were very sensible indeed. We will of course consider them all and see what can be done to encourage local authorities and companies to provide every assistance and intervene as quickly as possible to ensure that those who are affected do not find that their circumstances deteriorate. This is a shocking and disturbing situation, which will mean that many people in Scotland will find themselves in great difficulty in the run-up to Christmas through no fault of their own. We can all condemn those responsible, but it is important that we take practical measures to assist those who have been

affected. We will certainly do all we can to help. If members identify issues that arise in their constituencies, I am sure that ministers will be able to take them up.

Alex Fergusson (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con): Does the First Minister agree that clients of companies such as Farepak are, in effect, taking part in a money-saving scheme throughout the year? Does he agree that there is a strong case to be made for such companies to come under the same regulatory regime as banks and building societies?

The First Minister: I have not studied that point in great detail and would not want to give a specific answer today that would perhaps not work out in terms of legal detail. However, the member's point sounds like a fair one. I am sure that ministers in the Department of Trade and Industry will reflect on it as they investigate the circumstances of the case.

Winter Weather (Emergencies)

6. Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Lothians) (Con): To ask the First Minister what measures are in place, or are being prepared, to deal with emergencies arising from winter weather conditions, including landslides, icy and impassable roads and flooding. (S2F-2507)

The First Minister (Mr Jack McConnell): All the agencies that are involved in emergency planning, including the Met Office, have been working hard to learn lessons from previous incidents, including the storms in the Western Isles in 2005. A wide range of measures is now in place to deal with winter weather emergencies, including plans for wider circulation of severe weather warnings; contracts for trunk road maintenance that will minimise disruption and delay; and a vigilant approach by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency to monitoring potential flooding areas.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In the light of the serious incidents of torrential flooding and landslides this week in the Black Isle and Aberdeenshire, as well as immediate threats of flooding elsewhere in Scotland, can the First Minister assure the chamber that he will not be lulled into a false sense of security by a relatively mild autumn? Will he strengthen his forward planning to safeguard life and give maximum assistance to the emergency services?

The First Minister: Of course. As we have said on other occasions, one of the great benefits of devolution is the ability that it creates to bring people together in Scotland and ensure a better co-ordination of public services and those services that are not delivered immediately by the public sector.

Following the storms in the Western Isles nearly two years ago, we decided to bring together the various services that deal with weather emergencies in Scotland to ensure better co-ordination, better planning and better forward planning in the years to come. That is a continuing effort that will, I hope, create benefits whenever the weather emergencies occur this winter. No one in Scotland should be complacent about this issue because we have had a relatively mild summer and autumn.

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): Given that the Liberal-Labour Government is determined to press on with the transfer of housing stock from local authorities to housing associations, and following the law of unintended consequences, what consideration has the Government given to extending the Belwin scheme to those housing associations?

The First Minister: The Belwin scheme exists for local authorities, who are the emergency planning co-ordinators in their areas and have a responsibility for all parts of the geographical area, regardless of whether housing is owned or rented from the council or a housing association. Local authorities would not draw a line on the road and say, "On this side of the road, the flood exists and, on the other side of the road, the flood does not exist." It is important to reiterate that the local authorities have a comprehensive responsibility and that, therefore, the system will be maintained.

Euan Robson (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD): Will the First Minister consider enhancing the financial resources that the Executive makes available to local authorities when they submit flood prevention schemes?

The First Minister: I do not have the figures before me, but I know that there has been a sizable increase in the national budget for flooding schemes in recent years. If there are delays in the implementation of new flooding schemes, they are normally the result of local disagreements on the nature of those schemes. However, there is certainly no lack of funds available at national level to ensure that schemes can go ahead. I hope that, in those areas that have been affected in the recent past, those who are responsible will bring forward schemes quickly in order for us to be able to programme them and provide the necessary finance.

Phil Gallie (South of Scotland) (Con): Does the First Minister agree that one of the major aspects of severe winter weather is a huge rise in the demand for electricity? Given the tragic events at Hunterston this week, when we saw aging nuclear stock having to be taken out of service, what facilities will the First Minister provide to ensure that there will be no shortage of electricity supply this winter?

The First Minister: I wondered where that question was leading, but it did not quite go off in the predictable direction. There was no mention of Europe, for example—although we could, of course, look for a European solution if Mr Gallie would like. I am sure that we would be happy to have a Europe-wide energy policy if he were to advocate such a step.

In the meantime, we in Scotland are producing about 20 per cent above the level of energy that we need. That surplus capacity can more than adequately compensate for any short-term maintenance and repair difficulties.

The Presiding Officer: As we started late, we can have one final supplementary.

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): Some reports have indicated that we can expect a mild winter. Given today's reports from West Lothian where council officials are concerned that their resources are being stretched to the maximum in trying to cope with the influx of people from eastern Europe, and given West Lothian Council's concern about the diminution of service to West Lothian locals, might it not be feasible for the council to examine its budget for coping with bad winter weather? Will the First Minister and Tom McCabe meet the leaders of the City of Edinburgh Council and West Lothian Council to discuss the shortfall in their funds that could well arise from having to meet both the contingencies of a very bad winter and the influx of people into their areas?

The First Minister: I might admire Margo MacDonald's ingenuity in getting all that into one question on flooding, but I disagree absolutely with her premise. First, Tom McCabe meets council leaders on a regular basis, and he will of course continue to do so. Secondly, those Polish workers who are currently living in Scotland are working hard, creating wealth in our economy and contributing far more than they take from our society. As a result, they are very welcome here.

12:31

Meeting suspended until 14:15.

14:15

On resuming—

Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Health and Community Care

Health Service (Centralisation)

1. Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what plans it has to prevent further centralisation of the health service, in light of the paper by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges "Centralisation and Specialisation of Hospital Services—bigger is not necessarily better for rural and remote communities." (S2O-10849)

The Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Andy Kerr): The paper in question is an unpublished document, which I understand has been sent by the United Kingdom Academy of Medical Royal Colleges to the authors for redrafting. I understand that, in its draft state, the report does not take full account of the work on remote and rural health care that is under way in Scotland. Nevertheless, it welcomes the Kerr report's remote and rural health care recommendations, which we have adopted in Scotland through "Delivering for Health". The national health service in Scotland will, of course, continue to consider any relevant published reports as it seeks to improve patient care.

Fiona Hyslop: Can the minister reassure Parliament that he will take every step to re-examine the published paper and that, if it contains any clinical arguments that people who live in more remote areas are being put at risk, he will take action to ensure that the centralisation that is proceeding across Scotland—including the centralisation by stealth at St John's hospital—is tackled and stopped immediately?

Mr Kerr: That is the usual outrageous misinformation from the Scottish National Party. It is inappropriate to base health policy on an unpublished draft that has been sent back to the authors for more work. However, the draft report actually states:

"The Kerr Report ... makes very similar points, and will be debated by the Scottish Parliament ... Many of the recommendations from Kerr's Rural Access Action Team are equally applicable throughout the UK, and should be considered by all bodies considering health policy in areas with remote and rural patients."

In other words, the report states that the UK should learn from and be led by Scotland's health policy.

The report ends by stating:

"All Medical Royal Colleges, UK healthcare commissioners, and NHS trusts that are responsible for patients who live in rural areas should consider the Kerr report ... especially the section written by the Rural Access Action Team, and consider implementation of relevant recommendations."

That is an endorsement by the Academy of Royal Medical Colleges of our approach of making services as local as possible and as specialised as necessary.

I could correct many more such points of misinformation, but unfortunately I do not have time to do so.

Mrs Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab): Is the minister aware that the SNP in West Lothian continues to peddle rumours about service centralisation away from St John's hospital, which Fiona Hyslop mentioned? Such rumours are sapping the confidence of staff and patients. Will the minister follow Lothian NHS Board's lead by reaffirming his confidence in the services that are provided at St John's? Will he also confirm that services are actually being decentralised to that hospital?

Mr Kerr: That is exactly the case. I remind members—in particular, Fiona Hyslop—of some of the facts of the case. We are now treating more in-patient and day cases at St John's than we did in the previous year. We have moved Lothian's ear, nose and throat surgery out to St John's and the phototherapy unit there is now dealing with psoriasis patients. St John's is a vibrant and busy acute hospital that has been part of NHS Scotland's overall success recently in drastically reducing waiting times for both in-patients and day cases.

To return to the substantial point, we are investing resources in health care at St John's, which plays a full and active part in NHS delivery in Scotland and will continue to do so.

Mrs Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): The minister will be aware that Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board recently announced the closure of the integrated care pilot at Vale of Leven hospital in June next year once alternatives can be put in place. Is that decision in line with the recommendations of the Kerr report? Is it also in line with the duty that all health boards now have under the National Health Service Reform (Scotland) Act 2004 to implement regional planning through managed clinical networks to sustain the delivery of services in rural areas?

Mr Kerr: The member is wrong, as ever. However, I seek the guidance of the Presiding Officer on the question, as question 6 was appropriately lodged by another member.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):

The member has asked a supplementary question that is relevant to question 1—specifically, whether the approach corresponds to the Kerr report. The minister could answer that. His response to the later question will doubtless cover the other aspects.

Mr Kerr: Before answering the question, I must correct the member's assertion. The Vale of Leven pilot has not ended, but there are concerns about the next stage of the project. The clinical safety issues are not about the pilot as it currently stands but relate more to implementing the next phase of the operation. Any strategy by any health board in Scotland must fit exactly with "Delivering for Health". I will ensure that that is the case in the Vale of Leven and everywhere else in Scotland.

Cancer Patients (Treatment Delays)

2. Michael Matheson (Central Scotland)

(SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it has concerns about delays being experienced by cancer patients in receiving their treatment. (S2O-10800)

The Minister for Health and Community Care

(Mr Andy Kerr): Yes, we have. I am always concerned to hear about delays in cancer treatment. The possibility of cancer and the worry that it causes for patients, their families and friends is of concern to me. As I have said many times, it is unacceptable for people with cancer to wait longer for treatment than is absolutely necessary.

Michael Matheson: I draw the minister's attention to the recently published data on the "Cancer in Scotland: Action for Change" targets, in particular the target that by 2005 the maximum wait from urgent referral to treatment for people who suffer from cancer will be two months. Is the minister aware that the data that were published indicate that in the Forth valley fewer than 65 per cent of patients who are referred urgently are receiving the treatment that they require? That is the third-lowest compliance level for any health board in Scotland.

As the minister said, people who are diagnosed as having cancer are anxious that their treatment should commence as soon as possible. Why has Forth Valley NHS Board failed so badly to meet the target? What action has the Executive taken to ensure that the board complies with it?

Mr Kerr: We are taking significant action and I say again that I am deeply unhappy with the performance to date on the matter. However, the context is important. First, 14 per cent more patients are living through and surviving cancer. That is because of the work of our national health service. In the last quarter, performance has

improved on bowel cancer, lung cancer, breast cancer, ovarian cancer and melanoma.

Nonetheless, the member asks a significant question: what are we doing about the problem? First, we have scrapped the previous system of historical performance monitoring to make the monitoring current. Weekly monitoring information is now available on the status of patients within the system. If anyone is nearing the date that would be unacceptable if the two-month target is to be met, we can therefore get to the patient much more quickly. The issue has an organisational dimension.

Secondly, the Executive's delivery unit is working with boards that are most troubled in relation to the performance targets for redesign of services. If necessary, we will devote further resources to the matter to ensure not only that we track and monitor patients, but that when we get them in the service we are able to treat them more effectively by identifying bottlenecks and other such problems. I fully accept the point of the member's question and know that there will still be concern about the issue in the community. However, the action that we are taking, particularly the weekly monitoring, should reassure patients and allow for improvements in performance to meet our target.

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth)

(Lab): Has the minister received information from Lanarkshire NHS Board about its recent decision to site the new Lanarkshire cancer care centre at Monklands hospital? I am sure that the minister will agree that that will provide an opportunity for better access and better services for my constituents in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth. Will the minister make a speedy announcement on the issue and endorse the decision that has been taken by NHS Lanarkshire to provide this much-needed service at the Monklands site?

Mr Kerr: My colleague Lewis Macdonald will be in receipt of that document as soon as it comes from NHS Lanarkshire.

I will make two comments. First, that is an example of the steps that we are taking throughout Scotland to ensure that we have better cancer services. Secondly, let us not forget that we have world-leading services in the Beatson oncology centre and in the Western general in Edinburgh. Nonetheless, we should be doing better on waiting times. The move is a positive one for cancer patients in Lanarkshire because the centre will serve them and their families. The decision will also reassure people in the Monklands area that Monklands hospital will remain a crucial and central part of health care in Lanarkshire.

Residential Care

3. Mr Jim Wallace (Orkney) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what assessment it has made of local authority requirements for residential care places for elderly people between now and 2014. (S2O-10842)

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Lewis Macdonald): The report of the Executive's range and capacity review group, published in May this year, considered the available evidence on the balance of needs over the next 20 years. It recommended that local partners do further work to assess future needs in individual local authority areas and come to conclusions at local level as to what future provision of services will be required to meet those needs.

Mr Wallace: I am sure that the minister is aware, from correspondence with me and with the convener of Orkney Islands Council in recent months, that the percentage of the population that is elderly is set to rise much faster in Orkney than in Scotland as a whole, and that there are already concerns about the possibility of residents having to be sent across the Pentland firth for residential care places. Will he respond positively to my request for a meeting at ministerial level to discuss the issue and to consider a report, a copy of which he has been sent, that indicates that the allocation of grant-aided expenditure for social services in Orkney falls well short of the amount that the council spends on social services, and that community care services for older people, and children and family services, are among the areas that have been most acutely hit by the underallocation?

Lewis Macdonald: I am grateful to Orkney Islands Council for sending me a copy of that report, and my officials have had a constructive meeting with officials from the authority. Jim Wallace knows that, as the allocation of resources forms part of the wider local government settlement, it will be considered as part of that wider process, and we would not wish to negotiate on the settlement within individual councils. However, we are happy to have a meeting to discuss and fully address the issues that are particular to Orkney. The report covers issues that relate to a number of different ministerial portfolios. I would like to take a little more time to consider which minister will be best placed to respond to the issues, but we will certainly accept Mr Wallace's request for a meeting.

Shona Robison (Dundee East) (SNP): Is the minister aware of a report that was submitted to Dundee City Council's social work committee on Monday night, which shows that the number of people who are waiting for funding for a care home place in Dundee almost doubled between

May and September, from 63 to 118, and that, in the same period, the number of people waiting for free personal care rose from 17 to 30? What advice can he give my constituents who are caught up in those waiting lists? Who does he hold responsible for those waiting lists? Is it the Labour-Lib Dem coalition that runs Dundee City Council, or his own Executive?

Lewis Macdonald: Shona Robison knows very well that there are, in some circumstances, perfectly legitimate reasons why a person will wait for the delivery of full services. Responsibility for delivering those services at local level lies with the local authority. Where discharge from hospital is a factor, responsibility lies with the local authority in partnership with the local health board or with other partners. The allocation of funding for delivery of those services fully meets the earlier request that was made by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, and further consideration will be given to that in the spending review next year. Ms Robison is also aware of the fact that we are currently reviewing the implementation of the free personal care policy across Scotland, in order to ensure that we can learn any lessons that need to be learned and can improve the delivery of those services.

John Swinburne (Central Scotland) (SSCUP): Will the minister give a progress report on the situation regarding the excellent proposals to make pensioners' homes, where applicable, safer for residents, to enable them to remain in their own homes, as was recommended by the Kerr report? The main benefit of such an initiative would obviously be that it would do away with the need to sell people's homes to pay for their care.

Lewis Macdonald: Good progress is being made in addressing the issue of making people's homes safer. We are keen to enable people to stay in their own homes as long as they can, because that is what most older people want. I commend the example of West Lothian Council, which is in many respects leading the way in adaptations to housing to enable that. That is the sort of example that we would like to see being followed throughout Scotland.

National Health Service Employees (Monklands Hospital)

4. Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what its estimate is of the number of NHS employees in Monklands hospital in each of the next three years. (S2O-10832)

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Lewis Macdonald): The staffing establishment at Monklands hospital in March of this year was just over 1,500 whole-time equivalents. Lanarkshire NHS Board expects the staffing establishment at Monklands hospital to

remain at much the same level in each of the next three years.

Alex Neil: Will the minister guarantee that there will be no rundown in the number of people who are employed in the accident and emergency department at Monklands, particularly while that department is still having to cope every other weekend with the overspill from the other A and E departments in Lanarkshire? Given his last-minute—though welcome—decision to retain the intensive care and renal units at Monklands, will he explain how that impacts on the effective use of consultants when he is stupidly proposing to close the A and E unit?

Lewis Macdonald: Mr Neil has slightly missed the point about the clarification that I provided on renal services and high-dependency care. We have confirmed that the changes that are to be introduced in the next five years will permit continued delivery of dialysis and level 1 high-dependency support at Monklands hospital.

On the wider question of staffing at the accident and emergency unit, I am sure that Mr Neil is aware of the details of the changes that are to take place. The changes, which will take place in advance of any changes to the accident and emergency service at Monklands, will include the establishment of new community casualty units, including a seven-day, 24-hour community casualty unit at Monklands, and other changes to accident and emergency provision in Lanarkshire and in neighbouring health board areas.

Dental Students

5. Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive how many dental students graduated from Scottish dental schools in each year from 2004 to 2006 but did not take up dental vocational training posts in Scotland. (S2O-10814)

The Deputy Minister for Health and Community Care (Lewis Macdonald): The number of dental students who graduated from Scottish dental schools was 116 in 2004, 109 in 2005 and increased to 133 this year. The number who did not take up vocational training posts in Scotland fell from 25 in 2004 to 14 of the 109 graduates in 2005 and 14 of the 133 graduates this year.

Fergus Ewing: Does the minister agree that the loss to Scotland and to the national health service dentistry services of about 50 dental students is an absolute scandal? Does he agree that the situation resulted directly from the fact that, although we welcome trained students from England into the country, there were simply not enough vocational training posts in Scotland to keep about 50 dental graduates here? Given the

acute shortage of NHS dentistry services, is not that an absolute scandal and a sign that the Executive simply maladministered a system that could easily have worked to the benefit of all those who are throughout Scotland languishing on waiting lists for NHS dentistry services?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Ewing, you are now debating the point. I ask the minister to answer.

