

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 29 November 2007

Session 3

£5.00

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body 2007.

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

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

CONTENTS

Thursday 29 November 2007

Debates

Col.

TOURISM	3875
<i>Motion moved—[Jim Mather].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Lewis Macdonald].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Gavin Brown].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Liam McArthur].</i>	
The Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism (Jim Mather)	3875
Lewis Macdonald (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)	3880
Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con)	3885
Liam McArthur (Orkney) (LD)	3888
Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP)	3891
Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)	3893
Dave Thompson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)	3896
David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)	3898
Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con)	3901
Jim Hume (South of Scotland) (LD)	3903
Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee West) (SNP)	3906
Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)	3908
Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP)	3910
Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)	3913
Aileen Campbell (South of Scotland) (SNP)	3915
Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)	3917
Elizabeth Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)	3919
Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab)	3922
Jim Mather	3924
QUESTION TIME	3928
FIRST MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME	3937
QUESTION TIME	3949
ST ANDREW'S DAY	3966
<i>Motion moved—[Linda Fabiani].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Malcolm Chisholm].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Ted Brocklebank].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Iain Smith].</i>	
The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani)	3966
Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)	3970
Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)	3973
Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD)	3976
Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP)	3979
Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)	3981
Jamie Hepburn (Central Scotland) (SNP)	3983
Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)	3985
Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con)	3987
Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD)	3989
Bill Kidd (Glasgow) (SNP)	3992
James Kelly (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)	3993
Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind)	3994
Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)	3995
Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)	3997
Malcolm Chisholm	4000
Linda Fabiani	4002
SCOTTISH COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR)	4006
<i>Motion moved—[Pauline McNeill].</i>	
Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)	4006
Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP)	4008

Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con)	4008
Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD)	4009
The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill)	4010
Hugh O'Donnell (Central Scotland) (LD)	4010
DECISION TIME	4012
COALFIELDS REGENERATION TRUST	4026
<i>Motion debated—[Cathy Jamieson].</i>	
Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab).....	4026
Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)	4029
Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab).....	4031
Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con).....	4032
Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD)	4033
John Park (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab).....	4035
Keith Brown (Ochil) (SNP).....	4036
Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)	4038
John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP)	4039
Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab)	4041
Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab).....	4042
Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab)	4043
The Minister for Communities and Sport (Stewart Maxwell).....	4044

Oral Answers

Col.

QUESTION TIME	
SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE	3928
GENERAL QUESTIONS	3928
Coastal Erosion and Flooding	3931
Community Planning Partnerships (Budget)	3935
Housing (Renfrewshire).....	3930
McKie Case (Judicial Inquiry)	3932
Respite Care.....	3929
sportscotland	3928
Scottish Police Services Authority (Gartcosh).....	3934
Sign Language Interpreters.....	3933
FIRST MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME	3937
Affordable Housing	3946
Cabinet (Meetings)	3941
Engagements.....	3937
Nuclear Power	3944
Prime Minister (Meetings).....	3939
Route Development Fund.....	3945
QUESTION TIME	
SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE	3949
EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING	3949
Educational Attainment.....	3953
Higher Education	3950
Lifelong Learning	3954
Primary Schools (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic)	3956
Scots Language.....	3949
Universities (Funding).....	3955
EUROPE, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND CULTURE	3957
Cultural Policy.....	3962
Gaelic Language Digital Service	3959
International Aid.....	3957
Regulation.....	3961
Schools (International Relationships).....	3964

Scottish Parliament

Thursday 29 November 2007

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

Tourism

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): Good morning. The first item of business is a debate on motion S3M-945, in the name of Jim Mather, on tourism.

09:15

The Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism (Jim Mather): I am pleased to open the debate on such an important subject and to encourage people to come up with yet more ideas that can help to improve a key sector. I have no doubt that all members fervently believe in the value of what Scottish tourism can offer visitors, staff in the tourism sector and the nation. We are working closely with the industry to ensure that it delivers all that it can do.

Scotland is a destination that has stunning, evocative scenery, iconic places, friendly people, history, culture and tradition—in a unique and compelling blend. It is a package that evokes curiosity and enthusiasm in new visitors and deep emotions in the expatriate Scots, diaspora Scots and affinity Scots who are our repeat visitors.

There is a new realisation that tourism is economically important in providing jobs and revenue, in maintaining and broadcasting the brand and in attracting people to Scotland who will invest, return and buy Scottish goods and services. Indeed, there is a new awareness that we are all in the tourism business. We are all capable of improving visitors' impressions and experiences of Scotland, whether we are politicians or policemen, publicans or porters, or golf professionals or guest house proprietors. We are all in this together. That is how we need to operate now that we understand that the economy is at the centre of everything that we are doing. The importance of tourism is dawning on Scotland.

Our economic strategy has a clear, unifying core purpose, which can be paraphrased as the desire to boost the brand, the economy and the life chances of the people of Scotland. Tourism can help in all three areas. Tourism is not just full of potential; it is already one of our main industries and is identified as one of the priority industries by the enterprise networks. It provides £4.2 billion to our economy every year. It is central to the economic life of Scotland and it employs 200,000 people, which fits well with our objective of a

wealthier and fairer Scotland. Tourism sits at the hub of economic strategy in Scotland now that VisitScotland enjoys full and equal representation on the new strategic forum.

As I said, in Scotland tourism is everyone's business. We are all experts because we are all tourists. We are all experienced visitors who have strong opinions on the hospitality sector.

In the 21st century, tourism is one of the most competitive industries. More than 200 countries are seeking to win tourism business. They are all competing with us for business. We cannot sit back and be complacent, even if we have a winning product.

There is a good history of partnership in tourism. "Scottish Tourism: The Next Decade—A Tourism Framework for Change", which I admit that we inherited, makes a valuable contribution. The framework was developed in recent years in close collaboration between the public and private sectors. It sets out the shared ambition of increasing tourism revenue by 50 per cent over the 10 years from 2005 to 2015. That will not be an easy win, but it is a bold and achievable goal. I will take up the point that is raised in the Conservatives' amendment in that regard.

The industry has accepted that only it can deliver on the goal, but it is willingly and intelligently harnessing the support of Government and VisitScotland so that it can perpetually improve what it offers. We have brought tourism into the remit of the industry department, as part of the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth's portfolio, together with other industry support work.

We recently announced reforms to the enterprise network and VisitScotland's delivery structures, which will remove the confusing mixture of boundaries by restructuring the networks into six regional areas, while leaving space in which local authorities and destination development groups will be able to develop the focus and passion that will drive improvement and enrich Scottish tourism. Those reforms and VisitScotland's involvement in the new strategic forum will strengthen joint working between VisitScotland and the enterprise networks. Good, collaborative working is taking place, on research, for example, between the three major organisations—VisitScotland, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Enterprise. The streamlined approach will help VisitScotland and the enterprise agencies to address gaps or overlaps between them. The result will be a better service to and more value for tourism businesses, which will understand and appreciate that.

Since I took on my portfolio, I have found that there is a great spirit of partnership in tourism—it

is up there with the Scotch Whisky Association and Scottish Financial Enterprise. I have directly involved myself by holding two national tourism seminars, which each brought together 80 or more people involved in the industry, to consolidate opinion. I also held local events in the west, in my own constituency—Argyll and Bute—where the economy depends on tourism. The national events successfully brought together a wide range of tourism personalities and representatives. We debated and identified the main issues. We talked about our strengths and potential as well as inhibitors and barriers to growth. We established that, in the quest to meet our shared ambition on growth and to exceed visitor expectations, we are all in it together—that is crucial. In other words, we agreed that the public, private and voluntary sectors have roles to play in helping the industry to thrive and grow and in making Scotland the world-class, must-visit destination that it will be.

At the tourism seminar on 19 November, VisitScotland.com announced the start of big changes in how it will work, which represented a good example of how VisitScotland.com listens to its customers and lets them know that they have been heard. The emphasis of VisitScotland.com's operation will move from online booking to providing a guide to Scotland. There will be attractive information for visitors about things to do and a what's on guide, which will link to an online shop, where visitors will still be able to book accommodation online if they want to do so. They will also be able to click on links to other booking and ticketing services or individual hospitality locations.

Jack McConnell (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab): Will Mr Mather say how many people at the seminars called for the ending of the route development fund? The Government has decided to end the fund, but the tourism sector in particular benefited from the fund's establishment and the direct routes that were created.

Jim Mather: The member knows that the route development fund is constrained by what Europe will wear at the moment, but I must tell him that, of the 160 people who attended the two events, not one mentioned the route development fund. People who contributed to the events and to the tourism framework for change—[*Interruption.*] Is someone muttering? I hear noises off.

The Presiding Officer: If members are keen to intervene, time is available in the debate. Members who press their request-to-speak buttons will be able to contribute properly.

Jim Mather: Bring them on. We need ideas.

Tavish Scott (Shetland) (LD): I am surprised that Mr Mather said that no one in the tourism industry to whom he has spoken is worried about

the loss of direct flights to and from Scotland. I am sure that he acknowledges the importance of direct flights—[*Interruption.*] The minister and his colleagues are muttering away, but perhaps they should listen—

The Presiding Officer: They are following a previous example, I think, Mr Scott.

Tavish Scott: Does the minister accept that he could find ways to augment VisitScotland's marketing budget, to allow for the development of a new mechanism for providing the direct routes that are so important to the industry?

Jim Mather: VisitScotland has a good budget and much imagination is being applied to the issue. However, I have with me a list of issues that were raised at the seminars. The route development fund is not one of them.

Our galvanised tourism industry is taking the tourism framework for change to a new level. The framework is being implemented by brilliant, dedicated industry champions such as Gavin Ellis and Peter Taylor. Such people have invested significant time and personal effort and have shown drive and an enthusiasm to stimulate other people and spread the word to all parts of the sector. Five implementation groups cover the most important issues: market intelligence and innovation; marketing; customer experience; sustainable tourism; and corporate tourism and infrastructure. Between those groups and the overall monitoring group, more than 60 individuals are working to ensure that the framework is delivered.

Many third sector organisations are involved in tourism, from major attractions and heritage groups, such as the National Trust for Scotland, the National Galleries of Scotland and the National Museums of Scotland, to groups that work to improve training and promote involvement of hospitality staff, such as Springboard Scotland and Hospitality Industry Trust Scotland. Many community groups are showing growing interest in taking a lead to improve and promote their areas for tourism.

I spoke about the international competition for tourism business. We already have a world-class tourism agency in VisitScotland, which is committed to continuous improvement and is working with what I believe is an innovative, proactive and increasingly confident industry.

The success of VisitScotland's marketing work is internationally acknowledged. It has also been at the forefront of developments such as quality assurance schemes, the green tourism business scheme and customer focus.

In the spending review, we have not just maintained but increased the level of grant funding

for VisitScotland's work. Additional funds are allocated specifically for preparations for the Ryder cup in 2014. Further funds are available for the improvement of VisitScotland's capital estate of tourist information centres and offices. In total, more than £150 million is available as grant in aid over the next three years. That provides around two thirds of VisitScotland's overall income, but the Government's funding for tourism is by no means limited to VisitScotland's budget. In total, approximately £90 million is being provided this year by VisitScotland, the enterprise agencies, Scottish Natural Heritage, Historic Scotland and local authorities. They are working more and more closely together as there is growing awareness that we need to co-ordinate our efforts to maximise the impact on current and potential future visitors.

We intend to invest around £5 million in the homecoming Scotland project over the next two years. The money will go to VisitScotland to fund the homecoming project, which is being redesigned to drive increased tourism revenues and involve all of Scotland.

Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP): Will the minister confirm that the £5 million for the homecoming project is not currently in VisitScotland's budget but is additional money?

Jim Mather: It is additional money.

What excites me about the project is that the plan is to activate 5.1 million Scots—in the churches, universities, schools, professions, clan societies and so on—so that they pick up the phone and get on the e-mail to encourage people to come home. Given that all of that is being done, all of those resources are being used and the spending review produced a deal that compares well with the situation in England, where VisitBritain faces a significant cash reduction, we are now positioned to move forward.

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): What is the Scottish Government's thinking on what we might call genealogical tourism, in which people come back to Scotland to look for their roots with the help of a co-ordinated database and that sort of thing?

Jim Mather: I am exceedingly positive about that. We are working closely with the registrar general for Scotland to develop that further—he is even reducing his charges to make such searches easier and more affordable.

I have no hesitation in accepting the Conservative amendment, as it mirrors the work that we have already started in our consultation sessions to augment the work towards the target of 50 per cent growth and to place it in a more altruistic setting. We want the industry to exceed the demands and expectations of visitors and to

create a climate that offers improved career opportunities for young people.

Although the Labour amendment is doubtless well meaning, it fails to recognise that the route development fund is constrained by impositions by the European Commission. It also fails to recognise that we are doing many other imaginative things to ensure that we maximise the flow of visitors into Scotland. I regret to say that the proposals in the amendment might jeopardise the new-found cohesion in the industry.

I am rather shocked by the negative spin that the Lib Dem amendment presents. It fails to acknowledge the overall increase that I have mentioned. It also chooses to ignore the consultation sessions and the hard work done on the tourism framework for change, which is creating a new collaboration that will allow us to drill down into communities to create more destinations and will ensure that local authorities, enterprise networks and transport companies—all the missing stakeholders—work together to create tourism in Scotland at a new level. That will reward everyone in Scotland and boost our economy.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises the vital role that tourism has in increasing sustainable economic growth in line with the Scottish Government's Economic Strategy; reiterates its support for the ambitions set out in the Tourism Framework for Change that tourism revenue should increase by 50% in real terms in the decade to 2015 and that Scotland should be one of Europe's most sustainable tourism destinations; recognises the appetite in the industry to improve and exceed visitor expectation, and welcomes the fact that these ambitions are shared between the public, private and third sectors.

09:29

Lewis Macdonald (Aberdeen Central) (Lab): We welcome the debate, but it is a debate about means, not ends. The objective of a 50 per cent increase in tourism revenue by 2015 is one that we supported in government and support today, but it is not enough to agree on an objective or to hold forums and seminars on an objective. Achieving the objective can involve tough decisions about priorities, resources, and change in order to achieve structures that are fit for purpose. Labour and our coalition partners took many such decisions. We had a tourism minister at the Cabinet table, we doubled the money that was available to VisitScotland to market Scotland in the wider world and we created a coherent national network to do that job in the most effective way.

Sadly, tourism is no longer the lead responsibility of a Cabinet minister and the spending plans for VisitScotland over the next three years do not propose real-terms increases in

the core budget for marketing Scotland. The agency is to be further restructured in line with changes to the enterprise networks, but those networks face savage cuts to their capacity to contribute to the growth of Scotland's tourism businesses.

Labour's amendment highlights three issues that we believe are crucial to the further growth of tourism in Scotland: access, marketing and skills. It might appear to be a statement of the obvious to argue that the growth of tourist numbers requires increased access for visitors to Scotland by land, sea and air, but everything that the Government has done so far suggests that the objective of improved access is not a given. Air travel in particular does not appear to figure in the Scottish National Party's plans for growing tourist numbers or for growing the economy.

The Scottish Council for Development and Industry produced a concise response to "The Tourism Prospectus: Investing for Growth" in September. The SCDI's paper put a good deal of emphasis on access, including access to Scotland by air. It highlighted the fact that

"One particular success story over the last few years"

has been the route development fund, which Jack McConnell mentioned. It also highlighted the importance of integrating airports into the rest of Scotland's transport infrastructure and called for support for plans to make that happen.

The SNP has rejected the Edinburgh airport rail link and with it the idea of connecting Edinburgh airport to the strategic rail network around Scotland. The SNP motion proposes Scotland as a sustainable destination, yet the SNP prefers that visitors arriving by air should not have the easy access to Scotland's entire rail system that EARL would have given.

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Are you in the Labour Party suggesting that more and more people will arrive by air in Scotland or that they will use more sustainable forms of transport in the future if they want to travel here?

The Presiding Officer: I am not suggesting anything, Mr Gibson. Lewis Macdonald might be, and I am sure that he would like to answer.

Lewis Macdonald: I am indeed, Presiding Officer. I am suggesting that if we are to achieve a 50 per cent increase in tourism revenue, there needs to be an increased number of visitors by every mode of transport. Of course, the more who arrive by sustainable means, the better. If Mr Gibson is confirming by the tone of his question that the SNP's policy is that we do not want more travellers coming to Scotland by air, that confirms my point.

Of course, it is not only about air travel. It is important to ensure that sea ports provide integrated services for people who arrive by ferry from abroad and people who travel by ferry within Scotland. It is important to integrate ferry services with the road and rail network. Efficient access means access by all modes and easy transfer from one mode of travel to another. Of course, that includes access by road and rail. I wonder whether Rob Gibson is about to intervene and say that he does not want more tourists coming by road. If so, he is welcome to do so.

Rob Gibson: I would prefer that people come in from Leeds by road or rail rather than air. If you are looking at the largest number of visitors who come here at the moment, can you tell us whether you have a plan in your amendment to suggest how we can get the railway services working better so that people can come from the English market by rail?

The Presiding Officer: I have tried to make it clear to members that they should not use the term "you" in the chamber. It is preferred that they refer to members by their proper names.

Lewis Macdonald: I am delighted that Mr Gibson supports tourism by road and by rail. That is encouraging. However, I hope that, come decision time, we will have a vote that says that tourists arriving by air are also good for the Scottish economy.

Access by road and rail is important. If tourists who come here are to have certainty about their journeys and about the quality of Scotland's transport infrastructure, there needs to be a degree of certainty over projects such as the M74 extension, which is threatened with delay, and the Aberdeen western peripheral route, which is already a victim of delay. Those delays and uncertainties should concern us all.

Jamie Stone: Does the member agree that that point also applies to the A9 north of Inverness, a road with which he is acquainted?

Lewis Macdonald: I am well acquainted with that road. I hope that the range of strategic transport projects that have been carried forward from the previous Administration will have a degree of certainty under the current one.

Another project for which I had responsibility when it was introduced about five years ago is the route development fund. I, for one, am proud of the difference that the fund has made to Scottish tourism. Visitors can now fly direct to Scotland who previously would have had no choice, if coming by that mode, but to transfer at Heathrow or another hub airport. That is just what we need in the era of short breaks and city breaks, which will be the growth business of the future.

Jim Mather: I am sure that the member will not concede that the idea of the route development fund was evolved in the SNP ranks, but will he say what steps he would take to overcome the constraints that the European Commission has imposed?

Lewis Macdonald: I certainly agree with Mr Mather if his point is that the SNP did not think of the route development fund. There is nothing sustainable about air visitors to Scotland taking two planes rather than one, so direct flights and routes into Scotland are a good thing.

As Jim Mather said, ministers have concluded that the route development fund cannot continue in its current form and have pinned the blame for that on European rules. However, they cannot blame the European Union for their failure to come up with an alternative. It is one thing to say that an existing scheme that has served us well for five years must be set aside for reasons that are beyond ministers' control, but it is quite another to say that it is beyond the collective imagination of Scotland's devolved Government to come up with an alternative scheme for marketing Scottish destinations. Surely there are ways in which to make progress—a scheme for marketing Scottish destinations could be operated separately from airlines' marketing schemes for direct routes. If ministers were committed to building on the success of the route development fund, they could readily transfer the equivalent sum to a destination marketing scheme and ask VisitScotland to run that in partnership with, and with investment by, airlines and airports.

Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP): Does the member accept that the route development fund in its present format cannot continue to exist because of European rules?

Lewis Macdonald: That is not a question for me—it is clearly one for ministers. However, there is a question for all of us. If we think that the route development fund has been a success, rather than simply say—as Alex Neil appears to do—that we can do nothing because there is a question about the fund's compliance with European rules, the constructive and positive response would be to use the collective imagination to find a way to put in place a scheme. That has not happened, which is the focus of our amendment.

Jim Mather said that the tourism seminars failed to identify concern in the tourism sector about the loss of the route development fund. I am afraid that that says less about the importance of the fund than it does about the effectiveness or otherwise of the seminars in flushing out the key issues. Mr Mather will have seen the briefing this week from the British Hospitality Association, which highlighted the route development fund and the need for the Government to come up with an

alternative to the scheme as a key issue for the future of Scottish tourism.

VisitScotland exists to market Scotland, which is why previous Administrations doubled the funds that were available to it for marketing. That is why the decision not to increase further VisitScotland's core marketing budget in real terms must concern all those who share the objectives that we are discussing today.

Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con): Has the member seen a specific line in any budget anywhere that is described as being only for marketing, and can he prove that the funding has been reduced?

Lewis Macdonald: Along with me, Mr Brown attended yesterday's meeting of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, so he will recall that the visitor engagement line in the VisitScotland budget that was presented to the committee showed that the current year's funding for visitor engagement is £45 million and the intended funding in the third year of the spending review period is £45.3 million. No matter how optimistic Mr Brown may be about inflation, he must accept that that is a real-terms reduction. I put that point to VisitScotland's chief executive at yesterday's committee meeting and he did not dispute that he was facing a real-terms reduction in funding for the task of marketing Scotland. Although specific funds will be provided for specific purposes, it is not good enough to say that events such as the Ryder cup and the year of homecoming should be funded on an ad hoc basis. We need VisitScotland to make a core marketing effort that is funded by Government, but we have seen no evidence at all that that is intended in the spending review period.

If we are to grow tourism in Scotland, we must get our market positioning right, which means, above all, an emphasis on quality and promoting Scotland as a quality brand, which in turn means that we must ensure that the workforce has the right skills. The Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, which will consider these matters in the next few months, will pay a lot of attention to standards and skills. I hope that the Scottish Government will accept its responsibilities on that. It was clear from the evidence that the committee heard yesterday that the enterprise networks have in the past been critical to ensuring a supply of training to match the sector's demands and that VisitScotland has worked closely with the networks to achieve that. The replacement of the enterprise networks with a new skills agency must not be allowed to stop that happening. We share the concerns of others about the impact on tourism of the drastic cuts in funding for the enterprise networks. In real terms, funding is being cut by more than 14 per cent for Scottish

Enterprise and by more than 20 per cent for Highlands and Islands Enterprise in the next three years—and that is before the separating out of the skills agency and the transfer of the business gateway. Those cuts are serious and must at least present a significant degree of risk to the future support for tourism businesses throughout Scotland.

The Scottish Government's decisions in recent weeks have serious implications for Scotland's ability to meet the challenging targets that the previous Administration supported. Opportunities to improve the integration of our transport system and visitor access to Scotland have been rejected. A successful scheme to promote direct flights to Scotland has been abandoned and has not been replaced. VisitScotland's core marketing budget is to decline for the first time in years. The training and skills challenge has not been met. The enterprise networks are facing serious budget reductions, with all that that implies for the future growth of tourism businesses. By way of new thinking, we have been offered a tourism minister who is not in the Cabinet and a bold new slogan—"Welcome to Scotland". If tourism revenue is to grow by 50 per cent by 2015, the Scottish Government will have to do better than that.

I move amendment S3M-945.2, to insert after "destinations":

"recognises the importance to tourism of improved access for visitors to Scotland by land, sea and air; notes with concern the Scottish Government's failure to propose an alternative to the Route Development Fund or to increase the marketing budget of VisitScotland over the next three years; believes that improved skills and training are the key to achieving higher standards".

09:42

Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con): The debate should be an opportunity to unite behind Scotland's tourism industry, of which we should be extremely proud, but already the rain has arrived in the form of the Labour Party and, I suspect, the midges will arrive after my speech in the form of the Liberal Democrats. The Scottish Conservatives are extremely optimistic about the future of Scottish tourism. We have the best natural beauty in the world, the best built attractions, including Edinburgh castle, and, most important, the best people.

It was disappointing to hear Lewis Macdonald spend 90 per cent of his speech talking only about the route development fund. We have sympathy with Mr Macdonald's view—although there are European issues—but he needs to know that more than 85 per cent of tourists in Scotland come from Scotland or elsewhere in the United Kingdom, and that the vast majority of them arrive by rail or road. Therefore, it was a missed opportunity for Mr

Macdonald to spend his entire speech talking about one aspect.

Further, Lewis Macdonald's point about visitor engagement and the marketing budget is simply mistaken. The marketing budget is part of the visitor engagement budget, which will not go up hugely in the next couple of years. However, as we heard yesterday from VisitScotland, its marketing budget is safe, although other parts within visitor engagement, which is an entire department in the organisation, will not go up hugely. The critical point is that the marketing budget will go up—VisitScotland was clear about that.

Lewis Macdonald: Will the member describe to me, as I seem to have failed to note this at the time, the figures that were attached to the statement that the marketing element of visitor engagement will increase?

Gavin Brown: No specific figures were given about the marketing budget, but it was made clear that VisitScotland's view is that the core marketing budget has not gone down and, in fact, has increased. That is without taking into account the £5 million for the year of homecoming and the £1.5 million for the next three years to focus on the Ryder cup.

We are optimistic about the future. I recently attended the VisitScotland award ceremony at the Edinburgh international conference centre and was impressed by an industry that is in buoyant mood and is hungry for the future.

We welcome the debate and support much of the Government's approach, but there are two areas that we want to highlight in our amendment. The first relates to what might be called localism. We had concerns about the abolition of the area tourist boards and we think that the situation needs to be considered for the future. Certainly, any moves to centralise the industry further need to be resisted. It is important that local opportunities are given at local levels, so I was encouraged to hear the minister say last week that we need to improve engagement at a local level. I was further encouraged yesterday to hear VisitScotland say that the vast bulk of the 109 tourist information centres are safe. It is important that we stand up for them.

Tourism initiatives in Scotland are often best marketed by local tourism areas. That is particularly true in Edinburgh, which has capital city status and should be looked at again as an exception. VisitScotland talks about a national dish with local flavours, but it is important that we can taste those local flavours. The Government should commit to localism as far as possible.

The second part of our amendment refers to the aspiration to achieve 50 per cent growth and

makes it clear that we need a plan to do that. The tourism framework, which is a largely positive document, and the 50 per cent figure that came out of it were produced in March 2006—a year and a half ago—yet there is still no clear plan for delivery. That is one thing that prompted the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, with all-party support, to decide to look into the issue and come up with some suggestions and answers. That is important because, only last week, the chief executive of VisitScotland said that we need to quantify activity in key areas, allocate responsibility and measure progress on the 50 per cent growth ambition. If we do not do that, there is little chance that we will meet our aspiration.

Between 2005 and 2006, the overall position of tourism in Scotland deteriorated. The number of passenger trips decreased by 7.2 per cent and visitor spend decreased by 1.3 per cent. That is not good news and we need to reverse that trend as quickly as possible. The situation last year was excellent for international tourism. Visitor trips increased by 14.2 per cent and spend increased by more than 19 per cent. That is particularly impressive given the strength of the pound last year. There were impressive gains from the United States of America, France and Ireland. However, it was a bad year for domestic tourism, which affects the overall figures. We saw big decreases in the numbers of UK and Scottish tourists—people from the east travelling west, and people from the west and east travelling north and south. That is important and it is another reason why we favour localism. Between 2005 and 2006, the number of overnight stays in Scotland by Scottish people dropped sharply by 3 million, from 22 million to 19 million. That is why our amendment focuses on localism and getting a plan behind the 50 per cent growth figure.

We have many positive ideas. We must move as quickly as possible to year-round tourism, which will be good for the industry. It will mean that we will be much more likely to hit our targets and that we will have much more stability, which will improve the career paths and skills of those working in the industry. We need great initiatives such as the Cambo snowdrops campaign, which tries to bring tourists to Fife in February and March when it is traditionally quiet. We want increases in business tourism and, in particular, in wildlife tourism. We already have a strong reputation throughout Europe in wildlife tourism, but we can make it even stronger.

We are optimistic for the industry. We want greater control locally and a clear plan in place as quickly as possible to meet the growth aspiration. I note in passing that, according to the Scottish Government website, in 1996—the last full year of a Conservative Government—the Scottish tourism

industry was worth £5 billion a year. Last year, it was worth £4.1 billion. We need to move quickly.

I move amendment S3M-945.3, to insert at end:

“further recognises the important work done by the excellent network of tourist information centres; believes that decision-making at a local level is a crucial element of an effective tourism strategy, and calls on the Scottish Government to give a more detailed explanation as to how the 50% growth ambition is to be met and the role of the public, private and third sectors in doing so.”

09:49

Liam McArthur (Orkney) (LD): In the spirit of the current creative zeitgeist, I begin by saying: welcome to the chamber. They must have been up all night thinking up that one—it is clear that £100,000 does not you get much these days.

As well as giving members a heartfelt welcome to the chamber, I also welcome this morning's debate. I apologise to members for the fact that I need to absent myself from the chamber for a short time during the debate to attend another meeting.

No political party disputes the importance of the tourism sector to Scotland. As the minister highlighted, it is an industry that, in its various forms, probably touches every part of the country. Few other industries, if any, can make such a claim.

Equally, there can be little doubt about the fact that we are currently at an important juncture for the tourism industry. Bold and ambitious objectives for the development of the tourism sector have been set—largely, as the Government's motion acknowledges, by the previous Scottish Executive. They were agreed after much deliberation with the industry, and they will stretch all those involved in and connected with the industry. However, they also require those of us with an interest in and potential influence over that development to act in ways that support it and are sustainable.

I congratulate the Government on its motion. There is much of it that Liberal Democrats support—not least because it recognises the groundbreaking work of the ministerial working group on tourism, which was chaired by my predecessor, Jim Wallace. However, following the setting of such stretching targets and bold ambitions for the industry, I question whether the policy and spending decisions taken by ministers in recent weeks will help to deliver them.

Each of the amendments to the Government's motion reflects that question to some extent, although the Tories are perhaps a little coy in their amendment. It is certainly more restrained than Elizabeth Smith and Murdo Fraser were when they questioned the minister in the chamber earlier this

month. Only they can explain their compassionate opposition.

Gavin Brown's argument that local decision making is a crucial element of an effective tourism strategy is one with which I have no difficulty, and I will return to that shortly.

Gavin Brown: I am glad to hear that the member is keen on localism. Where did his party stand on the abolition of local area tourist boards?

Liam McArthur: As I already highlighted, the ministerial working group deliberated with stakeholders for a considerable time and arrived at what I thought was a sensible compromise between driving a national programme through VisitScotland and safeguarding a local dimension and autonomy.

The importance of excellent transport links has also been highlighted. I know that they are certainly important to my part of the world, but I recognise that such links are essential to the tourism industry throughout the country. No one disputes the fact that the air route development fund needed to be recast—Lewis Macdonald clearly set out the reasons for that—but the absence of any alternative proposal from the Government will have potentially serious implications for our tourism industry. It also flies in the face of what the SNP said in opposition on the need for direct links.

Brian Adam: Does the member recognise that, in the budget for the current spending round, the route development fund continues and then tapers off? There will be opportunities to engage with the industry to come up with alternatives—it is not tapering off now. Of course, the member also has the alternative of lodging an amendment to the budget.

Liam McArthur: It was not clear from anything that Mr Mather said that the Government has any ideas for what will happen as the route development fund tapers off.

Jim Mather: Wait and see.

Liam McArthur: Mr Mather is clearly adopting the same coyness as the Conservatives.

The skills necessary to achieve the high-quality tourism businesses that are now a prerequisite to distinguishing Scotland's tourism offering are vital. There is no doubt that Scotland has many natural advantages—the minister highlighted a number of them—but we rest on those laurels at our peril. Improving quality through improving skills is essential, and we can exceed visitor expectations in no other way.

Our amendment focuses on a number of specific decisions taken by the SNP Government that, we believe, deal a serious blow to the minister's

claims—which are certainly sincerely held—of wanting to see the development of a vibrant, high-quality tourism industry.

Of course, the minister's Achilles' heel is that he cannot resist a well-turned flipchart. Death by PowerPoint is the only way to die, so the master of matrix management has presented us with a restructuring of VisitScotland that is driven by process and function but ignores reality. Overlaying the structure with that of HIE and Scottish Enterprise may make sense in the land of consultants—those who are not required to operate in the system—but in Scotland's three main island groups we will be hard pressed to find anyone who has a good word to say about the minister's proposals.

I appreciate that further discussions are to be held about the centralising process, although I cannot help but think that some of that consultation would have been more helpful before plans emerged. Emerge is what they did—to say that they were launched would be to overstate what was in effect their interring in the peroration of a statement about the wholesale filleting of the enterprise networks.

There is no lack of commitment in VisitOrkney, VisitShetland and VisitHebrides to working collaboratively in VisitScotland's framework. Their track record in the past two years bears witness to their success. As well as tourist numbers, recent headlines in respected tourism publications that suggest that Orkney is the "glittering centrepiece in Scotland's treasure chest of attractions" and, perhaps less intuitively, "Why Shetland is Better than the Bahamas", serve as evidence of that success.

The gratuitous and unwarranted restructuring of VisitScotland so soon after the implementation of the previous restructuring pales in comparison with the wholesale demolition of the enterprise networks. Members will recall that, in his statement to Parliament, John Swinney asked us to get our heads round the concept of revitalising the local enterprise companies through their abolition. From the south of Scotland to the Highlands and Islands, people are concerned that the reduction in local decision making and the real-terms cuts in the budgets of Scottish Enterprise and HIE present a serious threat to business start-ups and growth throughout the tourism industry.

In the HIE area alone, a budget cut of 22 per cent will have been made by the end of the spending review period. It is hard to square that with the commitment in the Government's economic strategy that insists that the tourism industry is a key sector and as such will receive enhanced support. Such tough love raises the question whether being identified as a key sector

is akin to a football manager receiving the dreaded vote of confidence from his chairman.

The reduced funding for marketing by VisitScotland that was announced in the budget earlier this month and which Philip Riddle acknowledged in his evidence to the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee this week compounds the problems, but Liberal Democrats still believe that the decisions that have been taken on enterprise networks, college funding, a replacement for the air route development fund and Scottish Natural Heritage risk doing the most damage. Nevertheless, the signal that the SNP has sent to the tourism sector by proposing real-terms cuts to VisitScotland's budget—despite the investment that is proposed for capital grants and the Ryder cup—is at best inconsistent. What impact that will have on core services remains to be seen.

Although members agree on the ends, we have genuine differences about the means by which we achieve those ends.

I have pleasure in moving amendment S3M-945.1, in my name, to leave out from second "recognises" to end and insert:

"believes that this objective is put at risk by the cuts to the budgets and business support activities of Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Scottish Enterprise which will reduce local decision-making and have a negative impact on the start-up and growth of tourism businesses across Scotland; notes with concern the lack of consultation over the restructuring of VisitScotland, and calls on the Scottish Government to commit to safeguarding the budgets and autonomy of the island offices under the control of VisitOrkney, VisitShetland and VisitHebrides."

The Presiding Officer: We come now to the open debate. We have a little time in hand, but speeches should be of about six minutes.

09:57

Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP): The debate has had an interesting start. Lewis Macdonald chose his words carefully; he applied qualifying clauses to his description of the budget to achieve his end of implying that, somehow or other, tourism is bound to go to hell in a handcart as a consequence of the budget. I refute that totally.

I will make interesting comparisons. I readily acknowledge that, eventually, the previous Executive coalition delivered more money to the Scottish tourism sector for marketing. The figure genuinely increased. The evidence is that that will continue in the budget. For example, VisitScotland's budget, including the events budget, will be greater than that of VisitBritain at the conclusion of the spending review period. That is a significant commitment.

I welcome the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee's inquiry into how we will increase tourism revenue by 50 per cent by 2015. It is not the Government, but the industry, that will increase that revenue, but any steps that the Government takes must make it easier rather than more difficult to achieve that increase. That is the reason for the inquiry, which will cover matters to which other members have referred.

I will talk about the niche ancestral tourism market, to which Jamie Stone referred. On Monday, I attended the north-east tourism awards in Aberdeen, along with Lewis Macdonald. I was privileged to contribute to the debate there, as I have a significant interest in the subject. At the awards, Cameron Taylor from the Orkneys gave a good exposition of what is happening. The evidence from surveys at TICs is that 5 to 25 per cent of visitors are here to revisit their roots and that ancestral tourism contributes significantly to the industry. It is important that such tourism relies not on our beautiful scenery or on the weather, which might not be Scotland's greatest asset, but on our people, our history and our sense of place. We have not done enough to exploit that.

Some of the changes that the Government has announced will bring the Government's role in tourism back to centre stage, as opposed to having an isolated marketing organisation that is not an integrated part of the Government's approach. The closer relationship between VisitScotland and Scottish Enterprise will help to achieve what I described, as will the closer relationship between VisitScotland, the General Register Office for Scotland, the Court of the Lord Lyon and the National Archives of Scotland. To coin a phrase, that is joined-up government.

Jamie Stone: In relation to cultural tourism in my home town, the royal burgh of Tain's records were taken some years ago to be locked away in Inverness, where they are not generally available. Does the member agree that encouraging councils to make such records available to visitors in a user-friendly way would hugely benefit the tourism that he describes? In making that intervention, I do not wish to be identified with the cause of compassionate opposition.

Brian Adam: Jamie Stone's point is well made. If he contacts the General Register Office, he will find that, as part of the new arrangements for family history centres, it wishes to engage with communities and offer them such opportunities. If he can encourage the establishment of an appropriate family history society up there, I am sure that Highland Council will be willing to do what he suggests. I cannot speak for that council's arrangements, but I am sure that he has the opportunity to engage with it.

For tourism in general, we need to give people a reason to come here—things to do—as well as a sense of place and a beautiful country. That is why the winter festival that the Government proposes is important. If visitors go to events—not just major national events, but continuing local events—that provides them with opportunities to feel good and to engage with local people. That is all about relationships, and how we build those relationships is terribly important.

