

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 19 June 2008

Session 3

£5.00

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body 2008.

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

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

CONTENTS

Thursday 19 June 2008

Debates

Col.

FINANCIAL OUTTURN 2007-08	9931
<i>Statement—[John Swinney].</i>	
The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney)	9931
YOUTH JUSTICE	9943
<i>Motion moved—[Fergus Ewing].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Pauline McNeill].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Bill Aitken].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Mike Pringle].</i>	
The Minister for Community Safety (Fergus Ewing)	9943
Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)	9946
Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con)	9950
Mike Pringle (Edinburgh South) (LD)	9952
Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP)	9955
Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)	9957
Christina McKelvie (Central Scotland) (SNP)	9959
Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)	9961
Hugh O'Donnell (Central Scotland) (LD)	9963
Nigel Don (North East Scotland) (SNP)	9964
Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab)	9966
Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)	9968
Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD)	9971
John Lamont (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)	9973
Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)	9976
The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill)	9978
QUESTION TIME	9982
FIRST MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME	9991
QUESTION TIME	10003
HEALTH INEQUALITIES	10019
<i>Statement—[Shona Robison].</i>	
The Minister for Public Health (Shona Robison)	10019
SCOTTISH REGISTER OF TARTANS BILL: STAGE 1	10034
<i>Motion moved—[Jamie McGrigor].</i>	
Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con)	10034
Tavish Scott (Shetland) (LD)	10037
The Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism (Jim Mather)	10039
Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab)	10041
Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)	10043
John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)	10044
Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)	10046
Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)	10047
Christopher Harvie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)	10048
David Whitton (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)	10049
Stuart McMillan (West of Scotland) (SNP)	10051
Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab)	10053
Keith Brown (Ochil) (SNP)	10054
Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con)	10056
Elaine Murray	10057
Jim Mather	10058
Jamie McGrigor	10060
POINTS OF ORDER	10063
DECISION TIME	10065
GLASGOW PASSPORT OFFICE	10072
<i>Motion debated—[Sandra White].</i>	

Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP).....	10072
Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)	10074
Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con)	10076
Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP).....	10078
Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD)	10079
The Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism (Jim Mather)	10081

Oral Answers

Col.

QUESTION TIME

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE	9982
---------------------------------	------

GENERAL QUESTIONS	9982
--------------------------------	------

A96 (Inveramsay Bridge).....	9986
BEAR Scotland (Meetings).....	9988
Norwich Union (Dundee)	9983
Police Numbers (Strathclyde).....	9987
Redhouse Roundabout (Upgrading)	9989
Regeneration (Barrhead).....	9985
Scottish Ambulance Service (Braemar)	9982
Stroke Services.....	9984

FIRST MINISTER'S QUESTION TIME	9991
---	------

"Lessons for Mental Health Care in Scotland"	10000
Cabinet (Meetings)	9995
Engagements.....	9991
National Concessionary Travel Scheme	9999
Prime Minister (Meetings).....	9994
Shell (Strike Action)	9998

QUESTION TIME

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE	10003
---------------------------------	-------

EUROPE, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS AND CULTURE	10003
---	-------

Common Fisheries Policy	10003
European Union (Alliance of Southern European Members)	10008
Intergovernmental and Interparliamentary Contacts	10007
International Development Strategy (Business Involvement)	10005
News Coverage (BBC Trust Report)	10006
Robert Burns (250th Anniversary)	10009
Scottish Opera (Subsidy).....	10010

EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING	10010
--	-------

Additional Support Needs.....	10014
Class Sizes	10017
Free School Meals.....	10013
Graduate Endowment (Costs)	10011
Kinship Carers (Financial Support)	10010
Primary Schools (Catchment Areas)	10015

Scottish Parliament

Thursday 19 June 2008

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

Financial Outturn 2007-08

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The first item of business is a statement by John Swinney, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth, on the financial outturn for 2007-08. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of his 10-minute statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions during it.

09:15

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): I welcome this opportunity to inform Parliament of the provisional budget outturn for 2007-08.

Although we inherited the 2007-08 budget when we came into office last May, the responsibility for managing it lay firmly with the new Administration—and we have managed it to a level of precision unseen by any previous Administration.

The 2007-08 budget was originally approved on a departmental basis, but we used the opportunity that was afforded by the autumn budget revision last November to formally restate that budget on the basis of the Government's portfolio structure. That reflected the establishment of a smaller and more effective ministerial team and put in place a much more streamlined structure for the Scottish Government, which is better equipped to deliver our policies and priorities.

I also used the autumn budget revision to draw down from HM Treasury more than £600 million in end-year flexibility balances, which was necessary to cover two major additional factors that we inherited from the previous Administration: first, we required resources to meet the bulk of the original budget overcommitment of £220 million; and secondly, we required resources to meet the additional costs of capital expenditure programmes that had been approved by the previous Administration.

In addition to meeting those obligations, I provided additional capital funding of £100 million to support a range of projects in the higher and further education sectors, and funding of £30 million to meet some early policy commitments of the new Government, which included the removal

of bridge tolls in February and increased support for Scottish international development projects.

At the second of the routine budget revisions in the spring of this year, I used the opportunity to formalise a number of transfers between budget lines in order to align them with predicted spend for the rest of the year. That was in accordance with normal procedures and the principles of sound financial management. In any given year, there will be fluctuations in budget performance, and this Government—just like our predecessors—has addressed those factors.

As a clear demonstration of that sound financial management, I am delighted to report today that the provisional outturn for 2007-08 is expenditure of £27,367 million against a departmental expenditure limit budget of £27,409 million—an underspend of just £42 million.

The end-year flexibility of £42 million that has been generated by the provisional underspend is by far the lowest total ever recorded by any Scottish Administration. It represents less than 0.2 per cent of our DEL budget, which is equivalent to less than half a day's spending by the Scottish Government. That is in stark contrast to the levels of underspend reported at this time over the past four years: £623 million in 2003-04; £382 million in 2004-05; £139 million in 2005-06; and £135 million in 2006-07. That amounts to an accumulation of £1,279 million in underspends between 2003-04 and 2006-07, which the previous Administration left to languish in HM Treasury's coffers.

The achievement of such a low level of underspending reflects our proactive approach to budget management and our desire to make maximum use of the resources that are available to us. For the first time, the end-year flexibility balance, which is held on account at HM Treasury and is due to appear in its public expenditure 2007-08 provisional outturn publication in July, will have decreased significantly.

The opening balance of Scottish end-year flexibility at HM Treasury of £1,528.6 million, which was published last July, will have fallen by nearly £600 million to around £950 million. This is the first time since 2002-03 that the end-year flexibility balance held by HM Treasury has fallen below £1 billion. I need hardly remind Parliament that that is Scotland's money, which is intended to be used for the benefit and the interests of the people of Scotland. Where the previous Administration failed to make use of those resources, we have already shown that we will not be so tardy in using them for the benefit of the people of Scotland. Not only have we reduced the balance by £600 million during the past financial year, but we have secured access to the vast majority of the remaining balance over the next three years.

The unprecedented agreement that I made with HM Treasury as part of the spending review settlement ensures that we have guaranteed access to £300 million in 2008-09; £400 million in 2009-10; and £174 million in 2010-11. That is a total of £874 million, which has already been factored into our spending plans as outlined in the spending review document that was published last November.

Outturn against the Budget (Scotland) Act 2007 limits will be published in the Scottish Government consolidated accounts and is expected to show an underspend of approximately £216 million, subject to audit. That includes variances of approximately £100 million in capital charges; £21 million resulting from lower demand in student loans; and £21 million in national health service and teachers' pensions. Those variances are outside the departmental expenditure limit and have no impact on the delivery of our policies or the resources that are available to the people of Scotland.

The underspend of £42 million represents our headline underspend figure and measures our performance in managing the Scottish block of public expenditure. However, in announcing and celebrating that achievement, we recognise that there is no room for complacency. The efficient and effective management of our budget remains a key characteristic of the Government.

We are pursuing our programme of investment in the future of Scotland, despite the lowest increase in the United Kingdom spending settlement for Scotland since devolution. Parliament will recall that, over the next three years, funding will grow at an average of only 1.4 per cent per year, compared with an annual average increase of 4.3 per cent over the three years of the spending review 2004.

We will pursue our programme by continuing to govern with a sharp focus on delivering the maximum value for the taxpayer and the maximum impact on the Government's purpose. The outturn position that was achieved in 2007-08 provides ample evidence that we are fulfilling our promise to the people of Scotland to act wisely in the Scottish interest.

We will also govern to ensure that we retain in Scotland, for use in developing the Scottish economy and public services, as much of our resources as we can.

It remains a key objective to ensure that we maximise the use of the resources that are available to us and avoid any suggestion of a return to the bad old days of leaving languishing at Westminster £1.5 billion of budget that is intended to benefit the people of Scotland.

This Scottish Government has managed, and intends to continue to manage, the budget

effectively in the best interests of the people of Scotland. However, it is becoming clear that we will have to overcome significant obstacles put in our way by the financial arrangements under which we operate and the actions of the UK Government.