Lewis Macdonald: The scandal is the misinformation from Mr Ewing—the facts are contrary to what he says. The dental action plan made it clear that the number of vocational training places that we would provide would be in excess of the number of students who graduate from Scotland's dental schools. We have done that, so Mr Ewing's information is clearly wrong.

As I said, 14 of the 133 students who graduated from Scottish dental schools this year chose to take up vocational training places elsewhere. That is a decision for them. Given the proportion of dental students in Scotland's excellent dental schools who come from other parts of the United Kingdom, it should not be surprising that about one in 10 of them chooses to take up a VT place in another part of the United Kingdom or elsewhere.

Mr Ewing should welcome the significant advances that we have made on the matter, not least of which is the introduction of bursaries to encourage students to continue in the NHS in Scotland after graduation. The Executive announced the bursary scheme in the dental action plan in March 2005, and I was pleased to launch it in Dundee a few weeks ago. I am delighted to report to Parliament the high level of interest in the scheme among dental students.

Vale of Leven Hospital (Integrated Care Pilot)

6. Frances Curran (West of Scotland) (SSP): To ask the Scottish Executive why the integrated care pilot at Vale of Leven hospital has ended and what implications this has for the integrated care model in other areas. (S2O-10804)

The Minister for Health and Community Care (Mr Andy Kerr): The integrated care pilot at the Vale of Leven hospital has not ended, but concerns about clinical safety mean that the implementation of the next phase of the pilot, which requires the removal of on-site anaesthetic support, cannot proceed. The clinical safety issues are not about the pilot as it currently operates but about implementing the next phase. The current arrangements will remain in place until alternative service proposals for the area north of the river have been planned properly.

Frances Curran: I am afraid that the minister speaks with forked tongue.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You are not allowed to accuse somebody of lying.

Frances Curran: He is saying two things at one time.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You are allowed to say that.

Frances Curran: The minister is facing in two directions—that would be a surprise—because “cannot proceed” means that it will not go ahead, which is what the health board has said. Why does the minister not just admit that the proposal for an integrated care model at the Vale of Leven hospital was nothing more than a cynical political manoeuvre to derail protests on the street against the closure of the hospital? People have been duped into thinking that the hospital would be kept open using that model, but the intention is to close it.

Mr Kerr: The member is coming late to this game. I look back at her ministerial correspondence system cases for the Scottish Executive. She has written 26 letters, three of which relate to health: one on stoma; one on national health service dispensary; and one on chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. She has never written to, scratched a pen to or phoned NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde about the matter. Nonetheless, we find ourselves in the chamber discussing it. What I said clearly was that the integrated care pilot at the Vale of Leven has not ended, because it has not ended. The decision of the team involved was that we could not proceed to the next stage of the integrated care pilot due to very sound clinical risks with regard to the pilot. What I have asked the NHS in Glasgow to do—and what it will do because I have told it to—is to go back and review all current services at the Vale, including anaesthetic cover, to ensure that we have a satisfactory way forward for the community north of the river. That is what we will do.

Frances Curran: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I want to raise a point under the Data Protection Act 1998 about how the minister gets access to the letters that I have written to the health board and under what premise he did that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That is an interesting question, which I cannot answer now, but I am sure that we will endeavour to find an answer. I cannot quite put my finger on a point of order, but to be honest I was not awfully comfortable with the nature of the response. Any member is entitled to ask any question about any matter within the remit of the Scottish Executive.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I welcome the minister's confirmation that the integrated pilot will remain in its current form and thank him for his letter setting out the next steps. I am sure that he

will agree with me that the provision of anaesthetics is key to the future provision of services at the Vale of Leven hospital. Will he therefore make two things abundantly clear to NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and, indeed, to Parliament? First, will he make it clear that the starting point for any review of services is that all options must be considered to sustain anaesthetics at the Vale? Secondly, will he make it clear that a north-of-the-river solution will underpin the review, with the majority of health care for my constituents delivered at the Vale of Leven hospital?

Mr Kerr: There is little I can add to the correspondence with the member. The review will consider sustaining the provision of anaesthetics and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde will examine all possible models of delivery. I hope that that satisfies the member's request. As I said in the letter, the Health Department and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde agrees that while the work is being undertaken, there will be no changes to the services that are currently provided at the Vale.

Environment and Rural Development

Waste Management (Glasgow)

1. Mr Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will consider funding the upgrading of waste management facilities in the city of Glasgow. (S2O-10863)

The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie): We have provided Glasgow City Council with more than £37 million to improve recycling facilities and we expect a further application from the council shortly to enhance those facilities. In addition, we are considering the strategic outline case from groups of local authorities, one of which includes Glasgow, for residual waste treatment.

Mr Gordon: I acknowledge the recent generous treatment of Glasgow in respect of new facilities for recycling. It is my understanding that Glasgow and the seven other local authorities in the Clyde valley have submitted an outline business case to the minister's department in respect of three proposed new waste treatment plants in the period up to 2020. Can the minister tell us more about the current status of the evaluation of that outline business case?

Ross Finnie: We have received the strategic outline cases. They are extremely complex and involve allocations of substantial amounts of public money. The on-going discussions between my department and the local authorities have been designed to ensure that not only do we meet the environmental targets of our policy but we achieve

best value. The Glasgow case is currently under consideration, as are others, and I expect to be in a position to make announcements relatively shortly. However, we still have a number of technical issues to resolve.

Crofting Counties Agricultural Grants Scheme

2. Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what the future is of the crofting counties agricultural grants scheme. (S2O-10869)

The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Rhona Brankin): The crofting counties agricultural grants scheme came into operation on 1 April and it has state aid clearance that would allow it to continue in operation until 2009. The future of the scheme is under consideration in the context of the rural development programme for Scotland and land management contracts.

Maureen Macmillan: Is the minister aware of the anxiety among small crofters and farmers about the possible loss of these ring-fenced grants? Those anxieties, together with the expense of the bull scheme, the uncertainty over payments from the less favoured areas support scheme and the imposition of inappropriate animal welfare transport regulations next year, are putting additional pressure on crofters at a time when they most need our support. Will the minister consider what the Executive can do to relieve their anxieties?

Rhona Brankin: I am well aware of some of the anxieties that Maureen Macmillan describes. I have already met her, and Ross Finnie and I will meet the Scottish Crofting Foundation next week to discuss some of those concerns.

We are in a time of change, and times of change can be difficult, but we are aware of the concerns. We are committed to the importance of crofting in the Highlands and Islands and the crofting counties and we are aware of its importance in sustaining remote and island communities.

Mr Jim Wallace (Orkney) (LD): Will the minister acknowledge that one concern that crofters have about the possible change is that they will find that they have to bid for grants, rather than the grants being ring-fenced in the way that Maureen Macmillan mentioned? The experience of many crofters and small farmers in relation to the rural stewardship scheme was that they spent substantial amounts of money on bids that did not come anywhere near the threshold. People are concerned that the crofting counties agricultural grants scheme will go down the same route.

Rhona Brankin: I reiterate that we are well aware of the concerns about the schemes. As I said, we will meet the Scottish Crofting Foundation

next week. Jim Wallace and Maureen Macmillan can be assured that we will take the concerns into consideration and we are more than happy to keep in touch with the members who represent the affected constituencies.

Waste Water Treatment Plant (Dalmuir)

3. Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will consider the introduction of a new legal obligation to remedy long-running odour problems from the waste water treatment plant at Dalmuir experienced by the people of Clydebank. (S2O-10876)

Hundreds of people have signed the petition to stop the smell.

The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Rhona Brankin): The Sewerage Nuisance (Code of Practice) (Scotland) Order 2006 came into effect on 22 April. It introduced the first statutory code of practice on the assessment and control of odour from waste water treatment works, which applies to all such works in Scotland including the one at Dalmuir.

Des McNulty: The people of my constituency have been blighted by a failed public-private partnership project since 1998. The smell is disgusting and the catalogue of incompetence and disorganisation by the PPP company and Scottish Water beggars belief. We need the problem to be sorted out now. Does the minister recognise that the Executive cannot fail to deal with PPP projects? The smell from a PPP project needs to be treated in the same way as a smell that comes from a non-PPP project. Will the minister meet me and perhaps some of my constituents to discuss the way forward?

Rhona Brankin: Yes. As I said, the first code of practice on the matter came into force only in April this year, but it applies to all waste water treatment works including the 21 works that are operated under the private finance initiative, so it applies to the works at Dalmuir as well. I recognise the difficulties that have been experienced by Des McNulty's constituents and I am more than happy to meet them to discuss the matter.

Susan Deacon (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab): Does the minister share my growing anger and frustration that, despite substantial action, investment and indeed legislative change to tackle sewage odour, there are still no plans or funding in place to provide a lasting solution to odour emissions from the Seafeld waste water treatment works? Can she give a firm assurance that the Executive will do all in its power to resolve that unsatisfactory situation so that Edinburgh can be rid of the Seafeld stench once and for all?

Rhona Brankin: Yes. I am well aware of the problems associated with Seafield and the continuing work that Susan Deacon undertakes on behalf of her constituents to try to get a resolution to the problem. I am also aware that there is an on-going legal position on Seafield, but let me state that the new code of practice applies to the works operated by private finance initiative. I share Susan Deacon's frustration, and I am more than happy to meet her to consider ways that we can help to speed up the process of dealing with the problem.

Nuclear Power Stations (Leaks)

4. Mike Pringle (Edinburgh South) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what assessment has been made of the environmental impact of leaks from Scottish nuclear power stations. (S2O-10840)

The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie): That is essentially a matter for the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, which works closely with the independent regulator responsible for nuclear safety—HM nuclear installations inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive.

Before a station can commence operation, an essential part of the assessment by the independent regulator is to consider the effects of both routine emissions and the worst-case credible accident, known as the design-basis accident. In the event of an incident at a nuclear site, SEPA considers the significance of the incident for its effect, if any, on the environment.

In addition, SEPA publishes jointly an annual report entitled "Radioactivity in Food and the Environment", in which the level of routine emissions from nuclear power stations and their impact is presented, along with an assessment of the significance of any abnormal emissions that may have occurred. Copies of those reports are held in the Scottish Parliament information centre.

Mike Pringle: I thank the minister for his answer, and I am heartened by his reassurances. However, given the effect that Chernobyl had on Scottish agriculture and the particles that are still being found at Dounreay, does he agree that there is a risk to the Scottish environment from any new generation of nuclear power stations?

Ross Finnie: The usual leap of logic and faith. There are two things that I want to say about that. First, anyone listening to the question and answer should not draw the inference that the current leak reported by the authority was nuclear related. It is important for the public to understand that the authority reported a crack in the pipeworks relating to the conduction of water and steam. It was not nuclear related, and I would not want anyone

listening to the exchange to draw that unfortunate inference.

Secondly, on the long term, no one anywhere would want to commission a nuclear power station that was as low in its engineering and safety standards as that constructed at Chernobyl. I will not enter into the further debate. I have my views, as Mr Pringle well knows, but the Scottish Executive's position remains unchanged from that which has been stated many times.

Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green):

The minister will be aware of the John Large report published this summer, which reported significant uncertainties over the structural integrity and residual strength of the moderator cores in all advanced gas-cooled reactor plants, including Hunterston and Torness. Is he also aware that the nuclear installations inspectorate yesterday reported that most of the graphite bricks in the core of Hunterston are expected to crack in the near future, "jeopardising the safe running" of the station? If so, what action does he intend to take?

Ross Finnie: Yes, I am aware of the report; Mr Ballance would have been surprised if I had not been. Again, there are two points. First, we have regulation, which is why we are aware of the information. We have inspectorates in place to examine the sites, so we should not try to inflame unnecessary public concern when the regulator is clearly doing its job and drawing the public's attention to the problems that exist. Secondly, it will be for the operator to take action; otherwise it will fall foul of the regulations and will be required to cease operating the plants until they have been repaired. That is what the system is about, and we should not use inflammatory language when a regulator is doing its job properly.

Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP):

Given that the minister speaks for the Executive, is it not patently obvious that, regardless of the source of the current leak, the best way to minimise the danger of any future leaks from nuclear power stations is not to build any more nuclear power stations?

Ross Finnie: That would depend on what happened to new nuclear power stations. We are currently dealing with the leaks from existing power stations, and I do not think that even Mr Morgan is suggesting that we should necessarily close them down.

Scottish Environment Protection Agency (Licences)

5. Euan Robson (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it intends to review the fees for licences issued by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and, if so, when. (S2O-10836)

The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Rhona Brankin): The Scottish Executive will review any proposal by SEPA to increase its charges by more than the retail price index. A benchmarking report comparing SEPA's charging schemes with those in England and Wales has recently been published. We will study the report carefully to decide whether any action is needed. A major review of the pollution prevention and control charging scheme is also due to begin shortly.

Euan Robson: I am interested that comparisons are to be made with England and Wales. The minister might be aware of the issue of the use of road planings from the Berwick bypass. Scottish farmers are being asked to contribute £200 to get a licence to use planings, whereas English farmers in Northumberland do not have to do so. Would the minister agree that the regulation system has almost become an industry in itself and that, if an organisation requires to raise fees to contribute towards its budget, there might be a temptation for it to be overzealous in so doing?

Rhona Brankin: I am aware of that concern. Euan Robson has written previously on the particular issue of planings. He will understand from the letter that he got back that there is potential concern about the unregulated use of road planings as, in some circumstances, they could pose a risk to the environment. I am also aware of concerns that have been expressed about the regulatory framework and charges. We are already comparing the charging scheme here with that of England and Wales, and we are looking to review the system of regulation in Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call John Swinney. A question about fees, Mr Swinney.

Mr Swinney: I cannot imagine what you mean by that, Presiding Officer.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am enjoining you to be skilful in your supplementary.

Mr Swinney: You should have no requirement to suggest that.

In considering the fee for the licence that was issued by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency for Sacone Environmental Ltd's plant in Brechin in my constituency, does the minister feel that the review by SEPA of that fee is merited if that plant is failing to deliver the respite from serious odours to which the people of Brechin are entitled?

Rhona Brankin: That is obviously a serious issue for the management of that plant, rather than for SEPA, but I am more than happy to enter into correspondence on the issue if there is a continuing problem with the plant.

Loch Lomond (Byelaws)

6. Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive when it will announce the outcome of the consultation on byelaws for Loch Lomond. (S2O-10854)

The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Rhona Brankin): The consultation on the byelaws was followed by a 12-week period during which objections could be sent to the Scottish Executive. That period ended in the summer. The Executive has asked the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority to provide additional information on some of the matters that were raised in the objections. That information will help inform my decision on the byelaws. I understand that the park authority expects to provide the additional information by the end of November.

Jackie Baillie: I know that the minister will be considering the submissions carefully. She will, however, be aware of two issues that unite all the campaigners, irrespective of where they stand on the question of the need for byelaws. First, there is a deeply held desire to ban jet-skis. Secondly, there is a need to enforce the existing byelaws, never mind create new ones. Will the minister act on those remarkably united views?

Rhona Brankin: The Executive has asked for information on the proposals for the effective supervision and enforcement of the byelaws, including dealing with the antisocial use of jet-skis. The Executive has asked for information on arrangements to monitor and review the effectiveness of the proposed increase in speed reduction zoning in Milarrochy bay. We have also asked for economic impact work and information on commercial operations on the loch. I am happy to provide Jackie Baillie with a copy of the letter that I sent to the chief executive of the national park authority. We are very much aware of concerns about jet-skis, and we recently met several commercial operators and people living in the national park. I am more than happy to keep Jackie Baillie up to speed with developments. To reiterate, we are seeking additional information from the park authority specifically on jet-skis.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: By an incredibly narrow margin, question 7 can be called.

Energy (Security of Supply)

7. Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what analysis it has undertaken of the impact on the environment if security of energy supply from indigenous sources cannot be guaranteed in the foreseeable future. (S2O-10873)

The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie): We have

commissioned the Scottish Executive energy study to examine energy supply and demand in Scotland and associated carbon dioxide emissions. Volume 5 of the study will consider how Scotland's energy use could change in the medium term to 2020 and will use projections of demand and supply that are informed by different scenarios that could influence energy use in the future. Volume 5 will be published at the beginning of 2007.

Michael McMahon: Does the minister agree that it is foolish to believe that we can replace all our power-generating plants with hundreds of windmills? If we tried that, the lights would go out when the wind chose not to blow. Does he agree that our future energy generation must have a nuclear component if we wish to reduce carbon emissions and to have security of supply? Does he agree that although renewables are all well and good, if we are serious about the environment, we must look beyond the green spin to identify carbon reduction policies that include nuclear power as not only a carbon-free solution, but an ideal solution?

Ross Finnie: My only dispute with Michael McMahon is that to describe renewables as wind power only is wholly to misunderstand the range of renewable sources that is available to us. That range is why the Scottish Executive has invested considerable sums of money in the research centre in Orkney to test wave and tidal power. As Michael McMahon knows, although the wind may cease, the tide—strangely enough—keeps coming in and going out, so it is a much more reliable source of energy that is more attuned to meeting the problem that he raises.

Of course, I have not dealt with photovoltaics or microgeneration, or the fundamental issue that society faces, which is that we should reduce the amount of energy that we consume. A raft of renewables exists. I hope that Michael McMahon will ponder the range of renewables before concluding that there is only one other solution.

Coastal and Marine National Parks

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):

The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-5008, in the name of Ross Finnie, on coastal and marine national parks.

14:57

The Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Ross Finnie):

I am pleased that this debate on proposals that might lead to the establishment of Scotland's first coastal and marine national park is taking place. The Executive places great importance on the sustainable management of Scotland's marine environment. The national park proposal could form a key element of Scotland's coastal and marine strategy.

The Executive's consultation paper has been published and people can see for themselves what the proposals entail. Most important, we look to the people of Scotland to express their views. We want to know people's opinions and their ideas before we make decisions on the best way forward. The debate allows the Parliament to make its views known as part of the consultation process.

I make it clear from the start that no decisions have been taken on the location of a park or on the powers and functions that a park authority should have. Such matters will be determined only after the consultation period has ended. There is no question of our reaching pre-emptive conclusions.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): Does not a more basic question exist: should a park be created at all? In *Scottish Field*, the minister says:

"We can't give residents an absolute veto on a national park."