At the event that I attended on Monday, Paul Anderson—a well-known Scottish fiddler who works at the Elphinstone institute at the University of Aberdeen—demonstrated the importance of our culture and our music.

Rob Gibson: Will the member take an intervention?

Brian Adam: I am in my last minute.

The Presiding Officer: Time allows for an intervention.

Brian Adam: I am told that I can give way.

Rob Gibson: Does the member agree that “Scotland’s Music with Phil Cunningham”, which is on television at the moment, is the best advert that we could have to bring people to Scotland to hear our nation’s live music and to see the most beautiful scenery on earth? Will the BBC do something to broadcast that series to the rest of the world?

The Presiding Officer: Brian Adam should begin to wind up now.

Brian Adam: I agree completely with Rob Gibson—the series is wonderful. Paul Anderson and his group are in Tarland every Tuesday, but we need such activity to be spread out to use the off-season spare capacity in our industry.

We have a very successful tourism industry that can be even more successful; it is just a question of the Government doing its best to ensure that it does not get in the way but actually helps.

10:04

Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab): I was intrigued by the exchange between Mr Adam and Mr Gibson. Given that both gentlemen are right about the importance of culture to tourism and that sport is important—Mr Mather referred to the Ryder cup—I almost intervened to ask whether the Government would like to consider having a minister for tourism, culture and sport. Perhaps not.

Scottish tourism has faced several major crises in recent years. The foot-and-mouth crisis affected tourism throughout the United Kingdom and, of course, the events of 9/11 affected tourism

throughout the world, but our tourism industry has bounced back from those setbacks and has grown in strength and confidence. In the first nine months of 2006, for example, the number of overnight visits to Scotland by overseas residents increased. The figure rose from 1.98 million in 2005 to 2.25 million in 2006. We are also leading the way with the number of visitors from Europe. In the first nine months of 2005, the number of such visitors rose by 13 per cent, compared with 8 per cent for the rest of the UK.

Such increases did not happen overnight—the Government planned for and supported them. They were supported by the Government’s plans for the country’s infrastructure, the route development fund, which brought something like £100 million into the Scottish economy, and increased investment in marketing. VisitScotland’s budget was doubled and EventScotland was created—that was important—to help boost opportunities to exploit niche markets, which Brian Adam rightly spoke about.

It is therefore disappointing—in fact, it is plain sad—that the SNP, which claims to stand up for Scotland, has failed to recognise tourism’s importance and potential. Consequently, it has failed to invest properly in an industry that is growing faster than the Scottish economy as a whole—its annual average growth rate is around 8 per cent. Marketing for VisitScotland and marketing budgets in VisitScotland are part of Government investment, and that investment is real investment. VisitScotland has managed to secure from its advertising campaigns in the UK a return of £32 for every pound that has been spent; it has also managed to secure £23 for every pound that has been spent across Europe and £30 for every pound that has been spent across America. Failure to invest in such marketing is short-sighted. The Government must consider whether it has made the right call on the issue. The industry target of 50 per cent revenue growth by 2015 is—and will remain—tough to meet, but it is achievable if we work at it and are prepared to back VisitScotland and the tourism industry in the way that they deserve.

I was disappointed that Jim Mather mentioned the green tourism business scheme only in passing. Perhaps he did so because his party’s manifesto said that the SNP would have a lighter regulatory touch. I hope that that approach does not extend to the green tourism business scheme. It has been recognised that many people come to this country to enjoy our wonderful scenery and our great outdoors, but if our economy is to grow and thrive, we must ensure that that scenery is protected and that our tourism industry is sustainable. That is why the green tourism business scheme is important. It is currently Europe’s largest green accreditation scheme—it

has well over 500 members—and we should all be proud of it. It also helps to save the industry money, which can be reinvested. It deserves our and the Government's support.

The image that we portray to our visitors directly affects our place in the world of tourism. As the minister correctly said, we all have a role to play in promoting our country, but the tourism industry has a particular responsibility, of course. It is not enough simply for us to meet our visitors' expectations or to be able to match the standards of our competitors; rather, if Scotland is to continue to thrive as a tourist destination, it must exceed our visitors' expectations and set the standard. To do that, we must have the best-trained workforce in the world and raise the profile of careers in tourism and hospitality among our young people. That is important. For many people, there is still frustration with the number of schemes and projects that seek to provide training in the tourism and hospitality industry, albeit that many of those schemes and projects are very good. Given that the minister has taken to filleting the enterprise networks, which had an important role, I wonder whether he will now consider establishing a dedicated tourism and hospitality institute to promote the importance of training and draw together all the existing expertise.

It is disappointing that the concordat with local government did not mention the key role that local authorities must play in taking forward the tourism product. Local authorities have a key role in funding and shaping how tourism develops and, of course, in influencing the product in their area. They also have a key role to play in supporting tourist information centres—in which Mr Gavin Brown is so interested—and deciding where they are located. The Conservatives failed to understand that in lodging their amendment. Indeed, if they were truly concerned about centralisation, they would oppose the changes that the minister is planning.

I waited with interest and an open mind to find out what the Government's much-vaunted new slogan would be, but I was disappointed. We want to welcome visitors to Scotland, but we always did, as the previous slogan was:

"Welcome to Scotland—the best small country in the world".

I note that the photographs at our airports are designed to

"show what a modern, vibrant and successful country Scotland is."

I have news for the Government. The images that were used at airports always showcased the very best of Scotland, but they were also underpinned by a strategy that aimed to attract people to Scotland. Often, the aim was to attract those

people through our airports, but they were then encouraged to travel outwith the airport's immediate area to other parts of Scotland. Showing photographs of Glasgow at Glasgow airport will hardly encourage visitors to go to Aberdeen or Orkney.

We have a tourism product—our country—that is the envy of the world; one of the most successful and respected tourism agencies in the world; and one of the best tourism industries in the world. The Government's job is to support and encourage that industry in trying to achieve its target, and the Parliament's job is to ensure that the Government does just that.

I make a final plea to the minister. I ask him please not to feel obliged to change things just because he can.

10:12

Dave Thompson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): The Scottish tourism industry was badly hit after the dreadful events of 9/11. Scotland experienced the same security fears that swept through nations across the world. Consumer confidence was crippled and the Scottish tourism industry suffered accordingly.

That was six years ago, in 2001. Since then, there has been consistent growth in tourism, although that growth has levelled off over the past two years. That recent levelling-off has brought into question the feasibility of reaching the Government's target of generating a 50 per cent increase in revenue from tourism by 2015.

Patricia Ferguson: It is important that everyone in the chamber understands that that target was not a Government target—it was an industry target that the Government pledged to support.

Dave Thompson: I thank the member for that information, but it remains the target that we are all aiming to achieve.

Tourism contributes £4.2 billion per year to the Scottish economy and supports around 20,000 businesses and 200,000 jobs—roughly 9 per cent of the total Scottish workforce. Tourism therefore plays an extremely important role in the Scottish economy.

Tourism is even more important in the Highlands and Islands, which is comparatively more dependent on tourism than the rest of Scotland. Tourism contributes £750 million a year to the Highlands and Islands economy and sustains more than 2,600 individual businesses and 23,800 jobs, or roughly 13 per cent of total employment. In a sense, therefore, the Highlands and Islands has already reached the target that has been set, as it is 50 per cent ahead of the rest of Scotland, but that does not mean that we can rest on our

laurels; indeed, we must strive even harder to build on what we already have. To do so not only in the Highlands and Islands but in the rest of Scotland, we must do two things: improve the visitor experience with a higher-value product and market effectively. Any development in the Scottish tourism industry needs effective marketing and national and international research. It is right that VisitScotland should devote the bulk of its budget to visitor engagement. Some £45 million of its £71 million budget is put to that purpose.

In total, some £90 million of Government money is being provided this year for the tourism sector—through VisitScotland, the enterprise agencies, Scottish Natural Heritage, Historic Scotland and local authorities. There has also been a firm commitment by the SNP Government to improve infrastructure in Scotland, with work already under way on the A9 and improvements set for rail links between Edinburgh and Inverness.

It is a pity that more was not done over the past eight years. Inverness airport terminal is in need of expansion to support increasing demand, as it is nearing capacity. Now that airline operators such as Flybe offer cheap deals to various locations in England, this is the perfect time to capitalise on an already flourishing airport. I am hopeful that the minister will give the go-ahead to expansion of the terminal at Inverness airport—I will keep pressing him hard on that.

Realistically, if we want to meet the 50 per cent target, we cannot simply rely on traditional tourist attractions to facilitate that growth. Although we enjoy a swathe of such tourist attractions, the Scottish tourism industry must continue to grab the attention of different types of tourists, and we must learn from other countries. Places such as Kitzbühel in Austria and the Whistler mountain range in Canada have successfully implemented the destination management concept, which is based on the notion of improving the visitor experience, providing jobs locally and nurturing the tourism market. Those places are flourishing, and they give the visitor a tremendous experience. We need to emulate that.

Destination management organisations are already being set up in the Cairngorms and Loch Ness. Destination Loch Ness is a good example of what we need to do, although it is in its early stages, having been set up only in May 2006. Destination Loch Ness is a group of tourism businesses that operate around Loch Ness, and it is actively engaged in applying a collaborative destination development approach to improving the visitor experience in that area. The members of Destination Loch Ness are working hard to engage with a wider group of businesses and community groups, and they have embarked on a

number of activities that will support their long-term, sustainable ambitions. Destination Loch Ness has already made progress towards securing world heritage status from the United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization. It is leading by example, and I hope that members will encourage tourism businesses in their own areas to follow that example.

Finally, it is crucial that we encourage the millions of visitors who flock to Edinburgh and Glasgow to venture that bit further north.

Jim Hume (South of Scotland) (LD): And south.

Dave Thompson: And south.

One way to do that is to improve local facilities and make their visit worth while. Earlier this year, we saw the opening of the award-winning new museum and archives building in Shetland. Subsequently, *The Shetland Times* has mounted a campaign for the return of the St Ninian's Isle treasure to the islands. The treasure is currently in the national museum of Scotland in Edinburgh, where it is lost among thousands of other artefacts. The Shetland museum is allowed to have replicas and a loan of the real thing for a short time, but such things should—wherever possible—be kept locally. The treasure will be a far greater attraction in Shetland than it will ever be in Edinburgh. That is one small way to boost local tourism throughout Scotland.

I have joined the campaign to have the St Ninian's Isle treasure returned to Shetland—I have written to Linda Fabiani, the Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture, and Dr Gordon Rintoul of the National Museums of Scotland, asking them to give their support to the campaign and agree to return the treasure. I am on their case.

10:18

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to make a brief contribution to the debate. I will focus, as Dave Thompson did, on the Highlands and Islands. I will highlight an opportunity for the minister in the creative industries—through film in particular—and a criticism to do with the air route development fund, which many members have mentioned.

Members will need no lectures from me on the fact that the Highlands and Islands have a world-class product—they have outstanding natural beauty from the Cuillins to the Cairngorms national park; lochs, hills and castles; ecotourism; the stunning new Eden Court theatre in Inverness; film tourism; the Royal National Mod; and the world mountain bike championships in Fort William.

Jamie Stone: Will the member join me in welcoming the decision that the Mod will go to Caithness in several years' time?

David Stewart: I strongly echo the member's point—I congratulate the area on its magnificent campaign and look forward to attending that event.

The area has iconic wildlife images—visitors can watch the flight of the graceful osprey and the whooper swans wintering at the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Insh Marshes reserve. Those natural assets provide a fantastic base for the Highlands and Islands' most important industry. Vital jobs are provided throughout the Highlands and Islands in bed and breakfasts, guest houses, hotels and visitor attractions such as at the Landmark visitor centre in Carrbridge—which I know very well—in what I call “accommodation and song” in the well-known Ceilidh Place in Ullapool, which is owned by the impressive Jean Urquhart, and at the Ice Factory in Kinlochleven.

However, as any fresh-faced MBA student would tell us, business has to address the five Ps: product, price, place, promotion and position. They are vital for the tourism industry. I agree with the comments that Peter Lederer, the chief executive of VisitScotland, made this week. He said that to fulfil potential

“we must always look at ourselves from the visitor's perspective.”

I endorse his view that we must develop the five drivers for the industry—extending attraction hours, increasing the length of the season, accelerating marketing, promoting high-value quality goods and persuading businesses to promote others' goods. One fascinating statistic—my last—is that if 10 per cent of visitors spent the same amount as the average visitor to Switzerland, it would be worth half a billion pounds to the Scottish tourism industry.

New investment is vital. I would support several Donald Trump golf resorts throughout Scotland. It is an ideal project, although maybe not for crofters living next door. We must have a balance between inward investment and support for indigenous initiative. Most businesses have very hard choices to make—they have to differentiate their product by price or by quality, but not usually both. From the humblest one-bedroom B and B in Corpach to Culloden House hotel—where, allegedly, Bonnie Prince Charlie once stayed, although I suspect that his was not an online booking—quality must be the watchword and there should be no more, “You'll have had your tea.”

Tourists have to get to the area. Many members have commented on the air route development fund. I will highlight a couple of its successes: Glasgow to Dubai was developed through the

fund, as was the Prestwick to Rome route, the routes from Inverness to Birmingham, Bristol, Newcastle and Dublin, and the Sumburgh to Stansted route.

It has been suggested that the fund will still exist, but only for existing routes and it will not help to develop new routes. The fund has dropped by £7 million in the current budget but, as the minister will be aware, the state aid rules do not apply to airports that are run by Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd because none of the airports it operates deals with 1 million passengers or more. The state aid rules argument does not apply at all to HIAL—perhaps the minister can clarify that.

I strongly argue against the drop. I would say that, but members need not take my word for it. Liz Cameron, the chief executive of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, was quoted in *The Scotsman* yesterday as saying:

“We are extremely disappointed at the plans to axe the ARDF ... This is a magnificent return on an investment of just £14.4m over the past three years and is exactly the kind of project we need to continue.”

That is what the business community is saying.

On a more positive note, I encourage the minister to build on our strengths in the creative industries. Film is crucial—it was developed well and highlighted during the Highlands and Islands year of culture, which was the brainchild of Jack McConnell and Patricia Ferguson. I applaud the work that they have done. Does the minister have any plans to develop film studios, particularly in Lochaber and Inverness? That would allow film crews doing location shots for films such as the Harry Potter films, “Braveheart”, “Highlander” and various others not just to film and go, but to extend their stay to use the back-up technology that is available.

The “Monarch of the Glen” television series on the BBC was filmed in Badenoch and Strathspey, and at its height had 9 million viewers. I declare an interest, as I was once an extra in the show—I have perhaps the most famous right foot in the chamber. The Badenoch and Strathspey area was very successfully promoted by “Monarch of the Glen”, and I strongly support that.

Location tourism is vital. The village of Pennan still attracts many tourists, 25 years after the filming of “Local Hero”, and 150,000 visitors to Mull cited “Balamory” as the deciding factor of their visit.

In conclusion, Presiding Officer—I note the look that you are giving me—tourism is a crucial driver of Scotland's economic success in general and that of the Highlands and Islands in particular. The pathways to success in the industry are quality, skills and training, marketing, infrastructure improvements and the big bang events such as

the year of culture, the year of homecoming and the Commonwealth games. We know the route map to the next stage in the development of tourism. To paraphrase Sir Walter Scott, what we need now is the will to do and the soul to dare.

10:25

Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in the debate because tourism is an extremely important industry in my part of the world. At the risk of boring everyone with my enthusiasm for the north-east, I intend to focus on that this morning.

In Aberdeen and Grampian, tourism employs 16,000 people in about 2,000 businesses. It earns £577 million a year for the area. The 2006 figures show overall value growth of 1 per cent, with Aberdeen city up by 5 per cent, Aberdeenshire down by 1 per cent, and Moray down by 5 per cent. The growth was largely due to record business tourism in Aberdeen city. Sadly, there has been no discernible increase in leisure tourism. That is reflected in the downturn in Aberdeenshire and Moray, where leisure tourism is dominant.

To achieve a 50 per cent increase in tourism revenue in line with the aspiration of the tourism framework for change, Grampian would have to increase visitor spend to about £820 million, which represents a challenging increase of £273 million. The region is determined to meet that challenge if at all possible.

We have a wonderful product to sell in north-east Scotland—castle country, the malt whisky trail, and a unique maritime, rural and urban cultural heritage.

Brian Adam: Does the member agree that the Trump development at the Menie estate is likely to give a big boost to tourism in the area and will make a significant contribution to achieving the 50 per cent increase that we all seek?

Nanette Milne: The member is right. I intend to mention that in a few minutes' time.

In the north-east, we have a natural environment that lends itself to walking and observing wildlife, not least in the Cairngorms national park. Many activities are available, including country sports and winter sports when snowfall allows, which is not so often nowadays, sadly. The area is poised to become a global magnet for golfers, with three major developments at the planning stage—in the names of Trump, Nicklaus and Paul Lawrie—hoping to complement an already thriving network of good, accessible golf courses.

We have Victorian heritage in Deeside. Today's royal family continues the tradition of frequent visits to the Balmoral and Birkhall estates, which

maintains the tourist appeal of the area. We have all of that, and I have not even mentioned the abundance of excellent food that is grown and produced in the region.

However, we have significant challenges to overcome. We are perceived as a remote and barren area with a hostile climate, and we are not on the main tourist trail, which draws visitors from the south, via Edinburgh, up the west side of the country to Inverness and beyond, effectively bypassing the north-east corner. When Flybe can produce a map showing Inverness where Edinburgh is situated, what hope is there of identifying the locations of Aberdeen and Peterhead?

David Stewart: Does the member agree that that would save a lot of travel for those of us who live in Inverness?

Nanette Milne: I did not plan the geography of the countryside.

To face up to the challenges and the aspiration for tourism growth of 4 per cent per annum, the north-east Scotland tourism partnership has developed an action plan. If it is to succeed, it needs to involve all those with an interest in tourism from the public, private and third sectors. Of course, that includes VisitScotland and the enterprise company. Intensive work continues to increase awareness of the area, to develop tourist destinations and high-quality activities, to increase the availability of quality accommodation, to modernise our visitor attractions, and to improve local infrastructure such as roads and public transport.

There is tremendous local enthusiasm and a desire to work together to develop and promote our local product into a sustainable and thriving 21st century industry that will attract growing expenditure from UK and international tourists in the business and leisure sectors. Alongside that, however, is frustration and a feeling that the north-east is not getting all the help it needs to promote local tourism.

For example, there is anger that successive national campaigns for the UK market on areas in which the north-east has strong products—such as walking, wildlife, golfing and mountain biking—have largely ignored the area. As far as regional representation in TV adverts, direct mail inserts and specialist websites is concerned, the north-east may as well not exist. It is little wonder that, in the north-east, the national marketing campaign is regarded as less than successful and as putting at risk the achievement of 50 per cent growth in tourism in the north-east by 2015.

No one denies that there were problems with the area tourist boards and few people would bring them back, but their replacement with 14

VisitScotland hubs has not been seen to improve the situation greatly and the prospect of a further reduction is perceived as a potential further erosion of local input. So far, Grampian has been able to retain its tourist information centre provision, but local stakeholders fear that it will be impossible to maintain all the TICs in the area.

I would welcome the minister's comments on the future of local TICs. They are greatly valued and do excellent work in providing a comprehensive information service, but that has become increasingly difficult in the north-east. The reduction in European regional development funding and the introduction of centralised policies by VisitScotland have reduced the capacity to promote Aberdeen and Grampian.

There is a growing feeling that if tourism is to be increasingly successful, a bottom-up approach is needed, with strong regional partnerships that engage with the industry locally and promote local activities and attractions, and with VisitScotland as the national body with an overarching remit to promote Scotland as a whole.

Part of our amendment reflects the concerns about the north-east that I have described. I have no doubt that there are similar issues in other parts of Scotland. We all want tourism to grow so that Scotland indeed becomes one of Europe's most sustainable tourism destinations and attracts tourists from the UK and throughout the world. I am glad that the minister has agreed to accept our amendment.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan): I call Jim Hume.

10:32

Jim Hume (South of Scotland) (LD): Thank you, Presiding Officer. I am sure that, as you are a fellow South of Scotland member, you will be pleased that I speak today on behalf of the other half of Scotland, which everybody seems to forget about.

Tourism is an important part of the south of Scotland, with its mountainous uplands, rolling farmland and rugged sea coasts. It is a land of ancient buildings and it boasts strong literary connections: Burns, Hogg and Sir Walter Scott all lived there. Scotland's gateway is the border to the south. The scenery changes there, with the peaks of the big Cheviot and the Eildon hills. Those landmarks have been seen by generations of travellers at the Carter Bar on the A68, or Dere Street as it was called—the ancient Roman road that passes through the old Roman town site of Trimontium near Melrose. Of course, there are the forests and moors of upland Galloway and the greens of Ayrshire's pastures, with the mountainous Arran as a backdrop.

That brings me to my first point. In real terms, the budget for natural heritage, the water environment and coastal protection has been cut. That is worrying for areas such as the south of Scotland, because if we are to continue to draw first-time and repeat visitors, it is crucial that we maintain the environment and the coastline. From a purely practical point of view, it is worth noting that the south of Scotland is close to Ireland, England and the rest of Scotland. It is within an hour of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Carlisle, Newcastle and Belfast. The latter is a huge, as yet untapped, market.

Tourism needs infrastructure, such as direct flights through Prestwick. Good quality, clean and efficient integrated transport is key to allowing visitors to get around and enjoy all of Scotland. That is critical, especially as the market is dominated by short breaks. A balance has to be struck, of course, between exploiting and protecting our environment. I believe that nature-based tourism is an example of the possibilities in the future.

The south of Scotland is not lacking in history either. The battle of Flodden in 1513 saw the bloodiest battle between the Scots and the English. Commemorations still take place each year, with Flodden day in the Berwickshire town of Coldstream and the Hawick and Selkirk common ridings, not to forget Gala. In the past, battles were daily occurrences. Events such as the much-lamented MacDonald and Campbell tragedy in the Highlands were commonplace, almost everyday, occurrences.

In the south, reiver families were the front line of Scotland, and we remember the strong family reiving names that still hold fast there—Douglas, Scott, Armstrong, Elliot, and those wardens of the eastern marches, the Humes. In the south, there are obvious opportunities for the 2009 year of homecoming. "Wha daur meddle wi me?" was an oft-quoted saying from reiving culture, the reivers not caring whether they—I should say we—were led from London or Edinburgh.

Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP): You have not changed.

Jim Hume: We have not changed at all. The outlaw Murray was living proof of that. That was original regional decision making—something that Mr Mather should consider in the restructuring of Scottish Enterprise.

It is vital that our potential for untapped tourism is identified and taken forward to develop further the excellent sites that we already have in Scotland. I hope that the shake-up of VisitScotland and Scottish Enterprise does not result in Scotland losing out, particularly as regards local tourism initiatives in the south of Scotland. I therefore urge

Mr Mather to consider delegating authorities to the proposed new Scottish Enterprise regional boards, to allow decision making close to where the decisions have their impact—not in Atlantic Quay and not by toothless regional advisory boards.

The South of Scotland region is largely made up of small businesses, many of which depend on passing or tourist trade. The one supports the other. If tourism is buoyant, small rural businesses will flourish, which will encourage more visitors to come and see their products and what they do, whether it be rare books in Wigtown—home of Scotland's book festival, which is a hugely successful event—specialities such as are found at the Teviot Game Fare Smokery or the water gardens near Kelso. There is also the recently refurbished home of John Davidson, village souter, who was immortalised as Souter Johnny in Robbie Burns's "Tam o Shanter".

As well as history and scenery, there are a great number of activities in the south, such as mountain biking. Stow, near Galashiels, boasts not just the first Scottish person to become a world champion mountain biker, but the UK's first world champion, Ruaridh Cunningham. Mountain biking is huge in the south, with the 7stanes project and the Tweed valley adventure sports sites of Traquair and Glentress, which attract around 400,000 visitors a year and will be the site of a proposed chairlift facility as part of the Scottish Enterprise Borders pipeline adventure sports project. Dave Thompson mentioned Whistler. The person who runs the Whistler park came to Glentress and was hugely impressed. More visitors come to Glentress than go to Whistler for mountain biking. Sites such as those need all the launch funding they can be given, for the greater benefit to our economy.

Angling, diving, walking and bird watching are all catered for in the south. RSPB Scotland has numerous bird attractions. I recently visited two at the Wood of Cree, near Newton Stewart, and at Mersehead, near Kippford. I can tell David Stewart that we have osprey viewing centres at Glentress, too. We also have a film heritage, including "Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes" and the not-so-well-known "Flass the Sheepdog", which was filmed at my farm back in the 1960s. I was an extra in that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Can you wind up, please, Mr Hume?

Jim Hume: I am getting there.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order. Talking about the south does not get you any extra time.

Jim Hume: I am just winding up.

We have heard a lot about the backdrop of the Highlands and Islands, but we have the Solway coast—I should call it the costa del Solway—as

well. There is St Abbs, near Eyemouth, with the Coldingham discovery cliff-top tours, and nearby Siccar Point was the source of inspiration for James Hutton to discover the rules of geology. A Hutton trail is now a tourist attraction. Hutton was, of course, great friends with another great Hume—David Hume, of the enlightenment. I will not go into my relationship with David Livingstone, who was one of my ancestors.

I hope that members will support the Lib Dem amendment, recognising the south's part in Scotland's tourism future—I hope that the minister has got that message—and the need to keep decision making within Scottish Enterprise close to where the decisions have their effect.

10:39

Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee West) (SNP): I welcome today's debate, not least for the opportunity to talk about some of Dundee's top tourist attractions. I was up all night thinking about how I was going to do that, but it struck me over coffee this morning that I should just welcome the debate. As the new signage at Scotland's airports shows, the simplest words are sometimes the most appropriate. That is the case in welcoming people to Scotland, which is what we are trying to do with the signs. That is the correct way in which to do it.

Liam McArthur talked about the cost of coming up with the signage—it seemed an awful lot of money for the three words "Welcome to Scotland"—but the words are attached to images and we who are in politics are well aware that, whether in the media or in the leaflets that we produce, a picture is worth a thousand words. In those terms, the signage is extremely good value for money.

Jim Hume: Does the member think that it is appropriate that, on the A68, where Gaelic has never been spoken, there is a sign saying "Welcome to Scotland" in Gaelic? Should it not be in lowland Scots?

Joe FitzPatrick: I absolutely agree that there is an issue in terms of lowland Scots. We should argue for lowland Scots to be used more in the appropriate places. I hope that we can all agree on that, and I hope that the Government might take that forward.

As has been mentioned, tourism is extremely important to the economy of Scotland. Dundee is no exception to that. Each year, 780,000 tourists visit the greater Dundee area, contributing £130 million to the economy. Tourism now accounts for about 7 per cent of employment in Dundee. The figure has risen recently, with the demise of Dundee's traditional manufacturing base. As we aim for a 50 per cent real-terms increase in

tourism throughout Scotland by 2015, that figure is expected to grow.

Dundee was a city of jute, jam and journalism, but in the 21st century it is evolving into a vibrant, cosmopolitan destination that tourists from Scotland and further afield enjoy. The funding that is being provided by our SNP Government—which we have heard is £90 million in this year alone—will help Dundee to grow as a destination for tourists.

Dundee, the city of discovery, has Captain Scott's Antarctic expedition ship at the award-winning Discovery Point and Europe's top industrial museum, the Verdant Works. It is important that Dundee has managed to tap into its industrial past as part of its tourism future. Those two attractions are good examples of that. We also have the McManus galleries, which is undergoing extensive refurbishment. It holds an art collection that is of international as well as of local importance, and I look forward to more visitors coming to Dundee to see it. Dundee is also the home of the Scottish Dance Theatre and hosts annual jazz and blues festivals. DC Thompson & Co's classics *The Dandy* and "The Broons" also hail from Dundee.

Dundee is developing a new image that is far removed from the run-down view that was often incorrectly associated with the city in the past. One of the most important new developments is the waterfront project. The SNP budget provides the funding to allow Dundee to complete the vital infrastructure for the central waterfront project. The waterfront project is central to the new image that Dundee will portray to its inhabitants and to the world, and the visionary project will benefit the whole of Tayside. Revamping the waterfront can boost the economy and attract tourists, as has happened in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

However, as impressive as the waterfront project will be, our best tourist attractions are our natural ones. It would be wrong not to mention the beautiful Angus glens and rural Perthshire, which Dundee finds itself nestled beside. The importance of green spaces as a draw for tourists is demonstrated by Dundee's top attraction, Camperdown country park, which in 2006 welcomed almost 400,000 visitors. I hope that the new regionally focused VisitScotland will ensure that we continue to invest in such areas to maintain popular outdoor sites.

Another major boost to tourism in the area has been delivered with the first bill of the SNP Government, which will abolish tolls on the Tay bridge. The reduction in congestion when the tolls are removed can only encourage tourists to visit the area. We want to encourage as many commuters as possible to use public transport; however, it is safe to say that all parties in

Dundee—right across the political spectrum—are keen for our city to retain its reputation as a car-friendly city. Removal of the tolls will do more than that; it will also make Dundee more welcoming to tourists in buses and will increase the niche tourist market of cyclists, who currently find Dundee city centre a nightmare to navigate when the toll congestion is at its worst.

We have heard a lot today about the year of homecoming and the celebrations to mark the 250th anniversary of our national bard's birth. Given the fact that Dundee is associated with Scotland's second-best—or, at least, second-best known—poet, William McGonagall, we should have a large part to play in the celebrations.

Evidence can be found across the globe of Dundonians who have emigrated. We see that in financial institutions such as the Dundee Bank of Canada and in the raft of places called Dundee that are to be found in South Africa, Australia and the United States of America. It is clear that Dundee's influence furth of the River Tay has spread far and wide.

The winter festival provides the perfect vehicle for a city break to Dundee. With hotel occupancy rates between St Andrew's day and Burns night currently running at less than 40 per cent, the festival period gives Dundee the greatest potential for growth.

Dundee is a growing tourism destination that has huge potential. For too long, the city has been seen, wrongly, as run down. Dundee has the potential to provide a large slice of the 50 per cent increase in tourism in Scotland at which we all aim. Edinburgh, Glasgow and the Highlands enjoy a high profile. There is room for the city of discovery to join them. I am sure that members agree that Dundee has a lot to offer visitors to Scotland.

10:45

Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab): You made the point earlier, Presiding Officer, that a member's mention of the south-west of Scotland would not persuade you to give them extra time. I will therefore limit my remarks, unashamedly, to my local interests in Ayrshire.

In the debate, we have heard much about the challenges for tourism and whether centralism or localism should hold sway. I will focus on a number of those challenges. I was tempted simply to list a number of the wonderful tourist attractions and talk about the scenery in Ayrshire, but perhaps it is more important for members to be honest about some of the challenges that we face.

Lewis Macdonald and other members spoke about the need to improve Scotland's infrastructure if we are to attract tourists to come

to our parts of Scotland and to travel round the country. I hope that the minister will hear my plea that action needs to be taken to ensure that we continue to attract people to Scotland via Prestwick airport. Importantly, once people have visited Glasgow and Edinburgh—which, of course, I hope they do—I want them to travel to other parts of the country, too, including Ayrshire. Mr McArthur is indicating that I should also encourage people to go up north—indeed, they should.

We will be unable to bring more people to Ayrshire unless we see investment in infrastructure projects such as the further upgrade of the A77, including the Maybole bypass and, perhaps, the trunking of the A70. The minister will be aware that one of the main features in attracting the open golf championship to Ayrshire in 2009 was the ability to make improvements to the A77, in particular to the section of the road that leads down to Turnberry.

I welcome the success of projects under the Big Lottery Fund's living landmarks programme. I wish them well, but I am sure that the minister shares my disappointment that Girvan Community Developments' Girvan gateway project was unsuccessful. That imaginative partnership project with RSPB Scotland presented an ideal opportunity to form a gateway to the south-west of Scotland using the natural features of Ailsa Craig. I wrote to the minister on the subject, and I understand that other representations were made. If we are serious about trying to attract visitors into that part of Scotland, I urge the minister to look at what the Scottish Government can do to assist the project to go forward, perhaps in another form.

In the main, I want to speak about the 2009 homecoming year. I do so as the member who represents Burns's birthplace of Alloway and my current home village of Mauchline, where Burns spent a large part of his life. I have some concerns about the 2009 homecoming year, which I hope the minister will address in his closing speech. At the time of the launch, we recognised that Burns was worth some £160 million to the Scottish economy on an annual basis, two thirds of which comes from Ayrshire tourism. I pay tribute to the work that Patricia Ferguson did on the event.

The homecoming experience must be a top-quality one. It is vital that it is centred in Ayrshire; it would be ludicrous to suggest otherwise. Although I am pleased that we now have further information on funding, I am concerned about the contents of a letter from the minister, a copy of which was passed to me by my local Burns club. On 5 October, the minister stated that changes to the project will involve

"a tightening of the project's focus and new management arrangements"

and that

"a tighter focus on project objectives and greater streamlining of resources"

will apply. I hope that I have interpreted incorrectly that "greater streamlining of resources" means that fewer resources will be made available at the front line for organisations that will deliver events locally. Can the minister reassure me on that point?

When the minister sums up, will he give the chamber more information on the signature events, partner events, and rolling programme to which the Government referred in its press release of 27 November? What will that mean in practice? We are just over a year away from the start of 2009. If those world-class events are to be put in place in time, we should now have a broad knowledge of the timetable. We also need to have confidence that the infrastructure will be in place to support the programming. Management of the 2009 homecoming year has been handed to EventScotland. Can the minister assure members that EventScotland has the funding, staff and resources to take forward the event?

At the time of the launch, Patricia Ferguson, who was then the responsible minister, made it clear that the Burns World Federation would play a crucial role in the event, particularly in the south-west of Scotland—not only in Ayrshire, but in Dumfries, which is Elaine Murray's part of the world. That is an important element of the event. Will the minister confirm that the Government will continue to provide funding to that organisation?

Finally, I ask the minister to ensure that all the organisations in Burns country that want to participate in 2009 can access the funding. Organisations have expressed concern at the tightness of the timescale for making funding applications; I understand that they have to submit completed applications in February. As the minister will appreciate, the January period is a particularly busy one for Ayrshire. Some of the Burns organisations may find it difficult to get the resources in place to submit their application on time. I ask the minister to make available some of his senior officials to come to Ayrshire in my constituency to work with those organisations. That will ensure that we have a programme of events in and around Burns country to which people will want to come; perhaps more important, once they have come there they will want to return.

10:52

Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP): As many members have said in the debate, there can be no doubt about the importance of tourism to Scotland. That much is obvious in a constituency such as mine. Given the six-minute limit for my speech, I will not try to list the many appeals of the Western Isles, between Vatersay and Ness.

Tourism is increasingly a genuinely national industry that contributes significantly not only to places such as Edinburgh and Loch Ness, which was traditionally the case in the past, but to cities such as Glasgow and Aberdeen. As other members said, tourism contributes some £4.2 billion to our economy each year, and almost 9 per cent of our total employment. The 2009 year of homecoming presents an opportunity at every level, economic and cultural, to make Scotland known globally by renewing our links with the Scottish diaspora.

It is worth bearing in mind just how distinctive and positive the image of Scotland is to most people around the world. Some years ago, I was in Boston on the way to a ceilidh. In saying that, I do not mean that I had mistakenly ended up in Boston en route to a ceilidh in the Western Isles, although such things have been known to happen. I got off a bus in Boston, wearing Highland dress, and was accosted by an elderly lady who seemed almost overcome with emotion at seeing someone dressed in that way. She told me, at some length, of her husband's ancestry and the warmth of those sentiments was in no way undermined when it quickly became clear that she believed I was Lithuanian. [*Laughter.*] I did not feel the need to correct her.

The Government is expending great effort to promote Scotland as a world brand. At local level, there is much that Scotland can do, and is doing, to promote a range of niche tourism markets. Bed and breakfasts are involved in schemes that offer a tailored welcome to niche groups such as hill walkers, mountain bikers, Gaelic learners, and film crews.

In my constituency, numerous agencies, including Caledonian MacBrayne, have co-operated very successfully to promote a network of so-called Gaelic rings round the west coast of Scotland and, increasingly, we have a basis for food tourism, ecological tourism, sports tourism and so on. However, all that activity requires structures that are fit for purpose, and the restructuring of VisitScotland, Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise will enable the bodies to work together closely towards the goal of ensuring sustainable economic development in Scotland.

Liam McArthur: Does the member accept that, unlike many areas on mainland Scotland—for example, Inverness—the island groups are distinct destinations that tourists do not simply transit through? Does he agree that the tourist offices in each of the three main island groups have attracted significant talent who are doing excellent work and that any diminution of their autonomy, responsibility or—indeed—budget only puts such work at risk?

Alasdair Allan: I accept entirely that the island groups have a distinct market and play a distinct role with regard to tourism. However, where I differ from the member is that I do not think it necessary for those areas to have all the bureaucracy that is associated with the different organisations. Instead, it is important that we maintain service quality and the network of tourist information offices, and the Government has given many assurances on that issue.

VisitScotland will receive from the Government £47 million a year, which will trigger another £25 million of private sector and local authority funding. Of course, we should not ignore the significant challenges that are faced by the industry. I am sure that we can all bring to mind certain small problems that we have encountered in the past. For example, when I recently called in at a small hotel at 10 in the morning—I will not name it; suffice it to say that it was not in my constituency—and asked timidly at reception whether there was any chance of a bacon roll, I was met with the very frosty comment that I “might get a biscuit”. However, I did not.

