

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 27 February 2008

Session 3

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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 27 February 2008

[THE PRESIDING OFFICER *opened the meeting at 14:30*]

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):

Good afternoon. The first item of business this afternoon is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader today is the Rev Dr Martin Fair, from St Andrew's church in Arbroath.

The Rev Dr Martin Fair (St Andrew's Church, Arbroath): As a 16-year-old growing up on the south side of Glasgow, I was so left-wing, politically speaking, that there would have been no room for me here, even over there at the far end of the chamber. At that time, for me, it was all about changing the world, as I reckoned that so much of what I saw going on around me was not fair. Twenty-seven years on, I still want to change the world, but my tactics have changed. Now, my approach is one person at a time.

The congregation that I lead in Arbroath runs a ministry service that we call Havilah. There is a prize for any of you who know the origin of that word, and a topic for your researchers for those of you who do not. Havilah is a four-times-a-week open door, designed primarily for those who usually find that doors are shut to them. Recently, we have been welcoming something like 20 to 30 men and women into that open space, all of whom are suffering in one way or another. Most of them have serious alcohol or drug addictions, many have mental health issues and some are registered as homeless. All of them, without fail, are lost, lonely and living without the one thing that makes life liveable—hope. But there is hope.

The good folks of my church who run Havilah give tirelessly of themselves, without thought of reward or recognition. None of them are experts in any sense of that word. None of them are trained counsellors or addiction specialists. They do not have a diploma or a degree between them, but they have time and they are willing to give it; they have compassion and they are ready to listen with their hearts. Their faith has given them a love for people that would bowl you over—a love for the kind of people who most of us try our hardest to avoid.

A young man in his late 20s comes to Havilah—I will call him Jim. He had known nothing apart from heroin for as long as he could remember, until he walked through the door of Havilah. At first, he just sat in the corner, silent, and hiding in his hood.

Now he is bright and more alive than at any time since he was a child. By coincidence, today he is going into long-term, in-depth rehab and he cannot wait to get started because he wants to start a new life. He has glimpsed something of what that new life might be, because he has hope.

Cynics will tell me that it will take more time than I have to change the world one person at a time. But if I could change one person's world—that is what gets me up every morning. Here's to the next 27 years of giving hope.

Accident and Emergency Units (Ayr and Monklands Hospitals)

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business this afternoon is a 15-minute statement by Nicola Sturgeon, on accident and emergency reviews. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of her statement, so, as always, there should be no interventions.

14:34

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Nicola Sturgeon): In June last year, I reversed the previous Administration's decision to close the accident and emergency departments at Ayr and Monklands hospitals and charged NHS Lanarkshire and NHS Ayrshire and Arran with bringing forward new proposals to maintain high-quality, safe and sustainable A and E services at those hospitals. I also announced that their proposals would, for the first time in the National Health Service in Scotland, be subject to formal independent scrutiny. Immediately following my statement, the boards started work on their revised proposals.

The independent scrutiny panel chaired by Dr Andrew Walker was up and running by the beginning of September and, after a demanding and intensive period of work that included formal submissions, rigorous scrutiny, interim reports, option appraisal exercises and public engagement, it published its final reports in early January. The boards then agreed their preferred service proposals and submitted them for my consideration at the end of last month.

Later in my statement, I will reflect further on the detail of what the ISP and the boards had to say. However, at this point, I put on record my thanks to the ISP and the staff at NHS Lanarkshire and NHS Ayrshire and Arran for the considerable amount of work undertaken to deliver expert, informed commentary and comprehensive revised proposals within the very tight deadlines that were necessary to minimise delay and uncertainty while allowing rigorous scrutiny and public engagement.

With that said, after carefully considering both boards' revised proposals, the ISP reports and all other available evidence and representations, I have great pleasure in announcing that I am approving the proposals submitted by NHS Lanarkshire and NHS Ayrshire and Arran, which will ensure that the valued A and E services at Ayr and Monklands hospitals are not only maintained but enhanced. In my view, the proposals take full account of the ISP's reports.

Securing the future of A and E at Ayr and Monklands hospitals was a promise made by the

Scottish National Party—and I am pleased to confirm that this SNP Government has kept it. In this statement, I will outline the context and background to this announcement, summarise how the ISP was set up, reflect on its findings and the boards' subsequent proposals, and confirm what will happen next.

First, I want to remind the chamber how we came to be in this position. This Government has been consistent in its belief that our predecessors' decisions to close these A and E departments were wrong. Indeed, the experts on the ISP subsequently and emphatically confirmed that view to be correct. The original service reviews failed to address the very real concern of a significant proportion of the local populations that the centralisation of A and E services would not deliver clear benefits for patients.

There is little doubt that the original consultations in Ayrshire and Lanarkshire and the boards' subsequent decisions compromised local people's trust, faith and confidence in their national health service. Moreover, it quite simply beggars belief that the previous Administration was prepared to sanction the closure of these A and E units, notwithstanding the lack of any clear and robust evidence base.

Those concerns, coupled with this Government's policy presumption against the centralisation of key health services, led to last June's decision to reverse the closures. In instructing the two health boards to come forward with revised proposals for maintaining these services, I felt that it was clear that local people and clinicians would expect the new plans to be robust, evidence-based, patient-centred and consistent with clinical best practice and national policy, that the plans would need to be critically assessed and that, in order to build confidence in the process, the work should be carried out by a panel of independent experts.

In setting up the independent scrutiny panel, I was clear that the post of chair should be filled by a respected and capable individual with extensive experience of health service planning and redesign work in Scotland. As a respected health economist, as a previous adviser to the Parliament's Health Committee and as a contributor to the Kerr report, Dr Andrew Walker was, in my view, an excellent choice. The other members of the panel were an A and E clinical expert, a financial expert, and an individual with expertise in the field of public engagement and consumer interests. None of the panel members was selected by me; they were all nominated by independent bodies.

All parties agreed formally the process of scrutiny at an early stage, to ensure clarity around remit, terms of reference and engagement. The boards received advice and assurance from

external auditors on the compliance of their option appraisal work with national guidance. The ISP consulted the Scottish health council on appropriate methods of engaging with local people.

Time does not allow me to go through the ISP reports in detail, but members should be aware that they are published in full on the ISP's website, as are the interim reports and all notes of the public meetings. However, the fundamental finding of the ISP was clear. It found that neither board had

"made a convincing case for significant changes to emergency services."

In other words, the reports confirmed that the Government's decision to reverse the closures of both A and E departments was absolutely right. The ISP recognised the high quality of A and E provision at Monklands and Ayr and said that there was scope to develop those services in the best interests of local people.

It is to the credit of both NHS boards that they took time to consider fully the ISP reports. Let me outline what the boards' proposals mean for local services. The proposals of both boards recognise the potential to build on the strengths of the current services. That means that there will be no cutbacks in either A and E unit or in their support services. The units will retain all the back-up services that they have at present and, in both cases, service enhancements are planned. For example, on-site consultant cover at Ayr's accident and emergency unit will be extended from eight hours a day to 12 hours a day, seven days a week. Ayrshire and Arran NHS Board also plans to build a combined medical and surgical assessment unit on site to enhance the service further. NHS Lanarkshire is also planning service enhancements such as the establishment of an emergency response centre.

NHS Ayrshire and Arran estimates that the additional recurring cost of developing the A and E services at Ayr will be £5.7 million. That accounts for revenue costs such as the cost of employing additional clinical and nursing staff. The board estimates that the additional capital cost of developing and extending the A and E facilities at Ayr will be £18.6 million. NHS Lanarkshire estimates that its additional recurring cost will be £5.3 million. The board is now moving forward with plans to develop appropriate business cases to maintain and improve the Monklands site. The emergency service will be a key part of those plans. Both boards have agreed that the additional costs that will be incurred in maintaining and developing A and E services will be accommodated over a number of years within their overall budgets, which are, of course, rising. Next year alone, the budget of NHS Ayrshire and Arran

will increase by £17 million to £547 million. NHS Lanarkshire's budget will increase by an above-average £26 million to £760 million.

Members will recall that when I made my statement last June I was keen to emphasise that there was much to be commended in the original service plans; I refer to the proposals for community-based health services. I was also clear that I wanted the boards, in bringing forward revised proposals to maintain A and E services in their areas, to deliver as many of the planned community services as possible. The boards of both NHS Ayrshire and Arran and NHS Lanarkshire will meet soon to review their planning priorities in light of their funding allocations.

As always, I expect the boards to take account of national priorities and guidelines—and, of course, the needs of their local communities—when coming to decisions. However, I have consistently made it clear that I expect both boards to deliver as many of their planned service developments as possible. I am pleased to confirm that both boards have confirmed to me their intention to do so. Indeed, NHS Ayrshire and Arran has already confirmed that its plans for mental health services, which are additional to its original proposals, will proceed in full, as will the plans for a cancer centre at Ayr hospital and the plans for new community hospitals in Irvine and on Arran. NHS Lanarkshire has likewise confirmed that its plan for the new cancer centre at Monklands will go ahead, with haematology inpatient services for the area provided on site. The resource centre in Bellshill is under construction and plans for other resource centres in Airdrie, Carlisle and Coatbridge are key candidates for prioritisation.

As part of its service proposals submitted for my consideration, NHS Lanarkshire indicated that it intends to develop a specialist unit at Hairmyres hospital for those heart attack patients who will benefit from primary angioplasty. I am happy for that work to proceed. Although the Government operates a policy of presumption against the centralisation of core health services, we have always been clear that there are a small number of services where a concentration of skills on a specialist site really benefits patients. Indeed, the particular service we are referring to—angioplasty—was singled out by the ISP as being a service for which the case for concentration had been made.

I turn to what happens next. I confirm that I have written to both boards today to approve their service proposals. I will now look to the boards to implement effectively those proposals and to sustain and develop the services at Ayr and Monklands hospitals.

In a dynamic planning environment such as the NHS, it is inevitable that health boards will plan and review, prioritise and reprioritise, to meet the needs of local people within the resources available. However, I make one thing clear: local people can be assured that any further proposals to change significantly local services in Lanarkshire, Ayrshire and Arran, or any other part of Scotland, will be subject to full public consultation, independent scrutiny where appropriate and, ultimately, ministerial approval.

Members will be aware that the Government recently concluded its consultation on proposals to embed independent scrutiny in the major service change process in the NHS. I confirm my intention to seek a debate in Parliament on the issue in the next few weeks. I intend to use that opportunity to cover our plans for independent scrutiny and to outline more fully our view of the national policy implications of some of the decisions that we have already taken in the interests of patients and in the spirit of a mutual NHS.

The decision taken today to save the accident and emergency departments from the closure sanctioned by the previous Labour-Liberal Administration—and not only to maintain but to develop those valued local services—is evidence that this Government is committed to high-quality local services. We are committed to working with everyone in this chamber, with all in the NHS and with communities throughout Scotland to deliver a mutual health service that is efficient and effective, that delivers a consistent, high-quality service to the Scottish people and that is committed to stronger public involvement, better patient experience and enhanced local decision making.

I firmly believe that if we can continue to build on the successes of the past 10 months of effective Government, and continue to work in partnership with all stakeholders, we have the rare opportunity to secure for another 60 years and beyond a truly mutual Scottish health service of which the Scottish people can be truly proud. I commend my statement to Parliament.

The Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary will now take questions on the issues raised in her statement. We have a tight 30 minutes for questions, after which we will move on to the next item of business. It would be extremely helpful if members who wish to ask questions would press their request-to-speak buttons now. I assure the chamber that it will probably prove impossible to fit everybody in, therefore brevity in both questions and answers would be greatly appreciated.

Margaret Curran (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab): I will try to be as co-operative as possible, Presiding Officer. I thank the cabinet secretary for advance notice of her statement. Inevitably, there is much to pursue in the range of issues that has

been raised this afternoon. I have no doubt that the issues will continue to be pursued in the forthcoming parliamentary debate.

I want to press the cabinet secretary on primary health care investment and particularly on whether she can guarantee delivery in relation to Kilsyth health centre, Cumbernauld minor injuries unit and Lanark minor injuries unit. Those are important primary health care investments, which we must insist are maintained.

Given the shortage of time and the Presiding Officer's pleadings, I ask a specific question. I understand that the Government's approach is based on the full retention of Monklands hospital's accident and emergency service. Is that exactly what will be delivered? Following this afternoon's statement, can the cabinet secretary tell the Parliament whether full cardiology services will be maintained in Monklands A and E? Let me put that another way: under the cabinet secretary's plans, if the chief reporter from the *Airdrie & Coatbridge Advertiser* has a heart attack while working in their office, will they be taken to Monklands A and E?

Nicola Sturgeon: I will answer all Margaret Curran's questions in full, but what was missing from her questions were the words, "Labour got it wrong in trying to close the accident and emergency units and we apologise for getting it so wrong." I am sure that Margaret Curran forgot to make her apology to the people of Ayrshire and Lanarkshire.

First, on primary care investment, I have made it clear all along that I expect both boards to deliver as many as possible of the primary and community care investments that they planned. For example, NHS Ayrshire and Arran plans more than it originally planned, in relation to its development of mental health services. I gave examples of projects that will definitely go ahead. Both boards will meet shortly to discuss the prioritisation of their future plans, but they will do so in a situation that is different in one regard from the situation when the Labour Government was in office. Primary and community care developments will proceed hand in hand with a functioning A and E service, whereas under the Labour Government they would have been without such a service.

Secondly, on heart attacks, I will be upfront and straight. The majority of people who suffer a heart attack in Lanarkshire will go to Monklands hospital. All the evidence—this Government will always follow the expert evidence—suggests that patients who require primary angioplasty need to be seen as quickly as possible in a specialist centre. In the context of regional planning, it is envisaged that Hairmyres hospital will provide that service for patients from Lanarkshire and Ayrshire, and that for all other west of Scotland health boards the service will be provided by the Golden

Jubilee national hospital. Heart attack patients in Glasgow who need primary angioplasty will not go to the Southern general hospital or to Glasgow royal infirmary; they will go to the Golden Jubilee, but nobody is seriously suggesting that the GRI or the Southern general will not continue to have full A and E departments.

The reality is that the A and E departments in Ayr and Monklands hospitals are not only being saved and maintained but have been enhanced by this Government. The people of Scotland will draw their own conclusions from that.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

We welcome the announcement that the planned closure of A and E departments at Ayr and Monklands hospitals has been reversed. Given that you said that decisions about the services were based on consultations that

"compromised local people's trust, faith and confidence in their national health service",

and given that you said that neither board made a convincing case for significant changes, can I ask whether you will now reconsider—

The Presiding Officer: No, you cannot, I am afraid. It is the cabinet secretary who is dealing with the matter, not me.

Mary Scanlon: I apologise.

Will the cabinet secretary reconsider the downgrading and loss of services at the Vale of Leven hospital, or is she convinced that a significant case has been made for the reduction in services?

The Walker report questioned or contradicted recommendations that were made in the Kerr report. Will the cabinet secretary consider commissioning another independent review?

Nicola Sturgeon: In my statement to the Parliament on 6 June I made it clear that it would not be possible to unpick all the decisions that the previous Administration had made, some of which had been taken several years previously. I stand by that view. Unpicking such decisions would be wrong for patients, wrong for the NHS and wrong for Scotland as a whole.

Mary Scanlon mentioned the Vale of Leven hospital. She will know that no decisions have been taken on it. The independent scrutiny panel that was set up to consider the proposals of Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board published its report at the end of last year. After the board's decision not to go to consultation, I asked the independent scrutiny panel to reconsider the decision, to see whether the board had produced any new or compelling evidence for its actions. I expect that supplementary report of the independent scrutiny panel within the next few

days. When it comes out, I expect Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board to take full account of it and to act accordingly.

Mary Scanlon's question about the Kerr report is pertinent. All members were very involved in the debate on the report, and all members welcomed it. The Kerr report was a framework report—it did not look in detail at accident and emergency services at Ayr or Monklands or, indeed, at any particular service in detail. The Kerr report said clearly that any specific service changes would have to be underpinned by robust evidence. The independent scrutiny panel clearly found that the proposed service changes at Ayr and Monklands were not underpinned by robust evidence. I therefore contend that this Government was absolutely right to reverse the closures.