Does that mean that the Executive would impose national park status on residents in a designated area, even when the park did not have their consent or support?

Ross Finnie: I gave the interview and I know the extent of what I said in response to a long question. The issue was whether the establishment of a national park was exclusively the province of local residents. I made it clear to the interviewer that if substantive local opposition existed, a national park could not be imposed, anywhere in Scotland. That is self-evident. I was trying to make the different point that a national park would not exclusively—

Fergus Ewing: Would there be a referendum?

Ross Finnie: Fergus Ewing and I are keen on consultation, but he wrote to me about the fact that he wanted a consultation on where the consultation should take place. Now he wants a referendum. God, we will be here for a year and a day. I hope that nobody on the Scottish National Party benches ends up in government; if they do, we will never get anything done.

I want to move on. Scotland is blessed with some of the most outstanding marine areas in the world. I firmly believe that their status could be enhanced by establishing a national park if there is a consensus on that in the consultation. Such status would be enormously beneficial to areas.

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Will the minister take an intervention?

Ross Finnie: No. I must make a little progress. I will take an intervention later.

The increased profile of a national park area would be beneficial for its economy, particularly as a result of potentially enhanced tourism activity. Experience from around the world shows that national parks provide an excellent mechanism for raising awareness of the special qualities of areas and for promoting access opportunities and opportunities for the sustainable management of nationally important resources.

There are three key principles behind designating any national park on land or water, and the Parliament debated them when it considered the National Parks (Scotland) Bill. They are the same principles that we intend to apply in this case. First, there should be a long-term commitment to protecting and enhancing the unique qualities of an area. Secondly, there is the principle of supporting, sustaining and developing economic and recreational uses. Thirdly, there is the principle of striking the right balance to achieve the sustainability of our environment and the communities that rely on it. Given that we have already debated those principles and that we have such outstanding scenic features in our coastal areas, I confess that I am surprised that, having accepted the principle behind terrestrial national parks, the Scottish nationalists are reluctant to extend the principles to cover some of our outstanding marine heritage.

Mr McGrigor: I agree with what the minister has said about our marvellous marine and coastal environment, but does he agree that there is such an environment because of, rather than in spite of, management by local people in the past?

Ross Finnie: The member is not talking about the purpose of a national park. Local communities will not necessarily create a structure that will allow increased access for people to manage and control that environment properly and ensure that everyone in Scotland can enjoy its features.

A coastal and marine national park could deliver substantial benefits. Obviously, there would be the potential for increased tourism as a result of the improved profile that national park status would confer. There could be new opportunities for branding produce, additional local support and expertise for new inshore fisheries groups within the park area, better infrastructure for responsible access and stewardship of the environment, and the provision of new jobs in local economies.

However, a coastal and marine national park is not only about generating socioeconomic benefits; it is also about stewardship of our marine environment and the sustainable management of our natural and cultural heritage. Our coasts and seas are just as internationally renowned as the iconic loch-and-mountain landscapes that have rightly been the focus of attention in establishing our two existing terrestrial national parks. As the consultation document says, cultural and natural heritage considerations are important in identifying a suitable area, but I am clear that accessibility is an issue, as is the potential for a coastal and marine national park to contribute significant social, economic and environmental benefits.

Ten candidate locations have been identified. The extensive coastline of the Argyll islands contains an outstanding range of marine and coastal habitats, landscape features and important species. It is difficult to make a distinction between those landscapes and landscapes elsewhere. The Firth of Clyde can be divided into three distinct parts, including the inner Firth of Clyde and its upper east coast. Lochaber and the south Skye coast contain some of Scotland's finest Highland scenery. On the east coast, the Moray firth has long stretches of beaches and the world's most northerly population of bottlenose dolphins. The landscape of North Uist, the Sound of Harris and south Lewis is another outstanding candidate, as are Orkney and, separately, the Shetland Islands. In the south, the Solway area contains diverse coastal habitats and species and includes expansive sandflats and mudflats. The area around South Uist, the Sound of Barra and Barra is another outstanding candidate. We only have to look at Wester Ross and the north of Skye to see that Scotland has huge potential that should be given proper recognition.

We have identified three potential models for the park authority that would accompany the establishment of a park. I know that concerns have been expressed about restrictive controls that could impact on the livelihoods of coastal communities, but the favoured model—the park as planner and enabler—is proportionate and would not threaten those communities. The model is designed to ensure that the park authority works with other organisations. We do not propose that the park authority should become the single

regulator for the park area. With its planning and enabling function, the authority should ensure not only that sustainable practices continue, but that the park is an important generator of additional socioeconomic benefits.

Fergus Ewing: How?

Ross Finnie: By giving it the status and standing that the SNP was perfectly prepared to give to the terrestrial parks. Remember that John Swinney, who has left the chamber for the moment, is currently campaigning to extend the boundaries of those parks. The Scottish nationalists have not given a clear and coherent reason why they suddenly think that national parks are a bad idea when we want one that will deal with some of Scotland's outstanding scenic areas.

Of course, Mr Ewing is against these things. He has such a negative attitude to almost everything that he has almost turned it into an art form. We congratulate him on his consistency but, gosh, it is dull.

Fergus Ewing: Will the minister take an intervention?

Ross Finnie: Yes, indeed, and I am sure that it will be duller than usual.

Fergus Ewing: In order to confound the minister's expectations of me, I ask whether it would not be better to spend the £4 million or £5 million per year that it might cost to staff and run an office and bureaucracy somewhere on the west coast on affordable housing or getting new people into farming or enabling young people to stay in the west Highlands because they do not have to leave to find a job. Would that not be a better way to spend such a huge amount of taxpayers' money?

Ross Finnie: I have just thought up a slogan for the SNP: "Come to Scotland. Live in Scotland. But we don't want national parks. They would tell us how good Scotland is and point out how excellent our natural heritage is. We, the Scottish nationalists, do not want that. We want Scots to live against a dull and boring background." We have heard it all before. The SNP really ought to raise its sights and recognise that, internationally—

Fergus Ewing: What is the minister's answer?

Ross Finnie: The SNP is always telling us to look beyond Scotland. National parks are recognised internationally as making a major contribution in areas—*[Interruption.]* The SNP does not want to spend any money on the good things in Scotland. That is its policy, but it is not the Executive's policy. We want to provide a basis for improved co-ordination.

Jamie McGrigor has expressed concern about the management of inshore commercial fishing

activity, but I have clearly indicated that that will continue to be led by the newly established inshore fisheries groups and that the creation of a park will not take over the role of those groups. A coastal and marine national park will be a driver for local sustainable development. There is no contradiction in inshore fisheries group management plans complementing the aims of a coastal and marine national park.

Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): I heard what the minister said about planning. Under the Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency was told that it would be the lead authority in river basin planning. We have to accept that what we do in the rivers will affect the seas. What will SEPA's role be in the planning process if it is not going to be the overall planning authority as far as the proposed national park is concerned?

Ross Finnie: Let us be clear about this: managing a river basin from the birth of the river or burn as it makes its way through very different land uses is not going to be superseded by managing the coastal and marine environment. It is not about what SEPA does or does not manage. It is perfectly clear. If we want to maintain and preserve the environment and water quality of a river from its source to its outflow, that clearly comes under the Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003. There is no conflict at all.

The message to all who care about Scotland's marine and coastal environment is that this is our chance to help to shape the future, to get the balance right and to promote actively some of the most outstanding features of Scotland's natural heritage.

I move,

That the Parliament supports the Scottish Executive's commitment to manage Scotland's coastline and seas in a sustainable way; welcomes the Executive's public consultation on proposals to establish Scotland's first Coastal and Marine National Park, and notes that the Executive will take account of the views expressed in response to the consultation before taking decisions on how to progress the proposals.

15:10

Richard Lochhead (Moray) (SNP): The marine environment is moving up the political agenda. The European Union is consulting on its maritime strategy, the United Kingdom Government is preparing a marine bill, the Scottish Government's marine strategy is developing and there is now a proposal for a coastal and marine national park.

The whole chamber agrees that our marine environment should be taken extremely seriously,

because Scotland is a marine nation. Scotland accounts for 25 per cent of Europe's waters. We have 10,000km of coastline, which represents 80 per cent of the UK's coastline. We have a superb marine environment that supports myriad species and habitats that we want to protect. Our marine environment represents 50 per cent of Scotland's biodiversity and it is part of the wonderful landscape of this country.

We need prosperous coastal communities and healthy seas because our economy relies heavily on the industries and activities around our coast. Traditionally, we have obtained food from our seas. Our fishermen make their living from the seas, as do the onshore fishing sectors—fish processors, harbour services and so on. In recent decades, we have used our seas for trade, transportation, recreation and extracting oil and gas to meet our energy needs. There are now new demands on the seas around Scotland: aquaculture, renewable energy production, marine wildlife tourism and many other opportunities. We continue to find new benefits from Scotland's marine environment. We must all agree that the Parliament has a prime duty to protect and promote our seas and coastal communities.

Although the SNP has no objection in principle to the concept of coastal and marine national parks, we do not believe that they have a role to play at this stage. The minister has failed to persuade us and the people of Scotland that there is a demand for coastal and marine national parks in Scotland, especially from the people who matter—those who live in our coastal communities. Given the minister's half-hearted consultation exercise and the wording of the motion, we are not convinced that even he is persuaded that there is a need for such parks at this stage. We believe that the minister should spend his time and energy on more pressing priorities that coastal communities in Scotland face. We also believe that, currently, the management of our marine resources is a dog's breakfast. The last thing that Scotland's coastal communities and our seas need is yet another layer of bureaucracy and yet another body with a say over our marine environment.

Let us consider the demand for coastal and marine parks. I looked at information sheet 1 of the minister's consultation document to find out from where in Scotland the demand for such parks is coming. Under the heading "Where has this proposal come from?" the minister states:

"This consultation took place during 2004 as part of the Scottish Executive's consultation on Developing a Strategic Framework for Scotland's Marine Environment. Taking into account the responses to this consultation, the Minister for Environment and Rural Development announced on 15 June 2005 the Executive's intention to proceed towards the establishment of Scotland's first Coastal and Marine National Park by 2008."

I asked the Parliament's research service to examine the responses to the consultation in 2004. There were 834 responses, of which 730 were postcard or e-mail contacts organised by WWF. There were 104 substantive responses, of which only 50 addressed the questions posed by ministers on coastal and marine national parks. Only 25 of the 50 people in Scotland who responded to those questions supported the establishment of coastal and marine national parks. Twenty-five out of 834 responses—3 per cent of the total—called for the establishment of such parks.

Ross Finnie: I am interested in what the member is saying. I am also interested in the fact that in his amendment he prays in aid statistics provided by Scottish Environment LINK, from which the inference could be drawn that Scottish Environment LINK is opposed to marine national parks. The member will be aware that, during consideration of the National Parks (Scotland) Bill, that organisation lobbied all members with amendments to the bill to ensure that there would be provision to establish marine and coastal national parks, which it continues to support strongly. The membership of Scottish Environment LINK is much more substantial than any of the figures that Richard Lochhead quotes for those who are in favour of such parks.

Richard Lochhead: I will come to that very point. I plan to refer to Scottish Environment LINK. The whole point of the debate, and the point that the SNP is trying to get across to the minister, is that, currently, other more pressing priorities face Scotland's coastal communities. Marine national parks are worthy and perhaps should be established in the future, but we are talking about the here and now.

As Fergus Ewing mentioned, plenty of priorities are brought to the attention of MSPs who represent coastal communities. I doubt that few, if any, of us have had people coming to our surgeries and demanding that the best way forward for their community is the establishment of marine national parks at this time. People come to talk to us about the rural housing crisis; the lack of dentists; rural health services closing down; the lack of transport links in rural communities; the fact that our fishing industry is fighting for its life on an annual basis, with talks taking place in Brussels in December, and the need to cope with the decline of that industry in some communities; and the importance of inshore fisheries. Two shadow inshore fisheries groups have been set up and 10 more are planned. Why cannot we give them time to settle in? People also come to our surgeries with concerns about the future of agriculture in rural Scotland. The average age of farmers in Scotland is above the EU average and we need to do more to encourage new entrants. People in

rural and coastal communities bring plenty of pressing priorities to our surgeries.

Ross Finnie: If the logic of that argument is correct, the SNP would not have supported the creation of terrestrial parks, but it did: it supported the National Parks (Scotland) Bill as it went through Parliament and the creation of both parks. The logic of the argument is identical.

Richard Lochhead: It is not, because coastal and marine national parks are different from terrestrial ones. Marine management in Scotland is currently a complete dog's breakfast. In 2006, seven years into the Scottish Parliament, Scottish, United Kingdom and European international agreements and more than 85 acts of Parliament govern our waters. The first thing that we should do is review the governance of Scotland's marine environment before adding yet another body and applying another tier of bureaucracy.

The minister referred to Scottish Environment LINK, and I am happy to quote that organisation:

"Current management of the coasts and seas around Scotland is fragmented, outdated and unable to take account of local communities ... The system is failing people and our environment. It is time to deliver truly sustainable management of our seas."

That is why we believe that there are other priorities to consider. We have to sort out the dog's breakfast of the 85 acts of Parliament and the fact that European, UK and Scottish Government international agreements have more say over the future of our coastal communities and marine environment than do the people who live and work there. That is the key to the argument.

We must allow people who are directly affected by decisions taken in this Parliament to have a say in their own future. We need more bottom-up governance of our marine environment, not more bureaucracy, new bodies and dictation from ministers sitting in their offices in Edinburgh. The minister is out of touch with what is happening. There might be a place for coastal and marine parks in the future, but now we have to sort out the dog's breakfast that is marine management in Scotland and put democracy before bureaucracy.

I move amendment S2M-5008.2, to leave out from "supports" to end and insert:

"notes that coastal and marine national parks may have a role to play in the future but that at the present time there are many other more pressing priorities facing our coastal communities; further notes that, according to Scottish Environment Link, there are already over 85 Acts of Parliament that apply to Scotland's waters and yet a further layer of bureaucracy would not be helpful or popular and would only add to the existing complexity of marine and coastal management in Scotland; calls for a review of the governance of the marine environment before additional legislation is considered; believes that the creation of coastal and marine national parks should not be considered until other priorities are addressed and there is evidence

that there is sufficient demand within local communities, and calls for the Scottish Parliament to have additional powers to help protect and promote our marine environment."

15:18

Mr Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Conservatives broadly support the concept of establishing a coastal and marine national park. Scotland has some of the most productive and diverse inshore waters around the European coastline. If we are serious about sustaining the natural environment, which the Conservatives are, we accept that there must be a proactive agenda for sustaining our inshore waters.

As ever, in seeking to conserve and sustain, we must be constantly mindful of those whose livelihoods depend on coastal waters, whether they are fishermen, aquaculturists, vessel operators of all types or those who are employed in aqua and other tourism. We must not impose a national concept of sustainability against the wishes and experience of those who understand and have worked the local coastal environment for generations. I was encouraged to hear the minister say that no community would have a coastal and marine national park enforced on it.

Fergus Ewing: Is not the question, how does one assess people's views unless they are asked for them? Do the Conservatives believe that there is a strong case for a local referendum in which the electorate is the residents who live within the designated boundaries of the coastal and marine national park, so that their opinions can be ascertained? If not, how can they be ascertained?

Mr Brocklebank: As Fergus Ewing is aware, an exercise to seek the views of people in those areas around the coast that are possible sites for a park has already been carried out. As I understand it, that consultation will carry on as ministers and Parliament come to their decisions.

We fully believe that a coastal and marine national park could be used to promote marine conservation and the regeneration of inshore waters, to sustain the development of vital marine species. Such a national park should also bring benefits in securing local jobs and bringing new investment into rural areas, possibly in the field of offshore renewables. However, a park cannot be introduced at any cost. We must remember that this Parliament does not always know best. Close consultation every step of the way will be paramount.

I have no personal stake or constituency interest in any of the shortlisted sites. However, I do have knowledge, going back many years, of the fishing industry in the waters around the outer Hebrides, and of its struggle to break even, sometimes

against overwhelming odds. I await with interest the views of Alasdair Morrison, the MSP for the area. There are sound reasons to believe that the waters of the north-west would not be the best test-bed for our first coastal and marine national park.

As for the other sites, I have no particular preference, although it is interesting to note that the Environment and Rural Development Committee recently took evidence from the organisation that is seeking to conserve an area of Lamlash bay as a kind of boutique marine national park. Several witnesses suggested that, although the area in question is perhaps too small to provide meaningful data, it could be a valuable research facility in a future marine park if Argyll's islands and coasts were selected.

It is no secret that my esteemed colleague Alex Fergusson regards the Solway firth as a candidate for a coastal and marine national park, and I have no doubt that he will expand on that in his speech. Argyllshire and the Solway have largish populations in the communities along their shorelines, and thus are perhaps better geared to developments in aquasports and tourism, as well as in renewables, given their access to the grid.

Richard Lochhead: The Conservatives are always criticising bureaucracy. Do they not feel that we should sort out the existing bureaucracy that applies to Scotland's seas before we add another tier?

Mr Brocklebank: I will come to bureaucracy in a minute. However, I have to say that SNP members show huge poverty of ambition. They cannot see the potential of these developments.

Argyllshire and the Solway might admirably fulfil one of the most significant criteria in the Executive's consultation document—that the area should be, or have the potential to be, generally accessible to the population of Scotland.

We welcome the Executive summaries on the progress made by the two land-based national parks. That evidence is valuable, particularly in terms of visitor number surveys. However, the management and development of a coastal and marine national park will clearly throw up far more diverse challenges and might require considerably enhanced annual budgets.

As part of the consultation process, it would seem logical to appoint Scottish Natural Heritage as the eventual reporter, particularly since that organisation was involved in seeking views from the various stakeholders. However, in coming to their decision, ministers must ensure that the consultation process is as wide-ranging and inclusive as possible.

I will now consider the bureaucracy. The Executive proposes three choices for the functions

and powers of the national park authority. As Conservatives, we are attracted to the one that appears to represent the lightest touch and least regulation. Choice number 1 is for a planner and enabler model without management or regulatory responsibilities.

One of the most important functions of the park authority will be to work closely with the new inshore fisheries groups. The IFGs will continue to manage fisheries in the park area. Equally important will be maintaining relations with aquaculture interests, and in that regard we are attracted to the concept that the local authority and existing regulators will continue to manage aquaculture in the national park but be guided by the park plan.