We have been denied around £120 million of consequential arisings from the £1.2 billion of additional funding that has been given to HM Prison Service in England and Wales as a result of the Carter review.

Lord Sutherland said in his report published in April that it was "clearly contrary to equity" that people in Scottish care homes were denied attendance allowance while those in care homes elsewhere in the UK received it, and he called for the restoration of £30 million a year to the Scottish budget.

The continued suspension of the council tax benefit mechanism remains contrary to the spirit of "Funding the Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales and Northern Ireland Assembly: Statement of Funding Policy" and is estimated to deny Scotland approximately £100 million per annum of funding to which we are properly entitled.

We need to be sure of a fairer deal on issues such as animal disease after the lessons of last year's impact on Scottish budgets of foot-and-mouth disease in the south of England. In that situation, policy is devolved to us but budgets are retained by Whitehall and spent at its discretion.

I intend to continue to pursue those and other issues with the UK Government to ensure that Scotland gets its fair share of funding and that its people are treated equitably.

The Government has today announced a level of underspend that is the lowest ever achieved by any Scottish Administration. It bears testimony to our sound and prudent financial management and demonstrates our intention to use all the resources that are available for the benefit of the people of Scotland.

The Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary will now take questions on issues that were raised in his statement. We have around 20 minutes for such questions, after which we must move to the next item of business.

I remind all members that contributions should be made through the chair, which means that members should refer to other members by name or title.

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): I thank the cabinet secretary for the advance sight of the breakfast edition of his statement.

Underspend in the Scottish Executive budget has, of course, been on a downward trend for some time. It would be churlish not to congratulate the cabinet secretary on continuing that trend.

Recent practice has been for finance ministers to report the full underspend, not just the DEL underspend, in order to avoid any suggestion of hiding any of it. In this case, that would be £216 million rather than £42 million. Does the cabinet secretary accept that that sum demonstrates a rather more modest improvement? Is that why he has reverted to using the DEL figures? Can he explain why, on previous occasions, he believed that the higher figure was the important one but, on this occasion, he argues that the lower figure of £42 million should be the headline?

Given that the cabinet secretary has allocated allowed EYF draw-down in his spending plans—indeed, he has made a virtue of that—can he explain what measures he has taken to allow for contingency and flexibility by way of reserves, central unallocated provision or money that is available under any other heading? How will he deal with the unforeseen?

The cabinet secretary referred to proactive budget management. What plans does he have for routine autumn budget revisions this year?

John Swinney: I thank Mr Gray for the generous remarks at the start of his contribution. He correctly records the fact that I have reported the underspend of £42 million on the basis of the DEL figures. That is consistent with the declaration of underspend that has been put to Parliament by my predecessors throughout the period of the existence of the Scottish Parliament. In my statement, I recorded an underspend against the Budget (Scotland) Act 2007 limits of £216 million. As Mr Gray knows, the difference between that figure and the DEL figure is that the budget act provision includes annually managed expenditure over which the Government has no control. The provision that I think is the appropriate indicator of performance is the DEL budget, for which the Government has full responsibility. Of course, that is also the approach that was taken by my predecessors.

On forward budget activity, the Government has not made provision in the 2008-09 budget for contingency. We recognised the tightness of the financial settlement and realised that it was important that we allocate resources fully to maximise effective spend. In the course of any year, underspends emerge in particular programmes. Part of the routine financial management over the year will be to identify those resources timeously and ensure that they are allocated appropriately to deal with any pressures that emerge.

I expect to come to Parliament with autumn budget revisions. That would be the normal way of ensuring that our financial programmes are properly aligned with the expectations of Parliament. I will give due notice to Parliament of those provisions at the appropriate time. Of course, I will appear before the Finance Committee to address any issues that arise from that.

Derek Brownlee (South of Scotland) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of the statement.

I will pick up on the points that were just raised about flexibility and dealing with the unforeseen. Given that the balance at the Treasury is being reduced quite significantly and the overall level of underspend is falling as well, does that not mean that, if the unforeseen were to arise late on in the financial year, after the Government had taken all reasonable steps to reduce underspend across all portfolios, there is a greater risk than previously that the unforeseen might have, shall we say, unforeseen consequences? What measures is the Government taking to ensure that, if something arises late on in the financial year, the consequences for the Scottish budget are not extremely serious?

John Swinney: Mr Brownlee seems to be terribly concerned this morning by the unforeseen. We always monitor issues that arise, and we are already monitoring various factors in the budget to identify where potential pressures might arise in the period ahead.

We have a significant budget—today, I have announced figures that relate to our 2007-08 budget, which totalled over £27 billion. Within that budget, we have flexibility that will allow us to adapt to challenging circumstances that might emerge. The situation is routinely monitored with that in mind by me, the permanent secretary, the strategic board and the Cabinet. We will take appropriate decisions to guarantee that we are able to support the programmes that the Government has announced.

Tavish Scott (Shetland) (LD): I thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of his statement, which will be, we presume, the last before the summer recess.

Rather than the unforeseen, which Mr Brownlee mentioned, I want to ask Mr Swinney about a number of foreseeable issues that he will have to deal with.

Yesterday, the governor of the Bank of England said that rising food and energy prices could push UK inflation above 4 per cent. Further, interest rates are set to rise and the credit and financial squeeze is a reality, as anyone will find out if they talk to any of the one in six householders across

the country who fear losing their jobs. Those factors are foreseeable—they are commentators' assessments of what is happening. Given that today is Mr Swinney's last statement before the summer recess, does he agree that he could have used this opportunity to consider some of the wider economic influences that the Government and the country face?

Further, why was there no comment in Mr Swinney's statement on how he is going to fund capital projects such as the new Forth bridge? He promised to make such a statement to Parliament before the summer recess. Why, too, was there no mention of pay policy, which is a significant part of overall Government expenditure? Is his policy still that there will be no redundancies in the public sector?

Finally, why was there no mention of the "Government Expenditure and Revenue in Scotland" report—the famous GERS? We are told that the press—not Parliament—will receive that tomorrow. Possibly, Mr Swinney could confirm when the rest of us—that is, MSPs—will see that particular paper. Is it still a "dodgy dossier", to use his words? Will the authors, who are, of course, now Mr Swinney's civil servants, alter the report in light of Mr Swinney's comment in 2007 that

"the authors have once again admitted that it says nothing about how Scotland would fare with the benefits of independence"?

What are the authors to do this time, and when will we hear about it in the Parliament?

John Swinney: On a number of occasions in the past few weeks, I have commented extensively to Parliament—over the complaints of many, I suspect—about the wider economic circumstances. The governor of the Bank of England set out some very real issues and challenges. That is precisely why the Government remains committed to its agenda of reducing the costs of business, to ensure that we protect Scottish business and support it to weather what will undoubtedly be a difficult climate. I look forward to Mr Scott's support in that process.

On capital projects, the Government published its infrastructure investment plan in March. We set out our capital allocations in the spending review document in November, and all of that detail was approved by the Parliament in the Budget (Scotland) Act 2008 in February. We have in no way deviated from those plans. We will make a statement to Parliament about the replacement Forth crossing during 2008, which is precisely what we said we would do. Mr Scott will hear that statement when it is ready to be delivered.

The Government has published its pay policy, and I can confirm to members that this Government will not preside over any compulsory

redundancies in the programmes that we take forward.

Mr Scott will be aware that GERS is a product of the statistical teams in the Scottish Government and does not involve oversight from ministers. I understand that it will be published tomorrow. I cannot recall there ever having been a ministerial statement to Parliament about GERS. All that I can say is that, if that approach was good enough for Mr Scott over the past eight years, it is good enough for me.

The Presiding Officer: We come to questions from back-bench members. As always, time is limited, so I beg members to keep questions brief and to ask one question per member.

Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP): I congratulate the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth on having a very sustainable budget. The record low underspend figures are highly commendable. Significant progress has clearly been made with regard to the balances that are held at Westminster but, by my calculations, £76 million of Scotland's money will still be "languishing"—as the cabinet secretary put it—in the Treasury for a further three years. What further steps will he take to try to retrieve that important money for Scotland?

John Swinney: Mr Adam will be aware that, as part of the spending review arrangements, I secured an agreement with the Treasury for a three-year allocation of draw-down from end-year flexibility, which will be used to support the delivery of public services in Scotland over the next three years. Part of the terms of that agreement was that any further end-year flexibility that arose during that period would be held on account and released only in exceptional circumstances. In such circumstances, we would make appropriate representations to the Treasury. However, the arrangement that we have secured to have access to £874 million of Scottish resources held at the Treasury allows us to invest that money in supporting Scotland's public services over the next three years.

James Kelly (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab): I note from the attachment to the cabinet secretary's statement that there is an underspend of £22 million in education and lifelong learning, which comes at a time when there is a requirement to reduce class sizes, find jobs for probationary teachers and build schools that are fit for purpose. Will the cabinet secretary explain the reason for the underspend in the face of those major policy challenges?