We operate on a presumption against centralisation of services. I have said it before and I will say it again: that does not mean that there are no cases in which specialisation or a concentration of services will not be in the interests of patients. However, it does mean that there will have to be evidence before I, as Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, will approve any such changes.

Ross Finnie (West of Scotland) (LD): I, too, thank the cabinet secretary for the advance copy of her statement.

I do not disagree that the Kerr report was a general framework report. However, much of the thinking of health boards and of the previous Government was predicated on some of the general views in the Kerr report. Kerr concluded that eight to 10 high-intensity specialists might be required to provide a 24/7 service, that junior doctors would work 40 per cent less time as a consequence of European directives, and that there would be pressure on consultants. Those pressures were wholly refuted by Walker. Kerr highlighted the benefits of centralising a large number of services, but Walker questioned that and gave a much more restricted list of services, as the cabinet secretary pointed out. Kerr said that 70 per cent of patients who presented at accident and emergency units did not require to see consultants, and Walker made the case for not reducing any service.

Gil Paterson (West of Scotland) (SNP): What about a question?

Ross Finnie: I am coming to the question. It is important to give the background.

Walker criticised the peer-group reviews that had been cited, and he criticised Kerr's conclusion on unscheduled care.

Notwithstanding what the cabinet secretary has just said, if she is in effect endorsing Walker, and if

Kerr was so spectacularly wrong about the accident and emergency units, can we continue to use the Kerr report as a template for the NHS?

Walker also questions the credibility of the evidence supporting the ability of paramedics to stabilise conditions. He also questions the credibility of longer ambulance journeys. Does the cabinet secretary not therefore have to review not the decisions that were previously made, but some of the ambulance journeys that do not meet the criteria that Walker has set out in two reports?

Nicola Sturgeon: I have made my views clear about going back and unpicking decisions that were made several years ago. Whatever arguments Ross Finnie might make, my doing so would not be in the interests of the NHS.

People have to remember that, as well as being a framework, the Kerr report was a general and wide-ranging report. It had much to say about the shift in the balance of care—a shift away from acute services units and into the community. I think that everybody in the chamber agrees with that shift.

However, notwithstanding Ross Finnie's citations, it was at the heart of the Kerr report that any proposals for specific changes to services had to be based on evidence. Where I agree with Ross Finnie is that, when we put some of the proposed changes under the microscope, we found that the evidence for change was not as strong as had previously been contended: for example, some of the evidence around volumes and outcomes turned out to be not as strong and clear cut as some people had thought.

We are debating A and E services today, but only this week the Government made an announcement of a similar nature. Following the Kerr report, the previous Minister for Health and Community Care asked a group of experts to consider neurosurgery with the clear intention to centralise provision on a single site. The experts who looked into the matter reported to me a couple of weeks ago that there was no evidence to support the change.

The general thrust of the Kerr report is valid and relevant, but we must subject to rigorous scrutiny any change that is proposed in the name of Kerr. Where the proposed change withstands such scrutiny—for example, in the case of primary angioplasty, about which I have spoken today—the change is fine and well. Where a proposal does not withstand rigorous scrutiny, I say categorically to Parliament that I will not, as Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing—unlike my predecessor—sanction any unnecessary centralisation of hospital services that has no foundation in evidence.

The Presiding Officer: We come to questions from back benchers. I have 18 members with a question to put and 17 minutes in which to do that. It is pretty obvious that I do not want a lot of preamble; I want brief questions and—preferably—brief answers. We will get the doctors up front. I call Dr Ian McKee who will be followed by Dr Richard Simpson.

Ian McKee (Lothians) (SNP): The announcement is very welcome. Clearly, the Scottish National Party Government is delivering on our party's manifesto commitments. Following today's announcement and Monday's announcement that neurosurgery will continue to be provided at four centres around the country—contrary to the plans of the previous Executive—will the cabinet secretary confirm that our party's view that health services should be provided locally has been completely vindicated?

Nicola Sturgeon: In answering the question, I can comply with the Presiding Officer's request for brevity. The answer is yes. The experience at the two hospitals in terms of accident and emergency provision shows that this party and this Government's commitment to providing health care services as locally as possible are thoroughly vindicated.

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): Different groups of experts will provide different results—that statement is important in going forward. I have a couple of questions. First, will the cabinet secretary publish the Scottish health council's reports on the original Lanarkshire NHS Board and Ayrshire and Arran NHS Board consultations, and its views on the independent scrutiny panel's recent consultation? Secondly, will she invite the independent scrutiny panel to publish any evidence that it researched in coming to the view that it reached? In the statement in which it criticised the previous evidence, the panel made not a single reference. My third—

The Presiding Officer: And final question, please.

Dr Simpson: Given the 43 consultant vacancies in the NHS Lanarkshire area and the serious pressures on the NHS in Ayrshire and Arran, does the cabinet secretary feel that the latter board in particular can sustain spending £5.7 million of its £17 million increase on one service alone, given the many pressures that a health board faces, particularly at present as a result of this year's fairly low settlement?

Nicola Sturgeon: From the questions, it is clear that the Labour Opposition is still in denial on accident and emergency provision. It would benefit the Labour Opposition, and all of Scotland, if its members were to have the good grace to say that the previous Executive got it badly wrong on

closure of the A and E units, and to admit that we are right to overturn the closures.

I will answer all the questions. First, all Scottish health council reports are published. If Richard Simpson wants to check, I am sure that he will find any SHC report that he wants to look at. Secondly, as I said in my statement, the ISP report, notes of its public meetings, and other evidence that it used are available on the panel's website. I am sure that Richard Simpson can manage to source anything that he wants to look at. If there is a particular document that he wants to access, and if he asks me for it specifically, I will ensure that he gets it.

I turn to the pressures on NHS boards. All boards face such pressures. I was in the NHS Lanarkshire area this morning, visiting the accident and emergency department at Monklands hospital. Consultants at the hospital told me that, although the recruitment and retention pressures that the board faces have not gone completely—as they have not for any board—they have eased significantly from the position of a few years ago.

To respond to Richard Simpson's question about funding, it is not only me who thinks that the NHS boards have what it takes financially to maintain the accident and emergency departments—the boards think that they can sustain the costs and have accident and emergency departments that are not just as good as, but better than the ones that have been there to date.

Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP): Will the health secretary confirm that her decision is based on recent research, unlike that of her predecessor, which was based on 20-year-old United States research that was totally out of date and irrelevant to the needs of Lanarkshire? Does the health secretary agree that the difference between the decision that she has confirmed today and the decision of her predecessor is that somebody who has a heart attack in Monklands will be able to go to Monklands accident and emergency unit, unless there is a specialist requirement—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Alex Neil: That is unlike the decision of the cabinet secretary's predecessor, under which people may have had to go to Glasgow or, in some cases, Dundee for treatment.

Nicola Sturgeon: It is clear to me from the heckling and catcalls from Labour members that, if they had their way, the accident and emergency units at Ayr and Monklands would still be closing. The people of Scotland will draw strong conclusions from that.

Alex Neil asked me about evidence. As I said in my statement, the report of the independent

scrutiny panel said that, based on the rigorous assessment of evidence that the panel undertook, neither board had

"made a convincing case for ... changes to emergency services."

Given Labour's obsession with centralisation of hospital services, a Labour health minister may have opted to ignore that advice and press ahead with the closure of valued accident and emergency departments anyway. The SNP Government will not.

Alex Neil is absolutely right. Let us for a minute put to one side the inaccuracy of Margaret Curran's earlier questions about the situation surrounding heart attack patients, and focus on their sheer and utter hypocrisy. If Margaret Curran and her colleagues had had their way, nobody would go to Monklands accident and emergency unit, because it would not exist—it would be closed.

Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab):

As the minister knows, I campaigned with my constituents for the retention of all accident and emergency services at Monklands hospital. Can the minister explain to my constituents why she is accepting NHS Lanarkshire's recommendation that cardiac services be centralised in East Kilbride? Is the cabinet secretary content to ignore the people of Monklands and her colleague Alex Neil—I would listen to this, Mr Neil—who said in Parliament:

"if someone in Airdrie had a heart attack ... by the time that they got to Hairmyres ... at best, their position would be severely worse and, at worst, their life could be in danger"?—[*Official Report*, 14 September 2006; c 27502.]

He did not at that time talk about a specialist heart attack. Is not the failure to retain full emergency cardiac services at Monklands hospital a promise broken rather than a promise kept?

Nicola Sturgeon: For the benefit of Karen Whitefield—who I know has for many reasons struggled with the issue all along—I confirm that the vast majority of people who have heart attacks in Airdrie will go to Monklands accident and emergency unit. They would not have been able to do that if Karen Whitefield's party had been elected to Government in the recent election.

To answer Karen Whitefield's specific question, I have given the go-ahead for NHS Lanarkshire's further work on specialising primary angioplasty at Hairmyres for the same reason that patients who require such treatment in Glasgow will go not to the A and E units at the Southern general hospital or the GRI, but to the Golden Jubilee hospital. All the evidence shows that, for a small number of heart attack patients, that is the best result for them and will deliver the best outcome. I will always do what is in the interests of patients. We

have done what is in the interests of patients and the public by saving A and E services at Monklands and Ayr. We will continue to act in patients' interests.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): Nicola Sturgeon's statement will be warmly welcomed among my constituents in Ayrshire. As the cabinet secretary will know, staff at Ayr hospital are concerned that, notwithstanding the agreement to keep A and E services located at the hospital, those services could be jeopardised in the longer term by an inadequate level of consultant-led staffing. What discussions has the cabinet secretary had with NHS Ayrshire and Arran concerning staff numbers at Ayr hospital A and E department? Will she assure me that she is satisfied that the health board is committed to providing a long-term staffing level that will safeguard the service?

Nicola Sturgeon: I pay tribute to John Scott, who—like Alex Neil in Lanarkshire—campaigns for retention of Ayr accident and emergency unit. I give him an absolute assurance that I have made it clear to Ayrshire and Arran NHS Board that it is now expected to sustain accident and emergency services at Ayr hospital. Indeed, I hope that he is reassured that I said today that I am approving proposals that will enhance A and E services at Ayr. For example, on-site consultant cover at Ayr's A and E unit will be extended from the current eight hours a day to 12 hours a day, seven days a week. It is incumbent on the board to ensure that it has the consultant staff to deliver that commitment and that Ayrshire has the accident and emergency unit at Ayr hospital that it wants and deserves.

Jim Hume (South of Scotland) (LD): The cabinet secretary mentioned a rise of £17 million for NHS Ayrshire and Arran and £26 million next year for NHS Lanarkshire. Those increases are welcome but are a little more than 3 per cent and, therefore, really just above inflation.

She also mentioned embedding scrutiny in the change process in the national health service. Surely more open consultation would be more appropriate than embedding scrutiny in another layer, with decisions having to be ratified by the cabinet secretary, further bureaucracy, slowing up of processes and a temptation for centralised decision making by Government, thereby compromising local decision making by health boards.

Nicola Sturgeon: I will be gentle, because I appreciate that Jim Hume was not in the Parliament in the previous session. If only his party had done some of what he has just asked me to do, Ayr and Monklands might never have been under threat in the first place. That aside, I agree with him. There should be more open consultation, and I have made it clear to boards that I expect full consultation to take place

whenever they make proposals for significant service change.

We had a debate last week in Parliament about the principle of elected health boards, and I can think of no better way of bringing real accountability and transparency to health boards than by their having elected members. I do not think that Jim Hume's party supports that proposal, although I am hopeful of persuading it during the course of our deliberations.

Independent scrutiny has already shown its worth in the cases of Ayr and Monklands, and in Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board's proposals for services in the Clyde area. It gives the public the confidence that the evidence and reasons for change that boards advance are factually based, accurate and robust. The public have not always had that assurance in the past, so I look forward to ensuring that that part of the process is embedded for the future in the NHS because it will help to restore public confidence in how our NHS is run.

The Presiding Officer: I ask that there be no more multiple questions. One question per member, please.

Jamie Hepburn (Central Scotland) (SNP): Will the cabinet secretary inform members how health board consultations on proposed changes to A and E and other services that boards provide will be improved in the future, and how the improvements will avoid any sham consultations, such as the one in Lanarkshire that led to the initial proposal to close Monklands A and E?

Nicola Sturgeon: My answer will be similar to the one that I have just given to Jim Hume. I cannot overstate the point that the independent scrutiny process greatly enhances decision making. I repeat my thanks to Andrew Walker and his team, who have done an absolutely outstanding job in the cases of Ayr and Monklands.

Independent scrutiny builds confidence in the decision-making process. It is not for an independent scrutiny panel to take the decisions; rather, its job is to help to build confidence in the evidence base that underpins them. That, coupled with the other reforms that we detail in "Better Health, Better Care: Action Plan" to strengthen existing public consultation mechanisms, plus the possibility of elected health board members, will radically reform and improve the process of consultation and public engagement. The NHS will be stronger and better for it.

Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab): The cabinet secretary has set much store by the independent scrutiny panel's report. As far as Ayr is concerned, she will know that the report supports the extension of

minor injury provision into communities, notably communities in outlying areas. Is she therefore concerned that Ayrshire and Arran NHS Board's proposals have effectively scrapped the work that was under way to extend community casualty unit provision at East Ayrshire community hospital in Cumnock, and at the planned community casualty unit, which would have gone ahead at the new Girvan community hospital? That work is no longer in the pipeline. Does it give the cabinet secretary cause for concern that people in those outlying areas will now have to travel a considerable distance for the treatment of minor injuries?

Nicola Sturgeon: Those plans have not been scrapped. It is sad that Labour, having had its plans to centralise hospitals completely stymied, is now reduced to scaremongering among the populations of Ayrshire and Lanarkshire. I have made it clear—I will do so again for the benefit of Cathy Jamieson, who was a minister in the Government that wanted to close the Ayr accident and emergency unit—that I expect the boards in Ayrshire and Lanarkshire to proceed with as many of their community developments as possible. I have every confidence that the boards will do so, because both of them are committed to the development of primary and community services, as is the Government. Getting the balance right between acute, primary and community care is one of our key objectives. The approach of the previous Government was to shut hospitals in order to do the other thing. We want to do it all, and we want to do it properly.

Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): First, I extend my support and thanks to the firefighters who fought the recent fire in Whiteinch. I am sure that Parliament will join me in that. That resulted in some of the firefighters—

The Presiding Officer: Could we just have a question, please?

Sandra White: Some of the firefighters were taken to the Western infirmary. Given the changes that are taking place with A and E services in Glasgow, will particular attention be paid to emergency services, such as I have just mentioned, and to restricted use of the Clyde tunnel, which is a main artery between the north and south of Glasgow?

Nicola Sturgeon: I thank Sandra White for her questions and echo her comments about the work of the fire service. I assure her that the issues around the emergency services in Glasgow are very important, as they are in any other part of Scotland, and that the Government will always pay close attention to them.

Sandra White and other members know my views on not going back to unpick decisions that were taken many years ago. However, I am

determined to ensure that we have the right and the best configuration of A and E services in Ayrshire, Lanarkshire, Glasgow and throughout Scotland. I am happy to give Sandra White that commitment on behalf of the Government.

Andy Kerr (East Kilbride) (Lab): Does the cabinet secretary agree that the Government's decision was based on a manifesto commitment, and not on any decision to save lives—that it was to gain votes? As she basks in the short-term glory of the decision, will she admit that it will leave the health service in Lanarkshire substantially weaker in the longer term? What faith can we have in the cabinet secretary's conclusion if she appoints the panel, restricts its remit, does not allow it to examine the board's original proposals and provides such a paltry, ill-thought-through report?

Much more important, does the cabinet secretary now trust the voice of her appointed academic over and above the views not just of communities in Lanarkshire that supported the proposal—including my own—but of the management of NHS Lanarkshire, its clinical and staff community, its independent, publicly appointed board, the Scottish Executive health department and its chief executive and staff—

The Presiding Officer: I must ask you to be brief.

