

# **MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT**

Thursday 13 March 2008

Session 3

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## CONTENTS

Thursday 13 March 2008

### Debates

Col.

|   |      |
|---|------|
| <b>BORDERS RAILWAY</b> .....  | 6885 |
| <i>Motion moved—[Jeremy Purvis].</i>  |      |
| <i>Amendment moved—[Stewart Stevenson]</i>  |      |
| <i>.Amendment moved—[Des McNulty].</i>  |      |
| <i>Amendment moved—[Alex Johnstone].</i>  |      |
| Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD) .....                            | 6885 |
| The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson) ..... | 6888 |
| Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab) .....                                       | 6890 |
| Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con) .....  | 6892 |
| Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD).....  | 6894 |
| Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP).....  | 6896 |
| Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab).....  | 6898 |
| Tricia Marwick (Central Fife) (SNP).....  | 6899 |
| Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab) .....  | 6901 |
| Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con) .....  | 6903 |
| Des McNulty .....   | 6905 |
| Stewart Stevenson .....   | 6906 |
| Jim Hume (South of Scotland) (LD).....  | 6908 |
| <b>FUEL POVERTY</b> .....   | 6911 |
| <i>Motion moved—[Liam McArthur].</i>  |      |
| <i>Amendment moved—[Stewart Maxwell].</i>   |      |
| <i>Amendment moved—[Johann Lamont].</i>   |      |
| <i>Amendment moved—[Jamie McGrigor].</i>  |      |
| Liam McArthur (Orkney) (LD) .....   | 6911 |
| The Minister for Communities and Sport (Stewart Maxwell) .....                          | 6913 |
| Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab) .....  | 6916 |
| Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con) .....                                      | 6918 |
| Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee West) (SNP) .....   | 6920 |
| James Kelly (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab).....   | 6922 |
| Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD) .....   | 6924 |
| Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP).....   | 6926 |
| Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab) .....                                     | 6927 |
| Tricia Marwick (Central Fife) (SNP).....  | 6929 |
| Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con).....   | 6931 |
| Johann Lamont.....  | 6932 |
| Stewart Maxwell.....  | 6934 |
| Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD) .....  | 6936 |
| <b>QUESTION TIME</b> .....  | 6939 |
| <b>FIRST MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME</b> .....   | 6947 |
| <b>QUESTION TIME</b> .....  | 6957 |
| <b>NATIONAL PARKS</b> .....   | 6973 |
| <i>Motion moved—[Michael Russell].</i>  |      |
| <i>Amendment moved—[David Stewart].</i>   |      |
| <i>Amendment moved—[John Scott].</i>  |      |
| <i>Amendment moved—[Jim Hume].</i>  |      |
| The Minister for Environment (Michael Russell).....                                     | 6973 |
| David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab).....  | 6977 |
| John Scott (Ayr) (Con).....   | 6981 |
| Jim Hume (South of Scotland) (LD).....  | 6983 |
| Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP) .....  | 6986 |
| Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab).....  | 6988 |
| Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con) .....                                      | 6990 |
| Nigel Don (North East Scotland) (SNP) .....   | 6992 |

|  |      |
|--|------|
| Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD).....                                       | 6994 |
| Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab) .....   | 6996 |
| Dave Thompson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP) .....                                    | 6998 |
| Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab) .....                                     | 7000 |
| Jamie Hepburn (Central Scotland) (SNP) .....   | 7002 |
| Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD) .....                          | 7005 |
| Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con).....                                      | 7007 |
| Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab) .....   | 7010 |
| The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment (Richard Lochhead) ..... | 7015 |
| <b>PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU MOTIONS</b> .....  | 7020 |
| <i>Motions moved—[Bruce Crawford].</i>   |      |
| <b>POINT OF ORDER</b> .....  | 7021 |
| <b>DECISION TIME</b> .....   | 7022 |
| <b>IRAQ WAR</b> .....  | 7042 |
| <i>Motion debated—[Aileen Campbell].</i>   |      |
| Aileen Campbell (South of Scotland) (SNP).....                                       | 7042 |
| Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab) .....                                   | 7045 |
| Jamie Hepburn (Central Scotland) (SNP) .....   | 7046 |
| Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con) .....   | 7048 |
| Bill Wilson (West of Scotland) (SNP) .....   | 7049 |
| The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani).....           | 7052 |

## Oral Answers

**Col.**

|   |      |
|---|------|
| <b>QUESTION TIME</b>  |      |
| <b>SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE</b> .....                                 | 6939 |
| <b>GENERAL QUESTIONS</b> .....                                  | 6939 |
| Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route .....                         | 6942 |
| Community Planning Partnerships (Housing and Regeneration)..... | 6944 |
| Mayfield Community Regeneration Project (Funding) .....         | 6939 |
| Rape and Sexual Assault .....                                   | 6945 |
| Tourism (Scottish Borders).....                                 | 6946 |
| Underage Drinking.....  | 6941 |
| Young People (Disabilities) .....                               | 6939 |
| <b>FIRST MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME</b> .....                     | 6947 |
| Cabinet (Meetings) .....  | 6951 |
| Engagements.....  | 6947 |
| Local Government Services (Income Tax) .....                    | 6955 |
| Prime Minister (Meetings).....                                  | 6950 |
| Smoking Cessation.....  | 6954 |
| United Kingdom Budget (Scottish Industry) .....                 | 6953 |
| <b>QUESTION TIME</b>  |      |
| <b>SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE</b> .....                                 | 6957 |
| <b>EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING</b> .....                    | 6957 |
| Advanced Highers (Access) .....                                 | 6958 |
| Class Size Reductions.....                                      | 6961 |
| Rural Primary Schools.....                                      | 6964 |
| School Buildings (Access) .....                                 | 6963 |
| Schools (Deprived Areas).....                                   | 6957 |
| Skills Development Scotland.....                                | 6960 |
| <b>EUROPE, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND CULTURE</b> .....               | 6965 |
| Gaelic.....   | 6965 |
| Lisbon Treaty .....   | 6970 |
| National Theatre of Scotland .....                              | 6971 |
| Performing Arts.....  | 6966 |
| Scotland's Reputation.....                                      | 6968 |
| The Lemon Tree .....  | 6970 |

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## Scottish Parliament

*Thursday 13 March 2008*

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

### Borders Railway

**The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):** Good morning. The first item of business this morning is a debate on motion S3M-1549, in the name of Jeremy Purvis, on transport.

09:15

**Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD):** Good morning. This morning's debate is not on whether there should be a Borders railway; rather, it is on how and when the project will be delivered. The case for the Borders railway has been well and consistently made in this Parliament over a number of years, going back to 2000. Members from all parties joined local people in the Borders in the campaign to push for the restoration of the Waverley line—not only as far as Galashiels and Tweedbank, but all the way to Carlisle.

The campaign continues, but its record in this Parliament has been patchy. Progress has not been easy. The original case was developed and a viable project sought, thus the Waverley railway partnership was created. The strongest and most viable case was for a railway to Tweedbank, serving Galashiels and the communities of Midlothian. When the Waverley Railway (Scotland) Bill was subsequently presented to Parliament, Parliament decided—rightly, in my opinion—that there should be an additional station in the Borders, in the community of Stow.

The campaign continues for an extension of the line to Hawick and all the way to Carlisle. Inevitably, that would require decisions at a United Kingdom level, but trends for investment in rail services in Scotland since devolution have, I regret, not been reflected in trends south of the border.

The context for today's debate on the construction of the Borders railway to Tweedbank is the bill that Parliament passed. The Liberal Democrat manifesto contained a desire to see progress on a feasibility study into extending the project to Hawick. That desire did not appear in the manifestos of other parties, but I am sure that there is cross-party support for the extension. We have argued that a feasibility study should be carried out.

**Tricia Marwick (Central Fife) (SNP):** The member is well aware that the bill that was presented to the Waverley Railway (Scotland) Bill Committee was for a line only as far as Galashiels. I wonder why his party's transport minister did not argue at the time for a line as far as Hawick.

**Jeremy Purvis:** I give credit to the member, who was the convener of the Waverley Railway (Scotland) Bill Committee, which scrutinised the bill. The committee had cross-party membership.

In the first part of my speech, to which I hope the member was listening, I indicated that the Waverley railway partnership was tasked with promoting a viable project. The viability was determined, and the cost benefit ratio was positive only if the construction went as far as Tweedbank. I am sure that that information formed part of the committee's considerations at preliminary stage. The member will recollect that fact, although she seems to have somehow forgotten it this morning.

Notwithstanding the fact that the bill that authorised the construction of the railway received royal assent only on 24 July 2006, the SNP seems to think that former transport ministers should have progressed illegally and started digging up my constituents' gardens to construct the railway before then.

As we all know, the bill had a troubled process leading up to and during its consideration by the bill committee. Presiding Officer, you will recall an SNP amendment during consideration stage that called for the sacking of the Waverley railway partnership as the sponsor of the bill. I have checked the voting record on that amendment, and it was supported by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth, by the Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism—who is in the chamber—and by the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change. They have to consider their record of support for the Waverley railway partnership's proposals and for the bill. Voting to sack the promoter is perhaps not the best indication of support.

Last week's statement on the Borders railway raised more questions than it answered, I regret to say.

**Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con):** The bill received royal assent in July 2006, and the diligence exercise was instructed in March 2007. Why did it take nine months to instruct a diligence exercise?

**Jeremy Purvis:** Immediately after royal assent, £30 million was given by the previous Scottish Government for the preconstruction process. When the scheme was transferred to Transport Scotland in March 2007, it was expected that the design process would start immediately after the first £30 million had been spent. Since May 2007,

not one penny has been invested in the project by the Government. The design process has stalled. That accurately reflects who made progress.

Questions were raised by last week's statement. One welcome part was the capping of the local partners' contributions. I spoke to the leader of the Scottish Borders Council yesterday, to seek urgent clarification on a number of funding issues. Funding issues are of great concern to this Parliament. There is a move towards funding the line entirely through borrowing by a company on a non-profit model. The company has not even been set up yet and there is no timetable for its establishment.

I look forward to a timetable finally being published on the design process; I hope that that will happen within the next two weeks. The design process should have begun last June and run concurrently with the legal transfer of the scheme from the Waverley railway partnership to Transport Scotland. However, it was delayed by an extended due diligence process. Everything has been on hold for an eight-month review.

There are serious concerns about the funding model—concerns reflected in the comments of some Scottish National Party members in recent press reports. Last week, on "Good Morning Scotland", I did an interview with Christine Grahame, who no doubt will speak this morning. I have reviewed the transcript of that interview. I put it to her that the funding scheme was new, and her reply was, "No it's not." Gary Robertson suggested that the Government had chosen to experiment on a system that was not even in place yet. She replied, "It is."

I then said:

"There is no money in this three-year spending review for the Border railway; all the money for this project is going to be borrowed through a vehicle that has not even been set up yet."

Christine Grahame's response was:

"Indeed. Indeed. Far more prudent."

After this fundamental issue had been raised, the response from the SNP was:

"the actual nitty-gritty of the details are being worked out".

Well, £235 million-worth of nitty-gritty is something of a concern to my constituents. We are talking about a body that has not even been set up yet.

So far, the SNP has added confusion where there should have been clarity, and delay where there should have been progress. In the vote this afternoon, I hope that the Parliament will give a clear signal that up-front capital funding from the Scottish Government has to be urgently restored, so that there will be progress on the construction of the railway. Rather than a woolly sometime-

sometime-never start, I hope that construction actually starts and is completed ahead of schedule. That will be brought about not through an organisation that has not even been set up and over which there are question marks, but through actual Government investment in the project.

I move,

That the Parliament reaffirms its commitment to reinstating the Borders railway and condemns the SNP government for cancelling government funding for the construction of the line and failing to commit to a start date for its construction; deplores the uncertainty that this has caused about the future of the project, and calls on the Scottish Government to commit direct funding for the capital costs of the Borders railway and to take forward the construction of the project without delay.

09:23

**The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson):** Thank you, Presiding Officer, for the opportunity to remind the previous Administration that it had eight years to decide what to do with the project. We are reiterating this Government's commitment to deliver the railway.

The leader of the Scottish Borders Council has welcomed my positive announcement and is delighted that the council has had confirmation that the project's construction will begin in this session of the Scottish Parliament.

**Jeremy Purvis:** Just for the record, during the passage of the bill through Parliament, did the minister vote to sack the Waverley railway partnership as promoter?

**Stewart Stevenson:** Mr Purvis is unable to recognise that we have an effective partnership with all the councils involved. I very much congratulate the Waverley railway partnership on its very valuable contribution to getting us where we are. We do, of course, have to move on to deliver. I am delighted that the relationship between the members of the Waverley railway partnership and this Government are so good and will be effective in ensuring that the project is delivered—on time and on budget.

Much has been made of finance. As I advised last week, we intend to deliver the scheme using a non-profit distributing model. That means that we will use expertise and innovation in the private sector to deliver this public infrastructure project. The NPD route will provide an opportunity to use a competitive process that is geared towards obtaining the best solutions from the construction and finance markets, while ensuring that any excessive profits will be reinvested for the good of the community.

Contrary to the views of certain members, NPD is not new. Three projects in Scotland have been

developed using the NPD model already. Those projects are in the schools sector in the areas of Argyll and Bute Council, Aberdeen City Council and Falkirk Council. All three projects have reached financial close.

**Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab):** Does the minister agree that the NPD model is a form of public-private partnership?

**Stewart Stevenson:** The model is a method of ensuring that we do not pay the excess interest rates that too many projects with which Dr Murray's party has been associated have paid. The NPD model is a way of ensuring that the profits that are derived from financing the project are delivered for public benefit. I would have thought that Labour members would welcome that approach.

A project for NHS Tayside is currently being procured using an NPD model contract. Furthermore, Network Rail—which is owned by the Government on our behalf—is, in effect, an NPD structure delivering at UK level across the rail infrastructure. In short, NPD is a tried and tested approach that was used for years by the previous Administration, starting in 2005.

As I announced in my statement to Parliament last week, the capital costs are indicated to be in the range of £235 million to £295 million, with a contribution of £30 million from the councils—those are 2012 figures. The councils welcome the stability in relation to their funding contribution. We anticipate that the money will be paid back over 30 years. The final timescale will be agreed with the successful bidder.

**Jeremy Purvis:** Can the minister clarify how much of the capital costs he intends to borrow? Last week, on "Scotland at Ten", Derek Bateman said to Christine Grahame that Borderers will want to know where the money is coming from. Christine Grahame replied that the amount that the Government has said it will commit to the scheme is the same as the previous Government said it would commit, and that the additional costs will be met by the NPD mechanism, spread over a number of years. Will the NPD mechanism be used to cover the additional costs or all of the costs?

**Stewart Stevenson:** The people of the Borders are not the slightest bit interested in where the money is coming from; they are interested in the money being spent to deliver a railway for their benefit. Our plans will ensure that the railway is built on time and on budget.

In the current testing financial times, investors will move to high-quality investments—a flight to quality, as it were. People are already expressing considerable interest in providing funding via this excellent investment opportunity. We welcome

that interest whole-heartedly. It will ensure that the Scottish taxpayer gets good value for money.

I take this opportunity to reiterate our support for the project. The Government will have spent at least £40 million on the project before procurement commences, using the funding that I am talking about. There has been no cancellation of Government funding; in fact, we will be putting more money into the project. When one borrows money and repays money, one puts more money in.

When the railway opens, it will connect the Borders to the national rail network for the first time in more than 30 years and will reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by nearly half a million tonnes.

This Government takes a pragmatic approach to procuring projects because we are focused on project delivery.

I move amendment S3M-1549.1.1, to insert after "inception":

"commends the 450,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> saved by the project".

09:29

**Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab):** It is good to see so many Liberal Democrats here today. I hope that they know what they are doing at decision time.

Last June, the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change reaffirmed the Scottish Government's commitment to provide £115 million at 2002 prices towards the Borders rail project. Last week, the same minister tried to present as cause for celebration: the excision from the Government's budget of the earmarked amount that he had previously pledged to spend delivering the project; a delay of three years in the commencement of construction work; and the removal of the cap on the contribution from the taxpayer, coupled with the imposition of a cap on developer contributions, which, in the context of a delay of nine months plus three years, has sharply increased the estimated cost of the project.

Mr Stevenson has been generous in providing the chamber with vignettes from his wide-ranging experiences in a variety of occupations, but little in his previous life would have prepared him for talking such mince. Even though Christine Grahame has bravely attempted to put a bright red face on the removal of funding for the Borders rail project from the Government's spending plans, the minister has not, in truth, found many Borderers celebrating his announcement.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Will the member give way?

**Des McNulty:** I think that you have had your shot, Stewart.

**The Presiding Officer:** Mr McNulty, I must ask you not to refer to ministers or other members by their first name.

**Des McNulty:** I apologise.

Christine Grahame was unwise to go on the radio to defend the Government's position—

**Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):** On a point of order. Guidance issued by the Presiding Officer previously has always been that, on first reference, members' full names should be used. You have never ruled before that we should not use first names.

**The Presiding Officer:** Well, I've ruled it now.

**Des McNulty:** Stripped down to essentials, the SNP is saying that, for the next three years, no money will be forthcoming for a project that it eagerly embraced in opposition. Construction work will not start until 2011 at the earliest, and instead of funding the project along the same lines as every other rail project, the Government has come up with an experimental funding package that is untested and will require, according to the Government, extensive market soundings.

Budgets are where Governments make choices. The SNP Government has decided not to include the Borders rail project in its budget allocations for the next three years.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Did you oppose the budget that was passed a few weeks ago?

**The Presiding Officer:** I should also ask members not to refer to each other as "you".

**Des McNulty:** The SNP is not doing what it said it would do in its manifesto. People in the Borders were promised, not just by Christine Grahame but by others on the Government benches, that an SNP Government would prioritise a rail connection to Edinburgh. However, thanks to the SNP, no one will ride on a train from the Borders before 2014. Given the SNP's jettisoning of the project in this spending round and the higher priority that the SNP has apparently given to other commitments, the future of the project has been placed in doubt.

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** In relation to Des McNulty's amendment, while it might be appropriate for parliamentary committees to question ministers on the project, does he agree that it is appropriate for committees to decide their own work programme rather than be instructed by the chamber?

**Des McNulty:** That is an interesting point from a Green convener who was put there by the SNP.

Whether the Borders rail project can progress now depends on the attitude of the banks to the funding package. The minister has been able to give the chamber no assurances that, in the short

time before construction commences in 2011, the banks are willing to experiment with an untested funding mechanism. Similarly, he has been unable to clarify what impact the funding approach has on the project's business case.

The uncertainty and lack of clarity over the funding mechanism means that ministers have to accept their responsibilities. We want the issues to be tested by parliamentary committees, as they should be.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Fine.

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Des McNulty:** We are talking about a substantial amount of public money. Ministers cannot proceed simply by subterfuge. The issues must be explored in detail. That is why Labour's amendment calls on ministers to appear before parliamentary committees to answer appropriate questions.

I move amendment S3M-1549.2, to leave out from "commit direct funding" to end and insert:

"reinstate earmarked funding for the capital costs of the Borders railway with a view to taking forward the construction of the project without delay, and believes that ministers should be asked to appear before the relevant parliamentary committees to answer urgent questions over the delivery of the project, its escalating costs and the implications of the proposed funding arrangements for future transport and infrastructure projects."

09:34

**Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):**

It is my pleasure to speak in this debate and re-establish a connection that I have had with the Borders rail project since I had the pleasure of introducing a committee debate on the subject on 1 June 2000, when the Parliament was sitting in Glasgow. It is interesting to read the *Official Report* of that debate and note who spoke in it. Some of the people are now history, but some are here today to speak once again on the same subject.

After all this time, it is tempting for me to say, "A plague on all your houses." However, there are concerns about the Borders rail project that must be expressed, and I take the opportunity to do so now.

One of our chief concerns about the project has been that the extremely modest funding that previous Administrations allocated to it may lead to council tax payers in the Borders being asked to contribute more. The Conservatives on Scottish Borders Council are fiercely opposed to that. The minister's insistence that the local authorities' contribution has been capped at £30 million is welcome, but the new funding mechanism that he has outlined has done little to allay our fears about



the major funding gap of between £50 million and £110 million that appears to exist. We will return in the future to our concerns about the minister's insistence on novel funding methods for several transport projects.

The proposals that have been made progress the project in so far as they tell us how the Government intends to pursue it. The problem, of course, is that it appears that there will be further delays. How the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Party can complain about delays, given their record on long-term funding delays and on constructing major projects—

**Jim Hume (South of Scotland) (LD):** Will the member remind us which Government's actions led to the Beeching axe, which took away our railways in the Borders?

**Alex Johnstone:** I cannot remember. It was a long time ago.

**Jim Hume** *rose*—

**The Presiding Officer:** Sit down, please, Mr Hume.

**Alex Johnstone:** The Borders rail project, which we have pursued for more than eight years—other members raised the issue in Parliament before I did—is worthy of pursuit. It is disappointing but not at all surprising that it has continued to suffer from delays. Such delays were par for the course when two Liberal Democrat ministers took care of transport.

There are concerns about the route. The railway will serve only a very small area of the Scottish Borders. Our view is still that the project would have been far more viable if the railway had continued on to Hawick in the first instance. John Lamont raised that issue last week when he replied to the Government's statement. Vast swathes of the eastern Borders—notably Berwickshire—will be unable to benefit from the railway. The Government should seriously consider improving the availability of services on the east coast main line for people who live in that part of the Borders.

There is disappointment about journey times. It appears that we are in danger of having a service that is even slower than the one that was cancelled by Beeching in the 1960s. Such issues should be taken into account.

People are concerned about the failure to get freight on to the railway. As far as I am aware, Liberal Democrat transport ministers were responsible for the headlong dive to provide a passenger service without including the opportunity to put freight on the railway.

It is important to realise that we are experiencing progress, however slow. However, the Liberal

Democrats' motion either demonstrates a complete misunderstanding of the position of the project or is an attempt to misrepresent the position of the project for political reasons. Funding has not been cancelled, as far as I am aware. There are concerns about funding, but there is an opportunity for the project to be progressed. Let us take that opportunity and progress it.

I move amendment S3M-1549.1, to leave out from "reaffirms" to end and insert:

"notes the decision to progress the Borders railway taken by the Parliament on 14 June 2006; regrets the delay in construction and the substantial increases in costs since the project's inception, and calls on the Scottish Government to work with Transport Scotland and the relevant local authorities to ensure that the project is completed as quickly and cost effectively as possible."

**The Presiding Officer:** We now move to back benchers' speeches. We have some time available for the debate, so I can be a bit flexible. However, speeches should be no more than five minutes, please.

09:38

**Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD):** I understand that the Borders railway won the Parliament's backing because it will deliver major economic and social development opportunities and because it represents one of the most sustainable public transport proposals in Scotland. In fact, the minister said last week that its cost benefit ratio has increased even further.

The Government's laudable aim of leading the way on tackling climate change must be backed up by action. Transport contributes significantly to climate change, and it is one of the fastest-growing sources of emissions. We can take a big stride forward in respect of carbon reduction by facilitating modal shift, but only if the country invests in high-quality public transport services. If our country is to meet its climate change responsibilities, the Government must deliver a number of key transport projects without delay.

In developing Scotland's transport network, it is important to break the link between economic growth and transport growth. Reducing carbon emissions without damaging economic performance will be critical in the future, when economic success will depend on attracting and retaining talent. The Borders railway project will facilitate economic growth without concomitant transport growth. The railway will bring significant modal shift benefits. It will reduce car dependence, and it is expected to cut car journeys by more than 700,000 a year, which will reduce emissions and reduce traffic levels on the A7 and the A68. The project will also improve safety for travellers, as rail travel is around 10 times safer than car travel.

Much of the Borders is not currently served by efficient transport links, so the benefits of the railway should not be underestimated. It will facilitate new housing—including affordable housing—reduce congestion and address the predicted labour shortfall in the Lothians.

There is no doubt that the delivery of major transport projects needs broad support from the Government, local councils, the community and the private sector, and long lead-in periods. Successive Governments' certainty and willingness to press on with projects whose genesis was under a different regime are needed. At this stage of the development of the Borders railway project, it is not helpful to introduce uncertainty. Losing time through prevarication is damaging, because people lose confidence and investors think about going elsewhere. In the meantime, the opportunity to take early action to reduce emissions is lost, which makes it harder each year to contain damage. From what we heard last week, I believe that the Borders rail project is losing momentum. It risks stalling completely as a result of a lack of genuine commitment from the Government. We now have no start date and no clear funding mechanism.

Last week, the minister said that the non-profit distributing vehicle would operate as a private firm under Government control, which raises governance issues. The SNP's planned funding method is untested for transport projects in Scotland; so far, it has been used only to finance new schools. It appears that the proposed method would mean that a single company would build, finance and maintain the rail line. Do we need another layer of confusion? How does the proposal fit into an integrated transport network?

Last week, the minister said:

"NPD funding models are a cost-effective borrowing mechanism that avoid the high interest rates of private finance initiative funding and leave ownership of the asset in public hands".

However, finance experts have said that the incentives for private sector involvement remain unclear. Mr Stevenson also said:

"The details of our final approach will be developed by Transport Scotland, in conjunction with the financial partnerships unit and Partnerships UK, full account having been taken of market soundings and the need for a competitive procurement process."—[*Official Report*, 5 March 2008; c 6576.]

It sounds to me as though there is not a lot of certainty about the method, and that that is why we are facing a delay of at least two years.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Alison McInnes:** I am about to finish.

The Borders rail project should be allowed to progress without delay, and the people of the Borders are right to expect the Government to fund it properly. I say to Mr Stevenson: do not waver over the Waverley route. Let us get back on track and build it without delay.

09:42

**Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP):** There is a requirement in the Parliament's standing orders, which Mr Rumbles is familiar with, that motions that members lodge for members' business debates or for support should have titles. It would be interesting if the same requirement applied to motions that are lodged for the ordinary business of the Parliament. Members would then be given opportunities for light relief. For example, Mr Purvis's motion could be called the let's give the Borders Party more room to sabotage the Waverley line motion; the 40 years of Lib Dem inaction, true to form motion; or simply the bare-faced cheek motion.

Mr Purvis gave a history of the Borders rail line. I will give mine. In the 40 years of David Steel rising through the humble ranks to lordly status, not one piece of track was laid. In that time, the Scottish Borders continued to slide down the economic ratings. It still has the lowest household income in Scotland. In eight years of Lib Dem and Labour government—as members have said, we had Lib Dem transport ministers in that time—not one piece of track was laid, and the economic status of the Borders stayed exactly as it was: rock bottom. Indeed, in those eight dreary years, the Lib Dems and their Labour pals did not bring to the chamber one debate on the Borders railway.

**Jeremy Purvis:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Christine Grahame:** Not after the member had a go at me in the final minute of his speech.

In the first months of the first session of the Parliament, I secured the first debate on the Borders railway line. I established the cross-party group on Borders rail and assisted petitioners through the parliamentary process, from the Public Petitions Committee to the Rural Affairs Committee. That culminated in the unanimous vote in June 2000—which has been referred to—to build the line all the way to Carlisle.

The SNP led the way. We tried to get the line to go to Hawick, but there was no Lib Dem support for that. In those eight years, no feasibility study was commissioned to extend the line to Hawick. I know, because I kept asking about it. Indeed, efforts to include a station at Stow were blocked by Mr Purvis's predecessor, Ian Jenkins, who constantly told me to keep shtoom about Stow or the Borders would get no line at all. It took the

Waverley Railway (Scotland) Bill Committee to remedy that wrong.

**Jeremy Purvis:** Will the member give way?

**Christine Grahame:** No. Jeremy Purvis had a go at me in his last minute and I could not intervene—silly man.

Six years after that vote, as the Conservative amendment states, Parliament voted unanimously to pass the Waverley Railway (Scotland) Bill in what was also a committee debate.

**Alison McInnes** *rose—*

**Christine Grahame:** I am not going to allow Mr Purvis's deputy to deputise for him.

The problem for Mr Purvis is that I have been here from the start, and his party's record on urgency for and commitment to the railway is etched in my memory. If the past eight years have been an example of Lib Dem urgency, I would not want them near me if there was a fire, because I would be what the Lib Dems are now, politically speaking—toast.

Today, the former employee and self-proclaimed disciple of Lord Steel told the world, on "Good Morning Scotland", that Borderers are "appalled" at the delay, one year on from the previous completion date that was announced by his own party. However, at one time, the previous Administration was going to complete the railway by 2006—I know that because Nicol Stephen, the then Minister for Transport, told me so in 2004. Furthermore, Lib Dem councillors are in control of Scottish Borders Council, but are they shouting? Are they appalled? Councillor Jim Hume will, no doubt, tell us what his Conservative coalition partners are saying.

**Jim Hume** *rose—*

**Christine Grahame:** David Parker, who was elected by that coalition as council leader, is delighted. Jim Fullerton, Scottish Borders Council's executive member for roads and infrastructure, is delighted. For "appalled" read "delighted". The constituents who come to see me at my surgery in Tesco in Galashiels are pleased, but still wait like doubting Thomas for proof—track on the line. Who can blame them after 40 years of Lib Dem false promises and false dawns? They are dismayed by Mr Purvis's deliberate—and somewhat spiteful, I have to say—negativity, but what is new in that?

In his 2003 election material, Mr Purvis said:

"We will start construction of the Waverley Line."

Where is his wee bit of track? Is it OO gauge? Is it going round his living room? The document continued:

"In the next term of the Parliament Jeremy will give the area a strong voice and working with Liberal Democrats in the Parliament will ... ensure the Waverley line is constructed".

**Jeremy Purvis:** Will the member give way?

**Christine Grahame:** I am in my last minute. [*Laughter.*]

Mindful of the need for Mr Purvis to get Penicuik votes, the document added:

"and campaign for a light rail serving Penicuik".

Penicuik should not hold its breath.

In a spirit of compassion and because spring is in the air and the sun is shining, I will settle for the title "bare-faced cheek".

09:48

**Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab):** Christine Grahame should be on the stage—there is one leaving in about five minutes.

To have this debate so soon after a ministerial statement is strange. Neither on the occasion of the ministerial statement nor again today did we receive from the minister, Stewart Stevenson, his usual Churchillian eloquence—or perhaps that should be Gladstonean verbosity. The whole Borders rail link story is turning into a bit of a soap opera. I am not a regular soap opera viewer—I am not a regular television viewer—but when I pop home and my wife is watching a soap opera, she rapidly explains to me what is going on at that juncture with a wee comment on whether it is a good fact or a bad fact. For those who are not regular viewers of the Borders rail link, here are some facts with the comments added.

The Borders rail link has been delayed from 2011 until 2013 at least, which is bad. The cost benefit ratio has improved to 1.32, which is good. The rail link will be procured through a non-profit distribution vehicle—nobody knows yet whether that is good or bad. Network Rail is a non-profit distribution vehicle, but it will not be involved. Speaking from my considerable experience, I think that that is good.

**Stewart Stevenson:** I hope that Network Rail will be one of the parties that will seek to be involved in the project, and it may take the lead. Of course, at this stage I cannot say who will take the lead, but I hope that Network Rail will be involved.

**Charlie Gordon:** I think it will probably be the woman who makes the tea at Network Rail.

Apart from Network Rail, there are, in theory, other non-profit distributing bodies—for example, the Scottish futures trust, although it does not exist yet. The Scottish Government's consultation on that model closes tomorrow; therefore, it is

passing strange that a detailed variation of that model should be proposed by the minister in this context. Does that cut across the Government-wide consultation on the broader model, is it a branch of that model, or is it a different model altogether?

At this stage, the viewing public are becoming confused, because there is no simple explanation for some of what is happening. Transport Scotland will become the undertaker, the procurer and the debt servicer. As I will touch on, it may also be involved in appointing an operator, but not from among the usual suspects. Viewers are confused, so let me explain the situation as simply as possible in soap opera terms. Instead of using his debit card to pay for the Borders rail link, the minister will use his credit card. He will not pay off the credit card debt "in a wanner", as they say in Castlemilk; he will just pay the minimum amount every month for 60 years.

I return to my point about the operation of the line, which is what I find rather interesting about the possible new model. We could be talking about not just a new model of procurement, but a new model of operation—and not just of the infrastructure, but of the trains themselves. Such a model is not entirely without precedent in the rest of the United Kingdom's heavy rail network, but I wonder why the minister is being so coy about it all. If the model really is a revolution in the procurement, the vertical integration and the future operation of Scotland's railways, there may be a great deal of support for it in the chamber. However, I suspect that the minister has something to hide and that this is a soap opera in which more good or bad facts have yet to emerge.

09:53

**Tricia Marwick (Central Fife) (SNP):** I speak from my long association with the Waverley Railway (Scotland) Bill Committee, of which I was the convener. That was the longest-running committee of the Parliament, as it met for something like three years. As I recall, the committee had piles of evidence that were 4ft high, and 5 o'clock starts on winter mornings to get to Galashiels to hear evidence were not the ideal start to the working week.

Having been the committee's convener, I remember the stances of its former members and their reactions to the proposals for the Borders railway. Des McNulty has lodged an amendment to Mr Purvis's motion, asking the Scottish Government to

"reinstate earmarked funding for the capital costs of the Borders railway with a view to taking forward the construction of the project without delay, and believes that ministers should be asked to appear before the relevant parliamentary committees to answer urgent questions over

the delivery of the project, its escalating costs and the implications of the proposed funding arrangements for future transport and infrastructure projects."

That is the same Des McNulty who, during the preliminary stage debate on the bill, expressed his serious concern about the ability of the promoter and the Liberal Democrat minister to bring forward the project. For example, he highlighted increases in estimated costs, saying:

"In August 2002, the estimated cost of the railway was £73 million. By January 2003, it was £100 million; by March 2003, it was £126 million; by September 2003, it was £130 million, where it remained at that until September 2005, when it went up to £151 million. That does not seem to me to be evidence of firm cost appraisal and effective cost management by the promoter."—[*Official Report*, 28 September 2005; c 19527.]

I do not remember Des McNulty at that time calling ministers before a parliamentary committee to explain cost increases in the management of the project.

**Des McNulty:** Actually, the member is wrong. Ministers were invited to appear before the Finance Committee, of which I was the convener, to discuss the mechanisms of transport infrastructure. To my recollection, specific questions were raised at that meeting about the Borders rail project.

However, does the member accept that, if the estimated cost at that time was £151 million and is now between £235 million and £295 million, the SNP has presided over the largest increase in costs so far?

**Tricia Marwick:** I think that the member will find that the committee was not completely satisfied that the costs were robust. A Liberal minister repeatedly assured us that the costs were sound. As with everything else about this project, if there are any overruns, the involvement of Liberal ministers should be mentioned.

The Borders railway project has had a long history. First, it was going to be constructed in 2003; then, the timescale for its completion went to 2012. However, as I pointed out in my question to the minister after last week's statement on the project, Liberal Democrat ministers were already setting up the possibility that construction might not start until 2016 by lodging amendments that allowed the timescale to slip. Despite the protestations of the committee, which wanted the timescale to be brought forward, the Liberal Democrats, along with the Labour Party, voted to extend the timescale so that work would not begin until 2016.