John Swinney: One of the remaining challenges with regard to the Scottish Government's budget arrangements is that we are required to provide the Finance Committee with a

reconciliation of budgets on a portfolio-by-portfolio basis. As a member of that committee, Mr Kelly will be aware of that. That means, essentially, that we do not have the opportunity at advanced stages in the financial year to reallocate expenditure to take into account the fact that some programmes may have emerging underspends at that level. We are now down at those levels. We have a global figure of £42 million and a very tight management level in relation to the effectiveness of public expenditure allocations.

What has emerged in the Government's handling of the budget is a focus on ensuring that we leverage out as many resources as possible. We have allocated more resources to education during the past financial year. The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning was able to announce resources for the higher and further education community; to put in place resources to assist with capital allocations for school building; and to allocate more resources to increase the number of teachers in employment. A number of steps have been taken to ensure that more resources are available in education, and the Government is delighted with the impact that that has had on work to achieve its priorities.

Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee West) (SNP): The people of Scotland have already benefited from the £600 million of underspend that the cabinet secretary has managed to recover from the UK Treasury. In response to Brian Adam, the cabinet secretary said that he has negotiated the draw-down of more money over the next three years. How does he intend to ensure that we do not get into the situation again in which Scotland's money languishes in London instead of being used to benefit the people of Scotland?

John Swinney: Mr FitzPatrick's point is important, as most members will acknowledge. My response is to ensure that we have the maximum ability to use the resources at our disposal for the benefit of the people of Scotland. I have put in place arrangements to ensure that the planning of end-year changes in the Scottish Government's budget can be done in a fashion that allows us—subject, of course, to the consent of Parliament—to manage within the Scottish block the fluctuations in expenditure between portfolios to guarantee that we maximise the effectiveness of our expenditure.

We have recorded an underspend of £42 million this year. Frankly, I do not think that we could have got that figure any lower, although we will, of course, try to do that in the years to come, in order to maximise the effectiveness of our end-year spend. We will work to ensure that there is a willingness among portfolios to transfer resources to appropriate programmes—subject, as I said, to the consent of Parliament—in order to guarantee

that we maximise the end-year expenditure of resources that are available to the Scottish Government.

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): There is a Micawberesque aspect to the way in which Mr Swinney is presenting this. What would the overspend be in the current account if the draw-down from the Treasury were excluded? That is the real figure—the amount that you are spending over your annual income. Can you confirm Brian Adam's point that £76 million will be all that is left in the Treasury by April 2011 for contributions to major infrastructure projects such as the Aberdeen western peripheral route and the lower Forth crossing, all of which will have to be funded from your revenue income? Are we storing up huge problems for the future? Are you, in effect, making Scotland bankrupt?

The Presiding Officer: I am certainly not, Mr McNulty. I asked members to address other members through the chair. Somebody of your experience should know how to do that.

John Swinney: That was a scurrilous allegation to level at you of all people, Presiding Officer. The only thing that was bankrupt with regard to that question was the intellectual bankruptcy of Mr McNulty's proposition.

The previous Administration negotiated with the Treasury the level of draw-down that was anticipated in the financial year 2007-08. Had I not drawn down, I would not have been able to support the capital programmes that were initiated by the previous Administration, which Mr McNulty supported. Those programmes, which were all committed and which I inherited, would have had to stop.

The Government has ploughed on with capital programmes, much to the irritation of members such as Mr McNulty and Mr McAveety—they are horrified that we are going ahead with the M74 extension and other such projects. The draw-down was essential to ensure that we met the infrastructure commitments that the previous Administration made and the revenue budget overcommitment of £220 million that we inherited. We have secured a three-year agreement—which my predecessors were unable to do—that allows us to factor amounts into our spending review proposals for the next three years. Parliament has, of course, approved the first part of that in the 2008-09 budget.

Mr McNulty is not technically correct about the level of underspend that is likely to be at the Treasury in 2011. I imagine that we will contribute further underspend at the close of the financial year in 2008-09 and 2009-10. The number will be larger by 2011 than Mr McNulty's rather crude calculation suggests. We will aim to ensure that, in

the process, we maximise the impact of the public expenditure in benefiting the people of Scotland.

Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con): Having £1.279 billion at Her Majesty's Treasury is probably not in Scotland's best interests, but neither is having zero pounds and zero pence. In the interests of flexibility and being able to cope with the unforeseen, what is the appropriate balance to have at HM Treasury?

John Swinney: Mr Brown's question takes us into ground that I am delighted to enter, with regard to the appropriate level of financial responsibility for this Parliament to retain. It is perfectly rational to have resources held in reserve if we can have access to them at appropriate times. However, there is a difficulty: the previous Administration found that it had a mounting set of resources held at the Treasury that—unlike under the arrangement that we have now secured—it was unable to access and deploy for the benefit of the people of Scotland.

It is obvious that if the Parliament had wider financial powers and financial responsibility, we would be able to manage our finances much more effectively and comprehensively than is possible within the limitations of the responsibilities that we have. Of course, that is an aspiration of members on the Government benches; I am not sure where Mr Brown sits on the spectrum, but I know him to be an aspirational young man so I am sure that he wants the Parliament to have more such powers.

Liam McArthur (Orkney) (LD): In the context of the credit crunch crisis, my colleague Vince Cable has suggested that some people in the financial services sector appear intent on nationalising debt while continuing to privatise profit. I listened to the cabinet secretary's statement and the comments of some of his party's back benchers and it is hard not to conclude that the cabinet secretary and the Government are hell-bent on privatising blame and nationalising self-congratulation.

Does the cabinet secretary acknowledge that, although any underspend is welcome given reports of crisis meetings of the Scottish Government strategic board in January, at which civil servants prevented ministers from overspending on the budget, in light of the dodgy accounting on the Scottish futures trust, the lack of detail on planned efficiency savings and the various references to "smoothing" and "illustrative figures" in relation to the SNP's budget, there is likely to be considerable scepticism about the detail of the cabinet secretary's statement?

John Swinney: That was a cheery contribution from the Liberal Democrats. My goodness, Mr McArthur must have been up all night crafting his soundbites.

I reassure the member that the Government has recorded an underspend of £42 million. I would have thought that that would have provided an opportunity for Mr McArthur to demonstrate some of the grace that Mr Gray showed when he congratulated the Government on its performance. Instead, as usual, Mr McArthur reverted to type and whinged from the sidelines.

The Presiding Officer: We must conclude questions on the cabinet secretary's statement—we are already into the time for the next debate. I apologise to members whom I am unable to call.

Youth Justice

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is a debate on motion S3M-2204, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on youth justice.

09:47

The Minister for Community Safety (Fergus Ewing): I am delighted to present to the Parliament a new youth justice framework, "Preventing Offending by Young People: A Framework for Action".

At the outset, I re-emphasise the Government's overarching purpose: to create a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish through increasing sustainable economic growth. Young people and their families and communities are at the heart of that vision for Scotland. There can be few more pressing issues for this Administration than the need to tackle problems associated with youth crime. The successful future of Scotland depends on getting it right.

When we talk about youth crime and youth justice it is imperative to stress that the vast majority of young people do not offend. Most of our young people make an extremely positive contribution to society and are valuable and valued members of their communities. We need to build on the great qualities that young people bring to our society: energy, enthusiasm, creativity, an appetite for learning and huge potential for the future. At the same time, we must acknowledge that a small but significant number of young people offend and reoffend. It is therefore essential that everything possible is done to address the issues in a young person's life that cause offending behaviour.

The purpose of the framework is to outline a shared ambition of what we, as national and local agencies, want to do to prevent, divert, manage and change offending behaviour by children and young people and how we want to do that. In driving forward our work, we will focus on prevention, early and effective intervention, managing high risk, victims and community confidence.

We are proud to have developed the framework jointly with our partners in the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland, the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, the Crown Office, the inspectorates, the Association of Directors of Social Work and Audit Scotland. Many large third-sector organisations have also welcomed the framework. Indeed, I had an extremely

constructive meeting with a number of key players last week.

Our shared vision is to work together as national and local partners to deliver real improvements on the ground. All our partners will have a part to play in taking the framework forward through their various responsibilities. I have been greatly encouraged by the extremely constructive spirit of the discussions that I have had with all the parties involved in the development of the framework and I place on record my thanks to everyone who contributed to the work.

The framework's foundations were laid some time ago. For a number of years, the youth justice agenda in Scotland has been busy: there have been national standards, targets, legislation and we have had new money. During that period, a great deal of positive work has been carried out with young people and lots of good practice has developed. However, we have to ask ourselves what impact all that activity and extra money has had on outcomes for young people. For example, despite the £7 million of Government funding that has been devoted to antisocial behaviour orders for under-16s since ASBOs were introduced in 2004, only 14 ASBOs have been issued. It is perhaps no surprise that the appropriateness and effectiveness of ASBOs have been questioned.

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth (Lab): Surely the minister is not suggesting that the number of ASBOs that have been issued should be a measure of the success or otherwise of the policy. I think that the Parliament agreed that ASBOs should be issued only when other interventions had failed. It seems strange to regard the number of orders issued as an indicator of success or otherwise.