Andy Kerr: I also mention the Scottish health council and Professor David Kerr, who specifically condemns the minister for the decision. Is that now how Scottish health policy is made? Is it you we have to believe, cabinet secretary, while all those others are wrong?

The Presiding Officer: I must ask you to be as brief as possible, minister.

Nicola Sturgeon: If Andy Kerr cannot manage a period of silence following the decision, which most people in Scotland would think appropriate from the Minister for Health and Community Care who wanted to close the accident and emergency departments, I respectfully suggest that the only appropriate intervention from him today would have been to say, "I am sorry" to Ayrshire and Lanarkshire for trying to close their hospitals.

Saving accident and emergency at Ayr and Monklands was indeed a manifesto commitment of the SNP. It is a commitment that has been kept by this Government. That commitment was endorsed and vindicated by a panel of independent experts. Andy Kerr should reflect on that. It is interesting that Andy Kerr is unable to stand up here and admit that he was wrong. He has resorted, as usual, to attacking experts: a respected independent expert who chaired the panel; other members of the panel; a respected A and E consultant in Glasgow, who was appointed not by me but by his academic body; a member of the

Scottish Consumer Council; and a financial expert. They all said that Andy Kerr was wrong. Lanarkshire said that Andy Kerr was wrong, Ayrshire said that Andy Kerr was wrong and Scotland said that Andy Kerr was wrong. Why? Because Andy Kerr was wrong.

The Presiding Officer: That brings us to the end of the statement on accident and emergency reviews. We must move on swiftly. I apologise to the eight members whom I was unable to call.

Glasgow Commonwealth Games Bill: Stage 1

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is a debate on motion S3M-1366, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on the Glasgow Commonwealth Games Bill.

15:21

The Minister for Communities and Sport (Stewart Maxwell): While we are here today to consider the principles of the Glasgow Commonwealth Games Bill, it is worth noting at the outset that the games have the potential to inspire long-term change throughout Scotland by allowing us to develop new skills, improve people's health and reap the full benefit of the global coverage of Glasgow, and Scotland, hosting a major international sporting event. Plans for the legacy are set out in the consultation document that we launched recently. I urge members and their constituents to engage in that process. However, today's item of business—the Glasgow Commonwealth Games Bill—is about meeting the legislative commitments in our bid.

The bill will protect the games from ticket touting so that everyone in Scotland can enjoy the events at a fair price. The games will be commercially attractive, but they will not be cluttered by unofficial or unsuitable trading and advertising. The bill will ensure that a games transport plan is developed and implemented, so that athletes and spectators will be able to travel to and from Glasgow and between venues efficiently. The bill will also allow land to be bought if it is needed for the games.

I thank those involved in the bill's progress so far—members of the Local Government and Communities Committee, the Finance Committee and the Subordinate Legislation Committee and those who gave oral or written evidence. I also thank everyone who responded to our consultation on the draft bill last summer.

The Local Government and Communities Committee welcomed the bill in its stage 1 report. It said that the bill contained

“appropriate measures for the delivery of the Glasgow Commonwealth Games”

and recommended that the Parliament approve its general principles.

However, the committee raised some specific issues, some of which I would like to address at this point. The report asked why we need to protect the games from ambush marketing. Major sporting events attract large audiences. They have positive values associated with their brand and sponsors pay significant sums to associate their

goods or services with that brand. Ambush marketing aims to benefit from the games without contributing to the costs of the event. The bill will address unauthorised advertising or marketing in and around an event. We also want to prevent ambush marketers from creating an association in people's minds between the games and a particular brand. Policy on intellectual property is reserved under the Scotland Act 1998, so we are working with the United Kingdom to prohibit such activities. The provisions will mirror the protection that has been put in place for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic games.

The committee suggested that we might extend the ticket touting provisions in the bill to cover other sports and events. I have sympathy with sporting bodies or organisers of music events whose tickets are resold for greatly inflated prices. However, the bill is designed solely to deliver the Commonwealth games. It would not be appropriate for it to make such general provisions, which in any case would require proper consultation.

The committee was concerned that the benefits of the games could be undermined if compulsory purchase caused businesses to close and jobs to be lost. Local authorities already have a wide range of compulsory purchase powers. However, given the nature of the games and the potential time pressures, we decided to put such a power in the bill for the avoidance of any doubt. The relocation of displaced businesses would be a matter for the council exercising the compulsory purchase power.

The committee sought assurances that current licensed street traders would not lose out. We do not know who those individuals will be until the regulations are made much closer to when the games take place. However, section 8 requires councils to work with existing traders to try to identify alternative trading arrangements if they are prevented from trading by the bill.

The committee highlighted issues that have been raised by policing bodies about the enforcement provisions. My officials have recently met the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland to discuss its concerns. The meeting was positive, and I will bring forward amendments at stage 2 to address police concerns.

There has also been concern about who will take on the role of enforcement officers. It is important that enforcement officers are experienced and credible people. That is why the bill allows trading standards officers to be designated as enforcement officers. It also allows regulations to set other criteria for enforcement officers that might seem sensible nearer the time.

The report asked us to consider the recommendations of the Subordinate Legislation Committee. That committee felt that the power to designate games events was too broadly drawn. I agree, which is why we will lodge an amendment at stage 2 to require a designated games event to have a connection with the Commonwealth games. The committee was concerned that negative procedure was proposed for the regulations dealing with advertising, street trading and use of the internet. We will therefore lodge an amendment at stage 2 to require affirmative procedure for the first substantive use of those powers and negative procedure thereafter. We have left negative procedure for subsequent use in order to give flexibility to react to events leading up to and during the games. If, for example, the trading regulations were not having their intended effect, we would have to react quickly to protect the games. As the games are likely to take place during the summer recess, it would not be practical to make further regulations by affirmative procedure—I am sure that members would rather be watching the games than attending a Parliament that has been recalled just to consider small changes to those regulations. We are also planning to amend the bill to allow such urgent regulations to be made without the normal consultation and notice period.

The committee recommended that we restrict the use of the enforcement regulations to the appointment of enforcement officers and the process and jurisdiction for compensation. However, there is extensive provision for the enforcement of games offences in the bill that those regulations could not undermine. Therefore we do not propose to amend the bill to restrict the use of that power.

The report also considered that the meaning of the term "vicinity" should be defined at an early opportunity and that that should take into account the practical issues surrounding games events. The issue relates to the physical space in which unauthorised advertising and street trading will be prohibited. The regulations will define the places and times in which such measures will take effect. They are likely to apply restrictions for different periods in a different way for different events, depending on the nature of the event, on sightlines for control of advertising and on site layout for trading. The issue is not as simple as drawing a line a set distance around a building. Further, as the final games programme will not be finalised until closer to 2014, it makes sense to define "vicinity" in the regulations, which will use affirmative procedure for their first substantive use.

Finally, the report recommended that we seek lottery funding to run the games in order to allow more money to be invested in grass-roots sport. The First Minister has made it clear that we will not

look for lottery funding to replace public investment that has already been set aside to meet direct games costs. However, we are keen to engage with lottery distributors to see how lottery money can help to create a lasting legacy from the games.

However, Scotland stands to lose out on as much as £150 million of its share of lottery money because the UK Government is using it to support the London Olympics. We are pressing the UK Government to release that £150 million so that we can discuss how it could be used to support grass-roots sport and community projects, which will help us to make the most of the opportunities that Glasgow 2014 presents us with.

The bill sets a foundation on which we will deliver a successful games. I have listened to the views that were expressed during our consultation over the summer and during the parliamentary scrutiny of the bill since its introduction. The bill has evolved in response to those views and will continue to do so at stage 2. I am keen to carry the political consensus that secured our successful bid into the delivery of the games.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the Glasgow Commonwealth Games Bill.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan): Time is limited this afternoon, so members will be required to keep strictly to time. Kenneth Gibson, speaking on behalf of the Local Government and Communities Committee, has nine minutes.

15:29

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): I make it clear that I am speaking not as a member of the Scottish National Party but as the deputy convener of the Local Government and Communities Committee. I am opening on behalf of the committee because our convener is unable to be in attendance today due to a recent bereavement.

The Parliamentary Bureau, at its meeting on Tuesday 13 November 2007, agreed to refer the Glasgow Commonwealth Games Bill to the Local Government and Communities Committee for consideration at stage 1. Twenty-nine individuals and organisations responded to the committee's call for written evidence, and the committee took oral evidence on the bill from witnesses at its meetings on 21 November 2007 and 16 January 2008. The committee expresses its thanks publicly to all those who provided written and oral evidence on the bill.

The committee notes the report of the Subordinate Legislation Committee and asks the

Scottish Government to consider its recommendations and to lodge amendments at stage 2 where appropriate. In particular, we draw the Parliament's attention to the suggested amendments in paragraph 9 of the Subordinate Legislation Committee's report, on the definition of "games event", and those in paragraph 50, on enforcement powers.

The Local Government and Communities Committee notes the contents of the policy memorandum to the bill and accepts that it provides an adequate explanation of the policy intentions behind the bill.

The committee notes that the Finance Committee consulted relevant organisations and strongly recommended that the Scottish Government pursue possible lottery funding avenues to offset the public commitment of funding from Glasgow City Council and the Scottish Government. That would allow more money to be invested in grass-roots sports development in Scottish communities. However, I note the comments that we heard from the Minister for Communities and Sport in that regard.

There was no dispute about the definition of "the games", but there was concern from North Lanarkshire Council, the Advertising Association, the Scottish Police Federation, Scottish Enterprise and the committee itself about the definitions of "games event", "vicinity" and "precinct". At its meeting on 21 November, the committee explored the issue of current street trading licensees, particularly those who have licences to sell the paraphernalia associated with sporting and other events and activities. The committee seeks an assurance that the position of current licensed street traders will be taken into consideration. I note that the minister said that we do not know who they are at present, but I hope that the matter will be resolved in the years to come. The committee seeks an assurance that such traders will not be financially penalised as a consequence of the games in Glasgow.

The committee considers that definitions of "vicinity" and "precinct" should be provided at an early opportunity and that they should take into account the practical issues that surround games venues and events, including street trading and advertising.

The Scottish Police Federation commented that section 2 does not appear to cover illegal trading that takes place indoors. That means that such trading would be exempt from penalty and could not be a justification for exercise of the power to enter and search in section 25.

Scottish Enterprise commented that it believes that the regulations under the bill will not hinder legitimate business involvement in the games.

Sections 10 to 16 deal with advertising issues, including the creation of an offence of advertising within the vicinity of a games event at particular times. The Advertising Association suggested that the maximum duration of any advertising regulations should be specified, that there should be a duty to consult the advertising industry on any secondary legislation, and that any advertising regulations should be subject to the affirmative resolution procedure. The bill proposes that regulations would be laid before the Parliament under the negative resolution procedure. The Advertising Association also suggested that an advertising defence should be introduced. The association drew the committee's attention to the London Olympic Games and Paralympic Games Act 2006, under which regulations that concern the physical location of advertising are subject to affirmative resolution procedure in the House of Commons.

The Scottish Police Federation believes that section 11(2) is too widely drawn and could prohibit churches from using their normal notice-boards or distributing parish bulletins. The SPF asserted that it is inappropriate for such organisations to have to rely on the exercise of discretion under section 14 to avoid punishment for breaking the law. That concern was also identified by the Advertising Association, which suggested that an advertising defence would be a useful way to tackle the problem.

On the creation of an association right, the Advertising Association is firmly of the opinion that the body of law that covers intellectual property rights provides more than sufficient protection to sponsors in relation to the Commonwealth games. The creation of an association right is, in the Advertising Association's opinion, disproportionate and risks damaging the wider advertising sector by introducing intellectual property rights over words and numerals that are in common usage.

It is clear to the committee that further work is required to assuage the concerns of businesses and those who will be tasked with implementing the advertising provisions. The committee accepts that many of the issues that have been identified in relation to advertising are reserved matters, but it would welcome a clear statement from the Scottish Government about why the restrictions that it has outlined are considered necessary. In particular, we ask the Government to respond to the points that were raised by the Advertising Association.

Sections 17 to 20 are on ticket touting. They include a provision to make it an offence to tout games tickets, exceptions for certain advertisers, and provisions on internet and other electronic communication issues. The Scottish Rugby Union drew attention to the complexity surrounding ticket

touting and in particular the use of unofficial hospitality packages as a vehicle for the sale of black market tickets and the increasing incidence of internet ticket touting. The SRU suggested that the solutions found in the bill could be extended to other sporting events and that the bill affords an opportunity to tackle the problem in the context of sports events as a whole and not just in respect of the games. Glasgow Chamber of Commerce suggested that the bill could be applicable to all major events and suggested considering that in relation to the bill.

The issue of enforcement attracted the largest amount of and most detailed evidence submitted to the committee. ACPOS set out specific examples of where the bill provides enforcement officers with powers beyond those that are currently granted to police officers, such as the empowering of enforcement officers to take what they consider appropriate action to enforce a games offence, which is properly a matter for the courts to determine, and the power to destroy an infringing article used in the commission of a games offence, which should instead be presented to the courts as evidence. That point is supported by the written evidence of Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, which shares similar concerns, considering that such destruction of property would be based on a belief, rather than evidence, that it was being used in a games offence.

Following submissions by Network Rail, the committee recommends that if enforcement officers are to be enabled to enter railway land, appropriate provisions will be required to ensure health and safety.

I note that time is running short, so I will truncate much of what the committee had to say to certain key points.

The committee appreciates that some changes have been made from the draft bill to the bill as introduced. However, it is clear that significant concerns remain regarding the recruitment of enforcement officers and the powers that the bill grants them. Accordingly, the committee recommends that the Government review and address the enforcement provisions of the bill in the light of the concerns that have been raised. However, the committee is content with the provisions on how offences will be taken forward.

The committee is content with the provisions on transport and the transport plan, and it recommends that work continue on consulting and involving all relevant organisations on the specific issues. The committee also notes that, notwithstanding the funding assumptions that underpinned the successful bid, the Scottish Government is not now precluded from making a policy decision to try to offset some of that public

commitment by seeking lottery funding, allowing more money to be invested in grass-roots sport development in Scottish communities. I make no excuse for mentioning that point for a second time, because we believe that it is fundamental to the success of the games.

The committee notes the information that was provided by the bill team on broadcasting revenue and looks forward to updates on that as part of the regular updates to the committee that the Minister for Communities and Sport has offered. We welcome the minister's commitment to keep the committee and members in general informed on the bill, and we look forward to receiving updates and an annual report on progress towards the Commonwealth games.

The committee considers that there is broad overall support for the proposals in the bill, which has been welcomed as containing appropriate measures for the delivery of the Glasgow Commonwealth games. In its report, the committee identified certain places where the proposals in the bill could be improved further. Subject to those caveats, the committee recommends to the Parliament that the general principles of the bill be approved.

15:38

Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab): I thank the minister for his opening remarks and Kenneth Gibson for his measured and gentle summary of the Local Government and Communities Committee's comments on the bill.

As the minister said in his opening remarks, the bill is part of a journey to 2014 that started in 2002 with the previous Labour-led Executive. Much of the groundwork that was done between 2003 and 2007 was of great benefit to the success of the overall bid. I acknowledge that there has been a shared partnership throughout the chamber to deliver an event that is important not just for the city of Glasgow and my constituents in particular but for the whole of Scotland and the UK. In that context, I welcome the comments of Kenneth Gibson and his analysis of the committee's concerns.

Obviously, much of the infrastructure was committed by the previous Executive. The recent announcement on the M74 extension is welcome in meeting the obligation and commitment to meet the Commonwealth games criteria. Many of the other infrastructure projects, such as the national facilities that are being developed, are also testimony to the record of the Labour-led Executive. I hope that we agree that the bill is a part of a process in which we all believe that sport and a major sporting event can genuinely make a difference.

In that context, the relocation of sportscotland's headquarters presents an opportunity. Some of the debate in the chamber might have been tortuous, but that decision was wise. I hope that, in the long run, it will materially benefit the Commonwealth games and sport in general.