Such incidents are becoming noticeably rarer and, when they happen, they are—if our tourists have any sense of humour—part of the charm. Indeed, VisitScotland has assured me that part of Scotland's appeal is that the experience on offer is not synthetic. Tourists get to meet real people. In fact, the real challenges that face the industry are not of its own making; they are problems that do not fit neatly into the tourism portfolio. For example, visitor attractions and B and B owners in my constituency can do as much as they like to promote their businesses, but they will always find themselves at a competitive disadvantage if it costs £200 for tourists to reach them by car and ferry. I am confident that solutions to that problem are in hand, and the cutting of small business rates will also help many businesses in the tourism sector in my constituency to grow and prosper.

Liam McArthur: Will the member take another intervention?

Alasdair Allan: I think that one intervention is probably enough. I am just about to conclude.

The Government has made tourism one of six key sectors with potential for high growth, which reflects its importance to the economy.

Tourism proves that Scotland can aim higher than being merely the best small country in the world—and that, I believe, is the nearest that I have come to straying from the spirit of cross-party consensus on this issue. However, the fact that I have made it this far without the leaven of partisan loyalty rising in me goes to show that Scottish tourism is a global industry with a global brand that we can all agree operates on a truly global scale.

The spin-off benefits extend far beyond tourism. As the mood of national optimism extends, our tourism industry can provide a means of attracting people to come back to live here, to invest here and to spread the word about our country to those who have yet to visit us.

I commend the motion to the chamber.

10:58

Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab): As Labour's transport spokesman, I support Labour's amendment in this tourism debate, because Scotland's world-class tourism products and brands need a world-class distribution network. Of course, such networks are made up by transport links and effective marketing.

I agree that Scotland is a must-see destination, but how do people who want to see it get here? If they are coming from England, they might drive up the M6, cross the border on the M74 and perhaps visit Bonnie Galloway or Burns country. Indeed, they might then travel further north to God's country—my beloved city of Glasgow. If you gave me the opportunity, Presiding Officer, I could filibuster until decision time about that city's merits and attractions.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That will not be necessary.

Charlie Gordon: Another time, perhaps.

However, such visitors find that the M74 motorway ends abruptly 5 miles from Glasgow city centre and that they then have to grind their way through the residential streets of south-east Glasgow or make a short hop up the M73 on to the M8—where they might find tailbacks as they approach the Kingston bridge. That is one of the many reasons why John Swinney should take the tender for the M74 completion project out of the basket marked "Too difficult" and sign it off now. After all, it is essential for the 2014 Commonwealth games in Glasgow—and, on that point, I was astonished at the minister's failure in his opening speech to mention those games alongside his reference to the 2014 Ryder cup.

The motoring visitor might—as I do every summer—then tour northwards from Glasgow into the beautiful Highlands. However, Highland routes such as the A9 and the A82 need continuous improvement.

Although the main rail routes from England to our cities are quite good, there is scope for improvements north of the central belt. We should also study options for a high-speed rail link from London. Of course, the new direct ferry link from Belgium to Fife is significant and certainly more sustainable.

Then there are the direct air links to Scotland. For 17 years, I have been networking continuously with key players in Scotland's transport industry. This week, I spoke to airlines and airport operators. Those very successful businesses are not bringing out the begging bowl, but the fact is that a low-cost airline such as EasyJet operates on very tight margins. On its routes to Berlin, Milan or—for that matter—Luton, EasyJet might be profiting by only £4 a seat. Over the past two years, its model has increased passenger numbers by about 500,000, and it could be carrying 5 million on low-cost tickets in 18 months' time. Airport owners such as BAA do their bit with, for example, discounts of up to 30 per cent on landing charges in the first three years of a new air route.

Jim Mather said that, at the seminars that he organised, no one mentioned the air route development fund. I can conclude only that either he had bored them to sleep by that point or no one from the distribution side was present. The fact is that the aviation industry in Scotland is alarmed about the air route development fund's demise.

Brian Adam: As I recall, there are two sides to the air route development fund: the money that is contributed by Government and that which is contributed by airport owners. As the part that is contributed by the airports—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Quickly, please, Mr Adam.

Brian Adam:—is not constrained in any way, it will continue. Indeed, the air route development fund will continue during the period of this spending review settlement, and there will be plenty of time to adjust to a new arrangement.

Charlie Gordon: The fund is tapering out, but if there is no what might be called son of the air route development fund, we might lose quite a few of the 46 routes that have been nurtured. The industry is alarmed by that move, because the risk during the first three years of a new air route is high.

The aviation industry, the tourism industry and Scottish Labour want a son of air route development fund that complies with state aid rules. The Italians and the Portuguese have such a fund; indeed, even the Glaswegians have one. The air route marketing fund that is operated by Glasgow City Marketing Bureau, which actually predates the air route development fund, is used to market Glasgow as a destination at the other end of a new air route. If we want a son of air route development fund, we should get VisitScotland to roll out the Glasgow model. In fact, a wee bird—not an osprey—told me that the minister had planned to do that, but that he abandoned his plans due to pressure from Green

MSPs and, as has become apparent this morning, Rob Gibson. The Glasgow model is funded from the city growth fund, over which the SNP budget has also put a big question mark.

In evidence to the Parliament's Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee earlier this week, the chief executive of the Highlands and Islands strategic transport partnership—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Wind up please.

Charlie Gordon: Presiding Officer, I took an intervention.

The chief executive of HITRANS described direct air links to the Highlands as the area's equivalent of the central belt's rail network. The weight of evidence is that Scotland needs and demands a son of air route development fund. Labour will fight for that.

11:05

Aileen Campbell (South of Scotland) (SNP): I welcome the opportunity to discuss this important issue and to do my bit to sell the south of Scotland. The debate is timely, because tomorrow is the day that we celebrate Scotland's patron saint and it coincides with the launch of the winter festival, which is a long overdue initiative that beautifully ties together some of Scotland's most important dates and celebrations. The debate also coincides nicely with last weekend's comments from VisitScotland's chairman, who said that we should market our weather as an attraction. Some of us are perhaps still to be persuaded by that argument.

We have heard much about how important tourism is and how it contributes more than £4 billion annually to the Scottish economy. We know that gaps exist and that more can be done to improve the industry. That is why I am heartened that the Scottish Government supports VisitScotland's ambitious target of increasing that £4 billion figure by 50 per cent over the years to 2015.

Tourism has been correctly identified as a key contributor to the Government's economic strategy, which aims to achieve sustainable economic growth. It is important that tourism is not overly concentrated only in certain areas, as my colleagues Nanette Milne, Jim Hume and Cathy Jamieson have already said. Although our country undoubtedly has key attractions and honeypot areas, each region of Scotland has something to offer visitors from elsewhere in the world, from elsewhere in the UK and even from elsewhere in Scotland.

Let us not forget that tourism is not just about bringing in money. Tourism plays an essential part

in raising awareness and knowledge of Scotland's history and culture, especially among our younger people. If we can encourage more people to visit Scotland's outdoors by using public and active travel—be that walking, cycling, horse riding, canoeing, swimming or hang gliding—we will potentially contribute to a healthier Scotland in line with the Government's key objectives. Although it is important that we continue to attract visitors from overseas, Scotland's wealth of historic buildings and beautiful landscapes and its range of attractions to suit all ages and tastes are well placed to offer alternative destinations to Scottish people who would otherwise take carbon-intensive flights for short breaks in Europe.

However, not every region is equal in terms of visitor numbers or investment in the tourism industry. In the greater Glasgow and Clyde valley area, the occupancy rate for self-catering establishments is 51 per cent. For caravan and camping sites, the rate is 46 per cent. Those figures are below the Scottish average of 55 per cent and 51 per cent respectively. Given that those types of accommodation are more likely to be located in the more rural parts of the area, as a country we obviously need to up our game dramatically to ensure that every part of Scotland, regardless of its geography, is known about and advertised enough. We must not get bogged down in the traditional notion that Scotland is only the Highlands and Islands.

There is evidence of concerning trends. For example, New Lanark—the 13th most visited attraction in the greater Glasgow and Clyde valley area—attracted 354,425 visitors in 2006. That total was down by 2.3 per cent from the 2005 figure of 362,850. The Government and its agencies must be conscious of the requirement continually to raise their game across all of Scotland in attracting tourists from both within and outwith Scotland.

I want to ensure that the homecoming celebrations in 2009 are not just about the Highlands and Islands or Scotland's major cities. Emigration from the south of Scotland was also significant, so no area of Scotland should be neglected. The Government's idea of enticing back the Scottish diaspora is to be commended. I agree with Alasdair Allan that our diaspora is an untapped resource that is long overdue appropriate attention. Many historians have suggested that the forgotten cousin of the Highland clearances—the Lowland clearances—had a greater impact than its northern relative. Without wanting to engage in a debate about whether one clearance was more devastating than another, I gently remind the Government that the south of Scotland, which I represent, has much to offer and a history that is equally rich and engaging.

Indeed, one reason why 2009 was picked as the year for the homecoming celebration is that it is the year in which we commemorate the 250th anniversary of the birth of Scotland's national poet, Robert Burns. If he was alive today, he would be one of my constituents. Cathy Jamieson did a good job in highlighting the need to sell the Ayrshire aspect of that.

We need to ensure that everyone globally knows about what Scotland can offer. That can happen only with effective marketing and by building on the excellent global reputation that Scotland is lucky enough to possess.

We should be rightly proud of what Scotland has to offer for tourists from all parts of the world and from all walks of life. As VisitScotland implements its strategy to boost revenues by 2015, it should do so in an innovative, sustainable manner that promotes the attractions that are to be found in every part of Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to wind-up speeches. I apologise to the one member whom I could not call to speak in the debate.

11:10

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): Aileen Campbell's speech was absolutely typical of the tone of the debate, which has been very well tempered indeed.

In his opening comments, Jim Mather rightly referred to the importance of our scenery, culture and history. He also mentioned the diaspora—a topic that was picked up by other members. The minister set the pace by telling us the exact amount—£4.2 billion—that tourism generates, but he was absolutely correct to say that we must not be complacent about the competition. We need only look to some of the former eastern bloc countries to see the sort of competition that is coming our way in terms of emerging tourism destinations.

Genealogical tourism, which the minister also touched on, was picked up by other members. From my earlier interventions, it will be plain to colleagues that I am very supportive of the notion. I believe that genealogical tourism is an untapped resource that could bring great benefit to Scotland. It is also nice to think that, whatever misfortune led to people becoming part of the diaspora, their descendants could lead to good fortune for their home country.

Lewis Macdonald set the tone for the Labour Party in moving his amendment. He rightly laid out the need for discussion of the air route development fund, which was touched on by many other members including Charlie Gordon, who put the argument very succinctly indeed. Lewis

Macdonald also referred to the cuts in the enterprise budget, which I will touch on in my closing remarks.

Gavin Brown's speech—which my colleague Liam McArthur described to me as "compassionate opposition"—was supportive of the Government. Liam McArthur, with his far-north perspective, explained the importance of high-quality tourism.

I compliment Brian Adam—although he seems to have left the chamber—on making a thoughtful speech during which he was good enough to pay tribute to the contribution that was made by the previous Scottish Executive. He also talked about the winter festival and the importance of music.

Patricia Ferguson drew our attention to the fact that things were not so rosy at the time of foot-and-mouth disease and after 9/11, but we have come back from that. She also mentioned—she was, I think, the only member to do so—protection of scenery, which is an important issue in the Highlands. For example, the erosion of Stac Pollaidh—the hill is nearly, but not quite, in my constituency—is quite tangible and will be expensive to put right. Sustainability was a theme of Patricia Ferguson's speech: in that context it is worth remembering that the reason why the debate has been so well tempered is that all members recognise that tourism is an important industry which, if we get it right, will ultimately be one of Scotland's totally sustainable industries. The industry could go on forever and ever, all things being well.

Dave Thompson's speech brought a Highlands and Islands perspective to the debate. His was the first speech to focus on my end of the country, as it were. He rightly pointed out that tourism is even more important in the Highlands and Islands, where the industry employs 13 per cent of the workforce. He also made supportive comments about Inverness airport, so I welcome his remarks. Let us hope that his suggestion is where we go eventually.

On David Stewart's speech, what can I say? He made an extraordinarily eloquent contribution. I found myself thinking that he perhaps in the future ought to do voice-overs for adverts for Scotland. We heard from him about the scenery, the five drivers of the tourism industry and Bonnie Prince Charlie. We also heard that David was once an extra in "Monarch of the Glen". I bow in amazement before his eloquence.

Nanette Milne gave us a splendid advert for Aberdeenshire, as did Jim Hume, who mentioned Flodden, on which I want to make a small historical point. It is literally true to say that my home town of Tain lost its shirt at Flodden. That was because before the battle King James

borrowed St Duthac's shirt, which was believed to have magical powers of protection—we know what happened to King James when he went to Flodden. Tain never saw its shirt again; we would quite like to have it back.

Joe FitzPatrick rightly mentioned the tolls and gave us good reasons to visit Dundee. Cathy Jamieson did the same with Ayrshire and mentioned the A77 and Robert Burns.

I am sorry that Alasdair Allan should be mistaken for a Lithuanian—that seems to be hard luck. He talked about the importance of food tourism, but given that he was only offered a biscuit, one could say that his speech takes the biscuit. However, on a serious note, an important point arises out of what Alasdair Allan said: sometimes we in Scotland are guilty of assuming that everyone around the globe knows where Scotland is—sadly, that is not the case. I was disturbed to find out from a recent newspaper article that some residents of Seattle think that Scotland is part of London. Of course marketing is all important.

I turn to the point behind our amendment. As Dounreay is decommissioned, my constituency faces a situation in which people are fearful about their future employment. Tourism will be all-important in the future and there is no doubt that the enterprise network is a key player in tourism. Liam McArthur referred to the slash in funding for the HIE area. The announcement by Sandy Cumming, the chief executive of HIE, that the removal of £50 million would lead to 50 job losses is deeply disturbing. Those job losses will not be confined to Inverness—some of them could be in Wick, Thurso and Stornoway. That is not good news for the Highlands.

From a far-north perspective, the enterprise network is utterly crucial, not just to tourism, but to a way of life. It was a courageous leap of faith and imagination in the 1960s that led to the establishment of the then Highlands and Islands Development Board, which was set up to address

“the man on Scotland's conscience”

—the Highlands. Great work has been done so it is a backward step to unravel some of it. For the reasons that I have given, I ask members to support our amendment.

11:17

Elizabeth Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): In summing up for the Conservatives, let me give a compassionate welcome for the opportunity to debate the issue. As has been said several times, we cannot underestimate the importance of the tourism industry, not just because of the £4.2 billion that it returns to the

Scottish economy, but because of its potential to promote a positive image of our country in a highly competitive international community.

As the minister, Mr Macdonald and Mr McArthur all rightly said, we should have a head start in doing just that. We have a beautiful country that has some of the finest scenery in the world—withstanding the rain, the mist or the midgets—and which offers a wealth of opportunity to exploit rewarding outdoor activities. In addition, there is the warmth of a traditional Scottish welcome and its accompanying hospitality—which Mr Allan did not experience—the lure of several world-class historical sites and entertainment centres, and the potential that exists to develop many of our resources that have such a distinctive Scottish brand, as David Stewart and David Thompson mentioned.

A successful tourism industry matters not only from the economic and social perspective, however. If we marshal our resources effectively, it should play a large part in the feel-good factor that applies to Scotland's role in the global community. If I may be allowed to be slightly less compassionate for a moment, I firmly believe that a much more integrated approach must be adopted—one that combines a clear and coherent strategy for all the related businesses and stakeholders. From listening carefully to the views of various stakeholders in the tourism industry, including representatives of local tourist boards, two chambers of commerce and people who are on the front line of service delivery, I know that there are many good tourism initiatives around the country—many of which have been mentioned—that are not always co-ordinated or publicised in the most effective manner. It is good to hear that the minister is aware of that.

In addition, as Gavin Brown and Nanette Milne said, there are concerns that in some areas, we do not seem to be attracting the footfall of tourists that we had hoped for. On that point, although Patricia Ferguson would like to take the credit for the increase in the number of international visitors to Scotland in 2005-06, she will share our concern about the decrease in the overall number of visitors in that period.

I have read the manifesto of the Scottish Tourism Forum, which points to three fundamental failings in the current set-up, the first of which relates to the difficulties with the transport infrastructure. Those failings deserve more attention than has been paid to them this morning. Nanette Milne flagged up the fact that the position on their map that Flybe gives to Inverness does not help matters. Equally unhelpful is the situation on the west Highland line, whereby one arrives in Oban on a train, only to find that the ferry to Barra and South Uist left a few minutes before the train

got in. That is not about new infrastructure, but about better organisation. The point has been made that it would not happen in Switzerland or France.

The STF also highlights the fact that many jobs in tourism are not particularly well paid and it identifies technology problems in the sector. We must take all those issues seriously. Again, it was heartening to hear that the minister is trying to address them.

As Gavin Brown said, the biggest challenge that we face is the need to find a coherent national strategy that will also allow for plenty localism when it comes to making best use of our resources in the diverse parts of the country. On that front, we would have deep concerns if the Government's new strategy were driven only by the desire for greater centralisation. We need more detail on how we can make best use of the local diversity that enriches the tourism experience in this country. Assurances must be given that there will be effective forums across the country that will allow full representation of organisations that are on the front line, whether they are small businesses, large enterprises or local services such as tourist information offices. Worryingly, too many stakeholders point to concerns about the replacement of the area tourist boards with VisitScotland hubs, especially given the proposed decrease in the number of hubs.

What must be done? First, there is an issue about management of the industry. Under the previous structure, tourism operatives were members of a tourist board and had ownership of the body to which they paid their fees. They had a direct say in what went on and a vote in the election of local board members. The new model moves away from that set-up to a much more centralised structure. As I mentioned, it is worrying that the number of hubs will be reduced to six. Instead of being partners, tourism operatives will become clients who must buy services from their tourist board. We worry about how much that might curtail the driving force of the private sector, which is so crucial to the industry.

Some of the most successful tourism initiatives have been in areas where local businesses have combined effectively to take advantage of local resources and changing signals from the market. We should not forget about the huge importance of local services, particularly those that are provided by tourist information centres. Although TICs are having to adapt to changing needs, they are still central to the provision of effective services, in the same way that local post offices and other such public facilities are.

There is an unequivocal case for a better transport infrastructure with much greater linkage between routes and better planning of existing

connections. We support the reduction in business rates—although we firmly believe that it should happen in the next financial year rather than be phased in over a three-year period. We are fully aware that lower business rates are only part of the answer, but if we are to ensure that small businesses have a first-class future, such a policy will be welcome.

I finish by returning to the Conservative amendment. We must strive for the improvement we know Scotland can deliver. We must be ambitious—it is important to recognise that we are talking about an ambition rather than a target. That is why our amendment is important.

11:23

Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab): Many members have used the debate to express their passion for the attractions of their constituencies and of Scotland as a whole. Much as I would like to spend my whole speech talking about the attractions of my Dumfries constituency, I must respond to what other members have said—although I am sure that I will sneak in the odd reference to my constituency.

In contemplating how to develop the industry, let us be clear about the challenge that we face from other parts of the world. The United Nations World Tourism Organization estimates that, globally, international tourist arrivals will grow by between 5.6 and 5.7 per cent and that long-term growth will average 4 per cent until 2020. Tourism contributes to the economy of more than 200 countries, which offer wide and varied products, including niche-market leisure, outdoor, cultural and business activities. They use their native cultures and heritage to attract visitors and they provide electronic marketing and booking.

Liam McArthur: On electronic booking, does Elaine Murray share the concerns that have been expressed in my community about the way in which visitscotland.com operates—especially for smaller businesses that may not be able to set aside blocks of rooms or beds over a prolonged period?

Elaine Murray: Indeed. That issue has also been raised in Dumfries and Galloway, which, like Mr McArthur's constituency, has a number of smaller operators.

The target of a 50 per cent real-terms improvement in tourism by 2015 was set by the industry, as Patricia Ferguson said, and not by the Government. The target's context is a very competitive international market in which exchange rates are not at the moment acting to our advantage. The tourism framework for change identified key improvements that the Scottish tourism industry will need to make to achieve the

target. The industry has to be receptive to consumer trends and it has to be flexible enough in responding to what customers want and to what competitor countries are offering.

Of course, the industry also has to provide a very high-quality product. Scotland is expensive, so nothing less than excellence will do—excellence in accommodation, in food and in activities. Staff will have to be trained to a high level. Alasdair Allan was quite charitable towards the lady who offered him a biscuit, but that lady's attitude simply is not good enough.

In the tourism sector—as in all areas of the economy—enterprise and innovation must become part of the culture. As my colleague Charlie Gordon showed, we need the infrastructure to get visitors into and around Scotland. Rob Gibson perhaps missed the point of the air route development fund: it was not about flying people from Leeds into Prestwick or Inverness, but about flying visitors from overseas into Scotland directly, so that they did not have to go to Heathrow first before taking a short-hop flight to Scotland, which is environmentally unfriendly.

Rob Gibson *rose*—

Elaine Murray: I am sorry, but I want to make progress. The air route development fund is important environmentally as well as being important economically to the tourism industry.

We have to ask a few questions of the Government. Why did the Government not seek an alternative to the air route development fund? I ask the minister to reflect on the important points that were raised by my colleague Dave Stewart on state aid funding. I hope that the Executive will examine those points and, as Charlie Gordon suggested, reconsider the possibility of rolling out the Glasgow model to support flights into Scotland.

If a 50 per cent increase in revenue is to be achieved over eight years, how much of an increase in revenue do ministers think will be achieved over the period of the spending review? While Jim Mather was holding seminars, his boss John Swinney was cutting the budget to VisitScotland. Lewis Macdonald referred to his concerns over the marketing budget. VisitScotland's budget is falling in real terms by about 0.5 per cent per annum. As my colleague Patricia Ferguson said, VisitScotland has levered in money—£32 for every £1 invested—so why are we withdrawing funding from an industry that is so successful at levering in additional funding? Many colleagues referred to the £90 million as if it were an SNP £90 million. The £90 million was already in the previous Executive's budget.

We know that the VisitScotland network is to be subjected to yet more change. Gavin Brown was

at one point in his speech a little confused between ATBs and TICs, but the current network was established in April 2005 and the legislation was passed last year. There has not been a lot of time. I know that Jim Mather has said that streamlining will help to address problems with overlaps, but realignment is taking place again after a very short time in order to ensure coterminosity with the enterprise networks. I am concerned about the effect of that on the morale of staff, who have already gone through a period of considerable upheaval.

I echo some of the comments that were made by island members such as Liam McArthur about the effect of the withdrawal of the VisitScotland network from the islands. The network has specifically marketed the attractions of those parts of the country.

Patricia Ferguson referred to skills and training in the tourism sector. With whom will responsibility rest? How will we achieve the necessary improvement in the skills base, so that people will no longer offer a biscuit instead of a bacon roll?

Like my colleague Cathy Jamieson, I have concerns about the proximity of the year of homecoming. As she said, it is just a year away. Jim Mather seemed to suggest that we should be phoning our friends to get them to come over here. However, as a member for Dumfries—the place where Robert Burns died and where he wrote some of his greatest works—I would like to see more detail on the budget that will be available for the event and on how the budget will be accessed by local groups who want to use it to bring tourists into Dumfries and Galloway.

Dave Stewart referred to the stunning new Eden Court Theatre in Inverness—I would like a stunning new theatre for Dumfries. We have to examine the potential of cultural tourism to enable the regeneration of town centres such as Dumfries town centre. The local council is working on that, but if we had better cultural facilities we would be going some way towards regenerating our culture, our community and our town.

A number of members referred to the “Welcome to Scotland” slogan. All I will say is that Gretna has been well ahead for a considerable time.

When I read the Conservative amendment, it was no surprise to see the Conservatives and the SNP snuggled up in bed together again. It is a marriage of convenience that will probably last only until the other side of the next general election.

11:31

Jim Mather: This has been a fascinating debate; I have learned a lot of new information

and have heard a lot of new opinions. It was notable how, as the debate progressed, enthusiasm grew and grew—for individual places and for Scotland. It bolstered my belief in our huge potential. Gem after gem was mentioned. There was some negativity, but there were good ideas as well. The debate will perhaps help us and the industry to make progress, committed as we are to continuous improvement.

We heard earlier a very negative spin in respect of money, so I was grateful to Gavin Brown for attempting to give a true and fair view. I am looking at the data that were recently presented to the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee. Taking 2007-08 and the three years of the spending review, I come up with a figure of £250 million being spent on what is, in essence, marketing—visitor engagement, business engagement, strategic partners and EventScotland. When I then consider the budget for Scottish Natural Heritage, Historic Scotland, local government, the Ryder cup and the year of homecoming, and then consider the investment that is being made by a confident industry and the confidence that I have in inward investors coming to Scotland, I know that we will see materiality in money.

At a first meeting back on 27 August, the industry said that it wants a culture change: it wants an end to the dependency culture; it wants money to be invested intelligently; and it wants to be able to put in its own money, thus elevating the industry to a new level.

During the debate, some members have failed to acknowledge a number of things, such as European constraints on the air route development fund and the best efforts of this Government to work with Continental, EasyJet and other low-cost airlines to develop the marketing of Scotland and access to Scotland.

Charlie Gordon: After today's debate, will the minister reconsider and reinstate his plans to roll out the Glasgow model of air route development marketing? Will he tell also the Greens to take a hike? They have not even bothered to attend the debate.

Jim Mather: This Government loves all its sceptics. We will—open-minded people that we are—always take input from any area. That is why we sit down with the industry and listen.

I would classify Gavin Brown's speech as constructive opposition—it was the stuff of further improvement. It was not without criticism and not without challenges, but it certainly sought to ensure that we boost the brand and achieve 50 per cent growth with a clear and meaningful plan—an idea that was developed by Elizabeth Smith. How will we achieve that? We will do so

through improvement within the industry, through improvement within VisitScotland and visitScotland.com—I have given members evidence of that today—and through pulling the industry together as never before. We have a worthy goal, and the Conservative amendment augments that worthy goal, making it more meaningful in terms of visitor experience, careers and so on.

We are including all the stakeholders and we are making an effort to include the ones who do not volunteer naturally. In my constituency, we sometimes struggle to get the local key players into the room, but we are now doing that. On 14 December we will have a summit at which Argyll and Bute Council and HIE will bring together people who might not normally volunteer but who contribute to, and draw revenue from, the tourism industry in the area. That is a worthy goal. All the stakeholders will be involved.

We are committed to continuous improvement across the board. We want open statistical control, whereby we monitor progress. We want rooms with mirrors in them so that we make eye contact with ourselves. We are doing this for real. *[Laughter.]* Eye contact with oneself can be a very helpful thing. Being able to make eye contact with oneself in the shaving mirror in the morning is an indication that one might just be doing the right thing. Liam McArthur, on the other hand, was doing entirely the wrong thing. He gave us a negative spin that would be laughed at by the people who have got involved with us. Rather than death by PowerPoint, it is about using technologies, ideas, programmes and processes that have worked elsewhere to move forward, deliver leadership and get continuous improvement. The Liberal Democrats' approach will come back to haunt them. We are looking to ensure that Scotland has a pipeline of new and interesting projects that energise people.

Brian Adam, who I did not know had been a lawyer in a previous life, noted Lewis Macdonald's carefully chosen words and his reluctance to consolidate operational and financial cohesion in the industry. The industry, Government agencies, the transport sector and the third sector are really coming together. Isolation is over and centrality of tourism is a given. We will work together.

Lewis Macdonald: At the end of the three-year spending review, will the budget that is allocated to VisitScotland have increased or gone down in real terms compared with the current year?

Jim Mather: That question just shows the narrowness of Lewis Macdonald's vision. I am talking about operational and financial cohesion across an entire industry in which the money is burgeoning, inward investment is happening, people are waking up and investing in their own

businesses and the dependency culture is gone. That is the fact of the matter.

Patricia Ferguson's speech was interesting. She challenged me on the green debate. I am happy to say that the green tourism business scheme, which is a membership scheme, is cracking on. Beyond that, we are opening up a new entry-level scheme called going green, which VisitScotland is developing and which will be launched in early 2008. It will be a free scheme that will, in essence, create a climate in which the carbon footprint of those coming to Scotland will be very low and their reasons for coming to Scotland will be even greater than they are now.

Members have mentioned the islands and the scope for decentralisation. We are creating that scope at local authority level and island level. I spent the summer running sessions with the tourism industry on Islay, Mull, Bute and Lismore, in which I talked to island communities about moving things forward. Islay is now cracking on with its destination Islay initiative, which will be absolutely fantastic.

Liam McArthur: The minister referred to the centrality of tourism and ending the dependency culture. Can he give an assurance to my constituents, and those of Tavish Scott and Alasdair Allan, that as well as keeping offices open in the islands, he will ensure that there is no reduction in the role that they play and the budget that supports them?

Jim Mather: I say to every member that we want the industry to move forward. We want everybody to pull together. That which is vibrant, viable and energised will be supported.

In closing, I want to comment on the strength of feeling and enthusiasm that I have found in the tourism industry. In today's debate there have been lots of gems among some of the elements of negativity, particularly from David Stewart, who I understand has a new agent in the shape of Jamie Stone. I have been tremendously encouraged by the endeavours of everyone involved. There is strong ambition, leadership and a boldness that impressed me. As Goethe said:

"Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it."

Scotland is beginning that.

Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

General Questions

11:40

sportscotland

1. Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what plans it has to redeploy the expertise of employees of sportscotland should it decide to abolish the organisation. (S3O-1476)

The Minister for Communities and Sport (Stewart Maxwell): The review of sportscotland has been undertaken with a focus on what is best for the delivery of sport and as part of our approach to simplify Scotland's public service landscape. By getting rid of duplication, simplifying structures and stopping activities that do not contribute to the Government's objectives, we will free up Scotland's public servants to provide the services that people need.

We fully acknowledge the key delivery role that the expert sportscotland staff play within the sporting landscape. I am very conscious that the final decision on the future of sportscotland may have an impact on the lives and future of the staff at sportscotland, which is why we have stated that we wish to come to a conclusion on the review of the organisation as quickly as possible. However, it is too early to say what plans might be required to redeploy the expertise of sportscotland employees. We must wait until the outcome of the review of sportscotland is determined.

Jim Tolson: Only a few weeks ago, we all celebrated the announcement that the Commonwealth games will come to Glasgow in 2014. We all agreed that the games have the potential to leave a magnificent legacy for sporting participation in Scotland. However, the Government seems determined to push through the abolition of sportscotland at a time when a firm foundation is required for the build-up to and the success and legacy of the 2014 games in Glasgow. Sportscotland is also a one-stop shop for both Exchequer and lottery funding, yet the minister has given no clear indication of what other body might carry out that vital function for all our sporting organisations.

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): Ask a question, please, Mr Tolson.

Jim Tolson: Does the minister agree that sportscotland has a vital role to play in helping to

deliver that legacy and that this is precisely the wrong time to put its future in question?

Stewart Maxwell: Unsurprisingly, I do not agree with Jim Tolson that this is the wrong time to review sportscotland—it is exactly the right time to do so. We have to ensure that in the next seven years we build towards the games in 2014 to ensure that we have a legacy beyond the games. That is why it is right to spend a few months now consulting people in the industry and indulging in a meaningful discussion with sportscotland and the other sport governing bodies to ensure that the body that results from the review has the right relationship with Government, local authorities, athletes and the governing bodies, and is the sort of focused organisation that is required to take forward sport in Scotland and to deliver the legacy of 2014.

Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab): I am sure that Mr Tolson shares my disappointment in that answer.

I had thought in previous weeks that I detected a softening of the minister's attitudes towards sportscotland. It sounded more like he was going to opt for a rebranding exercise, rather than abolish sportscotland completely. Such a desperate measure should be taken only after a full and fair consultation on the issue, rather than after the internal review that the Government is taking forward. Have bodies such as the Commonwealth Games Council for Scotland been consulted on the proposals?

Stewart Maxwell: If the member wishes, I can read out the long list of bodies that we have consulted. However, instead of doing so, I refer her to the answer that I gave last week. There has been a full consultation with sportscotland, the Scottish Institute of Sport and all the other bodies that I listed last week—that is in the *Official Report*. I point out to the member that Louise Martin is on the board of sportscotland and is fully aware of the negotiations and discussions that we have been having with that organisation, therefore the Commonwealth Games Council for Scotland is well informed and well aware of our desire to deliver for sport over the next seven years.

Respite Care

2. Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what it is doing to increase the provision of respite care and breaks for carers. (S3O-1423)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Nicola Sturgeon): The Scottish Government recognises the enormous value of respite both to carers and to those with care needs, which is why our joint concordat with the Convention of Scottish Local

Authorities includes a commitment to move towards delivering an extra 10,000 respite weeks per annum. In addition, we are consulting on new respite guidance to improve the planning of more personalised, preventative respite.

Cathy Peattie: I welcome the cabinet secretary's answer. Can she give a timescale? I am sure that the 600,000 carers in Scotland would like to have a guarantee about their entitlement. Will it happen by 2011? Will the Executive please come back to the chamber with regular updates on progress?

Nicola Sturgeon: I agree with the member about the importance of the issue to carers and the people they care for. As she is aware, our concordat with COSLA sets out an agreed shared programme of action over the session of the Parliament. We will monitor progress carefully, and as part of our new relationship with local authorities they will be required to submit an annual report setting out their progress and achievements with a view to meeting all the national outcomes. Members across the chamber will take a great deal of interest in observing our progress towards increasing respite for carers, because they agree with me that the issue is extremely important.

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): Before and after May's election, I met a number of kinship carers and groups of grandparents who were caring for their grandchildren who are looked-after children. What does the concordat with local authorities mean for grandparents who are kinship carers when it talks about providing allowances for carers that are equivalent to allowances for foster carers?

Nicola Sturgeon: I thank Bob Doris for his question and I acknowledge his interest in the issue. I also acknowledge the issues that are important to kinship carers. The member might be aware that the subject is not within my sphere of responsibility; it is a matter for the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, who I understand will make an announcement on the matter shortly. I had better take care not to steal her thunder.

Housing (Renfrewshire)

3. Bill Wilson (West of Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive whether the tripartite working group to address housing issues in Renfrewshire is continuing to meet and, if so, when it will next meet. (S3O-1464)

The Minister for Communities and Sport (Stewart Maxwell): Officials from Renfrewshire Council, the Scottish Government and Communities Scotland have been meeting in a tripartite working group since early summer and will continue to do so as necessary.

Bill Wilson: As the minister will be aware, Renfrewshire tenants, like Edinburgh tenants, rejected Westminster's efforts to blackmail them into a housing stock transfer, so, as with Edinburgh, the housing revenue debt of £140 million that was inherited from the previous Administration is not being serviced by the United Kingdom Government. The minister will be aware that the new Administration is now tackling the decades of neglect that it inherited from the previous Administration. How are the discussions with the council on tackling decades of Labour neglect progressing?

Stewart Maxwell: I do not disagree that the new Renfrewshire Council has received a rather poor inheritance from the previous "decades of neglect", as the member said. The situation in Renfrewshire means that it is very difficult for the new council to make progress. I am committed to working with the council to take forward any plans that it wishes to submit to the Government. Only this morning, we received an outline business plan from the council. We will examine it in great detail, and once I have had time to analyse it I will be happy to meet the council and discuss its proposals.

Coastal Erosion and Flooding

4. Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what plans it has to co-ordinate responses from planning authorities on the issues of coastal erosion and flooding. (S3O-1395)

The Minister for Environment (Michael Russell): Scottish planning policy 7 deals with planning and flooding, and it provides a framework for assessing coastal flood risk so that planning authorities can include policies in their development plans and co-ordinate their decisions on planning applications.

Helen Eadie: I thank the minister for that reply, but how does he propose to address the problem of the Scottish Government's reporter who, against the background of catastrophe in England, has not accepted how serious the risk of flooding is on the coastal areas of the River Forth and has ignored the Scottish Environment Protection Agency's flood maps that have been made available online? In the case of St David's bay, he has put at risk the lives of constituents, especially given the background in Fife that frontages of homes and sea walls have recently been savagely removed by the force of the sea and the River Forth.

Michael Russell: The member has a long-standing interest in the matter, and I answered a question from her on the subject last week in the chamber. I have repeatedly—I do so again—offered to meet the member to discuss coastal

erosion and flooding that is effected by the River Forth and the surrounding area. I am absolutely certain that the process that the council has gone through is leading to the right answers, but if the member wants to continue with this matter, I am open to discussing it with her.

McKie Case (Judicial Inquiry)

5. Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what progress is being made in establishing a full, public judicial inquiry into the McKie case, as promised by the Scottish National Party prior to the election. (S3O-1417)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): We will establish a full public judicial inquiry to get at the root of the confusion, concern and controversy that have persisted for a decade. We are working hard on the details and I expect to be able to make a full statement to Parliament in a few weeks' time.

Des McNulty: The minister will be aware that four members of the fingerprint service staff were placed in an impossible position. Repeated inquiries showed them to be innocent of any misconduct, but they were prevented from carrying out their normal work. Will the minister ensure that the inquiry's remit is such that all aspects of the case can be considered, including the inadequacies of the Mackay inquiry?

Kenny MacAskill: It would be inappropriate for me to comment on the specific remit of the inquiry as it is under review, discussion and negotiation with the person who will carry it out. However, I can say that this Government is coming at the issue from the perspective that a manifest injustice was done to Ms McKie. Mr McNulty was a member of the Administration that paid a substantial amount of taxpayers' money to Ms McKie because of that injustice, and we will not move from the position that something went seriously awry. We need to work out why it happened and why that injustice was perpetrated so that we can ensure that what happened to Shirley McKie does not happen to anyone else.

Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP): I remind the Cabinet Secretary for Justice that, contrary to what Mr McNulty said, one inquiry recommended taking criminal action against the officers concerned. When the cabinet secretary draws up the inquiry's remit, will he ensure that it does not make the same mistakes as the parliamentary inquiry and that it considers all the issues around the misidentification of the fingerprint?

Des McNulty: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Alex Neil's statement is absolutely outrageous. He cannot make such a statement in this Parliament. We have a ruling from the

previous Presiding Officer on what can be said in connection with the McKie case. Alex Neil is clearly in breach of that ruling.

The Presiding Officer: I am advised that that ruling was on a sub judice issue, Mr McNulty. I invite the minister to continue.

Kenny MacAskill: As with the answer that I gave to Mr McNulty, it would be wrong to comment on the precise details of the remit that is currently being worked out. However, I can give Mr Neil the assurance that I gave to Mr McNulty: we take the view that a manifest injustice was perpetrated against Shirley McKie. We regret that and we need to work out why it happened, why it cost the taxpayer money and—more important—why she and her family went through the trouble that they did. It is not a matter of carrying out a witch hunt; it is about working out what went wrong, particularly to ensure that such injustice is not replicated or perpetrated against anyone else as a result of errors in Scotland. Whatever irredentists might say, we will try to work out what went wrong and ensure that it never recurs.

Sign Language Interpreters

6. Nigel Don (North East Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what plans it has to increase the number of sign language interpreters for deaf people. (S3O-1446)

The Minister for Communities and Sport (Stewart Maxwell): A long-term strategy has been agreed between the Scottish Government and the British Sign Language and linguistic access working group. We are pleased that, as a result of that strategy, the number of British Sign Language/English interpreters in Scotland is steadily increasing. The Scottish Government has provided substantial support for that and will continue to establish the infrastructure to sustain the increase. In March 2003, there were 39 interpreters on the Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters—SASLI—register, and by November 2007 that had increased to 52 registered interpreters, with 13 associates.

Part of our strategy is to increase the opportunities for learners to take advanced BSL classes, which in turn will expand the pool of potential interpreters. We are delighted that, with our investment, the first cohort of deaf students from the graduate diploma course in teaching British Sign Language tutors, which is delivered by Heriot-Watt University, has graduated this month and will be able to teach advanced BSL.

Nigel Don: I thank the minister for his comprehensive reply. However, organisations such as the Royal National Institute for Deaf People and the Scottish Council on Deafness say that health care providers often have to book

interpreters months in advance, depending on where the services are provided. Is the minister willing to review the placement of sign language interpreters throughout the country to ensure that we are providing effective national coverage for the deaf community?

Stewart Maxwell: I do not have in front of me the information that the member seeks on the location of the 52 interpreters that I mentioned, but I am more than happy to speak to officials to find out that information and to write to him with the details.

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab): I am glad that the number of sign language interpreters is increasing, but I am sure that the minister agrees that it is increasing slowly and that we need to do more to enable deaf people to have the access to interpreters that they need. A month ago, the Parliament was unable to secure sign language interpreters for a parliamentary debate, which demonstrates the difficulties that deaf individuals face daily. Will the Scottish Government allocate further financial packages to that important area of communication?

Stewart Maxwell: I agree that there are insufficient interpreters in the country and I accept the need to explore additional ways of increasing the number of registered BSL/English interpreters in Scotland. The Scottish Government equality unit has recruited a BSL and linguistic access project manager, who has expertise in BSL, to develop a detailed plan for improving linguistic access for people who are deaf, deaf-blind or hard of hearing. The plan will be delivered early in 2008.

Scottish Police Services Authority (Gartcosh)

7. John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive when a decision will be made on whether to go ahead with the Scottish Police Services Authority campus at Gartcosh. (S3O-1440)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): The project to establish a crime campus at Gartcosh is going ahead. We have secured an option to purchase the land, established a project board and appointed project managers. We will shortly go out to tender for a design team and cost consultant. When those key people are in place, work can begin on producing preliminary designs and a fully costed business case. We will then be in a position to make decisions about the next stages and to agree a firm timetable.

John Wilson: Does the cabinet secretary agree that the sooner the campus is up and running the better? The campus will bring major economic benefits to the people of Gartcosh, which was blighted by the closure of its steel strip mill a

number of years ago. It will also bring major benefits to the rest of Scotland by bringing police services under one roof.

Kenny MacAskill: I absolutely agree that the campus will be of great benefit to Gartcosh. In Scotland, we face a significant problem of serious and organised crime, and anything that facilitates the work of the forces of law and order in taking on pernicious elements will be supported by the Government, because we have made a clear commitment to tackle organised crime in all its facets in this country.

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab): Is the minister aware of the deep frustration that people in my constituency feel as a result of the length of time that it is taking to redevelop Gartcosh, which was devastated by Margaret Thatcher's closure of the steelworks? Can he assure me that he will not only insist that the crime campus headquarters with more than 900 quality jobs goes ahead as promised but ensure that progress on developing the rest of the site will be quick and not further delayed by work on other sites?

Kenny MacAskill: Progress will not be delayed by work on other sites. We are committed to Gartcosh, as I said. In seven months we have progressed the issue to the extent that I described; Labour had 10 years in London and eight years here and failed to progress the issue. The member can rest assured that we will act expeditiously and efficiently.

The Presiding Officer: Question 8 has been withdrawn.

Community Planning Partnerships (Budget)

9. Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what the budget in 2008-09 will be for the new fund to be deployed by community planning partnerships and into which the community regeneration fund, the community voices programme and working for families will be rolled. (S3O-1392)

The Minister for Communities and Sport (Stewart Maxwell): As we announced in the statement on the spending review on 14 November, support of £145 million per year for the period 2008-11 will be provided to regenerate deprived communities, tackle individual poverty and help people to overcome barriers to work.

Malcolm Chisholm: I hope that the minister will confirm that that allocation relates only to the three funds to which I referred. Even if it does, I think that it represents a cash cut on the combined budgets of the three funds. In the autumn budget revision, the budget for the community regeneration fund was £126 million, the budget for the working for families fund was £15 million and

the budget for community engagement was £6.1 million.

Even if the budget is adequate for the next two years, what reassurance can the minister give to anxious communities, including communities in my constituency, about what will happen in 2010 in relation to vital work for community regeneration?

Stewart Maxwell: The unified fund takes into account a number of contributor funds, including the three that have been mentioned, plus others, such as workforce plus; more choices, more chances; financial inclusion; and changing children's services. The new £145 million fund is directed at tackling poverty and deprivation issues in our community. It has been widely welcomed, not only because the Parliament recommended not once but twice that such a unified fund should be established, but because it also provides flexibility and removes the artificial barriers between funds that existed under the previous Administration.

The Presiding Officer: Before we move to First Minister's question time, I am sure that the chamber would wish to join me in welcoming to the gallery His Excellency Ihor Kharchenko, the Ukrainian ambassador to the United Kingdom, and Daniel Ona Ondo, the deputy speaker of the National Assembly of Gabon, with his cross-party delegation of parliamentarians. [*Applause.*]

First Minister's Question Time

12:01

Engagements

1. Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab):

To ask the First Minister what engagements he has planned for the rest of the day. (S3F-304)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): Later today I will have meetings to take forward the Government's programme for Scotland, including putting the final touches to a worthy celebration of St Andrew's day, Scotland's national day, which will lead into a winter festival that will match the mood of optimism that is still sweeping the nation, in sharp contrast to the mood of despondency that I detected in some quarters when I visited London on Monday.

Ms Alexander: The First Minister will be aware that new statistics released this week show a 7 per cent rise in reported cases of domestic violence. That means that over 100 women a day now report domestic violence, which is the highest level since statistics have been recorded. The scale of domestic abuse in Scotland remains one of our collective shames.

On a more optimistic note, the First Minister may be aware of a United Kingdom report, also published this week, which reveals that Scotland has set the policy benchmark for the rest of the UK in tackling domestic abuse. I hope that tackling domestic abuse can remain a shared priority among all the parties in the Parliament. In that spirit, and given the particular role that local government has in tackling the problem, I ask the First Minister to reconsider whether tackling domestic abuse should become at least one of the 45 national targets set for local government in the recent concordat.

The First Minister: Wendy Alexander should include local government in that shared priority of tackling a huge and serious problem in Scotland. People in local government want to tackle the problem as much as Wendy Alexander and this Government do.

In passing, I congratulate Wendy Alexander on her success in dominating the news agenda in Scotland.

Ms Alexander: I will return to the issue of domestic violence shortly, but let me make an observation. I have asked for the permissibility of the donation to my election campaign to be checked, and we await the outcome of the Electoral Commission's investigation.

In the meantime, Presiding Officer, given the First Minister's remarks, let me make a further

observation. When my team began compiling the information for our campaign return, we asked the Electoral Commission about the previous major party leadership contest held in Scotland, by the Scottish National Party, in 2004. Following a three-month election campaign—which involved the publication of personal manifestos, websites and campaign literature, and attendance at hustings—Alex Salmond, Roseanna Cunningham and Alex Neil, and the candidates for the deputy leadership, Nicola Sturgeon and Fergus Ewing, did not between them submit a single return or report any donations to the Electoral Commission. I find that an odd state of affairs for a party that is now lecturing us on transparency.

I return to my question about domestic violence. I accept that much of the direct funding to deal with violence against women stays with the Scottish Government, but the Government's planned changes in the funding of local government are removing other important sources of ring-fenced finance that are currently used to tackle domestic abuse. What assurance can the First Minister give to the women's organisations that this week have expressed their concern that the general reduction in ring fencing could lead to a postcode lottery in provision for victims of abuse throughout Scotland?

The First Minister: Wendy Alexander should accept that the outcome agreements that we are negotiating with each individual local authority will have the reduction of domestic violence as the highest priority. Members from throughout the Parliament should realise that the Government, the Labour Party, the Conservative party, the Liberal party and our colleagues in local government share that priority, which is a huge one for the people of Scotland.

Wendy Alexander's elaborate remarks on the leadership contest surely just prove that SNP members spent less on fighting elections than Wendy Alexander managed to spend on not fighting one.

Ms Alexander: I asked the First Minister to reconsider why not one of the 45 national targets in the concordat with local government deals with domestic abuse. I turn to one specific outcome of that. The First Minister will be aware that the supporting people grant is to be rolled up into the local government settlement. The grant currently provides £7 million a year to support 3,529 women and their children who are fleeing domestic violence. All that money is now up for grabs. What reassurances will the First Minister offer the 3,000 plus women who are fleeing domestic violence that that lifeline will not be curtailed? Does he appreciate the pressure that he will put on women's organisations by making them negotiate with 32 local authorities to try to hold on to that

£21 million in the next three years to support those 3,000 victims of violence?

The First Minister: Wendy Alexander should have a look at page 46 of the Scottish budget and spending review document. One of the shared objectives for the outcome agreements that will be negotiated with local authorities is to improve

“the life chances for children, young people and families at risk”.

Wendy Alexander asks about what is, or should be, an agreed priority for every member of the Parliament. I suggest to her that there is a culture change in the relationship between central and local government in Scotland. The days of top-down diktats are over. Instead, we have a new relationship that is based on a shared understanding of the priorities of the people of Scotland. One of those shared priorities, as in the outcome agreements and the Scottish budget documents, is the huge priority to protect people in Scotland from domestic abuse. Can Wendy Alexander not concede that local authority councillors the length and breadth of Scotland and from all political parties share that objective with members of our national Parliament?

Ms Alexander: I appreciate the desire for a change of culture. I simply draw the First Minister's attention to the key recommendation in the UK report I mentioned that was published earlier this week, which said that Scotland is in the lead. The report said that the single greatest priority is consistent national coverage and spending.

The First Minister will be aware of the success of the Glasgow domestic abuse court and its use of dedicated sheriffs and specialist support for women. The justice minister recently declined all requests to roll out that successful model elsewhere in Scotland. Will the First Minister at least think again about the case for creating specialist domestic abuse courts in Scotland's major centres, so that there is one in each of Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dundee and Inverness?

The First Minister: We are expanding the position in Glasgow. Can Wendy Alexander not now appreciate that part of the new relationship that she accepts is happening in Scotland is that objectives such as that on the reduction of Scotland's still dreadful statistics on domestic violence—which Wendy Alexander will remember have been rising—are shared throughout the Parliament, local authorities and our judicial system?

Prime Minister (Meetings)

2. Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Prime Minister. (S3F-305)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): I have no plans to do so immediately. However, it is likely that the Prime Minister and I will meet at the British-Irish Council in Dublin early in the new year.

Annabel Goldie: The First Minister will have read with concern the Audit Scotland report on overseas staff in the national health service, which was ordered after the Glasgow terrorist attack. It revealed that background criminal checks on overseas workers in the NHS in Scotland are not routinely carried out.

Alarming, this is not just about the NHS or terrorism. It is a much wider issue: the suitability of every individual seeking to work with children or other vulnerable groups in Scotland. There is a robust system for UK applicants through Disclosure Scotland, but there is no such system for overseas applicants. Indeed, in a written answer on foreign workers, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice said:

“It is the responsibility of the person concerned to provide information from her or his home country if that is sought by an employer.”—[*Official Report, Written Answers*, 26 September 2007; S3W-4302.]

Does the First Minister really think that that is robust enough? Is that good enough?

The First Minister: No, which is why we have issued revised guidelines. We should remember that, although the Audit Scotland report identified some issues that must be addressed, it found 97 per cent compliance with the variety of safety checks that are made.

The issues that the report raised are exactly why the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing issued revised guidelines earlier this week.

Annabel Goldie: I listened to what the First Minister said, but I am pointing out to him that the issue is wider than the health service.

Let us consider the facts: we should not be relying on self-declarations that might not even be asked for; there is no robust or comprehensive system for bodies in Scotland to run criminal checks with other countries; Disclosure Scotland currently has no jurisdiction to obtain criminal records from other countries; and even within the European Union a possible solution is at least three years away.

In short, the robust procedures that exist for any UK citizen applying to work with vulnerable groups in Scotland do not exist for applicants from outwith the UK. Surely the body responsible for vetting the criminal background of any UK applicant seeking to work with children or vulnerable groups in Scotland—Disclosure Scotland—should also be responsible for vetting the criminal background of all such applicants. Does the First Minister agree?

The First Minister: I should have indicated to Annabel Goldie that the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing announced earlier this week her intention to issue revised guidelines.

The cabinet secretary has dealt with the obligation on the NHS suitably to vet people working in the health services. On the wider issue, Annabel Goldie makes a number of interesting points that I will consider and write to her about. They touch on other responsibilities, particularly UK responsibilities for immigration and the statistics available to public bodies in Scotland, but nonetheless she has identified an area that we will look at and write to her about.

Cabinet (Meetings)

3. Nicol Stephen (Aberdeen South) (LD): To ask the First Minister what issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Cabinet. (S3F-306)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): The next meeting of Cabinet will discuss issues of importance to the people of Scotland.

Nicol Stephen: On 26 October, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning announced £100 million of capital money for further and higher education to be spent in this financial year. On 14 November, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth published the budget, which showed £100 million of capital money for further and higher education to be spent in this financial year. Yesterday, the Parliament voted that the £100 million should be spent this year. Why, then, last Thursday did the First Minister's staff distribute a table to journalists that showed not a single penny of that £100 million allocated to this financial year? Was that deliberately misleading or just a mistake?

The First Minister: Nicol Stephen should have reminded members that the acting leader of the Liberal Democrats, Mr Tavish Scott, seemed to do his level best to stop the Parliament allocating that £100 million to colleges and universities.

Colleges and universities have widely welcomed the capital allocation that the Government has contributed and which would not have been available to them if the previous Government had stayed in office. Perhaps Nicol Stephen will consider two points. First, I doubt whether every one of the tremendous new facilities that will be available as a result of that £100 million capital allocation will be absolutely complete by 31 March next year. Secondly, if that money had not been allocated—if we had listened to Tavish Scott—where on earth does Nicol Stephen believe that universities and colleges would have secured the capital funding to invest in those new facilities?

Nicol Stephen: The First Minister has missed the point. The question is about much more than

the details of Government budgets; it is about standards in government. Ministers are supposed to give accurate information and to require civil servants to give accurate information, yet the First Minister has got one set of civil servants to publish documents that show £100 million for colleges and universities this year and another set to produce figures that show not a single penny this year. Yesterday, Mr Swinney told us that those figures had been "smoothed". Why has the First Minister made speech after speech using those smoothed figures from that doctored table?

The First Minister says that universities have a bigger slice of the cake, but the truth is that they will have less. Universities came to the Parliament yesterday and said that they could not make the numbers add up to those of the First Minister, no matter how they tried. Will he call a halt to doctored tables? Will he enforce higher standards in government? Will he stop issuing documents that deliberately seek to mislead?

The First Minister: Let us be—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): Order.

The First Minister: Let us be absolutely accurate. Between 2004-05 and 2007-08, the baseline for higher education institutions represented 3.13 per cent of the Scottish Government's total managed expenditure—Nicol Stephen will remember that, because he was the Deputy First Minister. Under the plans that the SNP has announced, between 2008-09 and 2010-11, the baseline will represent 3.14 per cent. Even the Liberal Democrats should realise that that is an increase in the share of public spending that is devoted to our colleges and universities throughout Scotland.

Nicol Stephen argues that we should get a grip of the statistics. He should get a grip of Mr Tavish Scott. If we had followed the advice of the acting leader of the Liberal Democrat party, not only would colleges and universities have lost £100 million of additional investment, but pensions in the health service, the education system and the abolition of tolls on the Forth and Tay road bridges would have been put at risk.

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): On behalf of pleural plaques sufferers in my constituency and throughout Scotland, I welcome Kenny MacAskill's announcement today that a bill will be introduced to reverse the House of Lords judgment on pleural plaques. I ask the First Minister to join me in congratulating campaigners from Clydebank, Glasgow and Tayside who have pressed their case effectively. Does he agree that that is an example of how the Parliament should work on behalf of disadvantaged individuals and communities? Will he give us more details about

the bill and the timescale for its passage through Parliament?

The First Minister: I share the sentiments that Des McNulty expressed. The Parliament should acknowledge that many of the campaigners are present in the public gallery and I am sure that all members want to congratulate them on their efforts. *[Applause.]*

We will introduce the proposed legal changes as quickly as possible. I know of Des McNulty's interest in the issue. The bill will return the law to the position that was understood before the recent House of Lords judgment. There are questions about the liabilities of United Kingdom departments. I stress that their liabilities will be exactly those that they would have expected to have before the House of Lords judgment was issued. I expect not only UK and Scottish Government departments, but Scottish society and the private sector, to meet their full obligations when the Parliament changes the law in the interests of justice for the Scottish people.

Tavish Scott (Shetland) (LD): The First Minister will be aware of the outcome of the fishing discussions between the European Union and Norway earlier in the month, which were vital to fishermen in Shetland. The cod quota has been increased by a welcome 11 per cent, but the haddock quota has gone down by 15 per cent and the whiting quota by 25 per cent. With respect to pelagic stocks, the mackerel quota has been cut by 9 per cent and the herring quota by a swingeing 41 per cent.

Does the First Minister agree with the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, which described the outcome of the discussions as a "mixed bag"? How much time will our fishermen get to catch the fish that they will be allowed to land? Will the First Minister outline the action that his Government will take to head off the European Commission's plans to cut by 25 per cent the number of days at sea for white-fish boats?

The First Minister: We will strongly resist the Commission's proposals. I point out to Tavish Scott as a fellow fishing community representative that a "mixed bag" is the best description that the Scottish Fishermen's Federation has been able to offer in respect of any of the European fisheries negotiations outcomes over the past 10 years.

The increased cod quota is vital. It is the first increase in the past decade and I hope that it represents a turn of the tide as far as that vital species is concerned. Tavish Scott rightly draws attention to the decline in other key quotas, but he should remember that the previously large increases in the haddock quota are likely to mean that there will be no decrease in the effective take-up of haddock.

I hope and believe that, as a result of strong and continuing argument from the cabinet secretary with responsibility for agriculture and fisheries and his deployment of representations and contacts with industry, although we may not have the ideal outcome for our vital fishing industry at the end of this year, we will have the best outcome for the past decade.

Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP): Does the Government see NHS Western Isles continuing to be a statutory national health service authority that is independent of any other equivalent authority elsewhere in Scotland?

The First Minister: There are no plans for merging Western Isles NHS Board with any other authority. There have been continuing difficulties, which the previous Government addressed and that the Scottish National Party Government has continued to address. I understand that the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing will visit the authority in the next week or two in order to take forward improvements for the people of the Western Isles.

Nuclear Power

4. Jamie Hepburn (Central Scotland) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what input the Scottish Government will have to the United Kingdom Government's consultation on the future of nuclear power. (S3F-322)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): The Scottish Government responded to the UK Government's consultation on the future of nuclear power on 9 October 2007. Copies of its response are available in the Scottish Parliament information centre. In it, we made clear our opposition to new nuclear power stations in Scotland and stated that we do not believe that there is an energy gap that only nuclear power can fill. We also reiterated that, under devolved powers, any application to build a new nuclear power station in Scotland would require consent from the Scottish ministers under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989, and not the consent of the UK Government.

Jamie Hepburn: On Monday, the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, told the Confederation of British Industry that

"new nuclear power stations potentially have a role to play in tackling climate change and improving energy security."

Does the First Minister agree that what Greenpeace has called the Prime Minister's "obsession" with nuclear power displays an astonishing lack of commitment to renewable energy, which has enormous potential in Scotland? Will he confirm that the Scottish Government has an on-going commitment to investment in renewables and will he confirm its

opposition to a new generation of nuclear power stations? Does he agree that the greenest Scotland is a nuclear-free Scotland and that a greener Scotland is far preferable to a Browner Britain?

The First Minister: I certainly think that minority government in Scotland is proving to be considerably easier than majority government at Westminster. However, rather than talk about the Prime Minister's views on the future energy configuration south of the border, let us talk about the Government in Scotland's commitment. We have increased our target for renewable generation in Scotland. The new target is to provide 50 per cent of Scottish energy demand by renewable generation by 2020, with an interim milestone of 31 per cent by 2011. That is equivalent to 5,000MW of installed capacity—twice as much as we had on green energy day a mere two months ago. When we launched green energy day, which was the day on which the installed capacity of alternative renewable sources in Scotland overtook the installed capacity of nuclear power, people pointed to the fact that the utilisation ratio—for example, in wind power—can be around 50 per cent or even sometimes less. I point out to Jamie Hepburn that the utilisation ratio of Hunterston B nuclear power station for much of this year has been zero, because the power station has not been in production.

Route Development Fund

5. Lewis Macdonald (Aberdeen Central) (Lab): To ask the First Minister whether the Scottish Government considers that the route development fund has assisted the growth of tourism in Scotland. (S3F-315)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): Yes. The growth of direct flights has made Scotland more accessible and has helped to increase the number of visitors from outside Scotland over the past few years.

Lewis Macdonald: I am pleased to hear that. The First Minister will recognise that there are further opportunities to attract visitors to Scotland from around the world with the year of homecoming, the Commonwealth games, the Ryder cup and the promotion of Aberdeen city and shire as a world-class golfing destination. Does he accept that this is the wrong time to be winding up the route development fund with no alternative scheme in place, and will he now listen to the views of the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, the Scottish Council for Development and Industry, the British Hospitality Association and many others, and put in place a new destination marketing scheme to work alongside the efforts of airports and airlines in supporting further new direct flights to Scotland?

The First Minister: Lewis Macdonald was previously a deputy minister for transport, so I know that he will be aware—for the sake of completeness—that the previous Government failed in its attempt to win from the European Commission a further derogation from the new guidelines on route development that have been introduced. That is hugely important for the Scottish economy, because the revised guidelines are very restrictive and limit the assistance that can be provided to airlines. Our analysis shows that any scheme that complied with the new guidelines would not lead to a significant increase in international connections. You cannot, for example, support destination airports that have over 5 million passengers, and you cannot assist new routes outwith the European Union or non-EU carriers. We are considering alternatives, including a marketing-based initiative. We do not believe that that would be effective in further developing international air services, but VisitScotland will continue its own marketing efforts with airlines, which are aimed at increasing the number of overseas visitors coming to Scotland. Another important evaluation exercise is taking place at present, which is to specify how much additional benefit has been brought to the Scottish economy by the route development fund when we were in a position, under European law, to apply it.

Affordable Housing

6. Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD): To ask the First Minister how the Scottish Government will meet the future affordable housing needs of Scotland. (S3F-313)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): Our discussion document "Firm Foundations—the Future of Housing in Scotland" sets out how the Scottish Government proposes to address Scotland's affordable housing needs. In particular, we shall encourage the building of more good quality, sustainable homes across all tenures to meet aspirations and tackle homelessness.

Jim Tolson: The First Minister will be aware that Shelter Scotland estimated that the budget settlement for housing will result in only 15,700 affordable homes for rent, which is fewer than the output of 16,500 for the comprehensive spending review period of 2005 to 2008 that the previous Liberal Democrat and Labour Government set, and far short of the 30,000 homes that housing stakeholders asked for in the election. Does the First Minister agree with his deputy, who said in the chamber on 31 October that the current rate of house building is "simply inadequate"? If he does, why has the Government chosen to deliver fewer houses—affordable homes—on what is an increased budget from that of the previous Administration?

The First Minister: The housing crisis that we have inherited in Scotland is largely the result of eight years of total inactivity between the Labour and Liberal parties in government. Spending on affordable housing in 2008 to 2011 as a whole will be over £1.5 billion—up 19 per cent compared to the planned budget set for 2005 to 2008. That is a substantial increase in what has been a very tight spending review settlement. Once receipts are netted off, the 2010-11 budget is 23.5 per cent higher than this year's budget, which was set by the previous Administration. In those circumstances, even within the parameters of the tight budget that has been dictated by Westminster, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing is entirely confident that we will manage to increase the number of affordable homes that are built in Scotland.

The Presiding Officer: We started slightly late, so I will allow a final question from Johann Lamont.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): Will the First Minister confirm that his affordable housing policy has no target whatsoever for the building of social rented housing? If there is a target, perhaps he will be willing to share it with us. Does he acknowledge that there are concerns about meeting the housing needs of vulnerable people whose needs go far beyond simply bricks and mortar? Will he instruct his minister to meet the housing organisations that are expressing grave concern about the matter with the same urgency with which his Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning met the university sector?

The First Minister: I point out that our target of 35,000 for new build across Scotland is across all tenures including social housing. I wish that Johann Lamont had shown as much concern for the social housing needs of Scotland when she and her colleagues were in government during the past eight years. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

The First Minister: Perhaps she was arguing for the policy within that Government. I have no knowledge of that. However, does she not think it possible that stopping the right to buy new council houses in Scotland—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

The First Minister: —will lead to a substantial increase in that sector, compared with the virtually zero position left by the Labour Party?

Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. During her questions to the First Minister, Wendy Alexander said that she had checked with the Electoral Commission and found that I did not spend any money in the SNP

leadership contest in 2004. The reason for that is that I was not a candidate for the leadership in 2004. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Alex Neil: For the record, I publicly backed Mr Salmond. I have no doubt that that was a major factor contributing to his success.

The Presiding Officer: That is not a point of order, but it is now on the record.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Mr Neil is, of course, right. The candidate was Mike Russell. Perhaps we might be forgiven on two counts. First, it is so difficult to tell Mr Neil and Mr Russell apart as they sit together right on the shoulder of the First Minister. Secondly, everyone in the chamber knows that Alex Neil has pretensions to the throne.

However, the key point, Presiding Officer—

The Presiding Officer: Do you have a point of order, Ms Baillie?

Jackie Baillie: Indeed I do. The SNP needs to confirm that, in a three-month election leadership campaign, every candidate was entirely self funded—

The Presiding Officer: This is not a point of order for me, Ms Baillie.

Jackie Baillie:—and that each of those candidates, including Mike Russell—

The Presiding Officer: This is not a point of order for me. I ask you to close.

Jackie Baillie:—received no donations and no support—

The Presiding Officer: That brings us to the end of First Minister's question time.

12:32

Meeting suspended until 14:15.

14:15

On resuming—

Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Education and Lifelong Learning

Scots Language

1. Aileen Campbell (South of Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what consideration will be given by Learning and Teaching Scotland to including the Scots language in the experiences and outcomes headings in respect of language in the curriculum for excellence. (S3O-1437)

The Minister for Schools and Skills (Maureen Watt): Learning and Teaching Scotland will produce draft outcomes and experiences for English language and literacy, which will include references to Scots. That will build on the guidance that has already been issued on the curriculum for excellence, which makes it clear that the languages and literature of Scotland provide a valuable source for learning about culture, identity and language.

Aileen Campbell: I spent Tuesday afternoon at Kirkton primary school in Carlisle with the bestselling author Matthew Fitt, who was giving lessons on the Scots language to primary 7 pupils. The children's reaction was incredible to watch. Every child was fully engaged and their confidence grew. That is not an isolated example of what can happen. Does the minister agree with me and the teachers at Kirkton primary school that the teaching of Scots in schools and the inclusion of Scots in the curriculum for excellence will increase the confidence and self-belief of Scotland's children, which in turn will make for successful learners?

Maureen Watt: Yes, I absolutely agree with Aileen Campbell. I think that I have mentioned the delightful time that I spent on the reading bus in and around Aberdeen taking part in the same kind of activity.

Much good work is going on in local authorities throughout Scotland. Matthew Fitt and James Robertson of Itchy Coo do a fantastic job in helping teachers and officials to show how the language that children hear in the playground and in their families can be built on in their learning of English and other languages. This morning, I had a delightful time judging the 2007 Itchy Coo competition. It was a delight to read all the entries and to see how well children write in their own language.

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): I call Margo MacDonald to ask a supplementary question—I ask her to bear in mind that the subject is the Scots language.

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): My genuine and heartfelt thanks, Presiding Officer.

The minister talked about the connection between learning Scots and an improved understanding of the English language. May I commend to her the teaching of Latin alongside Scots and English? According to a letter that I received today from a former HM inspector of schools, such an approach would undoubtedly help to promote the correct use of grammar and syntax.

Maureen Watt: I acknowledge the member's long-standing interest in the matter and I agree that learning Latin helps in the learning of other languages—it helped in my case. I understand that her letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning on the subject will be answered in due course.

Higher Education

2. Jim Hume (South of Scotland) (LD): I will keep my question in plain English.

To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will provide assurances that the future of higher education will be safeguarded. (S3O-1466)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Fiona Hyslop): The Government is committed to the future of higher education in Scotland. By maintaining high levels of Government funding, putting significant additional investment into university infrastructure, introducing legislation to scrap the unfair graduate endowment fee and establishing a high-level joint future thinking task force with Universities Scotland, we are demonstrating that commitment.

Jim Hume: Will the cabinet secretary join me in congratulating the University of the West of Scotland, which covers part of the south of Scotland, on its status becoming official?

I was encouraged to read in the press that the minister is sympathetic to the additional funding needs of the sector and that she intends to increase funding when money becomes available. However, there is no guarantee as to when and how much funding will appear and there is certainly no guarantee that such funding will address the immediate problems that the sector faces. Therefore, will she advise the Parliament how universities will be supported to meet the staff pay settlement of £110 million that is coming in 2008, when the budget faces a real-terms cut, how they will compete for staff with universities south of the border and how that will affect their

international competitiveness? Will she comment on the impact of the settlement on the Crichton campus and local colleges in the south of Scotland?

Fiona Hyslop: That might have been in plain English, but it included quite a number of questions. I will try to address the substantive ones.

I, too, celebrate the University of the West of Scotland receiving that title.

It will be far easier for the Government and the country to support the universities as a result of the budget revision that the Parliament agreed to yesterday. The Liberal Democrat finance spokesperson spoke against providing, for example, £3 million to the University of the West of Scotland.

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): That is rubbish.

The Presiding Officer: Mr Purvis!

Fiona Hyslop: He spoke against providing £168,000 to Barony College and £368,000 to Dumfries and Galloway College. The development of those colleges and the Crichton campus will be supported by the provision of the additional £100 million in infrastructure investment to which the Parliament agreed yesterday evening.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Will the cabinet secretary confirm that, when she met university principals last week, she told them that, should additional funds become available, the Cabinet would look sympathetically on increasing the amount of money that is available to universities? Of course, the Parliament voted last week that, should additional resources become available, they should be spent on reducing business rates. Will she tell us what the priority is should additional resources become available?

Fiona Hyslop: The priorities for any additional resources will be determined by the Cabinet. In my discussions with university principals last week, which were positive and constructive, we recognised that there is an issue that must be addressed in the immediate short term. We are looking to see how we can work creatively with the universities to find support, particularly for the issues that they face in year 1 of the settlement. We also want to support universities over the longer term, particularly going into 2010, when issues will arise if the cap on tuition fees is taken off in England.

In working towards that, the Cabinet will make its decisions collectively, mindful of the vote in Parliament last week. Perhaps the timing and distribution of any additional resources will be subject to discussion. We have a three-year period and, going into the next number of years, we must

decide what to do in the short term, the medium term and the long term. As I have said, we are particularly interested in supporting universities in the short term and the long term.

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab): Does the cabinet secretary agree with John Swinney's words from January 2004 that giving a

"funding advantage to universities south of the border"

will be followed by

"a draining of Scotland's academic resources and Scotland's universities put to the financial sword"?

Is it not the case that the spending review settlement opens up a funding advantage for English universities of some 5 per cent now, not in 2010? Has Mr Swinney not ignored his own dire warnings? Has the cabinet secretary been able to promise the principals any additional funding to the current poor settlement?

Fiona Hyslop: There is no evidence that English universities have secured a competitive advantage at this time. Indeed, the English settlement for universities has yet to be announced. If Richard Baker looks at the current proposals, he will see that we have increased the universities' share of Government spend—marginally, but it has gone up since the previous spending review—and that we have achieved a very good settlement that provides competitiveness. We agree that it is not what the universities asked for, which is one of the reasons why we have to think about how we develop and shape them. Rather than debate the past, why does Richard Baker not congratulate the university principals on joining us in a joint future thinking taskforce to take the country and our universities forward?

Jeremy Purvis: The cabinet secretary knows well that Parliament unanimously supported the budget revision yesterday evening. She knows that by the voting record and she misrepresents the views of our party if she states anything else. The Liberal Democrats sought clarification on the status of the £100 million capital funding, and I will do so again today. At yesterday's Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee meeting, the cabinet secretary saw evidence from Universities Scotland that the real-terms increase over the spending review period is 2.9 per cent. Will she confirm that that is correct?

Fiona Hyslop: David Caldwell from Universities Scotland stated yesterday that it would be helpful if we moved on. I did not debate the different figures and, indeed, I agree with him on that point. If we do not take into account the impact of the £100 million, the real-terms increase is 2.9 per cent; if we take it into account, the real-terms increase is 4.4 per cent. As Roger McClure from the Scottish Further and Higher Education

Funding Council said yesterday, we must recognise that the valuable pump priming of capital this financial year will have a very important impact, not least because providing that capital releases revenue to support other projects that otherwise would not have been provided for.

I think that the very healthy capital settlement, not just this year but over the spending review period—there is 20 per cent extra capital infrastructure for universities—is to be welcomed. I urge Jeremy Purvis and other members to join university principals in taking the university sector forward and looking towards where we can be not just in 10 years' time but in 20 years' time, with a university sector that is fit for purpose.

Educational Attainment

3. Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how it plans to raise educational attainment. (S3O-1390)

The Minister for Schools and Skills (Maureen Watt): The concordat that we have signed with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities is founded on improving educational outcomes for all children and young people.

We will focus on improving the learning experience for children and young people by improving the fabric of schools and nurseries; developing and delivering the curriculum for excellence; and, as quickly as possible, reducing class sizes to a maximum of 18 in primary 1 to primary 3 and improving early years provision with access to a teacher for every pre-school child. In addition, our skills strategy describes our ambitions for developing skills in a lifelong learning context, from cradle to grave.

We are committed to working with local government and other partners in the education community to build on the new relationship. Our aim is to develop young people who are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens, and so raise educational attainment in Scotland.

Rhona Brankin: We know, of course, that the Government does not value children and education. There has been a real-terms cut in the budget for schools, children and social care. When we were in government, we passed legislation to give increased rights to children with additional support needs. In its manifesto, the Scottish National Party committed £30 million to an additional support fund for pupils with additional support needs. Where is it?

Maureen Watt: I realise that Ms Brankin and other members of her party are finding it difficult to get their heads round the new settlement with local government. All the money that is in education is contained in the local government

settlement. That is why we are looking for the outcomes with local government.

Lifelong Learning

4. Ian McKee (Lothians) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has as part of its lifelong learning strategy to ensure that staff across the economy, including in the public sector and Government departments, have access to training and education for continuous development and for the transfer of skills. (S3O-1456)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Fiona Hyslop): The Scottish Government set out its ambitions for workplace learning and skills development, in both the public and private sectors, in the skills strategy, which was published on 10 September. I refer the member to that publication for a complete answer. "Skills for Scotland" seeks to ensure that vocational skills and qualifications have parity of esteem with academic skills and qualifications, through, for example, coherence with the three-to-18 school curriculum. It highlights the need to encourage employer demand for skills by supporting employers as they develop ambitious strategies for growth. We set out our commitment to increasing the effectiveness of employer engagement through, for instance, the laying down of specific challenges to the sector skills councils and supporting learning in the workplace through trade union learning representatives.