**Jeremy Purvis:** Does not the member accept that the five-year timescale plus another five years for compulsory purchase to which she refers is consistent with the provisions of every such transport bill that has passed through the

Parliament? As a member of the Airdrie-Bathgate Railway and Linked Improvements Bill Committee and the Edinburgh Tram (Line Two) Committee, I know that it was included in the Airdrie to Bathgate railway project and the Edinburgh tram project. Indeed, it was also included in the Edinburgh airport rail link project.

**Tricia Marwick:** The committee was assured by the Liberal Democrat minister that he expected the project to be completed by 2012. If that was really the case, there was no reason to extend the timescale to 2016—unless, of course, there was no way that the project was ever going to be completed in the timescale that Jeremy Purvis has set out. Indeed, that has been borne out. Neither Mr Purvis nor his party has laid a single bit of track or allowed construction to go forward. *[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** You should be closing, Ms Marwick.

**Tricia Marwick:** I am finishing, Presiding Officer. It is a pity that I was interrupted by Mr Purvis from a sedentary position.

I am confident that construction of the Borders railway will begin under this Government, because the SNP—unlike the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Party, which spent eight years fighting between themselves about whether the project should go ahead—has a long history of commitment to the project. Indeed, it was the infighting between those two parties that blighted the project in the first place.

09:59

**Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab):** History is being rewritten somewhat in this debate. Other members have covered some of this ground, but I would like to recap what happened in the past.

Interest in opening the line precedes the creation of this Parliament. In 1999, the then Secretary of State for Scotland, Donald Dewar, and the then Scottish industry minister, Gus Macdonald, launched the first feasibility study into reopening the Waverley line, the results of which were published in February 2000 by Sarah Boyack, who at that time had been Minister for Transport and the Environment for only nine months. The study concluded that a regular passenger service on the line could cover its operating costs.

As Alex Johnstone said, on 1 June 2000, the Parliament, which was sitting in Glasgow, debated a motion on the Borders rail link that had been lodged by the Rural Affairs Committee after receiving a petition via the Transport and the Environment Committee. Parliamentary time was requested because we all felt that the topic was

sufficiently important to merit such a debate. I should mention in passing that when Mr Johnstone mentioned members who were history, he looked directly at me—that worried me slightly, as I am one of those who survived against the odds.

Parliament unanimously agreed to the motion, which recognised and endorsed

“the case for the establishment of a railway linking the Scottish Borders to the national network at Edinburgh and Carlisle and urges the Scottish Executive to consult with the Strategic Rail Authority and others to facilitate its establishment.”

However, as much as I—and indeed many of us—would love the railway line to go all the way to Carlisle, I must accept that that might have to remain an aspiration. For a start, the track has been built over in some places, which might give rise to difficulties with compulsory purchase.

During that debate in 2000, Christine Grahame and Michael Russell vehemently demanded to know when the railway would be built. Eight years later, despite the fact that a minister with responsibility for transport has been in post for 10 months, we are asking the same question.

Members have implied that the previous Executive somehow procrastinated. That is not the case: the Waverley railway partnership was formed in summer 2001; technical assessments continued between the end of 2001 and the summer of 2003; and in September 2003 the Waverley Railway (Scotland) Bill was introduced, which, as Tricia Marwick pointed out, was a private bill, not an Executive bill. That was part of the problem. As the many members who served on bill committees well know, Parliament, not the Executive, had agreed a very cumbersome and long-winded process for dealing with private bills; in the case of the Waverley Railway (Scotland) Bill, that meant that consideration of the general principles was not completed for two years. The bill was eventually passed in June 2006 and received royal assent eight months before the dissolution of the second session of Parliament. As Jeremy Purvis said, the Executive in its last stages made some investment to try to bring the project forward.

**Jeremy Purvis:** I know that the minister is listening to the member's speech. I am sure that the member agrees that, given when the bill received royal assent, this Government, which has made zero investment in the line, has been in charge of the project for longer than the previous Government, which gave £30 million towards it.

**Elaine Murray:** I absolutely agree.

The non-profit distribution model for funding the project is actually, as Mr Neil would describe it, a form of PPP. Private contractors make a profit at

subcontractor level; the private sector is represented on the board of the contracting organisation; and the funding is borrowed from the financial markets.

Argyll and Bute Council, Falkirk Council and Aberdeen City Council have used the same model to fund PFI schools projects, but it is still relatively new and there are some doubts about whether it will deliver as efficiently as conventional PPP in the operational phase. Moreover, organisations such as Unison that dislike PPP have said that the model is another form of PPP that, according to that union, retains “higher borrowing costs”, ensures that private profit is taken out of public services at contractor level and results

“in the same profiteering and inflexibility inherent in PFI”.

I do not share Unison's opposition to PPP, but the SNP has been opposed to PPP for years. One might well wonder why the SNP, after all that it has said about PPP in the past, now proposes to fund this project through some version of it. Obviously, one reason is that it is off balance sheet—for the moment. Of course, that might not remain the case. After all these years, why has the SNP performed such a U-turn on the funding of the project?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan):** We move to winding-up speeches. I can allocate up to a minute extra on the original allocations, but that is a strict limit.

10:04

**Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con):** The Scottish Conservative position is that we must ensure that the project is completed as quickly and cost effectively as possible. To that extent, we welcome the £30 million cap on Scottish Borders Council, the City of Edinburgh Council and Midlothian Council that was announced previously, because we were concerned about that spending in the past. It is worth mentioning that, although the debate is about what has been called the Borders railway, there will be big benefits to the city of Edinburgh and to Midlothian, where four of the seven stations will be situated.

Where do we want to go with the project and what are our priorities? First, we want answers from the minister on timing. My colleagues Derek Brownlee and John Lamont raised the timing issues last week. However, given the history that Elaine Murray has just told us about—the eight years of dither and delay and the nine months that it took from royal assent for the Government to order the start of the due diligence process—it is important that we get more definitive timescales from the minister and the Government. To be specific, when will construction begin? I read the minister's statement last week, and he made it

clear at least five times that construction would begin at some point

“before the end of the life of this Parliament.”—[*Official Report*, 5 March 2008; c 6588.]

That is not exact enough. The people of the Borders and the Lothians—the people of Scotland—deserve something more concrete. We do not expect an exact day or week, but I am pretty sure that the minister, in his closing speech, will be able to tell us something more exact than that.

Another important question to which we need to know the answer is when construction is scheduled to finish. The critical date for the people of the Borders and Midlothian is the one when the trains will start to run, as opposed to when construction starts. However, given the project's history and circumstances, we need dates for when construction will start and when it is due to finish. That should be possible. The minister also mentioned in his statement that a critical path is in place. He stated that some items are part of it and others are not. If a critical path is in place, the minister must be able to give us an indication of when construction will start and finish.

The other priority on which we need to focus is funding for the railway. We have heard a little bit about the NPD model, which sounds fairly similar to a rebadged PPP model, but we would like more detail on it; I hope that the minister will be able to tell us that soon. As Derek Brownlee pointed out last week, there is a shortfall of £50 million to £100 million between what the Government said it was putting into the project and the total cost of between £235 million and £295 million that it announced. From where will that shortfall be made up and how will the gap be closed? Will the minister guarantee that using the proposed funding mechanism will not slow down the process? It has been far too slow for far too long. What is the total sum of money that the Government is physically committing? The minister said that the people of the Borders do not care too much about the functions, but the Scottish taxpayer does, so who will repay what and when will it be repaid?

Another issue that was raised last week is freight. We welcome the minister's statement that the Government would be delighted to have freight on the track. We take that as a positive signal, but we are looking for something a bit more concrete than that. How will the minister actively pursue the line's freight potential? If it is not pursued actively, it will probably not happen, which would be a loss to the Borders, the Lothians and Scotland as a whole.

10:09

**Des McNulty:** We were treated to a bravura performance by Christine Grahame, who covered up her embarrassment on behalf of her party by trying to attack everybody and anybody for the delay that the minister who is sitting in front of her has announced.

Parliament is entitled to question ministers on the details of the funding proposal for the Borders railway and to seek independent corroboration on the approach's viability and its implications for other infrastructure projects. This is about not only the Borders railway, but the future transport budget and there are some serious questions to be asked about the financial mechanisms that the Government proposes. It is one thing to talk about costs increasing, but trying to create a scheme to transfer the method of payment from the debit card to the credit card—as Charlie Gordon accurately pointed out—has profound consequences not only for the Borders railway but for every other project that comes along in its wake. Parliament has a responsibility to examine that as a matter of urgency before we get to the strategic projects review so that we can clarify the position.

When SNP members were in opposition, they stridently opposed PPP and called for direct Government funding for new schools and similar projects. Now it seems—as Elaine Murray pointed out—that they want to extend the PPP model beyond schools and into rail projects, for which it has never previously been considered a viable funding mechanism. There are some serious questions about whether we could translate the futures trust model—even if we knew what it was—into a rail project. Let us be clear that, according to the consultation, that vehicle

“could design, build, finance, operate, manage and own the facilities created.”

That is what the SNP says about the scheme that it is taking forward. A private railway of a new kind: is that what the SNP is offering us?

We have been offered no good reasons for departing from the decision that the Parliament made in 2006 to proceed with the Borders railway. SNP ministers have failed to take the process forward. As the decision was made in 2006, the soonest that construction could have started was 2008. However, the soonest that it will start is 2011. Mr Stevenson and his colleagues are responsible for that three-year delay. As Gavin Brown pointed out, the key issue for Borderers is not when construction starts but when the first train runs on the line. The earliest that that will happen is 2013 or 2014—ministers have not been able to tell us the year—even if the Government agrees to proceed with commissioning the project in 2011 in the next funding round.

The Borders have been sold a pup. Ministers should reinstate the financial commitment during this spending review period in line with what they said they would do in June last year. There are serious issues about whether the Borders railway can proceed under the model that ministers have now set out. Parliament must explore whether they have a realistic basis for that model—whether the banks will buy into the scheme and whether we have enough detail on it to progress it—because people need to know the answer to that question.

On that basis, I hope that members will endorse the Labour amendment, which emphasises the need for Parliament to exercise its scrutiny function with rigour and for its approval to be sought when significant changes are proposed to a project of the magnitude of the Borders railway. I ask for support for the amendment in my name.

10:13

**Stewart Stevenson:** The debate has been slightly more interesting than I thought it might be when I read the amendments. Although it has covered a reasonable range of topics in relation to the Borders rail link, it has brought little light to the subject and it has certainly brought some confusion and uncertainty. That came in particular from the previous speaker, who is being unhelpful by introducing a synthetic uncertainty that need not be present.

I will respond to one or two matters that arose during the debate. There is no stall in the decision-making process, whatever Mr Purvis asserts on the subject. The non-profit distributing vehicle is, of course, established as part of the bid process when the project is put together, and members should realise that that is when it takes.

The special-purpose vehicle is a model with which we are entirely familiar. The point of the model is that it reduces dramatically the interest rates at which Government can borrow. Any benefit from the resulting profits is delivered back to the public sector. The core interest rate over the life of a Scottish Water PFI project in the late 1990s was set at 8.5 per cent; the mezzanine finance rate for the project was set at 13.75 per cent. It is absolutely clear from the interest that has already been expressed that the interest rates via which we will be able to fund the Borders rail project are of an entirely different character. The high level of interest rates has always been the central objection to the way in which things were done in the past.

**Jeremy Purvis:** Last week, the minister announced costs of £235 million to £295 million. How much of that sum is budgeted for interest payments?

**Stewart Stevenson:** The member must put on his financial thinking hat. The figure that we announced refers to borrowing, which must be repaid over a period of time. The important point is that we have given certainty to the councils that are involved—certainty on the future of the railway, on the financial structure of the project and on the price. The financial model that we have chosen over the life of the project will deliver a cost-effective solution for the people of the Borders.

**Des McNulty:** If the figure of between £235 million and £295 million refers to the capital cost of the Borders rail project, what is the total cost—capital cost plus interest repayments—over the 60 years of the project?

**Stewart Stevenson:** The member knows perfectly well that it is important for us to have a negotiation that delivers appropriate value for the public purse. We will, and we will be accountable to Parliament and the people of Scotland for that. No one will respect the concerns that Opposition members raise if they continue to introduce a synthetic uncertainty into the project; that is in no one's interest. Opposition members failed to address the issue during the recent debates on the budget.

Mr Johnstone raised the issue of journey times, which we have managed to reduce. I would also like to see freight on the railway. In the near future, I will speak at a major rail freight conference in London; I will also speak to the all-party parliamentary rail group at Westminster. I will not hesitate to take those key opportunities to raise the issue.

Reference was made to those who have supported the project since it began to be debated. I welcome the fact that Donald Dewar, Sarah Boyack and many others of different political persuasions accepted that the project was vital for the Borders. That is why some of the remarks that have been made today are distinctly unhelpful.

This year we have spent £14 million on land, site investigation and topical surveying. We started the outline design in 2007, without even waiting for the due diligence to be completed. The financial issue that has been raised is synthetic. I direct members to page 60 of the Liberal Democrat election manifesto, which states:

"I want to involve the private sector in financing and delivering priority transport facilities".

As we are into websites, I point out that the statement is available at [www.nicolstephen.org.uk](http://www.nicolstephen.org.uk). Ms Grahame put her very substantial political finger on the nub of the issue. Under the Liberal Democrats, the Borders have been in the economic doldrums for years.

Charlie Gordon suggested that the minister had something to hide. He is correct—it is my humility.

10:19

**Jim Hume (South of Scotland) (LD):** All members who represent the Borders have welcomed Jeremy Purvis's Lib Dem debate on the Borders rail project. Christine Grahame was keen to quote Mr Parker, the ex-SNP Scottish Borders Council leader. I will give her another quotation from Mr Parker:

"Given her appalling conduct"

on the cross-party group on Borders rail

"it seems clear that she does not, in fact, support the reintroduction of the railway. She should resign from the cross party group immediately and allow other MSPs, who have supported the promoters all along, to do the job properly."

The minister suggested that people in the Borders are not interested in where the money comes from and did not clarify how much money he thinks will be needed. It is perhaps no coincidence that on this day, the ides of March, 2,052 years ago, in a similar forum in what is now Italy, a certain Caesar was stabbed in the back. The people of the Borders will feel that exactly the same thing has been done to them today—"Et tu, Brute?" I will translate that for members later.

Just last week, we debated a report on rural policy, which highlighted the difficulties associated with social exclusion in the south of Scotland and the problem of attracting young people to and keeping them in our area. There is a need for integrated public transport, which is a huge factor. Scottish Enterprise, which is now being dismantled by Jim Mather, says that a Borders railway would attract young people to and keep them in the area, provide better access to jobs and opportunities, boost tourism, create more inward investment and reduce road congestion.

Today's debate is disappointing because in 2006, during the previous session, the Waverley Railway (Scotland) Bill became law. The present Government has been in charge of the project for longer than any other Government. We were looking forward to the project being completed, not just started, by the end of this session, but now we are told that there is no specific scheduled start date for the project.

**Gavin Brown:** The project has been talked about since 2000. Being absolutely fair and objective, what percentage of the delay is attributable to the Liberal Democrats?

**Christine Grahame:** Higher!

**Jim Hume:** No percentage whatever of the delay is attributable to the Liberal Democrats, who have always pushed the project forward. That is



the view of the same independent councillor who stated that Christine Grahame is holding the project back.

Today no light has been shed on the final cost of the project or on the shape that funding will take. Last week, the minister stated in the chamber that he

"will not give an exact cost for the railway".—[*Official Report*, 5 March 2008; c 6576.]

He has repeated that statement today. It is hardly Stevenson's Rocket—more like a slow train never coming. That is not good enough. I agree with my colleague Jeremy Purvis that last week's statement raised far more questions than it answered.

**John Lamont (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con):** Will the member give way?

**Jim Hume:** I would like to make some progress. It is a pity that Mr Lamont did not get involved in the debate earlier.

The minister's statement was very disappointing, especially after he had taken a year out to review the project. The previous Executive committed £115 million to the development—the equivalent of £155 million now. We are now being told that the money to finance the cost of building the railway will be borrowed from an as yet unknown source, by an uncertain method, and paid back from the transport budget over 60 years.

As Jeremy Purvis mentioned, the minister's colleague Christine Grahame said on 6 March:

"the actual nitty gritty details are being worked out between Transport Scotland financial partnerships unit and Partnerships UK".

It is disappointing that the minister has not given us those details. Will he stand by the commitment that he gave in June and September 2007 to provide the Government funding of £155 million that has already been agreed for the project? Is he willing to state whether he will increase or decrease his portfolio's contribution to the project, given the uncertainty that now exists about the remainder of the project's costs, due to the SNP delay?

**Stewart Stevenson:** The member asked a specific question about funding. We are providing the funding, forby the £30 million that we have capped for the councils. That commitment has been widely welcomed. The project will go forward.

**Jim Hume:** I look forward to the project not going forward but, as Gavin Brown mentioned, being completed. That is the issue that interests people.

I was disappointed by Alex Johnstone's knowledge of history. Today we have heard from

both the Tories and Labour about how much they would love to see the railway back, but it was the Tories who started to wield the Beeching axe in the late 1950s, reducing the size of the railway network. The 1960s Labour Government said that it would backtrack on that policy but failed to do so.

**Alex Johnstone:** By the same token, can we therefore claim that when the railway is built eventually, it will be the Liberal Democrats what done it? [*Laughter.*]

**Jim Hume:** I thank the member for that.

The case for the Borders railway line has already been made and accepted. The Government has shunted that vital project on to a sideline; I plead for it to be put back on track. It is no coincidence that, despite frequent attempts, the SNP has gained no constituency seats in the south, nor is it ever likely to do so. I can see the timetable announcement in the Borders now: "SNP railway delayed".

I am happy to support the Lib Dem motion, of course, and look forward to some real certainty that the project will be finished.

## Fuel Poverty

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S3M-1550, in the name of Liam McArthur, on fuel poverty.

10:26

**Liam McArthur (Orkney) (LD):** It is safe to say that over the course of the next hour and a quarter, we will hear members cite a range of statistics that are shocking, but which provide this Parliament and Government with an unambiguous call to action. Action must also come from the United Kingdom Government, local government, energy companies, civic Scotland and all of us as individuals.

It is simply unacceptable that, as we approach the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, more than 650,000 households in Scotland are in fuel poverty—a rise of more than 230,000 over the past five years. Help the Aged estimates that, among older people, who make up a disproportionate number of those in fuel poverty in Scotland, a shameful 320,000 households are spending more than 10 per cent of their disposable income on fuel, despite the introduction of innovative and welcome initiatives, notably the warm deal and the free central heating programme.

Although those initiatives have made a real difference to the quality of life of many thousands of older and more vulnerable people in communities throughout Scotland, the staggering increase in the cost of fuel over the same period has resulted in an explosion in fuel poverty. It is estimated that a 5 per cent increase in fuel prices will result in 40,000 more Scottish households falling into the fuel poor category. In the past year alone, fuel prices have risen by more than six times the rate of inflation. At the same time, the energy companies' profits have soared by 500 per cent. The responsibility on those companies to do more to address fuel poverty in this country is beyond any reasonable dispute.

**Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP):** I agree with every word that the member has said so far. Does he agree that the measures announced yesterday in the chancellor's budget are wholly inadequate for dealing with the current crisis?

**Liam McArthur:** There is an element of truth in what Alex Neil says.

In my constituency, the combination of the harsher climate and poorer housing stock with relatively lower wages and even higher fuel costs has led to acute difficulties in recent times. Such difficulties have been made worse by recent

failures to carry out free central heating installations in a timely fashion. Those difficulties have not been helped by the continued unwillingness of UK ministers to consider a reduced fuel levy for remoter parts of the country.

Like other members, I know of older constituents who are choosing not to turn on their heating systems for fear of the bills that they might run up. The consequences of such action do not bear contemplating, not least when one considers that almost 3,000 deaths a year are already linked to people living in cold, damp housing. Such statistics are not in dispute, and nor is the political will across the Parliament to look at how we can address the problem, drawing on the lessons that have been learned to date.

Fuel poverty will continue to dodge any single magic bullet. That is why Liberal Democrats are challenging the Scottish Government to develop a one-stop-shop approach to tackling fuel poverty. Bringing together the warm deal, the central heating programme and the Scottish community and householder renewables initiative with effective advice services would make a real difference. That would make it quicker and easier to increase the installation of energy efficiency measures, such as better insulation, efficient central heating systems, microgeneration systems and smart meter technology. All those measures would not only save households money, but improve health and contribute to tackling climate change.

To achieve those outcomes, we believe that the Government should re-establish the fuel poverty forum, which should take the lead in developing a more joined-up approach that harnesses political consensus and drives concerted action. There should probably be a review of fuel poverty programmes first.

Under Nicol Stephen's leadership, Scottish Liberal Democrats are proud of playing a leading role in efforts to increase energy efficiency and promote microrenewables—both measures that can dramatically cut fuel bills for families in Scotland. However, we must do more. We call on the Government to make the installation of microgeneration schemes an easier and more attractive option for households. Planning rules need to be changed to remove one of the main obstacles to micropower installation, and we look forward to the Government taking swift action on the back of the consultation that has been launched.

We believe that using the local taxation levers that we have at our disposal is key. Evidence from elsewhere in the UK suggests that such incentives are tangible and therefore effective. I know that the minister has reservations about their use, but I hope that he will agree to consider seriously how

such incentives, along with a range of other measures, might be made to work in the interests of increasing energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty. In an otherwise acceptable SNP amendment, we need greater clarity on that point.

In their amendment, the Tories have sought to plagiarise our motion—I suppose that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery—but they remain coy about energy companies' profits and unambitious about local tax incentives. The Labour amendment is an addendum to our motion and strengthens it in the key area of money advice and energy advice.

In preparing for this morning's debate, I was not hard pressed to find any number of startling facts and figures. As I said, some of them are deeply depressing in 21<sup>st</sup> century Scotland. However, I was struck by the clarion call from Energy Action Scotland's director Norman Kerr in the organisation's most recent edition of its quarterly journal, *Energy Review*. Although he acknowledges many successes over recent years, he expressed genuine disappointment that his organisation is still around to celebrate its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.

I hope that all members will join me in committing to do what we can in this parliamentary session and beyond to create the conditions for making Norrie Kerr redundant. That would be a P45 worth celebrating. The Liberal Democrat motion today sets out a broad-based approach that can best achieve that worthwhile objective. I look forward to members' contributions to the debate.

I move,

That the Parliament deplores the fact that while household fuel prices have risen by six times the rate of inflation over the past year, power companies' profits have risen by 500%; is concerned that, for every 5% increase in fuel prices, it is estimated that 40,000 more Scottish households become fuel poor, while almost 3,000 deaths per year are linked to living in cold, damp housing; believes that tackling the social, health and environmental impacts of fuel poverty can save people money, improve health and help to tackle climate change; calls for the re-establishment of the Fuel Poverty Forum with a remit to include the development of a one-stop-shop approach to fuel poverty that increases the installation of energy efficiency measures, efficient central heating systems, microgeneration and smart meter technology; calls on the Scottish Government to consider the introduction of a local tax rebate to provide a further incentive to householders to invest in energy efficiency and microgeneration packages, and further calls for changes to planning rules to make it easier to install micropower.

10:33

**The Minister for Communities and Sport (Stewart Maxwell):** I start by warmly welcoming this debate on such an important area, which impacts on far too many households throughout

Scotland. As we have said before in the chamber, this Government is committed to eradicating fuel poverty as far as is reasonably practicable by 2016. We signed up enthusiastically to the previous Administration's target, which was bold when it was established in 2001. However, fuel poverty has doubled since 2002, as Liam McArthur said in his opening speech. We have a real challenge, but we are determined to rise to it.

According to the report "Fuel Poverty in Scotland", which was published in 2004, a closer look at the evidence shows that increased energy efficiency has a role to play in affecting fuel poverty, but that 50 per cent of the reduction in fuel poverty up to 2002 was due to rising incomes. The rise in fuel poverty since then is mainly due to fuel prices, which, as we all know, continue to march upwards.

Although we continue to invest in energy efficiency and to look for ways to maximise the impact of that investment on fuel poverty, we are also doing all that we can to influence prices and incomes for people who are fuel poor. We might not have control over many of the factors that affect prices and incomes, such as the tax and benefits system and the regulation of the energy markets, but we have a strong argument and take every opportunity to make it.

**Alex Neil:** Does the minister agree that the UK Government should earmark the additional revenues that result from higher energy and oil prices to tackle fuel poverty?

**Stewart Maxwell:** I absolutely agree with Alex Neil that the UK Government is not going anywhere near far enough or quickly enough in tackling fuel poverty. I will come on to address some of the issues that I have raised with the UK Government.

I expect to be at the fuel poverty summit that the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets will convene on 23 April, at which I will engage directly with ministers from across the UK on the core issues and the need for action across the board. In November 2007, I wrote to Hilary Benn at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and John Hutton at the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, underlining the need for the re-establishment of just this kind of dialogue, which has apparently not taken place formally for more than two years.

I have met the energy companies in Scotland and the Energy Retail Association to encourage them to maximise progress in helping their most vulnerable customers. I welcome the Ofgem probe into energy supply markets that it announced recently. I intend to keep up the pressure on those who determine prices to ensure that they do all that they can to protect vulnerable people from

falling into, or getting deeper into, fuel poverty.

**Liam McArthur:** The minister has outlined a number of worthwhile discussions. In that context, will he take forward discussions with Ofgem and Treasury ministers on the possibility of using a windfall tax on emissions trading certificates to address fuel poverty issues?

**Stewart Maxwell:** I fully expect many of these topics to be discussed at the fuel poverty summit on 23 April. There is a wide range of topics that we are all keen to see discussed, and a co-ordinated effort across the UK is needed to ensure that we tackle fuel poverty. Many of the levers—indeed, most of them—rest with UK ministers. I will raise a number of matters at the summit, including the issue that Liam McArthur raised.

Of course, the basic flaw in the political settlement is that it divides responsibility for these interconnected factors. As a result, too many of our households are left struggling to have a warm home. I see that as a key area for debate in the national conversation. In taking on the challenge of the fuel poverty target, we are maximising our impact on the factors that are not under our direct control. At the same time, we must ensure that we enable energy efficiency measures to maximise their impact on fuel poverty. We will do that by making the most effective use of our investment in the fuel poverty programmes. We will support that effort by maximising other opportunities for all householders to reduce their fuel costs.

I will give some examples. As Liam McArthur said, the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change announced on 4 March a consultation on reforming the planning system to encourage greater use of microgeneration equipment. The Sullivan report “A Low Carbon Buildings Standards Strategy for Scotland” sets out a route towards zero carbon new buildings. We are also funding a dedicated worker in the Energy Saving Trust to ensure that Scotland gets its fair share of funding for insulation from energy suppliers through their carbon emissions reduction targets.

Last week, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing and I met many of the key stakeholders in tackling fuel poverty. We discussed how to reinvigorate the debate on fuel poverty and move forward in the most constructive way. We heard that the industry forum had not gone as far as stakeholders had hoped it would. Many said that they were disappointed with progress and felt that the forum had nothing more to offer. However, it is clear that there is much to discuss around how we can take things forward. We will continue those discussions. We are impressed by and welcome the stakeholders’ appetite for a fresh start on the challenge to reach the 2016 target. As part of that wider debate, I also welcome this opportunity to

hear members’ views on what more can and should be done to tackle fuel poverty.

As I have discussed with the Local Government and Communities Committee, an internal review of fuel poverty work is being undertaken to take stock of what has been achieved to date, so that we can consider how to make improvements. I expect to share the findings with the committee once the review is complete. As is necessary for such an important issue at such a crucial stage, the review will be thorough and wide ranging.

I am determined to use our fuel poverty review as the starting point of a better and shared understanding of the action that we now need to take to tackle fuel poverty. Over the coming months, we must all focus our attention on the big picture of the fuel poor. Everyone must be part of that debate—parliamentarians, Government and all the groups that are concerned about or have an interest in fuel poverty—so that, together, we can come to a collective view on the way forward.

I move amendment S3M-1550.3, to leave out from “calls on the Scottish Government” to end and insert:

“recognises the Scottish Government’s announcement on the consultation to remove planning restrictions on the wide range of energy generating and saving devices, and calls on the Scottish Government to make a statement to the Parliament before the summer recess outlining in detail its progress to more effectively address fuel poverty.”

10:39

**Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab):** As Liam McArthur said, the Labour Party amendment is an add-on to the Lib Dem motion. The aim of our amendment is to reinforce the importance of the role of the voluntary and statutory organisations in giving appropriate advice to those who are in fuel poverty.

For eight years, fuel poverty was a critical issue for the Labour-led Executive and the Parliament. There is no doubt that the issue was championed by members from across the parties. Sadly, some of them are no longer with us—I think of Margaret Ewing. Those members kept the issue on the agenda and worked hard to ensure that it did not get lost in the normal day-to-day party-political battles in which some of us are all too happy to engage.

The issues with which we are wrestling are difficult. The debate is important in building agreement on action. It is right that it should spur us on in recognising that there are still people who are cold in their homes and who have to choose between heating their homes and feeding themselves. In addition, the consequences of the rise in fuel prices have huge implications for people who are in fuel poverty.

The minister has broader responsibilities, including the important issue of people having quality housing with effective insulation measures. A broader question needs to be asked about housing policy and how local authorities and housing associations are supported in meeting the housing quality standard. Many people wanted to vote to get rid of housing debt for just that reason. In that broader housing debate, it is important that we hear from the minister how the Government plans to address the issue.

Labour strongly supports the fuel poverty forum. We recognise the potential for developing a one-stop shop. In the past, things perhaps became overfragmented, which may have led to a lack of understanding. Critically, the fuel poverty forum recognised that Scotland is blessed with strong voluntary sector organisations. People such as Norrie Kerr and others are committed to addressing fuel poverty and are creative in developing policy. They are also robust in challenging Government through their advocacy for those who are in fuel poverty, no matter which party is in government. The forum could have a key role to play in bringing the power companies to the table to discuss further the development of the social tariff and the rationalisation and harmonisation of programmes to ensure greater reach, and to consider why the poor face disproportionate charges for fuel.

Although I am sure that Alex Neil will not agree with me, I recognise the important strand that energy issues played in yesterday's budget. We can debate how far the Government has gone in addressing the issues, but in the announcements that were made it recognised that the issue is important to everyone.

Of course it is important to link work on energy efficiency measures and fuel poverty programmes. We must also recognise the importance of sustained money advice and energy advice, as such advice can reach out to those who are most vulnerable and who suffer most when action is not taken. Although general energy efficiency issues are critical, we must not lose our focus on the issue of the poor paying disproportionate charges.

I am disappointed that neither the Tories nor the SNP want to consider the notion of tax incentives for microgeneration measures. Labour's Sarah Boyack has done a huge amount of work on the area—the Government would not have to look far to get advice—and engaged with loads of people in the sector. I hope that the minister will look further into the work that she has done.

However, the reality is that the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth has set his face against such tax incentives. As a consequence, the hands of other ministers are tied. It is odd that a cabinet secretary who offered

accelerated tax cuts to small business with no conditions attached will not support the use of taxation as a means of encouraging positive action on energy efficiency.

**Alex Neil:** Will the member take an intervention?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The member is in her last minute.

**Johann Lamont:** I need to make progress, and have one minute remaining.

Labour members have an agreement with our Liberal Democrat colleagues on the issue, although we may not agree with their position on local taxation. The motion is moderate in its demands. It asks the Executive to look at the possibility of a local tax rebate, and it is disappointing that the Government will not countenance that. Instead of closing down the debate, the Executive could have said that it would include that option in its report to Parliament.

We know the challenges that are involved in eradicating fuel poverty by 2016. We acknowledge the important work that is being done and the challenging points that energywatch Scotland has raised about the central heating programme. It is important that the debate progresses. The minister spoke of an internal review. I urge him to have the confidence to externalise the review, particularly around the central heating programme. That would enable the Executive to hear what those who are trying to deliver the programme have to say about the challenges involved and the programme's effectiveness. In his response to the debate, I hope that the minister will tell the chamber that he recognises the importance of doing that.

I move amendment S3M-1550.1, to insert after "technology":

"recognises the importance of continued support for voluntary and statutory organisations providing debt management, money and energy advice to those most affected by fuel poverty;"

10:44

**Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** The number of people who qualify as fuel poor dipped to a new low in this country in 2002, yet between the financial years 2004-05 and 2005-06, fuel poverty rose by 30 per cent, which was, of course, under the Liberal-Labour coalition. Most worryingly, nearly 50 per cent of single pensioner households are fuel poor. Therefore, although I congratulate Liam McArthur and think that he is right to highlight those appalling statistics, I point out that the situation came about under his Government's watch.

**Liam McArthur:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Jamie McGrigor:** Let me make progress—I will come back to the member in a minute.

I well remember in the previous session of Parliament taking on, in a short period, more than 100 cases involving senior citizens in the Highlands and Islands who could not get the free central heating that they had been promised. Some of those people who had no heating were in Orkney and Shetland. Because the proportion of elderly people in our population is ever increasing, a long-term solution must be found if the Government is to honour its pledges on the central heating programme.

**Liam McArthur:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Jamie McGrigor:** In a minute.

I am still listening to complaints on the issue from people from Campbeltown to Shetland.

**Liam McArthur:** Jamie McGrigor was quick to criticise the previous Executive, but he has been rather more coy about pointing to the 500 per cent increase in the energy companies' profits in the same period. As the minister and other members have made clear, the biggest driver of the increase in fuel poverty has been the rise in fuel prices.

**Jamie McGrigor:** If the member will let me carry on, I will come to that.

We are told that there is a waiting list of 10,000 for the central heating programme, with an average waiting time of between five and six months. How many of those people might die as a result of that wait? The motion speaks of 3,000 deaths, which is a sobering thought. In my region, the Highlands and Islands, the problems are exacerbated by storms and bad weather, which often cut electricity supplies to rural households. More than a third of households in rural areas suffer fuel poverty whereas, in urban areas, the figure is a fifth.

I listened to the chancellor's speech yesterday, and it is good to know that he has finally woken up to the unfairness for customers who have prepayment meters. However, it is too late for most of those people, because they cannot get their money back. Prepayment meter customers pay on average £214 a year more than those who pay by direct debit, which is grossly unfair, particularly as the extra charge generally falls on those who can least afford it.

I am concerned that the latest price rises will hit low-income households the hardest. I welcome the response to political and customer concern about anti-competitive behaviour—we have the Ofgem investigation into the domestic retail market, which will report before the end of September, and the House of Commons Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Committee investigation. If the

assertions that have been made are confirmed, steps must be taken to ensure that the customer gets a fair deal.