Having said all that, we need to acknowledge the points that were raised in the committee's discussions. The committee has identified several technical issues that concern how we use the games to put in place a legal framework and the framework to meet expectations of how we will deliver the games. That is as important as the success for which we hope on the track, on the field and at all the events.

We need to explore the sensitive issues of advertising and trading that the committee identified. I welcome the minister's comment that he will examine a couple of matters, because more detailed legal scrutiny and interpretation are required to ensure that beneficiaries of the new structure are businesses that use positive marketing and trading, rather than those that have over the years tarnished too many events—not just in Scotland but throughout the UK and beyond—by taking advantage of possibly lax legislative frameworks. We need to move forward on such issues.

I worry when I read eBay's consultation response on its responsibility as a major trading organisation in relation to tickets or other items on its website. We need to engage with eBay and others on how we deal with that. I note the concerns that have been raised about enforcing the law against people who operate from outwith Scotland's borders. Stage 2 and beyond present the best opportunities to develop those points.

On land assembly, we must look at the role of Glasgow City Council and its partner local authorities in assessing how to use land and consider whether they should have powers to acquire land to meet expectations for the Commonwealth games.

One key message of the committee's report was about the role of the Manchester Commonwealth games in regeneration. I welcome the continuing commitment to making the Commonwealth games an opportunity not only to regenerate the east end of Glasgow, which has cried out for such regeneration for a considerable time, but to showcase many other aspects, which we can discuss when we talk about issues that relate to the Commonwealth games more broadly.

The committee has identified two fundamentals, although we might differ on emphasis. I welcome the willingness to address the legacy impact. I note with interest that the Government's consultation paper on the legacy does not refer to

seeking lottery money, although the First Minister talked about that in a press conference about the games. We need to work in partnership with the UK Government on how we generate a legacy but, more important, we need to consult present lottery distributors in Scotland. If a criticism of the Olympics has been that there has been a lack of consultation, we should not avoid such consultation. Finally, there are ambitions to have broader legacies, which the consultation document covers.

I welcome the committee's stage 1 report, which identifies several requirements on which we need more clarity and precision. I also welcome the willingness to engage in an open debate about the legacy and about how we all—including the Scottish and UK Governments—will contribute to that. I hope that we can develop that issue.

15:44

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands)

(Con): I am pleased to speak in the debate and I welcome the Government's swift action to introduce the bill, in line with the legal requirements of our successful bid to host the Commonwealth games in 2014. The Scottish Conservatives strongly supported the current Government and the previous Executive in the campaign to secure the games for Glasgow and we will give similarly strong support as the bill makes its way through the Parliament, by flagging up any concerns about details in the bill.

I also welcome Sir Robert Smith's recent appointment as the chairman of Glasgow 2014. His experience in the business world, as chairman of the Weir Group and of Scottish and Southern Energy, and his success in delivering large capital projects bodes well for the success of the Glasgow games.

I have studied many of the 39 submissions to the consultation on the draft bill that were received between June and September, and I am encouraged by the fact that the vast majority are broadly supportive of the bill's policy objectives and the fact that, in a number of instances, the Scottish Government has already clarified matters in response to issues that were raised in the consultation.

In addition, the main committee report from the Local Government and Communities Committee states that it considers that there is broad overall support for the bill; that the bill has been welcomed as containing appropriate measures for the delivery of the Glasgow games; and that, subject to the resolution of some of the issues that will emerge today, it recommends to Parliament that the general principles of the bill be approved. However, a number of points have emerged from

the consultation and the committee's report that I hope the minister can address further.

Submissions from respondents such as the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Federation of Small Businesses emphasise the need for those organisations to be consulted in the development of the transport plan. Delivering a successful transport infrastructure for the games will require a lot of organisations to work together in an integrated way, and the delivery of an effective transport system will be key to the success of the games. I welcome the fact that the Government has added section 37(2)(c) to ensure that the consultation over transport can be as wide as possible, and I look forward to its delivering on that. Local businesses in potentially affected areas must be consulted as a priority.

The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association is disappointed that there is no requirement to consult the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland or other disability organisations about the transport plan or for the plan to include a timetabled plan for making transport more accessible. The same organisation wonders what the organising committee is doing to ensure that buses in Glasgow and at other games venues meet the requirements of the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000 and that they also have visual and audio announcement systems.

I back the Local Government and Communities Committee in seeking assurances that the position of current licensed street traders is taken into consideration so that they are not penalised financially as a consequence of the games being held in Glasgow. I also agree with the committee that definitions of "vicinity" and "precinct" should be provided as soon as possible and should take into account practical issues surrounding games venues and events, including street trading and advertising. I note that several police forces, including the Northern Constabulary in my region, have also made those points.

The Scottish Conservatives are in favour of the general principles of the bill and will work with the Government and all agencies to deliver the best ever Commonwealth games for Glasgow and for Scotland. I hope that the bill is drafted adequately to prevent the kind of cost overruns that occurred for the 2002 Manchester games, for which the final price tag was four times the original bid estimate. I am sure that all of us in the chamber wish to avoid that.

15:48

Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD): I hope that the minister listened carefully to my colleague, Kenny Gibson, who sits on the Local Government

and Communities Committee with me. He made a lot of good points and showed that, although there was a lot of consensus among committee members when we debated the details of the bill and the minister's statements, there are a number of concerns. I hope that the minister will be able to address those concerns during the bill's progress.

The Glasgow Commonwealth games of 2014 offer a tremendous opportunity to inspire a new generation of Scottish athletes and focus attention on the vast array of personal, social and health benefits that can come from sporting participation. Scotland is a proud sporting nation, and I have no doubt that our athletes will give us much to celebrate in 2014.

The legacy of the games can, and should, resonate across the whole of Scotland, but it will be felt primarily in the east end of Glasgow. That is important given the fact that, in Glasgow's east end, life expectancy for men is a mere 69.1 years—six years less than the Scottish average. For women living in that part of Scotland, life expectancy is 74.5 years—four years less than the Scottish average. We must do all that we can to ensure that the Commonwealth games act as a catalyst to improve those statistics.

In doing so, however, we must be wary of demanding that a single sporting event should have transformative power. As other cities around the world will testify, legacy is easier to talk than to walk. Indeed, we need not look far to witness the challenges involved in providing a lasting legacy. Meadowbank stadium and Edinburgh's Commonwealth pool face considerable bills for upgrading them, and further investment is required in sports facilities throughout the city and the country.

The Glasgow bid document commits to funding fully the permanent works that are needed to refurbish the Commonwealth pool. Will that commitment be honoured? Similarly, we ask the Government to reconsider the decision not to fund the 50m swimming pool in Aberdeen. Inspiring people to take part in sport is one thing; giving access to quality facilities that encourage on-going participation is quite another.

Stewart Maxwell: I am sure that the member did not mean to insinuate that we have refused to fund a 50m pool in Aberdeen. Nothing could be further from the truth. We have said quite clearly that we support the principle of a 50m pool in Aberdeen, and we are working with Aberdeen City Council, sportscotland and others to see how we can move that project on. There is a clear understanding that we want the project to be delivered, just in case there are any mistakes about that.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before Jim Tolson and the debate go too far, I remind him that we are discussing the general principles of the Glasgow Commonwealth Games Bill.

Jim Tolson: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

I thank the minister for that clarification and his guarantee, although he has not guaranteed a timescale, which is a key point. If there is no pool, people will not be able to train in Aberdeen in good time for the Commonwealth games, and that is a lost opportunity.

Part of the strength of Glasgow's bid was the fact that approximately 70 per cent of the facilities for the games are already in place. However, we cannot avoid the likelihood of price inflation—sometimes of several times the original estimate, as Jamie McGrigor said—in the construction industry as a consequence of the London Olympics and other major infrastructure projects, including the games. What safeguards has the Government put in place to ensure that building projects are delivered on budget?

As well as medal-winning performances, the best result that Glasgow 2014 could deliver would be a marked increase in the numbers participating in sport. Liberal Democrats welcome the Government's recognition, however belated, that sportscotland can make an important contribution to enhancing participation. We were pleased by Stewart Maxwell's announcement on television yesterday—he was sporting a sportscotland sweatshirt; I hope that he gave it back—that the fit for girls pilot scheme is to be rolled out to all secondary schools in Scotland. That builds on the previous Executive's considerable efforts.

Unfortunately, that positive step has not been matched in relation to the SNP's manifesto pledge to provide free access to council swimming pools for children in Scotland. I recently asked a written question about which local authorities would introduce such free access, to which Stewart Maxwell responded:

“As a result of the historic agreement between the Scottish Government and local authorities, we are working together to address the national outcomes of ensuring that our children have the best start in life, are ready to succeed and live longer, healthier lives.”—[*Official Report, Written Answers*, 7 February 2008; S3W-8998]

We can all share that laudable aim but that was a pathetic attempt at answering a straightforward question. The concordat appears to be a device to allow the SNP to avoid answering questions. Local government must be supported as part of the drive to increase sporting participation and develop sporting facilities, but it is worth noting that not one of the national indicators and targets in the Government's historic concordat makes direct reference to sport.

I look forward with great anticipation to the sporting spectacle that Glasgow 2014 promises to be. Not a moment can be wasted between now and then in making sure that Scotland delivers for the Commonwealth games and that the games, in turn, deliver for Scotland.

15:54

Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): I sincerely welcome this opportunity to talk about a bill for an event that we all want to succeed and which will leave a lasting legacy not only to the city of Glasgow but to the rest of Scotland. I remind the chamber that, at the 2006 Commonwealth games in Melbourne, Scotland won 39 medals, 11 of which were gold. That was a fantastic achievement, but I am sure that we will overtake it at the 2014 games.

Given that the games will be seen all over the world, a major consideration for the bill must be to ensure that the image not only of the event itself but of Glasgow is a positive one. In that regard, I note the minister's comments on the provisions on the control of trading in the vicinity of the events. However, there is concern that section 7 could mean that currently licensed traders might be disadvantaged or financially penalised because of the games. Although I note the minister's comments about Glasgow City Council's role in that matter, can he, in his closing remarks, reassure traders that they will not be disadvantaged or penalised in that way?

I also ask the minister to set out the Government's plans for ensuring that existing businesses will not be affected adversely by the compulsory purchase powers that will be granted. Such concerns have already been raised with me—and, indeed, with other members—and although the minister has given some assurances on the issue I feel that those concerns still need to be addressed. Perhaps he will pick up on that point in his closing remarks.

With regard to the financial memorandum, the Finance Committee has strongly recommended that the Scottish Government pursue possible avenues of lottery funding. My colleagues will elaborate on the point later, but, as members will agree, it is shameful that because lottery moneys are being diverted to support the London Olympics, they are being taken away from the Glasgow Commonwealth games. It is to this Government's credit that it will bid for other lottery funding to ensure not only that Glasgow has a lasting legacy from the games but that people both in Glasgow and outwith the city will benefit. In light of the precedent set by the Commonwealth games in Manchester in 2002 and given what has happened with the 2012 London Olympics, I very

much hope and believe that this Government will secure the money for the games in Glasgow.

Given that the games will bring many business and employment opportunities, the establishment of a central point for procurement should be brought forward. I do not know whether other members have seen this, but the London organising committee's website has a dedicated section for companies to tender for upcoming work. The London organising committee has also established a business network that includes a UK-wide programme of business events. Has the minister considered such ideas and has he thought about introducing something similar for the 2014 games?

One of the games' greatest benefits will be the employment opportunities that they will offer. Indeed, there will be a tenfold increase in such opportunities, and we must ensure that they are not lost to the people of Scotland and that Glaswegians in particular are given the fullest opportunity to take part. Existing training and apprenticeship schemes must be developed to ensure that those who at the moment are not in employment, training or further education feel the games' benefits. Glasgow 2014 is for them, and they should benefit the most from the event.

Will the minister also consider making special provision for the active recruitment of volunteers with special needs and disabilities to assist in the smooth operation of Glasgow 2014? The issue has been raised in various cross-party groups, particularly the cross-party group on older people.

With regard to the need to make Glasgow 2014 inclusive to all, I echo Jamie McGrigor's point about disability requirements and believe that the bill should contain a requirement that new buildings, access provisions and transport comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Such a move will ensure that everyone can see and take part in the games.

As members have already mentioned, the games will provide a great opportunity to improve transport, and the creation of the so-called games lanes, which Glasgow City Council has said will be one of Glasgow 2014's lasting legacies, will I think be very appropriate for the people of Glasgow. Moreover, the Glasgow airport rail link will present a fantastic opportunity. However, one opportunity has been missed. Will the minister speak to the Minister for Transport and Climate Change, Stewart Stevenson, about the Glasgow crossrail project, which has been on the cards for 30 years and which could be up and running for 2014?

With Glasgow 2014, we have a golden opportunity not only to improve the health and life chances of all the people of Scotland but to show to the rest of the world that Glasgow's sporting

achievements are among the best. We must not and cannot fail—this is the opportunity of a lifetime, and we must ensure that we pass on to the people of the east end and of Glasgow as a whole a lasting legacy of life improvements. I am sure that, with the support of the Government's positive and ambitious programmes, people will see long-lasting benefits from the games.

16:00

Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab): I share Sandra White's pleasure in being here to speak in today's stage 1 debate on the Glasgow Commonwealth Games Bill. Like Jamie McGrigor, I congratulate Sir Robert Smith on his appointment as chair of the 2014 organising committee. As Jamie McGrigor pointed out, Sir Robert is well known for his abilities in business. He worked closely with Lord Macfarlane to deliver the Kelvingrove project, an achievement of which anyone would be proud. As well as being a businessman and a patron of the arts, Sir Robert is a Partick Thistle fan—indeed, he is a season ticket holder—so he has ably demonstrated that his dedication to sport knows no bounds and that he has experience of taking minor setbacks in his stride.

As we have heard, Scotland is required to introduce legislation to underline our commitment to the Commonwealth games and to put in place measures that will help to ensure the delivery of the games. Many of the functions laid down in the bill are specifically required by the Commonwealth Games Federation. It is safe for me to say, without being party political, that all members want the games to be the best, the greenest, the most sustainable and the most accessible that the Commonwealth has ever seen. When summing up the debate, will the minister explain how the needs of spectators with a disability will be met, given that there seems to be no statutory responsibility to consult with disability or mobility groups?

The minister will recall that at the Local Government and Communities Committee I raised with him the issue of advertising at venues, about which some local authorities, in particular, have expressed concerns. I am grateful to him for the clarification that he has given about enforcement officers, which is genuinely welcome. I hope that he will discuss with MSPs the amendments that he plans to lodge at stage 2, so that he can gain our support for them.

As we know and have heard, the 2014 games are hugely important for our country, not just in terms of sporting achievement but because they will boost our national economy. They will provide a showcase for Scotland internationally and will offer our citizens, young and old, great opportunities to be involved and to gain lasting

benefit from their involvement. However, we must remember that the games last only 11 days. If we get the games right, those 11 days will be memorable as a spectacle and as an experience, giving us the opportunity to enjoy a sporting event that is arguably second to none. I hope that there will also be a cultural programme for all of us to enjoy. Traditionally, culture has been an integral part of the Commonwealth games, but the Government has been a bit quiet on that aspect of the event. I would welcome more information about it in the weeks and months to come.

The legacy of the 11 days of the games is vitally important, and we must start to build it now. Sandra White was correct to mention the 30-plus medals that were won in Melbourne in 2006, building on the success in 2002. We know that, traditionally, athletes compete better at home than they do abroad, so I hope that in 2014 we will have an even bigger haul of medals than we had in 2006. I hope, too, that we will have a legacy that will allow our young people to become involved in sport and all of us to become more active and to take forward our sporting ambitions.

It may appear from newspaper reports in the past few days that the First Minister believes that the legacy of the games should be paid for entirely from the national lottery, and that funds that are currently earmarked for the 2012 Olympics should be used for that purpose. I share some of his concerns about the use of the lottery money in question and have said so on the record, but the money should be redistributed back to all the good causes—it should not be used only to build a legacy from Glasgow 2014. Of course, we will need investment to provide a legacy, which we all recognise is important. Will the minister advise us what legacy the Government has already committed to providing? The Commonwealth Games Federation is alive to the criticism that many big sporting events do not deliver a legacy—members have mentioned that criticism. I would be surprised if the bid document did not oblige the Government to secure a legacy. If a promise has already been made, what provision is the Government making in its own budgets to secure that legacy? Should it not see any money that may come from the lottery in due course as a bonus over and above what has already been committed?