The skills strategy challenges and encourages learning providers and awarding bodies to support the transfer of skills by recognising the value of individuals' prior learning and wider achievement, which builds on the work of our world-leading Scottish credit and qualification framework. The strategy also spells out our plans for ensuring that our national training programmes continue to meet the needs of individuals and employers. The development of our combined skills body, skills development Scotland, which we aim to have up and running by April 2008, will make it easier for all employers to access the information, advice, guidance, training and support that they need to develop their workforce.

Ian McKee: Does the cabinet secretary agree that, as nearly a quarter of Scotland's workforce is employed in the public sector, it is important to develop vigorously the aspect of the Government's skills strategy that involves exposing all public service employees to high-quality education and training? Does she agree that the skills in that process developed by organisations such as NHS Education Scotland are potentially transferable and that mechanisms should be developed to allow good practice to be disseminated across internal boundaries?

Fiona Hyslop: Many public service employers have good experience in quality education and training. NHS Education Scotland is a key employer in that regard. That is why it is singled out for special attention in the skills strategy. Officials from NHS Education Scotland were fully involved in the development of the document. It is important that we learn lessons that can be spread across the sector. That is something that the Government will encourage.

John Park (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): The cabinet secretary may be aware that the United Kingdom Government is proposing to place a duty on public bodies to recruit modern apprentices. Given that the public sector is a substantial employer in Scotland and that there is a lack of targets for modern apprentices in the skills strategy, would the Scottish Government consider emulating that proposal?

Fiona Hyslop: The fact that there is a lack of targets for the number of modern apprenticeships has been supported and applauded by many employers across the country, because we want to work on sustainability and retention in particular. However, I agree with John Park about the role of many public employers in taking on modern apprentices. I know that many councils are exemplar employers in that regard. We will do anything that we can do to encourage that.

Universities (Funding)

5. Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether funding to universities will be reduced as a result of the proposed abolition of the graduate endowment and, if so, by how much. (S3O-1424)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Fiona Hyslop): No. The abolition of the graduate endowment fee will have no effect on the funding that is allocated to universities as the current law, if unaltered, stipulates that the income that is generated must be used for student support.

Dr Simpson: I am intrigued to know how money can be spent twice, but I thank the cabinet secretary for her answer.

We now know that the Government is cutting education maintenance allowance for 16 to 18-year-olds—a grant for children from poorer families who stay on at school. There are many pupils in the public gallery today who may be interested in that. How does that square with making a fairer Scotland? Will the cabinet secretary also confirm her previous position that bursaries to young students are not to be increased? Again, how does that fit with a fairer Scotland? Finally, will she confirm that a rise in the number of graduates from 10,000 to 11,000 would

have produced an increasing stream of funds for maintenance grants to students, amounting probably to some £20 million in the long term, which will now be replaced from general funds? That money would have been available for her to use to fund universities.

The Presiding Officer: Briefly, Dr Simpson.

Dr Simpson: Those universities will instead suffer a real-terms cut. How do all those cuts and changes reflect the SNP's programme to produce a fairer and smarter Scotland? I cannot see how.

Fiona Hyslop: We are growing investment in universities. There is an increase over the period of the spending review, which has been welcomed by many. The member is incorrect to make accusations about EMAs—the budget line is decreasing because of population changes.

On the central point, we cannot displace funding from the graduate endowment fee, because it was unreliable. The funding generated was not used by the previous Administration to fund student bursaries but was used to provide student loan subsidy. By abolishing the graduate endowment fee and replacing the funding stream for student bursaries from general taxation and the general block grant, we are providing a far more secure way of funding young students' bursaries in the future.

The Presiding Officer: Question 6 is in the name of Charlie Gordon, who is not present.

Primary Schools (Reading, Writing and Arithmetic)

7. Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive what initiatives it is taking to improve reading, writing and arithmetic in primary schools. (S3O-1381)

The Minister for Children and Early Years (Adam Ingram): The development of literacy and numeracy are key themes running across the curriculum. The curriculum for excellence will ensure that our young people are successful learners, effective contributors, confident individuals and responsible citizens. Our policy of early intervention and cutting class sizes in early years will support that agenda. All teachers will have a responsibility to promote literacy and numeracy developments. Learning and Teaching Scotland has produced innovative examples of good practice and has supported a range of initiatives in primary schools, including Scotland reads and MR tracker.

Mary Scanlon: How will the closure of eight Highland primary schools, which the SNP-independent Highland Council proposes, benefit primary education? Does the minister agree that the recent success in improving basic literacy and

numeracy in West Dunbartonshire is a good example of what can be achieved? Does he agree that that model confirms that tried and tested learning by phonetic methods and basic number patterns remains the most successful way of raising educational standards among primary school children?

Adam Ingram: I am happy to agree with Mary Scanlon's point about the West Dunbartonshire initiative to eradicate illiteracy. I visited Gavinburn primary school in Old Kilpatrick in West Dunbartonshire last week and I was impressed with what I saw. Other local authorities should consider that model, but I know that good work is going on elsewhere in Scotland.

Mary Scanlon's first point is about matters that are for Highland Council.

The Presiding Officer: I will take two supplementary questions, which must be brief, because we are over time.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): As the minister knows, synthetic phonics was pioneered in Clackmannanshire, under an SNP council administration that was led by my esteemed colleague Keith Brown. What resources will be required to roll out synthetic phonics throughout Scotland?

Adam Ingram: Local authorities have an adequate settlement from the Government to progress any developments on that front. As far as I am aware, synthetic phonics and phonics in general have been around for an awful long time. I do not want to take credit away from my colleague from Clackmannanshire, but I recall learning phonics some 50-odd years ago.

Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab): Does the minister agree that delivering the curriculum for excellence and consequently improving reading, writing and arithmetic is entirely possible in small rural schools such as Sorn, St Xavier's, Littlemill and Crossroads primary schools in East Ayrshire, which the SNP-led council proposes to close?

Adam Ingram: As I said in response to a previous question, such matters fall properly within the local authority's remit.

Europe, External Affairs and Culture

International Aid

1. Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive when it plans to deliver the Scottish National Party manifesto pledge of doubling Scotland's international aid budget. (S3O-1427)

The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani): As the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth detailed in the Scottish budget on 14 November, the international development fund will rise to £6 million in 2008-09, will be the same in 2009-10 and will rise to £9 million in 2010-11. That is in line with our first 100 days commitment.

Karen Whitefield: I welcome the doubling of the international aid budget over the Parliament's four-year session. That follows the precedent set by the previous Administration, which also doubled the aid budget during its tenure.

When will the Government conclude its review of the international development strategy and when does it plan to advise the Parliament of the outcome of that review?

Linda Fabiani: I do not remember the previous Administration's doubling of the international aid budget.

I am happy to say that the end of October was the closing date for submissions to the small consultation on our website on how the international aid budget should be structured and what the strategy should be. The responses are being collated. Once I have seen them, we will produce a report that will be discussed with all stakeholders and relayed to the Parliament. I very much look forward to that.

Jamie Hepburn (Central Scotland) (SNP): The minister will doubtless be aware that this Saturday is world AIDS day. What priority will tackling the HIV/AIDS pandemic that affects parts of the world be given in the international aid budget? What pressure will the Scottish Government bring to bear on G8 countries to ensure that they meet their commitments to fund access to treatment by 2010 for everyone who is infected with HIV or AIDS?

Linda Fabiani: I indicated to Karen Whitefield that we will look at the responses that we receive, so that we can target our budget to best effect. HIV and AIDS and other health issues in Africa and elsewhere concern everyone. One precious aspect of Scotland having committed a budget to international development is that there is cross-party consensus on the issue. We work with many other partners. For example, we work closely with the Department for International Development, as Scots contribute to international aid and to DFID funding through the United Kingdom taxes that they pay. We work closely with DFID to ensure that everything that we do here complements what DFID is doing and enables us to move forward on international development issues.

It is hard to eradicate HIV and AIDS. Through the health element of our international aid budget, we will work with DFID and the many other

international players who are concerned about the issue to try to eradicate that terrible scourge, which affects far too many people in the world.

Gaelic Language Digital Service

2. John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will set out its position on a Gaelic language digital service. (S3O-1474)

The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani): As we have stated a number of times, we are committed to establishing the Gaelic digital television service. The Scottish Government is aware of the BBC Trust's interim conclusions and is confident that the BBC, the Gaelic Media Service and the other key partners are working together and will be able to provide the necessary evidence to ensure the successful delivery of this essential service.

John Farquhar Munro: There are still major concerns that any new Gaelic programmes may be available only online and will not be broadcast on TV screens, through Freeview or associated digital broadcasting services. What steps is the Scottish Government taking, or will it take, to ensure that the promised Gaelic television channel is established at the earliest possible date and is available to all?

Linda Fabiani: The current programme is that the new channel will be on digital TV by the end of March. It will not be available on Freeview from its launch, but it will be available on satellite, via Sky, Sky Freesat and BBC and ITV Freesat, whose launch is expected in March 2008. Soon after that, the channel will be available on cable. As John Farquhar Munro suggested, both the Gaelic Media Service and the BBC plan to develop online access to services and will discuss with TeleG the use of the space on the Freeview channel that is used for Gaelic programming.

We are committed to the channel being available on Freeview as soon as possible. In the short term, we would like the Gaelic Media Service to work with the holder of the current Gaelic Freeview licence, so that before switchover at least some of the content of the new channel is available to everyone with Freeview. We are keen for the Gaelic Media Service and the BBC to make best use of all the methods of delivering the channel.

Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): The Conservative party has an excellent record on funding Gaelic broadcasting. We were the first political party to recognise the need to fund Gaelic-language programmes separately. Does the minister agree that, if the proposed new digital channel does not provide programming that is aimed at increasing the number of Gaelic

speakers, the BBC and the Gaelic Media Service will have missed a unique opportunity?

Linda Fabiani: Jeremy Peat and the BBC Trust are concerned that the channel will not have enough educational output to increase the number of Gaelic speakers. As I said, I am confident that GMS and the BBC will be able to respond to the interim report, to ensure that the BBC Trust realises fully that education is an essential element of what we are trying to do.

Education—increasing the number of Gaelic speakers—is great, but our Gaelic heritage is about so much more than that. It is our culture and our heritage, and that in itself brings joy to a lot of people who are not native Gaelic speakers and who might not even be learners when they start to engage with the wonderful Gaelic culture. I am worried that the service might be seen as a purely educational tool, when Gaelic is so much more than that.

Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP): Will the minister confirm that one of the key issues that the BBC Trust might be considering at present is the potential appeal of any such channel beyond Gaelic speakers in Scotland? In light of that—which the minister has touched on—will the Government take the opportunity of the forthcoming official visit to the Parliament by representatives of the Isle of Man's Parliament to inform its submission to the trust? There are 2,000 speakers and learners of Manx Gaelic, some of whom have contacted us about the issue.

Linda Fabiani: Alasdair Allan is right, and his point leads on from what I said earlier. Gaelic—and the culture and heritage that it brings—goes way beyond native Gaelic speakers and those who wish to learn. I was annoyed by a comment made in a newspaper about our new points-of-entry campaign. The comment was that having Gaelic on our point-of-entry signs was for native Gaelic speakers who were coming home from their holidays. There was no recognition at all of the Gaelic diaspora throughout the world and of the fact that so many people from the Isle of Man, Wales, Ireland and other Celtic nations will tap into what we are doing in this country and will be delighted to see Gaelic reaching out to all those other parts of the world. That is hugely important. I will be going to the Isle of Man in the next few months, but in the interim I would be delighted to meet any representatives from there who are visiting this Parliament.

The Presiding Officer: I am sure that members will be interested to know that I am opening the Gaelic debating competition tonight. In doing so, I will be speaking Gaelic on live television. Given my previous performance on live television, I look forward to it with some trepidation.

Regulation

3. David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con): I wish you well, Presiding Officer.

To ask the Scottish Executive what discussions it has had with the institutions of the European Union and the United Kingdom Government on Scottish National Party manifesto commitments on reducing regulation. (S3O-1379)

The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani): I also wish you well, Presiding Officer. I am sorry that I cannot be there to watch your glory.

I understand from Jim Mather, who has responsibility for policy on better regulation, that in delivering our better regulation commitments his officials work closely with the United Kingdom Government as well as with the United Kingdom permanent representation to the European Union, Regleg counterparts, the European Policy Centre task force on better regulation and officials in the European Commission.

David McLetchie: I am glad that the minister brought up the name of Mr Mather. She will be aware that the SNP had three policy commitments in relation to business regulation in its manifesto. The first was to introduce regulations only once they had been approved by a majority of our EU neighbours; the second was to ensure that Scottish regulations did not have so-called British gold plating; and the third was to adopt the Better Regulation Commission's policy of one in, one out—meaning that each new regulation must replace another that has been repealed.

We all know that the aforesaid Mr Mather had no sooner slid into the back of his ministerial limousine than the SNP Government dropped the one in, one out policy. In those circumstances, will the minister assure us that the first two policy commitments are not equally dead in the water, and that there will be a reduced flow of EU-inspired base metal regulations over the four years of this session of Parliament?

Linda Fabiani: The Scottish Government is committed to implementing better regulation measures. For example, under primary UK legislation, we are exploring the scope for introducing business-friendly legislation at Westminster, such as that requested by the Scotch Whisky Association.

We want to avoid gold plating EU legislation—either by rushing transposition or adding unnecessary hurdles for business. We are liaising closely with business on the transposition of EU regulations that are already in progress—for example, under the internal services directive. For existing regulations, we are using the regulatory reform group and other business stakeholder

groups to ensure that business views are addressed in major reviews that are already under way—for example, on waste management.

We will increase the role and standing of the improving regulation in Scotland unit to allow it to work better with the industry-led group. We will roll out good practice on risk assessment, enforcement and sanctions to all arms of the Scottish Government and ask them to report on progress. I could go on.

Cultural Policy

4. John Scott (Ayr) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions have been held with local authorities in relation to the delivery of cultural policy. (S3O-1432)

I, too, wish you every success this evening, Presiding Officer.

The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani): Local authorities already make a huge contribution to local cultural provision. The Scottish Government continues to encourage them to build on that and to strive for continuous improvement and excellent outcomes for all the people of Scotland, with meaningful community engagement and practical approaches. That is consistent with our manifesto commitment to widen access to cultural opportunities through the community planning process.

Recently, I met Councillor Harry McGuigan and representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, who confirmed their commitment to work with us to promote cultural provision of the highest quality at local level. As in other many areas, the Government will work closely with local government and its community planning partners. I will also work with other key bodies, including creative Scotland, to progress our work in the area.

John Scott: Several responses to the consultation on the previous session's draft Culture (Scotland) Bill supported the principle of dispersing collections more widely, with financial support being made available to enable the receiving museums to achieve appropriate standards of environment and security. I acknowledge the minister's understandable desire, which she expressed during her recent statement to the Parliament on culture, to assess how the present structures work before embarking on reform of the governance of the national collections. Nevertheless, will she give positive consideration to the proposed dispersal programme? What view might she take of it, particularly with regard to South Ayrshire?

Linda Fabiani: Mr Scott is quite right. We have wonderful resources in our national collections that are used for outreach work, part of which involves

a dispersal programme. As he described, there are issues about the best environment for pieces of work and the length of loans.

Since taking up my post and trying to understand fully the widening access agenda and the best way to approach it, I have found it quite frustrating that no work has been done to state categorically the ways in which our national collections and national companies already do such work on widening access. I want to map what has already been done before we start to talk about plugging the gaps and introducing new initiatives. The mapping will involve our understanding what the national collections have already done and discussing with them how they can go that bit further. A basic part of that work will involve our making sure that we make the best use of our collections and that, in the right circumstances, we disperse them so that as many people as possible have access to them. Of course, Mr Scott's area in Ayrshire would benefit from that too.

In the meantime, if Mr Scott wants me to look into a particular issue, I will be more than happy to do so.

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab): Given that widely disparate levels of provision at the local level is one of the main problems in cultural policy, why has the minister ditched all the proposals and policies that were designed to address the problem? Does she realise that the Cultural Commission's thinking on rights and entitlements was designed precisely to address that problem? Does she acknowledge that the provisions that we included in the draft Culture (Scotland) Bill were an attempt to give practical effect to that? How will she ensure that local authorities deliver at a local level when there is no outcome indicator that relates in any way to culture?

Linda Fabiani: As my colleagues and I have said so often lately, there is a new partnership going on in Scotland. We are moving forward and progressing, and part of that partnership involves working together and trust between national and local government. I do not believe, as the previous Administration did, that we have to micromanage absolutely everything that local authorities do.

We have to trust that those who are elected to local authorities and those who work for local authorities have the best interests of the electorate and the population at heart. The Opposition parties keep talking about cultural entitlement, which was mentioned in the guidance that was put in the draft bill by the previous Administration. It did not really understand what "cultural entitlement" meant, so it did not have the confidence to put it in the bill. The previous Administration believed that that looked good, but

it actually had no teeth. What was the point of that?

Why did that Administration not, in eight years, carry out a mapping exercise of what was already happening before it started to introduce further micromanagement? Let us find out what is going on, see what we are about and plug the gaps. That is what widening access really means.

The Presiding Officer: We started the session late, but we have just time for a quick question from Tricia Marwick and a quick answer from the minister.

Schools (International Relationships)

5. Tricia Marwick (Central Fife) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what encouragement the Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture is giving to schools, such as Pitteuchar East primary in Glenrothes, to develop relationships with schools in Malawi and other parts of the world. (S3O-1454)

The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani): I am working closely with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning to ensure that all our young people have an international education. It is important that they grow up with a knowledge and understanding of the world and Scotland's place in it, and that they develop a special Scottish world view.

I am terribly glad that Tricia Marwick had to pronounce "Pitteuchar" before I did. Fife has a wonderful culture, but I sometimes find the words quite difficult. I have been criticised for not speaking Gaelic, and I will now be criticised for not speaking Fife, but there you go.

The Presiding Officer: As briefly as possible, please, minister. I am sorry to hurry you.

Linda Fabiani: Malawi has proved a particular focus for Scottish schools, and I am looking at that just now. We must develop those links and arrange visits and learning opportunities. The primary school link with Malawi is a hugely laudable example of what is being done. It is important that schools are able to develop meaningful and sustainable links with any country. An awful lot of those links have been established with Malawi and beyond.

Tricia Marwick: I assure the minister that "Pit-tew-ker" is the posh way of saying Pitteuchar. In Glenrothes, we say "Per-chucker".

Pitteuchar East primary school has had a link with Namadzi primary school in Malawi for three years. There are letter-writing and song-writing projects, among others. There are 15 schools in Fife that have established such links with Malawi. What work has been done by the Scottish

Government to monitor the links between schools and other organisations in Scotland and Malawi? Does the minister intend to publish a list of those links, for the benefit of us all?

Linda Fabiani: I rather like “Per-chucker”—that is good.

So many things are happening. Loads of primary schools are linking with Malawi, and I want a mapping exercise to be undertaken. Work is being carried out by the University of Edinburgh, which I hope will report back to me early next year, to produce a database of what communities in Scotland are doing to link with Malawi. Everywhere we go, we find some link between Scotland and Malawi—sometimes, in the most unlikely places. I think that it would be great for Scotland to know exactly what we are doing. That is important. I will look at the information when it comes back. If it needs to be improved, I will want to do that so that it shows the true extent of Scotland-Malawi twinning.

St Andrew’s Day

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is a debate on motion S3M-946, in the name of Linda Fabiani, on St Andrew’s day. You have 11 minutes, minister, but I would be grateful if your speech was a little shorter than that.

14:59

The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani): I want consensus in the debate, which is being held on the day before St Andrew’s day. It is important that we celebrate Scotland together. Indeed, we should encourage the entire country to get involved. I had hoped that all the Opposition parties would find it in themselves to engage in a positive manner and focus on our national day, which is tomorrow, 30 November. I wanted to talk about an upbeat Scotland; that is what I intend to do, as soon as I have dealt with the Opposition amendments.

Iain Smith may have thrown me out of my seat just before the debate got under way, but I assure him that we will meet our manifesto commitment on St Andrew’s day. We will make it a day in which Scots are engaged and a day that benefits Scottish confidence and the Scottish economy.

No Government—here or elsewhere—can force Scots to take a break. Unfortunately, we cannot decree a “full national holiday”, under Scots law or United Kingdom law. Nor can we enforce jollity and happiness on the population, although, that said, people seem happier since May. I am only too pleased to accept the credit for that, on behalf of the Scottish National Party Government. We are leading by example and encouragement in making St Andrew’s day a holiday across Scotland. We will continue to do that and we will encourage other employers to engage in this important day for Scotland.

A colleague from previous sessions of the Parliament is sitting in the public gallery for the debate. I commend Dennis Canavan for the sterling work that he did on St Andrew’s day. *[Applause.]*

I know that my Labour Party colleagues want to celebrate all that is good in Scotland; all Scots want to do that. The Labour Party’s acceptance of the winter festival in its amendment is a great step in the right direction. It is therefore a pity that the Labour Party then spoiled things by making a poor attack on the legislation on new year trading. As a member of the Parliament in the previous session, I was happy to support the overwhelming groundswell of public opinion in favour of a ban on shopping and trading on Christmas day, which is a day for families to be together. The question of

trading on new year's day was left for a later date. Parliament remained unconvinced of the case for a ban.

Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab): Will the minister give way?

Linda Fabiani: No.

When the winter festival was launched at the beginning of the month, some Labour members said that sending supplies of the saltire to pre-schools and colleges was nationalist propaganda. As a nationalist, I have never thought of Scotland's flag as belonging to any one party. I am surprised that anyone else thought that, particularly when the coalition Administration sent out saltires to schools last year. A celebration of Scotland is not a party-political event.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I welcome what the minister says on the subject. However, does she accept that, when SNP candidates are out on the street during election campaigns, it is unhelpful for them to hand out the saltire as if it were a party-political symbol? Will she pass that comment to her party headquarters and try to encourage SNP candidates not to do that? Surely the SNP, in handing out saltires, is trying to appropriate Scotland's national flag for party-political purposes.

Linda Fabiani: There is absolutely nothing to stop any Scottish political party handing out the saltire to Scots people.

I welcome the amendment in Ted Brocklebank's name, despite the fact that he corrected my grammar. In the motion, I referred only to the six modern cities of Scotland. I apologise for that; I should have paid due respect to our ancient cities, too. I am happy to accept Ted Brocklebank's amendment. Obviously, he thought about the substantive issues and has made a considered contribution to the debate.

St Andrew's day is Scotland's national day. In our manifesto and the 100-days document, we set out our commitment to mobilise Scotland's national day for the benefit of our economy and country, and to give a boost to our traditional and contemporary culture. Our aim is to raise awareness of the day as a cornerstone of Scotland's winter festival, building on our success in attracting visitors to join us for hogmanay. We also want to build on the global reputation of Scotland's national bard, the excellence of our summer festivals and our incredible scenery.

We want to ensure that Scotland is seen as a year-round destination that is open for business and ready to engage with the world. The St Andrew's day programme involves events around the world and in all Scotland's cities—modern and ancient—and serves as a launch pad for

Scotland's winter festivals. Throughout the country, top visitor attractions are opening their doors for free, in celebration of our national day.

Scotland's pre-schools, schools and universities are being encouraged to join the St Andrew's day celebrations. Some are hosting events and others have themed their activities on the day around the many cultures that make up Scotland's people. We are creating new events such as the St Andrew's day debate and we are working with new partners such as Edinburgh Leisure, Dance Base and the Scottish Storytelling Centre.

The Government is spending £400,000 on St Andrew's day and a further £300,000 on the winter festival, giving sponsorship to Scotland's cities for their winter festival events. We are galvanising activity all across Scotland, sponsoring events in Aberdeen, Dundee, Inverness, Glasgow, Stirling and elsewhere and delivering the St Andrew's day celebrations in Edinburgh.

We know of 60 schools events and 13 events in further and higher education institutions. For example, Banff and Buchan College is providing a free porridge breakfast for staff and students, and 87 second-year pupils from Waid academy in Fife are taking part in a sponsored walk along the old pilgrim route from Guardbridge to St Andrews cathedral to raise money for the Children's Hospice Association Scotland.

We are raising the profile of St Andrew's day and Scotland internationally as well as at home. A new section of the www.scotland.org website, entitled celebrate Scotland, will provide a permanent online resource for the promotion of Scottish culture and festivals. The St Andrew's day section, which is live and promoting activity in Scotland and overseas on and around the national day, will build into a sustainable, international resource for the winter festivals.

We are selling Scotland abroad. Tomorrow, we will launch a new website in Chinese—www.scotland.cn—which will be followed up with direct mail to appropriate Scottish stakeholders and Chinese media contacts. By celebrating St Andrew's day overseas and utilising Scotland's reputation, icons and traditions, we can reinforce Scotland's culture and place in today's world.

The Scottish diaspora are proactive and very proud to celebrate their home country's national day. To date, we are aware of more than 100 St Andrew's day events around the world, and we are still counting.

We are also doing more here. I hope that some members have already downloaded the Red Hot Chilli Pipers ringtone from the website. I am not technically minded enough to be able to do that, so I would be grateful if someone could show me.

Our national conversation is up and running, and the public are engaging in their thousands to argue for and against constitutional change. The debate has shown how every aspect of life in Scotland has somehow been constrained by the current devolution settlement and, between this St Andrew's day and the next, the Scottish Government will make the case for constitutional change. I urge everyone who lives and works in Scotland and those throughout the world who have an interest in the country to join in that national conversation.

Scotland has been shaped by the ebb and flow of migrants over centuries and the richness of our culture and tradition, our architecture and music, our art and education are testament to those influences. That diverse population helps Scotland to experience different ideas and values and helps to develop a culture of entrepreneurship and ambition.

Scotland is growing in confidence, and becoming more dynamic, forward thinking and energetic. Of course, there are challenges that can shackle opportunities and our nation's potential. Yes, there are pockets of prejudice, bigotry, racism and discrimination. We will continue with a wide programme of work on those issues, and further develop the one Scotland campaign and the national statement and action plan on race equality. Moreover, following the announcement of the outcome of the spending review, we are considering the future funding of work and other projects that tackle racism and promote race equality, integration and community cohesion.

St Andrew's day is Scotland's national day. It is the national day both for everyone who lives here and for anyone who wishes to visit us tomorrow. It is time for us to celebrate everything that is good about Scotland and challenge what needs to be challenged.

Presiding Officer, I trust that you are pleased that I have given you some extra time. I move,

That the Parliament believes in the importance of celebrating Scotland's national day; recognises the opportunity that it offers to both celebrate what it means to be Scottish in the 21st century and to promote a fair and inclusive society; notes the Scottish Government's proactive support of a programme of events throughout the country and all of Scotland's six cities; commends the work of schools and community groups across Scotland in teaching our young people about St Andrew's Day and promoting diversity through their celebrations, and furthermore thanks the St Andrew's societies, Caledonian societies, Scottish Development International, Globalscots, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and all the other overseas organisations who have planned over 100 wide-ranging celebrations in countries around the world.

The Presiding Officer: I am very grateful to you, as it happens. Thank you very much indeed.

15:08

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab): I am very pleased again to be taking part in the celebration of St Andrew's day and the winter festival that will follow. I am also happy to support the motion and the Liberal Democrats' amendment. However, although I support the sentiments that are expressed in the Conservative amendment, we cannot support it, as it would delete ours.

I say "again", because I have a strong sense of déjà vu about everything that is happening at this time. The new Government has helpfully left all the previous Executive's old press releases on its website. There I am, as the previous Minister for Communities, stating in a release last November:

"Scotland is a place where we can all benefit from a diversity of cultures, religions and backgrounds. The contribution of everyone should be valued and the events taking place on St Andrew's Day will remind us again of how rich our cultural influences are here in Scotland."

One of last year's events was the one Scotland ceilidh, which we ambitiously planned to be held in the open air. At least the new Government's jig in the gardens, which will take place under canvas tomorrow night, is more realistic about Edinburgh's weather.

The one Scotland, many cultures theme is rightly at the heart of our celebration of St Andrew's day in modern 21st century Scotland. Integration and multiculturalism are not contradictory—as some argue—but two sides of the same coin. As we rightly strive to ensure that ethnic minority communities are integrated as equals into Scottish society, we should recognise that integration will be all the stronger if it is based on respect for diversity.

Like the motion, I commend the work of schools and community groups across Scotland in teaching our young people about St Andrew's day. As under the previous Administration, packs and flags have, I believe, been sent out to schools. I am sure that many different activities will have been developed by schools throughout Scotland.

However, St Andrew's day is not just about Scotland. We should remember that St Andrew is also the patron saint of other countries, including Greece and Russia. I am told that he is also the protector of Romania.

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): Does the member think that Russia and Greece remember that St Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland? Perhaps they concentrate on the fact that he is their patron saint, too.

Malcolm Chisholm: I am not in a position to answer that question, but I hope that the answer is the former.

As with last year, many different events will be supported across the world tomorrow. I join others in thanking all the bodies that are referred to in the motion for the work that they have put in.

Scots around the world are our ambassadors. They can spread the message about the modern 21st century Scotland that we want to build. As Scots in the past went out into the world, our population is now growing as we attract more and more people to Scotland. A modern diverse Scotland welcomes people from across the world and embraces their enterprise, culture and ambition. On St Andrew's day, therefore, we should celebrate not just shared Scottish traditions, but our shared future.

Just as the broad definition of culture leads to the celebration of diversity, so its narrower artistic definition should lead us to the same conclusion. As we have reasserted our Scottish identity over the past few years through the achievement of home rule, we have seen a blossoming of literature and other forms of art. However, the writers do not all say anything like the same thing and many of them do not write about Scotland at all. For the most part, they are outward looking and they often draw on other cultures: Janice Galloway has reflected on the life and position of Clara Schumann and Ali Smith has transposed classical mythology into a modern setting. That is the modern diverse culture of a modern diverse Scotland. That is what we should celebrate at this time.

It is not that there is anything new in all this, given that the winter festival that begins tomorrow will culminate on Burns night. It is hard to think of a writer who has had more international themes or more international recognition than Burns. Debates may rage about his views of Scotland within the union, but they are irrelevant to his underlying appeal. Scotland's history and culture belong to us all; they should never be hijacked for narrow political purposes.

Clearly, the new Government has aligned culture with Scotland's international image and relations. That has some advantages in promoting Scotland abroad all the year round and particularly on St Andrew's day. However, there are two dangers. First, it could result in too narrow a definition of Scottish culture. Secondly, it might overlook the central importance of promoting culture at local level.

In celebrating Scotland and Scottish culture today and looking forward with confidence to the future, we should focus clearly on two central questions. What kind of Scotland do we want to create? How do we ensure that national cultural standards and increased access to culture go hand in hand? I endorse the motion's reference to

"a fair and inclusive society",

but I have some concern that fairness has replaced social justice in the Scottish Government's lexicon. I hope that they mean the same thing, but I am not entirely sure. We have not time today for a detailed debate on what kind of society we want to create, but our amendment raises a specific aspect of that issue that is also relevant to the winter festival theme.

I will not embarrass the Scottish National Party too much by quoting all the SNP members who supported the final outcome of the Christmas Day and New Year's Day Trading (Scotland) Bill, but suffice it to say that Jim Mather—now Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism—stated:

"We are particularly persuaded that the bill and its amendments offer an opportunity to ensure a sensible balance between the competing pressures of spending time at work, enabling people to earn and trade, and having the time to celebrate and relax with family and friends."—*[Official Report, 7 March 2007; c 32805.]*

Jim Mather's boss, John Swinney, waxed even more lyrical about the value of the bill in promoting a better work-life balance. In the light of those two ringing endorsements from the Scottish National Party's business team, it is hard to understand why the Cabinet Secretary for Justice decided to invoke business when refusing to commission a study of the effect of a new year's day ban on trading by large retailers. Can the minister give a better explanation for that overturning of Parliament's decision than the ridiculous excuse that the justice secretary gave at question time last week—that he could not afford the study because of the Edinburgh tram? If £300,000 extra is being spent on St Andrew's day this year, surely it would be reasonable to spend a third of that amount on an important study?

Given that we are celebrating Scottish culture, I will end by addressing the second question that I posed on cultural standards and access. I reassert the concern that I expressed at question time about the backward movement of cultural policy over the past few weeks. I set aside the budget, as I have asked questions about that; I will keep my powder dry until I receive the answers.

The statement that the minister made on 7 November, which ditched the local authority sections in the draft Culture (Scotland) Bill and binned all the central recommendations of the Cultural Commission was a serious backward step for culture in Scotland. I repeat the question that I asked during question time: how are we to address the current perceived inequity in access to cultural provision when there is no outcome indicator for culture among the outcome indicators for local authorities? Linda Fabiani said that the bill had no teeth, but it certainly had more teeth than

her non-existent proposals. At least it would have placed some requirements on local authorities.

At a Scottish Arts Council conference some time ago, Annamari Laaksonen of the Barcelona Interarts Foundation, who is one of the leading cultural thinkers in Europe, said that, on the basis of international research, Scotland's intention to adopt a practical rights entitlement approach to culture was considered widely to be in the vanguard of cultural policy in Europe. That approach has now been consigned to the dustbin. Although the new Government talks a good game about Scottish culture, we must have serious concerns about how it will deliver.

I move amendment S3M-946.3, to insert at end:

"and, recognising that St Andrew's Day is the start of Scotland's Winter Festival which includes Christmas Day and New Year's Day and concludes on Burns Night, looks forward to the success of all components of the Winter Festival starting with the events on St Andrew's Day, and in this context regrets that the Scottish Government has overturned the decision of the previous Parliament to commission a study into the impact of a ban on large retailers trading on New Year's Day."

15:18

Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): This is perhaps the fifth time that I have spoken in a debate about St Andrew's day. It is a subject dear to me, as a native and resident of St Andrews. I am glad that the minister understood why I took mild exception to the reference to six cities in her motion. As the original ecclesiastical capital of Scotland, St Andrews is an ancient cathedral city.

Tricia Marwick (Central Fife) (SNP): I am sure that, as a fellow Fifer, the member will also recognise the status of Dunfermline as a city and royal burgh.

Ted Brocklebank: I fully take that on board.

For newcomers to the debate, the usual form is for speakers—before getting down to the economic nuts and bolts of St Andrew's day celebrations—to trot out the Fife town's historic links with the apostle Andrew. Those links are tenuous, in that they seek to validate Andrew as Scotland's patron saint on the basis that some of his finger bones and a tooth might—it is a dubious "might"—have been brought to the Celtic settlement of Culrivie, which is now known as St Andrews.

For a change, I will offer an alternative to the Andrew legend. St Andrews—or Culrivie or Mucross, in earlier derivations—was a holy place thousands of years before Christianity. South of St Andrews is Dunino Den, which has interesting pagan carvings and was a noted druidic place of worship. Most likely because of the druidic

connection, Coinneach—or Kenneth—who was a disciple of Columba in the sixth century, established a monastic community on the site of an ancient Celtic well at Culrivie. That well can still be seen in the graveyard to the south of St Andrews cathedral. Kenneth's monastery predates the Andrew legend by at least a few centuries.

It is clear that the story of Andrew's relics added to the lustre of Culrivie as a holy place, but had Kenneth from Donegal not been outranked by Andrew of Galilee, we might well be debating St Kenneth's day rather than St Andrew's day, and my home town might have been called St Kenneths or—I apologise to Tricia Marwick—Kennoway. Interestingly, since Kenneth's saint's day is 11 October, that might have been more suitable as a national day. The November date comes in winter and in the middle of the school and university terms.

As we know, tomorrow will be a well-deserved holiday for parliamentary staff, but St Andrew's day does not yet seem to have gained national acceptance as a holiday in the way that Parliament might have hoped. Scotland's big companies—including the banks and insurance groups—and even public sector bodies such as the councils themselves, apparently have not seen an upsurge of employees claiming St Andrew's day as a holiday. As members will recall, Dennis Canavan's bill won the right for employees to swap any of their public holidays for a day off on 30 November.

On this side of the chamber, we fully support a national holiday on St Andrew's day. We believe that employers and employees should be encouraged to swap one of their public holidays in favour of a holiday on 30 November, and we are delighted that the other parties seem to have fallen in line with our thinking. What we opposed was an extra public holiday, on the ground that it could cost the Scottish economy up to £200 million a year. However, we accept that celebrating St Andrew's day could eventually be as powerful an economic driver as St Patrick's day is worldwide.

In that connection, our amendment stresses the international context of St Andrew's day. Of course, that will be even more important during the year of homecoming in 2009. St Andrew's day must always look outwards as well as inwards.

From a tourism perspective, 30 November is of course a great launch date for a season of winter festivals throughout Scotland. On a personal note, I would like to praise the excellent efforts of the local committee that organises a varied week of events in St Andrews around the patron saint's day. The events range from performances by the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra, the University of St Andrews symphony orchestra and the Scots Fiddle Group, to less esoteric events such as

family stovie suppers and whisky tasting—indeed, I look forward to doing some of that tomorrow night in the town hall, and to attending a beating of the retreat in St Andrews. I pay tribute to the efforts of Waid academy in its sponsored walk to St Andrews.

What do we do about helping to achieve Dennis Canavan's vision of a widely supported national holiday on our patron saint's day? The problem seems to be that existing holidays are so well entrenched that it will take time before a moveable holiday like 30 November will be widely observed. Even if the holiday had been the nearest Monday to 30 November, that might have helped. Perhaps the councils and schools hold a partial key to making the patron saint's day work. If schoolchildren were off, their parents might be encouraged to take the day off in lieu of one of the existing holidays. Also, the Scottish Government clearly has a role in encouraging employers in both the private and public sectors to consider 30 November as an alternative holiday. As part of that, the Government should ensure that there is a programme of events following fast on St Andrew's day.