Fergus Ewing: We must take into account the effectiveness of expenditure of public money. If £7 million has been devoted to junior ASBOs and only 14 such ASBOs have been issued, by my arithmetic the cost must have been £500,000 per junior ASBO. The member might not agree with me on every occasion, but what I say is not my judgment but the judgment of Audit Scotland in its report "Dealing with offending by young people: performance update", which set out the number of ASBOs that had been issued—at the time it was even fewer than 14. The Auditor General for Scotland said in the report:

"the impact of this activity on improved services and outcomes is not yet demonstrated ... sustained reductions in offending behaviour have yet to be realised."

The road to Polmont and Barlinnie is paved with good policy intentions.

This Government has clearly signalled its belief that if action to tackle offending and antisocial behaviour is to be effective it must be taken at the

earliest possible stage. We are determined to ensure that all young people have more choices and chances and that positive opportunities are available for all. Perhaps Cathie Craigie agrees that if £7 million were spent on providing more choices and chances rather than on junior ASBOs, the outcome might be more successful.

Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab): Will the minister kindly suggest specific alternatives to junior ASBOs? What proposals does he have in mind?

Fergus Ewing: From my discussions with the third sector last week, my impression is that the belief that more effort on prevention and intervention would pay dividends is common ground among key players—that seems almost axiomatic. Indeed, there is such clear consensus on the matter among all people who are involved on the front line that it is scarcely a matter of controversy. I will mention specific examples.

We are already delivering on prevention and intervention through cashback for communities funding of around £7 million, which is providing a wide range of physical and cultural opportunities for young people in our communities. We are investing money confiscated from drug dealers and organised criminals in choices and chances for young people. After all, when asked what they want most from Government, young people most often say, “More things to do.” That is what we are trying to offer. According to the old saying, crime pays, and it is now time for criminals to pay up.

I am particularly keen for youngsters who have been identified as being on the cusp of developing a pattern of offending behaviour to be given the opportunity to take part in structured outdoor activities on residential courses. In the long-term fight against crime, prevention is better—and far less costly—than cure.

Of course, that does not mean that we should ignore the small but significant number of children and young people who have complex needs and present a high risk both to themselves and to others. Their needs should be met and the risks that they pose managed to ensure that they have an opportunity to change their behaviour and become positive contributors to society. I believe that the word “divert” comes from the Latin “divertere”, which means to turn aside—I see Bill Aitken, that noted Latin scholar, nodding sagely at that—and that is what we wish to do with these young people.

Although this framework signals a new approach, it builds on the best of what has gone before. I recognise, again, the positive work and commitment that have taken us to this point and will highlight a couple of examples of the effective work that is going on. For example, NCH’s early

intervention project, which works with not only primary school age children who are at risk of offending or who display challenging behaviour but their families, has been very successful in diverting children from entering the youth justice system. Moreover, by working together effectively, agencies in Fife have in the past year cut in half referrals to an overburdened hearings system—a particular problem, which the Conservatives have identified in their amendment.

Following a successful pilot, we have extended intensive support and monitoring to help to manage high-risk and vulnerable young offenders. I have seen for myself how effective a strong bond of trust between a youngster and the worker deputed to provide support can be. I could cite many more examples, but time does not permit.

This framework, which covers prevention, diversion, intervention and risk management, sets out a new approach to achieving better and more consistent ways of tackling offending by young people. However, although we are united in our focus on this problem, I am under no illusion about the task that faces us. I very much welcome the time and effort taken by all the partners to come up with this framework, which I hope that we all can unite behind. By doing so, we can secure a safer, stronger future for our young people and Scotland.

I move,

That the Parliament acknowledges the positive contribution that children and young people across Scotland make to society; believes that every young person deserves the best start in life; is committed to giving young people more positive choices and chances and removing the barriers that prevent some from realising their potential and leading successful lives; notes that there are a number of young people who do not realise their potential and get into trouble and recognises the need to intervene quickly and effectively to turn their lives around; further recognises the need to support victims of offending, and considers that communities, the third sector, the private sector, public services, local authorities and the Scottish Government need to work together to build a more successful Scotland by preventing offending and intervening early with children and families at risk.

09:58

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): Another week, another justice debate. Either the ministers are on performance pay or they just like our company. Who knows?

Youth justice is a wide-ranging subject that, officially, covers a huge age range from eight to 21. It can mean different things to different people and, in presenting the “Preventing Offending by Young People” framework document to Parliament, the Government has set out some of what the issue means to it. Labour can certainly support some of its views. For example, we do not

disagree that the vast majority of young people do not offend. As we know, there are offenders as young as eight—and, sadly, offenders who are even younger, but the age of criminal responsibility in Scotland is eight and I see no reason to change that position. Some—though not all—of those children and young people come from our most marginalised communities; many do not get the best start in life and come from families with histories of offending. They have poor parental relationships and their aspirations are low.

When in government, Labour recognised that the cycle of poor achievement, low expectation and social exclusion had to be broken if we were to improve the life chances of those individuals and to help to change the overall picture of youth offending. However, we never allowed—and will never allow—someone's background to excuse bad or criminal behaviour. As well as shaping policies that identify where things go wrong and acting accordingly, Governments must also act against offenders who break the law and behave badly.

The framework document is extremely wordy and, to be honest, rather convoluted. I know what it is driving at—it is certainly very difficult to disagree with its view that every child should fulfil his or her potential and that we should intervene with positive choices and give young people chances—but it lacks any kind of reality check. It makes no mention of the fact that, in too many of our communities, young people are still committing serious crimes, or of the fact that they must be dealt with robustly if our communities are not to feel that society tolerates bad or criminal behaviour. In fact, the approach set out in the document seems very soft to me.

In Glasgow, there have been 6,501 referrals on offence grounds, involving almost 3,000 children. The *Sunday Herald* recently reported that children as young as five are running about brandishing knives and other serious weapons. Although there is probably some exaggeration in that claim, there is probably some truth in it, too. The newspaper also reported that young people felt that they had been born into a gang culture. Indeed, Detective Chief Superintendent John Carnochan of Strathclyde Police's violence reduction unit has said:

"Young men from deprived backgrounds who have poor parental relationships can often find the support they don't find within their families among a group of similar young men. The gang therefore becomes almost like an extended family."

It is believed that there might be more than 200 gangs in Glasgow alone. Gang culture sustains—

Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Pauline McNeill: Please allow me to finish this important point. Gang culture sustains high levels of offending and significant resources are needed to change that situation. Minister, we want you to show where those resources will be invested. We can get those young people out of those gangs, but you must show that you are prepared to put money into that kind of exercise.

You mentioned the cashback scheme, which Labour and the Liberal Democrats support—and, in fact, introduced when in power. We are still waiting for you to demonstrate in your sporadic announcements—

The Presiding Officer: I am sorry to interrupt, Ms McNeill. I ask you to address your remarks through the chair.

Pauline McNeill: I apologise, Presiding Officer.

We are still waiting for ministers to show that that cashback money goes to the communities that are most affected by drugs. The violence reduction unit that I mentioned is carrying out very important work in that respect. Crimes of violence and dishonesty and, indeed, lower-level crimes such as vandalism and graffiti can blight communities and must be tackled robustly.

The minister appears to be backtracking on ASBOs for under-16s on the ground that the measure has not been proven to work. However, the Scottish National Party Government's approach to tackling antisocial behaviour must not slacken. It has already been sleeping on the job on this issue, and it will let down generations of people if it does not commit fully to the concept of challenging behaviour. Given the Government's decision to abolish, in April, ring fencing for tackling young people's offending, it is going to be very difficult for people to judge where the resources are going and for the Parliament to find out whether the Government is putting its money where its mouth is.

Indeed, the Government does not even appear to want to count the number of persistent young offenders. I would appreciate some clarity on that matter and an indication of how we are expected to monitor its progress.

Sandra White: Will the member take an intervention?

Pauline McNeill: I will, if it is on that point.

Sandra White: The member refers to young people reoffending. Does she not agree that constantly demonising young people makes them offend more and that, in fact, the best way forward is early intervention to find out the reasons for persistent young offenders' behaviour?

Pauline McNeill: I have already discussed that point—and, indeed, have moved significantly on from it. This is, after all, supposed to be a debate.

In their amendment, the Tories criticise the previous Administration for failing to reduce the number of persistent young offenders. When we were in government, we were at least prepared to say what we were doing, to be transparent and to show where progress was being made. This Government is not prepared to do that.

The Labour amendment seeks to add a reality check by calling for the rolling out of youth courts and by recognising the key role of the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Act 2004. We should note that the act did some important things, by empowering communities and by introducing joined-up thinking to ensure that agencies think and act together in tackling antisocial behaviour. In my opinion, there is no better example of that than Glasgow Community and Safety Services, which is a unique organisation. The partnership brings together the local authority and Strathclyde Police to tackle offending. For the first time, civilian officers are knocking on doors and challenging the behaviour of young people. They have mapped out the names of the gangs and offenders and they are challenging their behaviour. That is what tackling antisocial behaviour is about.