We are at pains to stress that the eventual national park's success will depend on whether it has been able to take local stakeholders along with it. The concept will fail if it is seen as simply heaping another layer of bureaucracy on to those vulnerable and hard-pressed local communities that rely on coastal areas for their livelihoods. At a time when fishing communities in particular are reeling under successive blows against their prosperity inflicted largely by the Executive, it is essential that the development of a coastal and marine national park should not endanger their livelihoods further.

Today, we give a cautious welcome to the proposal before us and we encourage as many people as possible, especially local people, to respond to the consultation. The amendment in my name incorporates some of the specific concerns to which I have referred.

I move amendment S2M-5008.1, to insert at end:

"and, in particular, urges the Executive to carefully consider the impact of a Coastal and Marine National Park on local fishermen, the aquaculture industry and all whose livelihoods are directly dependent on the sea."

15:24

Eleanor Scott (Highlands and Islands (Green): My party and I are in favour of coastal and marine national parks; they have been dear to my heart for some time. I could not very well say otherwise, as it was an amendment lodged by my colleague Robin Harper to the National Parks (Scotland) Bill in the first session of the Parliament that made marine national parks possible.

The Green party's attitude to national parks is that they should be beacons of good practice and models of community participation and sustainable land use. That applies equally to coastal and marine national parks, which include sustainable use of the marine environment.

Bruce Crawford: Land use is obviously a planning matter. As I said to the minister, we have the Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003. What in the proposals that are before us could not be dealt with under that act or amendments to that act? I am struggling to see where that is coming from.

Eleanor Scott: The proposal for the governance of a marine national park. We would favour the park taking the most responsibility possible so that local people would have the most control. SEPA would still have the role of monitoring—it does not manage water; it polices other people's management, and it would continue to police the management of the park authorities.

The Executive has stated that any area that is to be considered for a coastal and marine national park must meet the criteria that are laid out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000. The act defines the purpose of the national park as:

“(a) to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area,

(b) to promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area,

(c) to promote understanding and enjoyment ... of the special qualities of the area ... and

(d) to promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities.”

In addition, the Executive has stated that the area must not be too remote. The minister knows that I have issues about that, to which I will return. The act also says that the designation should make a significant contribution to the social and economic development of an area.

Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): The Green party's amendment ends with the phrase,

“believes that location should not be a barrier to the siting of a marine national park.”

Can Eleanor Scott explain that?

Eleanor Scott: That is a reference to the remoteness issue, which I will come to. I could probably have worded the amendment a bit better—we were a bit pressed this week.

I have no real quarrel with any of the aims, except for the remoteness issue. However, communities need to know what all that means in practice. In the past, the minister has, rightly, reassured the chamber that designation as a coastal and marine national park is an accolade. It is not a designation like that of a site of special scientific interest or a special area of conservation, and it would not, of itself, restrict activity in the designated area. I concur with that. However, equally, if there is just to be business as usual, there is not much point in creating a coastal and

marine national park. It may be that some activities will have to be modified while others will have to be actively encouraged and developed.

For example, on Mull, where there is cautious interest in a coastal and marine national park, the chamber of commerce has asked whether the designation would bring extra money—say, to employ more rangers to enhance the already-thriving wildlife tourism sector. It is perfectly reasonable for communities that could be eligible for the accolade to want to know what, frankly, they would get out of it. Communities' support is vital. This cannot be just a top-down exercise or it will not work. Communities must be involved. They must be more than just acquiescent; they must have their own vision of a coastal and marine national park. They must also be keen to take on responsibility, including the responsibility for regulation.

I hope that the roadshow that the Executive has going round the country to consult on the issue will be able to give communities real answers. My assistant went to the roadshow in Inverness and felt that she got more woulds and coulds than definite answers. There are communities that are already keen; there are communities that are interested but not yet convinced; and there are communities that are hostile to the idea, although some of the hostility may be due to unfounded concerns. Any coastal and marine national park must belong to its stakeholders, and all the stakeholders must be involved from the start—even those who have to be actively sought out and reminded that they are stakeholders. Ideally, there would be consensus within a community, but that may not always be achievable. It would certainly not be appropriate for the Executive, in the name of awaiting consensus, to allow one stakeholder to exercise an effective veto despite the views of others.

A keen host community will be one of the crucial elements in making any coastal and marine national park a success. This is where I return to the issue of remoteness. It has been clear, so far, that the Executive's preference is for Scotland's first coastal and marine national park to be easily accessible from the central belt. That would exclude Fair Isle, which cannot be described as easily accessible. I know that because I went there by boat from mainland Shetland this summer and, as a poor sailor, I found the three hours on the boat rather long—although, at £2.60 each way, it was the best-value public transport that I have been on for a long time.

However, Fair Isle is increasingly visited by sea. With the rise in recreational sailing, it has a regular stream of visitors who are attracted by its natural heritage. The people of Fair Isle have a long and distinguished history of managing their land

environment themselves to maximise its unique environmental features and wildlife while making the most of the opportunity to exploit them sustainably. They wish—the whole island's population is behind it—to have the same rights and responsibilities over their marine environment, and they should.

Fair Isle could become—dare I say it—the best small marine national park in the world. However, I do not say that it should be Scotland's only coastal and marine national park, because we should not have only one. Our coastal areas are so varied and each coastal and marine national park would be so different that there is no reason not to proceed with designating more than one. Many areas could have a great deal to offer as coastal and marine national parks and would have a great deal to gain from the accolade, so we should introduce it. I hear what other members say about consolidating marine legislation, and I agree that it is a dog's breakfast, but the establishment of our first coastal and marine national park need not await consolidation. We should go ahead with it.

I move amendment S2M-5008.3, to leave out from “and notes” to end and insert:

“expects the Executive to take account of all stakeholders' views with no one sector having primacy; recognises that very many livelihoods depend on our safeguarding our coastal and marine environment; expects local management of marine resources to underpin the organisation of any future coastal and marine national park, and believes that location should not be a barrier to the siting of a marine national park.”

15:31

Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): I welcome the fact that the Executive has initiated the debate at this point in the process. It is entirely appropriate that we have an early debate on the topic because of all the issues that colleagues have raised so far.

In the first session of the Parliament, we addressed the big priorities that awaited devolution: land reform, community land buyouts and the establishment of the first national parks in Scotland. John Muir, the inventor of national parks, spent his life creating them around the world and we need to catch up in Scotland. I strongly support the establishment of a coastal and marine national park. It was in our previous manifesto and I welcome the progress that the Executive has made so far.

Richard Lochhead: Will Sarah Boyack give way?

Sarah Boyack: No; let me get into my stride.

When we established the national parks at Loch Lomond and in the Cairngorms, we had lengthy debates about the principles that underpinned

them but, even though there was a clear expectation that they were the key areas that would require national park status, we had debates—which still continue—on the detail of their management and boundaries. That is why I welcome early engagement on coastal and marine national parks, on which we start, in effect, with a blank sheet.

Richard Lochhead: I remind the Parliament that Sarah Boyack supports the introduction of a marine act for Scotland to streamline the existing 85 acts that apply to Scotland's waters. Would it not make sense to go down that road before we foist another tier of bureaucracy on our seas?

Sarah Boyack: I will come to that later. The Parliament is capable of thinking about more than one topic at a time. A bit of joined-up thinking would do Richard Lochhead a lot of good.

Richard Lochhead: Joined-up thinking is exactly what I am talking about.

Sarah Boyack: Richard Lochhead has made his point.

Marine and coastal areas represent different challenges to land-based national parks, but they also represent different opportunities. Other colleagues have begun to talk about those. For a coastal and marine national park to be established in a particular area, it would have to bring demonstrable benefits to those who live and work in the area and to the management of its natural attractions. It would have to bring with it opportunities to enhance the understanding, enjoyment and care of the area.

I am grateful for Eleanor Scott's clarification of the access issues, but we all know that nature tourism in Scotland is expanding. There are new recreational opportunities in Scotland and new companies pop up all the time throughout the country. People want nature tourism. Whale watching alone now generates £11.8 million for the west coast economy, and WWF identifies a host of economic benefits from nature tourism.

That is where we are at the moment, but I ask members to think about where we could be if we learn from other countries that have set up marine national parks. The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 was crafted to allow coastal and marine national parks to come afterwards, and I ask members to think about the social and economic benefits that national park status would bring with it—job creation and economic vitality for the fragile rural communities that they have talked about—and to examine best practice and innovation. Surely we could concentrate on those things in the Parliament. That is an exciting agenda.

I always felt that marine national parks were places that one would find in warm areas of the

world—Kenya, Australia, the Caribbean, Costa Rica and the Seychelles—but countries in colder parts of the world, such as Canada and Chile, have made marine national parks successful. We must learn from those experiences, because the establishment of coastal and marine national parks is not without difficulties.

The range of recreational opportunities that is already available in Scotland includes fishing activities and nature conservation, but nobody is pulling them together or looking at the further opportunities that exist. We can learn lessons from around the world about promoting both our economy and, crucially, the protection of our natural environment.

Consultation and participation must be a key principle of the process from the start. I support the work that SNH and the Scottish Executive are doing to raise the issue up the agenda. When I visited the stand in Fort William last week, I was impressed by the range of information that was available. One could not possibly expect the people who were staffing the stall to answer every question when we are still debating many of the principles and the location of any new marine national park.

Maureen Macmillan's speech will focus on the need for participation. I agree with others that participation is crucial. In places such as Loch Lomond and the Trossachs and the Cairngorms, not everybody agreed during the participation but we still needed significant buy-in. That is a responsibility on which we should all focus.

There are some key issues on which we need to focus to identify the location of a marine national park, but I will not follow colleagues by giving my best guess of where such a park should be. From my position as member for Edinburgh Central, I do not want to dictate that to the rest of the country. However, my constituents will want to visit the marine national park because they will want to appreciate its benefits. They will travel to other parts of Scotland, where they will spend money, enjoy recreation and enjoy nature conservation. The issue is how we do that in a controlled and structured way. We need proper integrated management.

The SNP amendment points out that we have 85 pieces of legislation on marine areas, but that is why I want the Environment and Rural Development Committee to get going on the discussions that will shape the proposals on marine legislation in the next session. The UK Government is already active and we cannot afford to fall behind. However, that does not mean that we should stop considering issues such as marine national parks, the superb initiatives to bring together the fishing industry and nature conservation in Alasdair Morrison's constituency,

or the proposed ship-to-ship transfers in the River Forth. A range of conservation issues needs to be considered, but a marine national park would be special and we need to get it right.

I hope that today's debate will show people that we in the Parliament are interested and prepared to listen and, crucially, that we see the big benefits of a marine national park. Those other countries around the world are not wrong, but we need to do things to suit our communities and our nature conservation opportunities in Scotland. Let us get on with it rather than be negative about the proposal. Let us take the comments that we have had from all parties in the chamber—with the exception, as ever, of the SNP—and let us think big and be constructive. Let us look at the opportunities. Let us not talk ourselves down. Let us go for it.

15:37

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): I am sure that all members will wish to welcome the large party of people in the public gallery who have come down from Lochaber to listen to today's debate. Over a period earlier this year, one of their number carried out a survey of visitors to Lochaber. English-speaking visitors were asked whether marine national park status would encourage them to visit the area. In summary, of the 10,204 people who were asked the question, 8,366 said no, 1,015 said yes and 723 were not sure.

Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD) *rose—*

Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD) *rose—*

Ross Finnie: Will the member give way?

Fergus Ewing: Not just yet.

By contrast with that survey, which was conducted at no expense to the taxpayer by a citizen of Scotland who is genuinely motivated by a fear for the future of communities such as Mallaig and Arisaig, the supposed consultation that SNH carried out this week—which, incidentally, many of my constituents in places such as Lochaline could not find because it was not where it was supposed to be in Fort William—includes questions such as:

“What benefits do you think a Coastal and Marine National Park could bring?”

Many people feel that such a park would not bring any benefits, so that is a loaded question. A further question was:

“Which area would you like to see designated as Scotland's first Coastal and Marine National Park?”

Again, that is a loaded question, because many people do not wish to see an area so designated.

More specifically, they would prefer taxpayers' money—their money—to be spent on the real priorities that face rural Scotland.

Mike Rumbles *rose*—

Ross Finnie *rose*—

Fergus Ewing: I give way to the minister.

Ross Finnie: First, the second consultation to which the member refers is being conducted not by SNH, but by the Executive. Secondly, the questions in the consultation are perfectly open and do not require respondents to say that they agree—in fact, they invite them to disagree.

I respect Fergus Ewing's constituent's interest in the matter. However, Fergus Ewing's attitude to the questions that the 10,204 people were asked is in contrast to his criticism of the Executive's consultation. How much information did the citizen provide so that an objective answer could be provided by the 10,204 people?

Fergus Ewing: The question, which seems to me to have been perfectly open and fair, was whether marine national park status would encourage them to visit the area. The minister does not like the fact that the response from 82 per cent of a sample of 10,000, which is much larger than any sample that is used by MORI or other pollsters, signified clearly that the minister's main thesis—that the measure would help tourism—is flawed. Moreover, if it helped tourism in Lochaber, what about areas such as Argyll, the Western Isles and the northern isles? Would they lose out? Is that fair? The idea seems to me to be absurd.

As far as promoting access is concerned, in what way are people denied access now? The minister did not say. I do not believe that people are denied access. I spent a great deal of the summer in the west Highlands in my constituency. I was happy to travel on the Shearwater over to the small isles to visit the Morvern games and to be the chieftain of the Mallaig and Morar games—the first non-laird to be so. I had a marvellous time and nobody restricted my access to anywhere.

The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Rhona Brankin): The member is concerned about the establishment of a coastal and marine national park and claims that it could damage tourism in other parts of Scotland. Is he calling for the closure of the Cairngorms national park, which is in his constituency?

Fergus Ewing: I do not believe that taxpayers' money, which it is our duty to spend wisely and invest well, should be spent on what must be the most woolly, vague and ill-thought-out document that I have ever come across.

If the Executive wants to establish an office serving a marine national park, which I believe

would cost £4 million or £5 million if it was similar to the Cairngorms national park—I am surprised that the Tories are willing to sign up to spending money in that way—it would be doing well to find houses in Mallaig or Fort William. There are no houses for local people, never mind for people who are bused in from somewhere else.

How long do I have left, Presiding Officer?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): About a minute and two seconds.

Fergus Ewing: The fishermen and the communities in my constituency have looked after their fisheries for centuries. That sustainable management of resources is proven by the fact that last year there was at long last—as the minister knows—an increase in the nephrops quotas, for which I have argued for a long time. If those resources had not been sustainably managed, the scientific evidence that justified the increase in the quotas would not have been available. The argument that a coastal and marine national park is required for sustainable management therefore falls, as we already have that.

We have a huge responsibility to Scotland—the Scottish National Party believes this as the party that seeks to be the Government of this country in under a year's time—to spend taxpayers' money to address the real problems. The real problems on the west coast are the lack of affordable housing and the lack of ability to retain people who work as teachers in the area, who have to live in caravans and who stay for perhaps a year. Those are the real priorities. We are prepared to make that decision and not foist yet another bureaucracy on Scotland.

15:44

Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands (Lab): I hope that my speech is more measured and more grandmotherly than Mr Ewing's.

I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests. I am a member of the strategy group of the Moray firth partnership, which seeks to promote integrated coastal zone management and sustainability from Wick to Fraserburgh. I note that the Moray firth is, deservedly, a possible candidate for coastal and marine national park status.

As I represent the whole of the Highlands and Islands I cannot show favouritism, but I endorse everything that is written in the consultation document about the beauty and the diversity of landscape and seascape from Kintyre to Moray, and about our great fortune to have such amazing biodiversity around our coasts.

However, I believe that it is important to think of national parks not only in terms of visual impact,

stunning though our seascapes are, nor in terms only of the richness of our flora, fauna and undersea treasures, such as the maerl beds, but in terms of people's needs and of the benefits to the people who make a living from the marine environment. They need to be closely involved in the decisions that are made and in the management of any coastal or marine national park. The marine environment is a working environment. It provides a living for inshore fishermen, fish farmers, shellfish growers, scallop divers, recreational diving schools, recreational sea fishing businesses, whale and dolphin-watching operators, those who provide services to yachtsmen and women, seafood restaurateurs, fish processors and those who operate offshore wind turbines and, in future, I hope, wave and tidal energy devices.

Much of the negativity that has surrounded the consultation process, and which we have heard in the chamber today, has arisen because of fears in some areas that the creation of a coastal and marine national park would affect people's livelihoods and mean that the sea could not be worked and that people would be banned from earning a living. Those are the same fears and negative reactions that we experienced during the consultation on the Cairngorms national park back in 1999. Those fears were proven to be groundless then, but they are being fuelled by the same negative politicians who pander to those fears for their own reasons.

The fears are misplaced. The minister has said, and must say loudly and clearly again, that there is not a threat to fishermen, to tourism businesses or to others. On the contrary, there are enormous benefits to be gained from having a business in a national park. The rules of the park will guarantee the environmental sustainability of those businesses and will therefore give them an additional important selling point. That is important, because the discerning consumer is increasingly concerned about the provenance of food and about the impact of tourism on the natural environment. National park status will give a huge boost to those businesses.

Because we demand so much from the marine environment, we must protect it. Integrated coastal zone management and marine spatial planning have been spoken about for years, but little general progress has been made in delivering them. We need to plan where we want and do not want fishing, and where we want fish farmers—progress has been made in that area. We need to decide how many whale and dolphin-watching businesses are sustainable—the businesses themselves say that having too many operators puts too much pressure on the cetaceans—and where we will site our marine renewables. Some

of those matters are being progressed, but I have the feeling that they are not being integrated yet.

I do not want to see a national park whose board is remote from local people; Eleanor Scott dealt with that point well. I want the boundaries of the park to include coastal communities. People have talked about the marine environment, but we must also consider the coast—the cliffs, the links and the coastal walks. I hope that money that is drawn down by the park authority can be used to regenerate coastal communities, particularly those with small harbours, to enhance their attraction for tourism. We must get the balance right between environmental, social and economic development, and we must always have regard to the needs of local people.