Despite the First Minister's rhetoric this morning about putting finishing touches to excellent winter festival arrangements, from where I am sitting that looks a bit like wishful thinking. Tomorrow's national St Andrew's day celebrations look a bit isolated as there is no apparent linkage to other events happening later in December. That appears to me to be missing a marketing opportunity. I urge Linda Fabiani to take that on board. Whether the Government has the will—or, more important, the financial wherewithal—to make such a festival a reality is another matter. That is why we have addressed the issue in our amendment.

Finally, as a good unionist, I recognise and accept that Gordon Brown believes that, in a multicultural society, the time has perhaps come to observe a British national day holiday. Although our priority today is a Scottish national day, I would have no objection to a British national day—but, again, only if, like the St Andrews day holiday, it replaced an existing holiday.

I move amendment S3M-946.2, to leave out from “to both celebrate” to end and insert:

“both to celebrate what it means to be Scottish in the 21st century and to promote a fair and inclusive society; notes the Scottish Government's proactive support of a programme of events throughout the country and all of Scotland's cities, including the cathedral city of St Andrews itself and urges it to build on St Andrew's day as a launch pad for a winter tourist season; commends the work of schools and community groups across Scotland in teaching our young people about St Andrew's day and its importance in a national as well as an international context and promoting diversity through their celebrations, and

furthermore thanks the St Andrew's societies, Caledonian societies, Scottish Development International, Globalscots, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and all the other overseas organisations who have planned over 100 wide-ranging celebrations in countries around the world.”

15:24

Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD): For those of us who have been in the Parliament for a number of years, this may seem like a debate more on groundhog day than on St Andrew's day. Debates on the importance of St Andrew's day have been a regular feature of our parliamentary calendar, culminating this very day last year with the passing of Dennis Canavan's St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday (Scotland) Bill. I am pleased to see Dennis in the chamber this afternoon, and I hope that he enjoys yet another debate on the subject.

Before Ted Brocklebank and Tricia Marwick get all excited, I assure them that I will return to the issue of the St Andrew's day holiday later in my speech. I start by welcoming much of what is in the Government's motion. However, on balance—the minister accepts this, too—I prefer the wording of the Conservative amendment, not just because of the grammar but, more important, because it mentions St Andrews the town.

I recall suggesting in one of our previous debates that St Andrew's day should be promoted as the launch of Scotland's winter festival season, which takes us from St Andrew's day through Christmas, our unique hogmanay celebrations and new year festivities and on to Burns night. I would like to see St Andrew's day become the switch-on day—we should not allow any Christmas lights anywhere in Scotland until 30 November, when there would be a big switch on and we could start to celebrate properly.

I am delighted that the idea of St Andrew's day as the start of our winter festival season has been picked up and that we have started to brand the various events that will happen throughout Scotland over the next few weeks as Scotland's winter festival. However, we should be clear that that is about promoting Scotland as one of the best places in which to spend time during the festive season. If the winter festival concept is to be successful, it has to be about promoting across the world the unique opportunities that Scotland offers to celebrate all aspects of the season. Those opportunities include the increasingly popular Christmas markets—this will be the eighth year in a row in which I will probably say that I must go ice skating in Princes Street gardens but never quite get round to it; cultural events, particularly those that feature traditional Scottish music and dance; our infamous pantomimes; the street parties that take place not just in our big cities but in communities throughout Scotland to see in the new year; or taking advantage of the

special air and light that we get in rural Scotland and our Highlands and Islands in the winter months.

We have much to offer at this time of year and the winter festival can and should be developed to ensure that we make the most of all of Scotland. The winter festival must be about promoting the best of Scotland and not narrow nationalism. St Andrew's day can be our national day, but it can never become a nationalist day. It must not be focused only on the six cities, which is why I support the Conservative amendment. When I looked at the official winter festival website through www.scotland.org, I was concerned to see that it provided information on what was happening in the six big cities tomorrow, but nothing about what was happening in St Andrews—there was not even a link to the St Andrews festival website, which contains information about the events to which Ted Brocklebank rightly referred. As the local member, I am not happy about that; it is not good enough. I hope that in future St Andrew's day will be seen by those who are responsible for the winter festival website as something for all Scotland, not just the cities. We have the opportunity to link the festival website to all the other events that are happening throughout Scotland.

I turn to the St Andrew's day holiday and our amendment. I have taken a consistent position on the case for a St Andrew's day holiday, which I have expressed on every occasion that this subject has been debated in the Scottish Parliament. I believe that St Andrew's day should be a public holiday and that public bodies such as the Scottish Government and local councils should take the lead in promoting it as a public holiday by substituting it for one of the existing public holidays—I have never agreed that the holiday should be additional, but rather that it should be a substitute for an existing holiday. Back at the start, the Scottish Parliament substituted the September holiday for the St Andrew's day holiday.

Sadly, the SNP has not been quite so consistent. In opposition, the SNP was all for an additional public holiday. In November 2004, Nicola Sturgeon said in a press release:

"St Andrew's day should be a day of national celebration and debate, and only a national holiday can allow us to exploit this enormous potential."

In a press release last September, Stewart Maxwell said that Jack McConnell

"has been rather miserly with his refusal to create an additional public holiday, and so we will continue to press for further changes by this weak First Minister."

He went on to proclaim that an SNP Government would

"ensure that all of our people can celebrate our national day just like normal nations. The SNP are the only party who can deliver on this promise."

In a debate in the chamber, Stewart Maxwell said:

"if we are serious about growing our tourism market by 50 per cent over the next 10 years, initiatives such as an extra bank holiday are exactly what we need, rather than robbing Peter to pay Paul by taking a holiday away from elsewhere in the year."—[*Official Report*, 28 September 2006; c28064.]

In its manifesto for May, the SNP said:

"we will make St Andrew's Day a full national holiday".

In its document, "It's time to look forward—the first 100 days of an SNP government", the SNP went further and stated that in its first 100 days it would

"introduce early legislation to confirm St Andrew's day as a full national holiday."

What has happened? Has legislation been introduced? No. In a written answer to Nicol Stephen, Linda Fabiani stated:

"There is no requirement to introduce further legislation to confirm St Andrew's Day as a national holiday".—[*Official Report, Written Answers*, 20 August 2007; S3W-2499.]

In "Reporting on 100 days: Moving Scotland forward", the First Minister confirmed:

"It has been decided that, for this year, staff in the core Scottish Executive Directorates, can choose to exchange their existing September weekend half-day holiday for a half-day holiday on St Andrew's Day."

It is not a full day, but a half day. There is not even a holiday for the Government's own staff. There is not even a half day; it is just a choice.

Perhaps Mr Maxwell, who is not here for the debate, can tell us later whether that is the sign of a miserly and weak First Minister and whether Peter is being robbed to pay Paul.

When the SNP was in opposition, it was more concerned about ensuring that the Liberal Democrats in government implemented every dot and comma of their manifesto than it has been about implementing anything in its own manifesto now that it is in government. It would appear that the St Andrew's day holiday is another promise that was made to get the SNP elected then ditched in government. Will the only people who will be guaranteed a holiday on St Andrew's day be the 1,000 people who had hoped to be recruited as additional police officers?

I move amendment S3M-946.1, to insert at end:

"but notes the failure of the SNP government to keep the SNP manifesto promise to 'make St Andrew's Day a full national holiday'."

15:30

Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): I thank Iain Smith for reiterating the SNP's and this Government's commitment to St Andrew's day. I also remind him that if this country had full independence, we would be able to make St Andrew's day legislation. He should think on that.

St Andrew's day is a day for everyone to celebrate, so I am disappointed that the Opposition parties are so bitter that they have used what should be an opportunity to show confidence in our past and future to sow the seeds of discontent and see failure instead of success. From speaking to various people, particularly in Glasgow, I know that if the Opposition parties cannot adapt to and embrace the SNP Government's new positive outlook, they will be consigned to history as failures. This Government will be applauded as a success that delivers for the people of Scotland, unlike the Opposition parties, which have scant ambition for Scotland's future.

I will move on to the St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday (Scotland) Bill. I pay tribute to and congratulate Dennis Canavan on his conviction and dedication in getting his bill enacted. He met with very fierce opposition from the Lib-Lab coalition, which returned the bill to the Enterprise and Culture Committee in the hope that it would change its views and not recommend the bill to Parliament. I am glad to say that the committee re-scrutinised the bill but did not change its recommendation. That reinforces the strength of Parliament's committee system.

When considering the bill, the committee asked the previous Executive to enhance the celebration of St Andrew's day domestically and internationally: I am glad to say that that is exactly what the Government is doing. As the minister has already said, we view St Andrew's day as the launch of Scotland's exciting winter festival. On that point, I congratulate "River City"—a fantastic television programme—on introducing St Andrew's day into Tuesday's episode. I must also say that I hope that Archie gets his comeuppance.

Tomorrow's activities will include Glasgow's shindig in the square, Edinburgh's jig in the gardens, a Doric cabaret evening in Aberdeen, music, dancing and food in Dundee, a ceilidh in Stirling, and living history displays on Culloden battlefield near Inverness. There are international events including balls, dinners, lectures and concerts from Abu Dhabi to Washington. That is what it is all about: it is not about parochialism, as some Opposition members have said, but about internationalism and ensuring that the Scottish people remain the internationalists they always were.

Young people are getting involved. Information was sent to all schools.

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): Does Sandra White regard St Andrew's day and the saltire as the property of the whole of Scotland, regardless of political belief, or of only part of Scotland?

Sandra White: I believe that the saltire can belong to anyone in Scotland or elsewhere—whatever they like. It is a flag and we, as a political party, are identified with it. It is shame that the Liberal Democrats are not identified with some kind of symbol. I believe that the saltire belongs to everyone, and I think that it is a cheap shot to try and take over a debate about St Andrew's day by talking about the saltire not belonging to some people.

I will continue with my theme of internationalism. Iain Smith talked about St Andrew's day being rolled out only in the big cities. Today, I got a phone call from my sister who stays in a wee place called Carntyne, near Glasgow; she asked me if I had any tartan because they are having a St Andrew's day celebration tomorrow and her kids want to join in. It is all about everyone being able to join in and celebrate.

Scottish universities are debating Scottish identity in Edinburgh. Is not that a good thing? There will also be a conference on national days at Glasgow Caledonian University. I have received a number of St Andrew's day cards.

As people become more aware of the day and more employees take the holiday—both my employees are taking tomorrow off—it will continue to grow, which is a good thing.

I turn to Labour's amendment and remind members that the Lib-Lab coalition returned Dennis Canavan's bill to the Enterprise and Culture Committee in the hope that it would change its view and not recommend the bill to Parliament. In a letter to the committee, Tom McCabe said,

"there are more effective ways of encouraging Scots to celebrate our national day".

Iain Smith said:

"The bill will not deliver."

Karen Whitefield—the member who voted against her own bill in favour of further consultation—said:

"I ... believe that the creation of a new bank holiday will not in itself achieve that aim."—[*Official Report*, 6 October 2005; c 19881, 19884.]

I will not read out the names of all the Labour members who objected to the St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday (Scotland) Bill.

Bill Butler: Will the member give way?

Sandra White: No. I am sorry, I will not take an intervention. Suffice it to say, you were in majority Government and you could have delivered a bill instead of pretending that others—

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan): I did not deliver anything.

Sandra White: Sorry, Presiding Officer. The Labour Party and the Lib Dems were in Government and could have delivered if they so wished. They should stop using that white elephant to attack people.

St Andrew's day is a day of celebration and people in Scotland should be proud of our country, our people and our patron saint. I look forward to St Andrew's day being embraced by everyone. We should not hide from the fact that we are Scottish and proud of it. I am proud to support a St Andrew's day holiday.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We are tight for time, so members must stick to their time limits.

15:35

Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab): I speak to the motion in the name of the minister and will say a few words in support of the addendum amendment in the name of my colleague Malcolm Chisholm.

I have no problem whatever with the motion and I do not think that any member opposes the sentiments that it expresses. I am one of the Labour members who in the previous session of Parliament supported our then colleague Dennis Canavan's St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday (Scotland) Bill from the start to the finish of its parliamentary journey—I welcome Dennis Canavan to the public gallery. Therefore, I am particularly pleased—Ms White should note—that the current Government continues to stress the importance of St Andrew's day in the promotion of a fair, inclusive and diverse Scottish society.

As members rightly pointed out, it is important that we recognise that St Andrew's day is not parochial but is about Scotland's place in the world. It is a celebration of our diverse modern Scotland. Scotland today welcomes people from many nations and different ethnic origins. We have people from a variety of cultures and faiths as well as people of no faith. I welcome that.

I congratulate the Scottish Trades Union Congress on its organisation last weekend of the annual St Andrew's day march and rally against racism and fascism. There can be no place for bigotry in 21st century Scotland. The previous Executive's approach—one Scotland: many cultures—was correct, so I welcome the current Government's continuation of that approach. Parliament must encourage and support such

events to ensure that all citizens of Scotland have ownership of the St Andrew's day celebrations.

The St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday (Scotland) Act 2007 not only provides the possibility of encouraging the recognition of a national holiday on St Andrew's day but allows all Scotland's people to celebrate our cultural diversity. The people of Scotland will be able to celebrate our national identity and our membership of the international community. I share the hope that Dennis Canavan expressed during the stage 3 debate on his bill, when he said:

"I am confident that, in the years ahead, recognition of the holiday will grow and constructive negotiations between trade unions and employers will lead to it eventually becoming an additional holiday.—[*Official Report*, 29 November 2006; c 29767-8.]

I hope to see that day and I would be happy if the minister could confirm that that is her Government's intention, at least.

The Labour amendment expresses not bitter nitpicking but the genuine disappointment that is felt by everyone who supported the Christmas Day and New Year's Day Trading (Scotland) Bill. It is in order to ask questions of a new Government about such an issue, so answers would be most welcome. Members know that I raised the issue last week with the minister's colleague, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice, Mr Kenny MacAskill, without much success. Perhaps Ms Fabiani will be more constructive. The disappointment and anger of members of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers and the thousands of Scottish shop workers who backed the union's campaign to keep Christmas day and new year's day special are not artificial. There is widespread discontent—the evidence is in my postbag.

I would be happy if the minister could explain, as her colleague Mr MacAskill signally failed to do, why, in March this year, the Scottish National Party, with the exception of one member—Sandra White—voted in favour of carrying out the much-needed further research into the impact of the ban on large retailers trading on new year's day but now, only six months later, when in government, does not hesitate to renege on that commitment, which Parliament made to the retail staff of Scotland. I believe that people should stick to their commitments. I will allow Ms Fabiani to intervene if she wishes, or she may wish to save her answer for the closing speech.

Linda Fabiani indicated agreement.

Bill Butler: Very well.

Does the Government not understand that such a reversal of the position that it took in March is considered widely to be unfair and that pandering to the prejudices of a minority of short-sighted employers demonstrates a worrying inability to

stand up for the rights of ordinary working people throughout Scotland? Do Ms Fabiani and the Government not know that that is very concerning?

Will the minister relay to Mr MacAskill my dismay and that of my constituents at the content of his recent letter to me, in which he did not mention protecting the rights of shop workers or retail staff being compelled to work on new year's day? Astonishingly, the cabinet secretary chose to refer solely to his Government's aim of

"reducing regulation and constraints on business".

That is a partial approach that gives weight to a particular sectional interest over the rights of working men and women in Scotland. That is highly regrettable and is a myopic approach that the SNP may well come to rue. It certainly goes against the grain of the bill that my comrade in the gallery, Dennis Canavan, introduced successfully, and I urge Parliament to vote for the addendum amendment on that basis.

15:41

Jamie Hepburn (Central Scotland) (SNP): Before I speak to the motion, I will deal with the point that Robert Brown made. He suggested that the SNP is somehow trying to hijack the saltire and use it for itself. I find that interesting, because I hold here a postcard with the Scottish saltire on it, emblazoned with the words "It's about freedom." It is produced not by the SNP youth wing—the Young Scots for Independence—but by the Scottish Young Liberal Democrats. It is not only the SNP that lays claim to the saltire. I welcome the Scottish Young Liberal Democrats trying to use it as well.

I am delighted that our national Parliament is able to have this debate on the eve of our national day, St Andrew's day. It is surely an opportunity for Parliament to speak with one voice and send out a signal to the country and the world that our national day is of huge importance to us, that we value it and that we want to make the most of it. However, with all the amendments that are before us, it remains to be seen whether we will speak with one voice. I suppose that we will find out at decision time.

The debate is important, because Scotland still has work to do to establish St Andrew's day as a national day that is as significant as those of many other countries. National days around the world have different meanings and different historical roots. St Patrick's day on 17 March is a broad celebration of culture that has close ties to the religious significance of the feast, as it usually falls during Lent, which means that those observing Lent can abstain from their Lenten abstinence. However, St Patrick's day now offers huge

commercial and tourism possibilities not only for Ireland itself, but for places wherever parts of the Irish diaspora find themselves, be it Boston, New York or our country. American independence day on 4 July has different origins from St Patrick's day but is just as significant to the American people. It marks the foundation of a nation and the values of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness that its founding declaration boldly set out.

I look forward to the day—which is coming soon—when we are able to celebrate our national independence day, too. However, in the meantime, Scotland has yet to establish for itself a national day that has anything like the significance of St Patrick's day, American independence day or many of the other national days around the world. Nobody seems to celebrate devolution day with much fervour, although I like to imagine that, every 12 May—the date on which the Scottish Parliament was reconvened in 1999—wherever he is in the world, Lord George Robertson raises a toast to devolution and the Parliament killing the SNP "stone dead". Perhaps not.

We still have to establish a national day that has the same significance as those of many other countries. Burns night unites Scots and other lovers of the bard's works around the world in a celebration of the life, poetry and song of Robert Burns. However, it lacks the potential for the wider exploration and exposition of our culture and society that is found in the national days of other countries. I welcome the opportunity that is provided by the Scottish Government to mark as best we can our national day, St Andrew's day. The wealth of activities that are being undertaken by the Government and others to celebrate St Andrew's day build on what has gone before, and serve to make this year's series of events bigger and better than ever before.

We have to build on that and strive for yet more—St Andrew's day has so much unharnessed potential. The debate this morning was about tourism, and the tourist potential of a bona fide national day hardly needs explaining. I have already referred to it, but we need only look at the experience in Ireland: tourists pour into Dublin on St Patrick's day for a glimpse of what is possible.

We are moving in the right direction in that regard. The utilisation of St Andrew's day to kick-start a Scottish winter festival is a welcome step. Used properly, that festival can run from St Andrew's day tomorrow, through Christmas and hogmanay to Burns night in January. Taking in those traditional holidays, as well as modern events such as Celtic Connections, provides much-needed coherence and focus, with a continuous celebration of Scottish heritage and culture. St Andrew's day should properly be the

launch pad for that. Such a winter festival will go some way to making it the sort of national day to which we aspire.

Noting the context of the debate—Ted Brocklebank mentioned this—it is interesting that Gordon Brown is desperately scrambling around for a date to designate as Britain's national day, although we already have days for each constituent part of the UK, with which people always identify more readily. Gordon Brown would give his eye teeth for a British equivalent to St Andrew's day, St David's day or St George's day, although St Gordon's day does not quite have the same ring to it, I am afraid. Instead of desperately clambering about to create a synthetic British national day, let us get on with the business of establishing St Andrew's day as Scotland's national day. I commend the Government for working towards that aim, with the events that it has set up this year.

15:47

Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate. The St Andrew's day holiday gives Scots the chance to celebrate Scotland's culture and all that is good about Scotland and marks the start of Scotland's winter festival and our traditional festive celebrations. It allows us to recognise our patron saint and to celebrate our national identity and our ethnic and cultural diversity—all that is good about Scotland. It allows us to reiterate our welcome to citizens around the world who choose to come and visit our country.

The events are a welcome move, and I welcome the Government's motion. I am sure that the St Andrew's day holiday will be a welcome boost to many Scots, offering them the opportunity to participate in the special events that are scheduled for the day, to do some Christmas shopping or to visit some of the country's vibrant Christmas markets.

It is important that we recognise the vital contribution of Dennis Canavan, who introduced the St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday (Scotland) Bill to the Scottish Parliament back in 2005.

I hope that the St Andrew's day holiday will capture the imagination of people up and down the country, particularly in our schools. In my constituency, St Andrews primary school in Airdrie is possibly slightly more excited than many other schools—although I am sure that it is not alone in looking forward to the celebrations—because 2007 is the school's 50th anniversary year. The year will culminate in tomorrow's events. Throughout 2007, the children have been learning about the school's history and Scotland's history, people and culture. The school is looking

resplendent, having been thoroughly decorated. Even the dull grey school gates have been painted bright blue and white with a saltire. Aside from the celebrations on the day itself, I am proud to say that the school has raised £4,000, which it has given to the aptly named St Andrew's Hospice in Airdrie, which does a fantastic job looking after the sick. That is one example of many that I am sure will be replicated across Scotland.

I hope that in the years to come St Andrew's day will become as embedded in our culture as Burns night has turned out to be. However, it is important that we do not lose sight of the fact that, although the winter festival is a two-month-long celebration, two of the most important times in the calendar are hogmanay and new year's day. Scotland's unique hogmanay celebrations attract visitors from around the world. They are a valuable part of our heritage and culture, so it is vital that hogmanay maintains its status as one of the most important dates in our national calendar. Scotland is the only part of the UK that has a statutory holiday on both new year's day and 2 January, which ensures that Scots can make the most of our traditional hogmanay festivities.

Unfortunately, our historic celebrations are starting to be undermined by the growing trend of retailers to open 365 days a year, with many supermarkets also now opening 24 hours a day. That is leaving thousands of shop workers unable to participate in our national celebrations throughout the two-month winter festival season. Given the Government's enthusiasm for the winter festival, it is a shame that it has disappointed so many of Scotland's shop workers by scrapping the previous Executive's promised research on new year's day trading.

My Christmas Day and New Year's Day Trading (Scotland) Act 2007 was passed by Parliament earlier this year with overwhelming cross-party support, including from the SNP. It was a victory for Scotland's shop workers, who were looking forward to celebrating the new year with their families—which is not too much to ask and is something that most workers take for granted. Most shop workers accept that they have to work on St Andrew's day, given its proximity to Christmas, but the reality is that although there is no real demand for shops to open on new year's day, more retailers are attempting to cash in on our hogmanay celebrations and to turn new year's day into just another shopping day.

Retail is now a 24-hour industry, and many workers are under constant pressure to work extra hours, particularly during the festive period. They work Saturdays, Sundays and even bank holidays, usually for no extra pay. Shop workers are among the lowest paid in the country—many are paid little more than the national minimum wage. Surely it is

right that they should be allowed to join in with Scotland's hogmanay celebrations without worrying about having to work.

The thousands of shop workers across Scotland who backed the campaign to keep new year's day special were relying on the Government to deliver—after all, SNP members happily voted for the 2007 act, with its amendments, back in March. They happily supported the amendment to commission research into the impact of the ban, which is what ensured a parliamentary majority. It is therefore disappointing that the SNP Government has backtracked on the commitment that meant so much to thousands of Scotland's shop workers.

Shop workers across Scotland find it hard to believe that a party that claims to be the voice of Scotland and that is so enthusiastically promoting the celebration of our traditional St Andrew's holiday and the winter festivals is choosing not to support them about new year's day working. I ask the Government to reconsider its position, support Scotland's shop workers and honour the will of Parliament as expressed in March this year.

15:53

Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con): Along with the rest of the Scottish Conservative group, I am genuinely excited and looking forward to St Andrew's day tomorrow. I hope that it is a big success.

The minister asked for consensus at the start of the debate, and she has rightly got that on the bulk of the ground that we have covered. However, there is one important point to make. The minister and the SNP should not try to link St Andrew's day with independence, and it should not be part of the national conversation. I accept that it is not mentioned in the motion, but the minister spent at least a minute and a half trying to link it with the national conversation, and that is wrong.

Keith Brown (Ochil) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Gavin Brown: Yes, it would be a pleasure to take an intervention from the man who, I believe, invented phonics.

Keith Brown: I would love to claim credit for that, but I did not.

If Gavin Brown is asking the minister to ensure that the SNP Government does not use St Andrew's day for a celebration or promotion of independence, will he give a similar commitment if he has his British day not to promote the union?

Gavin Brown: I have not made a commitment to promote a British day and I have not even mentioned a British day—I have spoken for only

about one minute and 12 seconds. It is important that St Andrew's day should be for everybody in Scotland, whether or not they support independence. Iain Smith summed it up by saying that it should be a national day, not a nationalist day. I hope that all members support that.

I was going to comment on the political use of the saltire, but just in case Jamie Hepburn has a postcard of a Scottish Conservative saltire, I will keep quiet about that. When he held up his postcard earlier, it was the only time that I have seen Robert Brown silenced for more than a couple of minutes.

In the past week or two, we have read in the press a couple of articles in which people have tried to say that St Andrew's day will be a failure, that nobody is excited about it and that nobody will take the day off. I hope that they are wrong. I understand that 85 per cent of respondents to the consultation on Dennis Canavan's St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday (Scotland) Bill supported the holiday and that a MORI poll that was issued shortly after the bill was introduced said that 75 per cent of people in Scotland felt that the day should be a holiday and supported what he had done. I hope that the nay-sayers are wrong.

We can hear and read about many positives, some of which have been mentioned. Sixty historic sites and monuments throughout Scotland will open free on the day, which is an excellent initiative. I hope that the number is far more than 60 next year. I understand that tomorrow the world's largest Dashing White Sergeant will take place—I might go along to that; it might be quite a lot of fun. A whole load of dinners, events and ceilidhs will take place. I am not sure whether it is true that a couple of aqua-ceilidhs will take place for the first time ever—I do not know whether the journalist who reported that was just having a laugh, but apparently they involve the splashing white sergeant and drip the willow—those are not my words, but those of the journalist. I cannot decide between the world's largest Dashing White Sergeant and the aqua-ceilidhs. Many great things are going on tomorrow.

The idea of a winter festival is excellent. If the first festival is not the massive success that we hope it will be, I hope that we will persevere with it, because two months is a long time, so getting the festival perfect first time is probably unlikely. In the period between St Andrew's day and Christmas, keeping people going for the first two weeks in December might not be easy, but I hope that we will persevere, because the festival could be extremely good for tourism and the economy as a whole.

I have a small point. We heard the minister talk about a new website that will be established to promote Scotland in China. That is a great

initiative, but we need joined-up thinking. Last night I looked at visitscotland.com just to see what it does and says. Lots of good stuff is on there, and it mentions a hotline to telephone to make bookings and find out what is going on. Unfortunately, that hotline's working hours were reduced last month to winter hours, so it is now open only from 9 o'clock to 5 o'clock, Monday to Friday. If we are trying to attract international visitors from the United States and south-east Asia, we need to be open not only from 9 to 5 United Kingdom time. I am sure that the minister will mention that to Mr Mather.

We must review how events have gone after St Andrew's day and how the winter festival has gone. We need ingenious or creative ways of building up the critical mass for St Andrew's day. If, as predicted, not everybody takes the day as a holiday this year, we should try to think of imaginative ways to encourage people to take the holiday next year, so that we get it right for the year of homecoming in 2009. My colleague Mr Brocklebank made a couple of suggestions to encourage schools to get on board. If children are off for the day, it is more likely that parents will take the day off. Parliament has set the right tone and the right example. I do not know whether it is true—someone can correct me if it is not—but I have read that Angus Council has decided that its staff will have the day off.

The economic benefits could be massive. We have heard how St Patrick's day works for Ireland—that one-day celebration is thought to be worth €80 million just for Dublin—so it is worth persevering for economic benefits. The initiative will be good for tourism, especially if we get the winter festival right. We have 28 million people throughout the world who claim some Scottish ancestry, so an enormous market exists for tourism, for wider economic benefits and for retailers from bringing us all under one strong identity. The holiday should be firmly established before the year of homecoming in 2009.

15:59

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): As I listened to some members, I was struck by the curious thought that, in Roman Catholic countries, it used to be said that people were keen on holy days because that allowed them to have so many holidays—a very bad pun, I know. While I was listening to Karen Whitefield, I was struck by the curious fact that, apart from St Andrew's day, Scotland already has two internationally recognised days, in the form of Burns night and hogmanay. That is quite good going for a small country.

An amazing variety of themes have been stirred up by today's motion: the definition of a holiday;

tourism and cultural issues; yet more manifesto breaches by the SNP Government; Scotland's place in the world and, of course, the United Kingdom; promotional advertisements for the cathedral city of St Andrews; and new year's day trading. That is good going for one motion.

There has been a lot of good common ground: members of all parties have welcomed the notion of St Andrew's day as Scotland's premier national holiday or national day and, as Iain Smith said, the start of the winter festival and of Christmas, but I strongly take issue with the point with which Linda Fabiani began. She devoted a considerable amount of her speech to linking St Andrew's day to the concept of independence. I agree strongly with Gavin Brown: I am not keen on national days that are too closely linked to the political philosophies of the Government of the day, whether it be led by Alex Salmond and the SNP or by Gordon Brown, who is promoting the British national day to which Keith Brown referred.

Linda Fabiani: I would be intrigued to learn where the notion that I have linked St Andrew's day to independence comes from. There is no doubt that St Andrew's day is for everyone in Scotland. The national conversation is also for everyone in Scotland. When I mentioned it, I said that we are receiving views from all sections of constitutional opinion.

Robert Brown: I am grateful for that intervention, which confirms the point I am trying to make. Consciously or unconsciously, the SNP sees a close connection between the symbols of Scotland's national position and the political philosophy that it espouses.

I will venture a few words on national identity. Scotland has a long-established national identity. We are comfortable with our place in the world—a world to which Scotland has contributed much of the physical and intellectual furniture. Most of us are also comfortable with our membership of and commitment to the United Kingdom, to which we have given much of its stamp and identity, and within which we have so many political, economic, social, historical and cultural ties.

However, identity is a diverse concept that varies from person to person. It comprises individual philosophy, religious belief and tradition, professional or employment links, cultural interests and national identity, among other things. People easily accommodate a variety of overlapping identities. That is part of our diversity—it is what makes us interesting and who we are. National identity is the same. Charles Kennedy memorably said that he saw no contradiction in being proud of his Highland heritage and of being Scottish, British, European and a citizen of the world; neither do I. I resent the idea that my national and personal identity can be imposed and restricted by

any Government, even a cuddly one that is represented today by Linda Fabiani.

The SNP view of the world attempts to force a choice on people: if someone is Scottish, they cannot be British as well. Sometimes, SNP members have to restrain themselves from suggesting that if people support the United Kingdom they are somehow not one of us, unpatriotic and lacking a true understanding. It is a sort of tartan version of John Major's cricket test.

I was born in England and have lived in Scotland since I was seven. I have English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish antecedents. With a family background in Newcastle, it is highly likely that my ancestry was influenced by a bit of pillage and rape at some point over the years. I am not untypical of many people who move about and connect around our islands. The situation today is quite different from that at the time of the union, when only 3,000 Scots are reputed to have lived in England.

As so often under the SNP Government, in this debate all is not what it seems. The big furore about St. Andrew's day in the previous session has diminished to something of a whisper. As has been pointed out, the SNP Government is not giving us another holiday; that is another broken promise from the SNP. Things have changed. Instead of a weak and miserable Scottish Executive, in Stewart Maxwell's words, we now have a weak and miserable SNP Scottish Government. My heart beats faster at the thought of that change.

When I was on the train today, I met a friend who is a small employer. Their view is that politicians never think about who is going to pay. The Liberal Democrats are clear on the matter—we support the option of substituting St Andrew's day for a different holiday, but we do not support the provision of another holiday. It is a matter of choice, and the dark days of winter are perhaps not the best time to encourage a new holiday. Linda Fabiani conceded in the debate on creative Scotland that that is now the Government's view too. St Andrew's day undoubtedly has potential for stimulating a mini winter tourism season—I like Ted Brocklebank's amendment to that effect, which felicitously reminds us that even in an SNP-run Scotland a split infinitive just will not do. Some standards are, after all, universal.

There are opportunities and we must move forward on them, but we should not pretend that £0.3 million each year to support the winter festival idea is anything more than a token—and it is potentially offset by the rolling up of the cities growth fund that was used, for example, to support the hogmanay and winter wonderland events in Edinburgh. The SNP Government must get out of the habit of claiming the earth, the moon and the

stars and delivering a rather more barren, pebbly beach in consequence.

16:06

Bill Kidd (Glasgow) (SNP): As other members have said, St Andrew is not only—and importantly—the patron saint of Scotland, he is the patron saint of Greece and Russia. Furthermore, he was not a native of our shores, but came from the middle east. St Andrew is a truly international patron saint and, as such, is just the man for our 21st century Scotland—one Scotland, many cultures. Our celebration of St Andrew will—and should—emphasise that he has been our patron saint since the 7th century and that he will continue to be seen as a symbol of a mainstream European nation with a long history and a sustained culture.

The celebrations must also include the constantly evolving nature of Scotland. Immigration from Ireland, Italy, eastern Europe, Pakistan and India have added, and continue to add, to the number of people—such as my friend, Bashir Ahmad MSP—who are proud to call themselves Scots and for whom this land is their, and their family's, homeland. St Andrew is, of course, a Christian icon, but in Scotland he is also a symbol of unity—of a people with diverse backgrounds but a common destiny. Sectarianism and racism still rear their ugly heads in our land, but there is genuine revulsion on the part of the vast majority of Scots at those knuckle-dragging attitudes and their manifestations. St Andrew's day will not be for such attitudes; it will be for all to join together in joy, not hate.

The celebration of a national day on the day of the patron saint is an idea that resonates with the great majority of Scots. They will see the sense in nominating a day that all schoolchildren learn of but which, sadly, becomes less relevant as people become adults. At present, it ceases to be a red letter day. Making St Andrew's day the start point of a winter festival that runs throughout the dark months to include Christmas and the new year, on through Celtic Connections and past Burns night, will make it a day of relevance to all. If we make St Andrew's day a day of colour and unity of purpose for all Scots, no matter their racial background, and for all Scots with faith and without faith, we will be able to draw the poison of the bigots who seek to divide us for their own purposes.

We might not at the moment have the powers to establish a full public holiday on St Andrew's day, but we can make it a day of celebration of Scotland and Scottishness in all its wonderful guises. We can also, as the Irish have done with St Patrick's day, welcome home the Scottish diaspora and give them cheer wherever they now live in the world. St Andrew's day will serve the economy and enhance Scotland's image abroad,

but mostly—and most important—it will serve to draw all our people together. Let us celebrate our unity by recognising diversity in a Scotland where St Andrew's day is seen as day for all Scots.

16:10

James Kelly (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab): I am delighted to speak in this debate on St Andrew's day and to support the Labour amendment. I see the debate as an opportunity to celebrate St Andrew's day, to reflect on the successes of Scottish life, and to contemplate what sort of Scotland we want in the 21st century.

I want to be positive about St Andrew's day and positive about Scotland. We have a proud history and heritage, and one of the aspects that I will concentrate on is science and innovation. If we consider Fleming, Bell's work on the telephone and Logie Baird's creation of the television, we have some tremendous examples to follow. That continues in current Scottish life, because one person in 100 is employed as a scientist. That is positive and we want it to continue. It is a relevant point to make on the back of yesterday's science in the Parliament event, which was organised by Bristow Muldoon, a former MSP.

Yesterday's event considered some key challenges for Scotland, including energy, renewables, electricity generation and climate change. As we look back at Scotland's great heritage and talent in science and innovation, we must also consider how to reduce carbon emissions, tackle fuel poverty and keep the lights burning in Scotland. Those are key tasks.

It is also important to celebrate Scotland's success in engineering. As I came into Edinburgh this morning on the train from Cambuslang, I saw the Forth rail bridge emerge through the morning gloom. It reminded me what a great advert for Scottish engineering the bridge is. Recently, I looked at some pictures of the building of the bridge. It was tremendously interesting to see each part being built. We should not forget that it took 4,600 workers to put the bridge up over a good number of years. Nor should we forget that there were 71 deaths during the process.

I pay tribute to those in modern times who have made efforts to encourage the Scottish workforce. I pay tribute to Karen Whitefield for the work she did on the Christmas Day and New Year's Day Trading (Scotland) Act 2007, which gave workers in large shops the opportunity to spend some much-needed time with their families on Christmas day. The Parliament agreed that a pilot study would be run in relation to new year's day. The matter has been raised by a number of my constituents and I wrote to the minister about it. He said that he is not prepared to go ahead with

that pilot. That is most disappointing. It is also disrespectful to the Parliament and its decision.

The minister thinks that a pilot would not be a good use of public money. I wonder whether he would like to tell workers who have to go out and work in large shops on new year's day whether the £100,000 that was spent on changing the Scottish Executive's name to the Scottish Government, or the £100,000 that was spent on coming up with the "Welcome to Scotland" slogan, was money well spent.

Perhaps we should not be surprised. When one of the major pieces of legislation on the workforce was voted through in the UK Parliament—on the stipulation of the minimum wage—two members of the Scottish Cabinet were not present. Regrettably, both Alex Salmond and John Swinney were absent on that occasion.

As we reflect on St Andrew's day, we should consider what sort of Scotland and Scottish society we want. A lot of members rightly mentioned the number of festivals and events that take place throughout Scotland. It is also important to reach out to other groups who do important work to build up Scotland as a society and as a country.

For example, in my constituency, the local community health initiative is doing important work—a lot of it resourced voluntarily—to promote healthy living, but it is worried about its funding in 2008. The mental health campaign groups are worried about changes in funding, which is being transferred to local government, and various housing campaign groups and organisations are concerned about whether the current local government settlement will deliver adequate social housing and help to meet the targets on homelessness.