Increased energy efficiency can help the fuel poor. Scottish Gas has highlighted that, for every £3 that is spent on heating and lighting, £1 is lost immediately. Twenty-five per cent of carbon emissions are generated in the home, so we are wasting money and potentially damaging the environment. Energy efficiency measures are widely acknowledged to be the cheapest, cleanest and safest way in which to achieve Britain's climate change commitments. In addition, energy efficiency can make an important contribution on other energy priorities, including those on fuel poverty, supply shortages and sustainability. Best of all, energy efficiency makes money for those who invest in it—for example, installing cavity wall insulation can save £150 a year on energy bills in an average home.

I agree with Liam McArthur's sentiments regarding the fuel poverty forum, the goal of which was to end fuel poverty in Scotland by 2016. I note that the minister, Stewart Maxwell, has written to Westminster to ask the UK ministerial fuel poverty group to reconvene as soon as possible. Can he enlighten us as to the responses to that inquiry?

**Stewart Maxwell** *indicated disagreement.*

**Jamie McGrigor:** Apparently, he has not had a response—that is not very encouraging.

I support the investigations into the domestic retail market and the calls for the re-establishment of the fuel poverty forum. I call on the Scottish Government to ensure that the central heating programme reaches those who need it most as quickly as possible.

I move amendment S3M-1550.2, to leave out from "deplores the fact" to end and insert:

"regrets that the latest figures show that fuel poverty increased by 30% between 2004-05 and 2005-06, with nearly 50% of single pensioners experiencing fuel poverty, and welcomes the Ofgem investigation into the domestic retail market and the similar investigation by the House of Commons Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Committee; further regrets that almost 3,000 deaths per year are linked to living in cold, damp housing; believes that tackling the social, health and environmental impacts of fuel poverty can save people money, improve health and help to tackle climate change; calls for the re-establishment of the Fuel Poverty Forum with a remit to include the development of a one-stop-shop approach to fuel poverty that increases the installation of energy efficiency measures, efficient central heating systems, microgeneration and smart meter technology, and further calls on the Scottish Government to ensure that the central heating programme is reaching those who need it most."

10:49

**Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee West) (SNP):** The motion proposes a local tax rebate. I understand

the sentiment behind that, because anything that we can do to encourage more people to introduce energy efficiency measures and renewable energy sources must be welcomed. However, in effect, the proposal is for a £100 grant. Do members really think that giving a £100 grant will encourage people to spend £3,000 on a solar energy installation on their roof? I do not think so.

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** Does the member now not support the provision of grants for the installation of community and household renewables? Is such a grant not a great deal better than the Scottish National Party proposal to give £2,000 to first-time buyers for no particular purpose at all?

**Joe FitzPatrick:** I support grants for renewables, but if we introduced that small £100 grant, the money would have to come from somewhere, and it might come from the more reasonable grants that can pay for a third of the cost of solar installations, which makes a difference. If there is a pot of money that we have not tapped into—some of the profits that the energy companies make could be used to provide more investment—grants for cavity wall insulation, which Jamie McGrigor mentioned, would have a much bigger impact. We should consider what more can be done to ensure that no houses in Scotland have cavity walls that are not insulated, as that is probably the easiest measure that we can take to have a big impact on fuel poverty and our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

It is a sad state of affairs when we must debate fuel poverty in Europe's most energy-rich nation. Scotland produces 10 times more oil and five times more gas than it consumes. We export 20 per cent of our electricity and have huge renewable resources, with 25 per cent of Europe's wind resources and about a quarter of Europe's tidal resources. We know that we face challenges in tapping into that huge renewable resource, but members are up for that challenge.

Despite the abundance of energy resources in Scotland, pensioners still die from cold and more than 1 million Scots live in fuel poverty. We all remember the massive price rises a couple of years ago that resulted in fuel bills rocketing. The reason for those huge increases was that the UK had become a net importer of gas, with about 5 per cent coming from overseas, despite the fact that Scotland is a net exporter. Scotland produces at least five times as much gas as the country uses, but a quarter of our households are fuel poor. That is the reality of the union dividend for the people of Scotland.

The previous Administration made a worthy effort to tackle fuel poverty—we must give credit where credit is due. The central heating programme made and still makes a big difference

to households throughout Scotland. However, as we have heard from other members, as fast as some people are being pulled out of fuel poverty, more people are becoming fuel poor as a result of rocketing prices. The Parliament lacks resources to combat fuel poverty, the rate of which is three times that in England. We need power over regulation of the energy industry and control over Scotland's oil and gas to make a real difference to the hundreds of thousands of Scots who cannot afford to heat their homes.

Communities throughout Scotland hoped for strong action from the chancellor in yesterday's budget to ensure that energy companies put some of the huge profits that they make back into combating fuel poverty. The chancellor is not one for exciting speeches, and his announcement that energy companies will be encouraged to spend £150 million on social tariffs fell flat. Figures from energywatch show that the 5 million customers who have prepayment meters in the UK pay on average £255 more than consumers who pay online by direct debit for the equivalent energy. That tax on the poorest in our country means that energy companies rake in an extra £1.2 billion per year.

On the one hand, the chancellor talks about the energy companies spending £150 million, but we should compare that with the £1.2 billion a year that those companies make from the poorest energy users in society—it does not add up. The non-mandatory extra £150 million that the chancellor wants energy companies to put towards social tariffs is a drop in the ocean compared with the profits that those companies make. The budget attempts to tackle fuel poverty, but it fails to address the key underlying factor in the rise in fuel poverty, which is the high prices that energy companies charge people, particularly those who have prepayment meters.

Colleagues have shown their willingness to tackle the blight of fuel poverty. I agree with the majority of Liam McArthur's comments. However, the simplest way to combat fuel poverty is surely to take control of our huge energy resources and to ensure that the people of Scotland benefit from them—that would put an end to fuel poverty once and for all.

10:54

**James Kelly (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab):** I welcome the opportunity to take part in this debate on fuel poverty. As has been acknowledged, it is a major issue, affecting 650,000 households throughout Scotland. Energy prices are increasing and energy companies are hiding behind the façade of rising wholesale prices. Analysis shows that much of the cost is being passed on to customers. It is a particular problem for

pensioners—324,000 pensioner households are affected, which accounts for nearly half of the fuel poor. It is a particular problem in my constituency, where the number of pensioner households is high.

I disagree with Alex Neil and Joe FitzPatrick. There were some positive aspects to yesterday's budget. Increasing the winter fuel allowance for over-60s to £250 and for over-80s to £400 was a positive move and a step in the right direction.

**Alex Neil:** Does the member accept that the increase in the allowance was 2.5 per cent compared with an increase in energy prices of around 40 per cent?

**James Kelly:** The fact of the matter is that for over-60s the allowance has gone up by £50 from £200, and for over-80s it has gone up by £100 from a base of £300. Those are significant increases, which are well above the rate of inflation. They are a serious step in the right direction of helping pensioners.

The minister asked for practical suggestions on how to move things forward. I will certainly give him some. He is committed to eradicating fuel poverty by 2016. In a recent debate, the Scottish National Party said that tackling poverty was at the core of its aims. Therefore, I am disappointed that it has not given support to Sarah Boyack's bill on energy efficiency and microgeneration. Measures in the bill include incentives to householders and housebuilders to put energy efficient measures in place and to offset council tax payments. Such incentives would tackle energy efficiency and fuel poverty. There is an excellent example of that in my constituency, where Rutherglen and Cambuslang Housing Association is putting solar panels in the housing stock, which is resulting not only in energy being used more efficiently but in reduced bills, particularly for pensioners. Sarah Boyack visited the scheme with me and we spoke to a number of pensioners who had experienced real benefits from it. The minister would be better going down that route than down the council tax freeze route. The £70 million from the council tax freeze would have been better invested in the scheme that Sarah Boyack proposes, which would have done more to tackle fuel poverty.

The minister should be a lot more robust in his discussions with energy companies. Prepayment meters have been mentioned. Direct debit customers pay £137 more and online customers £214 more. Scottish Power has a scheme for back-charging, which it has implemented in Scotland but not in the rest of the United Kingdom. I would like to know what discussions the minister has had with Scottish Power and other energy companies about prepayment metering.

I welcome yesterday's announcement by Alistair Darling of an increase from £50 million to £150 million to tackle social tariffs. He said that he would legislate if necessary to get that through.

We also need to consider smart meters, which are a good way of achieving energy efficiency. The minister should take forward the matter in discussions with energy companies. There is a sound business case for such meters for companies, because it saves them money and makes their billing systems more efficient.

There is broad agreement among members that we need to tackle fuel poverty, but we must also consider the practical suggestions for how we do that. The minister should look again at the Boyack bill and should be more robust in discussions with energy companies on prepayment metering and smart meters. In that way, he will demonstrate that he really means what he says about eradicating fuel poverty by 2016.

11:00

**Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD):** It is no coincidence that a significant number of our debates centre around either water or fuel—water because we tend to have rather too much of it, and fuel because in our climate we are in constant need of it. A home in the north of Scotland can use 68 per cent more fuel than one in the south of England. That factor lies behind the debate in Scotland.

I was disappointed with the Conservative amendment. While most of the other amendments concentrated on measures to tackle fuel poverty, as far as I can understand it the Conservative amendment—apart from jumbling up the wording—seemed to exclude three issues: fuel company profits; the possible tax rebate for energy efficiency and microgeneration; and planning rule changes. Taking those issues out of the debate is not a helpful way to take the matter forward.

Across the board, the single most successful policy measure taken in the Parliament has been the free central heating scheme that was introduced for those people most challenged by fuel poverty. It is regrettable that the roll-out of that provision has fallen into arrears under the current Government. The delivery time has gone up from 114 days to 239 days. The minister must spare no effort in getting it back on track.

**Stewart Maxwell:** The member is not comparing like with like. He is comparing the survey waiting time with the final installation time. Those are two separate sets of figures. He might as well compare apples and elephants.

**Robert Brown:** I am not sure that that is necessarily a correct rendering of the matter. Over



recent weeks, there has been quite a lot of publicity of the issue. The SNP Government has also flat-lined the budget in that area, causing a real-terms decrease of 2.6 per cent a year. I notice that the minister is not standing up to challenge that point.

There is probably more agreement on it being time to move forward on a more unified system, and to roll up the central heating scheme, the warm deal and the Scottish community and householder renewables initiative into a single gateway for accessing free installation of microgeneration technology and smart metering. It is also time to address the idea of a benefits check. I would like to develop those points a little.

As I have said in a number of previous debates, microgeneration has many advantages, but one of the biggest in this context is the potential for stable pricing, which is a huge attraction for people on low incomes. The challenge is the capital cost of the installation of microgeneration devices but, once installed, the resultant energy is not subject to price increases. That is why I welcome the Government's proposed relaxation of planning restrictions on such devices. However, the Government must go further. James Kelly rightly referred to housing associations, which are often pioneers in this field. They should be encouraged and funded to roll out microgeneration, and private householders should be given information and support to take it up. All of that would help to increase demand and—importantly—bring down the unit cost. Once we reach that take-off point, there will be a drive forward. Incidentally, there are big opportunities for Scottish businesses in that area. Joe FitzPatrick may or may not be right to criticise the incentive idea. It is certainly worth considering. All that the motion proposes is that we should examine the potential for encouraging the take-up of such devices in the private household market.

On smart metering, it is trite to say that people on low incomes are those most likely to have prepayment meters, but people do not always realise that such customers are likely to pay an average £214 a year extra for gas and electricity compared with the best deals available. Even worse is the way in which they can be thrown into unnecessary debt because of delays in recalibrating meters after a price rise. A while back, I had a motion before Parliament on that matter. Members should say quite categorically that it is the responsibility of the fuel companies—who make substantial profits, as has been pointed out—to sort that out. If they cannot, they should refrain from charging customers for the increase. No other business would get away with taking such a cavalier attitude to their customers. The whole subject is linked to the sluggish introduction of smart metering and the anti-competitive

practices of National Grid, which recently earned it a £41.6 million fine.

This is a timely debate. I welcome the Government's constructive response to it but, at the end of the day, this is about living standards and the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in Scotland. Our response as a Parliament must be equal to the challenge.

11:05

**Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP):** As many members have testified, fuel poverty blights every region of this energy-rich country. I make no apology for pointing to a particular problem in my constituency. I cite the Western Isles as being where the problem afflicts Scotland most extremely.

Seventeen per cent of Scottish households are officially in fuel poverty; in the Western Isles, the figure is 42 per cent or, if we aggregate the last three surveys, 46 per cent. In other words, getting on for half my constituents are paying more than a tenth of their income just to keep tolerably warm. Some of the reasons for that are obvious enough: the wind-chill factor; the ageing population; and the unavailability of mains gas in most areas of the islands.

There are also some distinct historical reasons. Government grants in the 1930s were designed to get people out of the thatched black houses, and another wave of housebuilding took place in the 1970s. The new houses were not all fuel efficient and many of them are now in need of significant repair. The most recent Scottish house condition survey indicated, unsurprisingly, that dwellings in the Western Isles score among the lowest in Scotland according to national home energy rating measurements. In the islands, 92 per cent of houses scored 6 or under on the 10-point scale.

Many people in the islands live in what might, at first sight, be classed as private sector accommodation, but their houses are in fact tied to crofts and to crofting legislation—and that is not to mention the several hundred people who are waiting to get a house at all. The islands have a huge task on their hands to deal with that legacy of inefficient and ageing housing stock, which was recognised by the Government's recent decision to dedicate an extra £750,000 to the housing repairs budget in the islands. Given all that, like many other members, I looked hopefully to the UK budget for signs that fuel poverty would be genuinely tackled, but that hope was largely confounded.

I welcome any initiative, however small, to get a better deal for people who use prepayment meters, but the call from the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the energy companies to spend an

extra £50 million on social tariffs must be seen in two telling contexts. First, the social tariffs are not mandatory for the companies. Secondly, the sum amounts to less than a week's profits for them.

Whatever Westminster's failures in this area, I hope that we in Scotland can take a lead. Therefore, I welcome the freeze in council tax, which will, slowly but surely, take people out of fuel poverty. As the Scottish fuel poverty statement of 2002 made clear, it defines household income net of council tax. A local income tax would certainly remove more people from fuel poverty.

**Johann Lamont:** Does the member acknowledge that one of the key charges that the SNP must face is that a council tax freeze does not actually help the poorest people in our communities and, therefore, it is bizarre to claim that a freeze will somehow address fuel poverty? Regardless of the separate argument about whether the freeze is a good thing or a bad thing, it is certainly not directly in the interests of the poor.

**Alasdair Allan:** I thank the member for that intervention, and I challenge her to come to my constituency and explain to pensioners that it would be a good idea for them to continue to pay the council tax.

I welcome the current review of the Government's central heating scheme. Like other members, I pay credit where it is due. When it was first introduced, the scheme made significant progress in tackling fuel poverty—36,000 houses received central heating. However, any member who is alive to the contents of their mailbag must see the flaws that are now appearing in the scheme. The character of the scheme's operation has changed. In certain areas, certainly in the Western Isles and the other islands, there have been periods when no installations have taken place. It is unclear whether the scheme takes account of the needs of areas where there is no mains gas supply. I hope that, despite the howls of contrived outrage that greeted the news of a review—from some parties, anyway—we can all now see that if we are going to tackle fuel poverty, such a review is welcome and long overdue.

11:09

**Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab):** I thank all the members who have contributed so far to the debate on an issue that I think is of fundamental importance to everyone in Scotland. As I was one of the ministers with responsibility for tackling fuel poverty through the central heating programme and the warm homes agenda in the initial years of the Parliament, I welcome the progress that we made. I will perhaps

comment later in my speech on some of the regrettable developments that have happened since the SNP Government was elected last May.

I note with interest that virtually all the members who have spoken on behalf of the SNP so far have focused on what the UK Government and the chancellor could be doing about fuel poverty, rather than on the responsibilities and powers that they have in this Parliament. We should measure their contribution in that context.

**Stewart Maxwell:** Will the member give way?

**Mr McAveety:** I want to make progress on these fundamental issues.

We were making progress using the powers that we had in the Scottish Parliament. That is why we now have the central heating programme that was developed by the previous Executives. We gave support to energy efficient housing in new developments. The fact that 80,000 pensioners and almost 315,000 homes have, in different ways, benefited from those programmes is testament to the vision of the previous Executives.

There are concerns contained in the briefings that we have all received for the debate, not from political parties but from organisations that are involved in the sector. They are equally critical of what is being done here as they would be of what is being done at Westminster. That is right and proper, as they are campaigning organisations. We should be concerned that the waiting time for central heating installation has almost doubled. The minister might shake his head in disagreement, but those are not Frank McAveety's words nor the words of any other MSP; they are words from the briefing from Energy Action Scotland. The minister can take up the issue with Energy Action Scotland.

**Stewart Maxwell:** Irrespective of whether the member is quoting Frank McAveety's words or anybody else's words, the fact is that the average waiting time has remained at roughly six months. It is six months this year; it was five to six months last year; and it was six months the year before. For the first two years of the programme, when Frank McAveety's Administration was in charge, the average waiting time was eight months.

**Mr McAveety:** In a briefing paper, Energy Action Scotland cited 114 days in May 2007 and 229 days in January 2008. I know whom I would much prefer to believe. In their recent contributions at the Local Government and Communities Committee, the installers—the key agencies for delivering the programme—indicated that the ambition that the minister expressed to the committee would be difficult to fulfil in the time remaining.

Members have touched on the need to have a much more responsible approach to microgeneration, and some have identified ways in which that can be done. I stress the action that we can take here in Scotland, and I welcome the chance for further dialogue. The minister has indicated that the statement that will be made to Parliament in the near future will address the dialogue involving organisations such as Energy Action Scotland and the fuel poverty forum. That would be a welcome development.

We have considerable concern about the role of the major companies involved, but I understand that the Government has good relationships with them, in particular with Scottish Power. Let us engage in a debate with Scottish Power around its position of, in effect, not releasing the debt of people in Scotland who have prepayment meters, although it will do so for those elsewhere in the UK, in areas that the company has inherited owing to its expansion. It would be helpful to open up such a dialogue.

**Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP)** rose—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman):** The member has one minute left.

**Mr McAveety:** I am in my final minute, and it is important to make this point.

We have major issues to address, as we have been called on to do by Energy Action Scotland and other organisations. One is the need to refine the central heating programme, in particular to address the installation time. I disagree profoundly with what the minister will probably say in his winding-up speech. In members' experience, there is an increase in the number of people who are waiting for central heating installation, and more problems are emerging in that regard.

There are many acronyms involved in the fuel poverty industry: HTA, or Help the Aged; ERA, the Energy Retail Association; and EAS, or Energy Action Scotland. This is a new one for me: MSFM—Mr Salmond's favourite minister. I ask Stewart Maxwell to concern himself with the issues that campaigning organisations and constituency and regional members of the Parliament have raised, and to make three differences on: installation under the central heating programme; a social insurance programme, as identified; and taking a one-stop-shop approach, as Liam McArthur suggested, to try to integrate what we do throughout Scotland. If we do that and advocate measures to tackle the fuel companies, we can address fuel poverty much more effectively.

11:15

**Tricia Marwick (Central Fife) (SNP):** By and large, this has been a good debate with many

measured speeches, which reflects the commitment throughout Parliament to tackling fuel poverty. I am grateful to Johann Lamont for mentioning our good friend Margaret Ewing, who did such fantastic work on the issue. I know that Alex Neil, too, would have liked to contribute, but the debate has been unfortunately too short. I will make an exception for Frank McAveety, who is quite an exceptional person. Some of us have long memories, so we remember the Labour-Liberal Democrat record in government.

We acknowledge that there are three contributory factors to fuel poverty: household income, the energy efficiency of houses and fuel prices. I recall a debate in November 2003 in which Opposition members were forced to debate a motion that congratulated the Executive on the central heating programme's success in reducing fuel poverty. In that debate, I said:

"Although I accept that the Executive has made progress, I think that it is disingenuous to suggest that the reduction in the number of fuel-poor families is ... down to Executive and Government action."—[*Official Report*, 20 November 2003; c3522.]

Most independent commentators at the time acknowledged that because there was a drop in fuel poverty up to 2002 price rises had been limited—there had been very few. I warned then that what comes down will go up and that when fuel prices started to rise, we would see a consequent increase in fuel poverty, which has proved to be the case. In 2002, 580,000 people in Scotland were in fuel poverty. By 2005-06, the figure had risen to 959,000. Most of that increase was down to rises in fuel costs.

I take issue with what Frank McAveety said and contrast the record of this Government on the central heating programme with the record of his Executive. In Glasgow in October, November and December 2007—the three worst months of the year—under this SNP Government, there were 648 installations. In the same period in 2006, when Labour was in government, there were only 34 installations in the Glasgow postcode area.

**Johann Lamont:** Will the member give way?

**Tricia Marwick:** Yes, in a moment.

In my area of Fife, in October, November and December 2007, there were 183 installations in the KY postcode area. I will let members guess how many installations there were in the same period in 2006. Precisely none. This Government will not take lectures from those who failed abysmally to ensure that the central heating programme was available when it was needed. The record speaks for itself.

**Johann Lamont:** The specific time that Tricia Marwick chose for her comparison was of course the time of the transition from Eaga delivering the

programme to Scottish Gas delivering the programme. I was involved at the time and wrestled with these issues. I will not pretend that the figures were great, but they are explainable and we acted to deal with the situation. The SNP now has to act to deal with the fact that waiting times are increasing and people are losing confidence in the central heating programme and buying their own systems because they have been told to expect delays of up to a year. I have a constituency case if Tricia Marwick wants an example.

**Tricia Marwick:** The previous Executive was responsible for managing the transfer of responsibility, in which it failed abysmally. I welcome the fact that the minister has said that there is going to be a review of the programme. When the programme was introduced by the previous Executive, I said that I wanted it to be extended to families with young children. The one life-enhancing experience for young children is to grow up in a dry, warm home. I hope that the minister will consider including in the programme further categories of people who could benefit from it.

11:20

**Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** The debate has been interesting and constructive points have been made by members of all parties. I am pleased to acknowledge that even Robert Brown made constructive points today.

I acknowledge the points that were made by Alasdair Allan and Liam McArthur about housing in the Western Isles and the Orkney Islands. Those points need to be highlighted. I echo Johann Lamont's tribute to the late member who did excellent work here and at Westminster.

Any debate that raises awareness of fuel poverty is welcome, given that the Scottish house condition survey revealed a 30 per cent rise in fuel poverty between 2004-05 and 2005-06. Many factors determine fuel poverty: for example, the price of fuel, wage levels, welfare benefits and the type of fuel that is used. We can all argue about which is the most significant contributory factor, but none of us is arguing about the contribution of energy efficiency measures to household and business bills and to tackling climate change. We can also discuss the various incentives to invest in energy efficiency measures and microgeneration. I am pleased to hear that the Government is considering those.

In our manifesto for last year, we pledged to invest £12 million a year in an eco-bonus scheme for households, communities and small businesses, who would be able to apply for a grant to install modern energy-saving and energy-

creating technology. That could include microgeneration, solar-powered heat and water and wood-fuel heating. Under the scheme, households and businesses would be entitled to apply for a grant of up to £4,000 to cover the cost of buying and installing a wind turbine or solar panel. Community projects could apply for a grant of up to £100,000. Consumers would see a cut in their energy bills, small-scale renewable technology production would be given a boost, and there would be a reduction in carbon emissions. Under such an initiative, there are no losers—there are only winners.

We also called for an urgent review of building standards to incorporate world class energy-saving design. I appreciate that we proposed a different incentive system to the one that the Liberal Democrats are proposing, but the end result would be the same.

**Liam McArthur:** Mary Scanlon made interesting points about incentives. I am therefore slightly surprised that the Conservative amendment to our motion would remove any reference to incentives and would not replace them with anything else.

**Mary Scanlon:** That is a fair point. I am now putting forward our suggested incentives. Whether they are better than the Liberal Democrats' incentives is a subject for debate. I think that our policy is excellent.

With Jim Hume, Jack McConnell, Rob Gibson and Robin Harper, I am the Conservative participant in the Friends of the Earth Scotland energy challenge for MSPs, which has been extremely interesting. I live in a 14-year-old house in Inverness, which I presume was built to all the required building standards of 14 years ago. It is quite shocking to see from the thermal imaging that the insulation is not quite what I thought it would be. The Tory Government did not build my house—I think that we need to ensure that builders are meeting energy efficiency requirements.

I have discovered local energy advice centres. I have to admit that I did not know that they existed and I hope that they will be rolled out throughout Scotland.

11:24

**Johann Lamont:** This has been a constructive debate, although I suspect that Tricia Marwick mistakes being critical for being unconstructive. When one is in government, one needs to recognise that hard things will be said, and one has to be responsible for what happens on one's watch. My constructive-comment count has been very high today, if I may say so.

I urge Government back benchers and the Minister for Communities and Sport to look again at the issue of a tax incentive. We are asking the Government only to consider it, as we believe that it will make a difference and a lot of work on it has already been done. Joe FitzPatrick said that the money would have to come from somewhere, which I accept. That is the responsibility of Government, and we ask it only to consider the proposal. I would be more likely to accept the note of caution about choices from a party that had not spent the morning criticising the choices that were made at UK level.

I want the Government to think about the choices that it makes. The incentive might be only £100, and it might not make as much difference as some of us might hope, but the Government has committed, at the last count, to over £200 million in business tax cuts, with not one condition concerning energy efficiency. The Government still advocates the £2,000 first-time buyers grant, which will inflate house prices and will not do anything to counter fuel poverty. Those are giveaways and, in that context, Joe FitzPatrick's comment about the money having to come from somewhere rings a little hollow.

**Bob Doris:** Would Johann Lamont like to redirect the more than half a billion pounds that is being spent on the Edinburgh trams to tackle fuel poverty?

**Johann Lamont:** I do not want to lecture Bob Doris on being in government, but he needs to avoid having a single transferable alibi. The Government must take responsibility for the choices that it makes. I accept that the Government has chosen to freeze the council tax. It should not pretend that that will address fuel poverty—it will not, although it might address some issues.

Regarding the central heating programme, I note that the minister said that he is holding an internal review. If the Government is going to examine the central heating programme, it should not be in denial. There were hard issues in 2006, which we addressed. There are currently serious issues concerning the central heating programme, and the Government cannot pretend that they do not exist. I urge the minister to talk to those who are delivering. They tell us that the £7 million that has been announced by Nicola Sturgeon comes nowhere near to addressing the problem, and they tell us about the bizarre situation in which although we have the capacity for installations, companies are going out of business because they are not getting any work as a result of pricing levels. Those issues must be confronted.

The Tory amendment says that the central heating programme should be revised to ensure that it

“is reaching those who need it most.”

That is the ultimate tension in the programme, so I urge the minister to ensure that we have an “open and constructive” debate on the issue, in the words of energywatch Scotland, which says some challenging things to all of us who saw the development of the central heating programme.

An internal review by the minister is not adequate—those who live with the programme have something to say. I welcome the fact that the minister has indicated his support for the fuel poverty forum, and I hope that that will be addressed, along with the broader issues that we have outlined.

On the work of Communities Scotland—and, I believe, the Scottish Building Standards Agency—being brought in-house, we need bodies that have a commitment to and an understanding of issues such as energy efficiency and fuel poverty. In the absence of those organisations, there must be greater pressure on the Government and its officials to ensure that that critical work—supporting housing associations, giving advice and ensuring that there is movement from policy to practical delivery—is still carried out. Whatever the weaknesses and criticisms of those agencies, they did an important job and I would like the minister to tell us how he intends to address their absence.

11:29

**Stewart Maxwell:** As members have said, the debate has been interesting and generally constructive. It has involved many issues that members have raised on behalf of their constituents, which reflect the contents of my postbag. I will respond to a number of members' points.

Johann Lamont raised a number of issues, including the fact that our amendment would remove mention of tax rebate. Although that is technically correct, we want—as I said in my opening speech—to debate the big picture, and to consider all the options. We are not ruling anything out, which is why the amendment mentions bringing the issue back to Parliament for a full debate before the summer recess—with contributions from all parliamentarians, all the committees that have an interest in the area, and outside stakeholders—to decide how to tackle fuel poverty. That is important, particularly given the figures that many members have quoted today concerning the rise in fuel poverty levels in Scotland. All options are being considered, and nothing has been rejected at this stage.

**Liam McArthur:** Will the minister state for the record that, in that context, consideration of local tax incentives is still very much part of the review?

**Stewart Maxwell:** Any member and any party in Parliament can propose ideas to the debate. I have said that I have some doubts about tax incentives—we have discussed that in passing in the past few days—but it is a perfectly reasonable suggestion. We will debate that before the summer recess, and decide whether it is the proper way forward. There are a number of other options: Mary Scanlon mentioned a number of other possible incentives that we might want to discuss.

I said in my opening speech that I am more than happy to share the results of the internal review with the Local Government and Communities Committee and the rest of Parliament, when it is complete.

**Johann Lamont:** Many people other than parliamentarians would want to contribute to the review, rather than just be given a report on it when it is complete.

**Stewart Maxwell:** I met a number of outside stakeholders, including Energy Action Scotland, last year. Last week, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing and I met a wide range of stakeholders to ask for their opinions and contributions to the review—that is why we met them before ending the review.

On waiting lists for the central heating programme, we can argue about figures until the cows come home, but the average waiting time is roughly where it was last year and the year before. The number of people who are waiting the longest—at the furthest end of the list—is declining week by week under the programme that we have instigated.

Joe FitzPatrick rightly pointed out that we must use all the levers to tackle fuel poverty because we have very few levers in that area. Although other members, including Frank McAveety, said that we in the Government spend our time moaning about the UK, the fact remains that the vast majority of the levers—including the levers for energy prices and the whole of the energy market—rest with the UK. It is right for us to point out that the UK must play its part, because it has the levers and we do not.

Frank McAveety also mentioned rocketing fuel prices in Scotland, and other members mentioned the fact that we have rocketing fuel poverty in an energy-rich Scotland. It is important to remember that Scotland is a net exporter of energy.

James Kelly and other members asked why the Government is not backing Sarah Boyack's bill on local taxation proposals. I ask Mr Kelly why the Labour-Lib Dem Executive did not back Sarah Boyack's ideas when it was in power for eight years. It had plenty of opportunity to do so, but it

did not, so Labour members should not come moaning to us when we are thinking about it.

I have had robust discussions with the energy companies on a number of matters that are extremely important to us all. It remains the case that the UK Government has responsibility, so I would welcome James Kelly's support for us in ensuring that the powers are devolved to this Parliament, so that we can have robust discussions and take firm action when necessary.

Robert Brown mentioned renewables. The renewables pilot is on-going and will report in the summer. We will respond at that point. Alasdair Allan made a particularly thoughtful speech about the situation in the Western Isles, and about the bigger picture with regard to fuel poverty and the role of the central heating programme within that.

I will finish with a quotation from a number of key stakeholders, including Energy Action Scotland, Citizens Advice Scotland, Friends of the Earth Scotland and Shelter Scotland, who recently wrote to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing. In that letter, they said:

"In our view, the current programmes are not targeted effectively at fuel-poor households and are failing in their primary goal of eradicating fuel poverty. Ineffective targeting means that there are recipients of the programmes, in particular the central heating programme, who are not necessarily fuel poor."

That is one of the reasons why we instigated a review of fuel poverty. We want to find out whether, after seven years, the programmes are delivering. I welcome all contributions to the debate, and I hope that members will support our amendment so that we can have a full and frank debate about the issues that we all must sign up to so that we can move forward.

11:35

**Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD):** As the Lib Dem shadow Minister for Communities and Sport, it has been my pleasure to work with a number of people and organisations who are seeking to eradicate fuel poverty. Not least among them are Norrie Kerr and Elizabeth Gore of Energy Action Scotland. I know that they are dedicated to eradicating fuel poverty in Scotland, and I have seen some of their work in practice, when I visited a local pensioner in my constituency a few weeks ago who had just had her insulation upgraded free of charge.

Having been involved in working towards the eradication of fuel poverty in my constituency for a number of years, I know that the target of ending fuel poverty as far as possible by 2016 is tough. However, it is a target that will, if it is met, make many people's lives more comfortable, but for some it will also literally be a life saver. To reach

the target will take a co-ordinated effort from a number of public, private and voluntary partners. That is why I welcome the dedication of Energy Action Scotland and others to eradicating fuel poverty in Scotland.

I also had a briefing a few months ago from Sam McEwan of the Energy Retail Association about pressing the Westminster Government to progress a national roll-out of smart meters. As that could be heavily subsidised by the private sector, it is shocking that Labour in Westminster has not welcomed the opportunity with open arms.

All members are aware of the devastating effect that rising fuel prices have on tackling fuel poverty in this country. From 2003 to 2007, the average dual-fuel bill rose from £543 to £914—a rise of 68 per cent in only four years. What have been the consequences? There have been rising levels of fuel poverty in Scotland and a massive increase in profits for the energy companies, with British Gas reporting annual profits of £571 million in 2007, up from £95 million in 2006.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer had the opportunity yesterday to address those obscene profits, but he chose to ignore them and instead allow the energy companies to continue to make huge profits on the backs of the most vulnerable in society. It is a scandal that customers on prepayment meters are paying more than those who have access to internet direct debit tariffs. Companies must make their cheapest social tariffs available to the most vulnerable customers.

**Bob Doris:** Is Jim Tolson aware that in 2004 Mike Weir MP tried to amend the UK Energy Bill to ensure that additional tariffs in prepayment meters would not be allowed? In 2008, Alistair Darling has again refused to act. Does the member agree that, as a one-stop shop to tackling fuel poverty, competence for energy prices should be returned to this Parliament so that we can tackle fuel poverty?

**Jim Tolson:** Although a one-stop shop would do a lot of things, we are not seeking an independent Scotland on the back of it.

Presiding Officer,

“Companies like EDF Energy and British Gas have made significant efforts”

with social tariffs,

“But one thing the Government should have learned by now is that relying on voluntary action by suppliers will not deliver the goods.”

Those are not my words, but the words of energywatch in the aftermath of yesterday's budget, to which Frank McAveety also referred. Liberal Democrats believe the fuel poverty forum should be re-established—my colleague Ross

Finnie has written to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing on that very matter.

Included in the minister's deliberations should be an examination of the development of a one-stop-shop approach to fuel poverty that increases the installation of energy efficiency measures, efficient central heating systems, microgeneration and smart meter technology. Only by taking immediate action will the Scottish Government be able to tackle the growing number of individuals who are in fuel poverty.

There have been some very good speeches, not least from my colleague Liam McArthur, who opened the debate by highlighting the disproportionate effect on elderly households and the poor quality of houses that many people reside in, particularly in the island communities. Jamie McGrigor made a good point about the Highlands and Islands suffering more because of the frequent breaks in energy supply.

Johann Lamont raised the important issue of not only the 2016 fuel poverty targets but the 2015 targets to improve the quality of homes throughout Scotland.