Why is the Government not rolling out youth courts until 2009? The Government has said that it believes in early intervention and speedy justice. Youth courts have demonstrated great success and in the light of the evidence the idea that the Government will not even think about rolling them out until 2009 should be unthinkable. We know that that means that the courts will not be rolled out during the current parliamentary session.

On young people in prison, the Government has announced its intention to remove unruly certificates from the Scottish prisons system. Labour will support that move if the Government demonstrates how it will cope with difficult young people who currently would be kept in those institutions, but we have not heard from the Government on that. “Preventing Offending by Young People” also states that the Government will honour the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child by not imprisoning children. I seek clarification on what that means because, as members will know, the convention defines childhood as being up to the age of 18. I am not sure whether that is a change in policy direction.

In summary, the Government needs to be prepared to be tested on its policies on youth justice. It needs to show us exactly how it will use the resources and new money to which the minister referred and give the Parliament a mechanism so that we can test whether progress has been made.

Clarity is needed on what the strategy means when it states that it aims to

“shift the focus from service provision as the vehicle for delivery of outcomes to building the capacity of individuals, families and communities”.

Minister, a lot of that needs explaining—we need to know what it means. Yes, we can support the Government’s general direction in tackling youth offending, but we need a harder edge on this. We want the Government to demonstrate that that harder edge is there.

I move amendment S3M-2204.2, to insert at end:

“and, while recognising the demand for services and initiatives to prevent young people offending and re-offending, considers that the criminal justice system must also seek to deal with those offenders who persist in breaking the law and disrupting communities; further recognises the important role of the Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004; believes the youth court pilots have been successful and calls for further rolling out of youth courts across Scotland, and further believes that the Scottish Government should ensure adequate funding is in place to support youth services and the youth justice system across Scotland.”

10:08

Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con): In opening, I correct the minister on one point: it was once disparagingly said of my education that I had little Latin and less Greek.

There is not a great deal that separates the parties this morning, so it is important to underline that the vast majority of Scotland’s youngsters are a credit to us. Having recently visited a couple of schools and received visitors—along with Robert Brown—from a school that is not in the best area of Glasgow, I can say that the children were a credit to themselves and to their parents. Not everything is negative. However, some youngsters are problematic—and a small minority seriously so—and we do neither ourselves nor them any favours by failing to acknowledge that and by failing to cope with the problems that they cause.

Paragraph 1.3 of “Preventing Offending by Young People” indicates that the preferred option is prevention and early intervention. That is entirely true. After all, prevention is better than cure. Sadly, in some family units, the problems are depressingly predictable and early intervention is essential in those circumstances.

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): Does Mr Aitken accept that there is a high correlation between those who come before the children’s panel at the age of six for neglect and the other family difficulties to which he referred and those who come back again at the age of 15, 16 or 17 for offending? Does he draw any conclusions from that?

Bill Aitken: Absolutely. I shall come to that presently.

One issue that we must address—I know that Robert Brown, Sandra White and Pauline McNeill share this concern—is the lack of amenity, particularly in Glasgow and other urban areas. Open spaces where kids could kick a ball without causing a problem are vanishing and opportunities for recreation are simply not available. Another issue—although perhaps not for this debate—is the restrictions that we are imposing on youth organisations. In becoming perhaps a little bit too restrictive, albeit for the best of intentions in respect of child safety, we may be restricting the voluntary sector's ability to play its part in preventing antisocial behaviour.

When kids get into trouble, the children's hearings system comes into play. Robert Brown is correct to say that many of those who offend have, earlier in their lives, been offended against. When I attended a series of children's hearings a few years ago, I found it a depressing experience because practically every case involved neglect or abuse. It seemed almost inevitable that the children who were the subject of the hearings would appear in later life before another hearing, if not before a court, on criminal grounds.

The children's hearings system, which was set up by the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, is much vaunted—although, significantly, no one else has copied it—and still has a real role to play. However, the research under which the system was introduced is well over 40 years old. We need to look again at the system's operation, as the amendment in my name suggests, because, in some respects, it is simply not working. I would be grateful if the minister could confirm that a review will be forthcoming at an appropriate point.

The disposals that are available to the children's hearings system are inevitably limited. I am attracted to the strategy document's proposals on introducing restorative justice, but that will work only if it has an impact on offenders. For instance, I understand that when, two or three years ago, some youngsters in Glasgow who had vandalised a park were put to work to correct the damage that they had caused, they were made to work for all of 20 minutes. Although the publicity highlighted the advantages of restorative justice, such work would not have had an impact on those offenders. We need to demonstrate to offenders that we mean business.

Sadly, one of the biggest problems that Scotland faces is drugs. There is unanimity in the Parliament on that. Given the unfortunate fact that there are many instances of drug abuse among those under the age of 16, it would appear appropriate to extend the disposals that are

available to children's panels to include drug treatment and testing orders.

We also need to look at age limits more generally. The 16-year-old of 1964, when Kilbrandon published his report, was quite different from the 16-year-old of today. We must consider whether the children's hearings system is equipped to deal with that type of offender. Youth courts certainly seem to be the answer.

This is a complex matter; it is not simple, and I do not suggest that members on the Conservative benches have all the answers. However, we must cope with the small minority who are causing trouble. If we fail to do so, they will continue to cause trouble, their pattern of offending will escalate and many of those who enter the children's hearings system will inevitably continue to graduate to the dock of the High Court.

I move amendment S3M-2204.1, to insert after "around":

"notes with concern the failure of the previous administration to reduce persistent young offending by 10% and recognises the increasing drain on time and resources that offence referrals are having on the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA); recommends that an increase in disposals available to SCRA, such as an extension of drug treatment and testing orders, would enable it to intervene more effectively; recognises that the sending of 14 and 15-year-old persistent young offenders to youth courts would allow children's panels to concentrate more on referrals for non-offence grounds."

10:14

Mike Pringle (Edinburgh South) (LD): I welcome the debate and I certainly agree that our children and young people make a positive contribution to Scottish society. As the minister and Bill Aitken said, there can be no doubt that the vast majority of our young people—whom I would define as being those not just up to the age of 16 but beyond that—are hard working, positive about what they want to achieve and know where they are going. Indeed, I think that today young people know where they are going even more than they did in Kilbrandon's day and they know how they are going to get there.

I agree with the minister that young people who offend often do so because they get bored. Young people need assistance and support in reaching their goals. I am sure that all members could give examples of good practice that serves young people well and helps them to achieve their potential, but I will set out two.

The City of Edinburgh Council's schools sports academy involves 44 talented pupils from throughout Edinburgh, including from three schools in my constituency—Gracemount high school, Liberton high school and James Gillespie's high school. Thirty-six of those pupils have

progressed to regional and national squads in sports across the spectrum. Next year, the council will expand the number of pupils by 30. I fully expect and hope that many of those pupils will go on to represent Scotland at the Commonwealth games or even the Olympics, as well as at many national competitions and finals.

My second example shows how a small event—we might call it an acorn—can grow into something that affects a wide range of people in the local community. About three years ago, Liberton high school got a new headteacher, Donald Macdonald. The school had not been doing well and many problems in the local community were generated by a small number of its pupils. Donald Macdonald was a new leader and his troops—the teachers—needed new direction. A new regime was begun, with one of the first acts of the new head being to introduce a school uniform. I believe that that was significant. The uniform was not entirely rigid, but it was definitely identifiable with Liberton high. When Donald Macdonald took over, the existing report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education was not good. However, in the first three years after the change in leadership, I became aware of a gradual but significant improvement in the school. The police are grateful for that, as there is less offending in the area.

Last week, I attended the annual prize-giving ceremony at the school, which was a well-staged event, with more than 100 pupils receiving prizes. Many of the pupils are going on to universities and colleges. There is now a real buzz about the school—what a change in the past three years. The latest HMIE report says that the school is the most improved school in Scotland, but Liberton high's aim is to be the best school in Scotland. The young people of Liberton high were given a new direction; they have taken the opportunity and the entire community has benefited. That example illustrates that, when young people are given a new direction, they can improve and the improvement affects all of us.

How do we improve young people's attitudes? I agree with the point in the Government's motion about early intervention. After my election in 2003, I well remember a visit to a primary school in Edinburgh South. Coincidentally, it was Liberton primary school. Before I met the pupils, I met the staff and we discussed behavioural problems. One teacher told me, "It's all about early intervention. I can identify the pupils who are going to be trouble within a week of them starting in primary 1." The Liberal Democrats believe that we should all support a culture of early intervention, with professionals in nurseries and schools working to identify those who are at risk of offending.

New York has a good scheme under which a team of young people aged 14 to 18 is drawn from local schools to propose solutions to juvenile justice issues. In addition to giving young people a voice, which does not happen often, the scheme helps the policymakers, who can make better decisions with that youth input. Down south, the Home Office has extended the British crime survey to include 16-year-olds. However, the Scottish Government, in response to a question from Margaret Smith, has refused to do so. I ask the minister to reconsider. We realise that young people are less likely to share details of minor incidents with their parents or the police and we believe that extending the Scottish crime survey to 11 to 15-year-olds would offer a greater understanding of how crime affects young people in Scotland. That would allow more information to be gathered, which could be used to shape better messages on encouraging young people not to engage in crime, carry knives or engage in antisocial behaviour.