The Cairngorms national park has led to a huge demand for second homes in Badenoch and Strathspey, which has made it difficult for local first-time buyers to compete. The park authority is considering whether it will have to place restrictions on sales of new homes. I do not want to see the same thing happen in the coastal areas of the marine national park. We must plan housing from the outset. Sustainability must include housing, too.

With those caveats, I support the Executive's motion. I hope that my grandchildren will enjoy the sea environment, as I did as a child and as my children did. I mention my grandchildren because three of them—Tom, Rosie and Angus—are in the gallery this afternoon, and now have their names in the *Official Report*. I hope, Presiding Officer, that you will excuse my absence from part of the debate while I spend some time with them. [Applause.]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind members of the public in the gallery that it is not appropriate to applaud.

15:49

Alex Fergusson (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con): In the lead-up to the 2003 elections, I pledged that, if successfully elected, I would campaign for Scotland's third national park to be the Galloway national park. I was successfully elected and I campaigned for a national park but, rather disappointingly, I found considerable coolness toward the proposal among local agencies, which should have been much more alive to the possibilities of a national park. I hold firmly to my belief that a strong case can be made for such a park. I was delighted when the recently launched strategy for the Galloway forest park was described as a work in progress. I remain convinced, and I suggested at that launch, that the progress that was mentioned should have one aim in mind and one alone: to make progress toward a Galloway national park.

The area fulfils the criteria for a national park and I have no doubt that the creation of such a park would provide the much sought-after incentive for northbound travellers on the M74 to turn left at Gretna and discover and enjoy the mystical beauty of Dumfries and Galloway. I am grateful for the debate if for no other reason than that it allows me to correct the statement that I made a few months ago in the Parliament that travellers should turn left at Carlisle to visit the south-west of Scotland. That was a slight slip of the tongue, but at least travellers who do so are led to a national park, albeit one in Cumbria. I hold firmly to my ambition that turning left at Gretna will lead to a similarly recognised designated area: a Galloway national park.

What could be better than the eventual linking of Scotland's third national park in Galloway to its first marine national park? Dr Elaine Murray and I have many political differences, but I am sure that we would agree that the Solway firth, which forms the southern boundary of our two constituencies, would be a completely worthy choice and thoroughly deserves to be the front-runner in what is in effect a competition to become Scotland's first marine national park. We would also agree that no other area is more deserving of the potential benefits to which the minister referred in his opening speech.

I welcomed the Executive's plans to consult those concerned and to take on board local people's views in assessing the suitability of the proposals. However, I am sorry to say that the most public part of the exercise got off to a singularly inauspicious start, at least in Dumfries and Galloway. Is it really acceptable that only three days' notice was given publicly that the marine parks consultation bus was to spend one day in Kirkcudbright? Dumfries and Galloway is more than 100 miles from east to west, but the bus spent only one day in Kirkcudbright, at disappointingly short notice. Is it really acceptable that the Drummole Harbour Trust, which is surely a statutory consultee in such exercises, was sent the relevant papers a week after the bus's appearance in Kirkcudbright, and only after the trust had inquired why it had not been included? Is it really acceptable that the Executive has given the impression that the consultation exercise, at least in relation to the Solway firth, was pretty much an afterthought and that minimal appearance would suffice in consulting those who are most immediately involved?

I cannot and do not believe for one minute that the minister wanted that to be the case, but that is the distinct impression that has been created locally. I hope that the minister, or the deputy minister, will address that matter in summing up the debate. In particular, I hope that ministers will outline what further steps the Executive will take to

ensure that all interested parties, not just those who happened to be free and in Kirkcudbright on a recent Saturday, are engaged meaningfully in the exercise to determine which area receives the historic designation.

Unlike the Scottish National Party, which will no doubt spend much of the coming six months telling my constituents that their salvation lies in voting SNP, I want my constituents to benefit from the designation of a marine national park. Most of all, I want to ensure that my constituents' views get a fair hearing in the process. I regret to say that the impression that has been created thus far is that that may not be the case. I look forward to the minister, or the deputy minister, convincing me that I am wrong. I support my colleague Ted Brocklebank's amendment.

15:54

Mr Alasdair Morrison (Western Isles) (Lab): A week tomorrow, the Western Isles inshore fisheries group will have its first formal meeting, on the isle of Harris. The group is an example of real devolution; it is about empowering a community and particular stakeholders in it. The inshore fisheries group will in effect run and manage all marine activity around the Western Isles, initially in the seas extending to 6 miles from the shore, with a view to extending the range and competence to 12 miles from the shore. I commend the Executive ministers for realising that the establishment of such a body will improve greatly life and work for many people whose livelihoods or leisure time activities depend on the seas around the Western Isles. Since the creation of the Parliament, Ross Finnie has doggedly pursued that way of working. I was delighted when, some months ago, he announced that the Western Isles was to be among the first in the country to have an inshore fisheries group.

Turning to the motion, I was particularly pleased to read that

"the Executive will take account of the views expressed in response to the consultation before taking decisions on how to progress the proposals."

I shall help Ross Finnie and Rhona Brankin to short-circuit that process of consultation by placing unambiguously on the record that I do not want any part of the Western Isles to be within any coastal and marine park at this time—I emphasise "at this time". No one questions the principle or the merits of a park; indeed, the principle has enjoyed support throughout the chamber, with the notable exception of the Scottish National Party.

I place on record the view of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. The sustainable communities committee has spoken with one voice, as indeed has the whole council:

"We all appreciate the benefits, but at this time we do not have evidence and cannot appreciate the demonstrable benefits that would come our way."

I also put on record the views of the Western Isles Fishermen's Association. It, too, is opposed at this stage—again, I emphasise "at this stage".

We are saying no for a positive reason: we want to see the inshore fisheries group do its job. The minister well knows that the Western Isles Fishermen's Association is one of the most—if not the most—conservation-minded associations in Britain. It is ably led, and positively endorses meaningful conservation measures. Not only does it positively embrace conservation and traceability measures, but it regularly lobbies the Government to introduce such measures. Years ago, it led the way on the V-notching of berried lobsters. This year, we have seen the benefits, through the improvement in catches and landings. When he visited Stornoway last week, Ross Finnie would have seen that for himself.

At this stage, it would be an act of folly to include any part of my constituency in a national park. It is a part of Scotland that is just beginning to embrace the new inshore management system that I mentioned, in which fishermen, processors, scientists, shellfish farmers, fish farmers and environmentalists will convene and manage our fisheries and all other activities, initially up to 6 miles out, and I hope that the range will be extended to up to 12 miles out. That exciting initiative is recognised and promoted by the Executive, the United Kingdom Government and the European Commission.

I have never credited Richard Lochhead with having a sense of humour, but today he pleasantly surprised me. In the nationalists' amendment, he says that

"there are many other more pressing priorities facing our coastal communities".

Hand-wringing sanctimony must always be applauded, but I remind Richard Lochhead and his fellow nationalists of their betrayal of Western Isles fishermen when other members sought, successfully, to amend the Inshore Fishing (Scotland) Act 1984 to reduce the number of dredges scallop boats are allowed to tow. The so-called Highlands and Islands MSP Rob Gibson refused to support Western Isles fishermen and their families, and Fergus Ewing turned up to support him. However, Nora Radcliffe, Maureen Macmillan, Sarah Boyack and I all supported the families who depend on a thriving scallop industry. The nationalists ignored the Western Isles Fishermen's Association, but chose to listen to and act on the instruction of their London leader, Alex Salmond. While the platitudes come pouring forth from their mouths and pens, their actions demonstrate where their loyalty lies—not with the

coastal communities of the Western Isles but with wee Eck and what he tells them to do.

Western Isles Council, the Western Isles Fishermen's Association and I have no difficulty with the concept of a coastal and marine national park; indeed, we actively endorse the principle and wish the minister and the Executive well in promoting it. However, right at this moment, we are all eager to allow the inshore fisheries group to establish itself. In future, we will be better placed to assess the need for a coastal and marine park in parts of—or indeed all of—the Western Isles.

15:59

Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): I accept, as the SNP amendment says, that marine national parks may have a role to play. However, I will take some convincing that there are not, as the amendment says—if only Alasdair Morrison had read it correctly—"more pressing priorities" with which we should proceed. In particular, as Richard Lochhead has already outlined, there are a number of pieces of legislation that already affect the seas.

An interesting document from EnviroCentre and the WWF called "The Tangle of the Clyde" gives a good example of an area in which there is a real mess. The document states:

"Many shipping lanes pass through sensitive areas such as the Minch, representing a serious environmental risk. As navigation is a reserved matter, however, it is difficult for Scotland to address this risk."

That is applicable to lots of areas, and I will finish my speech by commenting on one particular area that is dear to my heart.

We heard from the Greens that a coastal and marine national park might appropriately be placed around Fair Isle, but the only link between Fair Isle and the proposals that are before us today is that the proposals are as woolly as a Fair Isle jersey. The Executive's question-and-answer document asks:

"What powers will the National Park have?"

The answer is:

"The Park Authority could make a significant contribution to the care and enjoyment of some of Scotland's outstanding coastal and marine natural heritage."

That is fine, but it continues:

"It could, for example, contribute to and enhance the local delivery of other national objectives on promoting Scottish food products and tourism."

I wonder what VisitScotland, Scotland's councils, the Food Standards Agency or SNH are doing in that regard. Are they failing so badly that a bit of joined-up government could not help them to deliver what the Executive is trying to achieve

through the creation of additional bureaucracy? The same result could be achieved by existing organisations. Perhaps we need to re-examine what the Executive's document says and flesh out what the proposed organisation will actually do.

This afternoon's debate is about the marine and coastal environment so I make no apology for mentioning ship-to-ship oil transfers in the River Forth, which are a matter of great concern to MSPs of all parties. I accept that it is a complex matter that involves a number of pieces—10, I think—of both reserved and devolved legislation. However, in a briefing that was prepared for Alyn Smith MEP and me this month, SNH, which advises the minister on natural heritage matters, expressed the view that, where works are proposed that would affect European protected species or their shelter or breeding places, a licence is required from the licensing authority, which in this case is the Scottish Executive.

Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): The member is against a national park authority having greater regulatory powers. Does he agree that it would be better for such powers to be held by a park authority, rather than a public limited company such as Forth Ports plc, which operates within harbours, damages the environment and fails to uphold its regulatory duties?

Bruce Crawford: I want to see rationalisation of the legislation first to make sure that we get some real focus. I will come to the issue of Forth Ports later in my speech.

SNH's view is given further weight by a written answer that was given to my SNP colleague Mike Weir MP in the House of Commons on 25 July. Dr Ladyman, the Minister of State for Transport, stated:

"It is for Forth Ports, as the competent harbour authority, to decide whether to permit ship-to-ship transfers.

Furthermore, under regulation 44 of the Habitats Regulations, there is provision to license activities that could disturb a European protected species, or damage or destroy breeding sites or resting places. As this is for a devolved purpose, it is the responsibility of the Scottish Executive to determine whether a licence would be required for ship-to-ship transfers in the Firth of Forth."—*[Official Report, House of Commons, 25 July 2006; Vol 449, c 1308W.]*

I see both ministers nodding their heads in agreement, but they have not yet agreed that they will be required to license the operation.

Ross Finnie: My comment is intended to be helpful. The point is that we have not come to that stage yet. I hope that Bruce Crawford will note that the Executive and I absolutely agree that regulation 44 is in play. That is why we invited SNH to review any proposal that comes from the port authority and advise us on whether it is

consistent with the habitats directive. If it is not, we will take action, but we are not at that stage yet. The port authority, as the competent authority, is preparing the information. We have made it absolutely clear to the port authority that it must have the proposal reviewed and that it must comply with the habitats directive.

Bruce Crawford: I am glad that the minister has clarified that. However, SNH has already said quite plainly that there will be an effect on whales, porpoises and dolphins, so I do not see why we need to delay in deciding whether the licensing process should be invoked.

One reason why we took the issue to and raised a complaint with the European Commission environment directorate-general was the situation with Forth Ports. It is not all the fault of the port authority, because the legislation created by the Tories to privatise that organisation left a private company to decide on an issue of public policy. The DG environment has agreed to investigate the matter, and there will be a meeting tomorrow with UK representatives. Will the Scottish Executive have a representative at that meeting? It was clear that European Commission staff expected that the Scottish Executive would have to approve the process followed by Forth Ports. They could not understand why a private company would be able to give the go-ahead without a final say from a public authority.

16:06

Mr Andrew Arbuckle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD): I welcome the arrival of the consultation on establishing a coastal and marine national park. As the Minister for Environment and Rural Affairs stated in his introductory speech, experience throughout the world shows that national parks create socioeconomic benefits, and Sarah Boyack reminded us of the international legacy of John Muir in creating national parks.

The minister was right to chastise the narrow nationalist view on this exciting project. Richard Lochhead asked from whence the proposal for a marine park came. I can tell him that, back in 2003, the Liberal Democrats made a commitment at their conference to establishing a marine park and, as such, ensured that the proposal was included in the 2003 partnership agreement.

The establishment of such a designated area also links in with the Scottish Executive's marine and coastal strategy, the intention of which is to ensure that not only we but future generations will be able to enjoy these areas. I am sure that the consultation will produce a diverse range of opinions, and I hope that areas so designated will see designation as an opportunity to increase economic activity rather than a move that will stifle local businesses.

Unfortunately, we have seen negativity and tunnel vision in the Scottish National Party's amendment to the motion. The SNP seems to believe that the setting up of a maritime park will do nothing other than cost money. As both the minister and deputy minister have pointed out, if the SNP cared to consider the existing situation with the Loch Lomond and Cairngorms national parks, it would see no damage to those areas. Indeed, there are benefits through more tourists visiting the areas, while biodiversity is being protected.

It is possible that the SNP is just ignoring the background in the consultation document, which lists the four main objectives of national parks. Every one is positive. Three out of the four talk of promotion and one includes economic development. Perhaps the SNP just has a funding gap called student grants to deal with.

I do not presume to predict the views that will arise from the consultation, but I hope that those who live and work in areas designated as national parks will see that designation as an important factor in ensuring their long-term sustainability and viability. It would be wrong if designation was seen as an added burden on local communities, especially if the burden involved more bureaucracy. However, I see no great evidence of additional paperwork in the consultation document or within existing land parks.

When the proposal is taken forward, it will be important to me and, I hope, to others that local residents and communities play a full role in any controls and management that are needed. To my mind, any management team should reflect local priorities, and I am pleased about the proposal for local voices to have a majority on the board.

I hope that, when the proposal comes to fruition, the percentage of local people on the park board will at least equal the 88 per cent achieved by the Cairngorms park board. Incidentally, the percentage of local representation on the Cairngorms board could be even higher if we moved the boundaries to a more sensible line and included a representative from Perth and Kinross Council.

The geology of Scotland dictates that the west coast provides more diverse and scenic land and seascapes than we enjoy in the east of the country, and that is reflected in the areas that are in the front line for consideration. Like Sarah Boyack, I will duck the question of where might be best, but to be a little parochial, I am disappointed that the Forth estuary was not promoted for designation. That estuary would have been a far more challenging prospect, given its wide sweep of interests. It is recognised internationally for its outstanding marine and coastal biodiversity. It has a wide range of wildlife, both on the coast and in

its waters, and it combines a range of flora and fauna with strategic commercial activity. Ports in the Forth handle more shipping than any other location in Scotland, and the estuary hosts the fourth busiest port in the United Kingdom.

I am pleased about the minister's remarks on the latest position on the ship-to-ship transfer of oil. His remarks provide the country with hope of a possible stop to that operation. I hope that, by the time the first marine national park in Scotland becomes a reality, the proposal for ship-to-ship oil transfers has headed off to areas that are more suitable and less exposed to the elements. As Mark Ruskell pointed out, a marine park designation for the Forth might have been the ideal deterrent.

Aside from that, I support the concept of coastal and marine national parks, but I and others will remember the SNP's attitude to and words about the proposal.

16:11

John Home Robertson (East Lothian) (Lab): I understand that the coastline of Scotland is about as long as that of France. The seas and coast of Scotland are extremely extensive assets. Recent experience shows that our seas and coastlines, with their harbours, coastal walkways and beaches, can be managed in ways that strike the right balance between environmental protection, public access and economic development.

In my patch are the Scottish Seabird Centre, the John Muir country park, which is named after a son of Dunbar who led the movement to establish national parks in North America, coastal footpaths and nature reserves. We also have interesting new activities such as diving, surfing and sea angling, all functioning side by side with the local prawn fishery. The coast of East Lothian is an important asset, which needs to be protected and developed. Good development can be compatible with the principles of conservation. I wish that people who claim to be conservationists would learn to work with local communities instead of indulging in knee-jerk opposition to everything from fish farms to wind turbines.

I am not going to join Andrew Arbuckle in suggesting that the Firth of Forth should be Scotland's first marine national park—that is a little implausible—although I will return to issues concerning the Firth of Forth later. Unlike the SNP, I support the proposal to establish marine national parks, presumably starting with one on the west coast. Fergus Ewing's suggestion that we should not proceed with that because there are other priorities is a recipe for total inertia. If we tried to deal with every single priority at once, we would never get anything done at all. Fergus Ewing's position is absurd.

If it is approached in the right way, the initiative could ensure better protection for marine habitats and species. It should create good opportunities for appropriate activities and eco-tourism, which could boost the local economy of the area concerned. However, as a former minister with responsibility for fisheries, I must make a plea for local fishermen and other local businesses. I am well aware that some fishermen carry a heavy responsibility for damage to fish stocks and the marine environment. Such damage has happened. However, fishermen are not all like that. In local communities, responsible fishermen must be genuine partners in planning for the management of marine national parks. The practice of appointing city-based quangos and employing graduates with big salaries to impose impossible constraints on people who are struggling to survive in remote areas must stop.

I look to the minister to ensure that fishermen and other local businesses are actively involved in the initiative. There should not just be the usual nominal consultation; there needs to be genuine participation. From my experience at the Scottish Executive Rural Affairs Department, as it was then, I suggest that the process will require some hands-on ministerial political involvement. I am looking to my colleague from Midlothian to provide just that.

I return to the Firth of Forth, specifically to the Scottish Seabird Centre. The Seabird Centre is one of the best millennium projects in Britain. The combination of a fabulous location in North Berwick and the centre's use of excellent remote technology is giving thousands of people direct access to watch real seabirds in real time on the Bass rock, Fidra and the Isle of May without disturbing the birds or their habitats in any way.