From Rabbie Burns to Alexander Graham Bell, there is a lot to celebrate in Scottish life. We must remember our heritage and tap into Scotland's talent, but we must also speak out for the disadvantaged in Scotland. If we can continue to do all those things, Scotland will flourish and we can celebrate many more successful St Andrew's days.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): I call Margo MacDonald. You have two minutes.

16:16

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): I will be brief, Presiding Officer. I am sorry that I cannot take interventions, but I have only two minutes.

I asked Malcolm Chisholm whether he thinks that people in Russia and Greece celebrate the fact that Scotland shares a patron saint with them

because I wanted to illustrate the fact that I think that he was being too careful to internationalise a national day. It is an occasion on which to be whole-hearted about being Scots and about Scotland. We are here because we want to be here—or because we do not have the points to get into Australia.

The Government should do more in the lead-up to St Andrew's day next year. It should watch the Scottish Rugby Union film that the cross-party group on sports saw at lunch time. "This is my country," it said. That goes for everybody who is here. We should not get knotted up trying to explain how we are reaching out to the folk who have come to live here. Of course we are doing that—they know that, and we should not make such a song and dance about it.

I associate myself with the remarks of Bill Butler. The STUC was enthusiastic about Dennis Canavan's bill and the Government could work more with the STUC. It could also do more about having schools promote the notion of "Scotland: this is my country."

With all due respect to Ted Brocklebank, I am not at all sure where St Andrews comes into it. We have latched on and said that 30 November is our national day. There is nothing wrong with that. The Irish have shown us how to do it and we should copy them—it is a good idea.

I am afraid to say—to Robert Brown and the other poor moths in here—that we will continue to have the debate about our identity until we have sorted the national question. People in Scotland will continue to enjoy St Andrew's day, if the occasion is there for them to enjoy, without getting into all the trouble that we get into by trying to link it too closely to the political. It is about Scotland and her people.

16:18

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): I will endeavour not to be a poor moth for Margo MacDonald, but I question whether we will ever sort the national question, as she put it.

I hope that the long tradition of Iain Smith not skating in Princes Street gardens continues.

The minister started her speech by saying that St Andrew's day is an opportunity for us to celebrate Scotland together. That is absolutely right. It is correct to state that many cultures make up Scots and Scotland.

Like some other members, I was not born in Scotland; I was born in Berwick-upon-Tweed—a town that changed hands 13 times between England and Scotland. For centuries, the Scots and the English merrily used that key trading link

for the benefit of their economy and, equally merrily, raided it, invaded it and slaughtered its inhabitants. I enjoyed being at school in Berwick because we got English and Scottish local holidays, and I am in favour of having more public holidays rather than having fewer or swapping them with others.

The powerful evidence that was presented on Dennis Canavan's proposal and the subsequent act showed that there is little correlation between the number of public holidays a country has, the productivity of its people, its economy and unemployment.

As Iain Smith said, the Liberal Democrats are justified in highlighting the confused position of the governing party on its inability to implement its manifesto commitment to make St Andrew's day a "full national holiday". I remain unsure what the SNP means by that. If it thought that there was no scope under Scots or UK law, why did it make the manifesto pledge?

There is always the temptation of using public holidays for political purposes, and of course the nationalist party of Scotland has used the issue in that way. I do not criticise it for that; it is exactly what a nationalist party would do. Millennia ago, Roman emperors would have day after day of public games and holidays. The number simply depended on their popularity. Indeed, it got to the stage when there were more public holidays and games than working days. In thinking of the use that is made of public holidays for political purposes, we need only look at recent history to find public holidays on which militaristic and political displays were made.

There is to be a winter festival, albeit it is to be repackaged and rebranded. I accept that the sincere view of the Government is that it wants to develop the festival into a genuinely exciting package in cultural and tourism terms.

As a single man, I think that we should do more to promote St Andrew's day folklore. Around midnight on 29 November, it was traditional for girls to pray to St Andrew for a husband. They would make a wish and look for a sign that they had been heard. A girl who wished to marry could throw a shoe at a door. If the toe of the shoe pointed in the direction of the exit, it was a sign that she would marry and leave her parent's house within the year.

A girl could also take an apple and try to peel it without breaking the skin. If she succeeded, she would throw the peel over her shoulder. If it formed a letter of the alphabet, it indicated the initial letter of the name of her future groom.

Linda Fabiani: I am not married.

Jeremy Purvis: Disappointingly, there is no apple on the desk before the minister for her to peel.

In Germany, on St Andrew's eve, young women noted the location of barking dogs, as it was said that their future husbands would come from that direction.

St Andrew is also expected to look after gout, singers, sore throats, stiff necks, unmarried women, women who wish to become mothers, fish dealers, fishmongers, fishermen, old maids, Greeks and Russians, as well as, of course, Scots—a rather eclectic group.

I am not entirely sure why Jamie Hepburn had so readily to hand a young Liberal Democrat postcard. I am unsure whether to commend or condemn him for that. Of course, he was right in what he said: political parties, public bodies, charities, churches, and royalty use the saltire. They may use it, but they do not own it. When used exclusively, the saltire and the other symbols for Scotland become the tools of nationalism. There is a fine line between their exclusive use, national identity, and ownership.

I do not doubt Linda Fabiani's sincerity in wanting Scotland to be independent, nor do I condemn the desire of Bill Kidd to use St Andrew's day as a parallel to today's politics. They can do that, but I think they are wrong.

Gavin Brown's contribution was highly appropriate. He reminded us that the minister said that St Andrew's day should be used for the national conversation. That policy was made by one party in the Parliament, which is in minority government.

If the previous Government had announced only £300,000 to promote St Andrew's day, it would have been condemned for lack of ambition. I do not want a political holiday—one that is Government sponsored; I want a festival that celebrates the best of all parts of Scotland, not only the cities or the Highlands.

If I may, Presiding Officer, I will close on a local note. If someone is lucky enough to be born in the Borders, or wise enough to make it their home, they have the great fortune of being not only part of Scotland, but part of the United Kingdom, and Europe. In the debate, we discussed the Scottish diaspora. I hope that those people will form part of what I hope will be a great winter festival for Scotland and the UK—one that is just great for people to enjoy.

16:24

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): It would, of course, be entirely ungracious, unkind and inappropriate of me to recommend that any

young ladies who hear dogs barking in the vicinity of Jeremy Purvis tomorrow night should run in the opposite direction.

Earlier, Ted Brocklebank gave us an erudite history lesson on St Andrew's contribution to Scotland. Interestingly, very few members have referred to the historical or, indeed, religious dimension of this issue. After all, as a saint's day, St Andrew's day was originally a day of religious celebration. I find it a little regrettable that that element has been entirely forgotten.

Of course, the celebration of saints' days went out of fashion in post-reformation Scotland. Although I am a member of the reformed church, I think that we should remember that our patron saint was the Lord's first apostle and consider the religious element of St Andrew's day to be worth celebrating.

There has been much discussion about St Andrew's day as a public holiday. I must say that I had forgotten about that. Although my staff have tomorrow off, I seem to have a full diary—as is usual on a public holiday. Perhaps next year I will get round to ensuring that I have the day off.

Iain Smith: It is on a Saturday next year.

Murdo Fraser: I dare say that my diary for Saturday is also full.

Iain Smith: Actually, it will be on a Sunday. Next year is a leap year.

Murdo Fraser: Oh yes. Mr Smith is right to point that out. Perhaps I will get some time off then.

In the previous parliamentary session, I was a member of the Enterprise and Culture Committee that examined the St Andrew's day question and, like other members, I commend Dennis Canavan for his work on promoting the cause. Everyone recognises that the St Andrew's day holiday will have economic benefits—I recall evidence that suggested that Dublin benefited from St Patrick's day to the tune of €80 million a year—as well as benefits from promoting national identity and social cohesion.

However, against that, the committee had to recognise concerns about the potential cost to business as a result of creating an additional public holiday. Indeed, the Department of Trade and Industry estimated the cost at £200 million. The Conservatives, therefore, promoted the compromise position of making St Andrew's day a holiday that people could choose to take in place of another public holiday. As usual, the Conservatives led opinion on this issue in the Parliament and everyone came to agree with us.

I agree, for once, with Iain Smith on his amendment's reference to broken promises. Once again, the SNP has broken a promise. There was

no doubt about what the SNP manifesto said: it promised to make St Andrew's day a full national holiday. Indeed, the SNP said in its 100 days document that that would be one of its first acts as a new Government. Now that it is in government, that promise has gone the same way as the promises on student debt, smaller class sizes and the elusive 1,000 extra police officers.

I regret to tell Malcolm Chisholm that we cannot agree to his amendment because we welcome the Scottish Government's decision to overturn the decision that was made in the previous parliamentary session to commission a study into the impact of a ban on large retailers trading on new year's day. Some members on the Labour benches put forward the bizarre argument that because the previous Parliament had taken that decision it would somehow be disrespectful to overturn it. The fact is that when another party wins an election, it always overturns previous decisions, and it would be ridiculous to suggest otherwise.

Margo MacDonald: How do we differentiate between breaking promises and overturning a previous Government's decisions?

Murdo Fraser: It is pretty obvious. A new Government is elected to overturn a previous Government's decisions. However, a new Government should not promise one thing in its manifesto and do something quite different when elected.

We do not regret what the SNP has done. However, as I pointed out last week to Kenny MacAskill, if the study was such a bad idea, why did the SNP vote for it when in opposition? Kenny MacAskill's response, which was that it was something to do with the Edinburgh trams, was the most bizarre and pathetic excuse for a U-turn that I have ever heard from a minister.

I agree with the comment made by many members that St Andrew's day is for everyone in Scotland—it is for old Scots, young Scots and new Scots from whatever background, creed, class or racial group. It should not be hijacked by any narrow partisan or political cause. In that respect, I agree with the Brown brothers—Robert and Gavin—both of whom made excellent speeches on that point.

Just as St Andrew's day should be a day for all Scots, so the saltire—our flag—should be a flag for all Scots. The minister and the SNP would have more credibility if they did not try to appropriate the saltire for party-political purposes. In recent years, we have seen the deplorable sight of the British National Party—an organisation with which I deeply disagree—seeking to appropriate the union flag for narrow, partisan, political purposes. It is very much to be regretted that the

BNP has gone some way towards trying to tarnish the reputation of the union flag. That is to be deplored. I hope that the SNP will take on board the message that the saltire is a flag for us all. We should all be entitled to fly it. No one should try to hijack it.

Let us all—unionists and nationalists of whatever political persuasion—unite in flying the saltire and celebrating St Andrew's day.

16:31

Malcolm Chisholm: In this wide-ranging debate, despite the many differences, a great deal has united us. Before dealing with the various contributions, I join other members in welcoming Dennis Canavan to the public gallery. I acknowledge all his work on the St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday (Scotland) Bill and on many other issues over his long career.

I will start with Margo MacDonald's short speech. I assure her that I agree entirely with her central point that St Andrew's day is an occasion on which to be whole-hearted about being Scottish. My passing remarks about St Andrew being the patron saint of Greece and Russia in no way contradict that.

At the same time, I agree with other speakers that on St Andrew's day we must look outwards as well as inwards. Ted Brocklebank made that point at the beginning of his speech. It was also at the heart of Bill Kidd's very moving speech about one Scotland, many cultures. He emphasised that it is highly appropriate for modern Scotland that St Andrew is an international patron saint.

I was a little bit puzzled by Sandra White's speech. She chided us for not having a more positive outlook, but at that point in the debate I had been the only Labour speaker. I suggest that she read my speech in the *Official Report* and tell me afterwards what was negative about it.

Sandra White: My point was about the Labour amendment, which is certainly not positive.

Malcolm Chisholm: I will come to our amendment later, but the central point is that Sandra White made those claims about our views on St Andrew's day. She went on to say that St Andrew's day is not about parochialism, but who ever said that it was? I pointed out that this year's celebrations are very similar to last year's, but I certainly made no complaint about that.

Iain Smith gave another example of that in respect of the winter festival that will follow St Andrew's day. As he reminded us, there have been winter festivals for several years in many parts of Scotland. He referred in particular to Edinburgh's long-standing winter festival, but I

know that many other places celebrate the winter period in a similar way.

Jamie Hepburn said that nobody likes to celebrate devolution day. I remind him that the Scottish Constitutional Convention's report was launched on St Andrew's day in 1995. His party had nothing to do with that, so I can accept why he might have overlooked that fact. I suggest that he should watch out for another important devolution landmark tomorrow. On St Andrew's day, we celebrate devolution along with the other great advances in Scottish history and culture.

I join Bill Butler in congratulating the STUC on its march and rally against racism and fascism, which are an important part of the lead-up to St Andrew's day each year. I also share his sense of genuine disappointment about the failure to conduct a study on the effect of banning trading on new year's day. Widespread discontent about that is evident in Bill Butler's postbag and in mine, so I would be very surprised if SNP members did not see it in theirs, too.

As ever, Karen Whitefield talked eloquently about her constituency. I join her in congratulating St Andrew's primary in Airdrie on its 50th anniversary. She mentioned the fundraising that the school has done for St Andrew's Hospice, which I am sure is one of many superb examples of work that people are doing for St Andrew's day. She also talked about pupils learning about the school's history and Scotland's history. In that context, I am sure that we all welcome the news of a few days ago that Scottish history will always be part of the higher history syllabus.

Karen Whitefield went on to discuss the Christmas Day and New Year's Day Trading (Scotland) Act 2007, which she so diligently promoted, and expressed concern that thousands of shop workers will be unable to participate in the winter festival, especially on new year's day. It is entirely appropriate for that issue to be raised in a debate about the winter festival. She said that shop workers were relying on the Government to fulfil commitments that were first made during the second session of Parliament. It is certainly appropriate for the Parliament to express its disappointment about the Government's failure to meet those commitments.

Murdo Fraser helpfully and correctly reminded us of the religious origins of St Andrew's day. That theme will run through the festival period. On a more light-hearted note, Gavin Brown told us that a splashing white sergeant and a drip the willow are to be held—given my enthusiasm for swimming, I hope that he will be able to tell me where that is taking place.

Robert Brown and Jeremy Purvis expressed concerns about St Andrew's day being aligned too

closely with a particular point of view, and I am sure that most members agree that that is to be avoided. Robert Brown also made an extremely valid point about multiple identities. It is important to emphasise that it is possible to feel simultaneously Scottish, British and European—many of us do—as well as being citizens of the wider world.

James Kelly made a powerful speech on the subject of being positive about Scotland and St Andrew's day, in which he focused on a particular aspect of Scottish history—our outstanding scientific achievements. We should celebrate those achievements, along with all the other aspects of Scottish history and culture.

Notwithstanding the differences that have been expressed, I hope that we can all unite in celebrating the diversity of modern Scotland and the richness of our culture and history. However, given that St Andrew's day is the start of the winter festival, it is legitimate to focus on an important day during that festival period and to express disappointment at a callous Government U-turn on the proposal to carry out a study on the effect of a ban on trading by large retailers on new year's day, to which the Parliament agreed. As people on all sides of the debate on new year's day trading united in support of that proposal, I hope that the Government will think again and help to make the winter festival even more inclusive and enjoyable.

16:38

Linda Fabiani: Someone—I cannot remember who—said that this has been a largely consensual debate, which is true. I am pleased about that because, as I have said repeatedly, St Andrew's day is for everyone in Scotland.

In his opening speech, Malcolm Chisholm rightly made powerful statements about Scotland being a modern and diverse nation, and said that we must celebrate that diversity. I am sure that all members agree. One of the first events that I was privileged to attend as a minister was the our Scotland event at the Royal Lyceum Theatre, which I understand was funded by the previous Administration and the City of Edinburgh Council. I opened that marvellous event, which showcased Scotland's many cultures. Tomorrow, the First Minister will attend the closing event.

Malcolm Chisholm and Bill Kidd spoke about the need to spread the message among the members of the diaspora. All members will agree that that is crucial to anything that we do for the promotion of our country.

I was concerned when Malcolm Chisholm spoke about the possible promotion of what he regarded as a narrow definition of Scottish culture. We would fight against that all the way. There is

absolutely no definition of culture. We cannot put on culture the straitjacket of a definition, because that would not allow culture to flourish. As the minister responsible for culture, I have said all along that we must allow culture to flourish. We should not cram it into pigeonholes for the sake of ticking boxes. We have absolutely no desire to control Scotland's artists, musicians, dancers and actors, or to examine the narrow issue of "cultural entitlement". Let the arts flourish.

Concerns have been expressed about this Government using the term "fairness" rather than "social justice". I cannot see what the difference is. We should be promoting fairness in absolutely everything that we do as a Government, and we intend to do so. If things are fair, we achieve social justice. Let us start by considering what we have to do to achieve that end.

Ted Brocklebank gave a very interesting speech. It was fascinating. When Ted stands up to speak, we are guaranteed to learn something, which is always useful.

Iain Smith: It is not always useful.

Linda Fabiani: Well, it is generally very useful—as was Jeremy Purvis's speech, which contained a lot of hints for a lot of people in the chamber. However, I hate to disappoint Ted Brocklebank, but I have absolutely no desire, and nor does the Government, to change Scotland's patron saint to St Kenneth—not even for Fife. And, in the interests of equality, I have to say that I was surprised and disappointed that Ted did not make a case for St Margaret, who also has a link to Fife.

Ted Brocklebank spoke of the importance of promoting the concept of the national holiday, which I agree is important. There were interesting links to Gavin Brown's speech. Promoting the idea in our schools and building up momentum will make the celebration of our national day become a desire and a template for a holiday. Yes, we have to build on everything that is being done, and that is the Government's intention. We very much have an eye on the year of homecoming in 2009. As Gavin Brown said, that is important.

Ted Brocklebank and Murdo Fraser spoke about the religious significance of St Andrew's day. I spoke to Cardinal Keith O'Brien last night and I learned that St Mary's cathedral—which holds relics of St Andrew—has a special St Andrew's day mass, which John Swinney will attend to say a few words. My colleague Maureen Watt tells me that last Sunday, to celebrate St Andrew's day, she read the lessons in Doric in the kirk of St Nicholas in Aberdeen, which is great.

There has been a lot of talk about the winter festival, but there is so much more to it than people think. We have to get that across. I am delighted that people are already coming to us and

asking whether they can be part of the winter festival. For example, we are going to have the first Gaelic Christmas concert in Glasgow, at St Andrew's in the square, which will be headed by Fiona Mackenzie, and the organisers have requested that the concert be part of the winter festival. Karen Whitefield mentioned hogmanay, and we also have Celtic Connections and Burns night. The Highland new year in the middle of January, up in Inverness, is also part of the winter festival, as is Shetland's Up-Helly-Aa. The difference is that we are trying very hard to unify everything under the winter festival theme. As Margo MacDonald said, we can build that up, and use this year as a springboard, which is absolutely what we intend to do.

Sandra White was disappointed at the negativity that some members have shown. I am too, but I hope that we can all get over that negativity and celebrate our national day together. The Labour group made contributions about the previously proposed potential for a new year's day holiday. Anyone listening to them might have thought that the Labour group had pushed the case that the big shops should close on new year's day, and they might have thought that, had Labour won the election—which it did not—the proposal would have been immediately implemented and all the big shops would have closed on new year's day.

Bill Butler rose—

Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab) rose—

Linda Fabiani: That is not the case. The Labour group backed a study of whether it would be appropriate to close the shops on new year's day.

Bill Butler: Will the member give way on that point?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The minister does not appear to be taking an intervention.

Linda Fabiani: The Labour members do not like hearing the reality, which is that the Labour group backed off from its commitment and did not try to push it through. Labour members are now saying that no matter the result of the investigation and research, they were going to pronounce that holiday. As usual, they were not going to listen.

While we are at it, let us nail the myth about the SNP's position on the minimum wage. James Kelly made a spurious claim about what happened at Westminster. He was talking about a House of Lords vote on an amendment. Our own Alasdair Morgan took part in the committee that oversaw the National Minimum Wage Bill. Our MPs supported the bill and voted for it at its second reading. Our MPs supported Trades Union Congress-backed amendments to strengthen the bill. Our MPs voted on it more often than Tony

Blair and as often as Gordon Brown. Let us nail that myth right now.

Having said all that, I am delighted that there is common ground in relation to our St Andrew's day proposals, as Robert Brown said. I am concerned about Robert Brown's concern about the identity that is being promoted. Robert Brown explained his antecedents, who are varied and treasured, as are my own and those of many people in the SNP group.

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

Linda Fabiani: I also worry about the view that we are somehow appropriating symbols. We are not doing that. Of course we use Scotland's flag—we are proud to be Scots. While I am on that subject, I have often seen the Conservatives using the union flag. Does that mean that they are appropriating it for their advantage? Possibly.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Minister, I am sorry, but you should be finished.

Linda Fabiani: I will finish now. Let us have a fantastic St Andrew's day. Let us forget our differences, join hands for our national day tomorrow and have a very good time.

Scottish Commission for Human Rights (Appointment of Chair)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The next item of business is a debate on motion S3M-884, in the name of Pauline McNeill, on behalf of the selection panel, on the appointment of the chair of the Scottish commission for human rights.

16:47

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): As a member of the selection panel, I invite members to nominate Professor Alan Miller for appointment as the first chair of the Scottish commission for human rights, for an initial period of five years.

I will say a few words about the background and the selection process before I turn to the proposed nomination of Professor Miller. The Scottish Commissioner for Human Rights Bill was short but controversial and was finally passed in the previous session of Parliament. The Justice 1 Committee had identified that there were many bodies already dealing with human rights, which made the appointment of a Scottish commissioner for human rights difficult to justify. Indeed, the final committee report stated that there was only a small gap in the field of human rights. However, after some robust debate and detailed scrutiny, the then Scottish Executive was persuaded to make considerable changes to the bill to ensure that the Scottish Parliament would fund a human rights body that was more collegiate in nature, would fill the remaining gap in the field of human rights and be better able to respond to the everyday issues that affect the lives of ordinary Scots.

The commission's main function is to promote human rights and an understanding of what human rights are. Its legal powers were carefully crafted to recognise the existence of all the other bodies in the field of equality, public services and human rights. A strategic plan will now set out and guide the work of the commission. It will be published and available to anyone who wants to see what the commission is spending its time and money on. The Scottish Commission for Human Rights Act 2006 sets out clearly that the commission does not have overall responsibility for human rights but acts within its own remit. The responsibility for the enforcement of human rights is shared and the work of the Parliament continues to have human rights at its heart. The Scottish courts have the overall duty to make rulings and enforce the law.

We like to do things in our own way in Scotland and the 2006 act is no different. Unlike the Commission for Equality and Human Rights, which

was set up by Westminster, the Scottish commission for human rights will be accountable to the Parliament and not to ministers. We spent time looking at other models of human rights commissions around the world and we settled on our own model. Indeed, it was Alan Miller who advised the interview panel that Scotland is now seen as a model for other countries to follow, and we should be proud of that.

Although we have not pleased everyone here—I am sure that we will hear from Bill Aitken, as we do—we have balanced the need for the commission to have the right measure of independence from the legislature while being financially accountable to the Parliament. The Parliament decides on the location of the commission and sets its budget, while the commission is responsible for setting its priorities and ensuring its independence.

I put on the record my thanks for their perseverance to the Justice 1 Committee members and to Robert Brown, then Deputy Minister for Education and Young People in charge of the bill.

The recruitment process was carried out by a selection panel on behalf of the Parliament, chaired by the Presiding Officer, and it consisted of Bill Aitken, Alasdair Allan, Hugh O'Donnell, Sandra White and me. The position was advertised in the press and I thank Louise Rose, the panel's independent adviser.

Professor Miller is a well-known and respected human rights lawyer with 25 years of involvement with the legal, academic and voluntary communities in Scotland. He is currently the director of McGrigors Rights, a human rights law consultancy, and a visiting professor of law, specialising in human rights, at the University of Strathclyde. In this role, he has assisted public authorities to develop best practice in compliance with human rights legislation.

Professor Miller also brings an international perspective and insight gained from his engagement with the United Nations and other bodies in capacity-building initiatives in around 20 countries in the world. That he has trained 100 Iraqi judges certainly impressed me.

The panel had no hesitation in agreeing the appointment unanimously. Indeed, the panel was relieved that it was able to make the appointment unanimously. Professor Miller will prove to be an effective and well-respected chair, who will bring to the post enthusiasm, knowledge and, importantly, an inclusive approach. I am sure that the Parliament will want to wish him every success in his role; it will be a demanding one.

Although the Human Rights Act 1998 has had some bad press, it is up to us to ensure that the

work of the commission relates to the experiences of ordinary Scots. My advice to Alan Miller and the commission that he will appoint is to remember that its work must ensure that it includes the most disadvantaged communities in our society and makes human rights relevant to what they do.

May I be the first to congratulate Professor Alan Miller on getting this far.

I move,

That the Parliament nominates Professor Alan Miller to Her Majesty The Queen for appointment as Chair of the Scottish Commission for Human Rights.

16:53

Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): I am very pleased to say that today sees the appointment of the first ever chair of the Scottish commission for human rights, Professor Alan Miller.

His experience in human rights and law is very impressive—director of a human rights law consultancy, visiting professor of law at the University of Strathclyde, and internationally renowned throughout the world as an expert adviser to the business leaders initiative on human rights, led by Mary Robinson, the former UN high commissioner for human rights.

Professor Miller's remit will be to promote awareness, understanding and respect for human rights, as well as reviewing and recommending changes to the policies or practices of public authorities and providing them with guidance. He will also work with the Parliament.

I commend his appointment to the Parliament. I look forward to working with the commission and wish Professor Miller all the best in his post.

16:54

Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con): I have been accused of many things, but being a hypocrite is not one of them, so I start by saying that today is a day that I hoped we would never see.

It appears that, over the years, this Parliament has come to require a commissioner to govern every possible facet of human behaviour. There are more tsars than there were in the Romanov dynasty. To our minds, this was a completely unnecessary appointment, but Parliament made a decision and, as democrats, my colleagues and I accept it.

Alan Miller and I have known each other for many years. I first came across him when he was a young solicitor who frequently appeared before me in the district court and expressed concern when condign punishment was visited on his clients. He was also a council constituent—although I suspect not a voter—of mine in the west

end of Glasgow. It would be churlish of me to say anything other than that he has made a considerable contribution to human rights law. He is committed to the concept of human rights—as I imagine are all members of the Parliament—and he has done excellent work in the field. Pauline McNeill referred to his involvement in the training of judges in Iraq. I am sure that the benefits of that work will be manifest in Iraq in years to come.

I congratulate Professor Miller on his forthcoming appointment and look forward to working with him on occasions when human rights issues become entangled in the workings of the Parliament. This is a good appointment. I wish that we had never had to make it, but if we must have someone do the job there can be no better applicant than Alan Miller.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: There are too many conversations taking place in the chamber. If members must converse, will they please do so outside the chamber.

16:56

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): I am grateful for the opportunity to say a few words. When I was Deputy Minister for Education and Young People during the previous session, I took the Scottish Commissioner for Human Rights Bill through the Parliament, not without tribulation, as Pauline McNeill mentioned. A key commitment from Liberal Democrats was delivered by Liberal Democrats in Government.

The commission's success in realising the hopes that human rights campaigners have for it will rest in considerable measure on the body's quality and style and not least on its chair. There was a gratifyingly large number of applications for the post, but I am not surprised that the proposed appointee is Professor Alan Miller. Four or five years ago I might have made a profitable wager on his appointment.

I have known Alan Miller for many years. He has exactly the attributes that are needed for the post. He has a wide and probably unrivalled knowledge of and connection with not just the subject matter, but everyone of significance who operates in the field, in the United Kingdom and internationally. He is highly respected here and elsewhere. He has huge experience of the practical implications of human rights for ordinary people. Above all, he has a measured, unassuming, understated style, which is not flamboyant or showy but—much more important—solid and authoritative. He knows how to work with rather than against people. He is in the business of persuasion rather than compulsion.

Alan Miller is the ideal man to take the human rights agenda forward and to demonstrate its

worth in everyday life and its value to people who need the protection that good standards offer. I am delighted to support his appointment and I wish him and the commission well in the new role and programme of work that this Parliament, to its great credit, has established in Scotland. I support the motion.

16:57

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): I am grateful to Pauline McNeill and the other members of the selection panel. The Scottish Government had no involvement in the appointment process, which is rightly a matter for the Parliament, but we are happy to accept the panel's recommendation.

I congratulate Professor Miller on his nomination. His reputation goes before him, as Pauline McNeill, Robert Brown and Bill Aitken said. From personal experience I know that he has an impressive breadth of knowledge on human rights issues. He has been instrumental in devising and delivering human rights training for Scottish Government staff, as well as being involved in numerous matters around the globe, as Pauline McNeill said. If the nomination is confirmed in today's vote, I am sure that Professor Miller will be an excellent choice as the first chair of the Scottish commission for human rights.

16:58

Hugh O'Donnell (Central Scotland) (LD): It is a great honour to wind up this short debate on the nomination of Professor Alan Miller for appointment as the chair of the Scottish commission for human rights. On behalf of Liberal Democrats and, I am sure, all members, I congratulate him on his nomination.

I pay tribute to Robert Brown, who, when he was Deputy Minister for Education and Young People in the previous session, steered us through choppy waters to the position that we are now in. I am sure that we are all grateful to him.

The standard of the candidates that the panel had to select from was exceptional and I am sure that the nomination will reinforce our position as leading defenders of human rights throughout the world.

Sadly, we have seen over recent times the slow and often unremarked-upon erosion of many of the civil rights that we take for granted and threats to other rights in the name of protecting us from dangers, real or otherwise. It is vital that we do not sleepwalk into losing any of our sense of personal privacy or the civil liberties of which we are rightly proud. Nor should we forget that, alongside our human rights responsibilities, we have responsibilities to wider society: neither the

commission nor the appointment of its chair should be considered a licence for spurious challenges under any legislation.

As a member of the Parliament, I look forward to working with Professor Miller in the cause of human rights. As a citizen of Scotland, I welcome and fully support his nomination to the post.

Decision Time

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is decision time. There are nine questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S3M-945.2, in the name of Lewis Macdonald, which seeks to amend motion S3M-945, in the name of Jim Mather, on tourism, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (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, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)

Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 58, Against 61, Abstentions 1.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The second question is, that amendment S3M-945.3, in the name of Gavin Brown, which seeks to amend motion S3M-945, in the name of Jim Mather, on tourism, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The third question is, that amendment S3M-945.1, in the name of Liam McArthur, which seeks to amend motion S3M-945, in the name of Jim Mather, on tourism, 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)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (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, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)

Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 56, Against 63, Abstentions 1.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-945, in the name of Jim Mather, on tourism, as amended, be agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament recognises the vital role that tourism has in increasing sustainable economic growth in line with the Scottish Government's Economic Strategy; reiterates its support for the ambitions set out in the Tourism Framework for Change that tourism revenue should increase by 50% in real terms in the decade to 2015 and that Scotland should be one of Europe's most sustainable tourism destinations; recognises the appetite in the industry to improve and exceed visitor expectation; welcomes the fact that these ambitions are shared between the public, private and third sectors; further recognises the important work done by the excellent network of tourist information centres; believes that decision-making at a local level is a crucial element of an effective tourism strategy, and calls on the Scottish Government to give a more detailed explanation as to how the 50% growth ambition is to be met and the role of the public, private and third sectors in doing so.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S3M-946.3, in the name of Malcolm Chisholm, which seeks to amend motion S3M-946, in the name of Linda Fabiani, on St Andrew's day, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)

Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)

Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 44, Against 60, Abstentions 15.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S3M-946.2, in the name of Ted Brocklebank, which seeks to amend motion S3M-946, in the name of Linda Fabiani, on St Andrew's day, be agreed to. Are we all agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: That is agreed.

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: That is not agreed—I beg your pardon. I thought that it was too good to be true. There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)

Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)

Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 78, Against 42, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S3M-946.1, in the name of Iain Smith, which seeks to amend motion S3M-946, in the name of Linda Fabiani, on St Andrew's day, as amended, be agreed to. Are we all agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)

Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)

Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 72, Against 46, Abstentions 2.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-946, in the name of Linda Fabiani, on St Andrew's day, as amended, be agreed to. Are we all agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)

Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 74, Against 46, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament believes in the importance of celebrating Scotland's national day; recognises the opportunity that it offers both to celebrate what it means to be Scottish in the 21st century and to promote a fair and inclusive society; notes the Scottish Government's proactive support of a programme of events throughout the country and all of Scotland's cities, including the cathedral city of St Andrews itself and urges it to build on St Andrew's Day as a launch-pad for a winter tourist season; commends the work of schools and community groups across Scotland in teaching our young people about St Andrew's Day and its importance in a national as well as an international context and promoting diversity through their celebrations, and furthermore thanks the St Andrew's societies, Caledonian societies, Scottish Development International, Globalscots, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and all the other overseas organisations who have planned over 100 wide-ranging celebrations in countries around the world but notes the failure of the SNP government to keep the SNP manifesto promise to "make St Andrew's Day a full national holiday".

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S3M-884, in the name of Pauline McNeill, on behalf of the selection panel on the appointment of the chair of the Scottish commission for human rights, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament nominates Professor Alan Miller to Her Majesty The Queen for appointment as Chair of the Scottish Commission for Human Rights.

The Presiding Officer: That brings us to the end of decision time. I ask members leaving the chamber to do so quietly. *[Interruption.]* Ms McNeill, do not walk across the floor of the chamber, please. Members should know by now not to walk across the floor of the chamber when Parliament is sitting.

Coalfields Regeneration Trust

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S3M-524, in the name of Cathy Jamieson, on the Coalfields Regeneration Trust. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament commends the work of the Coalfields Regeneration Trust in Scotland in supporting and helping to rebuild coalfield communities; notes the positive impact made by the trust throughout the former Scottish coalfields; welcomes the support that the trust has provided for community-based organisations in East Ayrshire, such as Yipworld.com, the Muirkirk Enterprise Group and the Bellsbank Women's Project, and for other projects in local authority areas throughout Scotland that provide opportunities and activities for local people, and hopes that support will continue for the work of the Coalfields Regeneration Trust in helping to create healthy, prosperous and sustainable communities in Scotland's coalfield areas.

17:09

Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab): Like most people in Ayrshire, I am acutely aware of our mining heritage and community history. Only a few weeks ago, that was brought vividly to life by schoolchildren performing "The Price of Coal" in packed local venues. More than a few tears were shed—some in laughter and some because of painful memories—as the history of coal mining in Ayrshire was told in music and song. The harsh regimes that were faced by the early miners and their families, the Bevin boys and the miners strike were all remembered.

Another poignant moment was the memorial service for the men who died in the Kames pit disaster in Muirkirk on 19 November 1957. Again, a few tears were shed, but despite the impact of the disaster's still being felt in Muirkirk today, the community took the chance to invite old friends back to the village to share memories of the good times, as well as their grief. That community spirit is priceless, so we must work hard to keep it alive and allow it to prosper—an essential part of why the Coalfields Regeneration Trust was set up.

The trust was established in 1999 following a report by the United Kingdom Government's coalfields task force. It now works in the coalfield communities of Scotland, England and Wales and is leading the way in regenerating and restoring healthy, prosperous and sustainable communities.

In 2005, an evaluation report that was carried out on the CRT in Scotland by Napier University indicated the extent of the problems in former coalfield community areas. Of the 500,000 people who live in those areas, around 300,000 live in

council wards that are in the 20 per cent that are defined as the most deprived by the Scottish index of multiple deprivation.

The coalfield communities campaign report in 2005 stated:

"Statistics show that the coal industry continues to cast a shadow over the well-being of many areas long after the mines themselves have closed ... Re-building the economic and social base of these communities was never going to be quick or easy. There has been progress, but the figures on deprivation show that the job is far from finished".

The reports also showed high levels of long-term unemployment and long-term illness, often industry related. Many communities were geographically isolated from major centres of population and employment, and there was weak transport infrastructure, reflecting the semi-rural character of many mining areas. There was low educational attainment and gaps in basic skills, which were reflected in a lack of formal educational achievement. There was also poor quality housing stock and low demand for new investment in housing. All those factors have contributed to high levels of income poverty and welfare dependency, and those problems have provided a focus for the CRT and its work not just in my constituency but in other parts of Scotland.

What has the trust achieved? Since 1999, it has awarded more than £10 million to social and economic projects in coalfield areas and has helped 400 different organisations.

Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab): I congratulate Cathy Jamieson on securing the debate and thank her for taking this brief intervention. I am afraid that a prior commitment means that I will not be able to stay for the whole debate. I thank the Coalfields Regeneration Trust for the hugely important contribution that it has made, including more than £132,000 of funding across nine different projects in my area.

Does Cathy Jamieson agree that the trust's recent focus on building sustainability into its work is extremely welcome and represents the way forward if we are to ensure that our former coalfield communities are cohesive, prosperous and viable in the future?

Cathy Jamieson: I agree with Rhona Brankin. Her constituency, which I had the pleasure of visiting last night, has much in common with mine. I am sure that we will see the benefit of the CRT's work in both areas in the years to come.

In the current 2005 to 2008 funding round, the trust has supported 126 different projects and awarded grants of more than £3 million. What that really means—this can be seen by the large number of people in the public gallery for this debate—is that the CRT in Scotland is making a

difference and delivering real improvements. The highly successful partnership with the Bank of Scotland and the Scottish Football Association to develop midnight leagues is just one example.