I urge the minister to ensure that there is good co-operation with the London 2012 organising committee in order that the legacy of the Olympics can be part of the lead-up to 2014. We can learn much and hugely benefit from 2012. I hope that the transition from the Olympic games to the Commonwealth games is as seamless as possible. In that context, it would be helpful to know when a replacement for Julia Bracewell as chair of sportscotland and our representative on

the 2012 nations and regions group will be announced.

In closing, I want to make a point that I have made before—I do not make it from a partisan point of view. The year 2014 will be a wonderful year for sport in Scotland—indeed, it will be a wonderful year for sport and for Scotland. We will host the Ryder cup in addition to the Commonwealth games. Will the minister consider making 2014 a year that is recognised as a year of sport in which we will redouble all our efforts to allow everyone in Scotland to take the opportunities that are afforded by such great events and by all the facilities that will be provided as a result of those events?

16:07

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): It is right that I begin my speech by congratulating all those who were involved in the successful bid to bring the Commonwealth games to Glasgow. I was in the Old Fruitmarket in Glasgow when the result of the bidding process was beamed back live from Sri Lanka. The atmosphere on that day was electric during the build-up to the announcement, and it was euphoric after the successful bid was announced. The sight of Wendy Alexander, Nicola Sturgeon and Annabel Goldie on stage dancing with one another was truly something to behold. Such unity and shared joy among political parties was a pleasure to watch—although perhaps the dancing abilities of those whom I have mentioned were not. It was a joy to watch the many schoolchildren and young athletes who made up the bulk of the crowd that day as they celebrated the announcement. Their energy and enthusiasm were inspirational. I know from subsequent news coverage that such scenes were repeated in schools and sports centres throughout Glasgow.

On the way home that afternoon, my friends—one of whom possessed the largest saltire that I have ever seen—and I met a group of Glasgow workmen, who were aware that an announcement was to be made that afternoon. They asked us what the result was, although given the grins on our faces, they may have had a sneaking suspicion that the announcement had been positive. When they heard the good news, one of them asked my friend whether they could borrow the flag. I use the word “borrow” advisedly; in Glasgow, it means that you ain’t getting back what has been borrowed. The flag was readily handed over. Thirty seconds later, it found its way to the top of a scaffolded building that the workmen had been working on—I also use the word “working” advisedly. A number of proud and patriotic chants and songs from our new-found friends followed in the dulcet tones that only Glasgow workies are capable of. After a while, the owner of the flag

thought that it would be best not to try to get it back, and we went on our way.

I tell that story because it is connected to the idea of providing a legacy. If we could bottle the feel-good factor that was shown in the Old Fruitmarket, schools and sports centres and by the workmen whom we met that day, it would go a long way towards raising the expectations and aspirations of many of the most vulnerable and impoverished communities in Glasgow. However, life does not work like that, which is why the legacy for Glasgow and for Scotland is incredibly important.

Jamie McGrigor: The member might not be aware that Aviemore in my region has supplied more Olympic athletes per head of population than has any other town in Europe. I think that that is because of the sporting infrastructure that surrounds the village, which is important. Does he agree that the sporting infrastructure that is left by the Commonwealth games will be exceptionally important?

Bob Doris: Sporting infrastructure is incredibly important. Not just the large buildings and stadia that will host the athletes but infrastructure in working-class communities throughout Glasgow are important. Those communities should punch their weight in winning medals in Commonwealth and Olympic games.

Warm talk and good intentions will not achieve the legacy. A co-ordinated approach to the build-up of the 2014 Commonwealth games and beyond is essential. Unless the feel-good factor is harnessed and built on through action and financial support, there will be no legacy. We have a wonderful opportunity.

The Local Government and Communities Committee noted in its stage 1 report that sportscotland told the Finance Committee that “significant investment” will be required if we want a legacy. We should all be aware of that. People must put their money where their mouth is. The Local Government and Communities Committee endorsed the Finance Committee’s view that lottery funding should be sought, to allow

“more money to be invested in grass-roots sport development”.

I support the London Olympics, but it is accepted that the decision to divert money to the Olympics will directly affect grass-roots sport in Scotland. If the Government successfully sources an additional £150 million of lottery funding, we will be in a stand-still situation. Some members might argue that more money should be supplied, so that the UK can fund a legacy.

Even if the Commonwealth games had all the funding in the world, it would be crucial to spend

the money wisely. A general principle of the bill is the development of grass-roots sport. I support that principle, but what do we mean by it? We must develop grass-roots sport in Scotland on the back of the games, but we must remember that the Commonwealth games will be not just Scotland's but Glasgow's games. I hope that consideration will be given to the host city, which has the worst levels of poverty and deprivation in Scotland, health statistics that would make some developing nations blush and the most serious youth disorder and gang problems in the UK. If ever there was a place on which we needed to focus £150 million of investment, it is Glasgow, and grass-roots sporting facilities in the city. I hope that the vast bulk of money raised from lottery funding will go directly to Glasgow. Good projects already exist in the city, which aim to break down gang culture and territorial boundaries and attempt to divert youngsters, via sport, from disorder. Such projects must be encouraged, funded and expanded.

If we want to bottle enthusiasm and civic pride in the Commonwealth games and their legacy, it will cost money. If there is a pot of cash worth £150 million at the end of a rainbow, the vast majority must be spent in the deprived communities of Glasgow.

16:13

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): I declare an interest. My husband is Councillor Archie Graham, who is executive member for culture and sport in Glasgow City Council.

The Government trumpets that it has achieved an historic concordat with local government; at my fireside, we have not quite got that far, and there is still evidence of conflict. However, in the Parliament and in Glasgow, the importance and significance of the Commonwealth games are recognised.

Bob Doris raised a crucial point about territorialism and disorder. Solving such problems is not just a Commonwealth games issue; it is core business for Government.

The Commonwealth games are important for Scotland, and particularly for Glasgow, given the stark health inequalities in the city—not to mention inequalities between Glasgow and other parts of Scotland. Too many Scots who declare a love of sport are spectators who do not engage in it. One of the big legacies of the Commonwealth games will have to be that people realise that sport can be an active part of their lives, rather than just another expression of their tribalism.

We support the bill. It is largely technical, and there was an obligation to produce it. We thank all those who gave evidence to the Local

Government and Communities Committee, and we thank the Minister for Communities and Sport for introducing a bill that we are able to support.

There was a great sense of achievement when we realised that the bid had been secured. It is impossible to overstate the professionalism and passion with which Glasgow's case was pursued towards success. I acknowledge the role of this Government and of past ministers in ensuring that the bid was successful.

We have to remember how much of a challenge winning the bid was; it was not a short-term process. The success originated from the foresight of people in Glasgow—in particular, people in Labour administrations over a period of time. There was a long-term commitment to understanding the creative ways by which it is possible to transform the lives of Glasgow's citizens—a commitment to understanding the power of sport and the arts in people's lives.

Rightly, the minister spoke of political consensus, but it required courage to argue for such consensus before it could be built. It required courage to invest in more than £100 million-worth of facilities over the past 10 years. Labour in Glasgow has historically sought to win the argument on the importance of sport and culture to the life of the city. That has been controversial in the past, and it could continue to be controversial. Some of us who were born a long time ago and have long memories will remember the controversy over building the Burrell collection building in the middle of Pollok park. People asked whether money should be spent on that when there was so much need in the city. We now have consensus, but it was political will and choice at an earlier stage that allowed the political consensus to build.

Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con): Does Johann Lamont recollect that the decision on the Burrell collection building was taken under a Conservative administration?

Johann Lamont: Absolutely—and my point is that, in building consensus, we have to acknowledge that the first step is a hard one. We should commend the first step, whoever took it. All of us in the chamber should acknowledge the role that we have played, but we ought not to colonise for the Parliament the credit for success in securing the games.

There will be a Scotland-wide benefit, but it is reasonable to insist that there is a focus on Glasgow's citizens, because of Glasgow's drive and Glasgow's need.

I will make some brief points about access to and the legacy of the games. I urge the minister to reflect on equality issues. We have received a thought-provoking briefing from the Guide Dogs

for the Blind Association that gives a significant commentary on issues that it wants us to consider. That should prompt us to ensure that we have close dialogue with the people who best understand the games' implications for the equality agenda.

I want to make a point—and not just to keep in with the Deputy Presiding Officer—about the concerns of women's organisations that women could be trafficked into Glasgow during the Commonwealth games. It would be useful to address the issues surrounding that.

We have to broaden the debate and understand the games' implications for broader social and economic policy. I know that that is already happening in Glasgow. I am not talking only about business opportunities; we also have to consider the opportunities for social enterprises. I am not talking only about employment opportunities; we also have to consider the employability strategy and the challenge of benefiting the people who are the furthest away from getting work. We also have to understand the importance of talking to and working with the local community, to ensure that its needs are addressed.

As a mother who spends far too long at the side of a swimming pool—my daughter swims six times a week—I want to stress the importance of supporting people who have the talent but not the support. I urge the minister to consider—along with Glasgow City Council—creative ways of ensuring that there is support for people who are talented but do not have access to the support structure that will harness their talent.

We should acknowledge in particular the role of local clubs. Anyone who is involved with young people in sport will know that volunteers—people who do not receive one coin—are the lifeblood of sports, especially sports that do not have great recognition. For example, I commend the people who ran the recent netball international in Glasgow, which was supported almost entirely by voluntary effort and was hugely significant for the young women who want to participate in that sport.

We need to harness such energy, not crush it. We need to support volunteers in our communities and embrace volunteering activity. We well know the critical role that the minister and the Government play, but we also have to recognise that part of our job is to support the volunteers and others who have got us thus far—those who have the ideas and energy to take us right to the winning line.

16:20

Stuart McMillan (West of Scotland) (SNP): I will add my thoughts and sentiments to those that

have been expressed thus far. There is no doubt that the Commonwealth games will benefit Scotland as a whole. I am sure that a positive effect will be felt in the West of Scotland region. I welcome the games to Scotland, and I am certain that the Scottish people will be model hosts. However, there are obvious concerns in staging a world-class event.

The bill contributes towards the Scottish Government's aim of making the games safe and enjoyable for all. In turn, the games will create a long-lasting legacy for Glasgow and Scotland. In debating the bill, we have the opportunity to ensure that Scotland gets the most out of hosting the games. However, some fears have been expressed that the loss of lottery funding to the London Olympics may adversely affect the legacy of the Commonwealth games. The escalating cost of the London Olympics means that Scotland could lose out on £150 million of lottery funding over the next four years.

During the recess, a week or so ago, I was down south visiting some of my family. I spoke to a man who stays on the outskirts of London and works in the City of London. His take on the London Olympics was that they will benefit only the people of the east end of London, not people in London more generally, and certainly not people north of the Watford gap.

I return to the Commonwealth games. The Parliament has achieved cross-party support for the Scottish Government making a claim for more lottery funding for the games' legacy. The Government's generous agreement to provide 80 per cent of the net costs, with Glasgow City Council meeting the remainder, should be welcomed. That said, the agreement should not detract from the raw deal that we are getting in comparison with the funding for the London Olympics.

The fact that the London Olympics are unlikely to have much impact north of Watford—never mind in Scotland—proves that the SNP Government got it right in launching a public consultation on the Commonwealth games. The consultation will engage all those who will be involved in the games, from the ground up. Their views will be important in getting the games right, so that a legacy is created not only for Glasgow but for the whole of Scotland. With the views of those people duly taken into consideration, the bill should be allowed to proceed in line with the appropriate actions. The bill should also act as a guide for the Commonwealth games organisers and the public, so that they can enjoy the games and take pride in their country's hosting them.

I welcome the guidelines on ticket touting. The issue is not new, but it does catch people out unwittingly. I was fortunate to get a ticket for the

Scotland v Norway game in France in the 1998 world cup. What got my goat on the train journey to Bordeaux was the touts who were wandering up and down the train trying to sell tickets to genuine fans. My take on touts is that they are parasites on genuine fans, whether of the sporting or musical variety.

When someone is trying to obtain tickets for a large event, it is all too easy to become immersed in the sense of occasion. The bill addresses the need for the sale of tickets to be regulated. Cracking down on ticket touts was a key factor in the success of Glasgow's bid to host the games. Indeed, the host city's contract sets out that

"the unauthorised sale of tickets should not be allowed".

That view should gain wide support in the chamber. From the speeches that I have heard, that seems to be the case. I hope that the great number of people who will go to the games will not be adversely affected by ticket touting. As I said, ticket touting is not new; it appears during every major sporting or musical event. There is the potential for us to use the consultation findings to consider future ticket touting regulations.

The extensive infrastructure work that is to be undertaken for the games in Glasgow is to be commended. That infrastructure not only will create short-term sustainability for the city, but will be part of the games' legacy. During another vacation, in the summer of 2005, I went to Australia for three and a half weeks. I was based in Melbourne. The sporting legacy that that city gained from hosting the Olympics a few decades ago and from the Commonwealth games, which the city was about to host in 2006, was fantastic. The facilities that I saw were world class. Any country that hosts a major sporting event should consider that model.

As well as the sporting facilities, the legacy of the Glasgow games will have other aspects. I hope that the athletes village in the city and other contributions to the regeneration of the Clyde area will work towards the common legacy goal. Although efforts will be concentrated in Glasgow, the west of Scotland should benefit from the increase in trade and tourism that the Commonwealth games will attract. The Clyde will be the focus for many people. On lovely summer days—when we get them—trips on the Waverley down to Arran are first class.

I hope that, through implementing the bill, Glasgow and Scotland host an extremely successful Commonwealth games for the home and visiting athletes and spectators. Let us hope that we provide an atmosphere that befits a winning nation and encourages current Scottish athletes and those of the future.

16:25

James Kelly (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to take part in this stage 1 debate on the Glasgow Commonwealth Games Bill. The bill contains several technical measures that are crucial to supporting the Commonwealth games, and it is important that they go hand in hand with other work that is being done, so that we have a successful Commonwealth games in 2014.

As others have done, I acknowledge the important contribution of the previous Scottish Executive and Glasgow City Council, which worked for several years to ensure a successful bid. The bill and the other work will have several pluses for Glasgow, not just for sport but for the economy. The games will benefit my constituency of Glasgow Rutherglen directly.

One technical aspect of the bill is the measures on ticket touts. I share Stuart McMillan's concerns about ticket touting. Sport is for fans and communities, but we all know of instances in which ticket touts have ripped off fans by overcharging. Touts exclude ordinary supporters and fans from attending events. It is important for Glasgow 2014 that we reach out to the communities of Glasgow and the rest of Scotland, so that many people participate in the excitement of sporting events. I hope that they go away from those events and take up sport, which will improve the sporting infrastructure throughout Scotland.

The bill contains important measures on street trading and advertising. Established street traders' concerns need to be addressed, but street trading must be regulated properly. We need to maximise the advertising revenue, so that we boost the funds for the games. Members have raised concerns about a financial overrun, but one advantage of the Glasgow project is that much of the infrastructure is in place, which will minimise the required capital spend and, I hope, limit the exposure to financial overrun. Those technical aspects must be taken care of.

The games are a tremendous opportunity for Scotland. There are great sporting benefits to be had for Glasgow and the nation. To see that, one need only consider the successes of the 1970 and 1986 Commonwealth games in Edinburgh. One of the images of 1970 is that of Lachie Stewart in the 10,000m race running away in the last lap to win. Members will understand that I have seen only the archive footage of that and that I do not remember it from the time—perhaps some older members, such as Bill Aitken, could tell us about it. Sandra White mentioned the 39 medals that we won at the most recent Commonwealth games but, until then, 1986 was our biggest medal haul, with 33 medals. That shows the advantage of being the base for

the games. I hope that we better those totals in 2014.