**The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):** The member should be winding up now.

**Jim Tolson:** Nearly there.

Stewart Maxwell made the welcome statement that all options would be considered and that a debate on fuel will be held before the summer recess. I also welcome the minister's assurances on reform of the planning system in respect of microrenewables.

I am heartened by what I hope is Government support for our motion—it has been a while in coming. This has been a mostly consensual debate, and I hope that members from all round the chamber will support our motion whether amended or not.

## Question Time

### SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

#### General Questions

11:40

#### Mayfield Community Regeneration Project (Funding)

##### 1. Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland)

**(Con):** To ask the Scottish Executive whether the withdrawal of housing estates renewal funding from the Mayfield community regeneration project in Arbroath will be used to offset local and national reductions in housing association grant, reported to be 25 per cent in Tayside in 2008-09. (S3O-2563)

**The Minister for Communities and Sport (Stewart Maxwell):** No. The housing estate regeneration fund is not being withdrawn. The fund was introduced for a three-year period ending on 31 March 2008 and was only ever intended as a short-term programme. HERF monies are part of the 2007-08 budget and therefore cannot be used against spending plans for the financial year 2008-09.

**Alex Johnstone:** Is there therefore an alternative that will allow money that was not able to be spent on phase 4 of the regeneration project at Mayfield, which is not yet completed, to be carried over, or is there alternative funding that that councils can apply for to replace funding that was not used within the original allocation period?

**Stewart Maxwell:** In the situation that the member raises, the local council, partly through its own behaviour and partly through that of others, has not used the money available to it in the period up to 31 March 2008. It was made clear to the council on a number of occasions that the money would not be available after 31 March 2008 and that it could not be carried forward or rolled over into next year without the effect being a cut in the affordable housing budget.

There is no roll forward for the money in question. The money was reallocated to this year's priorities once the council made it clear that it would not spend it in the financial year up to 31 March 2008.

#### Young People (Disabilities)

**2. Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive how it intends to implement the findings of the Commissioner for Children and Young People in Scotland's report on the moving and handling of young people with disabilities. (S3O-2612)

#### The Minister for Children and Early Years

**(Adam Ingram):** The Scottish Government welcomes the "Handle with Care" report from Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People and in particular its emphasis on consultation, dignity and positivity.

As with all issues and challenges faced by children and young people with disabilities, a coherent approach is required to moving and handling. We will develop an approach that covers practice in health, education, social work and other relevant sectors and that takes stock of the recommendations in "Handle with Care" as well as the views and feelings of children and young people and their families.

**Karen Gillon:** It is apparent from the report that a risk-averse culture has developed throughout Scotland, which is severely hampering the life chances and rights of children and young people, and it is clear that new and robust national guidance is needed. Will the minister agree to establish a stakeholder working group to develop that guidance, involving professionals, parents and children and young people, to ensure that the guidance brought into place is appropriate to their needs and takes into account their wishes and aspirations so that they can enjoy the fullest possible life?

**Adam Ingram:** I am certainly strongly supportive of the commissioner's recommendation that blanket no-lifting policies should be abandoned by local authorities. That poor practice is about penny-pinching on training and certainly not about improving accessibility.

Engaging with children and young people is obviously important, as is involving them in solving their accessibility problems. As the member will know, appropriate legislation is in place, including the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, with its requirement for all education authorities to publish a disability equality scheme.

Guidance is also available, including "Helping Hands: Guidelines for Staff who provide Intimate Care for Children and Young People with Disabilities", which was published in 1999. We will revise that guidance in the light of the commissioner's report and follow up on other reports, such as the Audit Scotland report "Adapting to the future: Management of community equipment and adaptations" and "Equipped for Inclusion: Report of the Strategy Forum: Equipment and Adaptations". We will involve parents and children in the revision process.

**Bill Kidd (Glasgow) (SNP):** Will the minister consider establishing a central register of the



number and distribution of children and young people who require moving and handling assistance, to enhance planning for resource allocation?

**Adam Ingram:** We can consider that when we review the recommendations in the commissioner's report and revise the guidance, as I have said we will. I will take on board that interesting suggestion.

**Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab):** My colleague Karen Gillon mentioned the safety of the children who are involved, but workers who participated in the consultation said that they felt restricted from lifting and handling and from offering the service that they would like to offer. How will the minister address that while ensuring the safety of children and of workers?

**Adam Ingram:** As I intimated, I am particularly interested in following up the commissioner's recommendations on local authority lifting policies. The guidance will focus on that.

### Underage Drinking

**3. Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive what action it is taking to address and highlight the dangers of underage drinking. (S3O-2607)

**The Minister for Public Health (Shona Robison):** We have rolled out test purchasing of alcohol to crack down on retailers that sell alcohol to young people who are under 18. By the end of March, all police forces will have live test purchasing operations. However, we must get better at diverting young people from misusing alcohol in the first place. The curriculum for excellence will ensure that all young people are aware of the implications of the use and abuse of alcohol and become confident individuals who can make the right choices.

**Cathie Craigie:** I ask the minister to continue to provide support and financial assistance to help educate young people about the danger to their health and the havoc that young folk who go about in crowds can cause in communities.

What more can the Scottish Executive do to deal with irresponsible adults who buy alcohol to sell or pass on to young people? We really should address that.

**Shona Robison:** As the member is probably aware, the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 creates wider offences, including those of selling alcohol to a child anywhere and of purchasing alcohol on a child's behalf, and, for a child, the offence of buying or attempting to buy alcohol anywhere. In line with the seriousness of selling alcohol to children, penalties have been raised from a £1,000 fine to a £5,000 fine, a three-month jail sentence

or both. The act will come into force in September next year.

The issue is serious. Far too many adults are too willing to buy alcohol for those who are underage. If they are caught, they will feel the full force of the law. We need to get better at using intelligence to catch such individuals and we will examine additional measures to achieve that.

**Ian McKee (Lothians) (SNP):** Does the Scottish Government have proposals to deal with the problem of underage and young drinkers who drive cars or ride motorcycles?

**Shona Robison:** That issue is important. First, we need to get across the message that such behaviour is dangerous. We have only to look at the statistics to see how many fatal road accidents are linked to alcohol and drug misuse. Communication and education among young people are needed. We will take that forward in the review of substance misuse education in our schools. We have established a steering group to consider how we can improve young people's education on substance misuse, so that they are aware of the dangers, including the danger of using a vehicle when under the influence. We must also ensure that when any young person is caught acting in that manner, they are dealt with swiftly and severely.

**Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** The minister will be aware that Fife Constabulary is cracking down on adults who supply alcohol to young people and that, only this week, a second adult has been charged with supplying alcohol to two 12-year-old girls. However, tracing such adults is difficult and the police must rely on reports from the public. Does the minister agree that the Government should introduce a mandatory national ultraviolet marking scheme that would link alcohol products to the people who bought them? That would go a long way towards helping the police to do their job of identifying adults who break the law in that way.

**Shona Robison:** We are willing to consider any ideas that could help us to identify such people. Of course, intelligence gathering is part of the solution and we need to examine how we can assist the police in that. For example, the use of closed-circuit television has helped with capturing the image of someone who has purchased alcohol and handed it over to young people. However, I am willing, as I am sure the Cabinet Secretary for Justice is, to examine any measures that may help us to support our police forces.

### Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route

**4. Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Executive what timescale is in place for the public local inquiry into the Aberdeen western peripheral route. (S3O-2646)

**The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson):** We are making arrangements for the public local inquiry. I hope to announce shortly a date for the pre-inquiry meeting, which will set the inquiry's timescale.

**Alison McInnes:** Does the minister agree that time is of the essence? The AWPR is crucial to the north-east's economic wellbeing. Will he not only assure me that he will announce the inquiry in the immediate future, but guarantee that when the reporter makes her or his recommendation, the Government will reach a conclusion promptly?

**Stewart Stevenson:** I agree that the project is essential for the north-east. It has one of the highest rates of return among transport projects—that sits at 5, whereas the figures for other projects are dramatically lower. In line with our objective of supporting economic progress, we will seek to make the fastest possible decision that is consistent with fairness to all parties.

**Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP):** Does the minister agree that the AWPR's northern leg is less contentious than other parts? Could the public local inquiry, on which I hope he will announce details in the near future, be structured to proceed in segments that would allow faster progress to be made on delivering the AWPR?

**Stewart Stevenson:** We acknowledge that different parts of the route are subject to different challenges from objectors. People have been on the ground to undertake preliminary work on the northern leg of the route. I am confident that, overall, we will make the necessary progress and be able to proceed with the whole plan. We will see what the objectors have to say to the inquiry and what conclusions the reporter reaches. There will be several ways to deal with the outcome when we know it.

**Lewis Macdonald (Aberdeen Central) (Lab):** How does the minister intend to fund the western peripheral route when final decisions on it have been taken? Will those details be made public before the public local inquiry?

**Stewart Stevenson:** The route will be funded with money. The issues that the public local inquiry will cover relate to objectors' interests. Funding is unlikely to be relevant to the inquiry.

**Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):** The First Minister has given a commitment to abide by the public local inquiry's recommendations, whatever they are. Will the minister confirm that that is still the Government's position?

**Stewart Stevenson:** It is unusual to reject the inquiry's findings, but the decision must be made by ministers, and of course ministers will make that decision. Parliament will be party to that. I am

sure that we will make a decision that reflects the view of the 90-plus per cent of people in the north-east who want the road to be delivered as early as possible.

### **Community Planning Partnerships (Housing and Regeneration)**

**5. Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive how housing and regeneration issues will be developed by community planning partnerships. (S3O-2621)

**The Minister for Communities and Sport (Stewart Maxwell):** Responsibility for the implementation of community planning sits with the partnerships themselves, and it is up to individual partnerships to decide how they develop housing and regeneration issues locally, within the overall context of Scottish Government priorities. To enable partnerships to regenerate communities, tackle poverty and remove barriers to work, they have each been awarded money from the fairer Scotland fund, which they can use as a catalyst to drive wider mainstream investment and improve services to people and communities.

**Johann Lamont:** The minister will be aware that, with the abolition of Communities Scotland, its officials are now resigning from local community planning partnerships. I am sure that the minister acknowledges that physical regeneration and community regeneration are central to effective work by community planning partnerships. Is he aware that, like housing associations, housing providers are not able to sit on community planning partnerships? What action is he taking to ensure that the critical work of the partnerships is sustained? Who will replace the Communities Scotland staff in the partnerships?

**Stewart Maxwell:** From 1 April 2008, Communities Scotland will cease to be a formal member of local community planning partnerships. It is our view that its role in the partnerships will not be taken by the Government's new housing and regeneration directorate—the successor body for many of Community Scotland's functions.

Responsibility rests with local authorities and other members of community planning partnerships. It is not for Government to micromanage and intervene in the local flexibility and freedom that community planning partnerships must have to exercise their functions and to make decisions that are best for their communities. What we have done is a step forward. The previous Administration was too keen to micromanage every single decision that local authorities and community planning partnerships took.

## Rape and Sexual Assault

### 6. Christina McKelvie (Central Scotland)

**(SNP):** To ask the Scottish Executive what action it is taking to address the historically low detection and conviction rate for rape and sexual assault. (S3O-2591)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill):** We are committed to improving the way the justice system responds to rape and other sexual offences in Scotland—through law, through practice and through challenging public attitudes.

We will introduce legislation to reform the law in light of the Scottish Law Commission's report. We have asked the Scottish Law Commission to examine the law of evidence and in particular the Moorov doctrine. By 2009, the Crown Office will have implemented the 50 recommendations in the report on the investigation and prosecution of sexual offences.

Last week I announced funding for Rape Crisis Scotland to undertake a publicity campaign to challenge attitudes and preconceptions regarding rape.

**Christina McKelvie:** The cabinet secretary will be aware of comments made by solicitor Iain Smith, who serves as a temporary sheriff and who described the 15-year-old victim of a rape as being "not very vulnerable". The cabinet secretary will also be aware of recent comments by Donald Findlay QC on a related subject. Can the cabinet secretary assure us that the Government does not agree with the stance taken by those lawyers? Will he act speedily to introduce legislation after the consultation on the Law Commission's report closes tomorrow?

Rape is the only crime in which the character of the victim is used in defence of the actions of the accused. Will the cabinet secretary assure us that he will act to bring that strange anomaly to an end, and will he assure us that the Government agrees with Roseanna Cunningham's motion that clothing is not an invitation to rape?

**Kenny MacAskill:** The Government will move as expeditiously as possible with regard to legislation; that was the commitment that we gave at the outset. We accept that inappropriate comments have been unhelpful. There are laws to ensure that victims giving evidence are protected from questions. Clearly, language used in the courts and elsewhere can be inappropriate.

We need to change the law. Changes have already been made, and we pay credit to past Administrations and to the Lord Advocate for her role in ensuring that changes have been made when necessary. We will not hesitate to make further changes when necessary.

However, individuals in Scotland—particularly males—have to challenge their own attitudes, consider their own language and accept some responsibility. Legislative change there must be; but cultural and attitudinal change there must also be.

## Tourism (Scottish Borders)

**7. Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Executive how it is supporting tourism in the Scottish Borders. (S3O-2650)

**The Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism (Jim Mather):** VisitScotland supports the Scottish Borders in a great many ways, including through the VisitScotland website [www.visitscotishborders.com](http://www.visitscotishborders.com) and through various brochures and guides. The area also features in a range of VisitScotland national marketing campaigns and in adverts in key publications.

**Jeremy Purvis:** Will the minister join me in paying tribute to the staff in the Selkirk office of VisitScotland Borders in my constituency? They have a very good record of promoting the area and are dedicated to the development of tourism in the Borders. Does the minister not understand the confusion as to why the provision is now being removed and replaced by a general south of Scotland provision? Does he not understand the anger felt by many people? At the very time when benefits are starting to accrue, the Government is removing a specific, dedicated, local office in the Borders and replacing it with a generic south of Scotland office.

**Jim Mather:** I will join the member in making that commendation. However, I will also say that this is an operational matter for VisitScotland, which is aligning resources with demand in order to meet the purpose of developing tourism in the Borders. Mr Purvis must understand that, in other parts of Scotland, we are seeing greater collaboration and I am determined to ensure that that happens in the Borders. I want to create a situation in which we take full advantage of the small business bonus that now exists as well as the changes to [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com), which have aligned the service with the needs of Borderers such as Alan Keith.

**The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):** I am delighted to say that His Excellency Rasoul Movahedian-Attar, the Iranian ambassador to the United Kingdom, has joined us today for First Minister's questions. Ambassador, on behalf of the Scottish Parliament, I welcome you.

## First Minister's Question Time

12:01

### Engagements

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

To ask the First Minister what engagements he has planned for the rest of the day. (S3F-588)

I also welcome our visitors to the Parliament today and pass on the chamber's congratulations to Frank Hadden and the Scottish rugby team, following their Calcutta cup victory last Saturday. I look forward to seeing them later.

**The First Minister (Alex Salmond):** Later today I will have meetings to take forward the Government's programme for Scotland. I will also meet Frank Hadden and will pass on everyone's congratulations.

I think that the chamber will want to join me in congratulating young Nathan Thomson who, at nine years old, intervened to protect his mother from a vicious assault and agree with the Solicitor General's remark that there should be an award for bravery for that exceptional young man.

**Ms Alexander:** I associate myself with the remarks that the First Minister has just made.

Two weeks ago, I asked the First Minister to publish his local income tax plans. Finally, the ever obliging Mr Swinney is shoved out to present the First Minister's flagship policy. The nat tax got an even worse reception than Thatcher's poll tax. *[Laughter.]*

**The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):** Order.

**Ms Alexander:** For the most basic of accountancy purposes, can the First Minister tell the chamber how much 1p on income tax would raise in the first year of the tax?

**The First Minister:** I can tell Wendy Alexander that 432,000 pensioners across Scotland will welcome the change in taxation.

I notice that Wendy Alexander said that this tax is unpopular. She is a professor at the University of Strathclyde, whose election survey showed that 88 per cent of people supported income tax based on the ability to pay and 12 per cent supported Labour's council tax rises. I think that that is a sign of popularity, and I hope that, at some point, Wendy Alexander will welcome the introduction of a fair tax based on the ability to pay.

**Ms Alexander:** Pre-rehearsed, pre-cooked. I asked a fair question—what does 1p on income tax raise in the first year? I will try another question, with the assistance of one of Scotland's

top accountancy firms. Yesterday, I asked PricewaterhouseCoopers for its analysis of the Government's plans. It said that it was at a total loss to explain why the most basic numbers were missing from the document. How much council tax cash has to be replaced? Which year do the plans refer to? How much will 3p on income tax raise? What is the size of the resulting black hole and how might it be filled?

It is strange that, although this time last year, in its scramble for votes, the Scottish National Party was willing to answer all of those basic questions, none of those numbers appeared in this week's document.

Does the First Minister agree that he is duty bound to publish the basic numbers and then let the people of Scotland decide?

**The First Minister:** I saw Margaret Curran shaking her head again. I think that Wendy Alexander is in trouble. *[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**The First Minister:** I can only imagine that the new consultation with PricewaterhouseCoopers means that Professor Arthur Midwinter is getting the sack. *[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**The First Minister:** What Wendy Alexander describes as a black hole is a £281 million tax cut for working families throughout Scotland, which, as she has said, represents less than 1 per cent of Scottish Government expenditure. She thinks that that sort of efficiency gain is easily affordable, as she told us in her famous hungry caterpillar speech. Will she at some point join me in acknowledging the fact that single pensioners, pensioner couples, couples with children and one-parent families will welcome a taxation system that is based on the ability to pay as opposed to Labour's regressive council tax? *[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Ms Alexander:** If the First Minister's Government is unwilling to publish the basic numbers or even tell us which year is being talked about, any talk of winners or losers is simply meaningless. It is no accident that the basic numbers appear nowhere in the Government's document. Even worse than that, they are being denied to parliamentary officials. When the Scottish Parliament information centre asked the Government for details on how the money would be raised, it was told:

"the figure was deemed to be internal advice to ministers only."

Scotland deserves answers. In three years' time, the council tax will raise £2.5 billion. That means that there will be a 5p local income tax and a 25

per cent tax hike. Is it the case that, at a rate of 5p, a single person in an average house will start to lose at £23,000 and a couple will start to lose at £34,000?

**The First Minister:** Wendy Alexander has, unfortunately, forgotten the tax cut of £281 million. She also seems to support the United Kingdom Government's attempt to withhold Scotland's money by withholding its council tax rebate.

Wendy Alexander asked for detailed numbers. I will give her detailed numbers. Under the proposals, single pensioners will be better off by £7.30 a week; pensioner couples will be better off by £13.80 a week; couples without children will be better off by £3.40 a week; couples with children will be better off by £3.10 a week; one-parent families will be better off by £5.40 a week; and single people will be better off by £3.30 a week. That is why the proposals have been widely welcomed by people in society who are concerned that taxation should be based on people's ability to pay.

**Ms Alexander:** Attempts to talk about winners and losers are meaningless if the First Minister will not tell us which year the plans refer to, how much council tax cash has to be replaced and the size of the black hole. Of course everybody will pay less if there is a 40 per cent cut in the cash to local services, but that will not make everybody a winner. Three pence on income tax would lead to a huge hole in local finances. The truth is that families cannot afford what has been proposed, businesses do not want it, local government does not like it and—by the way—the rich will not even pay it. Is it not time that the First Minister admitted that he is trying to con the people of Scotland?

**The First Minister:** I tried to explain that a £281 million cut in taxation will be widely welcomed by the people of Scotland.

Let us take some quotations from the people to whom I listen—as opposed to Wendy Alexander's MSPs, who must accept that they will pay a bit more under an income tax, which is probably why they are so against it. The Child Poverty Action Group says:

"The poorest pay proportionately more tax than the rich. Regressive taxes include council tax ... Government must ensure the burden of taxation is proportional to the ability to pay."

This morning, the Age Concern website commented on yesterday's budget announcement:

"Many pensioners will be disappointed that the government hasn't offered any help with their Council Tax bills. Council Tax should be replaced by a fairer system that reflects people's ability to pay."

Those groups, which are concerned about the poorest in society, are part of the 88 per cent of people who support the introduction of a local

income tax. Wendy Alexander and her MSPs are part of the 12 per cent who want to hang on to the unfair council tax.

### Prime Minister (Meetings)

#### 2. Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con):

To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Prime Minister. (S3F-589)

I endorse the congratulations to Scotland's rugby players on winning the Calcutta cup. I tell them to be of good heart, as every time Scotland has won the grand slam it has been under a Conservative Government. There is not long to wait, boys.

**The First Minister (Alex Salmond):** I have no immediate plans to meet the Prime Minister.

I am pondering which position Annabel Goldie is lining herself up for in the Scottish rugby team.

**Annabel Goldie:** That is a matter of private interest but not something that I would ever discuss with the First Minister.

The Scottish National Party has, at long last, introduced its plans for a Scottish national income tax. Will the First Minister confirm how much Scottish national income tax someone will pay if their income derives wholly from share dividends and bank interest?

**The First Minister:** The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, the Burt report and Professor Smith have all argued that an attempt to attack dividend income would cost more than it would yield. Therefore, our proposal is for a fair, progressive taxation system that is infinitely preferable to the council tax, which the Conservative party introduced.

**Annabel Goldie:** Even allowing for the fact that it is the First Minister, that is a very coy way of saying nothing. I think that we are detecting the early signs of retreat.

What the First Minister cannot confirm is that his charter is to encourage the wealthy to switch income from earned to unearned while clobbering the hard-pressed wage and salary earners of Scotland who have no such room for manoeuvre. The First Minister must face the fact that his Scottish national income tax is unravelling by the day. He must reform the council tax and follow our lead by cutting—not just freezing—council tax for everyone. Under a Scottish national income tax, the dustman will pay but the duke will not; the bus drivers of Scotland will pay but the bus owners might not; the dividends of ministers will be Scot free, but the wages of Scottish workers will be hit hard. How can that be fair?

**The First Minister:** The people whom Annabel Goldie describes would have to be on dividend

income but no earned income, in which case they would pay more, and they would have to have only one house. Most of the super-rich probably have more than one house and would, therefore, be caught by the Government's proposals. The council tax pays no attention to anybody's ability to pay, but local income tax is based on a fair system.

Although I have been pretty hard on the Labour Party by pointing out that, since March 1997, council tax in Scotland has increased by 62 per cent, let us not forget the double-digit increases that occurred in the years before that, after the Tory party introduced that hated tax.

Annabel Goldie, who has been willing to take the credit for so many of the SNP budget's excellent features, should at some point acknowledge that the council tax freeze, which some people in the chamber said could not be introduced, has been successfully introduced by the SNP and widely welcomed across Scotland.

### Cabinet (Meetings)

**3. Nicol Stephen (Aberdeen South) (LD):** To ask the First Minister what issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Cabinet. (S3F-590)

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

I am delighted to see that Nicol Stephen got to the chamber in time.

**Nicol Stephen:** It is clear that the Chancellor of the Exchequer's budget fails to deliver for Scotland. The new whisky tax, for example, smacks more of smash and grab than sound government and it is bad for Scotland's industry, but this is not the first time the First Minister and I have criticised Labour budgets. In fact, this very week three years ago, the First Minister, who was then in opposition, set five tests for the United Kingdom budget, which he described as

"simple ... tests to determine whether the budget is ... designed for Scottish success".

Now that the First Minister is in government, which of those tests does he still think is important and which of them is met in his own Scottish budget?

**The First Minister:** I am sure that Nicol Stephen will join me in welcoming the fact that, yesterday, in the magazine *fDi*, which is published by the *Financial Times*, Scotland beat 38 other European competitors to be named the European region of the future. We are not claiming all the credit for that magnificent award, but it might have something to do with acknowledging the central aim of this Administration to increase sustainable

economic growth for Scotland. No UK chancellor in recent memory has ever had that as a priority.

**Nicol Stephen:** At the moment, I want to focus on the First Minister's own tests, particularly the second. The SNP made a very specific promise to give a £2,000 grant to every first-time buyer in Scotland. In 2005, the First Minister said that the matter was urgent; in 2006, his deputy said that it was time to help first-time buyers; in 2007, his manifesto said that it was a promise. It is now 2008. Where is it? The newspapers tell us that it has been cancelled.

Now that the First Minister can deliver in government, his own budget fails his own simple test. Does he still support the £2,000 grant? Does he think that it will ever be put in place? Or does he intend, every year, to break his promise to the 30,000 first-time buyers who enter the market each year?

**The First Minister:** As Nicol Stephen well knows, the consultation document is out just now. The Government will carefully consider measures to help not only first-time buyers but people right across the housing market. Unfortunately, such measures were not introduced during the member's time in the Labour-Liberal Administration.

I have no doubt that, when we introduce these initiatives, Nicol Stephen will be the first to acknowledge them, in the same way that he has acknowledged that we have frozen the council tax, abolished prescription charges and saved hospitals throughout Scotland. Such initiatives are why this Administration is rather more popular than the previous Administration of which he was Deputy First Minister.

**David Whitton (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab):** The First Minister will be aware of a serious incident at the weekend at St Mary's secure unit for troubled youngsters in my constituency, during which a member of staff was injured and required hospital treatment.

I thank the Cabinet Secretary for Justice for meeting me this morning to discuss the matter. Can the First Minister assure me that the incident will be fully investigated and lessons learned, and that the Scottish Executive will give full support to the staff of St Mary's, who do a terrific job in difficult circumstances?

**The First Minister:** Yes, I can give those assurances. I know that the member met Kenny MacAskill this morning.

The incident raises a number of concerns that obviously must be investigated before we come to any conclusions. As I am sure David Whitton heard this morning, we take the matter extremely seriously and any improvements that are necessary will be introduced.

### United Kingdom Budget (Scottish Industry)

**4. Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee West) (SNP):** To ask the First Minister what impact the UK budget is expected to have on Scottish industry. (S3F-595)

**The First Minister (Alex Salmond):** The United Kingdom budget not only failed to mention Scotland once but managed to damage our economic interests at a time when oil revenues are propping up the UK's finances to the tune of an expected £56 billion over the next six years, which is up from £38 billion over the past six years.

**Joe FitzPatrick:** Does the First Minister agree that the chancellor missed a vital opportunity to back Scottish business by failing to end the system of fuel duty rises and introduce a fuel price regulator to stabilise prices for Scottish industry?

**The First Minister:** Yes I do. The deferring of the 2p rise was welcome, but we should remember that it has been deferred until October and I cannot imagine that many economists believe that oil prices will suddenly take a dip before then. That remains a serious problem for Scottish industry. As we argued to the UK Treasury, it would be useful to consider a mechanism such as the fuel price regulator and, indeed, the impact—particularly on peripheral communities—of transport costs, which feed through to every area of the economy. It is entirely legitimate to ask the chancellor—who, after all, sits for a Scottish constituency—to consider the particular impact of steeply rising transport charges in the Scottish economy.

**Liam McArthur (Orkney) (LD):** Does the First Minister recognise that the chancellor's smash and grab raid on the whisky industry will be most acutely felt by Scotland's most northerly distilleries—the Highland Park and Scapa distilleries in my constituency—which already face serious challenges because of their locations? Will he consider making representations about the continued failure to consider introducing a lower fuel duty for remote and island areas, which is having a serious detrimental impact on the competitive position of businesses throughout the Highlands and Islands?

**The First Minister:** I can see Liam McArthur's argument that distilleries in his constituency are suffering a double whammy from the whisky tax increase and the rising cost of fuel and transport. We made such representations, of course, before the budget; unfortunately, they have fallen on deaf ears. I congratulate Wendy Alexander on anticipating last week the huge, swingeing increase of 59p in whisky duty. It is the highest rise in whisky duty for 30 years. [*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**The First Minister:** Although the increase impacts on Liam McArthur's constituency, we should remember that it also impacts on many other constituencies throughout Scotland, including Paisley, which has a distillery and a bottling plant. I am sure that the Labour leader will be able to explain her support for it to her constituents.

**Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con):** The budget mentioned setting a goal for small and medium-sized enterprises to win 30 per cent of public sector business. Page 22 of the Scottish National Party manifesto talks about a target of 20 per cent. Will the First Minister review Scottish Government policy and give SMEs in Scotland the same opportunity as SMEs south of the border?

**The First Minister:** We have active work under way on procurement to secure the maximum opportunity for Scottish business. Of course, small businesses in Scotland anticipate keenly the massive opportunity of the small business bonus scheme, which will, for the first time, put them at a competitive advantage over businesses south of the border. No doubt that is why people, businesses and even towns are flocking to join the Scottish community these days.

**Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab):** In his budget statement yesterday, the chancellor announced new money to improve the quality of science education and expand apprenticeship programmes to tackle skills gaps in industry. Indeed, apprenticeship opportunities in England will rise to around 500,000. Will the First Minister commit to matching that with 50,000 apprenticeships in Scotland before Scotland and Scottish industry are left behind?

**The First Minister:** Not only do we have a target of 50,000 places for apprenticeships and other suitable training in Scotland but, as Iain Gray should remember, many analyses of the quality of training that is on offer in Scotland show that it is substantially superior compared with some of the quantitative analyses south of the border. I want Scotland to have more training places, but I also want us to keep the edge in quality over quantity that we have at present.

### Smoking Cessation

**5. Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** To ask the First Minister how the Scottish Government will support people who are trying to give up smoking. (S3F-605)

**The First Minister (Alex Salmond):** Yesterday was national no smoking day. I congratulate everyone who has taken the difficult first step towards stopping smoking. The Scottish Government wants to support people to stop

smoking all year round, which is why we are investing in NHS smoking cessation services.

**Dr Simpson:** I invite the First Minister to join me in congratulating those who organised the day and took part in the celebrations. I know that the First Minister will be aware that every day there are 35 smoking-related deaths in Scotland, amounting to one in four of all deaths in Scotland. He will also be aware that the Scottish Government has cut the smoking cessation budget by almost 6 per cent in real terms over the next three years. How does the First Minister justify cutting spending on preventing Scotland's number one killer disease?

**The First Minister:** As Richard Simpson knows, expenditure on public health initiatives in Scotland will rise sharply over the next three years. He also knows that Action on Smoking and Health Scotland has told ministers and officials that it welcomes the development of the forthcoming smoking prevention action plan. I am delighted to congratulate and celebrate those who have worked on no smoking day, which is a splendid initiative that the whole chamber should welcome. Richard Simpson, in particular, will welcome the fact that the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing has announced that, for the first time ever, healthy living centres will receive central Government funding—especially as six of those centres closed under the previous Administration.

**Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP):** As the First Minister is aware, my consultation on a licensing bill that would require people to have a licence to sell cigarettes has closed. Mixed views were expressed on positive and negative licensing. The First Minister is aware of my preference, but does he agree that either scheme would not only outlaw rogue traders who are engaged in underage selling but help to eradicate the sale of counterfeit cigarettes that, because of their content, are even more lethal than other cigarettes?

**The First Minister:** Christine Grahame draws attention to serious issues. Regardless of people's opinions on how we should continue to tackle smoking, the member has identified steps that must be taken. Such measures are under active consideration.

#### **Local Government Services (Income Tax)**

**6. David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con):** To ask the First Minister whether the Scottish Government will press ahead with a nationally set income tax to fund local government services without the co-operation of HM Revenue and Customs. (S3F-597)

**The First Minister (Alex Salmond):** In the consultation paper that we published three days ago, we made it clear that we want HM Revenue

and Customs to collect the new tax. At this early stage, we are looking forward to receiving a positive response from HM Revenue and Customs. As I indicated earlier, surveys show that there is massive support for the introduction of a local income tax in Scotland. If it becomes the will of the Parliament that we should pursue such a tax, I am certain that HM Revenue and Customs will not want to defy that will.

**David McLetchie:** Why does the First Minister not save us a lot of time and energy? The proposal is doomed, whether or not he gets the co-operation of HM Revenue and Customs, because the sums do not add up, because the parliamentary arithmetic does not add up, and because, at best, he is dependent on a group of Liberal Democrats who, on yesterday's evidence, do not know their affirms or their annuls from their elbows. Finally, and most important, the plan is doomed because, as Annabel Goldie pointed out, at its heart is the fundamental unfairness that it will tax the earned income of hard-working Scots whereas people who live on investment income will be SNP tax free. Will the First Minister acknowledge that on this national income tax his game is a bogey?

**The First Minister:** Annabel Goldie's lines were much better. I do not underrate the determination and ability of the Government to get its measures through. People said that we would not get the budget through but, as I remember, some of our opponents ended up abstaining. People said that we could not freeze the council tax, but it has now been frozen across Scotland, by all but one council, which cut the council tax. That authority is Stirling Council, which last night came under SNP control.

I have received personal assurances from Nicol Stephen that Liberal party members will turn up early for every vote to introduce a local income tax. I accept those assurances and look forward to our joint endeavours to defeat the unhappy cabal of Labour and Conservative members who want to deny the people of Scotland fair taxation based on the ability to pay.

12:30

*Meeting suspended until 14:15.*



14:15

*On resuming—*

## Question Time

### SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

#### Education and Lifelong Learning

##### Schools (Deprived Areas)

**1. Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive how it plans to improve performance in schools located in areas of deprivation. (S3O-2605)

**The Minister for Children and Early Years (Adam Ingram):** The concordat that we have signed with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities is founded on improving educational outcomes and providing more choices and more chances for all children and young people, including those who are identified as living in poverty.

We will shortly launch a policy statement, jointly with COSLA, that will set out an approach to early intervention across education, health and other services. We are also developing a personalised approach to education through the curriculum for excellence, while our skills strategy sets out our vision for a smarter Scotland for all our people. In addition, we are reducing class sizes to a maximum of 18 in primary 1 to primary 3, which we expect to have the biggest impact on pupils from deprived areas.

**Bill Butler:** The minister will be aware that there are areas of social and economic deprivation in my constituency. He will also be aware that, over the years, Drumchapel high school has made strenuous efforts to improve the educational opportunities available to its pupils. Does he understand that the Scottish Government's short-sighted decision to axe the schools of ambition programme undermines those efforts and is patently unreasonable, given that the programme was introduced only in 2005 and that early performance indicators such as Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education reports have been broadly positive? Will the cabinet secretary guarantee that, as part of the Government's alternative proposals, schools such as Drumchapel high school in my constituency will be given additional funding and resources after 2010 to allow such excellent work to continue?

**Adam Ingram:** I thank Mr Butler for his question and for the promotion, but he rather misrepresents the situation. The schools of ambition programme will continue and over the next few years this Government will spend more on it than the

previous Government did. The key is to learn lessons from the schools of ambition programme and transfer good practice so that all schools can become schools of ambition.

I remind Mr Butler that we learned from the debate earlier in the year on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's report that who we are rather than what school we go to is what matters when it comes to attainment and achievement. The biggest long-running problem in the Scottish education system is that 20 per cent of our children go through the whole system and end up with very little. We must crack the vicious cycle of poverty and deprivation.