In my constituency, many community groups have been supported by the CRT. I am proud to be a trustee of the Barony 'A' Frame Trust, which is being restored as a fitting memorial to the men who died there as well as providing a new heritage centre as a focus of local regeneration. In Muirkirk, the local enterprise group has created a skateboard park for young people. There has been support for yipworld.com—a groundbreaking and innovative project for young people in the Cumnock and Doon Valley area. In Bellsbank, one of the most disadvantaged parts of my constituency, there has been support for an adventure playground and the Zone youth project. The Bellsbank women's project and the Bellsbank woodland project have also been supported—and those are just some of the projects to benefit.

However, the CRT in Scotland is more than just another organisation that distributes funding to community groups—it engages directly with communities to develop and improve community capacity through training and coaching, helping with business planning, developing funding strategies and identifying relevant funding sources.

As Rhona Brankin suggests, sustainability is important. Of the projects that the trust funded in 2006-07, 90 per cent have secured funding from other sources, and 40 per cent have delivered sustainable results, such as helping people back into work.

The agenda is for the long term and the CRT has a critical role to play. The trust's challenge is to build on what it has achieved and to act as a catalyst for change. More scope exists for working with young people on employment projects, for developing young people through sport, for social enterprises, for community transport initiatives and for helping people to access employment.

However, a question exists, which I hope the minister will deal with in his summing up. In England, the Department of Communities and Local Government has announced a further three years of funding for the trust, as has the Welsh Assembly Government, but funding for the trust in Scotland will end in March 2008. The CRT awaits an imminent announcement from Communities Scotland about a future funding package.

The CRT has a proven track record of funding sustainable community projects that make a difference by addressing the social and economic problems that the people who live in our coalfield communities face. I hope that the minister will assure us today that further funding will be

provided. I am sure that we will hear in the debate further examples of the good work that the trust does.

The Presiding Officer: Many members wish to speak, so I ask that speeches be a tight four minutes, please.

17:17

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): I extend a warm welcome to a couple of my colleagues in the public gallery—Councillor Jimmy Kelly and Councillor Barney Menzies from East Ayrshire Council—and I congratulate Cathy Jamieson on securing the debate.

The history of Scottish mining and the Ayrshire coalfields plays a crucial part in Scotland's history as a whole. It is a history of struggle and adversity, but also of great achievement and resilience of the families who came to depend on the industry for their livelihoods. By the early 1900s, nearly 150,000 people were directly employed in our mining industry and we produced more than 40 million tons of coal each year. Scotland's miners were the powerhouse of our economy.

Sadly, fatalities in the industry were a part of many families' lives. I believe that the first recorded deaths in the Ayrshire coalfield were in Kilmarnock in 1804. Close to my own heart, when two fatalities occurred at Windyedge pit near Crosshouse in 1927, my grandfather, Daniel Coffey, narrowly escaped with his life. *The Scotsman* reported at the time:

"Mr Coffey sustained severe injuries and was removed to Kilmarnock Infirmary but there is good hope of his recovery."

For obvious reasons, I am thankful that he recovered.

As Cathy Jamieson said, we have just had the 50th anniversary of the Kames disaster at Muirkirk, which claimed 17 men's lives and broke the hearts of many families down there. Many men, women and children lost their lives in the pits and many survivors have suffered a lifetime of ill health through silicosis and related conditions. It is right to recall those facts as part of our understanding of where we have come from.

The history of struggle in the face of extreme danger to life and limb cannot go unnoticed and without recognition from the current generation. The industry has all but disappeared—no deep mines are left—and with that, the livelihoods of many families have disappeared over a relatively short time.

That short narrative helps to explain why the Coalfields Regeneration Trust is around today and why it is essential. The shifting pattern of the economy means that businesses and industries

can shut down almost overnight and restart somewhere else, but communities cannot and should not be expected to do that. The legacy of mine closures in the past 20 years will probably affect communities for a generation or more and it is the task of the Government and local authorities to assist by whatever means they can.

East Ayrshire depended almost totally on the mining industry. That goes a long way towards explaining why, after the mines went, significant assistance was required; it still is.

The Coalfields Regeneration Trust was established around 1999, with the clear aims of leading the way in regenerating coalfield areas and restoring healthy, prosperous and sustainable communities. We have heard from Cathy Jamieson about the range of work that has been done over the past years and the many successes that have been achieved in helping people to retrain and reskill by giving them much-needed information and communications technology skills, improving lifestyles, supporting healthy living, enterprise and innovation, establishing new partnerships, creating opportunities and improving access to transport. There has been youth development work and successful projects have aimed to improve opportunities for women in the area. I am sure that colleagues will pay tribute to the trust for other work that has been done and is still to be done.

Without the initiatives that I have described, I shudder to think where our mining communities might be today. No one said that the trust would be an overnight success—it will be a long hard struggle to get the communities back on their feet. Unemployment levels in this area of East Ayrshire are still higher than those in the rest of Scotland and overall population decline is still projected for the area over the next 10 to 15 years. That gives us an indication of the difficult challenges that lie ahead. As we plan for the future, we must always ask whether what we are doing is likely to help the community to again become sustainable in its own right, without the need for assistance, which is surely the ultimate goal.

The Presiding Officer: You should close now, Mr Coffey.

Willie Coffey: If what we are doing is not likely to achieve that goal, the next generation may accuse us of administering medicine while failing to seek the cure.

Scotland owes a debt of gratitude to its former mining communities. Members can rest assured that those communities, especially communities in Ayrshire, are up for the challenge. Adapting to change, focusing on strengths and identifying new opportunities are characteristics that will be required to deliver real sustainability in the future. I

have no doubt that the mining communities of East Ayrshire have those characteristics in abundance.

The Presiding Officer: You must close now, Mr Coffey.

Willie Coffey: I am delighted to support tonight's motion.

The Presiding Officer: I am sorry to press members on time, but we are very short of it: "a tight four minutes" means four minutes, not five.

17:22

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Lab): I am proud to have the opportunity to take part in tonight's debate. I congratulate Cathie Craigie and thank her for lodging the motion. *[Laughter.]* I mean Cathy Jamieson—I am Cathie Craigie.

I declare an interest, as the daughter of a retired miner and a trustee of the Carlaw miners home. I have had an interest in the mining industry for a long time. I was born and brought up in a mining community and with the principle of always looking after your neighbour, which is instilled in every miner. Any miner who gave their time and labour underground had to adhere to that principle, and members who live in mining communities will know that it was adopted by the wider community. There was always a real community spirit in my community. Sadly, some of that was lost over the years with the closure of the mining industry, but miners and retired miners have worked hard to instil it in later generations.

The Coalfields Regeneration Trust is dedicated to improving the quality of life for communities across Scotland and to doing so in partnership with community groups. Great contributions have been made in the Cumbernauld and Kilsyth area over the past few years. I am pleased that people from Croy Miners Welfare Society and Social Club—Eddie McCarrol, John Cullen and Tommy Canavan—are in the public gallery tonight. All are retired miners who worked hard when they were in the pits and have worked hard over the years for their community. Croy Miners Welfare, which is now the Croy one-stop shop, was set up by miners and community groups in the Croy area. When folk in Croy were trying to raise the £1.5 million that was needed to provide the one-stop shop, they received financial and administrative support from the Coalfields Regeneration Trust.

Thankfully, we got there, and the facilities at Croy are now able to support people of all ages—from the toddlers group right through to the pensioners group—and they do so daily. The centre has also recently been able to get support through the CRT to provide a free legal advice surgery, which people are using. The regeneration

trust has also supported Cumbernauld and Kilsyth unemployed workers centre, which is helping people who are financially excluded in my community. The centre has been able to get hundreds of thousands of pounds for people from Cumbernauld and Kilsyth and it is grateful for the support that it gets from the regeneration trust.

However, the CRT is not just there for support—it has become a friend of our community. It encourages that approach, and it will build on that friendship and partnership so that we are all looking out for our neighbour. It is sustaining our communities, and I hope to hear from the minister tonight, when he responds to the debate and to Cathy Jamieson's motion, that the Scottish Government will continue to offer support to the Coalfields Regeneration Trust. The trust is doing a great job, and we need to support it financially as well as with kind words.

17:26

Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con): I congratulate Cathy Jamieson on bringing this debate to the Parliament and, in so doing, helping to raise awareness of the Coalfields Regeneration Trust and the excellent work it carries out to improve the quality of life of people in Britain's former coalfield communities.

I had not realised, until I read the briefing for the debate, that the trust has funded a number of initiatives and projects—of which I have been supportive—in the region I represent. It has provided grant to North Lanarkshire Carers Together, which is a voluntary organisation that does invaluable work to enhance the quality of life of carers and to help to ensure that they have a voice to influence policy development and service provision at local government and national level.

The CRT grant has been used to employ a part-time outreach worker and to establish drop-in centres that support and encourage carers in the North Lanarkshire local authority communities of Chapelhall, Salsburgh, Glenboig, Moodiesburn, Chryston and Shotts to raise issues that concern them. The provision of an outreach worker is a particularly important initiative for those areas—especially for Moodiesburn and Chryston, which are described as part of the forgotten northern corridor because they are at the extremity of North Lanarkshire's boundary and close to Glasgow. They are often neglected because they fall between two stools.

I have visited the midnight league initiatives in Motherwell, Kilmarnock and Galston on a number of occasions, but I was unaware that the CRT joined up with Halifax Bank of Scotland and the SFA to help fund and deliver that programme, which involves young people aged 12 to 16 in five-

a-side evening football. The value of that work should not be underestimated in terms of its achievements in helping to tackle youth crime and encouraging young people in that age group to take up positive pursuits.

However, there is one initiative in particular that I will highlight—the skill force development project that is being carried out in the Blantyre area. It utilises the skills of mainly ex-armed forces personnel, who work as independent instructors in local schools. They provide an alternative curriculum for young people between 14 and 16 years of age who have behavioural or other social problems. A CRT grant of £100,000 has helped to expand the programme, which has resulted in an improvement in the young people's attendance at school and a reduction in exclusion levels.

George Foulkes (Lothians) (Lab): It is implicit in what the member is saying that the Conservatives support the continued funding of the trust by the Scottish Government. Will she make that explicit?

Margaret Mitchell: I can certainly say that I hope that the Coalfields Regeneration Trust will go from strength to strength in the years to come, not least because of projects such as the one that I mentioned, which has improved young people's attendance at school and reduced exclusion levels. As a direct consequence, they have been remotivated and their chances of gaining employment have increased.

This evening's debate is extremely worth while. I congratulate Cathy Jamieson again on bringing the matter to the chamber for debate.

17:30

Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD): The Liberal Democrats are happy to support Cathy Jamieson's motion. It is a particular pleasure for me to do so because my father, Robert Tolson, was a miner all his life. He brought me up in the mining community of Ballingry in Fife.

The Coalfields Regeneration Trust is dedicated to empowering local communities to take action to improve the quality of life in their areas. Fife has benefited from its work to the tune of more than £1 million in the past two years. For example, the synergy youth project provides interesting and worthwhile activities for young people at its excellent facilities in Dunfermline. It has been given help to develop a 12-month action plan, which has enabled it to consider its funding requirements and prepare a funding strategy to ensure that it can continue to deliver its valuable services in my constituency.

The trust also assisted a project to transform an unsightly piece of waste ground in Abbeyview into a secret garden for the use of all residents.

The trust's priority plan for Fife includes, first, raising local communities' aspirations, self-confidence and self-esteem by supporting local groups. It is a core belief of the Liberal Democrats that local communities should be involved in developing local solutions to local problems and should not have things thrust upon them, particularly without consultation, by a remote Government.

Secondly, the trust plans to improve health by supporting health-promotion projects that give advice on drugs, promote healthy active lifestyles, support parents and carers, and provide much-needed respite care. The trust also provides valuable support in education and training by running vocational and non-vocational programmes that improve people's skills and employment prospects. Those initiatives give people the chance to progress personally, to the benefit of the local community, in education, health or employment.

Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): Does the member agree that one of the distinctive features of coalfield communities was their vibrant musical tradition and that everything should be done to continue and support that tradition?

Jim Tolson: I agree with Robin Harper. In particular, I think of the brass bands that have been associated with mines over the years, many of which have sadly been lost to communities in Scotland.

The trust also seeks to improve the local environment by providing facilities such as play areas.

The trust relies on the Scottish Government for the funding it disperses to communities. Between 1999 and 2007, the previous Executive fully supported the trust's work, which enabled it to award more than £10 million to social and economic projects and to help more than 400 organisations to benefit from its support. Between 1999 and 2004 alone, the trust received more than £7.5 million of Executive funding.

It is vital that the SNP Government continues to give the trust a similar level of financial backing. We need a commitment from the Minister for Communities and Sport that such funding will be provided. If the trust does not receive that funding, disadvantaged communities will decline socially and economically. The trust is pivotal in helping the Scottish Government to meet many of its priorities for social inclusion, economic development and community regeneration.

The previous Executive's support for the trust enabled it to provide funds for the establishment of vital facilities such as credit unions in areas where people found it difficult to get a bank account; debt and money advice; football leagues for excluded youths; food co-operatives to provide affordable, high-quality and healthy food; and computer courses to improve the skills of former mine-workers and help them to access employment opportunities. Such projects make a real difference to the daily lives of ordinary people and they must continue. I urge members to support the valuable motion.

17:34

John Park (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I, too, congratulate Cathy Jamieson on securing this important debate. As a proud Fifer and someone whose family came from the coal mines of Fife, I am proud to speak in the debate. I am not sure what my grandparents and great-grandparents would have made of it. I think that they would have been saddened but fascinated by the debate we are having.

There is no doubt that the coalfields of Fife have shaped the society in which we live today—certainly the society in which I live, in Fife. Recently, I researched the death of my great-grandfather, who unfortunately died in an accident at Fordell pit in 1920, after he had returned from the first world war. He was run over by a puggie going home from work one night. He was only 33. It was amazing to find out the story behind that. He planned to move the family to Argentina—he was an electrician to trade, a bit like me—but, following his death, the family decided to stay in Fife, and that has had an impact on successive generations. It is why I am here today. If the family had moved to Argentina, it is very unlikely that I would be standing here—that would have taken an unusual sequence of events.

I went along to a library to find out about the deaths that occurred in mining at that time. It was frightening to see the number of recorded deaths. There is a book about an inch thick that is full of the names of people who died in mining accidents from the start of the mining industry in Fife—just those who died in Fife. I found out the personal story that shaped my family, but thousands of other people died and there are thousands of similar stories. They have shaped the society in which we live today. I tell that story to remind members of the obligation that we all have towards mining communities throughout Scotland. It is not an obligation just for me.

I have great pride in and affection for our mining industry. One of the saddest events of recent times—it happened after I became involved in the Labour and trade union movement—was the

flooding at Longannet colliery seven or eight years ago. It was unfortunate because there was a future for the colliery and a chink of light. People thought that things were going to be different and that there was an opportunity. I pay tribute to the National Union of Mineworkers, which did an awful lot of work in Longannet at the time and continues to do fantastic work representing people who suffer from ill health and the families of ex-miners who have suffered from ill health. The NUM does a great job, so it is important to mention it in the debate.

It is important, too, to talk about the Coalfields Regeneration Trust. I have been very impressed by the work the trust has done, especially as much of the activity that I did not appreciate is being undertaken by the trust is happening in communities that I represent and know. The money is being well spent and is delivering at a local level. The trust gave a considerable amount of money to the Lochore Welfare junior football team, at whose ground I had one of my worst goalkeeping performances when I was 14 years old. It left a lasting scar.

There is a lot to celebrate in the work of the trust. Members will be aware that many ex-mining communities are still suffering from the closure of the pits. Just as generations of miners shaped our society, so the decline of the coal industry still shapes many communities today. That is why the work of the trust is still important—not just for our ex-mining communities, but for wider economic regeneration. It is important that we send a message of support to the Coalfields Regeneration Trust and to those communities.

The Presiding Officer: Several members still wish to speak. I am minded to accept a motion, under rule 8.14.3, that the debate be extended by up to 30 minutes.

Motion moved,

That, under Rule 8.14.3, the debate be extended until 6.08 pm.—[*Cathy Jamieson.*]

Motion agreed to.

17:39

Keith Brown (Ochil) (SNP): I am grateful to Cathy Jamieson for securing the debate and I join her in commending the work of the Coalfields Regeneration Trust, which is headquartered in Alloa, in my constituency. I also welcome the people from Clackmannanshire who are in the public gallery tonight, including Councillor Bob McGill, who is a representative of the local council on the trust.

The background and history of Clackmannanshire and Stirling's eastern villages is similar to that of the areas that have been

mentioned already. The situation is familiar to anyone who represents such areas: the coal industry that once brought jobs has gone and we are left with its very poor legacy. For example, Clackmannanshire has higher levels of poor health and limiting long-term illnesses than Scotland as a whole, and Stirling's eastern villages are no better off. In fact, because they are part of an area that is generally seen as prosperous, they are sometimes overlooked. There is also the environmental legacy. The work of the Coalfields Regeneration Trust is helpful in that regard.

Obviously, the regeneration of any area is a huge job and one in which many agencies have a role to play. For example, one of the biggest regeneration projects in the Clackmannanshire area is the reopening of the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine railway, for which Clackmannanshire Council led the campaign.

Local authorities make an invaluable commitment by providing funding and support across their range of responsibilities, but programmes such as those that the Coalfields Regeneration Trust supports deliver resources to groups on the ground, which leads regeneration from the ground up. It adds value to projects that would not otherwise get support.

Over the past two years alone, groups in my constituency have received more than £520,000 from the trust. It is interesting that that is more than double what groups in the area have received from the Big Lottery Fund. The point is important in the context of Clackmannanshire and the eastern villages of Stirling: the trust is very accessible and helpful to groups that ask for assistance—perhaps more so than some of the larger national grant-giving bodies.

I have met many people who are involved with the groups that the Coalfields Regeneration Trust supports. One such group is *recycle-a-bike*, a social enterprise project that is based in Fallin, which is shortly to be visited by John Swinney, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth. The project combines employment with opportunities for training and apprenticeships, which also have environmental benefits. Its promotion and support of cycling has been taken up as an initiative by local primary schools and the University of Stirling. Over recent months, I have donated three bikes to *recycle-a-bike*, bought a second-hand recycled bike, and had my three children's bikes repaired. I encourage other members to do the same.

Just down the road from *recycle-a-bike* is the Polmaise mining museum, which owes a great deal to the work of Archie Bone, a local figure who was very well known in the eastern villages of Stirling. Sadly, he passed away last week. The museum would never have been established

without Archie, who I think worked the number two pit at Polmaise.

The trust supported the community takeover of the Clackmannan town hall building, by way of money for redecoration, and it helped Alloa rugby club to provide disabled access. Very often, such projects would not get support from statutory or other bodies. The trust's support is even more valuable for that reason.

All the schemes that have benefited from the trust's support are an essential part of the regeneration of Clackmannanshire and Stirling's eastern villages. I welcome the contribution that the Coalfields Regeneration Trust makes in my constituency and look forward to the continuation of its work.

17:42

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): As someone who grew up in a mining community, I am pleased to contribute to the debate. In thinking about the debate, I was reminded that, in addition to coming from a family that has strong ties to the coal industry, I went to a high school in Cowdenbeath that named its houses after collieries. My house was Aitken—it was named after the Aitken pit. From that, members will see that my life and community are rooted in the history of the industry. The number of members who represent Fife who want to speak in the debate is a reflection of that, too.

The Coalfields Regeneration Trust was established in 1999 by a Labour Government that recognised the need to target investment at former mining communities. It recognised that those communities had not only had their heart torn out of them, but were at risk of losing their identity. It could see that unemployment and poverty threatened community ties and relationships. Given that 28 Fife wards are eligible for trust support, we can see that the area is particularly affected in that way. The trust supports valuable work in raising the aspirations of those communities. The demise of the coal industry led to a depression not only in economic activity, but of spirit. The trust has been helpful in restoring the confidence of those communities.

I do not view the mining industry or the past with rose-tinted glasses. For miners and their families, life was often hard. Even when there was an improvement in conditions—which was hard fought for—the industry still left behind a legacy of poor health, particularly of chronic respiratory problems. The poor health of those communities was exacerbated by the dramatic decline of the industry. High levels of depression were often the experience of coalfield communities, partly as a result of mass unemployment.

However, underpinned by the work of the NUM and miners welfare organisations, a support system was created around the coal industry. Miners galas may happen only once a year, but the impact of those community gatherings and events lasts throughout the year.

Members will know the proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child": coalfield communities often take that saying quite literally. By supporting projects that are responsive and relevant, the Coalfields Regeneration Trust gives valuable support to communities to maintain ties, support local groups, and generate activities that will renew communities in a way that will make them sustainable once more. Projects in Fife such as Trans-Fife Community Transport have benefited, but the trust's work with business and enterprise groups is also very important in securing the future of and returning optimism to these areas.

I echo Cathy Jamieson's point about securing the trust's funding. Although it has been a while since there were operational pits in Fife, the effects of the closure on communities that were built around the industry are still felt and investment in the area is still needed.

Fife is changing. New industries are moving in and new opportunities are being created; new families are moving into the area; and new houses are being built in communities. However, we must ensure that the traditional communities are not left behind. Their community spirit was built over generations around a dominating economic centre, and as the very nature of work becomes more fragmented, more short term and more fluid, we are unlikely to see such communities again. However, we should look to them as examples of how people can work together and can take pride in their work, in their communities and in themselves.

17:46

John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP): I am grateful to Cathy Jamieson for securing the debate. It is vital that we secure future investment to regenerate former coalfield communities and build on the good work that Cathy Jamieson has highlighted in East Ayrshire and, in particular, in Cumnock, where people entering the modern workplace receive help with their information technology and employability skills.

My wife hails from a mining family. Indeed, when she attended a recent meeting of the Coalfields Regeneration Trust to represent the interests of Chryston, Auchinloch and Gartcosh in North Lanarkshire, she discovered that, even though her father had been dead for 25 years, some of the retired miners still had fond memories of his work as an NUM activist and in the pit. It is important

that, despite the decline of some of those communities, we pay tribute to the people who came out of them, particularly national heroes such as Jock Stein, who worked in the mines and showed that people like him could make a contribution not only to their communities but to wider society.

Although the Coalfields Regeneration Trust was established in 1999 in recognition of the suffering that had been experienced by mining communities, it has in recent years retargeted its focus to work with community planning partnerships in various local authorities. I assert that, in North Lanarkshire, other funders have felt that the work has been a bit hit-and-miss. The case for retaining the Scottish allocation to the Coalfields Regeneration Trust is worth making; indeed, in that respect, one need only refer back to a question on investment in former mining communities that my colleague Fiona Hyslop asked way back in February 2000.

The 2007 report "Coalfields and neighbouring cities: Economic regeneration, labour markets and governance", which was produced by Sheffield Hallam University's Tony Gore on behalf of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, highlighted that regeneration and employment opportunities are linked to neighbouring cities. The Scottish element of the report focused on the relationship between the Lothian coalfield communities and Edinburgh, and concluded that the coalfield communities' proximity to Edinburgh had led to more commuting into the city and an increased population in the communities.

In comparison, many parts of Ayrshire, Lanarkshire, Fife and other areas suffer from deep-seated levels of poverty and, as a consequence, depopulation. It would be remiss of me not to highlight the issue of hidden unemployment and the fact that a significant number of people are claiming incapacity benefit. For example, in North Lanarkshire, 12.7 per cent of people of working age are in receipt of disability benefits. Indeed, the Coalfields Regeneration Trust has acknowledged the issue of deprivation by focusing its resources on Clackmannanshire, East Ayrshire, Fife and North Lanarkshire.

My plea to the minister is that the Coalfields Regeneration Trust receives funding to allow it to continue its vital work in many communities, not only by investing in capital but in other ways. Such a move will ensure that the communities can build up their strength and provide opportunities for their young people. We must not neglect what has happened to past generations or what might happen to future generations as a result of the suffering and deprivation that have been inflicted on those communities.

17:49

Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab): I, too, congratulate Cathy Jamieson on securing this evening's debate. From the speeches that have been made so far, and from the fact that the debate has had to be extended, I hope that people in the gallery will recognise the great support that the coal mining communities throughout Scotland receive from members of the Scottish Parliament.

As the MSP for Linlithgow in West Lothian, I am only too well aware of the many communities that grew up around the coalfields. Although the pits are long gone, the people and the spirit of those communities remain. That is why we should focus on their future and celebrate the contribution that the Coalfields Regeneration Trust makes to it.

As the daughter-in-law of a miner, I recently returned to my father-in-law's home town in Northumberland. At the end of the 1970s, five pits were located within a 3-mile radius of the town but, as in other areas, all those pits have now gone. However, as in the towns and villages of my constituency, the people are still there.

As Claire Baker mentioned, we sometimes hear a very romantic view of coal mining, but we should remember the reality. The work was hard and dangerous. For much of the time, the wages were poor. Those difficulties perhaps helped a spirit of interdependence to develop. The community was very real for people.

We should also remember that many people were educated through the mining trade unions. That education ranged from basic reading, writing and arithmetic to sports and the arts. As Robin Harper said, we cannot be unaware of the great music and bands that have come from our mining communities.

Although their economic reasons for being have gone, the communities remain, and we want to support them. In many practical ways, that is what the Coalfields Regeneration Trust does and will continue to do. The trust supports sport and culture, the young and the old, carers and the cared for. For example, in my constituency the many local groups that have benefited include Crossroads in West Lothian, which is a carers organisation; Rugrats, which is for children; the Answer Project, which is for dementia sufferers; the seventh West Lothian scout group, for young people; and the Blackridge community education centre, which is an education project.

Let me highlight just one of those. The Answer Project in Whitburn provides day-care facilities for people who have dementia and gives support and advice to their carers. That wonderful project has not only achieved much in a short time but represents the spirit of the coalfields community in the way that it cares for some of our most

vulnerable people. The project also harnesses the talents of its many volunteers, without whom it could not exist. Like other volunteers, those people give of their time and talents to improve the quality of life of their neighbours. That is what the spirit of the coalfields communities is all about and that is what the Coalfields Regeneration Trust supports.

I hope that the CRT will continue to do that work. However, I add my concerns to those that Cathy Jamieson raised about its future funding. I hope that I can look forward to continuing to work with the CRT in the future.

17:54

Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab): I congratulate Cathy Jamieson on securing this members' business debate on the Coalfields Regeneration Trust and on the vital work that the trust carries out in communities across Scotland.

As many have said, the decline of the coal mining industry and the employment that it offered meant that in many communities—such as in Shotts where I grew up—the pits that closed were replaced by a legacy of unemployment and poverty, long-term illness and benefit dependency, and isolation and poor transport links. Many of our communities that once thrived on the successes of the coal industry have struggled to recover from its collapse. The well-paid jobs and the community spirit that characterised many mining areas have been replaced by a climate of unemployment, poverty and, sometimes, despair.

The establishment of the Coalfields Regeneration Trust in 1998 marked the beginning of a new approach to tackling the disadvantages that are experienced in many coalfield communities. Across Scotland and the rest of the UK, the trust has gradually helped to rebuild, revive and regenerate former mining towns, and it is making significant progress in improving the quality of people's lives.

One reason why the trust has been so successful is that, rather than just fund projects, it has engaged directly with people at grass-roots level. It has worked in close partnership with local people, community groups and local authorities to meet the shared regeneration objectives of getting people back to work; improving health; building stronger, more attractive communities; raising educational attainment; and engaging young people. We all share and aspire to those objectives, and the trust is helping to make them a reality.

Although it will take many decades to regenerate some of the communities that have been most affected by the loss of the coal industry, the trust's work is gradually starting to make a measurable

difference to people and communities across Scotland. In my constituency of Airdrie and Shotts, which forms part of the former Lanarkshire coalfield, the trust has provided vital support to a number of local organisations, including, as we have heard, North Lanarkshire Carers Together. As well as supplying much-needed information and communications technology equipment for children at the Honeytree nursery in Shotts, the trust has provided funding to facilitate the expansion of the Newmains Credit Union; to allow the Rugrats toddler group in Shotts to purchase new play equipment and bikes; and to enable Motherwell and Wishaw citizens advice bureau to establish outreach services in Shotts, which has brought about a massive improvement in the lives of many of my constituents in Shotts, who previously found it difficult to access free and independent advice services. They can now do so at the Shotts healthy living centre, where the services are easily accessible and well used by the local community.

The trust is making a real difference across Scotland's coalfield communities by improving people's life chances and opportunities; by equipping people with new confidence and self-esteem, to help change things for the better; and by restoring community pride. That pride is based not on great mining history and traditions, but on hope, aspiration and ambition for the future.

It is vital that the work of the Coalfields Regeneration Trust continues to receive support so that such success can continue. I hope that the minister will respond positively to the many calls for continued support that have been made during the debate.

17:57

Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab): I, too, welcome the opportunity to celebrate the work of the Coalfields Regeneration Trust. I congratulate Cathy Jamieson on lodging a motion that clearly has the support of many members of all parties. There has been no political divide in the debate, the tone of which has been one of support for the idea of getting the minister firmly behind funding for the trust. I hope that the minister will pleasantly surprise us all by telling us that he will give an absolute commitment to fund that vital work.

As others have said, we have a rich mining heritage in areas such as Fife, Ayrshire and Lanarkshire. At one time, there were 60-odd coal mines in Fife, a large number of which were in the constituency that I am honoured and privileged to represent. At one time, towns and villages such as Kinglassie, Cardenden, Kelty and Cowdenbeath were rich in spirit and vibrant. Over the years, that has changed, but the Coalfields Regeneration Trust has helped to address matters, not just by

providing funds, but by helping to rebuild confidence and create opportunities for people to acquire skills and training. That is what has made the difference.

The trust has given opportunities to people who, in some instances, had not worked since they left the coal mines many years ago. I will give some examples. The Benarty regeneration action group—BRAG—is a training facility that is based in my constituency. There is the Fife Women's Technology Centre, the Fife Mining Museum in Kinglassie and the community transport project that Claire Baker mentioned. All those places have helped to change local communities.

I do not want to give a long roll-call of honour, but I would like to mention a few of the people who have really helped us in the work of getting regeneration funds into Fife. Nicky Wilson of the NUM is in the public gallery tonight. He has been right at the forefront of the work. Willie Clarke, the last communist in Scotland—although we will forgive him for that—has been a councillor in Fife and a champion of the cause; and Councillor Bob Young should also be mentioned.

We cannot really mention the Coalfields Regeneration Trust without mentioning the coalfields communities campaign. People in that campaign have worked hard to ensure that the additionality issue was addressed by the European Commission and the United Kingdom Government. I have to add a little point of dissent: Margaret Thatcher would not allow us to have the additionality aspect of match funding, which clearly made a difference.

I do not want to sit down without adding my comments to those made by others in the chamber. People's blood was given to provide the prosperity that Scotland has enjoyed over the years. My father-in-law, Alex Eadie, was a miner and also an MP at Westminster; he became a minister with Tony Benn. He always spoke about the "black diamond" and I do not think that he was talking just about coal. He was talking about the miner who came up from the pit with blackness on his face. That was the black diamond—the person behind all the work in our mining communities.

I want to say thank you for all the work that the Coalfields Regeneration Trust does. We applaud the trust and hope that it will go on for many years to come.

18:02

The Minister for Communities and Sport (Stewart Maxwell): Like other members, I congratulate Cathy Jamieson on securing this important and informative debate. I associate myself with her remarks about the Muirkirk disaster and the 50th anniversary, which took place this month.

I want to begin by recognising the important work that the Coalfields Regeneration Trust has been doing in Scotland's coalfield communities for many years. The trust's specific commitment to help those strong, proud and durable communities mirrors the commitment of the Scottish Government to tackling concentrated poverty and disadvantage in communities across our country.

There are many challenges in putting an end to high levels of relative poverty in Scotland. Pockets of concentrated disadvantage persist in far too many places. Coalfield areas have experienced the pain that comes with rapid decline in a traditional industry. The trust and other organisations, working with local communities, have shown their commitment by targeting resources where they are needed most.

As part of the spending review, the Scottish Government announced a new £145 million annual fund to be deployed by community planning partnerships over each of the next three years—to regenerate communities, tackle individual poverty, and help more people to overcome barriers to work. In seeking to use the fund as a catalyst for sustainable regeneration, we want community planning partnerships to tackle the root causes of poverty, not just the symptoms; to take early action and make early interventions in key communities and with key groups of vulnerable people; to work hard to improve overall employability in our most disadvantaged communities; and to empower communities to become part of the decision-making process about how to regenerate the places where they live.

An announcement on allocations from the new fund to each CPP will be made shortly. The Scottish Government places great importance on tackling deep-rooted poverty and deprivation across Scotland. Our view is that joined-up action by local government and its CPP partners is the most effective way to meet the challenges.

Cathy Jamieson: For the avoidance of doubt, is the minister saying that there is no plan to continue funding the CRT in its present form, and that everything will go through the CPPs?

Stewart Maxwell: For the avoidance of doubt, no, I am not saying that. I will come to a very specific point about the CRT in a moment.

The new fund replaces seven separate funding streams, each with its own monitoring systems. This Government is committed to tackling deprivation and poverty, but we also want to reduce administration for local partners and give them more control over decisions on targeting investment where it can result in the best outcomes for local people.

The Coalfields Regeneration Trust has been working to forge strong links with the CPPs

containing the highest concentrations of coalfield areas, particularly in East Ayrshire, Fife, North Lanarkshire and Clackmannanshire. I want the progress that has already been made to be built on in the most disadvantaged areas.

I expect CPPs to use the resources that they are allocated from the new unified fund, along with mainstream resources, to tackle concentrated poverty and disadvantage. Part of that should be working with people living in former coalfield areas to identify lasting and sustainable solutions.

I have said that this Government is committed to targeting resources towards those communities most in need, but we cannot view the needs of our most deprived communities as something that the public sector alone must address. That is why creating positive and lasting relationships with CPPs, the private, voluntary and community sectors, is vital to the sustainable regeneration of coalfield communities. Communities themselves need to be at the heart of that partnership, shaping the activities that best meet their needs.

That grass-roots approach is a strength of the CRT. The approach has been instrumental in establishing the trust as a respected player in the regeneration field and among communities in particular. A crucial link has been made with local businesses that provide investment and employment, which will help sustain the economic base of former coalfield areas.

The CRT has an impressive record of delivery and working in partnership. Between 2005 and 2007 it has supported 126 different projects, drawing in more than £5.5 million in partnership funding for projects. A joint venture with the Bank of Scotland and the Scottish Football Association involving a midnight leagues programme is an excellent example of partnership working as it engages young people between the ages of 12 and 16 in evening football events and promotes healthy lifestyles, builds confidence and produces positive outcomes.

I also note the successes in key areas such as supporting people into work, training, social enterprise development and health-related projects.

I turn to the issue of funding for the CRT, which so many members have raised. I am confident that as a respected player in the regeneration field and among communities, the CRT will continue to play a valuable role in helping to regenerate some of Scotland's most deprived communities. In order to assist the trust to continue its work in Scotland, I am happy to confirm that the Scottish Government will continue to support it and will invest £4.726 million in it over the next three years. As part of the recent spending review, we considered the many competing priorities for investment in

Scotland, but I wanted the trust to continue to work with local community planning partners and communities to make a lasting difference for people living in former coalfield areas.

We have heard many interesting and varied contributions to the debate. It is always interesting to find out the background of other members. I note that Willie Coffey, Cathie Craigie, Jim Tolson, John Park, Mary Mulligan and others have direct family connections with coalfield areas. It is also interesting to note that Cathie Craigie—I am sure that it was Cathie Craigie—explained clearly and accurately the history and development of many coalfield communities and the CRT's long-term impact on them. Other members also did that, but they are too many to name.

We will always seek to pool resources and ideas. We can create sustainable and positive change in communities right across our country by working together. The CRT will continue to play a key role in supporting coalfield communities and I am happy to announce continued funding for it over the next three years.

Meeting closed at 18:08.

Members who would like a printed copy of the *Official Report* to be forwarded to them should give notice at the Document Supply Centre.

No proofs of the *Official Report* can be supplied. Members who want to suggest corrections for the archive edition should mark them clearly in the daily edition, and send it to the Official Report, Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP. Suggested corrections in any other form cannot be accepted.

The deadline for corrections to this edition is:

Thursday 6 December 2007

PRICES AND SUBSCRIPTION RATES

OFFICIAL REPORT daily editions

Single copies: £5.00

Meetings of the Parliament annual subscriptions: £350.00

The archive edition of the *Official Report* of meetings of the Parliament, written answers and public meetings of committees will be published on CD-ROM.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS weekly compilation

Single copies: £3.75

Annual subscriptions: £150.00

Standing orders will be accepted at Document Supply.

Published in Edinburgh by RR Donnelley and available from:

Blackwell's Bookshop

**53 South Bridge
Edinburgh EH1 1YS
0131 622 8222**

Blackwell's Bookshops:
243-244 High Holborn
London WC1 7DZ
Tel 020 7831 9501

All trade orders for Scottish Parliament documents should be placed through Blackwell's Edinburgh.

Blackwell's Scottish Parliament Documentation
Helpline may be able to assist with additional information on publications of or about the Scottish Parliament, their availability and cost:

Telephone orders and inquiries
0131 622 8283 or
0131 622 8258

Fax orders
0131 557 8149

E-mail orders
business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk

Subscriptions & Standing Orders
business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk

Scottish Parliament

RNID Typetalk calls welcome on
18001 0131 348 5000
Textphone 0845 270 0152

sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk

All documents are available on the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.scottish.parliament.uk

Accredited Agents
(see Yellow Pages)

and through good booksellers