Wildlife tourism is already benefiting my constituency and is a growth industry for the whole of Scotland. I understand that Scotland has 45 per cent of Europe's seabirds, so we are very well placed to become a major global wildlife tourism destination. That brings me back to my point about the case for appropriate developments to enable remote communities to take advantage of the opportunities that can arise from good conservation. Plans for marine national parks must include plans for access to and enjoyment of those parks. That means hotels, guest houses, harbours, transport and the rest of the infrastructure that will be needed to enable people in the area to take advantage of the opportunities that should be created.

However, as other members have said, not all developments are good. I will not miss the opportunity to press the minister for help in dealing with the threat by Forth Ports to sanction transfers of Russian oil that is destined for other countries

between foreign ships in the Firth of Forth. The firth is a busy seaway and we all support properly regulated shipping to carry cargo to and from Scotland. However, the proposed transshipments would be something else altogether. They would create a real risk and—just as important—a perceived threat of major oil pollution in sight of the Scottish Seabird Centre, without creating jobs in Scotland.

Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab): Does the member agree that it would be totally inappropriate for a private company to make a decision of such a magnitude that affects many lives around the Firth of Forth?

John Home Robertson: That is a problem. The private company that has an interest in the business that accrues from oil transfers also happens to be the statutory port authority, which is a difficult position. That is why I look to the Executive to use all its influence and powers to prevail on Forth Ports to resist the temptation of revenue from that trade and to have due regard to its public responsibilities as a statutory port authority.

The burgh of Dunbar is the birthplace of the man who invented the concept of national parks. John Muir is a major national figure in the United States and it has taken far too long to bring his ideas back to Scotland, but we are getting there. I welcome the progress that is being made on our first national parks on land and I strongly support the principle of taking the idea offshore. However, we should never underestimate the Scottish civil service's capacity to turn a good idea into a bureaucratic mess. I urge the minister to proceed with caution and to keep a close eye on Scottish Natural Heritage's conduct.

16:17

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): The minister has chosen to bring this subject to the Parliament at an early stage, while the initial consultation is in progress. It is therefore all the more surprising that the SNP has greeted the proposal with such hostility. It is surprising for me because I recognise much of the hostility that has been expressed, as Conservatives often expressed such views in the past when the Conservative Government resisted pressure to establish land-based national parks. I recognise the same arguments that were made against national parks in the past and which could still be made against terrestrial national parks today. It is surprising that all that hostility has come together at this time.

In the early days of the Scottish Parliament, when I was the convener of the Rural Affairs Committee and Sarah Boyack was the minister

who introduced the National Parks (Scotland) Bill, it would not have surprised many if the Conservatives had opposed the proposal. However, we did not—we took a different tack. We chose to engage in the process across party lines with interested members of all political parties to work to ensure that economic interests were properly protected, that no group had the upper hand, that the position of those who sought legitimately to make their living in the new national parks would be protected from the start and that their position and that protection would be enshrined in the bill when passed. I think that all parties who were involved—the minister, the Executive, the committee and ordinary members alike—can claim a success.

There is still much to learn from the experience of the new national parks as they operate in practice, yet here we have a proposal, which does not surprise many of us, to establish the first marine national park. Perhaps we should regret that the opportunity has not been taken to carry out post-legislative scrutiny of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000. However, that opportunity has passed and there is a proposal in front of us.

The Conservatives have made it clear that we are not opposed to the principle that we are discussing. That is important. We have also made the commitment that we will involve ourselves in the same process in which we involved ourselves in the past to ensure that we support people whose economic interests may be threatened by marine national parks. We will support them to ensure that the opportunities for economic advancement in a new marine national park will be protected, supported and promoted.

Several proposals have been made on where the first marine national park could be sited. Those proposals form a significant part of the consultation. Fergus Ewing has made it clear that his constituents do not want such a park; if that is the case and the consultation proves that they do not, I will fully support them in resisting a park. However, I do not believe that all the people in every area in which the consultation is taking place do not want a park.

We are at the start of a very long process that will, I suspect, result in the creation of Scotland's first marine national park. The Conservatives will not oppose such a park but will aim to ensure that it is established in a beneficial way. We must protect fishermen from potential interference but not prevent the potential investment that can be made if things are done properly and successfully in areas in which people want national parks. Once an area in which people want a marine national park is identified, we should not hesitate to go forward with and debate a bill that is based on the proposals.

As I have said, I am surprised at the hostility that SNP members have shown in the debate. I appeal to them to do what we are doing and what we did with the National Parks (Scotland) Bill seven years ago. They should accept that a marine national park is inevitable and take part in the process to ensure that it will not be an economic burden on the area in which it is established but will be a positive measure. They should ensure that we all work together so that the park is a benefit rather than a disadvantage to the communities that face the designation.

16:22

Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Like Alex Johnstone, I have been somewhat disappointed by the debate, as I thought that there would be a strong consensus in it. As Ted Brocklebank rightly said, the SNP has shown poverty of ambition.

I agree with Richard Lochhead that there are multiple uses of our marine environment, that it faces multiple pressures and that the current legislation is a dog's breakfast, but that is no excuse for inaction now. Ship-to-ship oil transfers were mentioned. Of course the situation is part of the dog's breakfast of regulation that exists and we must sort it out, but that does not mean that the Parliament does not have the power to stop oil transfers proceeding at the moment. The Green party and others are gathering data on protected species in the Forth; indeed, SNH already has some of the data. Stopping those transfers is possible. We do not need to wait for new marine legislation to take positive action.

More important, a marine national park could provide a test-bed for new ways of working that we need to adopt in the future. Work on it will directly feed into the work that we must do on a new marine act for Scotland. It is important to start integrated working right now. We should not wait for regulation; we should go ahead and start working with all the stakeholders. There is a lot of experience relating to marine national parks from around the world. In Australia, for example, people have tried zoning different activities. Such an attempt will not work if we work with only one group of stakeholders; everybody needs to be brought together. We can try out a new way of working right now.

Perhaps the SNP has spoken to only one set of interests—the fisheries interests, whose representatives are shouting loudest on the issue. That is wrong; we need to listen to all stakeholders, as Eleanor Scott said. As Sarah Boyack and Maureen Macmillan said, participation is important, as is involving all the stakeholders in the structuring of the park and the decision making. That is what happens in Australia, which

has 25-year plans for the great barrier reef national park that involve 60 organisations. That is not just picking on one group of stakeholders; it is delivering a sustainable plan for that park. Any involvement of stakeholders has to be meaningful.

I was disappointed to hear from Alex Fergusson about some of the problems that he has encountered with some of the consultations that have taken place. I hope that the minister will listen to and reflect on that.

We have to start getting people participating right now. We also have to get the trust going between communities and the parks that might come out of the process. Crucial to that are the functions and powers of the proposed new park authority. Earlier in the debate, the minister said that he had not made a decision on the powers, functions or location of the park, but he then went on to say that he was ruling out the more regulatory functions as part of the model. I urge caution; we need to discuss the regulatory functions with the communities. If we are to build up trust with stakeholders, we need to give them some of the power and a cut of what is happening with the national parks. That is why I argue for broad regulatory powers. I also argue for the park boards to include more than just local councillors. Perhaps they should include some of those fisheries interests that are obviously lobbying Fergus Ewing and the SNP. We need to think creatively about how to bring all those people together to get genuine sustainable development.

Richard Lochhead: Will the member list the people who have lobbied him calling for coastal marine parks in Scotland?

Mr Ruskell: Many communities around the Firth of Forth are concerned about integrated management in the firth. The SNP wants to stop that because it does not want to test that management through a national park. *[Interruption.]* I represent Mid Scotland and Fife, as members know. *[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order.

Mr Ruskell: We need to focus on involving the stakeholders and if we leave those stakeholders outside the process at this point, and take an isolationist view with them as the SNP is doing, particularly with the inshore fisheries groups, that will be a problem. We have to consider the advantages, particularly the economic advantages—Maureen Macmillan spelled out many of those.

Fergus Ewing's constituency survey asked the wrong question. We should be asking the people who do not already visit Lochaber whether they would be prepared to go to Lochaber if there were a marine national park there. We should ask some of the people in Sarah Boyack's constituency, for

example. There is huge potential for domestic tourism. Earlier in the year, I had the opportunity to take a holiday. What would I do? Would I get a cheap flight to Prague, or would I holiday in Scotland? One of the draws to visiting Fergus Ewing's constituency was the existence of a national park. The park's integrated facilities and the fact that it is marketed effectively all persuaded me to make the journey to Fergus Ewing's constituency, to support its economy and to support the development of businesses there. I do not see why Fergus Ewing takes such a narrow view of the economic potential of national parks.

Marine national parks could be sustainable in economic, environmental and social terms, but we have to enable people to participate directly and, in doing so, we will change the culture and ways in which our seas and coastal areas are managed.

16:29

Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD): We are having the debate in the very early stages in the process of creating a coastal and marine national park. The consultation on every aspect, issue and concern relating to any such park—where it would be sited, how it would be run, the powers of the park authority, what it would be called—is open for anyone to make their views and suggestions known until 10 January 2007. Along with others in the chamber, I urge everyone with an interest to make the effort to contribute to the consultation, because this is the stage at which concerns should be made known and issues should be aired. It is also the stage at which it is easiest to influence the shape of whatever coastal and marine national park emerges from the process.

From discussions with my colleague George Lyon, I know that many of his constituents in Argyll have concerns about how any national park designation will affect their businesses and livelihoods. They can take comfort from the way in which the 2000 act is framed, to make it crystal clear that social and economic factors are as important as environmental factors in how national parks operate. That has worked in practice in our two land-based national parks.

Fergus Ewing: Were social and economic factors to be given the same weight as environmental factors, it would provide some relief to those who are presently opposed to coastal and marine national parks. However, that would require amendment of the 2000 act, which states plainly that the first aim—conservation—takes precedence, in accordance with the Sandford principle. Is the member proposing that primary legislation should be amended so that conservation is no longer given precedence?

Nora Radcliffe: The member has misinterpreted the 2000 act. As Alex Johnstone indicated, and as

those of us who considered the bill understand, we worked very hard to strike a balance between the three principles. Fergus Ewing is misinterpreting entirely a great deal of hard work that went into getting the bill right.

It is vital that the people who live and work in those areas that are being considered for possible national parks should get involved in the discussions. They are the people who have intimate knowledge of the areas and who can flag up potential problems and suggest reasonable solutions that will work in a local context, which they probably understand better than anyone else. As Jamie McGrigor said, they have been the custodians thus far.

We can offer George Lyon's constituents and the residents of other areas that are under consideration many positive reasons for welcoming national park designation. A coastal and marine national park could play an important role in supporting activities in the area. Some will be dependent on the functions and powers of the park authority and on the location of the park, but it is a pretty safe bet that more people will want to go to a national park area as a result of its national and international status. That will underpin a number of possibilities—for a start, the growth of new sustainable tourism businesses.

There is bound to be enhanced provision of recreational activities. As John Home Robertson said, the development and promotion of visitor and recreational infrastructure will be key, as will accessibility. All that will be of benefit to local people, as well as to visitors. Production of and access to better information about the area will increase the enjoyment and understanding of Scotland's coastal and marine environment for local people and visitors alike. That could bring the less tangible benefit of increasing pride of place—pride in the unique and wonderful place that is home, seen through and valued in the eyes of the outside world—and boosting people's sense of self-worth and confidence.

There are other, more practical benefits that could accrue. In a national park there would be a more co-ordinated approach to considering economic, social and environmental issues. I see potential for new approaches to rural housing, for example, which I am certain will be welcomed with open arms. Businesses are likely to have clearer information about local operational requirements, with better co-ordination between regulators and the potential simplification of existing regulatory arrangements. I am sure that that, too, will be welcomed with open arms.

Much of what I am describing sounds very land based, but it is impossible to separate coastal and marine national parks from the land adjoining them; after all, most access will be across land.

However, the focus will be on the coastal and marine environment. Understandably, fishing interests are a bit wary, but there could be more support for local fisheries and aquaculture, and the national park brand could bring commercial advantages.

I turn to the proposed amendments to the motion. The Conservative and Green amendments are entirely appropriate at this stage of the proceedings, as they flag up matters of concern. However, I found the SNP surprisingly disappointing. I do not see the creation of a marine national park as an additional layer of bureaucracy. Indeed, as I have said, there is scope within the proposal for rationalising and co-ordinating various bureaucratic strands in a helpful way. There is no doubt about the complexity of the law relating to the sea. The "Tangle of the Clyde", which was mentioned by Bruce Crawford, and the "Tangle of the Forth" amply demonstrate that. However, neither of those publications drew the conclusion that it should not be added to constructively. The subtitle of the Clyde document is "Why we must reform the management of Scotland's marine environment". Far from being unhelpful or unpopular, what is being carried forward by the Executive is eagerly sought.

There is no doubt that we have a fantastic marine resource, but there are huge gaps in our knowledge of what lies beneath the surface of our coastal waters. For all we know, in our ignorance, we might be doing enormous unseen damage. The sooner we start to take a more careful and conscious interest, the better. Scotland's marine and estuarine environment contributes £14 billion to Scotland's £64 billion gross domestic product. The possibly competing interests must be balanced. I believe that we can do that. I believe that we are on the threshold of an extremely exciting achievement. We can pull it off in style if everyone works together. Let us go for it.

16:35

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I echo the words of my colleague Ted Brocklebank, who emphasised the importance of preserving not only the environment and fisheries but the fishermen, processors and others who make their livelihoods from the coastal marine resource. Marine parks are, in fact, an old idea. Indeed, they long precede the more modern idea of marine spatial planning. That idea, which I believe is now the subject of discussions between fishery managers and the Executive, relates to codes of good practice and management for all Scottish waters, not just one or two areas.

I remember Ross Finnie telling us in no uncertain terms in a fisheries debate that fish do not respect boundaries but move around the sea

bed as they think fit. That suggests that it might be better to concentrate on marine spatial planning rather than emphasising a marine park too much. Why conserve only one area when we could instead ensure the better management of all areas?

There might develop a situation in which half of the people want to be in a national park and half do not. That would be a bit silly. However, in the interest of the areas that have been suggested—four of which lie in my region—I will try to be positive about any benefits that a marine park might bring.

SNH has shortlisted the five strongest candidates. I notice that they are all on the west coast. The east coast did not get any fish farms either. I feel a bit sorry for the east coast—why is it missing out on so much?

It is worth noting that the present legislation was designed for terrestrial parks not marine parks. As it would be unwise to suggest a terrestrial solution to a situation in a marine environment, it will be necessary to introduce special legislation that is a bit more appropriate.

As a marine park will be a new venture, it would be wise to consider any problems that have been experienced in the terrestrial parks. Some say that there is a difficult extra layer of bureaucracy and others are not so concerned. However, the bureaucracy can be disruptive to residents and I hope that that will not be the case in a marine park, where at present everyone has freedom of access and the definition of boundaries and ownership will be a bit more difficult. Will the price of boat moorings suddenly go whooshing up? Will there be restrictions on previous freedoms? That is what people want to know.

I know of pilot projects to do with marine spatial planning that are already taking place in the Argyll islands and coastal area. For example, there is the Scottish sustainable marine environment scheme in the Clyde estuary, which the minister will know about. There has also been a degree of co-operation between the Community of Arran Seabed Trust and the local fishermen with regard to Lamlash bay. Recently, fishermen in Loch Fyne and Loch Shira have agreed not to trawl within certain limits in order to help wild salmon and sea trout interests in the area. That sort of agreement is sensible for local stakeholders and does not require any input from civil servants.

The impression is being given that fisheries management will not be in the remit of the management of the marine national park. I am glad that the minister said that. However, that must be made absolutely clear. Although the marine park authority might not be able to define the gear or methods that fishermen may use, it will

be able to decide whether any fishing can take place.

In the Firth of Lorn, 90 per cent of the area is now closed to scallop dredging even though there is no UK rule to prevent such dredging. The recent ban emanates from the European Union habitats directive of 1993. One person who is affected is a fisherman from Luing who has been fishing the area for 40 years. He makes the point that the coral reefs, which he has studiously avoided, are still there. He would not want to lose his gear by going too close to them. However, he has now lost his livelihood and has lost the means to support his family.

So far, I have spoken mainly of the water area. If a marine national park is to bring increased and sustainable tourism benefits to the terrestrial coastal area, we will certainly encourage that. However, that is surely a job that VisitScotland is meant to be doing already. I note that the two existing land-based national parks receive £10 million between them. I would be interested to know how much of that goes into supporting local enterprises and things that benefit rural communities.

I will also be interested in the results of the consultation. I am glad that the minister has said that he will not impose anything on a community that is totally against it. The jury is still out. It is all very well for those in ivory towers here and in Brussels to talk about conservation but, as my friend Ted Brocklebank has said, we will support a park only if it does not impose a national concept against the wishes of the people who have lived and worked in a local coastal environment for generations. After all, they are the people who, over generations, have created the environment that a marine national park is supposed to protect. They are the ones who know the local environment and who will continue to manage it best. I can think of many things that fishermen have done. Alasdair Morrison mentioned the V-notching and returning of female lobsters. There is also the modification of trawl gear and dredgers to lessen the impact on the sea bed.

I want to conserve the communities as well as the land that they live on. Any park will have to do that before it will get my support.

16:42

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Our amendment has drawn a lot of fire from around the chamber, but it is important that members know what it says. It

“notes that coastal and marine national parks may have a role to play in the future but that at the present time there are many other more pressing priorities facing our coastal communities”.

The amendment uses the plural “parks”, referring to more than one national park, but the impression I get from the debate is that it is really important for the Government to have one trophy national park. The priority is not for all the communities around the Highlands and Islands that I represent, and all the communities around other parts of Scotland, to have a chance to share in a balanced and sustainable future for their coasts and inland waters, and that is the problem that my party has with the Executive’s position. We will not agree to the terms of the current proposals.

Rhona Brankin *rose—*

Rob Gibson: I am not yet into my speech, but I will give way in a minute or two.

Other people have quoted their party’s manifesto, so I will quote the SNP’s manifesto from 2003. We said that we would

“modernise legislation in the areas of wildlife, conservation and the seas.”

We want to modernise the legislation because there is far too much legislation in far too many acts.