In the past two days, much has been made of the SNP's attitude to young people and alcohol. I realise that the SNP proposals are not only about stopping 18 to 21-year-olds purchasing alcohol in off-licences, although from the press coverage one might think so. However, the Liberal Democrats do not believe in that approach. We believe that there are already enough tools in the toolbox. For example, very few retailers who are caught selling alcohol to minors are prosecuted. Although 357 retailers were caught selling alcohol to underage customers in 2005-06, only 70 were prosecuted. Identifying those who flout the law is progress, but it is meaningless if they are not prosecuted. I urge the minister to encourage the Procurator Fiscal Service to ensure that all such people are prosecuted, which would send out a hard message to retailers who sell alcohol to underage drinkers.

Other discriminatory measures, such as the increased use of the Mosquito ultrasonic dispersal device, should be avoided. The minister admitted that he has not yet examined the issue. Will the Scottish Government clarify its position on the use of the Mosquito? I ask the Government and the Scottish Conservatives to back the calls for a ban of that device.

I move amendment S3M-2204.3, to insert at end:

"calls on the Scottish Government to introduce children's rights impact assessments to show how government decisions impact on the rights and wellbeing of children; notes that young people are themselves often the victims of crime and therefore calls for the extension of the Scottish Crime Survey to under 16s; believes that young people must be engaged fully in the ongoing review of the national antisocial behaviour strategy including improving the provision of diversionary activities; calls for increased involvement of young people in delivering solutions to youth

crime through innovative measures such as a youth justice board and youth justice panels, and calls for an end to the use of all ultra-sonic "Mosquito" dispersal devices."

10:20

Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): The debate is important. I thank the minister for his positive speech. Far from condemning children, he talked about the positive contribution that the majority of young people make to society. We must not forget that some of the children we are speaking about are as young as five and six. I acknowledge the issues that are raised in the Labour and Tory amendments and warmly welcome the motion. For too long, the youth justice system has been too focused on demonising and criminalising young people who commit offences. Although their behaviour is unacceptable, it is too simplistic to rely solely on punishment as the panacea for all ills. The time is right to consider why young people get into those situations and why too many of them cannot find a way out.

I hope that the Parliament will move forward together on the issue. I hope that we can reach common solutions to the problems, which affect all the constituencies and regions in Scotland. I welcome the Liberal Democrat amendment, particularly the points about the Mosquito device, which I believe goes against children's human rights. I thank Mike Pringle for his thoughtful speech. Youth justice is too big and important simply to be used as a means of political attack. Members must act responsibly and contribute positively.

We must put young people at the forefront of the policy decisions that affect them. It could be said that it is little wonder that young people act in certain ways when we consider the behaviour of some of those who are said to represent them—present company excluded, of course. We must take into account young people's views and concerns in our approach to the problems. A recent report by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child identified as one of its main recommendations the need to involve children in decisions that affect them. I would be grateful if the minister told us what steps the Government will take to ensure that young people's views are taken into account. I suggest that an appropriate starting point would be the current antisocial behaviour strategy review, which has been criticised for having no clear plans to engage young people. I ask the minister to comment on that in his summing-up speech.

Another key point that has been highlighted is about children's right to play. There are not enough activities for young people. As Bill Aitken mentioned, places where kids play—particularly parks in Glasgow, although the same is true in

other areas—are slowly being eroded. Many people I speak to mention concerns about the rise in youth crime and antisocial behaviour, but in the exact same breath they identify the solution and talk about a need for more facilities such as sports centres. As the minister said, young people need more things to do.

We can all agree that the Government's efforts so far to provide more opportunities are laudable. The cashback for communities scheme, which has been mentioned, is hugely successful and is a perfect example of how we can tackle the problems. We can fund projects to support young people who are at risk, such as drop-in services and outdoor activities. However, to return to my earlier point, such initiatives should involve young people at every stage of the process. It is not good enough, and is not conducive to helping young people, to build a basketball court and then bemoan the fact that no one uses it, or that young people just hang about in it. Did the young people want it? Did we ask them whether they wanted it? Did we involve them in the process? The key point is that we must involve young people. If we take that approach, new facilities will be successful and will, I hope, flourish. I ask the minister to consider seriously involving young people at all stages.

To tackle the problems of youth crime, we must also try to change attitudes to violence. As has been said, many young people grow up in an environment in which violence is accepted and is seen as a routine and ordinary part of life. We must consider certain activities that are covered in the media that may glorify violence and desensitise people to the reality. I give the example of cage wars, which involves two contestants locked in a cage battling it out while being bayed at by a huge audience. The event came to Glasgow twice last year and was widely condemned, including by Detective Chief Superintendent John Carnochan and me. We thought that it was highly inappropriate to have glorified gladiator contests in a city with some of the highest levels of violence in the UK. As a Glaswegian, I am not proud of that, but it is a fact.

I accept that these are contentious and difficult issues, but we must tackle them nonetheless. I hope that the Parliament will support us in doing so. We must take difficult decisions together, not just for the sake of the Parliament but for the sake of future generations, to change our attitudes and, perhaps, even the media's attitude to reporting on children. We never seem to hear good news from the media—it is always bad news. If there is anyone in the press gallery, I hope that they will look at good examples of what young kids are up to.

Every one of us wants Scotland to be a safer and fairer place. To achieve that, we must take our

young people with us and ensure that they see themselves as part of Scotland's future.

10:26

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab): It is strange that the motion that we are debating starts by saying that the vast majority of young people in Scotland make a positive contribution and are valued members of their community. We do not have to say that—we are dealing with youth justice policy and understand that only a small minority of young people ever become involved in the justice system. For members to start their speeches by making that point is an excuse. In this week, when one half of the Scottish National Party Government is discussing votes for 16-year-olds and the other half does not want 18 to 21-year-olds to purchase alcohol in supermarkets or off-licences, it is an absurdity.

Nigel Don (North East Scotland) (SNP): Does the member agree that the problem is not what we believe but what the press portray? With respect, that is why the first line of the motion was included.

Cathie Craigie: We play to the prejudices of the press if we start motions with such lines. Sometimes the press listen to what is said in the chamber.

As all members are aware, early intervention and preventing offending are not tasks that can be accomplished easily with blunt instruments. That is why it is disappointing that we seem to be determined to malign Scotland's youth with headlines, while offering no real solution to the often substantial problems that face our communities and many young people. If any group in society deserves a second chance, it is young offenders. Scotland's prison population is largely made up of people who have lost their way. Almost all prisoners have a history of youth offending.

A series of risk factors show up time and again in the backgrounds of Scotland's prisoners. Those many risks include being male; coming from a deprived or disrupted family of which one or more members are already offenders; poor parenting, abusive parenting or no parenting at all; hyperactivity; a low attention span; truancy; and exclusion from school. As Robert Brown and Bill Aitken pointed out, the problems that lead to youth offending start very early in life. There is a real need for us to offer continued support for better family health care, parenting support, early education and child care. The SNP Government should commit itself to real policies to deliver early intervention, starting with the introduction of

Labour's policy of free nursery care for two-year-olds.

Early intervention to support vulnerable Scottish families is an important aspect of any policy, but it is not necessarily sufficient to address the root causes of offending behaviour. As well as working with vulnerable children, the Government should do more to help young people who are already caught up in offending. Young offenders need to have the opportunity to learn, often for the first time, that there are people in their community who think that they are worth something. Indeed all Scotland's young people benefit from learning to value themselves. It is hardly surprising that some young people lack self-respect and self-esteem if, for whatever reason, neither family nor school has equipped them with the resources that are necessary to make the transition to adulthood.

The Government is right to consider

"that communities, the third sector, the private sector, public services, local authorities and the Scottish Government need to work together"

to prevent offending and intervene

"early with children and families at risk."

However, where that intervention fails, young people who break the law and those who work with them must understand that communities and their friends and neighbours are not prepared to sit back and accept bad or criminal behaviour. People of all ages—young and old—are right to expect to be able to live in peace and quiet in their communities and to feel safe as they go about their daily activities.

In the previous session, Labour successfully passed legislation that was designed to give communities respite and to make young offenders face up to their irresponsible and unacceptable behaviour. Youth courts, tagging, restorative justice measures and ASBOs were all put in place and proved to be useful tools. The youth court at Airdrie is still working to provide swift justice for young people and communities. Restorative justice is working in my community for the good of the community. Tagging allows the community to get some peace and helps the young offenders concerned to address their offending behaviour. ASBOs provide respite for my community and help the young people concerned to realise that their actions have consequences. What is happening to the legislation under the SNP? From what we have heard this morning and from what we hear from members of the governing party, it appears that it has been parked on the sidelines, where it is gathering dust. That is not good enough for my community and for communities throughout Scotland.

I say to the SNP that it should start to take some action and do away with woolly justice debates.

We want not just words, but action, and to see what the Government proposes to do.