I echo Johann Lamont's comments about volunteers. I recently met my old athletics coach from Cambuslang Harriers, Jim Cunningham. We spoke about the many events that we competed in up and down the country, and it really brought home to me the amount of work that volunteers put in and the enthusiasm that they bring, and the mark that that can leave on youngsters. As we run towards 2014, it is important to support the work of volunteers.

I disagree with Stuart McMillan's comments about the Olympics. It is a distinct advantage that we have the London Olympics in 2012. Members should not forget that elements of those games, such as the football, will be situated in Scotland, so we will see a direct impact. We should think back to the big impact in Belfast when Mary Peters won a gold medal in 1972. Just think how it could invigorate Scottish sport in the run-up to 2014 if we got a Scottish Olympic gold medal winner.

There are obvious economic benefits to be had from the 2014 games. I welcome the recent decision on the M74. It is important that such infrastructure is in place for the games. In addition, jobs and investment will be attracted to Glasgow and the wider area, not only in the run-up to the games but post-2014.

As others have mentioned, it is important to promote fitness and healthy living. It is good that, today, we have a stall in the lobby on tackling inequalities in health care. The games give us an opportunity to promote healthy living, get people into sport and ensure that more people in Scotland live healthy lives.

I welcome the bill. The games are an opportunity to build up Scotland and Glasgow, strike a blow for sport in Scotland, boost the economy and improve the nation's health. I hope that we make the most of the opportunity in 2014.

16:32

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): I am pleased to sum up the debate for the Liberal Democrats. The Local Government and Communities Committee has done a good job of analysing and reporting on the bill's detailed implications. Indeed, the minister was good enough to respond to some of its points in his opening comments.

There have been some interesting contributions to the debate. I hope that, in the summation, we will not lose Patricia Ferguson's interesting idea of making 2014 a year of sport. That has a lot going for it, and it fits well with what I want to say about the context.

I will concentrate on the linked areas of funding and support for sport. If there is time, I will say a word about transport. Those matters are dealt with in the committee's report.

I will put matters in context. Like James Kelly, I disagree fundamentally with Stuart McMillan's comments that only the east end of London will profit from the London Olympics. I think that the Scottish Government disagrees as well, because it is involved in linkages into the Olympics.

Stuart McMillan: Will Robert Brown give way?

Robert Brown: I am sorry, I will not. I will proceed, if the member does not mind.

There are a number of contextual points to make. The Glasgow Commonwealth games in 2014 will follow the London Olympics of 2012. There are a number of other associated opportunities, such as the Glasgow world table tennis championships, the Ryder cup—I think somebody mentioned that—and even the possibility of England hosting the world cup, about which I have seen publicity in the recent past. All in all, there is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to raise the profile of sport in Scotland and the United Kingdom.

"Raising the profile of sport" is sort of a public relations man's phrase but, in practice, it means that young people will watch top-class sporting activities in their own country on television. Many will attend the athletics, swimming, water sports or team sports events in person. Some of them, when they come in their thousands to volunteer to be part of the games support structures, will meet the athletes personally. They will see young people just like themselves performing at the highest level, pushing themselves to the limit, winning medals for their countries and being inspirational role models. They will say, "I can do that; I can win a medal," or just, "I would like a shot at doing that."

In the context of all those other events, the legacy of the Commonwealth games has the potential to transform a generation, and we must be ready to take the fullest advantage of it. We have been seduced into thinking that money is the ultimate need but, in fact, the key need is expertise and capacity to give opportunities to thousands of eager potential sportspeople throughout Scotland. The key to that is capacity building on the back of existing sports clubs and athletics clubs. James Kelly mentioned his own experiences in that regard. Many sports clubs do a very good job, and many of them would be capable of doing much more if they had the capacity to move to a new level. Many of them do not have a youth development policy or the ability to up their game in the organisational sense. They

need support to recognise opportunities and good practice across the sector.

Amid all the furore about lottery funding, let us not forget the central point of the legacy. I found the Local Government and Communities Committee's recommendation on that at paragraph 87—although it is perhaps the wrong way round. I think that the minister also believes that. I have no objection to the Government pursuing lottery money to help fund the games, but I would far rather that the Government sought to obtain agreement that additional funding could be levered in directly to sports and athletics clubs—perhaps through umbrella organisations—to support and build the capacities of those clubs, and thus expand what they can do in youth development, in coaching, in using their facilities more fully, in increasing sustainable self-funding, in expanding their facilities and in collaborating between clubs and across sports. The minister may recall that he and I shared a platform at a pre-election debate, at which some of those issues were discussed. Such proposals should be supported—and would likely be strengthened—in the context of the London Olympics as well as the Glasgow Commonwealth games.

I would like the minister to expand on how he sees matters proceeding. My impression is that, although the SNP Government is extremely well intentioned on the matter, ministers have not developed their policy or applied their minds as fully as they might to the challenge of building and leaving a sustainable legacy throughout the country, in particular so that young people have hugely enhanced opportunities to make Scotland a centre of excellence for sports opportunity and development. The medals would be very nice, but much more important is the ability to take part, whatever people's background, location, social origin or level of skills.

I have a slight niggle on the subject of transport. The policy memorandum emphasises roads. Perhaps that is understandable, to a degree, but I hope that the games transport plan will be built on and will take full advantage of the opportunities for rail travel, not least in the east end of Glasgow. Specifically, I refer to the crossrail project, which Sandra White mentioned, and to exploiting the possibilities of the rail network in the east end, especially the Argyle line, which goes out through Bridgeton and Dalmarnock and links through to Rutherglen, Cambuslang and other parts of South Lanarkshire beyond. It could bear large numbers of spectators who will come into town to watch the various events of the Glasgow games.

As a Glasgow representative, I have a particular interest in the games being successful. The opportunities that exist throughout Scotland, thanks to the Commonwealth games and the bill

that provides the infrastructure to support them, are huge and tremendous. In many ways, they are limitless, and we must ensure that we take the opportunities fully.

I very much welcome the bill. I welcome the Scottish Government's support for the games, and I wish it well in its efforts. I urge members to support the bill at stage 1.

16:38

Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con): This is the first parliamentary manifestation of the tremendous result that Glasgow and Scotland got in obtaining the Commonwealth games. Now, we need to build on the success of that tremendous achievement. There is a unanimous view in the chamber that anything that can be done to make the games a success should and must be done. We are all as one on that. Various members have mentioned how the holding of the games has literally been the making of many cities, such as Manchester and Melbourne—even Edinburgh, for that matter.

Like James Kelly, I sometimes look fondly at the film of Lachie Stewart's tremendous win at the 1970 Edinburgh Commonwealth games. I was there, in fact, and next time James Kelly looks at that footage, he will see that I was Lachie Stewart's pacemaker—and I finished 10m ahead of him. He should watch that carefully next time.

However, today we are dealing with the bill. There should be an acceptance that we are taking some shortcuts, which are justified, but that should not be taken as a precedent for how we might deal with similar legislation in the future.

The bill deals with a number of important issues. First, it deals with ticket touting, which Stuart McMillan and James Kelly were correct to talk about, because it is a pretty despicable way to make money. Like Sir Robert Smith, I am a Partick Thistle supporter. I do not often have to get tickets to attend matches in which Partick Thistle are involved. It is totally inappropriate for anyone who is following their football team or watching any sport to be ripped off by those who are prepared to show such a lack of scruple as to make outrageous demands on their purses and wallets. As James Kelly said, the people who are ripped off in that way are often those who cannot afford such prices.

The issue of street trading has to be considered. We want the games to be a success. We want everyone who comes to Glasgow to remember the games fondly because what they see is easy on the eye and exciting in a sporting sense, and because they do not feel that they are being ripped off. Street trading has a perfectly legitimate place in the city's commerce, but we must ensure that the issue is addressed appropriately.

The minister acknowledged that some legal complexities are involved. It is important that the legal definitions are clarified and debated, either here or elsewhere, sooner rather than later. That cannot be left to the last moment; indeed, it must be addressed before we are much further down the road. Let us decide what the words “vicinity” and “precinct” and so on mean—that will make the legislation much easier to enforce.

I note that there were representations from either ACPOS or the Scottish Police Federation that the powers of arrest are not within the terms of the bill. As I understand it, that was also the situation in London in connection with the 2012 Olympics, but wiser counsel prevailed there. As the bill goes through its consensual but necessary parliamentary course, that matter might need to be revisited. I suggest that the minister asks his department to contact people down south to find out what their rationale was for changing the requirements in the London Olympics Bill.

The Commonwealth games have invariably been a success for the cities that have hosted them. However, that has not always been the case with more ambitious projects. The classic example is Montreal, which hosted the Olympics but did not have in place the appropriate financial infrastructure. It is clear that significant progress has already been made in that respect for the Glasgow Commonwealth games and we expect to be kept fully apprised of exactly what is happening.

We want the games to be a success. We know that that will cost us some money, but we do not have any difficulty with that because one must speculate to accumulate. However, the games must not become a total drain on either the Scottish taxpayer or the Glasgow council tax payer.

The wider benefits are of course important. Johann Lamont was right to make the point about encouraging wider involvement in sport. Her speech was useful and valuable. However, I was disappointed to hear that as her daughter ploughed her way through the lengths of the baths, Johann Lamont was simply spectating. Should she not be participating too?

The debate has been interesting. We are all as one. The games will be a success, because a lot of people, such as Patricia Ferguson, worked very hard to get them for Glasgow and Scotland. Let us deal with the outstanding issues and progress the bill with the alacrity and enthusiasm that it requires.

16:44

Mr McAveety: It is always good to follow a natural athlete. Folk memory will suggest that Bill

Aitken was a pacey winger for Partick Thistle—although I suspect that finishing 10m ahead of Lachie Stewart would be a remarkable achievement.

When I listen to debates on this subject, I worry about the fact that Shettleston man is invoked in relation to Scotland's health statistics. I have the privilege of representing the Glasgow Shettleston constituency and am aware that it has two mortality figures. Life expectancy is 54 in the inner east end and 64 in the outer east end. In the areas beyond the outer east end, life expectancy is 10 years more than that, so my recommendation is that everybody should transfer their accommodation to increase their longevity.

The more fundamental issue involves using the games as part of the bigger message about ways in which we can change our lifestyle. Johann Lamont talked about moving from being passive spectators to active participators. How can we use the legacy of the games to increase participation rates? What measures is the Government considering in that regard? The issue concerns not only the allocation of resources, but the building of partnerships. We have had a debate about the organisational change in sport, but the core debate is about how we can use all the partners. If we have an historic concordat with local government—I presume that we do—we need to think about how we can engage with local government and community clubs to increase the infrastructure and development opportunities at local level.

The Local Government and Communities Committee's report discussed the issue of street traders. Having read the front page of today's *Daily Record*, I hope that Chris Harvie does not lodge an amendment to try to ensure that street traders who wear shell suits will be declared invalid as a result. I could give a major sartorial commitment to Chris Harvie to provide him with a shell suit by Lacoste, Nike or the good Scottish brand of McKenzie to wear whenever he wishes, even in this chamber. That might be better than his normal mode of dress.

During the next stages of the bill, we must explore the bill's definition of the word “vicinity”, and the operation of the regulations that deal with vicinity. I hope that the present traders will not be disadvantaged by the bill. We all share memories of the fellas who sold chewing gum and macaroons at football grounds across Scotland, but they seem to have been eliminated from our social experience. In many ways that is regrettable, partly because I knew half the individuals who were involved in that trade.

We must ensure that street traders who have a good record of trading but who operate at the lower end of the market are not disadvantaged by

the corporate market trade around the games. Sir Robert Smith and the members of the Commonwealth games committee will have to perform that balancing act as they explore the issue with great rigour.

I would like to hear the minister's views on lottery funding. He must recognise that lottery funding has already been used in the infrastructure that made the bid successful. In my constituency, that money has had a substantial impact and there is the potential for immeasurable impact in relation to the national arena, the velodrome, the pool development, the hockey centre, and tangential developments such as the national football centre in James Kelly's Rutherglen constituency. It is obvious that lottery funding is already in the system, through sportscotland. We should try to match and maximise that throughout the debate, and I hope that the debate will be constructive.

I get worried when I hear the language that people use in talking about whether lottery money has been rerouted solely to the London Olympics and saying that it will not benefit the wider UK. Obviously, there is a commitment at UK level to reroute to the lottery distributors revenue that is generated from the sale of land after the Olympics. I want to hear from the minister about the consultation that will take place with existing distributors, not only in the area of sport but in areas such as culture.

The Local Government and Communities Committee identified the importance of skills and training, including soft skills and volunteering, which can help people move into work. I have a partisan interest in that as a result of the lack of work activity in substantial parts of Glasgow, particularly the east end. In such areas, a little bit of commitment to training and skills could increase employment opportunities. I hope that there will be a debate with the Commonwealth games organising committee about the possibility of giving preferential treatment to certain target groups in our communities. A commitment on volunteering should be given to our youngsters leaving school.

What is the minister's view on the possibility, which was raised by Patricia Ferguson, that 2014 might be designated as a year of sport, given that two or three emblematic events will take place in that year? It would be useful to hear at least some initial observations on that from the minister.

The ultimate opportunity is to raise our sporting ambition. Youngsters can be involved and make a commitment to the Commonwealth games through community clubs, through their schools and through volunteering. Can we open up a debate with the Commonwealth Games Federation and Glasgow City Council—as the key local authority

involved—about ensuring that youngsters are rewarded for that, perhaps with access to an event or two during the games?

We are on a long journey, which is a bit like a relay race. We held the baton for a period and it has been passed to the SNP Government for the next four years. Obviously, we have confidence in the wisdom of the electorate in 2011, and I hope that the baton will be passed back to the Labour Party, and to other parties if we need a coalition agreement. However, irrespective of the wisdom of the electorate, we want to ensure that we can all be proud of the Commonwealth games and that we can all say that we were there to help to make the event the success that it was. We want it to make a transformational difference to the people—particularly the young people—of Scotland. If it does, that will be a legacy of which we can be proud and one that will make a genuine difference to the wider community that we all serve.

16:51

Stewart Maxwell: It was all going so well until Frank McAveety mentioned passing back the baton. However, if we put that aside, I am sure that we all agree that the debate has been constructive and consensual. I thank members not only for listening to the debate, but for their constructive comments on how we should proceed. Today's debate has continued the spirit of collaboration that marked the successful bidding process and the spirit of co-operation that was present in the initial committee scrutiny of the bill. I pay tribute to the previous ministers who were involved and the previous Administration, which took forward the matter between 2003 and 2007. On such matters, it is important that we rise above party politics and agree to work together for the benefit of Scotland.

I will cover as many as I can of the points that were made in the debate. Kenneth Gibson made a number of points on behalf of the Local Government and Communities Committee. First, he raised the concerns of the advertising industry. We are committed to consulting widely with the advertising industry and we will ensure that, during the consultation on advertising regulations, its views are taken on board. However, we must ensure that advertising is legal and fit for purpose. We made a commitment to the Commonwealth Games Federation that we will protect the brand of the Commonwealth games, and we will do so. It is not only for the benefit of the federation but for the benefit of the Glasgow games that we will make regulations to ensure that the brand is protected.

The destruction power that was mentioned is not a widespread power but is limited to advertising. A similar power is available to local authority

planning officials under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997.

Kenneth Gibson went on to talk about a number of other things, including street trading. Several other members raised that issue, too. He was correct to say that section 2 of the bill does not create an offence in relation to indoor traders. The Commonwealth Games Federation requires us to control outdoor trading in the vicinity of the games. We have no reason—nor do we have any desire—to want shops or other indoor traders to stop trading. They will still be regulated by the laws that deal with trading in Glasgow.

Kenneth Gibson said that an association right is not necessary. That is a matter for the UK Parliament because it is reserved, but officials will meet the Advertising Association next week to listen to its concerns on that point.

The Local Government and Communities Committee wants annual updates on the games, including on broadcasting revenue. I confirm that we will provide that information to the committee and the rest of the Parliament.