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Tonight I will have the pleasure of attending Blairgowrie high school's annual gala dinner, which showcases the talents of school pupils who are studying catering and hospitality. Blairgowrie high school's catchment area includes areas of deprivation and it is a school of ambition. The additional funding from the schools of ambition programme has provided for an expansion in the catering and hospitality facilities at the school. What message does the minister want me to take to the school pupils tonight, now that the Government has scrapped the schools of ambition programme and jeopardised the future of those facilities? Or will he tell us today that in future the funding allocated to a school such as Blairgowrie high will be at least as high as it has been over the past three years?

**Adam Ingram:** The message that Mr Fraser should take to Blairgowrie tonight is that the Government has not scrapped the schools of ambition programme. Every pound that is allocated to the programme will be delivered over the next three years. He should also indicate the support of this Government for the activities in the high school and congratulate it on the good work it is doing.

**Bill Kidd (Glasgow) (SNP):** Does the minister agree that teaching in nursery schools is the foundation stone for future educational success and that the Labour group in Glasgow City Council was wrong to remove that foundation stone?

**Adam Ingram:** In the previous session of Parliament, the criticism was certainly made that certain local authorities were reducing their complement of nursery teachers. We want to reverse that trend and ensure that every child in the relevant age group has access to a nursery teacher. We are setting out our stall to deliver that.

##### Advanced Highers (Access)

**2. David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Executive what action is being taken to address the number of sixth year

school pupils who are unable to access the full range of subjects at advanced higher level. (S3O-2557)

**The Minister for Schools and Skills (Maureen Watt):** Individual schools and local authorities are responsible for determining which subjects and qualifications to offer and for matching opportunities to their students' needs and local circumstances. It is clear that, in some areas, offering a wide choice involves practical challenges. The Scottish Government is keen to promote good practice in the use of information technology and the development of collaborative arrangements between schools, colleges, universities, training providers and local authorities so that the widest possible range of subjects is delivered.

**David McLetchie:** I recognise that local authorities have the primary responsibility for the delivery of a range of courses, but is the minister aware that the number of pupils who have access to mainstream advanced higher courses such as physics, chemistry, geography and art is declining because of budget cuts? In framing the single outcome agreements that are to be provided between the Scottish Government and local authorities, will she consider including the expansion of access for some of our brightest young people to the courses that they need to access higher education?

**Maureen Watt:** The uptake of advanced higher has remained broadly level in recent years. There was a small drop in uptake in 2007, but that was in line with the overall fall in S6 rolls. Staying-on rates in S6 have remained fairly constant.

Schools are aware of the innovative systems that they can use to increase the provision of subjects. For example, the SCHOLAR programme, which was developed by Heriot-Watt University, provides opportunities for pupils to take advanced higher in several subjects through computer-based learning with support from teachers. That well-established programme is used by local authorities throughout Scotland to supplement learning provision. More than 3,000 teachers are trained in supporting pupils through the programme.

The Government is keen to maintain the broad range of advanced higher that is available to pupils throughout Scotland.

**Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind):** I take issue with David McLetchie's suggestion that advanced higher help pupils gain access to higher education. In fact, they do no such thing; they help to prepare students for individual learning and the sort of study that is required in higher or further education.

Does the minister have any figures to confirm my suspicion that pupils who take advanced

higher are those who are already best suited to individual study? Does she agree that advanced higher are therefore less of a priority need and that the 3,000 teachers whom she mentioned should be used to mop up the shortfall that Bill Butler mentioned in his question about schools in areas with the greatest social deprivation?

**Maureen Watt:** We have to ensure that we get a balance in our schools and that all pupils get from our school system the choices and chances that they deserve. We are considering the qualifications system in relation to the curriculum for excellence so that the system matches the outcomes that we are trying to achieve.

**Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD):** It was upsetting to learn this week that a number of higher courses will no longer be provided in the Borders because of reduced investment in schools in that area. That is symptomatic of the reduction in investment in schools throughout Scotland. Parents are confused when they hear from the Government that the local government settlement was the best ever when, in every community across Scotland, reductions are being made in schools. Who is to blame? Is it the Government or local councils?

**Maureen Watt:** I thank the member for his question, but he should have directed it to his Liberal Democrat council in the Borders. The Government has given strong support to Scotland's schools, which is why, from the tight financial settlement that we received from Westminster, local government budgets will increase by 5 per cent, 4.1 per cent and 3.4 per cent over the next three years. Local authorities can also recoup and reinvest efficiency savings, so it is up to them to put that money into education, if they so wish, and we strongly urge them to do so.

### Skills Development Scotland

**3. Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will provide an update on the establishment of skills development Scotland. (S3O-2614)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Fiona Hyslop):** Skills development Scotland will be up and running by 1 April and will be fully operational by the summer. Skills development Scotland is on track for staff to transfer on 1 April, when an interim staffing structure will be in place. Contracts and systems will also be in place to allow continuity of service. The positions of substantive chair and board members have been advertised, and interviews will be held shortly. Processes to recruit the substantive chief executive are in train.

**Charlie Gordon:** Can I press the cabinet secretary on the 50,000 training places to which the Scottish Government is committed? What proportion of those will be modern apprenticeships? Of that proportion, how many will be at Scottish vocational qualification levels 2 and 3?

**Fiona Hyslop:** The Scottish Government has considered the review of modern apprenticeships that was conducted under the previous Government and we are taking lessons from it. We are also listening to the interim board's advice. The new board, which will be up and running from April, will provide us with advice on the future of modern apprenticeships and wider training programmes.

I echo the First Minister's sentiment that it is important that modern apprenticeships help to support and drive forward the Government's overarching purpose of sustainable economic growth. It is vital that we support modern apprenticeships in the areas that will be of particular use to the economy. That is the best use of public resources in training programmes. Details of our plans will be forthcoming during the coming period.

#### Class Size Reductions

**4. Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive what progress it is making in calculating the cost of implementing its policy on reducing class sizes. (S3O-2640)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Fiona Hyslop):** We have signed an historic concordat in which local government has agreed to make year-on-year progress in reducing class sizes in primary 1 to primary 3. That concordat also provides local government with a record financial settlement of £34.9 billion over the next three years. The funding required by individual authorities to reduce class sizes will vary according to the progress that they are able to make over the next three years. We are planning to have 20,000 new teachers in training by 2011.

**Karen Whitefield:** I ask the cabinet secretary to welcome the modern studies pupils of Calderhead high school in my constituency to the chamber.

Will the minister confirm that, by June 2007, ministers had been collectively informed that the Government's manifesto pledge on reducing class sizes could not be met during the current parliamentary session? Will she also confirm that Scottish Government officials have advised her that the target might not even be met by 2015? How much money will she give Scotland's local authorities to ensure that the policy objective is

met? When will we have class sizes of 18 in primary 1, 2 and 3 in every local authority in Scotland?

**Fiona Hyslop:** The member will recall that we have had a statement in Parliament on class sizes, and the committee that she chairs has had a considerable amount of time to ask questions on the issues.

I reiterate that the historic concordat that we have signed with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities contains an agreement that there will be year-on-year progress on reducing class sizes. Those who attack the reductions do not acknowledge the important step forward that it represents, particularly in deprived areas where children will benefit most—as Bill Butler suggested.

The member might not accept it, but I accept COSLA's commitment that it will be able to deliver the class size reduction proposals that are set out in the—[*Interruption.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan):** Order.

**Fiona Hyslop:** I accept COSLA's commitment to the delivery of class size reductions, as set out in the concordat. We have arrived at that situation through discussion, not only with COSLA, but with deans of faculties and others. We will not compromise the teaching of our young pupils by recruiting teachers who are not of the required quality. That is why we will ensure that the delivery of our class size reduction policy will involve maintaining the quality of teachers in initial teaching training, acknowledging the population pressures, which are different in different parts of the country, and respecting—which Karen Whitefield clearly does not—local government's commitment to deliver class size reductions.

**Elizabeth Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** What measures will the cabinet secretary put in place to ensure that the additional financial burden that the class size policy in primaries 1 to 3 will put on councils will not in any way have a detrimental effect on the ability of all parents who have children in those year groups to find places for them at good schools?

**Fiona Hyslop:** I acknowledge the member's interest in and concern about this area. It is important to remember that local government has been provided with record levels of funding. Whereas local government's share of total Government spend was going down, it is now marginally going up. If the member looks at the section of the concordat on class size reduction, she will see that we have recognised the importance of not displacing teachers from one area to another. We will be able to maintain teacher numbers at the current level, which means

maintaining staffing budget levels across Scotland. There will obviously be variations between local authority areas, but COSLA will ensure that teacher numbers are maintained over the piece so that the required access to school places is provided.

As has been apparent over recent days, there are already pressures on popular schools in areas of growing population. Although the introduction of class size reductions does not change that, it highlights the fact that it is up to local authorities to determine placement policies—that is not something on which central Government will dictate to local government.

### School Buildings (Access)

#### 5. Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con):

To ask the Scottish Executive to what extent it considers that school buildings should be accessible to wider community youth projects outwith school hours. (S3O-2561)

**The Minister for Schools and Skills (Maureen Watt):** The Scottish Government supports community use of school facilities to deliver additional opportunities for young people. The fact that many schools already operate as centres of learning for their local communities means that they have a positive impact that extends beyond the traditional school day. Opening up facilities to local youth projects is one way in which schools can promote wider learning opportunities, but it is for local authorities to decide how best to use those facilities according to local need and demand.

**Margaret Mitchell:** Given the length of notice that is required for advance bookings—in some cases it can be as long as 14 days—and the prohibitive cost of school lets, which varies between local authorities within central region and elsewhere and which deters the use of such buildings outwith school hours, what action is the Scottish Government taking to ensure that all those important facilities are readily accessible and available for use by youth groups and the wider community?

**Maureen Watt:** We are aware that school facilities are under pressure. In areas where there are new and refurbished schools, the attraction of their facilities has led to increased demand from the community. As a result, in 2007-08, £5 million has been provided through the youth work facilities improvement fund to allow youth groups and organisations to bid for capital grants that will enable them to enhance directly opportunities for the young people who use their facilities.

**Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab):** Does the minister agree that community accessibility should be a key consideration when new school buildings

are planned? Furthermore, does she agree that yesterday's answer to a written question that revealed that no negotiations for any new school buildings have been started since May 2007 is extremely disappointing and represents an abject failure on the part of the Scottish National Party Government, which is simply not delivering the quality school buildings that our young people and communities deserve?

**Maureen Watt:** The member will know that, in the local government settlement and new concordat, local authorities have had a 15 per cent increase in capital—which is substantial—so that they can decide where their priorities on school building lie, and go ahead.

### Rural Primary Schools

**6. John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Executive what action it will take to support the smallest rural primary schools and recognise the particular strains on teaching resources where pupils across a range of age groups are being taught in the same classroom. (S3O-2647)

**The Minister for Schools and Skills (Maureen Watt):** We have signed with local government an historic concordat that provides authorities with a record financial settlement of £34.9 billion. Although there are no longer specific allocations for education in the underlying funding calculations, indicators such as the rural settlement pattern, population dispersion and the percentage of pupils in small schools are included, to address financial pressures that rural local authorities face. The indicators form part of the allocation formulae for councils that have been agreed with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

The concordat also commits local authorities to improve the learning experience for children and young people by improving the fabric of schools and nurseries and developing and delivering the curriculum for excellence. We expect local authorities to meet those commitments, irrespective of where children stay or the size of school they attend.

**John Farquhar Munro:** I am sure that the minister shares my concern that in its most recent budget the Highland Council considered removing extra half teaching posts from small rural primary schools such as Elgol primary school on Skye. The council is reviewing the situation with regard to next year's budget. Will the minister make representations to the council, to ensure that vital extra half teaching posts are retained?

**Maureen Watt:** The member is a former councillor, so he knows that staffing and other resources that are allocated to schools are a

matter for local authorities. I understand that, as part of the budget process, Highland Council considered reducing staffing at Elgol primary school but that the proposal was rejected at a council meeting, which is good news for parents, pupils and teachers at the school. I am sure that Highland Council will take that into account next year. I am sure that the council realises that the services that we provide nationally, such as the national schools intranet—glow—will help small rural schools.

## Europe, External Affairs and Culture

### Gaelic

**1. Michael Matheson (Falkirk West) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it intends to promote the Gaelic language. (S3O-2589)

**The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani):** The Scottish Government is preparing a Gaelic language plan and will promote the Gaelic language by taking forward a range of vital initiatives, which include encouraging the preparation of Gaelic plans by authorities and public bodies, expecting Bòrd na Gàidhlig to implement the national plan, seeking to expand Gaelic education at all levels, supporting the development of the Gaelic digital service, and promoting the Gaelic arts at home and abroad. We have provided new funding for initiatives to help to enhance the status of Gaelic.

**Michael Matheson:** No doubt the minister is aware that the Royal National Mod this year will be hosted in Falkirk, in my constituency. I am sure that she will be pleased that it will—we hope—be the first fair trade Mod to be held.

The minister will be aware that there is significant funding provision to support the Mod. However, there is little funding to assist with the Mod fringe programme, which plays an important part in the celebration and promotion of Gaelic. Will the minister ask the Scottish Arts Council to review the support and advice that it provides to organising committees of the Mod and to consider whether greater support and advice can be provided in relation to the fringe programme, in order to maximise the benefits that can be gained from hosting the Mod?

**Linda Fabiani:** I am delighted to hear that we will have a fair trade Mod. I am sure that all members will welcome that news. I am also pleased that the First Minister will formally open the Mod in Falkirk on 10 October.

The Royal National Mod receives funding from Bòrd na Gàidhlig and other bodies, such as enterprise companies, EventScotland and local authorities, as well as from the private sector—

Caledonian MacBrayne and the Royal Bank of Scotland.

I was interested to see the fringe programme for last year's Mod. It made me realise the good work that the organisers of the Mod fringe want to develop. The Scottish Arts Council disburses funding on the Government's behalf and decides how it is allocated. I do not doubt its commitment to promoting Gaelic language and culture, and I am sure that it will consider the Mod fringe carefully.

### Performing Arts

**2. Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive what it is doing to support the performing arts in the regions of Scotland. (S3O-2601)

**The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani):** Funding for the performing arts in Scotland is disbursed by the Scottish Arts Council. Once I have set the overall budget, it is for the Scottish Arts Council to determine how it will be allocated to the various arts fields. The Scottish Government provides direct funding only to the national performing companies, which play their part in taking their art to the regions of Scotland. The Scottish Arts Council supports regional performing arts in a variety of ways, to ensure that high-quality arts can be produced, and enjoyed by audiences, throughout Scotland.

**Richard Baker:** Does the minister agree that it is vital not only to provide support for regional artistic events, such as the Aberdeen international youth festival, but to ensure that the right funding is invested in the regions of Scotland to ensure that people there can have similar access to artistic and cultural events as people in central Scotland? In Aberdeen, for example, there is a desire to see not only touring companies—including, we hope, more visits from Scottish Opera—but more local professional theatre.

**Linda Fabiani:** I apologise to the member, because I found it difficult to hear some of what he said. I think that it was about how the thriving arts scene in Aberdeen can be helped and supported. I am more than happy to write to him.

**Bill Wilson (West of Scotland) (SNP):** Does the minister agree that "Transform Inverclyde: Bolt"—the recent performance by students from Port Glasgow high school and St Stephen's high school, which was produced with the help of the National Theatre of Scotland—is an excellent example of how the performing arts can motivate and inspire youngsters and build self-esteem, a sense of identity and community? Does she agree that participation in such activity is a far better way

of engaging youngsters in society than is an oath of allegiance?

**Linda Fabiani:** I had an absolutely super time last Friday in Port Glasgow at “Transform Inverclyde: Bolt”, which was put together by the National Theatre in conjunction with Port Glasgow’s two high schools and the rest of the community. The story of the community was written, produced and performed by the community. It was a fantastic project and the participants should be extremely proud of what they achieved. It was a wonderful way of making people recognise and celebrate their identity and sense of place and—yes—it was much more valuable than any oath of allegiance out of Westminster.

**Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** As the minister is aware, a number of charities and cultural groups, including national arts bodies such as Scottish Ballet and Scottish Opera, face funding cuts today from the City of Edinburgh Council, which is led by a coalition between her party—the Scottish National Party—and the Liberal Democrats. Did she anticipate those cuts and are they the shape of things to come with other councils, as a result of the freezing of the council tax? If they are, where does that leave Scotland’s national arts companies, whose funding the minister has always claimed was secure under the SNP Government?

**Linda Fabiani:** In past years, both the City of Edinburgh Council and Glasgow City Council have funded the national companies with the exception of the National Theatre. I do not think that the City of Edinburgh Council’s decision has come out yet, but I await it with interest. It is for the council to make its own decisions and for the national companies to make representations to the Government and local government. Discussions will be on-going.

**Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab):** I thank the minister for recognising that the previous, Labour-led council in Edinburgh funded outreach work for Scottish Ballet, Scottish Opera and many other arts companies.

Is the minister concerned about the effect of cuts in local funding for the arts? In particular, will she condemn the proposed cuts to Scottish Ballet and Scottish Opera? More generally, given that the substance of her answer to Richard Baker was about the Scottish Arts Council, will she explain how a declining budget for arts activity over the next three years will enable regional performing arts to be funded throughout Scotland? In an answer to me today, she recognised that creative Scotland will have many new responsibilities, but that means that traditional support for the performing arts will decline. Does that not give her cause for concern?

**Linda Fabiani:** I will not talk about a decision that the City of Edinburgh Council has not yet taken. When we hear what the decision is, we will consider it.

I have no concerns about the quality of the arts in Scotland or the ability of the national companies, creative Scotland and our local authorities to ensure that everyone in Scotland has access to high-quality arts and culture.

### Scotland’s Reputation

#### 3. Derek Brownlee (South of Scotland) (Con):

To ask the Scottish Executive what action it is taking to enhance Scotland’s reputation internationally. (S3O-2559)

**The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani):** Reinforcing Scotland’s distinctive global image is a key part of our strategy. The Scottish Government and its partners have a range of activity in place to ensure that we position Scotland as a great place to live, learn, visit, work, do business and invest.

The winter festival, which runs from St Andrew’s day until Burns night, is an important vehicle for our international and domestic promotion of Scotland. Summary research today confirms that Scottish Government-led events for St Andrew’s day 2007 were an overwhelming success. That is why I am pleased to be able to confirm that we will follow the lead set by the Parliament, which in November 2006 passed the St Andrew’s Day Bank Holiday (Scotland) Bill, and make St Andrew’s day a public holiday for Scottish Government staff. That will give Government staff the opportunity to participate in the various events that will take place across Scotland on or around St Andrew’s day. We encourage other organisations to follow the lead set by the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government.

**Derek Brownlee:** Some might say that if the Scottish Government took more holidays, Scotland’s reputation internationally would improve.

Does the minister agree that the reputation that Scotland has built up over many years is best exemplified by the ambassadors—in the widest sense—that we have internationally, and that more could be done to help business and trade missions to present internationally the attractive aspects of Scotland that she mentioned, by supporting them as they seek to grow Scottish business?

**Linda Fabiani:** I am sure that Mr Brownlee’s initial comment referred to previous Governments, rather than this one.

I agree with the member’s comments about our ambassadors internationally. The Government is

keen to ensure that we enhance Scotland's reputation overseas. Business is a vital part of that, which is why we intend to be much more focused in our international dealings. In April, I will appear before the European and External Relations Committee to outline our action plan for international work. It is incredibly important that we promote Scotland in that way, through business, education and culture. That is what the Government intends to do.

**Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab):** The minister may be aware of a fabulous and fascinating project in my constituency—the Bullwood project—which is doing its best to enhance Scotland's international reputation by producing the largest caber in the world, from a recycled Glasgow Christmas tree, so that it can be paraded in New York during Scotland week. Remarkable things come out of Glasgow Pollok.

In the past, the Scottish Government has commented positively on the project, but the minister may be aware that the project is now facing difficulties in two areas—in meeting the costs of transporting the caber and in securing the First Minister's signature for it. Is the minister willing to meet me as a matter of urgency, so that we can address those practical matters and ensure that this interesting and unique contribution to enhancing Scotland's reputation plays its part in the New York parade?

**Linda Fabiani:** I am aware of the Bullwood project, which is very imaginative. There is no need for me to meet Ms Lamont, because at the moment direct discussion is taking place between the Bullwood project and the First Minister's office. I will be happy to bring the member up to date after question time.

**Keith Brown (Ochil) (SNP):** I will be the first to congratulate the minister on her announcement of the entrenchment of the St Andrew's day holiday in Scotland, as the previous two speakers failed to do so. How does the minister plan to use Scotland week not just to enhance Scotland's international reputation but to further Scotland's economic and cultural interests?

**Linda Fabiani:** The week-long programme of events that will take place in North America is aimed at building on the celebration of Scotland that is tartan day, which takes place in the United States and Canada on 6 April. Scotland week 2008 will have events that are much more focused and targeted than in previous years, with the aim of promoting this Government's strategic policy objectives, which are to showcase modern Scotland, to promote business opportunities, to promote tourism and, of course, to promote homecoming Scotland in 2009.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Question 4 is withdrawn.

### **Lisbon Treaty**

**5. Stuart McMillan (West of Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what steps it has taken, or plans to take, to urge the United Kingdom Government to hold a referendum on the European Union Lisbon treaty. (S3O-2592)

**The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani):** This Government has made it clear on numerous occasions, including in this chamber, that the UK Government should have honoured its manifesto commitment to hold a referendum on the Lisbon treaty.

**Stuart McMillan:** Although I do not want to highlight the internal war going on among the Lib Dems or the broken manifesto pledge of the Labour Party, does the minister agree that we should seek to discover the will of the people on the EU treaty, and that the decision in Westminster this week to back the treaty highlights once again that that place treats the people of Scotland and the rest of the UK with contempt on this crucial issue?

**Linda Fabiani:** Of course I agree—it is completely out of order that the trust of the electorate in Scotland and the UK was broken by the current UK Government and some of its supporters.

### **The Lemon Tree**

**6. Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Executive how it will ensure that the Scottish Arts Council provides sufficient support for the Lemon Tree in Aberdeen when it reopens in June. (S3O-2651)

**The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani):** As I stated in answer to an earlier question, funding for the performing arts in Scotland is disbursed by the Scottish Arts Council. I understand that the Scottish Arts Council has been in close discussions about safeguarding the Lemon Tree building for cultural use under new management, and that it has received an application for funding, which it will consider in due course.

**Mike Rumbles:** The minister is aware that until the Scottish Arts Council stopped the grant in 2006, it gave in excess of £100,000 a year to the Lemon Tree. The SAC has now agreed to give £80,000 to the venue under the new running arrangements of Aberdeen Performing Arts. Does the minister agree that it is vital for the future success of the Lemon Tree that it receives grants to at least the previous level?

**Linda Fabiani:** I agree with the member that it is extremely important that Aberdeen Performing Arts is able to provide the same level of service to the people of Aberdeen as previously. However, I am not willing in the public arena to go into the details of what happened to the Lemon Tree venue or into the current discussions with the Scottish Arts Council. I am sure that there is good will all round to ensure that, if possible, the venue can be best utilised for Aberdeen.

**Lewis Macdonald (Aberdeen Central) (Lab):** I welcome the minister's information that talks are continuing. She will be aware that the Lemon Tree, which is in my constituency, has served the city and the whole region well over several years. Will she join me in welcoming the initiative taken by Aberdeen Performing Arts to allow the venue to reopen, albeit on a more limited scale of operation than applied before its forced closure a few weeks before Christmas? Will the minister assure us that decisions by the Scottish Arts Council on future funding of the Lemon Tree will not be affected by the decision of Aberdeen City Council to cut funding for Aberdeen Performing Arts and other trusts by £50,000 a year over the next three years?

**Linda Fabiani:** I welcome the fact that the Lemon Tree is operating at the moment, but it is for those partners who are currently discussing its financial future to come to their decisions.

### **National Theatre of Scotland**

**7. Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Executive whether it has any plans to increase resources to the National Theatre of Scotland to enable it to increase its ability to tour Scotland and foreign destinations. (S3O-2656)

**The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani):** The National Theatre of Scotland will receive core revenue grant of £4,377,000 in 2008-09, which is an increase of 6.77 per cent on the 2007-08 allocation.

The national performing companies are all required by the terms of their funding agreements to operate on a scale that is international, national and local. We have allocated £350,000 to the Scottish Government's international touring fund for 2008-09. All the national performing companies, including the National Theatre of Scotland, can apply to the fund for help with the costs of touring outwith Scotland.

**Jim Tolson:** I am sure that the minister agrees that Scotland has world-class artists who deserve to be recognised and that National Theatre of Scotland tours boost Scotland's international image and attract new audiences to Scottish cultural life. She will also be aware that the

previous Executive made significant investment in the theatre touring strategy. How will the minister ensure that sufficient funding is put in place to allow high-quality theatre of all types to be made available to as great a number and as broad a range of people across Scotland as possible?

**Linda Fabiani:** Of course, Mr Tolson is right in what he says. On promoting Scotland, we have a tremendous resource in our artists of all types. The National Theatre of Scotland has undertaken tours of "Black Watch", which we all know about, and "The Wolves in the Walls". Such touring is also undertaken by many other theatre companies. Of course, one of the ways that the Government will help to boost such work is through our Edinburgh festival expo fund. I hope to make an announcement on this year's fund fairly shortly.



## National Parks

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S3M-1548, in the name of Michael Russell, on national parks.

14:56

**The Minister for Environment (Michael Russell):** Today's debate provides me with an opportunity to set out the Government's thinking on the future of our national parks. At the outset, I want to say with enthusiasm how exceptionally important our national parks are to Scotland. Indeed, their iconic landscapes put Scotland on the international stage. I also pay tribute to Sarah Boyack, who, as Minister for Transport and the Environment, steered through the legislation. I believe that the National Parks (Scotland) Bill was her first bill as a minister. It stands as testimony to her.

There is enthusiasm across the chamber for the national parks, and we need to build on that. The parks demonstrate sustainable solutions for rural development and environmental protection, and contribute to the Government's greener Scotland and other objectives. There are many examples of how they do that, which, no doubt, will be raised in the debate.

In the five years since the parks were established, they have made good progress. The first-ever national park plans are in place and are being implemented. Many stakeholders are involved under the leadership of the national park authorities. Mike Cantley and Dave Green, the conveners of the national parks, are in the gallery with some of their colleagues. I am sure that everyone who is involved in the parks realises that the time is right for the review that is due to take place. For example, we are committed to simplifying the public sector landscape. It is time for us to ask ourselves some questions and to seek answers.

I will address three issues: the strategic review; the boundary review; and future national park designation. The strategic review of national park functions, which will start in May, will cover both the Cairngorms and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs national parks. At the moment, each park is an executive non-departmental public body in the shape of a national park authority. We want to look at the arrangements and see what the alternatives are. We also want to learn from experience elsewhere. We recognise that national parks are not the same in every country, but that lessons can be learned nonetheless.

The review will be in two parts. The first stage will address key questions on the organisation of

the bodies that run the parks and consider what sort of body should undertake national park functions. I expect it to look at a number of organisational options, including—centrally—the retention of the national park authorities as separate NDPBs. In talking of the review, I want to stress one point only: the primacy of the local democratic element. That element has served the parks well and it needs to come to the fore—indeed, if anything, it needs to be strengthened.

The first stage review will consider employer arrangements—the sort of issues that are being considered across the public sector—and seek views across a wide spectrum. It will be steered by a group on which the existing national park authorities will be represented. Consultation will also take place with the many park stakeholders. The first stage review will present the pros and cons of different models for running the national parks. I give members the commitment not only that we will publish the review findings, but that we hope to debate them. We will also consult on them.

**Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):** Did the minister say that he accepted that the two parks should remain separate, or that this is part of a review to put them together? Will he make that clear?

**Michael Russell:** I am unlikely to merge the parks physically—that would require more than I am capable of.

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** Surely not.

**Michael Russell:** Jackie Baillie seems to believe that I could achieve even that, but I think that that is unlikely. On the separation of the parks, given that I have spoken of the primacy of the local community, I do not imagine that arrangements are being considered to merge the organisational activity for the parks.

The second stage of the review, which will start in the autumn, will deal with more detailed operational matters, such as planning powers and the role in housing. I hope that all members realise that the review will be an opportunity to think thoughts and that it has not been pre-empted. I make the assurance absolutely that it certainly is not modelled on any report that members may have seen being discussed in the newspapers at the weekend. The review is a genuine opportunity, although I pay tribute to Neil Kay for thinking thoughts, as that is what academics do and he does it very well.

I turn to boundaries, specifically the southern boundary of the Cairngorms national park. Members are familiar with the issue. In the previous session of Parliament, John Swinney introduced the Cairngorms National Park Boundary Bill—I was not here, but I read about it

in the newspapers. The bill would have extended the park to include Blair Atholl and parts of highland and eastern Perthshire. It would also have made changes to the provisions on the local authority nominees on the park board. The Environment and Rural Development Committee heard evidence and agreed that there were persuasive arguments. It also noted that the communities of highland and eastern Perthshire felt that inclusion in the park would bring social and economic benefits to the area. The committee concluded that a strong case had been made.

Although the previous Administration did not support the bill, Sarah Boyack made it clear that it would be for ministers at the time to decide how the national park review would address the boundary issue. As there is clear evidence that the southern boundary of the park needs to be changed, I intend to implement that change. Therefore, today, I am appointing Scottish Natural Heritage to prepare a report on the new boundary that Mr Swinney proposed. We will make the change after due process has been completed.

Although there is a clear-cut body of evidence for proceeding with that boundary change, the same is not true of other proposed changes in the two national parks. I therefore intend that the national parks review will address the case for boundary changes elsewhere as part of the second phase of the review. If the review concludes that other proposals for boundary change have sufficient substance and are supported by the community—I make that point strongly—they could be referred at a later stage for formal evaluation.

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

The minister's announcement on the southern boundary of the Cairngorms national park is most welcome, but I seek clarity on one issue. On what date is it proposed to bring about the change?

**Michael Russell:** All members will accept that the process in the legislation for making changes is slightly cumbersome. If SNH appoints a reporter now, I hope that the process for the boundary change can be aligned with the review process. Therefore, my expectation is that the changes will come at about the turn of the year or early next year. The boundary change process will be aligned with the review, so that if other changes are to be made, we will not be acting in a piecemeal fashion. However, we have certainly accepted the boundary change—it will happen and, I hope, within that timescale.

The national park review that I have announced will be strategic and fundamental, in that it will consider the organisation arrangements for national park functions. Therefore, it is entirely appropriate that the review should also consider possible criteria for future national park

designation. In doing so, the review will need to build on the foundations of the original legislation. The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 lays down three conditions. First, the area should be

“of outstanding national importance because of its natural heritage or the combination of its natural and cultural heritage”.

Secondly, the area should have

“a distinctive character and a coherent identity”.

The third condition is that the designation

“would meet the special needs of the area”

and ensure

“that the National Park aims are ... achieved ... in a co-ordinated way.”

That work will be undertaken in the second stage of the review, once we have addressed the question of how national park functions should be delivered. There is also the question of coastal or marine national parks, although we have made it clear that we do not intend to take a position on their possible role in advance of the enactment of the proposed marine legislation.

For the third time, I stress that communities must be seen as central to the national park process. I am a strong supporter of community-led initiatives. It makes sense for the Government to consider national park designation where communities are supportive. Recently, I was approached by the community trust in North Harris, which believes that national park designation would benefit that island area. I believe that the North Harris Trust will announce today that it intends to consult the wider electorate in the area for its views on seeking national park designation and, if possible, to do more work on that. I strongly support that initiative.

I have made it clear in a meeting with representatives of the North Harris Trust that I cannot give a commitment to any group that such a process will necessarily lead to a new designation. There are, of course, funding issues to be considered. My duty would be to weigh up the case that is made by the community, alongside the statutory considerations. In addition, we have a tight spending review. However, if the community trust moves forward in that way, by consulting the community, it will be a model for others to follow, in which community initiative drives forward the process of possible designation.

I have given only an outline of the review—I am sure that my friend Mr Lochhead will go into much more detail when he responds to the debate—but I hope that it indicates not only our openness of mind on future structures, but our strong commitment to the two areas that are designated and to the communities there. I am happy to note that both the Labour and Tory amendments take

account of that and are encouraging about taking the review forward.

I am sorry, but I cannot accept the Liberal Democrat amendment because it would very much tie the hands of the review. Mr Rumbles asks, from a seated position, in what way it would do that. I will give a specific response. As members know—particularly those who represent the area that is covered by the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs national park—there is an issue around the ability of the parks as non-departmental public bodies to dispose of assets and to reinvest those resources in the running of the park. The present dispensation of the park does not allow that, so it is important that the review considers ways in which that might change. Tying the review to the exact existing model, as the Liberal Democrat amendment would do, would create considerable difficulty. I would have been happy to accept a Liberal amendment in which the wording had been amended, and I am sorry that that Mr Hume did not accept that, despite discussion.

I hope that members can coalesce around three clear principles: first, that the review will be positive and forward looking, and will attempt to build on the undoubted great success of the national parks; secondly, that the review will consider the possibility of including other areas and developing the functions of the national parks; and thirdly, that where communities are keen to be involved in a national park movement, they have an opportunity at least to tell the people of Scotland that they have that interest. In those senses, therefore, I am happy to commend the motion to the chamber and I hope that it will be a positive step forward, which will enhance what has already happened in Scotland.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the forthcoming strategic review of Scotland's two national parks; welcomes the opportunities that the national parks give to Scotland's citizens and visitors, and in particular commends their contribution to the greener Scotland agenda.

15:07

**David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** Zhou Enlai was the premier of the People's Republic of China until 1976. As members may know, he was famous for his skill as a diplomat, as a participant at the Geneva conference and as an historian. He is probably best remembered, though, for his response, when asked for his assessment of the 1789 French revolution, which was, "It is too early to say."

Some may argue today that it is too early to say how effective our national parks have been in meeting the four key objectives that were set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000. As the

minister said, the act was piloted through the Parliament by my parliamentary friend—and indeed boss—Sarah Boyack. Labour members thank the board members and staff of both national parks, some of whom are here today, for their enthusiasm, dedication and leadership, and for the progress that has been made over the years.

**Mike Rumbles:** Does the member agree with me—and, indeed, with the minister—that one of the great success stories of the national parks is the directly elected element of local representation?

**David Stewart:** I strongly agree with that; in fact, I will reach that issue later in my speech.

That progress has included the provision of eco-tourism at Loch Lomond and community action planning in the Cairngorms national park.

Taking a step back in time, members will be well aware that the founding father of national parks was a Scot, John Muir, who left Dunbar as a young man for a life in America. His efforts led to the development of the worldwide national parks movement. John Muir was influential in setting up Yellowstone national park in 1872, which was signed into law by President Ulysses S Grant. In the United Kingdom, James Bryce campaigned at Westminster in 1879 for the establishment of national parks. The Ramsay report of 1945 recommended five national parks and three reserve areas.