Elliot Morley outlined the UK marine policy at the beginning of January 2005. Discussing proposals for a marine bill, he talked about a role for a marine agency to streamline fisheries management, and about a range of other management issues to do with the marine environment. He talked about the bill creating a system for managing marine resources and creating sustainable development; about reducing the number of departments and organisations that deal with marine life; and about adopting a more holistic and overarching policy. I think that such proposals are a way forward for Scotland, and they fit in with the way in which the SNP has laid out its stall in this debate.

Sarah Boyack: I am delighted to hear the SNP’s fulsome support for the Labour Government at the UK level. Does the member not accept that it is not an either/or situation? We can have a much better managed marine environment—which we are beginning to debate here—and national park status, which is something special. That was accepted in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000. We are talking not about things that cut across each other but about things that work together.

Rob Gibson: I think that we should get things sorted out first. I was not in the Parliament in 2000—I should explain that I did not stand for election then, before someone throws that jibe again. I have always been of the view that the whole of the Highlands should have been made a national park, rather than excluding many areas

that are outside or on the boundary of the current organisations. That is the big problem. Who will look after those areas, many of which are as worthy as the trophy that the Executive wants to set up just now?

The European approach to the whole matter of maritime policy offers another, holistic approach. A proposed maritime policy would cut across numerous policy areas, including fisheries, transport, coastal policy, environment, energy, trade and research. At the moment, we have 85 UK acts that deal with this. Does the Executive not see the logic of getting that sorted out before we impose any further bureaucracy?

There is a lot of talk about support for a new national park, but Alasdair Morrison has stated that the fishermen of the Western Isles have no appetite for that. The consultation is out at present, and we shall see how many people respond to it. The fact is that many people around the country may wish to have some of the ideas but do not like the model that is proposed. The problem that we always have with the Executive is that it puts out the questions but ignores the answers that do not fit and that it does not want. We saw that with the Crofting Reform etc (Scotland) Bill, which we knew had to be scrapped. That is precisely how SEERAD works, and the minister knows that. We have been talking about bodies that already exist but that need to be co-ordinated and to work in a holistic fashion. A new national park would be just another body and, as far as I am concerned, it is not the kind of extra body that we require at this time.

I have followed and been involved in the discussions about the way in which SEERAD behaves towards communities that are interested in their local sea bed. The long story of COAST, which is still unfolding, has reached the committee of which I am a member, and does not show ministers and their department to have been terribly proactive in giving that community the say that it wants in managing its local piece of sea. If the Executive cannot come to an agreement on that, how will it deal with the massive competing and conflicting arrangements that there are in an area the size of the Firth of Lorn, the Moray firth, and so on? That is the problem. It is a great idea, but it is much more difficult to cut through to get something that will enhance people’s lives and the environment.

Ross Finnie: I understand the COAST argument: it is well rehearsed. One of the difficulties with COAST’s proposal—which Rob Gibson well knows—is in trying to fit it into some cohesive structure. Even Scottish Natural Heritage has said that the area is not large enough to produce the cohesion needed for the purposes of a national park. The SNP may want a whole raft of

national parks, but the 2000 act sets out the conditions, which Lamlash bay does not meet.

Rob Gibson: I am not for a moment suggesting that Lamlash bay should be a national park, but it is an example of totally flawed management of the sea bed by the authorities. The community there wants to do more, and other communities around the country want to have a say. I have mentioned those around Applecross in Wester Ross in past debates of this sort. However, at the moment, there are very few communities that want to do that sort of thing. Indeed, the Executive's proposals, which are based on the existing model for land-based national parks, will not really give local communities a big say. One of the commitments in the SNP's manifesto for the last election was to review the success of the different planning mechanisms that were used for the two national parks, and I might add to that the participation of communities.

The Firth of Forth will not be a trophy national park; it is another example of where we need to get the existing mechanisms working for the people there. The Executive's wish to have coastal and marine national parks cannot compare with the need to sort out the 85 acts that clog up the seas at the moment and which the SNP wants to be rationalised.

16:50

The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Rhona Brankin): I start by welcoming our visitors from Mallaig and the west Highlands to the Parliament.

I have listened with interest to all the speeches in the debate. Some members expressed support for the proposals to establish Scotland's first coastal and marine national park, while others have highlighted concerns that they would like to be addressed and some—such as Jamie McGrigor, in contrast to his Conservative colleagues—want to reserve judgment.

Those views reflect the range of opinion throughout Scotland and contrast with the preponderance of negative stories in the media in the run-up to the launch of the consultation. That negative coverage was based on assumptions of what might be contained in the Executive's consultation paper. I understand the concerns that led to those comments but, now that the consultation paper is available, I would like to encourage a real debate on the proposals so that we can take account of other views and adapt the proposals.

I turn to the concerns that have been expressed during the debate. It is not true that there is no support for a coastal and marine national park. As we have said, responses to the consultation have

indicated support, and it is a bit of an insult to dismiss those people who have taken the trouble to send in postcards supporting the proposed national park. The SNP, which is opposed to a coastal and marine national park, supported the establishment of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs national park and the Cairngorms national park. I would be interested to hear whether the SNP members from the Highlands would like the Cairngorms national park to be wound up. John Swinney, who is in the SNP, likes it so much that he is campaigning for part of his constituency to be included in it.

Richard Lochhead and various other members of the SNP claimed that we are doing nothing other than consulting on the coastal and marine national park, and several of them made reference to the complex legislative arrangements that exist in the marine environment. However, it is not true to say that nothing else is happening. The Executive's publication "Seas the Opportunity: A Strategy for the Long Term Sustainability of Scotland's Coasts and Seas" set out our vision for clean, safe, productive and biologically diverse marine and coastal environments that are managed to meet the long-term needs of nature and people. It was not published in isolation, because the strategy is being taken forward through an advisory group on marine and coastal strategy—AGMACS—which Ross Finnie chairs and on which I sit. Indeed, Jamie McGrigor is aware of the work that is going on in the Scottish sustainable marine environment initiative. AGMACS includes fishermen's representatives, as well as representatives from aquaculture, renewable energy, Scottish Enterprise, natural heritage bodies and a range of different agencies, including the Maritime and Coastguard Agency.

Richard Lochhead: Recently, there were media reports that the Scottish Executive wanted more powers over the marine environment to be transferred from Westminster to Holyrood. Will the minister confirm whether that is the case?

Rhona Brankin: As I said, AGMACS is meeting to discuss a range of issues and no definite conclusions have been reached yet. It is absolutely untrue to say that the proposed coastal and marine national park is a trophy national park and that the consultation is taking place in isolation. A huge amount is going on. We have created a framework for pilot management schemes and three pilot areas are up and running under the Scottish sustainable marine environment initiative.

Members have referred to several candidate areas. All the proposed areas are in the running as potential candidate areas, and I assure members that we are keen to hear consultees' views on all 10 of the areas that are identified in the

consultation. Indeed, we have held open the possibility of consultees suggesting other areas, provided that they can give reasons to justify their designation. Eleanor Scott has suggested Fair Isle, but I suspect that she will probably agree that it might not be the first candidate.

The proposed light-touch approach for the park authority is not intended as a stalking-horse for more draconian measures in future. A light-touch approach would give existing regulators an incentive to make the current systems work better.

I want to give some reassurance to those who expressed concerns about the impact that a marine national park might have on local economies. We have clearly indicated that the newly established inshore fisheries groups will remain the mechanism for managing fisheries. I reassure Alasdair Morrison on that point. Likewise, we propose that local authorities and existing regulators will continue to manage aquaculture in the park area.

Fergus Ewing: On that point, I support inshore fisheries management, but paragraph 26 of section 3 of "SNH Advice on Coastal and Marine National Park—Advice to Ministers" advises that, in the event of a conflict between fishing interests and the park plan, the park plan should take precedence. Is that the Executive's view?

Rhona Brankin: The importance of the park plan is that it contains the views and wishes of the people in the community. It is not true to say that that is not the case.

I see the national park as a driver for local sustainable development that will bring together all who have an interest in the economy, environment and communities of the park area. By way of reassurance, I suggest that those who are worried about the potential effects of a national park should talk to people in the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs national park area and the Cairngorms national park area. Indeed, SNP members should talk to John Swinney, whose constituents are desperate to be included in the Cairngorms national park. I am sorry, but I just think that it is hypocritical of the SNP all of a sudden to change from its position of support for national parks.

Several members referred to ship-to-ship transfers in the Firth of Forth. The issue is complicated, but let me be clear that Forth Ports plc has a duty as the competent authority under European Union regulations. I reassure members that Scottish Executive officials will meet EU officials to discuss the matter and that I am well aware of members' concerns.

On governance, John Home Robertson mentioned the importance of engaging local people. Local people will be involved in the management of the park area and the park

authority's board will include local people. That already happens in the existing national parks. We want to hear people's views about that.

In response to the Conservatives, it is not true to say that no one has visited the roadshow—1,200 people attended at Kirkcudbright and Oban and considerable interest has been shown in each leg of the tour—nor is it true to say that the roadshow is designed to sell a coastal and marine national park. The roadshow is intended to provide information on the proposals so that people can form their own views and submit their comments to the Executive. The roadshow provides one of many opportunities for people to participate in the consultation. In addition, we have sent out 600 copies of the consultation document, which can also be accessed on the Scottish Executive website.

Alex Fergusson: Will the minister give way?

Rhona Brankin: I must finish, as I have only another two minutes.

A coastal and marine national park is about much more than simply safeguarding and protecting our natural heritage. It is about creating substantial local economic opportunities, delivering genuine social benefits to communities within the park's boundaries, planning and managing the unique and precious aspects of our coasts and becoming world leaders in marine research and best practice. National park status would provide a focus for increasing opportunities for recreation and enjoyment. The creation of a coastal and marine national park has potential for tourism benefits through the marketing of the park brand. More generally, a coastal and marine national park should be a national and international showcase that would bring greater national and international recognition to the area chosen.

Scotland has an important responsibility to ensure the well-being of our marine environment and it is right that we deliver Scottish solutions to do that. We are determined to manage our rich marine environment in a way that is based on the principles of sustainable development. That has underpinned our wider strategy for managing Scotland's coastal and marine environment and is a key principle underlying our proposal to establish Scotland's first coastal and marine national park. I urge members to support the motion.

Parliamentary Bureau Motion

16:59

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The next item of business is consideration of motion S2M-5014, in the name of Margaret Curran, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on membership of a committee.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that Kate Maclean be appointed to replace Cathie Craigie on the Procedures Committee.—[*Ms Margaret Curran.*]

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

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): There are 12 questions to be put as a result of today's business.

In relation to this morning's debate on young people and families, if the amendment in the name of Robert Brown is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Derek Brownlee will fall. In relation to this morning's debate on climate change and road transport, if the amendment in the name of Tavish Scott is agreed to, the amendments in the names of Richard Lochhead and Ted Brocklebank will both fall.

The first question is, that amendment S2M-4999.2, in the name of Robert Brown, which seeks to amend motion S2M-4999, in the name of Patrick Harvie, on young people and families, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 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)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)

McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 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)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 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)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Petrie, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)

Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 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)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 65, Against 51, Abstentions 1.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The amendment in the name of Derek Brownlee falls.

The next question is, that motion S2M-4999, in the name of Patrick Harvie, on young people and families, 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)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)

McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (Sol)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 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)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Petrie, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (Sol)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 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)

Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Watt, Ms Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 67, Against 29, Abstentions 24.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament recognises the vital importance of all young people being able to fulfil their potential; pays tribute to the contribution young people across Scotland make to their families and communities; knows the importance of the family in providing support and guidance for young people; welcomes the fact that child poverty has been reduced by over a quarter in Scotland, that the Scottish Executive has introduced universal nursery education for all three to four-year-olds, that the Executive has seen record levels of investment in schools and teachers, that more of our young people are going on to higher and further education, that youth unemployment is at a record low and that more parents are in work and have access to support and childcare; recognises further that some parents require extra support to bring up children, that decent families and young people need to be safe and protected in their homes and communities, that young people supported by and having access to good quality youth work opportunities have an important role to play in improving their communities, and reiterates the determination of this Parliament to stand up to antisocial behaviour, to end child poverty and to provide every child and young person with the best possible start in life.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S2M-5005.3, in the name of Tavish Scott, which seeks to amend motion S2M-5005, in the name of Mark Ballard, on climate change and road transport, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)

Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 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)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 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)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 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)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McGregor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 66, Against 54, Abstentions 1.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: In that case, the amendments in the names of Richard Lochhead and Ted Brocklebank fall.

The next question is, that motion S2M-5005, in the name of Mark Ballard, on climate change and road transport, 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)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (Sol)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 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)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Petrie, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (Sol)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 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)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Watt, Ms Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 67, Against 30, Abstentions 24.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament supports the Scottish Executive's record investment of 70% of the transport budget in public transport; notes the significant investment in Scotland's bus services, which rely upon a modern road infrastructure, and in the rail network, where the Executive has already opened the Larkhall to Milngavie line, all with the aim of improving the environment; further supports the Executive's investment to reduce road deaths and casualties, improve safety on roads outside schools, and provide attractive, integrated and affordable public transport alternatives, and welcomes the Executive's climate change programme and sustainable development campaign.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S2M-5008.2, in the name of Richard Lochhead, which seeks to amend motion S2M-5008, in the name of Ross Finnie, on coastal and marine national parks, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 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)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 Watt, Ms Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)

AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Fergusson, 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, Marilyn (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)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley)

(Lab)

Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 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)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 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)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (Sol)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (Sol)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 26, Against 90, Abstentions 5.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S2M-5008.1, in the name of Ted Brocklebank, which seeks to amend motion S2M-5008, in the name of Ross Finnie, on coastal and marine national parks, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 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)
 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)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Petrie, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 Watt, Ms Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)

AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 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, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)

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)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 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, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

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)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 42, Against 71, Abstentions 7.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S2M-5008.3, in the name of Eleanor Scott, which seeks to amend motion S2M-5008, in the name of Ross Finnie, on coastal and marine national parks, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (Sol)
 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)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (Sol)
 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)
 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, Marilyn (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)
 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)
 McGregor, 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)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 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, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 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)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 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)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Watt, Ms Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 16, Against 82, Abstentions 22.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S2M-5008, in the name of Ross Finnie, on coastal and marine national parks, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.**FOR**

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Arbuckle, Mr Andrew (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West) (Ind)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 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)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 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)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)

Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 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)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 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)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (Ind)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 Watt, Ms Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (Sol)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (Sol)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 90, Against 26, Abstentions 5.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament supports the Scottish Executive's commitment to manage Scotland's coastline and seas in a sustainable way; welcomes the Executive's public consultation on proposals to establish Scotland's first Coastal and Marine National Park, and notes that the Executive will take account of the views expressed in response to the consultation before taking decisions on how to progress the proposals.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S2M-5014, in the name of Margaret Curran, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on membership of a committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that Kate Maclean be appointed to replace Cathie Craigie on the Procedures Committee.

Energy Technologies Institute

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S2M-4904, in the name of Richard Baker, on Aberdeen's bid for the national energy technologies institute.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes the current and future importance of the energy sector to the north east's economy; recognises that Aberdeen and the north east are home to a unique cluster of skills and expertise in energy exploration and development; notes the success of the Intermediary Technology Institute for Energy which is based in Aberdeen and works closely with the network of intermediary technology institutes throughout Scotland and also sources academic research across the United Kingdom and worldwide; believes that this successful model based in Aberdeen shows that the city has a unique potential to be the hub for a Scottish bid for the UK Energy Technologies Institute; notes both the location of leading oil and gas operators and contractors in Aberdeen and the work of the Aberdeen Renewable Energy Group, and welcomes the efforts to ensure that the UK Energy Technologies Institute is located in Aberdeen so that the north east remains a global leader in the energy industry.

17:12

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab): I thank colleagues from all parties who supported the motion. Their support shows the wide recognition of the importance for the north-east of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's announcement that the Government wishes to establish a United Kingdom-based world-leading energy and environmental research institute. That is a key decision, not only for the UK industry, but for Aberdeen and the north-east, because such an institute could help to ensure that Aberdeen, which is the centre of the energy industry in the UK, continues to be Europe's energy capital. In turn, Aberdeen, as a focus for the industry and its skills and expertise, will be essential to the new institute if it is to achieve its aims and be the success that we all want it to be.

The intention is that the institute will work in partnership with and be jointly funded by business in order to place the UK at the cutting edge of energy science and engineering. The aim is to provide the UK with a pre-eminent world-class means of delivering energy technology research that will underpin eventual deployment and which will be driven by the critical need to develop long-term sustainable and secure energy solutions. Those are key strategic aims for the UK and our energy industry. Aberdeen already makes a major contribution to achieving those aims.

The city is home to a remarkable cluster of about 900 energy-related businesses from across the spectrum of the industry, as well as being home to energy-related agencies, Government

bodies and research institutes. The major energy company headquarters that are located in Aberdeen are not just UK headquarters, but global ones. Companies also base their world engineering research centres in the city. No city in the world is better connected to the global energy industry than Aberdeen. It is therefore no surprise that the United Kingdom Offshore Operators Association and the Confederation of British Industry Scotland see Aberdeen as the logical location for the institute. Unions such as Amicus know that Aberdeen provides skilled workers for the energy industry throughout the world.

Aberdeen is home to the Executive-funded intermediary technology institute for energy, which already manages research and development programmes from throughout the energy spectrum—from mature oil and gas, power networks and energy storage through to renewables and clean energy. The model of the ITI, which collaborates with partners from industry, academia and the financial sector, is clearly a good one on which to base the operation of the UK institute.

Aberdeen is not just a world centre for the oil and gas industry, but is taking a lead in the developing renewables industry. The Aberdeen renewable energy group is an innovative public-private partnership that has been established to help identify and promote renewable energy opportunities for businesses in the city and its shire region. It has nearly 100 members across a range of sectors that are involved with renewable energy.

Aberdeen already has a wealth of partnership working across the whole spectrum of the energy industry. The city has academic expertise in that area through our universities; commissioning research is a central part of the proposed institute. The Robert Gordon University's energy centre offers industry-leading MSc training programmes in oil and gas engineering, and houses the centre for research in energy and the environment.

Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP): Is the member aware that not only is RGU one of the leading universities in this sector but it has recently attracted significant interest from China? Chinese postgraduate students are currently there for training in the sector, which is precisely the kind of approach that is being sought by the Department of Trade and Industry.