Frank McAveety talked about internet trading and about eBay in particular. We do not underestimate the challenge that we face in gaining the co-operation of internet services and ensuring that internet service providers comply with the spirit of the games. That is why we will draft internet regulations nearer the date of the games, taking account of the views of eBay and other services and of developments in a rapidly changing technology. We must accept that the technology changes almost week by week. There is no point in dealing with it now when a completely different set of regulations will be required nearer the games.

A number of members, including Stuart McMillan and James Kelly, talked about ticket touting, which is an important issue. Frank McAveety also asked about prevention of ticket touting outside Scotland. The bill clearly cannot create an offence in other jurisdictions, but it will ensure that those who engage in touting outwith Scotland, using computer systems located in other countries for example, will commit an offence under Scots law. We are working with the UK Government to extend the offence throughout the United Kingdom through a section 104 order under the Scotland Act 1998.

Jamie McGrigor asked about consultation with disability groups, particularly on the transport plan. We will consult disability groups—I can make that commitment clear and simple. As section 37(2)(c) says, we want to ensure that everyone is consulted

“whom the Organising Committee considers appropriate.”

We do not want to list organisations, but we expect that to involve disability groups. I can make that commitment to Jamie McGrigor and the other members who raised the issue.

Patricia Ferguson asked about co-operation with the London organising committee of the Olympic games. We are continuing to co-operate with LOCOG; indeed, my officials have a meeting with it tomorrow to discuss a number of issues on which we want to co-operate and the benefits that we want to gain from the lessons that it will learn in organising the 2012 Olympic games in London. That official-level engagement will continue, and we will also engage at ministerial level as time moves on.

Patricia Ferguson was concerned about spectators with a disability. We will ensure that there is full consultation about access for disabled spectators.

Many members mentioned the lottery and legacy issue. The legacy is dealt with in the consultation document that we published on 15 February. I point members, including Robert Brown, to pages 36 and 37 of that document, which cover many of the issues that he raised.

The advertisement for the chair of sportscotland was in the press last Friday, and the appointment will follow the normal public appointments process.

Several members asked about trading within the vicinity, and Sandra White in particular raised the question of compulsory purchase orders. The bill provides for those orders to make absolutely sure that we can get access to the ground that is required to deliver the games. Compulsory purchase orders are a normal process for local authorities. They are a process of last resort, but it is necessary to ensure that they are in place just in case we require to use them.

Sandra White asked about procurement and business opportunities. Officials are already talking to local businesses and chambers of commerce. Derek Casey is going round a number of chambers of commerce to give presentations on the business opportunities that will be provided by the 2014 games.

Bob Doris said that we want to bottle the feel-good factor of the 9 November announcement. I could not agree more, and that is what the legacy document is all about—whether it is in facilities or participation rates.

Johann Lamont referred to equalities and the trafficking of women. That is an extremely important point, and we will ensure that we deal with the issues as we make progress with the bill and other arrangements for the games.

Let me say in conclusion how heartening it has been to be part of the debate and to hear words of

encouragement from many members. Our progress in securing the games and developing the bill and the plans for a lasting legacy have been impressive. It shows what we can achieve if we all work together—the people of Scotland coming together to work for the benefit of Scotland. That is what we want to see, and I am sure that it is what members throughout the chamber want to see.

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): Order. There is too much background noise in the chamber.

Stewart Maxwell: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

We have already had many great sporting moments in 2008, with tennis hero Andy Murray winning in Qatar and Marseille. Alex Marshall retained the world indoor bowls championship to become a five-time world indoor bowls champion, which is a truly remarkable achievement. Just recently, Mark Beaumont smashed the world record for cycling around the world by taking only 194 days to do that—the previous record was 276 days.

We in Scotland have much to look forward to in the next six years. We hope that the profile of the Glasgow games will encourage our young people to reach for the top and to aim for places in the Scotland Commonwealth games team that will compete on home soil in 2014.

Such an opportunity does not come often. We must seize it with both hands. That is why I encourage every member and all the organisations and individuals in every constituency to engage in the consultation exercise and that is why I commend the bill's general principles to Parliament.

Glasgow Commonwealth Games Bill: Financial Resolution

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is consideration of motion S3M-1062, in the name of John Swinney, on the financial resolution in respect of the Glasgow Commonwealth Games Bill.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament, for the purposes of any Act of the Scottish Parliament resulting from the Glasgow Commonwealth Games Bill, agrees to any expenditure payable out of the Scottish Consolidated Fund for a new purpose in consequence of the Act.—[*Stewart Maxwell.*]

The Presiding Officer: The question on the motion will be put at decision time.

Business Motion

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S3M-1433, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Wednesday 5 March 2008

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Ministerial Statement: Borders Rail Link

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Organ Donation Taskforce Report

followed by Business Motion

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 6 March 2008

9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Scottish Government Debate: Scottish Law Commission's Report on Rape and Sexual Offences

11.40 am General Question Time

12 noon First Minister's Question Time

2.15 pm Themed Question Time
Finance and Sustainable Growth

2.55 pm Scottish Government Debate: OECD Review of Scotland's Rural Policy

followed by Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee Debate: Report on the Consultation on the Proposed Strategy for Enhancing Equal Opportunities for Scotland's Ministerial Appointments Process

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 12 March 2008

2.30 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motion

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 13 March 2008

9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Scottish Liberal Democrats Business

11.40 am General Question Time

12 noon First Minister's Question Time

2.15 pm Themed Question Time
Education and Lifelong Learning;
Europe, External Affairs and Culture

2.55 pm Scottish Government Business

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business.—[Bruce Crawford.]

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is consideration of six Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Bruce Crawford to move motions S3M-1426 to S3M-1430 and S3M-1435, on the approval of Scottish statutory instruments.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Community Care (Personal Care and Nursing Care) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2008 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Criminal Proceedings etc. (Reform) (Scotland) Act 2007 (Supplemental Provisions) Order 2008 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995 Fixed Penalty Order 2008 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Valuation and Rating (Exempted Classes) (Scotland) Order 2008 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 (Low Income, Low Asset Debtors etc.) Regulations 2008 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Budget (Scotland) Act 2007 Amendment Order 2008 be approved.—[Bruce Crawford.]

The Presiding Officer: The question on the motions will be put at decision time.

Decision Time

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): There are three questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that motion S3M-1366, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on the Glasgow Commonwealth Games Bill, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the Glasgow Commonwealth Games Bill.

The Presiding Officer: The second question is, that motion S3M-1062, in the name of John Swinney, on the Glasgow Commonwealth Games Bill financial resolution, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament, for the purposes of any Act of the Scottish Parliament resulting from the Glasgow Commonwealth Games Bill, agrees to any expenditure payable out of the Scottish Consolidated Fund for a new purpose in consequence of the Act.

The Presiding Officer: I propose to put a single question on motions S3M-1426 to S3M-1430 and S3M-1435, on the approval of Scottish statutory instruments. If any member objects to a single question being put, please say so now.

As I hear no objections, the question is, that motions S3M-1426 to S3M-1430 and S3M-1435, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on the approval of Scottish statutory instruments, be agreed to.

Motions agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Community Care (Personal Care and Nursing Care) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2008 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Criminal Proceedings etc. (Reform) (Scotland) Act 2007 (Supplemental Provisions) Order 2008 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995 Fixed Penalty Order 2008 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Valuation and Rating (Exempted Classes) (Scotland) Order 2008 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 (Low Income, Low Asset Debtors etc.) Regulations 2008 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Budget (Scotland) Act 2007 Amendment Order 2008 be approved.

Recreational Sea Angling

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S3M-1096, in the name of John Scott, on recreational sea angling. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes the economic and social importance of recreational sea angling to communities along the west coast and across Scotland; further notes that around 225,000 people participate in the sport annually with an average spend of £1,375 for boat anglers and £861 for shore anglers; recognises that most species of interest to sea anglers have limited commercial value and are returned alive to the sea, representing an excellent financial return for "Scotland plc"; affirms the extremely low environmental cost of recreational sea angling which is at the forefront of sustainable fishing and especially welcomes the Give Fish a Chance initiative from the Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network, encouraging anglers to keep only those fish which have reached breeding size; regrets the substantial decline of the sport and supporting industries, notably on the Firth of Clyde, due to a loss of stocks with a number of species becoming extinct locally or reduced to the point where only juvenile specimens are now being caught; notes with concern the critically endangered status of key species, such as common skate, porbeagle and spurdog, which bring sea anglers to Scotland, and considers that work between the Scottish Government, sea angling bodies and other relevant agencies should continue to ensure the conservation of key species and the continued growth of sea angling in Scotland.

17:04

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): I thank all the members who have signed my motion and especially those who have taken the trouble to stay for the debate. I welcome the various sea angling organisations that are represented in the public gallery and the other interested individuals who have joined us, many of whom attended the event in the Parliament at lunch time, for which thanks are especially due to Steve Bastiman, Ian Burrett and their colleagues from the Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network.

Before this begins to sound like an Oscar acceptance speech, I will turn to the subject. As my motion notes—and as we heard at lunch time today—recreational sea angling is hugely important to Scotland. It supports not only boat hire companies and tackle shops, but a plethora of other businesses such as hotels, cafes and pubs in often fragile coastal communities. As the motion states, an estimated 225,000 people participate in sea angling each year, not including the many tourists who also come to fish.

Research by Highlands and Islands Enterprise estimates that almost 80,000 United Kingdom residents visited the Highlands in 2003 to take part in sea angling, which it says supports more than

400 full-time equivalent jobs. Furthermore, Scottish Natural Heritage has suggested that boat anglers spend an average £1,375 each and that the equivalent figure for shore anglers is a not inconsiderable £861. As to the overall economic value of the sector, we await the Glasgow Caledonian University study with interest—indeed, with bated breath. It is worth noting that a similar study that was published by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs calculated the total worth of the sector in England and Wales to be a possible £1.3 billion.

Despite its significance to many of the communities that we represent—including those in my constituency—angling is, I believe, a subject that has been surprisingly overlooked by politicians. As the Scottish Estates Business Group has said,

"Scotland still has considerable opportunities to develop sea fishing which remain largely untapped",

yet I cannot recall a debate on recreational fishing in my eight years in Parliament. I am glad that we have been able to put that right with two events today. I hope, however, that the debate will not end here. I urge the minister to consider whether a full debate on the subject might be possible when the economic impact study is eventually published, later this year.

As the minister knows, I asked recently whether the Government intends to develop a sea angling strategy. He replied that the starting point must be the forthcoming study. I wonder whether, in his closing remarks, he will confirm whether the strategy forms part of his plans. Governments of all colours are good at publishing strategies, but not always to great effect. It may be that an alternative course is open to us. Either way, I trust that the minister will touch on how the Government might take things forward from here.

Recreational sea angling is an activity that we should all welcome, not simply because of its economic importance but because it represents the ultimate in sustainable, environmentally sound fishing. It causes no damage to the seabed and the number of fish that are taken bears no threat to the viability of stocks. Indeed, the sea angling community needs take a back seat to no one in its approach to conservation and is actively promoting minimum catch sizes to ensure that fish that are yet to breed are returned to the water.

In the light of the sea angling community's commitment to conservation, it is especially troubling—to all of us, I trust—that many of the species that are of interest to anglers and were once regarded as abundant are either extinct locally or reduced to the point at which only juvenile specimens are being landed. For example, in days gone by, the European cod

festival was held on the Clyde on more than one occasion. The idea that such an event should be held there today would be laughable if the matter were not so serious.

Many of the sea angling tourists who come to Scotland do so to fish for some of our most spectacular species, for example—in your constituency, Presiding Officer—the enormous and erroneously named common skate, which is caught each year off the west coast. There is one particular fish that I know for a fact has been caught eight times.

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): It enjoys it.

John Scott: It must enjoy it. It is doing its bit for Scotland and its contribution to the local economy has been calculated to be in the region of £6,000. It is better living than dead. However, as a species, the common skate is in great danger.

The reasons for the decline are varied, although poor fisheries management over many decades has undoubtedly played a significant role. It is little short of tragic that, following the most recent round of fishing talks, some 20 tonnes of the porbeagle shark—another prized species—will be dumped dead into the seas around the UK. Discarding is an activity that saddens the sea angling community—as it does most reasonable people, especially the commercial fishermen who are forced to carry out such a repugnant task.

I welcome the fact that Scotland is emerging as a European leader in the pursuit of more conservation-minded approaches to commercial fishing. The announcement last month of the first real-time closure was an important milestone. I also welcome plans for a marine conservation area in Arran. That is exactly the sort of model that we need to consider elsewhere, especially in areas where endangered species breed. Perhaps it could be the Solway Firth. Most of us agree that more radical action will be required in future, whether through the Scottish Parliament or Europe, to ensure that stocks of key species thrive again.

Scotland is blessed with a rich marine environment that, for various reasons, has been abused for generations. It is arguable that sea anglers have borne the results of that abuse more than most. We have an obligation to right old wrongs and, in so doing, to restore our marine environment. We must begin again the important journey to re-establish many of our endangered species so that stock might thrive again, and to recreate the conditions in which sustainable recreational and commercial fishing can exist side by side for the benefit of all our coastal communities.

17:11

Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab): I congratulate John Scott on his motion and the interesting presentation that he organised for lunch time today. Everyone who took part found it very informative.

Approximately 50,000 visitors to Scotland take part in sea angling, bringing something like £150 million to the Scottish economy, 30 per cent of which goes to the south of Scotland and Dumfries and Galloway. It is an important industry that provides tourism income outwith the normal season—28 per cent of sea anglers who come to Scotland to participate in recreational sea angling do so at least three times a year.

Some time ago, VisitScotland undertook a survey of the hurdles that hold back the growth of sea angling. The main issues were cost, variations in accommodation and boat hiring opportunities and, most important, the quality and quantity of the fish available. That was probably the most difficult and most serious problem to address. If we do not address those issues, Scotland could continue to lose as much as £20 million per year through losing opportunities to host championships and other competitions.

The greatest concern is the loss of fish stocks, which is a problem that cannot be rectified easily. We must strike a balance between recreational and commercial fisheries. It might have to be different in different parts of Scotland. I was surprised to hear that the langoustine industry is reckoned to be discarding 15 million fish a year. It discarded 250 jobs in my area last year. I might have less sympathy for that industry than I had, but it is important to realise how the different industries affect each other. A balance must be struck between the economic needs of different industries.

The importance of recreational sea angling to the small community of Drummole in your constituency, Presiding Officer, was described in the DVD that was shown at Mr Scott's presentation today. I believe that 500 people live there—you may put me right on that. The tourism income that comes from recreational sea angling supports a small, remote, rural community that might otherwise struggle to exist.

DEFRA has issued a draft strategy that contains a number of actions through which recreational sea angling could be promoted. The proposals under consultation include consideration of species that can be fished for recreational purposes only, the designation of fisheries for recreation-only use, the introduction of a sea angling licence that would bring in income and help to regulate the activity, the development of a code of conduct that would promote best practice,

and the development of management bodies. The Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network has suggested that angling centres should be promoted to conserve the sport. Does the Scottish Government have any plans to undertake a similar exercise in Scotland? We do not want to lag behind the rest of the United Kingdom.

I was disappointed by the Scottish Government's decision to shelve proposals for a marine national park. I realise that the idea was not popular in other areas of Scotland but, as I am sure you will confirm, Presiding Officer, it was popular in the Solway area. I hope that the minister will reconsider, particularly in view of the interest in the Solway area and the possibility that a marine national park would help to sustain and encourage biodiversity in the firth.

The forthcoming marine bill, which we are all looking forward to, must enable ministers to take rapid action when this important contribution to the economy in Scotland's remote and rural communities comes under threat. I know that much of the primary legislation will be enabling legislation, but I hope that when serious issues arise in certain parts of the country, ministers will have powers to take action, for example to impose the kind of conservation area that has now been imposed in Kenny Gibson's constituency. I understand from what Mr Gibson has said that achieving that has taken a long time. I hope that the forthcoming bill will address such matters.

17:16

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):

I know that if you were sitting where we are sitting, Presiding Officer, you would be very keen to take part in the debate. It is unfortunate that you are precluded from doing so.