Coming closer to the modern day, in 1990 the Countryside Commission for Scotland recommended four national parks, consistent with the principles established by the Ramsay report.

National parks have been a reality throughout the world for many years. The key question that historians might ask is why Scotland took so long to create its first two national parks. We can leave that debate to them, but we must get on and ensure that our national parks are fulfilling their roles and responsibilities.

The other day, I read the *Official Report* of the debates in the Parliament on the National Parks (Scotland) Bill. I was struck by the passion and enthusiasm of members across the political divide, many of whom are here today. Members argued strongly about the principles and provisions of the bill. They discussed the idea of having parks of national importance, but with local communities at their heart—the minister referred to that—and flexibility to allow for the "distinctiveness of different areas" of Scotland; to let local people decide things for themselves; to sustain people and resources; and to develop a "thriving rural economy" while sustaining "natural and cultural heritage."

Reading the *Official Report*, I was struck by the bipartisan approach in the chamber, with emphasis being placed on innovation, partnership and the integration of aims—the overlapping circles—in the social, the economic and the environmental. The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 was built on the well-developed Sandford principle. Lord Sandford, as members know, was a Tory peer who chaired the national parks review in England and Wales in 1974. He said that national parks' aims were twofold: to conserve the environment and to provide access to the public. If conflict arose between the two, conservation of the environment would take priority. Although that approach applied to England and Wales, it could be argued that the 2000 act represented Sandford plus in adding economic and social considerations into the mix.

We do not want communities that are situated within the national parks to stand still. Dedicated national parks make it possible to take into account the needs of the whole area when deciding whether a development should take place. The review that the minister announced comes at the right time for us to take stock and compare aspirations with reality, and I believe that it will be welcomed across the spectrum of environmental non-governmental organisations, from RSPB Scotland to the Ramblers Association—and, of course, the John Muir Trust.

I believe strongly that national parks are testament to the value that a nation places on protecting its environment and natural heritage. They are, in effect, the nation's champions. They must work in partnership with local communities and NGOs, for example in protecting biodiversity, tackling climate change, promoting tourism, promoting locally grown food and providing a voice for local people in campaigning for the development of affordable housing.

The debate on the National Parks (Scotland) Bill was about how to balance the sometimes conflicting push for economic development with the pull of social inclusion. There will be different solutions in different areas, but my belief is that a bureaucratic decision made in a bunker at Victoria Quay or St Andrew's house is not the way forward. We do not want national park objectives to be determined by a top-down approach to decision making, in a manner akin to the Kremlin in the Soviet Union deciding on ball-bearing production in the Ukraine. The real benefit of having a national park board that is made up of local councillors is that the needs of the whole area can be considered when a decision is made on whether a particular development should take place.

The structures that have been in place have, by and large, worked. I live a short drive from the

northern boundary of the Cairngorms national park, and I have seen at first hand the work being done on LEADER + and the community-based rural development plans. I have seen the work on land management, through the Cairngorms deer advisory group. I have seen the work on renewable energy—supporting green energy, but opposing large-scale conventional wind farms.

In that context, I read with interest Professor Kay's analysis of environmental governance in Scotland. As we have heard, the report was commissioned by the minister. I was a bit disappointed when I saw it trailed in the national press under the headline "National park authorities have a mountain to climb". That article, which was in *The Scotsman* on 8 March, said:

"A damning report on Scotland's two national parks says they have become a 'clunky, cumbersome, formal and bureaucratic muddle' and calls for 'root-and-branch' review of their quango status."

It also refers to the parks being

"rolled back into Scottish National Heritage."

**Michael Russell:** I am sure that the member is aware that I do not write *The Scotsman*. I am the person who commissioned the report. The member is right to draw attention to the much wider issues that it covers. In talking about national parks, it refers to the important issue of the size of the boards. In fact, the report has many positive things to contribute, which we should consider.

**David Stewart:** I thank the minister for his comments. His earlier announcements perhaps preoccupied some members in the chamber. The minister should by all means look at the positive aspects of the Kay report—I am sure that there are some—but I suggest in a friendly manner that he reject the idea that SNH should take over the management of the two boards, on the basis of the political principle that if it ain't broke, why fix it?

There is a great opportunity to review the park boundaries, which the minister has covered. I was going to say that one does not have to be the Brahan seer to predict that that will be part of the Government's plans for later in the session—clearly, I had a bit of foresight.

Transport is a key aspect of the national park, particularly in respect of tourism. I ask the minister to raise with Stewart Stevenson the important issue of the link between Dunoon and Gourock, which is important as a link to the national park. I would be grateful if he would clarify the role of CalMac Ferries in that regard.

This is an excellent debate. We welcome the opportunity to debate national parks. Establishing the national parks in the Cairngorms, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs was one of the

flagship achievements of the earliest days of the Parliament—it was an embodiment of the success of devolution. In practice, it fulfilled the Labour Party's commitment to create national parks.

We join a worldwide family of illustrious names, such as Yellowstone in the United States; the royal national park in Australia; and Kruger park in South Africa. National parks are firmly on the Scottish radar screen as an integral part of our rural landscape. I am convinced that John Muir himself would have approved.

I move amendment S3M-1548.2, to insert at end:

"and believes that the following issues should be included for specific consideration in the review: the effectiveness of the national parks in achieving the main objectives set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, the success of the national parks in building community engagement and involvement in the development of both parks, and whether the boundaries of the parks should be reviewed."

15:17

**John Scott (Ayr) (Con):** I declare an interest as a farmer, although I farm outwith the national park boundaries—as they stand at the moment. I welcome the debate and the minister's announcement of changes to the southern boundary of the Cairngorms national park, although I doubt that it will extend as far south as Ayrshire. I also welcome the wide-ranging nature of the review. I know that it is music to the ears of many of the minister's colleagues and many of mine—particularly Murdo Fraser, who has campaigned tirelessly for many years to extend the park boundary.

I welcome the minister's remarks about the need for the review, which will start in May, and I commend Sarah Boyack for her foresight as promoter of the National Parks (Scotland) Bill and for creating what we have today.

Scottish Conservatives have for many years supported the concept of national parks. I stayed in the Banff national park in Alberta in 1997 and saw for myself the benefit of a well-run national park and what it could bring to the community and the environment. The model of the Banff national park—Canada's oldest national park, which was established in 1885—where the terrain and climate are so similar to those in Scotland is one from which our existing park authorities could learn lessons in developing tourism, particularly eco-tourism, and environmental enhancement. Having seen that fine example, I welcome the opportunity to take part in the debate. The Canadian national parks, which are much larger than ours, have been in existence for many years. It would be well worth our learning from the lessons that have been learned there in achieving the pinnacle of excellence that has been reached.

There is absolute support throughout the chamber for the delivery of the aims and objectives of our national parks, but it appears that the governance structures of our park authorities need further examination. I took on board some of Professor Kay's comments, and his analysis of our national park board structures, which highlighted the size and cost of running a 25-member board for each park authority. I question whether a board of that size is absolutely necessary—I see that Jackie Baillie is shaking her head.

**Jackie Baillie:** The important point is surely not the size of the board, but how effective it is and what it delivers. Does the member agree that some of the conclusions that were drawn in that report—and, in particular, some of the numbers that were used—are inaccurate?

**John Scott:** I cannot say whether they are inaccurate, but I respect Professor Kay's report. It has been acknowledged, and I would be the first to acknowledge, that in setting up the two national park authorities, it might have been necessary—I think that this is the point Jackie Baillie is trying to make—to draw on the expertise of many people to assist in the complex processes of creating the valuable entities that we have today.

**Mike Rumbles:** Will the member give way?

**John Scott:** I want to press on.

Tribute should be paid to those who have carried out and seen through that developmental phase. However, the purpose of the review, which the legislation provides for, is to find out whether the model can be improved upon to deliver what the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 obliges park authorities to do, which is:

"to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area ... to promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area ... to promote understanding and enjoyment"

of the area's special qualities, and

"to promote ... economic and social development of the area's communities."

Having established our national parks, we must move to the next stage and refine and improve on what we have achieved. From my experience—I am tempted to say bitter experience, but it is best not to—I know that a board size of 25 is unwieldy and can be unworkable. The Scottish Environment Protection Agency, SNH and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, which have annual expenditures of £59 million, £59 million and £103 million respectively, have non-executive board sizes of 11, 15 and 10. One has to compare those budgets with the Loch Lomond National Park Authority budget of £7.4 million and the Cairngorms National Park Authority budget of £5 million. It is easy to see that there are good reasons to ask questions.

It is also easy to see that the board member remuneration as a cost relative to the total annual expenditure of each park authority is significant—I agree with Professor Kay on that. However, setting aside the cost and size of the board—and before criticism is levelled at me for knowing the price of everything and the value of nothing—it is important to take the opportunity that the review offers to examine where the parks go from here.

Scottish Conservatives welcome the Minister for Environment's announcement on extending the boundary of the Cairngorms national park. Under the review, we believe that both national park authorities should on balance be retained, but with much-reduced board sizes of a minimum of eight and a maximum of perhaps 12. We believe in local democracy and representation, and in a grass-roots approach that takes into account local public opinion and does not impose top-down solutions. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development report helpfully pointed that out last week.

That is why we welcome the review, and we hope that those who undertake it reach elegant and consensual conclusions that build on the good work that has been done in creating the parks and getting them to where they are today. My colleagues will deal with planning issues around affordable housing and local feeling, and with some of the problems that are still to be ironed out.

I move amendment S3M-1548.1, to insert at end:

"and calls on the Scottish Government to address concerns regarding the structural effectiveness of the national park authorities as presently constituted with a view to enhancing local participation and to address ongoing issues with regard to the southern boundary of the Cairngorms National Park."

15:23

**Jim Hume (South of Scotland) (LD):** Scotland's two national parks provide valuable and, more important, unique assets. The previous Executive, and Sarah Boyack in particular, led the way on the protection and enhancement of Scotland's landscapes with the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. The previous Executive also established the Scottish landscape forum, initiated the revision of planning guidance and introduced policies on Scotland's historic environment, as well as agri-environment schemes. It also passed the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 that established the two national parks in 2002 and 2003. In 2005, Ross Finnie, the Lib Dem Minister for Environment and Rural Development announced the intention to create a coastal and marine national park, which, it is hoped, will be delivered by 2008. Mr Russell mentioned that, and

we look forward to that being progressed. I mention those developments to illustrate the point that we need to invest in managing our landscapes to ensure that the people who live in and visit them use them sustainably and enjoy them.

We have had debates on the value of open spaces to our health and wellbeing, the value of preserving our natural heritage and the role of landscapes and environments such as national parks in helping to prevent the loss of biodiversity. We also debated recently the importance of forestry to Scotland's economic success. There is still huge potential to develop our market share of renewables. Land managers can work with the national parks to make a real difference in progressing renewable energy and sustainable transport projects. The national parks stand to make a significant contribution to the Scottish climate change programme too.

As common sense would suggest and as we can all see, there are basic environmental and socioeconomic benefits in using and managing our national parks in the right way. They are areas of land that have been specifically set up with not only conservation in mind, but the social and economic aim of supporting the 31,000-strong population living within their bounds. Perhaps even more people will live there in future, according to Mr Russell.

The two parks must be recognised as distinct, which is the point of our amendment. They need separate, responsive authorities with locally accountable members on their boards. That is what differentiates Scotland's national parks from other similar areas in the United Kingdom. Included in the parks' objectives and aims should always be a focus on social and economic progress and development.

That brings me to the key point of my amendment. The park authorities' socioeconomic objectives of promoting the sustainable development of the local communities within its perimeters are hugely important. Effective management of the land should mean job creation, job opportunity and enterprise. We are creating a place in which people want to work and live, and we are supporting the communities that live there.

The future of the two park authorities is unclear. Mr Russell said that he was interested in keeping two authorities, but he does not support our amendment, so there is some confusion, which I am sure that Mr Lochhead will clarify in his summing up. Professor Neil Kay's recent report recommends a root-and-branch review of their functions and suggests that they should be rolled into SNH. I strongly disagree with that.

**Michael Russell:** I am pleased that Jim Hume is quoting Professor Kay, and I will set his mind at rest on the issue of two parks. I may not agree with Professor Kay on everything, but the member will want to agree with what it says at the bottom of page 28 of his report:

"There should be no arguments or grounds supporting such fears"—

the fears being about the merging or loss of identity of the two separate parks. I confirm that on the record.

**Jim Hume:** I was actually talking about park authorities. If their roles are reviewed, the autonomy of the two national park authorities should be recognised—that is the point. The Government should ensure that there will be no impact on either their objectives or their freedom and flexibility. As John Scott mentioned, it is obviously important to streamline any organisation to ensure its efficiency, particularly when public money is involved. However, whatever the outcome, the minister must ensure that the work and aims of the two authorities are not compromised in any way.

A core Liberal Democrat value is that decisions should be made as close to where the effects occur as possible and by people who are affected. It is therefore vital, whatever changes occur in future, that elected members, practitioners and grass-roots stakeholders are fully integrated into the decision-making process and that the park authorities are given freedom to make appropriate decisions for their areas. In other words, it should be regional rather than centralised decision making. That goes to the heart of the review and, bearing that in mind, full consideration should be given to the existing park boundaries. I am glad that Mr Russell is considering the southern boundary of one park.

I hope that, whatever happens with the upcoming quinquennial review of the national parks, the Scottish Government will ensure a prosperous future for our national parks. I am concerned that the natural heritage budget will reduce in real terms by 0.9 per cent, so I hope that the Parliament will support my amendment and recognise the socioeconomic benefits of the national parks and their two governing authorities. I hope that the Parliament will agree that they should be kept as national bodies with at least five directly elected board members to allow the flexibility and responsiveness that they need to deliver benefits for all at their local level.

I am happy to move, on behalf of the Liberal Democrats, amendment S3M-1548.3, to insert at end:

"welcomes the quinquennial review as an opportunity to examine the operation of the park authorities and any

proposed boundary changes; believes that the park authorities' national body status and strong directly elected presence provides the parks with the freedom and flexibility to carry out their unique statutory objectives and to meet the needs of very different park areas across Scotland; considers that any attempt to roll up the park authorities with Scottish Natural Heritage would hamper the parks' capability to achieve these objectives, would damage local accountability and democracy and could have serious conflict of interest ramifications, and therefore calls for the forthcoming strategic review of the national parks to retain the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority and the Cairngorms National Park Authority as national bodies with at least five directly elected board members."

15:29

**Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** It is a pleasure to talk about the next phase in the development of the national parks. I watched the process from the sidelines during the first parliamentary session and I was involved in debates about boundary changes in the second session, so I am glad that we will have a review that takes account of how we trust local people to make decisions. In that respect, I agree totally with RSPB Scotland that the

"parks must focus more attention on delivering against the first objective, including biodiversity protection and enhancement."

That must include the biodiversity of the human population in the parks, too. It is best for decisions to be made by the people who live in the area.

The thinking behind how the park boards were established was that people who live in the area needed to have board members appointed nationally in order for the job to be done. Like John Scott and, I think, the Liberals, I suggest that we have reached the stage at which a national park board can be directly elected locally and can consult the experts who require to back up decisions. In relation to Neil Kay's report, the strategic review could make the case for a directly elected park board with absolutely no appointees. That would be a good democratic way forward that would recognise, as local people do, that local people's future is at stake.

When he read the Kay report, my fellow nationalist David Fallows, who is the councillor for the Badenoch and Strathspey ward, said that he was worried. He said:

"we fought long and hard for a clear and strong element of local democracy within the Park. We accepted that the Park was a National asset—but at the same time emphasised that the Park was our Park—the land where we live and work and where we have staked our hopes for our futures and those of our generations to follow."

That statement expresses the view that people are growing in confidence about taking on the job of running the national parks on the nation's behalf, with the support of bodies such as SNH. I commend that view to ministers.

Other aspects of rationalisation could save money. If a board were smaller, more money would be available to spend up front on the work that the national parks must do. That would be a strong argument in tight financial times.

Quite a bit of debate has been had about the planning functions. I agree with the argument of various groups, including Ramblers Scotland and the RSPB, that planning functions in the Cairngorms should be firmed up. It is possible to see that happening, but agreement is needed about what we expect from planning in the Cairngorms and in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs. We want a much firmer approach to sustainable economic development in the housing that is built there. As tourism is the parks' primary source of income and employment, people who provide services to tourism need to be able to live inside the parks rather than have to travel into them for work. That issue is fundamental because of property prices.

I agree with the Cairngorms National Park Authority that it is essential that

"The demand for housing must also be managed to ensure high environmental and sustainability standards."

If the national parks are centres of excellence, the planning functions ought to ensure much higher standards for housing in the parks than apply outside the parks. Such housing should be very eco-friendly.

Should the housing fair that has been set up in the green wedge at Inverness have taken place in the Cairngorms national park? Should we not save that green wedge and set an example for the housing that should be built? Such housing is not necessarily more expensive, but it is of far better quality for the future. That is the way in which the national parks could look after the human population's biodiversity. I hope that the review will consider that.

I join other members in thanking the minister for his comments on the extension of the Cairngorms national park, but national parks are not likely to stay static. New ones will be created, if people wish that to happen and the process is followed. The boundary changes in north Perthshire are welcome, given that that was the overwhelming view taken in the previous Parliament. I am sorry that some of the members who spoke in favour of the boundary change today did not vote for it in the previous Parliament, or we would have had it.

Let us finish on a high note—there were people who saw things correctly. I hope that in future we can point to new areas that can become centres of excellence and enable national parks to do a cutting-edge job that people look up to, not only in terms of what John Muir wanted, but by the standards that we have to meet today for Scotland

to set an example to the rest of the world and lead the fight against climate change.

15:35

**Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** I was proud to be involved in the original scrutiny of the National Parks (Scotland) Bill and the subsequent setting up of national parks in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs and in the Cairngorms. That was some time ago and it is only right that after a time the parks should be reviewed, but to my mind they have been a great success.

I remember the concerns of the community in the Cairngorms. People were worried about what the setting up of a national park in their area would mean. Those communities had worked the land and protected the environment for generations. Because of those concerns, the aims of the parks were set out with equal weight to give communities the reassurance that the appropriate balance between their needs and the needs of the environment would be protected.

The aims of the parks are to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area; to promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area; to promote the understanding and enjoyment, including enjoyment in the form of recreation, of the special qualities of the area by the public; and to promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities.

A perception in the Highlands and Islands is that the environment is often given greater weight than the needs of local communities. That is why it was crucial to move SNH nearer to the people that it works with, so that it could build an understanding of their concerns and work more closely with the communities that it serves. People who live in beautiful rural areas have the same needs as their urban counterparts: jobs and public services. We need to protect our beautiful environment but we must also protect the people who live and work there and ensure that their needs are met.

I am pleased that when the National Park (Scotland) Bill was drafted, sustainable economic and social development were built in. That has led to the success of our national parks. The bill also left enough flexibility to deal with local circumstances and needs. The concern in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs was that their area was overheating and risked being spoiled by too much development, while the Cairngorms required more sustainable development.

Planning powers were different for both parks, as local circumstances were taken into account. That was hugely contentious, but it has worked well. Some have called for the same planning



arrangements to be put in place for all parks, but I believe that we need to be alive to local concerns when we create new parks and that there should be flexibility in how planning is carried out in the parks.

One fear in the Cairngorms was that the park board would be run by faceless people who were not interested in or aware of the needs of the community. That fear has not been borne out and the park board works well with its communities.

Professor Neil Kay seemed to suggest in his review of environmental governance last year that SNH should run national parks in Scotland. That would be a disaster. We need to bring governance to the people and the current set up does just that. I would be against asking SNH to run the parks, because that would have the opposite effect. It would jeopardise the future economic and social development of the areas and local democracy would be lost. Local people and local councillors would no longer be involved and planning powers would be centralised. Those were the fears that had to be allayed when we first set up the national parks.

SNH works closely with park boards, as it should do, but its role is very different to that of the park board. SNH brings its own expertise to the table, as do other bodies who work with the park board. It is then for the park board to balance the requirements of those organisations with the requirements of the board as laid down in the 2000 act.

It is crucial to involve local communities. The Cairngorms national park has started community needs assessments, which involve listening to the needs of each small community and including those in their planning. Ramblers Scotland points out that the park has limited finance to carry out the communities' wishes, but the exercise is also helpful to the other public bodies that work with the board. There is a duty on other public bodies to work with the park authority to implement the national park plan. The community consultation work enables the park authority to feed back local needs to those bodies, which allows them to work together to fulfil local ambitions. The park board sets up the park plan and all the public bodies need to implement it. The work with local communities informs the way forward for the board and the other agencies that work in the area.

Another initiative that the Cairngorms National Park Authority is pursuing is the park brand. That was raised when we worked on the legislation. We discussed the economic benefit to producers in the park versus the restrictions and costs that are involved in implementing stringent guidelines. Use of the park brand is conditional on meeting the standards that the board sets for quality and environmental impact. The branding has been

successful with the tourism industry and local producers are beginning to use it. When a business meets the standards, use of the brand is free. That enables small businesses to use the park brand in marketing and promoting their products.

Similar marketing has taken place with the creation of destination management organisations. Those small businesses are assisted by VisitScotland and the park board to market the area, to involve local people in working in tourism, and to highlight the importance of tourism to the local economy.

I welcome the review, but I sound a note of caution. The parks have worked well, and they have certainly exceeded the expectations of many of the communities that they serve. It is important that the review builds on that and does not throw away good practice or the developments that have taken place. I hope that the review will also examine the boundaries. I note what the minister said about the southern boundary of the Cairngorms national park, but I sincerely hope that that does not mean that anyone who wants to talk about the other boundaries cannot feed their comments into the review.

The boards must continue to be rooted in their local communities, working with local people to ensure the success of the national parks.

15:42

**Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands (Con):** The two national parks play a significant part in my region. They are both young, although they are growing up, and at present they need encouragement rather than interference. Professor Kay is a fine academic and I feel that I know him well, having read many of his works on the Dunoon ferry service, which delivers people to the Argyll forest area of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs national park. I will comment on some of the issues that are identified in his report, and on some of my concerns, but first I will highlight the positive aspects of the national parks.

The other week, I had a meeting in Grantown with the convener of the Cairngorms National Park Authority, David Green. I am particularly interested in the work that the authority is doing to offer training to land-based businesses. The training is benefiting estates, farms, crofts, forestry, fishing, horticulture, nurseries and outdoor recreation providers in the park. Indeed, any business that is related to the management or use of the land is benefiting. Environmental courses on deer stalking, black grouse management, mole control, water margin management and dry-stone dyking are vital in maintaining traditional skills. There is so little agricultural training nowadays that those courses are all the more important.

Public-benefit courses that have been delivered through the training programme include ones on the Scottish outdoor access code, Cairngorms wildlife, tick control and heather management, and catering for the less-able visitor. The CNPA has received positive comments from businesses and organisations about the training. Last year, more than 800 people from 182 businesses in the Cairngorms national park benefited from the project and said so.

In the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs national park, a community training programme runs useful courses on a range of subjects including how community organisations can better access funding streams. I am also impressed by the work that the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority is doing to increase apprenticeships in the park and to encourage businesses in the park to make use of the latest information technology.

An issue of concern that my constituents in the Cairngorms national park have raised with me is the requirement on developers in the park to make up to 50 per cent of new homes in a development affordable homes. Although we share the aim of having more affordable homes, will imposing a punitive requirement for an extra 25 per cent of affordable homes on a developer or house builder produce more homes or lead to fewer? I would like the minister to comment on that, if possible, because it is doubling a tax that, at best, is beginning to look inefficient. I would be interested to hear the minister's views on that when he sums up.

Given that both NPAs have been up and running for about five years, it makes sense to examine and take stock of their performance. Professor Kay identifies an excess of bureaucracy in the NPAs, and the Scottish Conservatives are always prepared to consider a reduction in bureaucracy so that money can be focused on delivery at a local level. As John Scott said, it might be true that the number of board members should be assessed to reduce expenditure, and we should probably debate that.

What really matters is that the park is run so that it is a success. I have concerns about the suggestion to strip the two NPAs of their separate status and merge them with SNH. Constituents who have contacted me in light of Saturday's coverage in *The Scotsman* are concerned about and opposed to that suggestion, which would be a backwards step. Anyone who remembers the consultations in the run-up to the creation of the parks will remember, as I do, that the main cause of concern in the communities affected was that SNH might run them. I would not be wrong in saying that most local people would consider domination by SNH to be a form of colonialism and therefore quite unthinkable.

**Michael Russell:** Before the member becomes totally carried away, I will make clear something that I clarified on Saturday when I was consulted about *The Scotsman* story. The rolling up of the two park authorities into SNH is incompatible with the local democracy that I want at the forefront. I have been happy to say that to any member who raised the issue with me this week and I say it again now, on the record, so that people understand it.

**Jackie Baillie:** Excellent; keep saying it.

**Michael Russell:** I would be happy to keep saying it to Jackie Baillie forever.

**Jamie McGrigor:** I am delighted to hear the minister reiterate that.

Ministers will conduct a formal review of the Scottish national parks later in the year and Professor Kay's report will no doubt influence that process. They will, however, need to tread with caution and should not compromise our national parks' independence. I was glad to hear the minister mention the primacy of local input in his speech.

I highlight the positive work that goes on in our national parks while acknowledging that improvements could be made. I urge ministers to treat Professor Kay's report with caution. I support the amendment in the name of my colleague, John Scott.

15:48

**Nigel Don (North East Scotland) (SNP):** We probably agree that it is time to review where we are with the national parks. However, I will start with a quotation from some wonderful spin that I found on the web:

"For the visitor interested in wildlife, Braemar has long held great attractions. There must be few villages where one can take an early morning walk along the village main street and have a good chance of meeting, one after the other, a magnificent 13 pointer stag, a shy Roe Deer, Red Squirrels stealing nuts put out for the birds, a cock pheasant strutting in all his finery, and a big brown hare timidly exploring the possibility of access to some of the gardens, while overhead Golden Eagles and buzzards sail silent, missing nothing."

The interesting thing about the quotation is not its excess, which is obvious to us all, but that it mentions the wildlife that we seek to preserve in our countryside. The chances of meeting them on an early morning walk in Braemar might be pretty low, but they are there and they are one of the good reasons for preserving our parks.

If members have any doubts at all about the landscape that we are trying to preserve, I simply point them to the "Cairngorms National Park Plan 2007", to which I will refer later. It contains all sorts of wonderful small pictures that remind one of

places that one has been to and how magnificent they are.

The issue that we are discussing is whether the structures for the governance and management of the parks should be reviewed. I remind members that if we go to the professionals, we will find that a management consultant is someone who borrows our watch to tell us the time and then walks off with it. During the review process, we need to be extremely careful about keeping our eyes on what we are doing.

I turn to the "Cairngorms National Park Plan 2007" and some of the action points that it contains, in an effort to find out whether we can derive some ideas about the review. There are, I think, eight priorities for action in the plan. They are about

"Conserving and Enhancing Biodiversity ... Integrating Public Support for Land Management ... Supporting Sustainable Deer Management ... Providing High Quality Opportunities for Outdoor Access ... Making Tourism and Business More Sustainable ... Making Housing More Affordable and Sustainable ... Raising Awareness and Understanding of the Park".

One would have thought that that was a pretty wide canvas to start with.

If we look at the strategic objectives, we find phrases such as

"Conserve and enhance ... Engage all sectors ... Promote access to appropriate policy and funding mechanisms ... Develop awareness ... Prevent degradation and erosion of soils ... Develop a sound knowledge and understanding of the cultural traditions"—

I might question that particular objective—

"Help communities, businesses and households ... Promote sustainable flood management ... Adopt a catchment-scale approach to water ... Develop ... Encourage ... Maintain ... Promote".

It seems to me that the activities that the plan covers, which I am sure are highly laudable and which I am not trying to denigrate, are extremely wide ranging.

That point is emphasised when one turns to the priorities for action—it is good that the plan contains priorities for action. Some of the acronyms that are listed on page 102 are

"ADMG, CNPA ... DCS ... NGOs ... SGA ... LECs".

The acronyms "ACCC" and "RA" are two of the many others mentioned on page 107. In fact, there are 25 other acronyms, which account for considerably more organisations.

I say all that not to be disparaging about anyone, but merely to emphasise to members that the parks have an extraordinarily complicated function. If we acknowledge that, we will recognise that the simple solution of taking two bodies and merging them with another one is perhaps a little too simple.

I encourage the ministers to put all the organisations' connections on one piece of paper—perhaps we should borrow Jim Mather for that—to determine whether we can identify the real lines of communication and the real points of action that underlie the overall structure. That is a slightly bigger exercise than is currently being talked about.

If we do that, I suggest that there is a pretty good chance that we will come up with a good answer, whereas if we do not do that, I fear that there is a real chance that we will come up with a rather theoretical answer. That would be a pity, because we are hearing that the current system is working pretty well. If it ain't broke, don't fix it is a pretty good rule in most walks of life, so I encourage us to have a review that is consistent with what is actually going on. That is my point.

15:53

**Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD):** I am fortunate enough to have part of the Cairngorms national park in my region. As well as being a world-class area of outstanding natural environment, the park is home to around 17,000 people in a wide range of diverse communities.

I was a member of the east areas board of Scottish Natural Heritage while the national parks were being set up, and I thoroughly enjoyed being involved in the discussions about their remit, their geographical range and the governance issues involved. I welcome the minister's announcement on the southern boundaries.

From its early days, I have watched with interest the development of the Cairngorms national park, and I take the opportunity to commend the park authority for its work. The park has developed a strong identity in quite a short time. Many interesting initiatives are being progressed, from tackling affordable housing issues—which is central to ensuring that the park remains sustainable—to setting up a community investment fund and developing new sustainable transport options, such as the heather hopper.

From the outset, the park authority demonstrated a determination to connect with local communities and to take a consensual approach, as far as possible, to the determination of aims and objectives. The board carried out a comprehensive consultation on its park plan and I was particularly pleased at the efforts that it made to engage with young people. Local empowerment is an important principle for Liberal Democrats. We knew that if parks were to be truly effective, the rights of local people to be involved in the decisions that affect them must be enshrined in legislation. In many other national parks, in

England for example, tensions between the park and the community regularly arise.

I do not agree with John Scott that a board's size should be directly related to the size of its annual budget. Although SEPA, HIE and even SNH are important agencies, none has the scope that park authorities have to impact on people's lives in many ways. The reach of park authorities goes far beyond their direct expenditure.

**John Scott:** I merely refer—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman):** Please speak into your microphone, Mr Scott.

**John Scott:** I beg your pardon.

On the size of boards, I refer to the Nolan principles, which were laid down some years ago but have stood the passage of time and work extremely well. The recommendation is that the most effective board has eight to 12 members.

**Alison McInnes:** We might regard national park authorities as more akin to local authorities than to other quango boards, given the scope of their work.

Scotland came somewhat late to the setting up of national parks, so we had an opportunity to learn from and improve on earlier models. I single out our success in two areas. First, national parks in Scotland differ from many parks around the world in that they have a social and economic development aim alongside the aims of conservation, understanding and enjoyment of the countryside. There is an explicit recognition of the importance of the people who live and work in the park.

Secondly, the diversity of board members, which has produced a synthesis of local knowledge, national interests and specialisms, has been successful. Boards are tasked with reaching decisions in a collective and co-ordinated manner and have carried out that responsibility well. The involvement of directly elected members and local councillors, as well as other interests, means that boards can speak confidently on behalf of the park's interests and negotiate successfully with the myriad agencies that help to deliver the park's aims.

In the short time that the Cairngorms National Park Authority has been in place, it has built a reputation for openness and accountability. I acknowledge the need to review operations after the first five years, but I would be extremely unhappy if the diversity of the board or the principles of local decision making were threatened in any way.

15:57

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** I am sure that members will join me in echoing the minister's welcome to members and staff of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority. I also welcome the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, because the organisation played a key role in the long journey to having Scotland's first national park at Loch Lomond.

Without question, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs national park is an area of outstanding natural beauty, which is enjoyed by many people—including me—from throughout Scotland and the world. Of course I am slightly biased, because I am proud to represent the area.

It is clear to me, as it was when the park was established, that the park is very much a living, breathing space and not a wilderness that must be preserved in aspic. That was acknowledged in the park's four aims, one of which is

"To promote sustainable social and economic development of the communities of the area".

Such an aim is not common to national parks elsewhere, as far as I am aware. Of course conservation and sustainability are important, but the explicit recognition that people live and work in the national park was greatly appreciated by people in my area.

I am sure that Mike Russell will forgive me for focusing on Professor Kay's report, which made an interesting read. Mike Russell commissioned the report, so I am delighted that he has rejected one of its key conclusions, which was that boards should somehow be subsumed into SNH. My comments will provide him with an opportunity to join me in rejecting other assumptions in the report.

First, the importance of local community involvement has been ignored. I will share with the Parliament comments made by members way back in 1999 when we first debated the issue early on in the Parliament's existence. The Liberals said:

"The success or failure of the national parks will depend on the extent to which we involve local people in their management."

The Tories agreed, and said:

"there is a vital need for input from the people who live and work in that area."—[*Official Report*, 8 June 1999; c 349-50.]

Labour's record speaks for itself, but I am delighted to say that we were joined by Fergus Ewing, who quoted a shepherd in similar terms. I am sure that that shepherd has managed to impart a great deal of further wisdom to him.

Handing the national parks and their management to SNH in any shape or form would be wholly wrong. I fundamentally disagree with Rob Gibson on that. First, it is wrong on the basis of accountability, because SNH is currently accountable to ministers. It is hard enough to make it accountable to me and the Parliament, never mind trying to make it accountable to any of my constituents. Contrast that with the national park authority board members: I might not always agree with them—they will testify to that—but they are accountable to local people, I know where to get them and they respond to requests and complaints.

Secondly, the report is wrong on the scope of SNH's role. The assumption is that SNH could somehow manage the national parks when it has no experience of their fourth aim: economic development.

**Michael Russell** *rose*—

**Jackie Baillie:** Would the minister like another opportunity to agree with me?

**Michael Russell:** I would be grateful for the opportunity to make a brief point. I have made it clear again and again that I do not regard the option of rolling the parks into SNH as appropriate for local input. Jackie Baillie also makes a strong point about socioeconomic development. However, Professor Kay's recommendation was not to roll the parks into SNH. His recommendations are listed on page 37 of his report, and recommendation 3 simply says:

"A root and branch review of the NDPB status of the National Parks status should be undertaken as soon as possible and alternative forms of governance considered."

We should consider alternative forms of governance, but the one on which Jackie Baillie is spending most time is not one that I favour.

**Jackie Baillie:** I am delighted to hear that the minister does not favour that option but, if we look at the narrative of the report—I have taken time to read it, given that the minister commissioned it—it is clear that it is Professor Kay's favoured option. We need to remind ourselves that SNH has no current role in economic development, which is a key plank of the national parks, no experience in it and no capacity to deliver on it. I am delighted that the minister and I are at one on that.