10:32

Christina McKelvie (Central Scotland) (SNP): Presiding Officer, it may be a week or two since you or even I could be described as a youth, even charitably. However, as we both remember fondly St Martin's summer, halcyon days, children's laughter and the gentle strains of the Sex Pistols wafting across the grass, we come to this debate with the benefit of experience—perhaps not the most recent experience, but experience nonetheless.

I am sure that every member in the chamber can trade tales of people whom they have known or come across whose youth was wasted by a lack of engagement with society. It can be argued that society failed those youths. Our deliberations on youth justice must be underpinned by a determination to prevent any further waste of that asset.

The obligation that we carry is no easy burden—if there were a simple solution, it would have been used by now. Much as I have had occasion in the past to disagree with my good friends in the Labour Party, I refuse to believe that any Labour member has ever wished ill on the youth of Scotland or anywhere else. Where our attitudes and opinions may diverge is on the most effective remedies for addressing the problems faced by youngsters across the land and the problems that are caused by a minority of those youngsters.

I have long had concerns, which I am sure are shared, about the march of the ASBO. A temptation to label, pigeonhole and dispatch problems is common to all politicians, including me, but we should not fall for that temptation easily. I have to admit to a certain reluctance to hug a hoodie. The ASBO has its place, but that place is not at the forefront of the challenge of youth. The justice system and its outriders cannot be a panacea for the problems that society faces and should not be the first tool for which we reach every time; acceptance by and the encouragement of society can be far more effective.

Cathie Craigie: This morning, the Minister for Community Safety advised us that, over the past statistical period, only 14 ASBOs were issued. Does the member agree that that is hardly the march of the ASBO?

Christina McKelvie: It is the media attitude towards ASBOs. Cathie Craigie and I will probably disagree on this, but ASBOs are not an effective measure for dealing with youth crime.

Young people who are integrated into society instead of alienated from it must be a measure of

our success. I am pleased to see the Government taking us down a route that is more likely to lead to engagement than to disengagement. Tackling the drinking culture is essential; it is important to change the idea that drinking as much as you can is the ideal way to spend an evening. Alcohol has a place in our society and in oiling the social wheels, but it should not be the prime driver of socialising. Raising the qualifying age for off-sales purchases is a step in the right direction. It is important to send the message that alcohol consumption involves responsibility, as well as enjoyment, and implementing a unit price will carry that message further; cheap drink is not cheap for society.

The oversupply of alcohol has enormous costs in lost productivity, health spending and social breakdown. We should not allow those costs to be underestimated by the people who will pay the price. Test purchasing, a scheme to ensure the enforcement of age restraints, is one plank in the policy raft. Ensuring that the law is enforced as well as strengthened is vital to its success. Likewise, tackling the flow of drugs in our communities is essential. Drug misuse is not the preserve of the poor in our communities, as is so often suggested, but a blight that touches us all. Cutting the demand for drugs as well as tackling the supply—addressing both ends of the chain—requires concerted action across agencies. Educating children about drugs—what is what and what is not, and the ups and downs of drugs—is essential to enable them to make the appropriate choice when the opportunity presents itself.

I congratulate the Cabinet Secretary for Justice on his initiative to take assets away from criminals and recycle them into the communities that have been damaged by those criminals. As members said, the cashback for communities scheme, funded from the proceeds of crime, is delivering societal benefits to some of our poorest communities. That is a step towards alleviating deprivation and the cabinet secretary should be congratulated on that.

Encouraging the youth of our nation to engage properly in constructive activities is the way forward. Youth crime is not a universal stain on our young people and youth justice should not be seen as a rod with which to keep all our youth in line. We should aim at rewarding good behaviour, alleviating deprivation, providing routes out of poverty for our youth and allowing hope. We should encourage our youth to lift their vision so that they see the possibilities and reach out to the far horizon, and we should praise the efforts that they make to get there.

Speaking with all the experience of my very recent youthful activities, I am encouraged by the direction in which this Government is travelling

and confident that it will pay dividends. We all have a journey to make, and it will be easier if we help each other along the path.

10:37

Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab): I support the amendment in the name of my colleague Pauline McNeill. Youth justice is a serious and complex issue that has no easy solution. The previous Labour-led Executives made huge strides in this area, but of course we need to do more as a Parliament. As elected members, we all face the task of ensuring that we deliver for every young person in Scotland—even those who have offended. We need to ensure that those young people are integrated or reintegrated into society and become useful members of our nation.

When we talk about youth justice, it is important that we remember, despite what some members of even my party have said, that the vast majority of young people in Scotland do not offend. Indeed, only a very small percentage of the under-18 population in our country transgresses. Of those who do, most will respond positively to the guiding hand of a concerned parent, the support of a teacher, the involvement of a youth worker or a warning from the police. Our starting point in tackling youth offending must be to put the needs and deeds of the young person at the heart of what we do. That is not about excusing unacceptable behaviour or actions, but about providing support where and when it is needed, as well as challenging their offending behaviour. We must do that because we are passionately involved in thinking about the positive future that all our young people deserve. We do not wish to lose any young person to a life of crime; we want to help young people who have offended to turn their lives around and make the most of the opportunities that are out there for them. Our aim as a Parliament should be to enable every young person in Scotland to become a successful learner, a confident individual, an effective contributor to society and a responsible citizen.

Wherever possible, we should look to prevent and divert young people from offending through positive interventions. Investment in community safety partnerships and community quality of life are key to the success of that approach. It is crucial to give young people the opportunity to do something positive in their communities. We need to encourage imaginative schemes that bring together a range of services—education, youth services, social workers and others—to offer young people a variety of opportunities to engage in activities that they enjoy but may never have had the chance to experience in a structured and

positive way, such as music and drama, outdoor activities and various leisure activities.

The previous Labour-led Executive promoted such initiatives and the current Government has developed them. One scheme that is worthy of mention is the street football initiative that is funded by the proceeds of crime, which was initiated by the previous Labour-led Executive and is being continued, quite rightly, by this Government. As members know, occupying young people productively, especially during school holidays, can be difficult. The objective of street football programmes is to target key disadvantaged areas where young people may often be tempted to indulge in antisocial behaviour or petty crime as a result of having no positive activity with which to become involved.

We need to do all that we can to ensure that many such projects and imaginative initiatives are available in Scotland's communities and are attractive to young people. For the minority of young people who become involved in gang culture and antisocial behaviour, we need schemes such as operation reclaim in Glasgow, in the constituency of my colleague Paul Martin, to help build new skills and teach young people that there are alternatives to booze and blades. We need to resource projects that get participants back into education or employment. By building self-esteem we can target repeat offending—we all acknowledge that that is a problem for which there is no easy answer—and reduce the incidence of low-level crime, which blights too many of our communities and makes ordinary working people victims when they do not need to be victims. That is unacceptable and that is what I mean by saying that we must have a balanced approach. There is an absolute necessity for such an approach.

When young people transgress, there must be an appropriate degree of punishment. Antisocial behaviour must be tackled and, where appropriate, the variety of provisions in the 2004 act must be employed. I believe particularly that restorative justice services can be effective if they are supported and developed fully. They can be effective in forcing young people to see the harm that is caused to members of their own community by their unacceptable behaviour and ensuring that they make appropriate reparation—that is essential.

The minority of young people who indulge in antisocial behaviour and low-level offending must be encouraged to change their ways. Many will do so; for those who do not, condign punishment is required. I say to Mr Ewing that that must include as an option so-called junior ASBOs. They must not be the first option, but they must be an option.

Victims of offending demand and deserve nothing less.

10:43

Hugh O'Donnell (Central Scotland) (LD): Before I came to participate in the debate this morning, I had a meeting about a scheme that the previous Government initiated, called getting it right for every child. At the heart of that scheme is, in fact, the child. Many of the issues that speakers have covered are referred to in the principles of the getting it right for every child scheme—for example, early intervention and supporting opportunities—and that is all good. However, I am a little disappointed that a substantial debate about young people again comes under the auspices of justice. I understand that part of the reason for that is the framework that has been published; however, protecting our children and young people is complex, as is delivering services, so rather than yet again defining young people in terms of the justice agenda, it might have been helpful to have a wider debate on how to address all the issues affecting young people.

Too often, we are quick to label the young as troublesome, bad mannered, ill educated or just downright bad, although, as other speakers have said, the latter category applies to only a very small minority. Sadly, however, we are considerably slower to recognise that the young have been born in, live in, and are subject to the society that we, politicians present and past, have created for them. Far too often, society's general approach is to blame young people for the way they react to the society in which they find themselves.

Here we are again, defining young people almost exclusively in terms of the justice agenda, with a subtext that implies that that is the only way in which we can define them or deal with them. Perhaps what we should be doing is addressing the injustices that—directly, deliberately or otherwise—are done to them. Because of the misdemeanours of a few, we have—with the complicity of the more rabid elements of the tabloid media—branded all our young people as being bad to some extent. If we are here to talk about justice, that is certainly an injustice.