I thank John Scott not only for securing the debate but for bringing this issue to the Parliament's attention for, I believe, the first time. Sea angling's time has come, and sea anglers' passionate commitment to their sport is reflected in the fact that so many of them turned up at Parliament today to represent a very diverse group of organisations. Indeed, many were present at the lunch-time meeting to ask questions of the panel, of which I was a member.

The Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network is to be congratulated on the very comprehensive document that it produced for its lifelines event, which deals with a number of issues facing the sea angling community. I noted with some alarm that since 1970 the number of Clyde charter boats used for sea angling has declined from 119 to a mere three. Such a statistic shows the pressure that sea anglers are under.

As far as sea angling's relationship to commercial fishing is concerned, I think that there is a misconception about the fish species that recreational anglers catch. Having sea angled only once—after which I was, unfortunately, rather unwell—I am not personally familiar with some of the species caught by sea anglers, which include pollack, skate, conger eel, wrasse, tope, spurdog and porbeagle shark. I see Jackson Carlaw laughing at that. I should tell him that although I am the son, grandson and great-grandson of jolly Jack Tars, I am afraid that that gene has not been passed down to me.

The Scottish Government has tried to examine the issue of recreational sea angling. In fact, it has commissioned research from Glasgow Caledonian University that commenced just this year and should address the problem that we have very little objective information on the scale, character and economic impact of recreational sea angling in Scotland. Given the jobs at stake, it is vital that we increase tourism revenues in Scotland, and the role that recreational sea angling can play in that respect, particularly in some of the fragile communities that Elaine Murray mentioned, must be acknowledged if we are to reach our target of increasing such revenues by 50 per cent by 2015.

Not only has VisitScotland produced a "Fish in Scotland" brochure; it has a website promoting all types of fishing opportunities for visitors, including dedicated sections for coarse anglers and sea fishermen. However, those aspects could be promoted with a bit more gusto. We should also commend the anglers welcome scheme for providing storage boxes for rods; a daily weather forecast; freezer facilities for bait or catch; and facilities for gutting or preparing catches and for washing tackle. Moreover, the European Commission's shark action plan will be significant when it is introduced.

In my constituency, proposals for a no-take zone in Lamlash Bay went out to consultation on 21 January. For 13 or 14 years, the Community of Arran Seabed Trust—or COAST—has pressed Governments of all colours on this matter, without any effect, and I am pleased that the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment has launched the consultation. Introducing a no-take zone in Lamlash could help tremendously in showing that marine conservation can work for recreational sea anglers or fishermen of a commercial bent.

Recreational sea angling is an opportunity to provide all-year fishing in many areas of Scotland, especially the area that I represent—the Firth of Clyde. Members who attended today's meeting are keenly aware of how much sea anglers want to develop their sport. We recognise that recreational sea anglers can make an important

contribution to the sustainability and economic development of coastal communities.

17:20

John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD): Like previous speakers, I am pleased to participate in the debate. I congratulate John Scott on bringing the issue before the Parliament, as sea angling gives pleasure to many people all around our coast.

All members will agree that sea angling has tremendous potential. Around Scotland—our islands and, in particular, our mainland coast—we have a pristine marine resource that is the envy of the world at large. There is no doubt that others would love to have the resource that lies almost dormant around our coast. However, that resource could be developed much more sustainably than is the case at present.

The information that we have received on sea angling indicates that people can take aboard whatever fish they catch, with few exceptions. However, it goes on to name those exceptions as salmon and sea trout, which Jamie McGrigor may find interesting. Imagine the irony of someone fishing in the middle of the Minch, catching a salmon on a rod—which is quite unusual—and finding that, lo and behold, the book says that they must put it back. I wonder how many sea anglers would comply. In addition, to whom do salmon that are caught in the middle of the Minch belong?

Small, isolated communities should be encouraged to promote facilities for sea angling, which, if developed, would generate a welcome economic boost for those fragile areas. I am sure that we can encourage Government and agencies to provide more financial support for groups, organisations and communities that are willing to participate in sea angling.

Government and agencies constantly advise communities, especially agricultural communities, to diversify into this, that and the other. Daily we hear them say that communities must diversify in order to survive. Sea angling provides communities with an opportunity to diversify into marine tourism. That would benefit other local businesses, such as providers of accommodation, catering and transport, and tackle shops; everyone has something to gain. However, if we are to conserve fish stocks in sufficient numbers and quality to attract sea anglers, we must curtail commercial fishing in these fragile areas. We need to promote fishing and to create a world-class fishery for sea anglers and tourists alike. We must make people aware of the economic importance of sea angling as part of the visitor experience.

To support sea angling further, we need to ensure that we have secure and appropriate

harbour facilities, with a sound and modern infrastructure that can be accessed with complete confidence and the minimum of difficulty. There is little point in having a boat if people have to clamber over seaweed and rocks to get into it; we must have modern facilities to make access easy.

We must combine our efforts to develop this recreational marine facility. If we do so, I am confident that we can develop a world-class sea angling facility, to be enjoyed for years to come.

17:24

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I did not know that John Farquhar Munro has used his net in the Minch. I always thought that he did so in the coastal areas around Skye.

I declare an interest in that I am an honorary vice-president of the Clyde Fishermen's Association, a sea angler and a freshwater angler.

I know perfectly well that stocks in the sea lochs and the open sea have badly declined in the past 20 to 30 years. Once in the 1970s, my sister and I caught 110 good-sized saithe and lithe off a rock on the Isle of Coll. We returned on the same date two years ago and caught six. That either means that we do not know how to fish any more or that the fish are not there.

Sea angling is a major contributor to the economy in the region that I represent—the Highlands and Islands. John Scott gave figures on what it produces there. I was staggered when I heard a gentleman who was representing the European Federation of Sea Angling, I think, say today that sea angling is worth £7 billion to the European economy and that it supports half a million jobs in Europe. I have just spent a week's holiday in Lanzarote, where one gets bombarded with pamphlets that ask people to go sea fishing. When a German sea angler to whom I was speaking there found out that I had come from Scotland, he said, "Ah! You really do have good sea fishing." We do not make enough use of what we take for granted on our coast, but we should. Sea fishing is worth a lot, but it could be worth much more.

Some species of fish are best caught by anglers during the winter months. Income from winter tourism can be especially important to remote communities, many of which are struggling economically. Such communities want tourism to be expanded so that there are tourists all year round. Today, I spoke to the president of the Scottish Crofting Foundation, Norman Leask, who comes from Shetland. He told me that he has many friends with boats who make a lot of extra income out of taking people fishing. Of course, the fishing around Shetland is still quite good.

I was on Orkney during its sea angling festival around two years ago. There was a huge buzz in the air and all the hotels were full, although the festival was held off-season. Local boats were hired to take out sea anglers. We ought to make more of that obvious mode of tourism. A Shetland councillor there, Adam Doull, said that it is probably the best diversification that can be found. Politicians always tell farmers and crofters that they must diversify, and sea angling is a means of diversifying on their doorsteps that they could do something about.

Scotland has a huge coastline: Argyll alone has more coastline than France. We are surrounded by the sea on all sides—surely it is possible for commercial fisheries and sea anglers to live in sustainable co-existence. Lamlash Bay is closing, and there are areas in which people have voluntarily stopped commercial fishing. The fishermen's associations must be asked to work together with sea anglers so that, as I say, commercial fisheries and sea anglers can live in sustainable co-existence.

17:29

Peter Peacock (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

As other members have done, I welcome the opportunity to take part in this debate, albeit briefly. I thank John Scott for securing it and for organising today's event.

The motion draws attention to a leisure interest of members in the chamber who represent many thousands of people who cannot be here, but it also gives us a chance to draw attention to the economic, tourism and business benefits that sea angling brings to our country.

I have fond memories of sea angling in my childhood holidays. I remember going to Campbeltown in particular, and to Portpatrick in Arran, and seeing people sea angling. Occasionally, I managed to get out on a boat. I remember the first fish that I caught and my excitement as a result of being connected to something live at the other end of my line. It is a very real sensation, which virtually nothing else in life can replicate, so I understand the thrill and excitement that people get from fishing, although it is sad that I have spent little time fishing during my adult life.

Even now, when I am stuck in my flat in Edinburgh of an evening—as many members are—and am flicking through what seems to be thousands of cable television channels, I often stop to watch a fishing channel. I still get a bit of a thrill from watching sea angling. I confess that I am also a devotee of Rick Stein's cooking programmes, which include the occasional shot of someone catching sea bass or whatever from a

boat or the coast. Rick Stein does not return the fish to the sea; he cooks them. There is merit in that, no doubt.

Huge numbers of people gain enjoyment from sea angling. I think John Scott and other members mentioned that there are more than 200,000 sea anglers in Scotland who—unlike Rick Stein—are increasingly returning fish to the sea and adopting good conservation practices, because of the reasons that we heard about at the lunch-time event. The slogan "give fish a chance" has been attached to a programme that sea anglers are pursuing.

Like Jamie McGrigor, I have during the past 35 years travelled around the Highlands and Islands, and sea angling is obvious, wherever we travel in the area. I lived in the Orkney islands for a time, where sea angling was very much part of the community's economic activity. In Shetland and the Western Isles, sea angling is a huge part of the fabric of communities, so it would be horrible if its long-term future were threatened. Up and down the west Highland coastline, from Argyll to Durness, many communities have active sea angling populations, not just in summer but all year round.

It is obvious that sea angling provides not just great recreation for visitors, but great additional business for the people who live in those areas. A former councillor colleague of mine—and of John Farquhar Munro—who lived in Shieldaig and made most of his income from creel boats and salmon smoking, would take people out sea angling. He got an important supplement to his income while providing services locally.

It is obvious that sea angling generates income from tourism. There is income from boat hire, hotel stays and the meals, support services and equipment that are supplied. The industry is important for Scotland. Sea angling takes people to small and remote communities in my part of the world, which would struggle to survive economically if it were not for such activities. It is hugely significant.

I note the pleas of sea anglers that we should take more account of them in policy making, to ensure that we consider their interests when we think about the marine environment and, in the short term, the proposed marine bill. We must ensure that sea anglers have a place at the table with other interests so that their voices can be heard. I call on the Government to work more closely with sea anglers, to ensure that their concerns are addressed.

I urge the minister to ensure that our conservation policies are rigorous and protect species, and to consider setting up more no-take zones. Conservation is hugely important to sea

anglers, to biodiversity and to the future economic prosperity of many communities that derive their income in part from sea angling. We must take the issue seriously.

An issue that has emerged from the evidence that we heard today is that perhaps we place disproportionate economic value on one part of the fishing industry and do not regard the economic benefits of the angling industry in quite the same way. Maybe we need to ask serious questions about that. I am glad that the issues have been aired in the debate.

17:33

The Minister for Environment (Michael Russell): I congratulate John Scott on securing this interesting debate. I understand that today's lunch-time session was productive and informative.

The debate has been well informed. When I learned that I would have to respond to it, I thought that I had no experience of sea angling. Then I remembered that in recent years I have fished from the shore of Loch Riddon and from a boat in Argyll, with my son, catching mackerel at times when many mackerel come into the lochs, so I have on occasion enjoyed the pleasure that Peter Peacock described—the relaxation, the fascination and the involvement in the world around us.

I stress that I regard recreational sea anglers not just as part of the community of fishermen in Scotland—fishermen and fisherwomen, I should say—but as part of the effort to conserve the best of the Scottish environment. When reading material provided for us by the Scottish Sea Anglers Conservation Network, I was struck by the desire to define some species as “recreational species”. Catching a fish and then putting it back is clearly a conservation action—even if I can scarcely believe that a skate the size of the one illustrated in the publication I have in front of me can be caught and returned eight times.

The debate has produced some interesting mental images, one of which was the image of John Farquhar Munro casting from the deck of a CalMac ferry to catch a salmon—a ferry that is now, of course, better and more fairly subsidised thanks to this Government.

Jamie McGrigor: Not in all areas.

Michael Russell: Mr McGrigor intervenes from a sedentary position, and another mental image from the debate is that of Mr McGrigor catching 100 fish in one go. Little wonder none was left when he came back; he had fished that part of the sea completely.

This Government does not reject the idea of a strategy for recreational sea angling. However, we

are saying—I think fairly—that we need objective data to guide the development of policy. That is why we have commissioned research into the economic impact of recreational sea angling. The research will include surveys of the community that takes part in recreational sea angling. It will be steered by representatives of that community as well as by VisitScotland, by other tourism organisations and by sea fisheries officials.

In the context of that research and the developing marine bill, I hope that we will come up with some further ideas. I see no reason why we should not have a debate on recreational angling at some future stage. I cannot of course bind the Minister for Parliamentary Business, but having such a debate seems a reasonable aspiration.

My job as the Minister for Environment, and the job of my colleague the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment—who takes a particular responsibility for fisheries—is to balance the needs of a whole range of individuals and organisations. We have to find a balance, on this issue as on many others. We have to balance the needs of commercial sea fishermen, recreational sea anglers, conservation bodies and a range of other interests. As we make progress, we will have to acknowledge not only how much sea anglers want to develop their sport—which we welcome—but the other pressures, and find some way of balancing them.

I note Elaine Murray's point about the marine national park, and strong representations have been made to me from the Solway area. However, robust marine legislation will have to be put in place, and that will have to take priority at this stage. The marine legislation is being steered forward, with the involvement of recreational sea anglers, and I will say something about that in a moment.

The research that has been commissioned will consider the variations between different areas in the species that are targeted. We should have a comprehensive picture by early 2009. That will drive the development of policy and will inform the marine bill.

Recreational sea angling is not entirely about angling. There is a niche tourism market, which will contribute to our ambition of growing tourism revenues by 50 per cent by 2015. I am very impressed by the publication that I have in my hand as a visual aid. “Fish in Scotland” contains a fascinating section on sea angling. It is produced by VisitScotland and is designed to attract people to all aspects of angling in Scotland. It is also heavy with advertising; the sector clearly has a substantial economic input. I also have a brochure that supports a website dedicated to the promotion of all kinds of fishing opportunities for visitors.

VisitScotland and others have established the anglers welcome scheme, which Kenny Gibson mentioned. Participants in the scheme display a logo to show that they are willing and able to provide visitors who are interested in angling with additional facilities, such as storage boxes, a daily weather forecast, freezers, facilities for gutting and preparing fish, and facilities for washing fishing tackle. Like Mr Peacock, I am more than willing to return fish to the sea, but I am also more than willing to eat them myself. Scotland offers great opportunities for people to do that. Many of the pictures I have in front of me show that the eating can be very good.

VisitScotland is also on the angling tourism development group, which it part-funds. The group has been instrumental in developing the FishScotland website.

The focus of the emerging inshore fisheries groups is first and foremost the management of the commercial fishing sector. However, all relevant stakeholders, including recreational sea angling interests, can become involved in that work. Recreational sea anglers should have the opportunity to contribute to the work of the groups. If that is not happening in some places, I am sure that members will make representations to assist it to happen.

We look forward to the various developments that will help us, including the shark action plan, which was mentioned in the debate. We agree that all sea anglers and bodies with an interest in the matter should work together to provide tourism opportunities, to help conserve stocks and to encourage access to the outdoors. Members will know—I know that Mr Peacock knows—that our biodiversity indicators include an indicator on access to the countryside, of which access to the seashore is part.

The Scottish Sea Anglers Conservation Network has joined the sustainable seas task force, which was established by the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment. The task force is making an input to the proposals for the Scottish Government's marine bill. The objective of the bill, at least in part, is the sustainable management of Scotland's coast and seas and the balancing of competing interests for the use and protection of the seas.

I return to what I said at the outset of my speech. Although there are competing interests, we all share one interest, which is the sustainable management of Scotland's coasts and seas. That will provide a range of opportunities. I am happy to endorse the activity that is the subject of the debate and to welcome the presence in the gallery of those who take part in it. The Government recognises that it should do what it can to help support and encourage recreational sea angling. I

am grateful to Mr Scott for the opportunity that his debate has offered me to say that.

Meeting closed at 17:41.

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