**Rob Gibson:** Will Jackie Baillie give way?

**Jackie Baillie:** No, indeed not.

Thirdly, in case there was any doubt, in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, the national park authority is the planning authority, so Professor Kay's suggestion would have SNH in charge of planning too. What then for local accountability and what about the potential conflict of interest?

Michael Russell is indeed wise to reject all that, because it is fundamentally flawed. Of course we should review the efficacy of national parks—although I have to say to Nigel Don that mind maps from Jim Mather are not really the answer—and the review should take into account the lessons learned from the operation of the national parks to date. The issue is not the size of the boards. The Parliament agreed that it wanted national representation, local council representation and direct elections for local people. We wanted that balance and agreed that we needed expertise and local knowledge working together. I say to the minister that that has worked and, as one of his members said—if he will not listen to me, he should at least listen to Nigel Don—if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

16:03

**Dave Thompson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** Ours is a nation of beauty and diversity, and the national park authorities have succeeded in supporting that beauty and diversity since they were granted powers under the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000.

After five years, it is certainly now appropriate to review those powers, examine how we can make the governing structures more efficient and ensure that the national parks maintain their ability to achieve the four aims that the act set out. However, the key is not to undermine the entire purpose of the parks. That is what we would do if we responded to the review too harshly or too irrationally by making sweeping changes without the slightest regard for the consequences. Any potential changes to the parks must be thoroughly investigated to ensure that we do not lose more than we gain.

Much of the debate has centred on the size of the national park authority boards and the breadth of their jurisdiction in relation to other authorities. Of course, the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority and the Cairngorms National Park Authority differ in those respects. Any review must examine whether there is still justification for such differences.

Both parks have done a commendable job in responding to the needs of those within their boundaries and are developing an expertise that is representative of the wide range of perspectives and experience within their bounds. With the proper structure and support, there is no doubt that the national parks can provide the most complete and comprehensive services for our communities. However, the review can succeed in improving the parks to make them even stronger and more efficient, if it is carried out sensibly and not in a knee-jerk way. If we overreact negligently and irrationally, we will condemn our national

parks to substandard services and an unnecessary fate.

During the review, we must remember the four aims that were set out in the 2000 act: first, to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage; secondly, to promote the sustainable use of the natural resources of the area; thirdly, to promote understanding and enjoyment by the public of the special qualities of the area; and fourthly, to promote sustainable social and economic development of the communities of the area. The fourth aim is the most important, as without thriving communities there is no point in having a national park.

Handing the keys to an agency that would not meet all four aims would be negligence and a breach of our responsibility. I am glad that today the minister has made it clear that he does not favour that option, but I fear that the suggestion may gain ground in some areas. Even if the option were pursued with the best of intentions, the result for the parks and surrounding communities would be regrettable. Other authorities, already burdened by their current responsibilities, would not be able to give the national parks the attention that they require. Other leaders, already burdened with policy areas and duties, would not be able to focus on the environmental, economic and tourism-related issues that the parks consider and support. Other priorities that were created and are already valued by those with different duties might be given more importance and attention than the priorities that have been set for the parks.

We should allow the parks the authority to manage what is within their boundaries. They should be granted the responsibility to meet the key priorities of the Parliament and of Scotland, and they should always be held accountable for their performance in meeting those priorities. Maintaining an efficient board and supporting it with sufficient resources and jurisdiction are crucial to ensuring the continued vitality of our national parks.

**Jim Hume:** Does the member agree that there should be two boards? He has spoken of only one board. Does he envisage there being two boards, one for each authority, or one board for both authorities?

**Dave Thompson:** When I speak about maintaining an efficient board, I mean a board for each park. We must have a responsible board structure, with a strong democratic element. Why should the boards not be wholly democratic, as Rob Gibson suggested?

The national parks have been an asset to Scotland and our vital tourism industry. Men, women and children, not just from Scotland but from around the world, have been able to

appreciate our breathtaking views, the wonders of the natural environment and Scotland's vast resources. We have nurtured a deep appreciation of nature and should make no apologies for having done so. The national parks have been a key component of that gift to humanity. We should not hesitate to discard rash ideas that would not improve on the boards' current performance, but we should support measured changes that improve on the current structure.

I am happy to hold a responsible debate on the merits of measured change; we have had such a debate today. However, I will not accept a complete disregard for the merits of the parks as they stand. Let us have a sensible, reasoned debate on the future of the parks and resist any rash decisions that we may come to regret.

16:09

**Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** I am pleased to speak in this afternoon's debate. When the National Parks (Scotland) Bill was passed in 2000, I was working in the Parliament as a researcher. I am pleased to take part in a debate that reflects on the first five years of the parks.

One of the two national parks, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs national park, is situated partly in the region that I represent. I welcome the minister's announcement today that the boundary of the park will be extended. The national parks have at their core four statutory aims, with which we are familiar: conservation, sustainability, understanding and the promotion of social and economic development.

It is crucial that the existing national parks and any future parks that we establish stay true to those four aims and remain linked and accountable to the local communities in which they are placed. An important part of the role that the national parks play is that they build community engagement and involvement, so that the unique and special environment in Scotland is conserved, sustained and, moreover, enjoyed and understood.

Scotland's landscape and wildlife are among our biggest assets. The beauty of our country brings millions of visitors from around the globe to our shores every year. The economic benefits of the £4 billion-plus tourism industry, which sustains more than 200,000 jobs in Scotland, make it integral to Scotland's prosperity, especially in many rural areas. National parks that are linked and accountable to their local areas, that conserve and sustain our environment and that promote and develop the use of it should be a key element of further building our tourism industry.

I recently attended a tourism conference in Fife at which the challenges of climate change for the tourism industry were highlighted as well as an increasing move towards sustainable tourism both in terms of how tourists travel and how the tourism industry delivers. The quality of our national parks puts us in a good position to meet those challenges. I acknowledge the minister's assurances that he will not be bound by Professor Kay's report. I do not believe that Neil Kay's recommendation to merge the national parks into SNH is the proper way forward, as that could risk losing the local connection that national parks should have.

I was happy to receive useful briefings from RSPB Scotland and Ramblers Scotland in advance of the debate. Although they point out the room for improvement, they support the national park model. A key issue for Ramblers Scotland and others is that of access rights to Scotland's environment. In my region, there have been recent problems with access to land on the Sauchieburn estate, on which Ramblers Scotland has been lobbying hard, with a protest organised for this coming weekend. The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 was introduced as part of the measures on land rights in the early years of the Scottish Parliament, and the national parks have acquitted themselves well as access authorities. The Ramblers Scotland briefing states that our two national parks have

"demonstrated how public support for the protection of landscape, wildlife and the cultural heritage can go hand in hand with economic improvement and the wider aspects of sustainable development."

It seems clear that the national park structure is appreciated by those who enjoy Scotland's natural environment and that it is a valued model for securing the full potential of Scotland's environment.

National parks can ensure that the public have access to Scotland's countryside and can effectively manage that countryside in a sustainable way, both economically and environmentally. As part of the forthcoming review, I believe that consideration should now be given to extending the model of national parks to marine and coastal areas. I may be biased, but I believe that Fife contains some of the most beautiful beaches in the whole of Scotland. It is also home to diverse and fragile coastal wildlife. Extending the model of national parks to those areas and to other coastal areas in Scotland could help us to maximise the benefits of Scotland's coastline for tourism and quality of life and could help us to sustain them into the future. However, the minister has confirmed this afternoon that although the new Administration is not against a coastal marine national park in principle,

"simplification of the complex regulatory system for the marine environment"

is one of its "more pressing priorities". I quote from the Scottish Government's website.

A marine bill should be a high priority—it was in our manifesto and in the SNP's. However, it will take time to produce a marine bill, and it will take longer still to pass and implement such legislation. All the while, we are delaying the prospect of extending the benefits of the national park model to elsewhere in Scotland, including the marine and coastline environment. The truth is that it is not an either/or situation. A new national park can be created by ministerial order under the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 and need not wait for new legislation to come into force. I believe that, following the review of the national parks, the Scottish Government should seriously consider creating new national parks, including national parks in marine and coastal areas such as those in my region. There is no reason to wait for the proposed marine bill to which we are all looking forward.

**The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment (Richard Lochhead):** Does the member accept that it is not up to ministers in Edinburgh to decide where new national parks should be created, and that it is up to communities to bring their own ideas for the future to the Government?

**Claire Baker:** I fully accept that. Members have explored and recognised the importance of locating national parks where local people are keen to have them. My point is that I would like the Government to consider establishing a coastal and marine national park sooner than would be the case if we waited for the proposed marine bill to be passed.

We are lucky to have such a beautiful country. For a small country, Scotland has some of the most diverse landscapes and wildlife in the world. Our national parks should continue to form an element of how we secure the benefits of our natural resources for generations to come.

16:15

**Jamie Hepburn (Central Scotland) (SNP):** I welcome today's debate. Scotland's two national parks are one of the Parliament's most significant achievements. The legislation that created them could have been passed only under some form of home rule. The Westminster Parliament would never have found the time, let alone had the will, for such reform. Of course, perhaps an independent Parliament would have allowed us to go further and faster in the establishment of our national parks—I mention that as a mere aside.

As David Stewart said, the existence of the national park concept is a tribute to John Muir, a Scot from Dunbar who emigrated to the United States of America. His campaigns led to the protection first of the Yosemite valley and then of other great wildernesses in the US. It is a testament to the Scottish Parliament that the ideas of John Muir in establishing national parks have been enshrined in his country of birth.

We have two national parks in comparison with the 12—soon to be 13—parks across England and Wales and the many areas of outstanding natural beauty that have been designated south of the border and which are afforded the same protection. It is perhaps ironic that Scotland, which has some of the oldest, wildest and most impressive landscapes in Europe, has had to wait so long for a protection regime that matches European and global standards.

When we appreciate those landscapes, we cannot express our feelings more clearly than with the old maxim that we do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, but borrow it from our children. That is why protecting the land within our national parks is so important. Our landscapes and wildernesses have a value in their own right. Even if nobody ever visited them, our national parks would still be important as our country's lungs, filtering our water and purifying our air. That they act in that manner as well as being visited by so many people hammers home their importance to our country. It is right therefore that we should bestow on them a level of protection and management. Doing so will ensure that short-term gain does not mean long-term overexploitation.

As the motion before us correctly states, we should commend the contribution of national parks "to the greener Scotland agenda."

However, the contribution of the parks is much wider than that. They make a valuable contribution to the Government's aims for a fairer and healthier Scotland.

Our national parks can make Scotland fairer, because land is protected for future generations and is understood as being held for the common good. That is in keeping with the traditional understanding of land use and ownership in Scotland. The elected element of the national park boards is a commendable example of participatory democracy. It is a way of ensuring that the voice of ordinary people is heard at the heart of decision making. I am glad that there seems to be such uniform agreement on the issue across the chamber.

Our national parks can also make Scotland healthier, because of the opportunities that they afford for recreation, especially walking, which is one of the cheapest, easiest and most effective

forms of exercise. They also provide a wide range of outdoor pursuits from skiing and snowboarding on the Cairngorms to windsurfing on Loch Lomond, in which I am sure Jackie Baillie affords herself the opportunity to participate at every chance.

**Jackie Baillie:** Absolutely.

**Jamie Hepburn:** I assure members that I do not engage in those activities very regularly. However, for those who do, national park status means that the potentials can be maximised at the same time as the activities' impact on the landscape and environment is carefully managed.

Our national parks contribute

"to the greener Scotland agenda."

because they act as exemplars of the changes that we need to introduce in wider society if we are to tackle the causes and mitigate the effects of climate change.

National park authorities should be ambitious in promoting the Government's green targets. They should make their parks as accessible as possible to public transport; they should demand the highest standards of energy efficiency in their buildings; and they should minimise and manage waste. In that context, I welcome the Government's commitment to a strategic review of the operation of and future for our national parks. I hope that some of the points that I have made will be considered in the review.

After five years of designation, the time is right to ensure that our national parks serve the purposes for which they were established. Discussions have taken place on the effectiveness of the national park boards. It is right that all aspects of their operation should be considered in the review, but the elected element of those structures is of the utmost importance. In that regard, I welcome the minister's confirmation that he shares those principles. Given the questions to the minister on the subject, some members appear to have missed that confirmation. As I said, I welcome it.

Five years after the establishment of the national parks, the time is also right to consider their size. I welcome Mike Russell's announcement that the Cairngorms national park will include highland Perthshire. The people of highland Perthshire should be congratulated, not only on voting for the SNP, which won with 60 per cent of the vote in a recent by-election, but on the campaign that they have run to be included in the Cairngorms national park. I also pay tribute to John Swinney for the campaign that he has run.

I welcome the fact that the Government review will consider other areas that may be included in the existing national parks. I hope that the review



will also consider other areas throughout Scotland that may be endowed with national park status. For instance, the regional parks that were established long ago could be considered for promotion to full national park status. I ask the cabinet secretary to consider that possibility in summing up the debate.

Scotland's national parks are part of a European and worldwide family of designated and protected landscapes. The European Landscape Convention of 2000, which the United Kingdom finally ratified in 2006, reinforces the global dimension. That means that we have a duty not only to Scotland's future generations, but to people throughout the world who benefit from our national parks as tourists, consumers of produce and suppliers of the technology and tools that are used in the parks.

We have a duty to preserve and enhance the natural beauty and resources of our national parks and all Scotland's designated scenic areas. Scotland's national parks are a major achievement of devolution and a major responsibility of the Parliament. I hope that the debate takes us some way towards exercising that responsibility. We must realise that, through the careful and strategic management of our finest resources, we are building a legacy that will outlast us all.

**The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):** We come now to the winding-up speeches. I have a little time in hand, so I can allow members a little flexibility. I call Mike Rumbles, whom I can offer up to eight minutes.

16:21

**Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD):** Thank you, Presiding Officer.

The Liberal Democrats welcome the review of our national parks. The debate has been a good one. I was pleased that the minister confirmed straight away that we are to complete the unfinished business on the southern boundary of the Cairngorms national park.

However, I was disappointed by the minister's reaction to the Liberal Democrat amendment. In opening the debate, he accepted almost every element of the amendment, but then seemed to dance on the head of a pin in not wanting to accept the amendment itself. I could not follow his line of thinking. The only reason that the Government has given for not accepting the amendment is that it does not want to keep the national parks as public bodies—perhaps the cabinet secretary will address that in summing up.

**Michael Russell:** That is not true.

**Mike Rumbles:** The minister says that that is not true.

**Michael Russell:** I deny categorically that that is true. I wish to keep, and we will keep, the national park authorities as public bodies. The sole reason why I cannot accept the amendment is that it would tie the hands of the review in an unacceptable way. Mr Hume knows that, because I have discussed it with him three times. The points are covered by the motion and the other amendments, so if Mr Hume withdraws his amendment, we can agree unanimously. If anyone is dancing on the head of a pin, it is Mr Rumbles rather than me who is doing so, which I must say is an equally unlikely prospect.

**Mike Rumbles:** I rather hoped that the minister would explain why he thought that the amendment was not acceptable, but he has failed to do so.

**Michael Russell:** It would tie the hands of the review.

**Mike Rumbles:** The only reason that the minister is giving is that the amendment would tie the hands of the review.

**Michael Russell:** It would.

**Mike Rumbles:** I agree with you.

**The Presiding Officer:** I must ask that the little conversations between the two of you discontinue now. Please address the chair.

**Mike Rumbles:** I agree with the minister because he agrees with every element of our amendment. However, it is rather bizarre that although he agrees with every substantive point in the Liberal Democrat amendment, he argues that it would tie the hands of the review. There is no logic in the Government's argument and it is not persuasive at all. Any independent person listening to the debate would not be persuaded by the minister's argument. I hope that the real reason why the minister will not support the amendment is not the First Minister's political commitment to reduce the number of quangos.

John Scott focused on many things, but I want to follow through with him his assertion that 25 board members is an unwieldy number. I agree, but we should consider the history.

The National Parks (Scotland) Bill was the first bill to come before the Rural Affairs Committee back in 1999-2000, and the first bill that I examined as a member of that committee. In the bill as introduced, the Government wanted there to be 20 board members: 10 appointed by ministers and 10 appointed by local authorities. However, as the committee went through the bill, it became obvious to me and to other committee members that local people wanted local representation. The only way in which the amendments that sought to put five locally elected people on the board could be agreed to was if the Government and local authority nominees were not removed.

I am pleased that there is now recognition on all sides that the addition of local members has been the huge success that some of us always thought it would be. It is proof positive of the importance of the committee system in improving Government legislation. I agree that the park boards are unwieldy but the history explains why the Liberal Democrats make it clear in our amendment that we must retain at least five directly elected board members.

**John Scott:** Would the member care to speculate on his ideal size of board?

**Mike Rumbles:** I never like to speculate in that way. I am sure that that is what the review is all about. Our amendment aims to ensure that we do not undermine the directly elected element.

Jim Hume reminded us that, at first, the minister seemed reluctant to accept that we need two distinct park boards—I am still not sure whether he accepts that. Jamie McGrigor, Dave Thompson and many others supported the idea of two authorities, with local decision making. Alison McInnes highlighted the need for diverse boards.

The Liberal Democrats support the motion, and we have no problems with any of the amendments. We welcome the forthcoming review, and support the extension of the southern boundary of the Cairngorms national park. I remember committee members' frustration when we approved the secondary legislation that set up the Cairngorms national park and were faced with a take-it-or-leave-it situation. There was no doubt that the majority of committee members wanted the park boundary in the south to follow SNH's recommendations. However, the Government of the day decided otherwise. This is unfinished business, which our Government and our Parliament need to address, and I am glad that we are going to address it.

The review is necessary, but our amendment makes it clear that we need to retain two distinct park boards in the two distinct parks. The amendment would tie the hands of the review because it rules out any attempt by SNH to roll up the park authorities—a policy that the minister agrees with—and calls for retention of at least five directly elected board members. I cannot understand the Government's position. It supports all the proposals in our amendment, yet it cannot bring itself to support that amendment. I ask all members—and even, at this late stage, the Government—to be a bit more magnanimous and to accept the Liberal Democrat amendment.

16:28

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I warmly welcome the minister's announcement on altering the southern boundary of the Cairngorms

national park. I have pursued that issue since the park was first established without the inclusion of any part of Perthshire. As members will know, in the previous session, John Swinney introduced a member's bill on the issue, which I was pleased to support. In his absence, it is appropriate to pay tribute to him for his campaigning on the issue.

As we all know, when the boundaries of the national park were drawn up, they included parts of Inverness-shire, Moray, Aberdeenshire and a small part of Angus, but no part of Perth and Kinross. That was despite the fact that all objective views expressed on the matter said that the northern part of highland Perthshire should have been included in the park. Even the then Government's advisers on the matter, Scottish Natural Heritage, said that the boundaries should include part of highland Perthshire. Only the then Scottish Executive took a different view, but it failed to marshal any objective evidence to support its stance.

The only conclusion that could have been reached at the time was that the decision to exclude Perth and Kinross was taken for political reasons, as it suited the then Executive to have a majority of the elected members of the Cairngorms National Park Authority board from Highland Council. There was, and is, a great deal of public support for amending the national park boundaries from all sorts of bodies in Perthshire and further afield, including the Pitlochry partnership, the John Muir Trust, the Mountaineering Council of Scotland, the Blair Atholl area tourism association and many others. Perth and Kinross Council and other groups led a vigorous local campaign. I pay tribute to that campaign, which has now paid off.

Today's announcement will right a wrong, and it is good news for the highland Perthshire economy. There is no doubt that, as far as visitors are concerned, Blair Atholl is the natural southern gateway to the Cairngorms. Following today's announcement, Blair Atholl will come within the national park and will be able to develop as a proper gateway centre. Slightly further east, Spittal of Glenshee, which is on the A93, will now fall within the national park and should gain an economic benefit. That is good news, and I commend the minister, to whom I am warming by the week—much to his concern, I am sure.

I will address some of the wider issues in the debate about the future of the national parks. Our party's position was set out in some detail earlier by my colleague John Scott. David Stewart quoted from Professor Neil Kay's report. Professor Kay described park management as a

"clunky, cumbersome, formal and bureaucratic muddle".

Parliamentarians are right to be concerned when a respected academic produces such a report and uses such language.

We are right to be concerned about the costs of running national park boards. The duty on ministers, who are responsible for the purse strings, and on parliamentarians, who are responsible for holding ministers to account, is always to ensure that public money is properly spent.

As John Scott said, it is right to ask whether a board of 25 is the right size. We do not presuppose the answer to that question, but it is right to ask whether 25 is too many. I understand that individual payments for the national park board members are lower than they are for the board members of many other bodies, such as SEPA and SNH, but the national park boards have more board members, so the cumulative cost is higher. Against a backdrop of decluttering the public sector landscape—an ambition that we share with the Government—and scrutinising costs across the public sector, it is right that we ask such questions.

We are quite right to have a review, but I have two caveats. First, the Parliament wants to pay tribute to the people who have served on the boards of the two national parks until now. Whatever decision we take about going forward from here, we accept that, in the early days, when the national parks were being established, the board members did a lot of excellent work. A decision to restructure the boards or cut the number of members should not be taken as a criticism of the excellent work that has been done.

**Michael Russell:** I draw attention to the fact that Professor Kay makes exactly that point. However, he also says that although a board of 25 might well have been appropriate at the establishment of the national parks, when the priority was to set targets and to determine how things would happen, it might not be appropriate in future. That is an important distinction.

**Murdo Fraser:** I am grateful to the minister for clarifying that point.

Secondly, I reassure Jackie Baillie that our position has not changed and that we agree that there should be local democratic input, which should continue in relation to the boards. The minister accepted that point.

If I remember rightly, Rob Gibson made an interesting proposal, which is worth examining, that the boards should be entirely locally elected. At this time, when we are trying to promote public engagement and direct democracy, we should consider that option. Again, I do not presuppose the outcome of the review—indeed, the proposal shows why we need a wide-ranging review.

I am afraid that we will not support Mr Rumbles's amendment. Like the minister, we feel that it is simply too prescriptive. I apologise to Mr Hume—

the Liberal Democrat amendment is not in the name of Mr Rumbles.

We have become very much engaged with governance and management in the debate; perhaps we have lost sight of some of the broader issues that are at stake. National parks are a tremendous resource for Scotland. They hold precious landscapes of international renown. People come from all over the world to visit Scotland to see our mountains, fish on our lochs and walk on our hills. They come to our national parks, which are a tremendous part of our countryside and make a tremendous economic contribution to our tourism industry.

I question, as I have in the past, the good sense of building giant pylons through the Cairngorms national park, which will happen if approval is given for the Beaulieu to Denny power line upgrade. It is hard to imagine any other country with a national park talking about desecrating the landscape in such a way. I hope that ministers will consider that point seriously when they come to decide whether to grant consent for the upgrade. I do not dispute that we must have connectivity to the grid; I just wonder whether there are better ways of achieving that than building giant pylons, which is what is being proposed.

**David Whitton (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab):** Mr Fraser makes an interesting point. What would be his solution, if we are not to have that power line?

**Murdo Fraser:** If Mr Whitton had followed closely what I have said in the past, he would know that I have talked about options such as having a subsea cable, which would run around the coast, and making greater use of the eastern Scotland route, where we already have much larger pylons. The point is that we are dealing with very sensitive landscapes in the Highlands and the national parks. I question whether such landscapes can take the size of pylons that might be appropriate elsewhere in Scotland.

As I said, I welcome the announcement on the boundary change. There will be celebrations tonight in highland Perthshire, where, as Jamie Hepburn reminded us, there was a recent by-election. He is right to say that the SNP won that by-election, but the Tory vote went up by 4 per cent—there is a double cause for celebration this evening.

**The Presiding Officer:** I call Sarah Boyack. Ms Boyack, you have quite a long time.

16:36

**Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab):** Thank you. Why does that always happen when I do not have a gigantic speech to deliver?

The debate has been good and timely. The quinquennial review is the opportunity for the Government to examine how the national parks have been operating. I welcome our opportunity as parliamentarians to give our views to the minister as he commissions that review. Our amendment is written in a spirit of encouragement to the minister to examine how the parks have operated. We want him to consider not just the structures—important though they are—but the effectiveness of the parks' operation and the extent to which communities have been involved in them.

The ministers can take some key messages from the debate. The first is that our two national parks have been successful—that message has come from all parties. The second point is that although there are areas of consensus about where we want to go in the future, particularly on retaining local involvement, it is only fair to acknowledge that there are issues to consider around how the parks operate.

There is a need for some history in this debate. Colleagues have said that I was initially the responsible minister. The park boards now are not the size that we intended when we started the process. We have gone from enthusiasm in the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs area, where people had been desperate for a national park for years, to a huge amount of scepticism and doubt in the Cairngorms area about whether a national park was appropriate for the area. The bottom-up process to which Alison McInnes referred was crucial. People needed to be part of that process. That is why we did not just have an enabling act to set up the national parks—we had the act first, then the orders, so that we could consider the different characteristics of both areas.

It is testament to the work of colleagues in the chamber and, crucially, to the work of people on the boards, local representatives, businesses and communities that have been involved in the process, that eight years on we are having a debate in which there is universal agreement that it was right to set up the two national parks. The comments that Rhoda Grant made about the transformation of attitudes in the business community are testament to that inclusive approach.

The two parks have different histories and have ended up with different powers. The Loch Lomond and the Trossachs national park has full planning powers and the Cairngorms national park has the opportunity to call in planning applications, although they both have park plans. They have both been successful in delivering the model that was wanted locally.

I laud national parks as being one of devolution's successes. Jamie Hepburn is not in the chamber now, but he commented earlier that

we could not have had the national parks legislation before devolution, partly because the House of Lords would not have enabled us to have national parks on its land, and partly because there would not have been the time. That is absolutely right—we spent a lot of time discussing national parks.

That does not mean, however, that we all agree on everything. Colleagues have talked about the need to ensure that planning remains local. We have a robust process: national park plans are drawn up by the park authorities, the process enables consultation and changes to be made to the plans, and then the decisions are made. We will never have agreement on individual planning decisions—it is just not in our nature, and it is impossible to achieve. I congratulate Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority on winning one of the prestigious Scottish planning quality awards today, which is a testament to the fact that very good work is going on in our parks.

I welcome the minister's confirmation that he does not intend to centralise the national parks—I will not invite him to stand up and say that again for members' pleasure, even though I have a lot of minutes to use up today. It would, however, be a huge mistake to lose accountability and local focus just for the benefit of cutting a couple of quangos and changing the numbers. Members keep asking the minister about that because we have read the report in its entirety and are unhappy not just with the recommendation, but with the content of the report.

There is a history to the creation of the national park boards. We wanted to ensure that we had national appointees to reflect the national status of the parks. The national parks are hugely significant: Mike Russell read out the criteria, which include that they be of outstanding national importance—on that basis not every area in Scotland can qualify. We need to have national stewardship, but we also wanted local involvement, and local appointees who would be part of that process.

Mike Rumbles and I had many conversations about that—which I did not seek—but the process gave us better national parks. That is why I caution the minister against expecting that it will be simple to reduce the size of the national park boards. There were particular issues in establishing the boards with regard to bringing people in, but the challenge now is to retain local support. If the size of the park boards is automatically reduced, that support will potentially be put at risk.

**John Scott:** Did you give consideration at the time you drew up the national park plans—

**The Presiding Officer:** I did not give much consideration to that, Mr Scott. You might want to address Sarah Boyack. I refer to your use of the word “you”.

**John Scott:** I was about to address an issue that I know to be dear to your heart. Did you consider the possibility of creating a national forest park in south-west Scotland, based around the Glentworth area? Do you think, given your experience, that that might be a suitable area for consideration in the future?

**The Presiding Officer:** It was the use of the word “you” in relation to another member that I objected to, Mr Scott.

**Sarah Boyack:** It was clear at the start that there were two areas in which there was a broad consensus in terms of national priority and the national criteria that Mike Russell set out. The decision was taken that we would first make those two parks successful, and then focus on the location of more national parks. I will move on to that in my closing remarks—there are issues in respect of where the next national parks might be situated.

The national park boards are not the same as other quangos, in that they have a very intimate relationship with local people. The four aims of the national parks are unique to Scotland and were developed because we wanted local people not just to benefit from the parks, but to feel that they were part of the process. That has been crucial to the parks’ success. There was also an issue with regard to involving local councils. When local councils, locally elected people and national representatives are involved, it is difficult to get the number of people down to eight.

There is an important issue about balancing expertise and interest, and if we are to meet the four key principles that were set out in the 2000 act we need, as I said, more than just a structural review. We took a radical approach by having a slightly different set of aims and purposes and we departed from the traditional Sandford principle. We need to reflect on the extent to which that has been successful—drawing on the experience of both national parks would be a good part of the quinquennial review. I hope that the review is not just about structures. We should learn lessons about—

**Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Michael Russell:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Sarah Boyack:** I will take an intervention from Robin Harper, who has not been in the debate.

**Robin Harper:** I thank Sarah Boyack. She will recall that, during consideration of the National

Parks (Scotland) Bill, I failed in an attempt to incorporate the Sandford principle into the text of the bill. She will also recall that I was given an absolute assurance that the Sandford principle was embodied in the meaning of the entire bill. Does she agree that it would be useful for the cabinet secretary to clarify in his summing up the Scottish National Party’s position on the Sandford principle?

**Sarah Boyack:** That would be helpful, and I am more than happy to agree with Robin Harper’s suggestion that the cabinet secretary should outline the new Government’s position on the Sandford principle. The legislation was about implementing the four aims in a co-ordinated and collective way. That is why it would be useful to reflect on the success of the national parks. We did something radical and innovative—it would be good to examine how that has worked in practice.

Almost every member has commented on the Kay report, and I strongly agree with Jamie McGrigor that we should treat it with some caution. However, it was revealed from reading the report that we should be grateful to Professor Kay for persuading ministers to dump the idea of merging SNH and SEPA. I would therefore not want to dismiss the entire report out of hand or suggest that it is not worth reading.

I can sense from the content of colleagues’ speeches that we have all read the briefings that have been sent to us by the national park authorities. If there is a core agreement among members, it is that people are interested in the range of challenges that the national parks address. Nigel Don was right to consider the positive achievements of the parks and to warn ministers to be careful not to unpick their work. Those who are responsible for managing our national parks should take some pride in the consensus in Parliament on their achievements. Getting us all to agree on something is no mean achievement.

When we consider the range of issues, it makes us think about the challenges that are faced by the boards: publicity; the imaginative and effective work that colleagues have talked about; economic development; the massive opportunities for tourism; the new facilities that have been built; the new housing that has been worked through with the rural housing associations; and, crucially, the investment in nature conservation and environmental protection. A huge amount of innovative work is being carried out. I note the work with young people in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs national park and the community and culture work in the Cairngorms.

**The Presiding Officer:** One minute.

**Sarah Boyack:** Are you telling me that I have one minute to go, Presiding Officer?

**The Presiding Officer:** You may certainly have another minute if you would like one.

**Sarah Boyack:** Fantastic. Thank you.

It has been a timely debate, and there has been a clear message to ministers that our national parks have been successful. The last point to focus on is the question of new national parks. Richard Lochhead asked Claire Baker the tantalising question of whether we would agree a new national park if it was promoted by a community organisation. A little more thinking through and clarification is needed—perhaps not in the cabinet secretary's closing speech, but in the future.

National parks have a national priority and receive national funding. As Mike Russell correctly pointed out, they must be of outstanding national importance. I would like a marine and coastal national park to be established and some good arguments have been made by NGOs for other land-based national parks—Mike Russell mentioned north Harris. There will be competing opportunities in the future, and one subject for a debate is how that process works in practice so that we do not have every regional park in Scotland saying, "We want to be a national park, and we'll get to be one tomorrow."

In the spirit of a little constructive criticism, I suggest that more work should be done on that and that members and the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee should be involved. There needs to be more thought on that issue, because the next stage in the national parks process is to ask about new national parks. What will the criteria be? Will they all be land based? I hope that we can consider a coastal marine park with some enthusiasm and involve all members in that debate. That will mean that we have a constructive discussion in which we may not necessarily all agree but in which we all at least know the ground rules and principles.

It is fantastic that at the beginning of the third session of the Scottish Parliament we are looking at how we build on the success of the first two national parks. That is a good message for the future.

**The Presiding Officer:** That was a sterling effort, Ms Boyack, almost worthy of national park status itself.

16:49

**The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment (Richard Lochhead):** I agree with Sarah Boyack that the debate has been good. I might take issue with Nigel Don, who I think confused the High Street of Braemar with the Highland wildlife park at Kincaig, but I know where he was coming from.

Out of self-interest, I will refer to upper Speyside. Residents of that area, which is in my constituency of Moray, might not feel lucky this week, after the United Kingdom Government's smash and grab on the local whisky sector, but my constituents there feel lucky to live in the midst of the spectacular landscape of Cairngorms national park. Last year, I went along to speak to the children of Glenlivet primary school. When I arrived at the school, which is adjacent to the cairn that marks the gateway to Cairngorms national park, I thought how lucky they are to go to school in such a spectacular location, surrounded by a rich cultural and natural heritage.

As Rhoda Grant was, I was proud to be involved in the first debates on national parks back in 2000. Many members will feel their age today—that was eight years ago, and it is now five years since the parks got up and running. The creation of the national parks had cross-party support back then and we are delighted that such cross-party support for the review has been expressed today.

In the previous parliamentary session, I was a member of the Environment and Rural Development Committee, which considered in 2007 John Swinney's member's bill to extend Cairngorms national park's southern boundary. Having heard the powerful case that was presented by John Swinney and—most of all—by communities, whose views the committee heard at first hand when it visited Blair Atholl, I know that the communities concerned will warmly welcome the Government's announcement that the park's southern boundary will be extended to include highland and eastern Perthshire. I say to John Swinney, "Your Government was listening to you." I pay tribute to all the campaigners and to Murdo Fraser, who mentioned his role in the campaign, although I was concerned that it has taken him several years to begin to warm to Michael Russell. Many of us warmed to him many years ago.

As many members have said, Scotland's national parks use a distinctive model with four aims that combine conservation of natural and cultural heritage with the sustainable use, enjoyment and development of an area's communities. National parks seek to conserve and enhance the qualities that make such places special, and offer significant benefits to the people of the whole of Scotland. Our national parks are helping to develop solutions for rural Scotland that improve people's lives.

The people, places and special qualities of the national parks are strongly connected and interdependent. The landscapes, habitats and species that give the areas their special character are actively shaped by land management and the communities that live there. Both national parks have successfully developed with their partners

the first Scottish national park plans, which will ensure that the public sector organisations that are involved in managing the areas are joined up and working towards a shared vision. To see the number of organisations that are involved, we have simply to look at the number of logos on the first page of the "Cairngorms National Park Plan 2007". It is great that all those organisations are working together.