Richard Baker: Brian Adam makes an excellent point that establishes that there are global connections that we have in academia and the industry, which come through to Aberdeen.

We should not forget the University of Aberdeen—its rector, who is here, would not wish us to do so. The institute for energy technologies

at the university is one of the pre-eminent centres of its kind in Europe, with top-class researchers and links to, and funding from, industry. It is involved in a joint project with the UHI Millennium Institute to offer a range of courses that will be linked to the decommissioning of Dounreay. That is an important point, which was reflected in the debate last night that was led by Jamie Stone, which highlighted the research potential at Dounreay. Although I am emphasising the role that Aberdeen can play in the new institute, we are all conscious that in the rest of Scotland and, indeed, the United Kingdom, there are a number of other centres of expertise in the energy industry.

Aberdeen's institutions are collaborating with a number of key partners in the Scottish Executive's team, and are working on maximising the involvement of our centres of excellence, such as Heriot-Watt University and the University Of Strathclyde, in the new institute. The team is keen to work with other centres of excellence in the UK, such as Imperial College. It has never been envisaged that only Aberdeen would benefit. The new institute is bound to commission research and to draw on expertise throughout Scotland, and indeed throughout the UK and the world. That is the model on which the energy ITI that is already based in Aberdeen works. Of course, we hope that our own academic institutions will be key beneficiaries, but the principle has always been that the research will be commissioned from the institution that is best placed to carry it out, wherever that institution happens to be based. It is important to recognise that Aberdeen is absolutely crucial to Scotland's efforts to play a key role in the new institute and that when we are looking for a hub and centre for the institute, where the operation is and where the strategy is developed, Aberdeen is clearly the logical place.

The Executive placed the energy ITI in Aberdeen because that is where the cluster for energy is. The same argument follows for the UK institute. As Europe's capital of energy, working with partners throughout the UK, as it already does, Aberdeen is ideally placed to make the Government's aspiration for the institute a reality. I hope that the minister can reassure us tonight that the Executive realises that. I know that the case is being made strongly by my colleagues Frank Doran and Anne Begg at Westminster, and by members from other parties, too. I hope that the minister will accept not just my view but the strongly held view of many members that the new institute should be based in Aberdeen. That is the best way of ensuring that the whole of Scotland, and all of those involved in the bid, will benefit from this exciting new initiative, which has the potential to ensure that not just Aberdeen but

Scotland and the UK will be world leaders in the energy industry for decades to come.

17:19

Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP): I welcome tonight's debate and I commend Mr Baker for lodging the motion that has allowed the debate to take place.

The proposed UK energy technologies institute represents an opportunity for all of Scotland, but our bid must be led by Aberdeen because that is where our expertise in energy lies. The bid will require partnership working; it should be led through our academic institutions but it will also require industry input and international input. As Mr Baker rightly pointed out, the connections between industry, our academic institutions and the international dimension exist in Aberdeen.

Because the Department of Trade and Industry has not spelled out all the detail, we have a wonderful opportunity to drive the project. We have a chance to create an institute that will work for us all—in fact, one that will work for the benefit of mankind, if members will forgive the motherhood-and-apple-pie approach. The proposed institute is not intended just to be a profit centre; it is about making the required changes to our approach to energy for the good of us all.

A key point is the fact that the bid will focus on who is to head up the institute. It will be a partnership between academic institutions, the private sector and aspects of the public sector, but the DTI is looking for a key individual to be the director. I hope that Scottish ministers will help to identify a suitable person from the great wealth of experience that we have in the field. Someone from the private sector who has an academic background might well be the individual who is needed. As I understand it, although there might be a real campus, the hub will revolve around a virtual campus, and that will depend on who is chosen as the director. I hope that the energies of the Executive and its partners are focused on identifying suitable individuals who could head up the institute.

I commend the Executive for the work that it is already doing with its partners in the field. I am aware of that work, having attended a number of meetings that have been held in Aberdeen and which involved all the interests and were focused on the efforts of Aberdeen City Council. I particularly commend its efforts in organising the groups that need to be involved in the initiative.

Yesterday, I received a written answer to one of the questions that I have lodged on the issue. It is disappointing that the Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning did not go as far as his colleague Richard Baker and those of us

who signed the motion would like him to go. He wrote only about attracting

“a significant proportion of the Energy Technologies Institute's research funds to centres of excellence in Scotland, including Aberdeen.”—[*Official Report, Written Answers*, 25 October 2006; S2W-28860.]

I was looking for a dynamic approach to getting the institute here in Scotland. The sensible place for it to be is Aberdeen. Of course we should involve partners, but the minister was asked a specific question but did not particularly endorse the proposal. We need to create partnerships throughout the academic world in Scotland. That is happening now, but the minister's response did not have the enthusiastic approach to an Aberdeen-led bid that I expected.

I think that I have taken as much time as the Presiding Officer will allow. I commend the motion to the minister and hope that he will give a positive response.

17:24

Mrs Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): Richard Baker is to be warmly congratulated on his timely introduction to the Scottish Parliament of a debate on a subject of immense importance to Scotland's future prosperity.

In September, when the Government announced the setting up of a UK energy technologies institute, the CBI stated that such an institute

“has the potential to establish the UK as a world leader in energy technology research. It will help build a critical mass of R&D activity in an area that has great commercial as well as environmental potential across the globe.”

If the bid to locate the institute in Scotland is successful, Scotland will rightly be able to claim that it is the best small country in the world, in the energy field at least.

Aberdeen has been at the forefront of the energy industry for 30 years. From its experience of extracting oil and gas from the very difficult environment of the North sea, a wealth of knowledge and technology has been developed, exported globally, and applied to other sources of energy, so that today Aberdeen is as well known for renewables as it is for oil and gas.

As Richard Baker said, Aberdeen is home to an amazing cluster of energy-related businesses and research institutes, and collaboration among Aberdeen's two universities, other Scottish universities and possibly even Imperial College, London is already under way. As we have heard, the ITI for energy is situated in the city, and Renewables UK is based in the DTI's Aberdeen

office, clearly indicating the links between renewables and the oil and gas sectors.

Technology developed by the North sea oil industry is being put to use in the developing Moray firth wind farm project, Pelamis was developed in Scotland, biomass is increasingly contributing as a source of energy in the north-east, and hydrogen capture techniques are being developed nearby.

The energy sector in Aberdeen is a major contributor to the country's economy. To put it into context, an industrial sector that employs around 40,000 people in Aberdeen is equivalent to one that employs 630,000 people in the London area—the equivalent, I am told, of nine Heathrow airports. Furthermore, this year's business gateway international study has shown that 41 per cent of exporters in the North sea oil and gas sector have international activities valued at more than £1 million and that international business accounts for at least a third of their turnover.

Getting the energy technologies institute into Scotland would provide an unparalleled opportunity for our country. Richard Baker has clearly laid out the compelling reasons why it should be situated in Aberdeen. I am delighted that his words were endorsed earlier this week by CBI Scotland, which gave its unequivocal support to Aberdeen's case when it appealed to politicians at Westminster to support the city and help it to secure its position as Europe's energy capital.

Work on preparing Scotland's final bid for the institute is well advanced. I hope that the minister will agree that there are compelling reasons for considering Aberdeen as its location. I hope that he will add his support to Aberdeen's case, as the CBI and other significant industrial and academic players in the energy sector have done.

17:27

Nora Radcliffe (Gordon) (LD): I add my congratulations to Richard Baker and endorse everything in his motion. I also congratulate him on lodging his motion at just the right time.

The energy technologies institute, funded jointly by the Government and business, will enable major investment in research and development and provide a significant boost at a pivotal point in the development of renewable energy. Its remit will be to deliver secure, reliable and cost-effective low-carbon energy technologies ready for commercialisation as soon as possible. I would argue that if we want to tap into the most concentrated expertise currently available across a range of relevant disciplines, it exists uniquely in Aberdeen and the north-east.

Exploration, research, operating in a marine environment, financing large and risky projects, fabrication, maintenance, communication, oil, gas, CO₂ sequestration, hydrogen, offshore wind, onshore wind, wave and tidal power—you name it, Aberdeen has it. As Richard Baker said, it also has good links to and on-going collaboration with other research and academic institutes from Caithness to Cambridge, and internationally.

Brian Adam made a good point about the opportunity to shape the institute. Aberdeen has the expertise and networks to do that effectively, too.

Brian Adam: Nora Radcliffe rightly mentions the academic and public sector contributors, but it is noticeable that, of the major private sector contributors, none of the Scottish companies has so far taken part. I am talking about some of our big electricity and oil companies—we have oil companies involved both in production and on the ancillary side. Does she think that it would be a good idea to encourage some of them to make the financial commitment to help make the project work?

Nora Radcliffe: It would be excellent if companies did that. As the work of the institute builds up, it will become more attractive and companies will want to opt into it, rather than be left out. This development is hugely significant. The amount of investment that is being made at this pivotal time for the development of energy technologies is exciting, and it presents a huge and vital opportunity.

The skill sets that we have in Aberdeen have perhaps not been emphasised enough. We do not just have the two universities; we also have the biggest college in Scotland. They can produce the people who can do the practical things that are needed to produce the technologies. For all sorts of reasons, Aberdeen seems to be the obvious place to centre the new technologies institute. Aberdeen has a cluster of relevant expertise across the board, in practical, research and financial areas. It is all there, and we should be exploiting it. There should be a Scottish bid, based on Aberdeen. Basing the institute in Aberdeen will bring benefits throughout Scotland and the UK.

17:30

Shiona Baird (North East Scotland) (Green): I thank Richard Baker for securing the debate. Aberdeen has a long and successful record in the energy business, even if much of it has been fundamentally unsustainable. It is surely time to turn that around and to develop energy systems that are fit for the future.

A quick look at Scotland's greenhouse gas statistics shows that energy, in all its forms,

accounts for very nearly 90 per cent of our carbon emissions. If we are to achieve the reductions that are needed—some people are talking about reductions of more than 90 per cent over the next three decades—energy must be at the very heart of policy. There needs to be a fundamental shift in the way we generate, distribute and use energy. We need to raise our game and acknowledge that energy policy means more than simply the supply of electricity.

If the energy technologies institute is to go anywhere, Aberdeen is very well placed to be its home, but we need to question whether that is the best use of limited funds for moving towards a low-carbon economy. As my party pointed out in our debate this morning, transport is a significant producer of carbon emissions—it accounts for around 22 per cent of the energy sector's emissions. All along the line, in every sphere of life, in our homes and businesses, we waste more energy than we use. If we could simply cut out the waste, we would be going a long way towards an energy policy fit for the future.

We already know what we need to do and how to do it. We know that if we decentralise the generation of electricity, we can use the waste heat in homes and businesses. Our European partners do that all the time and wonder why we are so backward. We know how to build world-class renewable energy devices, but we cannot get them installed in our own country. We know how to build homes that require no heating or cooling. They are being built in Austria and Germany, where winters are far colder than anything we experience here. In the meantime, our building standards are far weaker than those of our northern European counterparts. We know how to develop fully integrated public transport networks that can cut down our car use radically, but we still have an outdated system and we persist in building houses far away from where people have to work, forcing them into cars on a daily basis. Just what is it that the energy technologies institute will tell us that we do not already know?

Richard Baker: We need to think of the institute as an energy and environmental research institute. Some of the themes that Shiona Baird has been talking about will form part of the institute's work. Aberdeen is not just a leader in oil and gas; it is also a leader in the development of new forms of energy, including offshore wind and wave energy.

Shiona Baird: Absolutely, but the point is that we know how to do these things; what we need is the application. The problems with our energy systems are not technical; they are structural and political. We have infrastructure that was built in the middle of the last century and a political system that refuses point-blank to face up to the

realities of climate change. People are wedded to the fantasy that we can invent our way out of trouble and maintain our current lifestyles in perpetuity. We cannot do that—there is no magic bullet. Even with hyperefficient cars, passive houses and decentralised energy networks, we will need to alter the way we live our lives quite radically if we are to have lives worth living.

We need to start changing now. We do not have the luxury of being able to wait for 10 years of NETI research before we start to change our ways. I fear that this initiative is simply another method of putting off the inevitable for another few years, making it someone else's political headache. We just cannot afford to keep on procrastinating like this. We know what to do. Let us just do it, instead of talking about it.

17:35

The Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning (Allan Wilson): I join other members in thanking Richard Baker for giving us the opportunity to debate a subject that is important, not least to Aberdeen and the north-east of Scotland. I have listened with interest to and noted the views that have been expressed.

As most members have said, the energy industry has long been a mainstay of the north-east's economy. The oil and gas industry in Scotland has been and continues to be hugely successful and the knowledge base in Aberdeen extends beyond offshore exploration and production in the North sea. The industry provides expertise worldwide in exploration, decommissioning offshore resources, health and safety and project management. Companies in the north-east are succeeding in selling their expertise in oil and gas to other parts of the world. The north-east has also experienced significant investment in renewable energy, as Richard Baker and others said.

The north-east has a proven track record in research. ITI Energy, which is based in Aberdeen, is an excellent example of a relatively new organisation that has made a significant impact on the energy scene. The seven projects that it has commissioned have a potential investment of more than £30 million and show ITI Energy's ability to bring world-class teams together to create globally competitive technologies.

ITI Energy has engaged widely with the business, academic and financial communities to ensure a focus on developing energy-related technologies with commercialisation opportunities and with the potential to deliver significant economic benefit for Scotland.

Brian Adam: Does the minister agree that ITI Energy, which is based in Aberdeen, would

complement rather than compete with the energy technologies institute that the DTI proposes?

Allan Wilson: Very much so. I am sure that the member is familiar with the series of roadshows that ITI Energy is undertaking to promote the opportunities for Scottish organisations to become involved in the projects that it has commissioned by becoming a licensee or supply-chain provider or by investing directly, for example. ITI Energy provides opportunities, not least for the companies that Brian Adam mentioned in an intervention, such as the major electricity generators in Scotland, which are not headquartered in Aberdeen.

Another innovative partnership—the Aberdeen Renewable Energy Group—has successfully brought together energy businesses, research institutes, consultancies and economic development agencies to identify and promote new renewable energy opportunities for north-east Scotland. The group is involved in assessing the feasibility of an offshore wind farm off the coast of Aberdeen—members will be familiar with that project—and in developing the energy futures centre and accelerating the transfer of oil and gas expertise to the renewables industry. That knowledge transfer is an important part of the process.

All that activity shows why Aberdeen is—rightly—considered the energy capital of Europe. There is no doubt that considerable expertise exists in the north-east and that it has the potential to make a significant contribution to the proposed energy technologies institute.

Members—not least Shiona Baird, who I thought had a bit of a warped impression of what we propose—will probably find it helpful if I briefly explain the aims of the energy technologies institute, how it will be established, the timescales and, most important, what we are doing to ensure that Scotland is fully involved from the outset.

In partnership with the private sector, the UK Government intends to establish a world-leading scientific institute to help the UK to tackle future energy challenges. Research and development are fundamental to facing the challenges that we identified in the energy white paper and reiterated in the energy review. Those challenges are to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases—something I would have thought Shiona Baird would welcome—to address the decline in the UK's indigenous energy supplies and to modernise the UK's energy infrastructure.

The institute's remit will be to accelerate the development of secure, reliable, cost-effective, low-carbon energy technologies towards commercial deployment. That is a fundamental objective if we are to meet our wider social and

economic policy objectives. The institute will support specific industrially relevant projects to develop both small-scale and large-scale energy supply technologies; projects to develop a mix of energy technologies to increase security and diversity of supply; projects to increase the efficiency of energy use; projects to develop sustainable transport fuels and transport management technologies; projects to develop energy infrastructure and supply technologies; and projects to alleviate energy poverty through the provision of secure clean energy to our poorest communities. I would have thought that we would all subscribe to those objectives, but it is obvious that not all of us do.

The institute will have £1 billion of funding for the next 10 years. Half of that money will be provided by the UK Government and half will be provided by private sector partners. The point that four of the world's largest energy companies—E.ON UK, Shell, EDF Energy and BP—have already expressed support for the initiative has been mentioned.

The institute will be established on a hub-and-spoke model. The director's office will form the hub, and the spokes will be centres of excellence located in various academic and scientific institutions in the UK. Most of the institute's research activity will take place in the spokes.

Brian Adam: I want to be helpful to the minister. Does he agree that it is important that, in any Scottish bid, we identify at an early point a suitable director so that we can build the bid around that person and the institute?

Allan Wilson: I was just about to speak about timescales.

As I said, the institute will be established on a hub-and-spoke model. Its board will be appointed by the end of the year, and the director will be appointed circa January 2007. Discussions about where the director will be based will start in January 2007 and are expected to be completed by next summer. It is hoped that the institute will be up and running by the second half of 2007.

I turn to Scotland's role in the process. We fully support the establishment of the institute—I hope that that reassures members. Secure, reliable and cost-effective energy is key to the sustainable development of our economy, and it is vital that the UK accelerates and broadens research activity in the energy sector and invests in the development and deployment of a wide range of modern technologies.

Scotland has a well-developed research base in energy and a number of world-class academic institutions that have a wealth of experience in energy research. There are major energy research activities in the University of Strathclyde, the

University of Edinburgh, the University of St Andrews, Heriot-Watt University and the universities in the Aberdeen area in fields such as renewable energy, hydrogen fuel cells, petroleum engineering and power systems. Those universities have a track record of commercial sector involvement and strong links with people in the energy industries, many of whom are based in Scotland.

We are confident that Scotland will play a major part in the new institute. The Deputy First Minister and Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning has written to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to express our full support for Scottish involvement in the institute. Rather than focusing on individual bids, the Executive has emphasised working with Scottish universities, the economic development agencies, the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council and industry to develop a comprehensive and coherent bid to attract a significant proportion of the institute's research funds to centres of excellence in Scotland. We recognise Aberdeen's key role in that process.

We believe that Scotland should be fully involved in the energy technologies institute. We have put in place a work programme—which members have referred to—to develop a bid that demonstrates Scotland's capabilities in the round. Our bid will reflect the skills and expertise in the north-east, which I have referred to. The Aberdeen city and shire economic forum is contributing to the development of the bid. We are confident that such an approach will maximise Scottish involvement in the new institute.

Meeting closed at 17:44.

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