As Jamie Hepburn said and Sarah Boyack reiterated, John Muir—that great Scot—is looking down on us from above and will be proud of the Scottish Parliament's actions. As Jamie Hepburn and Sarah Boyack also said, if there were no Scottish Parliament, there would be no national parks in Scotland.

Our national parks are important not only because of their iconic landscapes and outstanding environments, but because of their cultural heritage and qualities. Those reasons combine to give the national parks their distinctive identities. Scotland's national parks are not only places that are visited by millions of people each year: they are also living and working landscapes.

Many members talked about the potential for more tourism and John Scott talked about the greater potential for eco-tourism. The national parks are huge assets that have helped to put Scotland on the international stage. Our parks put the best of Scotland on show and contribute to increasing tourism revenue through sustainable means, while helping to look after nationally and internationally important species and habitats.

Cairngorms national park was the first national park in the UK to be accredited with the European charter for sustainable tourism and 50 businesses in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs national park have achieved green tourism business scheme accreditation. As many members highlighted, many innovative approaches to rural development are being taken in our national parks, which provide the opportunity to develop and test out innovative solutions to rural issues.

As Jamie McGrigor highlighted, in Cairngorms national park, for example, the land-based business training project, which has had wide acclaim, helps organise and fund many training courses for land-based businesses. In four years, more than 2,000 people from more than 200 businesses have been trained in a wide range of skills.

As many members highlighted, excellent examples of bottom-up rural development exist in our national parks. Parliament acknowledges that the parks are playing that crucial role. In Loch Lomond and the Trossachs national park, the successful communities future programme has led to more than 18 communities forming their own

community development trusts, through which local issues are being tackled to bring improvements to the people who live in those communities. A book has been published that sets out a step-by-step guide, so that communities throughout Scotland can learn from the excellent bottom-up approach that has been adopted in both national parks.

Rob Gibson and a number of other members highlighted the point that rural housing is central to rural development in our national parks. It is important that we encourage our national parks to seek out innovative solutions to address the affordable housing crisis in rural Scotland, rather than criticise them for doing so. That is vital—their efforts run parallel to many of the initiatives that the Scottish Government is progressing to address the rural housing crisis.

Michael Russell said in his opening speech—his remarks have been echoed by many members from all parties—that the enhancement and protection of local democracy is a paramount consideration of the forthcoming review. That will be the review's top priority. We all recognise that we have to protect local democracy and that, as Sarah Boyack highlighted, there has to be local buy-in for the work that is undertaken by national parks.

Scotland's national parks are parks for all. They allow people from all over Scotland and further afield, and from all walks of life, to enjoy, learn and benefit from special areas. Over five years, 4,200 people have gained a John Muir award while getting active and learning more about the nature and wildness of the Cairngorms national park.

Since their establishment in 2002 and 2003, both national parks have achieved a great deal, but there is more to be achieved. Even today, as Sarah Boyack said, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority won an award in the Scottish awards for quality planning for its work with the developer of the Carrick golf resort. That is another sign of excellence and I know that the whole Parliament will want to congratulate the authority on winning that award this morning.

The national park authorities have worked very hard since their establishment. They have led and enabled the action and partnerships that have been necessary to achieve the four statutory aims of the national parks. The authorities' role has been to facilitate and co-ordinate management of the national parks. However, as we all know, things do not stand still and reviewing after a reasonable time how things are working and identifying where improvements can be made is the natural course to take. We welcome the unanimous support for having the review now. As the Minister for Environment explained, now is the time to carry out the review of Scotland's national

park authorities. Many of the specific issues that have been raised today will be taken into account by the review.

I can only reiterate what Michael Russell said about the Lib Dem amendment: we cannot today pre-empt the review before it has even begun. It is illogical for many members of certain parties to say in Parliament today that they welcome the review, but then to give lots of reasons why there should not be change. That is why we will not support the Lib Dem amendment.

I will highlight how, as many members have said, the national parks are contributing to Parliament's and the Government's green objectives in respect of microrenewables, sustainable housing and local food produce. Many innovative measures are being adopted by our national parks to help Scotland achieve our greener Scotland objective and to ensure that we live in a greener nation. Of course, the national parks are ideally placed to play that role, particularly in relation to protecting biodiversity and our magnificent landscape. However, we must not forget the people who live there. This issue is about landscapes and the environment, but it is also about living, working communities. That must be at the heart of our future strategy for our national parks in Scotland.

In conclusion, we all agree that Scotland's national parks have been a big success, but we all agree that there is now a case for a review. We cannot be complacent: we have to look to the future, which is what the review is all about. I urge Parliament to support the Government's motion.

## Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:00

**The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):** The next item of business is consideration of three Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Bruce Crawford to move motions S3M-1541 to S3M-1543 inclusive, on the approval of Scottish statutory instruments.

*Motions moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Renewables Obligation (Scotland) Amendment Order 2008 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Official Statistics (Scotland) Order 2008 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Housing Support Grant (Scotland) Order 2008 be approved.—  
[Bruce Crawford.]

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



## Point of Order

17:00

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer.

Several areas of our standing orders deal with the publication of committee reports and the laying of reports and publications before the Parliament. You will be aware that a committee report is published today that deals with the planning proposal at the Menie estate. The report is already in the hands of a number of journalists who, understandably, are looking for comment even though it has been released under a no-approach embargo.

I entirely accept that the committee has followed standard and normal procedure and I do not question that, but will you examine the existing procedure and ask whether it would be appropriate for highly controversial reports—which will understandably provoke journalists to want to report comment from members quickly—to be given to members at the same time as the media?

**The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):** I thank the member for giving me advance notice of what I regret is not actually a point of order for me. As I think the member accepts, access to and distribution of committee reports is a matter for the committee, and particularly the convener of the committee. I will reflect on his words, but if he has any further concerns I suggest that he take them up with the convener of the Local Government and Communities Committee, Duncan McNeil MSP.

## Decision Time

17:01

**The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):** There are 13 questions to be put as a result of today's business.

The first question is, that amendment S3M-1549.2, in the name of Des McNulty, which seeks to amend motion S3M-1549, in the name of Jeremy Purvis, on transport, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

**For**

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

**AGAINST**

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)

Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)  
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)

Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)  
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 45, Against 80, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S3M-1549.1.1, in the name of Stewart Stevenson, which seeks to amend amendment S3M-1549.1, in the name of Alex Johnstone, on transport, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

**FOR**

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)  
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)

McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)  
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

#### AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)

Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 81, Against 44, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S3M-1549.1, in the name of Alex Johnstone, as amended, which seeks to amend motion S3M-1549, in the name of Jeremy Purvis, on transport, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

#### FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)  
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)  
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)

McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

#### AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)

Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 64, Against 61, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S3M-1549, in the name of Jeremy Purvis, on transport, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

#### FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)  
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)  
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)

McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

#### AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)

Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 64, Against 61, Abstentions 0.

*Motion, as amended, agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That the Parliament notes the decision to progress the Borders railway taken by the Parliament on 14 June 2006; regrets the delay in construction and the substantial increases in costs since the project's inception, commends the 450,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> saved by the project, and calls on the Scottish Government to work with Transport Scotland and the relevant local authorities to ensure that the project is completed as quickly and cost effectively as possible.

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S3M-1550.3, in the name of Stewart Maxwell, which seeks to amend motion S3M-1550, in the name of Liam McArthur, on fuel poverty, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

#### FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)  
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)

Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

#### AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)

Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

#### ABSTENTIONS

MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 48, Against 76, Abstentions 1.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S3M-1550.1, in the name of Johann Lamont, which seeks to amend motion S3M-1550, in the name of Liam McArthur, on fuel poverty, be agreed to.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S3M-1550.2, in the name of Jamie McGrigor, which seeks to amend motion S3M-1550, in the name of Liam McArthur, on fuel poverty, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

#### FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)  
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

**AGAINST**

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)  
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)

McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)  
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 16, Against 109, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S3M-1550, in the name of Liam McArthur, on fuel poverty, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

**FOR**

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)

Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

#### AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)  
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)

Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)  
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 65, Against 15, Abstentions 45.

*Motion, as amended, agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That the Parliament deplores the fact that while household fuel prices have risen by six times the rate of inflation over the past year, power companies' profits have risen by 500%; is concerned that, for every 5% increase in fuel prices, it is estimated that 40,000 more Scottish households become fuel poor, while almost 3,000 deaths per year are linked to living in cold, damp housing; believes that tackling the social, health and environmental impacts of fuel poverty can save people money, improve health and help to tackle climate change; calls for the re-establishment of the Fuel Poverty Forum with a remit to include the development of a one-stop-shop approach to fuel poverty that increases the installation of energy efficiency measures, efficient central heating systems, microgeneration and smart meter technology; recognises the importance of continued support for voluntary and statutory organisations providing debt management, money and energy advice to those most affected by fuel poverty; calls on the Scottish Government to consider the introduction of a local tax rebate to provide a further incentive to householders to invest in energy efficiency and



microgeneration packages, and further calls for changes to planning rules to make it easier to install micropower.

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S3M-1548.2, in the name of David Stewart, which seeks to amend motion S3M-1548, in the name of Michael Russell, on national parks, be agreed to.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S3M-1548.1, in the name of John Scott, which seeks to amend motion S3M-1548, in the name of Michael Russell, on national parks, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

#### FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)  
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)  
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)

Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

#### ABSTENTIONS

Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)

Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 109, Against 0, Abstentions 16.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S3M-1548.3, in the name of Jim Hume, which seeks to amend motion S3M-1548, in the name of Michael Russell, on national parks, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

#### FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)  
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)  
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)  
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

#### AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)  
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)  
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

#### ABSTENTIONS

MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 60, Against 64, Abstentions 1.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S3M-1548, in the name of Michael Russell, on national parks, as amended, be agreed to.

*Motion, as amended, agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That the Parliament notes the forthcoming strategic review of Scotland's two national parks; welcomes the opportunities that the national parks give to Scotland's citizens and visitors, and in particular commends their contribution to the greener Scotland agenda; believes that the following issues should be included for specific consideration in the review: the effectiveness of the national parks in achieving the main objectives set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, the success of the national parks in building community engagement and involvement in the development of both parks, and whether the boundaries of the parks should be reviewed, and calls on the Scottish Government to address concerns regarding the structural effectiveness of the national park authorities as presently constituted with a view to enhancing local participation and to address ongoing issues with regard to the southern boundary of the Cairngorms National Park.

**The Presiding Officer:** I propose to ask a single question on motions S3M-1541 to S3M-1543 inclusive, on the approval of Scottish statutory instruments. The question is, that motions S3M-1541 to S3M-1543 inclusive, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on the approval of SSIs, be agreed to.

*Motions agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Renewables Obligation (Scotland) Amendment Order 2008 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Official Statistics (Scotland) Order 2008 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Housing Support Grant (Scotland) Order 2008 be approved.

## Iraq War

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan):** The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S3M-1346, in the name of Aileen Campbell, on no end in sight to the war in Iraq. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

*Motion debated,*

That the Parliament notes the continuing effort of Rose Gentle from Pollok, Glasgow, and Beverley Clarke from Stafford to have the legality of the Iraq War tested in court; further notes that the Stop the War Coalition has called demonstrations in Glasgow and elsewhere on 15 March 2008 to mark the fifth anniversary of the start of the conflict; recalls the massive worldwide demonstrations against the war on 15 February 2003, in which many MSPs and people from the south of Scotland and across the country participated; believes that the legality of the war should be tested in the courts and continue to be discussed in the wider public arena; supports the demonstration taking place in Glasgow on 15 March, and believes that work in the international community should continue to speedily bring about peace and stability to Iraq.

17:13

**Aileen Campbell (South of Scotland) (SNP):** It is clearly with much sadness that we are having this debate. Who in the Parliament can feel pleased that we are discussing the fifth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq when troops and civilians are still being killed and when people across the world who dissented so strongly from the decision to invade are still being ignored?

If we did not continue to display our opposition to the war and to use every avenue open to us to show our dissent and to reaffirm that the actions that the United Kingdom Government took at this time five years ago were not taken in our name, we would be failing humanity and the memories of the people who have died as a result of the conflict.

It just so happens that, five years ago, I could voice my abhorrence of the war only by joining anti-war groups and taking to the streets. Five years on from those actions, I have had the privilege of being able to secure a debate on the subject in our Scottish Parliament. This is my first members' business debate and it is timely. My motion supports the actions of Rose Gentle in her pursuit of justice as we mark the fifth anniversary of the invasion.

I cannot think of an issue that, in my 12 years of active political engagement, has galvanised a generation of political activists more than the Iraq war. With colleagues in the Scottish Socialist Party and the Scottish Green Party, I set up the anti-war movement at the University of Glasgow. The movement was the fastest-growing group on campus, which, given that its membership came

from an age group and section of society that is often accused of apathy, demonstrated people's motivation to ensure that their voices of opposition to Tony Blair's actions were heard. Alas, as we all know, the people were ignored.

On 15 February 2003, people took to the streets with a sense of optimism that the Government would listen and Tony Blair's path could change from one of intent towards conflict to one of diplomacy and reason. The 2 million people who marched in London, Glasgow and other towns and cities throughout the UK exploded the myth of political apathy. It looked as though people power might win the day and the heart and mind of a Prime Minister who did not seek unpopularity as a badge of honour. Folk who felt distanced from politics took their chance to re-engage.

What was the aftermath of all that action? *The Guardian* summed up the situation when it described the bleakness that stemmed from a political elite that wanted to keep the public's sustained disquiet at arm's length and carry on with business as usual, despite the fact that a disastrous invasion had gone ahead for deceitful purposes. That is what hurts most: our country was taken into a war that the people evidently did not want or believe in and of which people did not accept the legality.

Far too many experts in international law think that the war did not comply with international law for us simply to ignore the issue and let its legality go untested. The people who marched five years ago and Rose Gentle and other relatives of people who have fought and died still do not know whether the decision to invade Iraq was legitimate.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations at that time, Kofi Annan, said of the invasion:

"I have indicated it was not in conformity with the UN charter from our point of view, from the charter point of view, it was illegal."

Elizabeth Wilmshurst, the deputy legal adviser in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, wrote in her resignation letter:

"I cannot agree that it is lawful to use force against Iraq without a second Security Council resolution ... I cannot in conscience go along with advice—within the Office or to the public or Parliament—which asserts the legitimacy of military action without such a resolution, particularly since an unlawful use of force on such a scale amounts to the crime of aggression".

Professor Philippe Sands and other notable academics said in a letter to *The Guardian* in 2003:

"There is no justification under international law for the use of military force against Iraq. The UN charter outlaws the use of force with only two exceptions: individual or collective self-defence in response to an armed attack and action authorised by the security council ... There are currently no grounds for a claim to use such force in self-

defence. The doctrine of pre-emptive self-defence against an attack that might arise ... has no basis in international law."

Who can submit a robust counter-argument to that? Those quotations illustrate that the rationale to go to war was illegitimate and unlawful and that the war has proven to be an expensive and destructive mistake.

It is no wonder that the families whose loved ones are serving in the military are calling for an inquiry into the legality of that most hideous conflict. I spoke to Rose Gentle the other day, to let her know about the debate. She told me that the military families who want an inquiry are desperate to find the truth and cannot understand why, if there is nothing to hide, they will not be granted an inquiry. They are not calling for an inquiry as a press stunt or to get their photos in the paper; they are doing so because they want to find out whether their sons and daughters lost their lives needlessly—and if they did, to get answers and some form of redress.

All members of the Scottish Parliament will sympathise with the sorrow and grief that those families feel and respect their determination not to let their campaign wither on the vine. As Rose Gentle told me, the campaign's aim is to ensure that what happened does not happen again. The families know the pain of war and what it is to suffer. They are feeling the consequences of the UK's decision to invade Iraq. Their campaign is based on the hope that the Iraq war can be the illegal war to end all illegal wars. They hope to restore the rule of international law and to ensure that no more soldiers and innocent Iraqi civilians die because of that futile conflict.

I want to use this opportunity to show the people who marched on 15 February 2003 and those who will be at Blythswood Square on Saturday that politicians care passionately about humanity. Politics does not need to be about backroom deals, imperialistic conquests and hidden documents; it can and should be about openness, listening and doing what is right. That is why politicians from the Parliament should march in solidarity with Rose Gentle on Saturday.

My motion calls for a positive and peaceful resolution, but that can be achieved only if there is full honesty about, and understanding of, how the war began. If Scotland had had the powers of a normal country, with a top-table voice in the UN, it would have had an opportunity to stand up for the rule of international law. That is why I want Scotland to take its place in the international community. I joined the Scottish National Party not to change flags but to change society and to play a role in making Scotland a centre for fostering peace and reconciliation throughout the world.

Another Scotland is possible and another world is possible. We must find the gumption to do our bit to ensure that we are never dragged into a murderous conflict again.

17:20

**Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab):** I thank Aileen Campbell for lodging the motion, which I supported. I acknowledge that it is timely to discuss the matter in advance of Saturday's demonstration to show our support for the stop the war coalition.

Members will note from today's *Business Bulletin* that the president of the stop the war coalition—Tony Benn, a prominent member of the Labour Party—is next week's time for reflection leader. That was the idea of my comrade, Bill Butler. I commend him for it and for good timing, as it has turned out.

It is appropriate to recognise the courage, dignity and determination of mothers such as Rose Gentle and Beverley Clarke five years on from the start of a war that cruelly robbed them of their sons. The Parliament debated the Iraq war on a number of occasions before it was launched and in the aftermath, and I participated in most if not all of those debates. It is a tragedy—albeit a predictable one—that we are still debating it five years on.

In one of the first debates, in January 2003, I said:

"Whether members believe that it is right or wrong to attack Iraq, they must recognise the consequences. ... there will be consequences for our armed services and for others who are drafted in, such as doctors and nurses, and there might be consequences for our civilians at home."—[*Official Report*, 30 January 2003; c 17649.]

All those consequences were suffered: families, including Rose and Beverley, lost loved ones in the war, and the so-called war on terror has since moved directly to our shores, including an attack on Glasgow airport.

Also as predicted—and as is the case in modern warfare—the main casualties of the war were Iraqi civilians, including children. Those people were not "collateral damage" as the perpetrators of war like to put it euphemistically; they were ordinary people, indiscriminately killed in a war that was not only of extremely dubious legality but most certainly unnecessary and inhumane. We should also remember that the people who were bombed so that they could be "liberated" had already suffered at the hands of a US and UK-supported policy of sanctions against the Iraqi people that killed millions.

It was hoped in March 2003 that the Parliament could send a strong united message by voting for an amendment in John McAllion's name, which I

and four comrades—including Bill Butler, who has stayed for this evening's debate—supported. The amended motion would simply have said, "This Parliament believes that no case for military action against Iraq has been proven" but, sadly, the amendment was not supported by enough colleagues to succeed. I know that some regretted that later. Speaking to the amendment, John McAllion said:

"That is a simple but powerful statement. It has the potential to unite all members of the Parliament who are concerned to stop the outbreak of what now appears to be an imminent attack on the Iraqi people.

We know that the United Nations has not sanctioned any attack on Iraq. There is no second Security Council resolution authorising such an attack. Those who believe that any attack without explicit UN sanction and authorisation would be wrong and a breach of international law can vote for the amendment, because without such sanction and authorisation the case for an attack on Iraq has simply not been made or proven."—[*Official Report*, 13 March 2003; c 19442.]

It was neither made nor proven, nor has it been since, but I am sure that it does not give John McAllion or anybody else any satisfaction to reflect that what he said was correct.

The destruction of Iraq continues. A million or more are dead and millions have been driven from their homes. The social and economic infrastructure has been devastated and the powerlessness and hopelessness remain. We also should not forget Afghanistan. Only today it was reported that two women and two children were killed in an air strike carried out by forces there.

The countless senseless deaths act as a constant reminder that the decision to invade Iraq has resulted in endless suffering for the victims—not only those who were killed, but those who have died in the aftermath as a result of disease, starvation and an inability to access health care. Nonetheless, British troops remain there. Our years of debate mount up, as does the death toll of the innocents, and Iraq still remains an occupied country.

I take this opportunity to express, again, my fervent opposition to the war. I do so on behalf of other members of the Labour Party who protested and marched against the war. I call for an immediate end to the military occupation of Iraq and the full transfer of sovereignty to its people. I will continue to oppose vigorously the seemingly endless war that is imposed by the US and its allies on sovereign states, including the threats that are currently being made against Cuba. I hope that tonight all members can unite in support of peace and stability in Iraq and elsewhere.

17:25

**Jamie Hepburn (Central Scotland) (SNP):** I thank my friend and colleague Aileen Campbell for

securing this debate, which, as she said, is timely. It is important and right that the Parliament should have a chance to discuss what is happening in Iraq today and how we arrived at this position over the past five years. My only concern is that tonight's debate may not be long enough to do those matters justice.

Although the debate is timely, I imagine that many are surprised that we are in a situation that makes it necessary. The fact that there has been a US and UK military presence in Iraq for five years and that there is no sign that that presence will end any time soon is testament to the lack of forward planning and thinking through of the consequences by those who took us into conflict during the headlong rush to war in 2003.

The consequences of the decision have been severe. According to CNN, there have been 4,279 coalition deaths in Iraq since 2003, and approaching 30,000 American troops have been wounded in action. Those deaths and woundings have scarred a generation of young servicemen and women, mostly of my generation, for no considerable good. Nor must we forget the tens of thousands of violent deaths of innocent Iraqi men, women and children since the invasion in 2003. I offer no more specific number because it is impossible to do so, as no official count of the Iraqi dead is made. That is significant, because it sends out the dangerous message that their dead—the dead men, women and children of Iraq—are worth less than our dead. Estimates of Iraqi casualties vary from the fairly conservative 50,000 to more than 1 million, but what are 900,000 or so dead individuals when no one is really counting?

We do well to remind ourselves that many of those who have died in Iraq have died as a result of terrorism that was unleashed in the internecine chaos that followed the invasion. One of the great ironies of the invasion is that its main protagonist, the United States Government, invaded on the dubious basis that Iraq was involved in the promotion of fundamentalist, Islamic-sponsored terrorism. The fact that Osama bin Laden was no friend of the Baathist regime and called Saddam Hussein an infidel was conveniently overlooked by, or unknown to, George Bush.

As repressive as the Saddam regime was, terrorism was not a domestic problem in Iraq before the invasion of 2003. The lack of forward planning and the dismantling of the state infrastructure of Iraq following the Pyrrhic victory of the coalition of the willing contributed directly to the unleashing of terrorism on the Iraqi people.

I have mentioned that the war on terror formed part of the rationale for going to war, but the basis for the war was formed above all by the idea that Iraq was attempting to build a weapons capacity that could strike at our shores within 45 minutes.

The fact that Iraq has been laid waste to for five years and not one scrap of evidence for the existence of such weapons has turned up gives the lie to the idea that they ever existed.

We all now know that the war in Iraq was about regime change and the desire to control that country's resources. I had no desire to support the maintenance of the Saddam regime, which was undeniably a barbaric form of government, but Saddam was equally barbaric when he was an ally of the United States and Britain against Iran; he perpetrated some of his worst crimes against the Iraqi people at that time. Where was the moral outrage from the American and British Governments then? There was none—Saddam Hussein was feted as an ally and Donald Rumsfeld was sent to meet and greet him. The old maxim "my enemy's enemy is my friend" held true in relation to Saddam Hussein—until such time as it did not suit.

I agree with the sentiments that Aileen Campbell has expressed in her motion. I hope that the legality of the war will, one day, be tested in the courts and that, when it is, those war criminals who are responsible—including George Bush and Tony Blair—are made to pay for their crimes.

17:30

**Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con):** This is a timely debate. However, I argue that it is timely not because there is a march on Saturday, but because over the past two or three weeks the violence in Iraq has become considerably worse than it has been for six months. Last week, 69 people were killed by a roadside bomb; 44 people, including British soldiers, were killed on Tuesday; seven people were killed by a car bomb yesterday; and today we heard about the kidnapped archbishop who has been found dead—we do not know whether he was murdered. So, it is a timely debate.

Jamie Hepburn stated that nobody cares about the body count in Iraq and that work is not being done to look into it. He does a great disservice to the World Health Organization and its work: its staff are risking life and limb day in and day out to work out what the body count is. It has produced what it thinks is a reasonable estimate of 150,000 people killed, which is a horrendous number.

I do not want to look to the past, although the Conservatives agree that a Privy Council inquiry into the origins and conduct of the war ought to go ahead. William Hague has been quite clear about that. I want to focus on what we should try to do going forward. We find ourselves in the position that we are in, but it is critical that we try hard to influence what happens going forward so that we get—as Aileen Campbell's motion says—an

effective way to bring about peace and stability. We probably all want to see effective peace and stability, although we may disagree across the chamber about how that can best be achieved.

As far as we are concerned, future withdrawal of troops must depend on conditions on the ground. We must listen to advice from military commanders about what is best. We hear people promising a timetable for withdrawal, especially in the current US presidential campaign, but I argue that a prescriptive timetable for withdrawal is also a timetable for extremists. It is not just about what members have described as an "invasion" of Iraq by foreign troops; the situation is far more complex than any of those who have spoken in the debate have acknowledged. We see Shia death squads all over the country. We see Sunni extremists and rivalry even among the Shia groups in the south of Iraq. A simple withdrawal or pulling out of the troops at this stage, without military advice, would be even more catastrophic than the current situation.

**Jamie Hepburn:** Does Gavin Brown accept that the situation that he describes in Iraq was created by one thing, which was the invasion of Iraq in 2003?

**Gavin Brown:** I do not accept that. Even if that were true, we would still find ourselves in the position in which we find ourselves. It is important to focus on how we go forward. The death count increased markedly in February 2006, following the bombing of an important Shia shrine. The case is not as simple as that which Jamie Hepburn puts forward.

A survey that was published in *The Economist* last year gets to the heart of the issue. The first question was about the extent to which Iraqi people supported or opposed the presence of coalition forces in Iraq. Six per cent strongly supported it, 16 per cent somewhat supported it, 32 per cent somewhat opposed it, and 46 per cent strongly opposed it. That is fairly compelling. The second question was how long Iraqi people thought US and other coalition forces should remain in Iraq. Thirty-five per cent thought that they should leave now, 38 per cent thought that they should remain until security is restored, 14 per cent thought that they should remain until the Iraqi Government is stronger, and 11 per cent thought that they should remain until Iraqi security forces can operate independently. Almost everybody, apart from that 35 per cent, felt that the troops should stay until security is restored.

17:34

**Bill Wilson (West of Scotland) (SNP):** "No end in sight", says the motion. Hard to see the end? The truth is that the assault on the Iraqi people

has been going on for so long that it is hard to see the beginning.

The war started with Iraq's decision to invade Kuwait. The lies also started then. How often were we informed that we were going to liberate Kuwait? "To liberate" has a very specific meaning for me: it means "to hand back control of a country to the people of that country." That was never the intention in moving coalition forces into Kuwait; to misquote the American president Franklin D Roosevelt, "We wanted our son of a bitch back in charge."

We followed the ending of the war in Kuwait with a prolonged and continuous assault on the people of Iraq. There were bombing raids on roads, bridges, power stations, factories that produced concrete and so on. We methodically destroyed a large section of Iraq.

**Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP):** I apologise for intervening on the member, but, given the honourable position of the Liberal Democrats at Westminster on the issue, does he share my disappointment that not one Liberal Democrat member is contributing to the debate?

**Bill Wilson:** I share that disappointment.

At the same time that we were methodically destroying a large section of Iraq, we were killing large numbers of the Iraqi people. Bombing was not enough; we needed sanctions, too.

In order to make sure of things, we added a second—illegal—war to the first one: a war against weapons of mass destruction. Of course, we did not do that because we disapprove of WMDs. The United Kingdom is very much in favour of WMDs—after all, we are about to spend £100 billion building and maintaining a lovely new collection of WMDs. We just think that no country other than the UK or the US can have them. In terms of the war in Iraq, WMDs were a digression. No WMDs were found; no WMD could be found. The United Nations inspectors had made it clear that Iraq had no nuclear capability and no chemical capability—no WMDs were present.

Suddenly, the war became a war for democracy: Saddam was an evil dictator. Saddam must be fought. The minor fact that UK ministers had visited nice Mr Hussein in the past; the minor fact that we had sold nice Mr Hussein the ingredients for chemical weapons; and the minor fact that Mr Hussein had been a friend was not a problem. Well, they might have been problems, but they were—of course—forgotten.

We were told that it was a war for democracy, but it is a strange kind of democracy that can be imposed over the barrel of a gun and with the use of torture. It is a strange kind of democracy that was backed by Bush's threats to bomb off-

message television stations—a democracy in which the Iraqi Government could be ordered to rewrite its constitution. Whatever the real reason for the invasion of Iraq, it was not democracy.

The Iraqi Government is now under severe pressure to pass a new oil law, the sole purpose of which is to hand control of its oil from the national people to the multinational companies, to those companies' great benefit. Whatever the reason for the war, it was not democracy. If we had had any interest in democracy, we would not have backed nice Mr Hussein in the first place.

**Gavin Brown:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Bill Wilson:** No. I am sorry. I have already taken one.

Of course, if the UK had any interest in democracy, human rights or basic justice, we would not have ethnically cleansed Diego Garcia, assisted in the genocide in East Timor or supported Suharto, Pinochet, or Saddam Hussein. The list of what the UK would not have done if it believed in democracy is almost endless.

We imposed sanctions on a country that imported 70 per cent of its food and relied on 90 per cent of its oil for foreign income. The result of those sanctions is 500,000 children under five dead and between 1 and 2 million Iraqis dead. Denis Halliday, the former United Nations humanitarian co-coordinator in Baghdad, who resigned in 1998 in protest against the sanctions, described the sanctions in one word: "genocide". More people died under sanctions against Iraq than died in the genocide in Rwanda. The west did not hesitate to condemn the genocide in Rwanda. Do we hear much nowadays about the sanctions?

In a just world, the political leaders who called for and supported those sanctions should stand trial for crimes against humanity. We—the UK and the US—followed those sanctions with war. We followed slaughter with more slaughter. We ordered the United Nations observers out and we commenced killing. We called it "shock and awe"; in Gernika, they called it something else.

The war in Iraq was not about democracy or human rights; it was about power. The war in Iraq was built not on principle or truth, but on deceit. The war in Iraq has not liberated or ended torture; it has left over 1 million dead. I say to Gavin Brown that the figure is not 150,000 dead, but well over 1 million. That is the reliable figure from *The Lancet* survey and the University of Oxford study. One hundred and fifty thousand is a vast underestimate.

In 2000, the Lord Advocate acknowledged that the rule of customary international law is a rule of Scots law. There can be no doubt that the

perpetrators of the Iraq war can stand trial in this country. Equally, there can be no doubt that were they to do so, the signal that it would send to future political leaders would make this world a safer place.

17:39

**The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani):** At one point in the debate it suddenly hit me that, five years along the line, here we are yet again debating the war in Iraq. I turned to my colleague Jamie Hepburn and said, "Isn't this so depressing? This country has been at war for five years."

I thank Aileen Campbell for bringing the debate to the Parliament and I thank all the members who have spoken. We have heard from members of the Labour Party, the SNP and the Conservatives, and I know that Patrick Harvie would have stayed if he could have done to speak on behalf of the Greens. Although we might not all agree on everything that has been said, one point that has come across clearly is the heartfelt conviction that everyone has that the war should be over and that the actions that took us into the war should be investigated properly. Aileen Campbell's debate is on a sombre topic and is, as she said, tinged by the sadness and personal loss of many individuals throughout the country.

Elaine Smith referred to the first debate in the Parliament on Iraq, with speeches from John McAllion and many others. It was clear from that debate that the Parliament felt that, no matter what powers are reserved from Scotland's Parliament and Government and held at Westminster, morality, humanity and common decency certainly are not and never can be reserved. In 2003, there was a big sense that people power could change the course of world events but, as I said, here we are five years later still debating an on-going conflict. At that time, we marched and said that the war was not in our name, but it was in our name that we were taken into an illegal war by the then Prime Minister. The conflict is in our name and it is the responsibility of each and every one of us—I know that many people in Scotland are deeply ashamed of that.

Many service personnel have died in those five years, including 18 Scots and four others from Scottish regiments. Each of those deaths is an individual tragedy. It is important and appropriate to note the contribution that our soldiers, sailors and fliers make to the preservation of our peace, as well as the contribution that Scots have made to peacekeeping and peacemaking throughout the world, often under the auspices of the United Nations. That should always be remembered. They have ended up in Iraq in an illegal war, which is a difficult situation for service personnel to be in.



Whatever the rights and wrongs of the conflict, there is absolutely no doubt that our servicemen and women deserve our support. Likewise, I am absolutely sure that every member wishes the Iraqi people well. I know that every member will offer a hope that Iraqis can finally live in peace, control their country and be free to use their nation's obvious wealth—which many members have mentioned—to benefit their people.

In the 1950s, Dag Hammarskjöld and Ralph Bunche changed the United Nations into an active peace-seeking organisation and developed the principles of peacekeeping—disinterest, parity, permission and negotiation. We should all cherish that legacy and we should expect our political leaders to cherish it and to act on it on our behalf. Scotland believes fundamentally in peace and prosperity and in the rule of international law. We have heard this week about citizenship and that we should all swear oaths of allegiance to the country. People in this country and in England and Wales and the north of Ireland all show their patriotism in how they care for their countries and those about them. They want and deserve a Government in which they can trust. If people feel that the leader of that Government told lies to take them into an illegal conflict, it is a bit rich of those who were involved to demand that we show them that we care about our country. It would be far better if those who are in power showed the people whom they supposedly serve that they care about their country and the people in it.

Members have used previous debates in the Parliament to question the legality and morality of the conflict in Iraq and of wider international policy. Tonight, Bill Wilson gave a bit of a history of the so-called ethical foreign policy that has been perpetrated in our name for many years. Scotland's voice must be heard. There is anger that soldiers were sent into combat with equipment that appeared to be unfit for purpose, and concern that the troops are still on duty in Iraq. It is in that larger court of public opinion that morality and decency are judged, and each of us here has a say in that judgment.

I wish the people well who march on Saturday for peace. I hope that it is as big a march as previous ones. Sadly, five years down the line from when the war began, people are getting a bit dejected. They think, "What's the point? Those who are in power and supposedly represent us, aren't doing so," and that turns to apathy. I urge as many people as possible to turn out at the march, to show clearly that it is still our opinion that this is a war that should never have been, that it is a war that should be stopped and that we need solutions to bring our Scottish troops home. Many other countries have pulled out of Iraq.

There was a lot of talk about hearts and minds when the war was entered into. What is in the hearts and minds of the people of Scotland is that we should not be in Iraq and that there should be proper reparation by those who took us into the war. What is in the hearts and minds of the people of Scotland is that we should support the Iraqi people for peace and prosperity in future—and that we need some truth.

*Meeting closed at 17:46.*



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