The victims of crime in our streets are more often than not the poorest, the most vulnerable and the least influential in our society. The most likely victims of violent crime are young males. Although offenders often have poor educational attainment and no qualifications, and although they often lack stable employment or opportunities to gain stable employment, we as a country are not making enough progress in tackling those wider social issues. The previous Administration and the present Government are taking steps, but

we are not doing so fast enough. Too often, we do not include the young people whose interests we all have at heart.

What I said about offenders does not excuse crime, nor does it mean that Liberal Democrats will shrink from appropriate measures that will address head-on the major issues in law and order. However, we reject approaches or policies that adopt a simplistic and authoritarian view of antisocial behaviour and the minor petty crime that is often an annoyance to older people.

Who can sound the toughest is not the challenge that politicians and people in the media face. The challenge is to tackle the problems of crime in our communities with policies that have been proven to work, instead of simply chasing headlines and proposing draconian measures. Liberal Democrats want the Government not to demonise young people but to invest in them. The Government should increase the level of financial investment in young people, doing so in the belief that those young people are the future of our country. The Government should give them a say in their communities and in the services that are available to them.

Liberal Democrats believe that the Government should be investing more in supporting a culture of early intervention and I look forward to the document on early intervention that I believe the Government will produce in due course. The Government should work with the agencies that are responsible for helping and supporting young people. I am sure that when my colleague Robert Brown winds up he will clarify the detailed Liberal Democrat policies in such areas—policies that encompass such ideas as youth panels and the successful youth court systems that have been piloted in Lanarkshire in my region. At the moment, the SNP Government seems less than keen to support such ideas.

We must remember that the success and foundation of every state is the education and support of its youth. There is no value in laying the blame for all society's ills at the door of our young people.

10:49

Nigel Don (North East Scotland) (SNP): My remarks will concentrate mainly on some of the outcomes from the Scottish cashback for communities scheme. Important lessons have come out of that, some of which have already been touched on.

Five projects are being supported in Aberdeen, using money that has recently been announced. The first relates to a youth cafe in Torry, in the south side of the city, which operates on Wednesday and Friday evenings during term

times and offers other activities during the summer holidays. The cafe organisers have been approached by youngsters from Kincorth, which is no great distance away. However, the organisers feel that they do not have the facilities for so many youngsters. It would be a very good idea if facilities also existed in Kincorth. We know that youngsters are territorial, and we must acknowledge that when we provide facilities.

For the second project, I turn to an area of the city known as Fersands and Fountain—the name is a corruption of road names in the area—in which a wide range of work is done in a community project. Recently, a graffitied wall was repainted, and it seems to me that that work incorporated several useful aspects. First, it was creative; secondly, it was a group activity; thirdly, it built confidence in those who took part; and fourthly, it improved the environment. It would be appropriate to consider those four aspects for any activity.

Thirdly, Transition Extreme Sports offers activities on a very large space near the waterfront. The sports have to be confined to their own space, and some youngsters find them great fun; I am talking about skateboarding, BMX biking and that kind of thing. There are also climbing walls and other relatively mad music and art activities. We must allow our youngsters to be creative and to go off in their own directions, and we should ensure that they have opportunities to do so. A great deal can be done creatively with graffiti; it just needs to be done in the right place. I make that comment drawing on my experience as a trustee of the Hot Chocolate Trust in Dundee, which continues to offer such projects very productively.

The fourth project concerns Befriend a Child. It is a very different type of project, which provides an opportunity for a relatively young person to work one to one for a few hours with a younger person—subject, of course, to all the checks that we would expect—who suffers from a lack of social skills and confidence, which can happen for all sorts of reasons. During a few hours of such work, the younger person's self-confidence and skills can be built up. Such work is very valuable in its place, and when we consider group projects and national projects, we should not forget one-to-one work, which can be crucial.

The last project that I want to mention is Apex Scotland, which is a national charity that works with offenders. There is work to be done with people who have failed—people who have gone through the sausage machine, come out the other end and are seen to be offenders. The work of the charity is to try to make them employable—not to tell them that they are bad boys, or possibly girls, but to say to them, “Right, we need to move on

from here. What skills do you need?” We all know something about prisons and offenders, and we know that offenders' skills are usually pretty low. The ability to put together a curriculum vitae might be beyond most of them, but that is the kind of skill that we must help them to acquire and use.

Recently, I went to a community policing meeting in Westhill, to the west of Aberdeen, and found that the community police officers rarely take things as far as an ASBO. Cases go through a system that involves an informal warning, a letter to parents, and an acceptable behaviour contract.

I am very glad that the legislation on ASBOs is not going away. I entirely take the point that ASBOs are not the right answer, but there is value in the whole process of helping youngsters to understand what they are doing.

I finish with a quotation from an Audit Scotland report from last August, “Dealing with offending by young people”:

“Most councils have found it difficult, both strategically and operationally, to overcome the differences between the child-centred focus of youth justice under the children's hearings system and the community-focused design of the antisocial behaviour legislation.”

That has been described as a philosophical difference, and I have heard it widely commented on in social work departments. We must understand that if we are going to be child centred, the community-focused antisocial behaviour legislation is perhaps not quite perfect.

10:55

Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab): I apologise for having to pop out at the beginning of the debate. I was speaking to the school students who we see in the gallery, who are from Armadale—a very topical place at the moment. I will come back to that later.

I am delighted to take part in the debate. It seems obligatory to acknowledge—other members have done so, and the motion does it too—that the majority of children and young people are well behaved and a credit to their families. I do not say that flippantly, but with some concern that it makes us sound defensive. I am not defensive. It is right to challenge the behaviour of those who cause trouble, regardless of their age. However, more so than older people, the behaviour of children and young people is likely to be affected by those around them, which is why it is important to consider how we support not just the child or young person, but their family and friends.

The minister tries to acknowledge that in the final sentence of the motion. However, I am concerned that projects that support families are suffering from reduced financial resources. Just

last week, I heard that family projects run by Aberlour Child Care Trust are facing cuts to their budgets. I am sure that the minister agrees that if we are serious about early intervention and a comprehensive response to behaviours, such cuts do not make sense. I hope that he will look into that situation.

There has been much talk this week about the Armadale pilot, which prevents young people aged 18 to 21 from buying off-sales of alcohol. In fact, there have been so many ministers in Armadale this week that I had begun to wonder whether the rest of Scotland was getting a fair share. The pilot started as an antisocial behaviour measure, but clearly involved the misuse of alcohol. People from Armadale had complained to the police and the council that some young people were acting antisocially and vandalism was rife, and that alcohol misuse was often a contributing factor. As an aside, the pilot was never intended to be a health measure—although there are obvious benefits—and it was certainly not going to change the culture of alcohol misuse. However, I suspect that those are arguments for another debate.

The pilot included a number of measures. As alcohol was a contributory factor to the antisocial behaviour, the police sought to restrict its availability. They used test purchasing to ensure that alcohol was not being sold to under-18s. The plan with 18 to 21-year-olds was to stop them buying alcohol for younger friends or family. The police drug and alcohol liaison officer visited schools to discuss the misuse of alcohol with young people. The risk that alcohol might be replaced by other illegal substances was picked up on, too. The police did a floor sweep of known hot spots. When they found young people with alcohol, the alcohol was confiscated and the young people were taken to the police station. Their parents were called to collect them and referrals were made to the West Lothian drug and alcohol project.

Eighteen to 21-year-olds were allowed to purchase alcohol in public houses. Through the best bar none campaign, those pubs were encouraged to make responsible sales. For example, the pubs ensured that they did not serve people who were already drunk. Finally, the youth action team was out and about in Armadale, speaking to the young people to find out why they were drinking and what other activities they would like to avoid getting involved in alcohol misuse.

The pilot has been successful and all involved are to be praised, particularly Superintendent Chris Griffiths. However, I think members would agree that it needed intensive resourcing and back-up. If it is to be rolled out throughout Scotland and is the example that people want to follow, the minister will need to guarantee

adequate resources for other areas. Six weeks of weekend pilots in a specific town is very different from Scotland-wide, 24/7, 365 days a year. The Scottish Government has raised people's expectations; I hope that they will not be disappointed. However, to give the minister some encouragement, Ross from Armadale academy said that he thought that the pilot was heading in the right direction.

As other members have said, we are proud in Scotland of the children's hearings system. The system sees many children who are there because they need protection, but there are others who need to change their behaviour. I recently sat in on a panel session in Bathgate and found that one of the difficulties facing panel members involved the array of disposals that they had available to them. In January, ministers indicated that there would be consultation on the administration of the hearings system. When will that happen? Will the minister ensure that any savings from that streamlining will be reinvested in the panels' front-line services? Is the Scottish Government planning any further reviews of the hearings system, particularly in relation to disposals? I agree with Mr Aitken that we should consider that issue, but I do not accept his assertion that we should remove 14 and 15-year-olds from the hearings system.

Early intervention is important if we are to reduce the influences that cause young people to get into trouble. We have the hearings system but, as Pauline McNeill and others have said, we have antisocial behaviour legislation and the youth court pilots. The fact that those measures were introduced by the previous Administration does not make them wrong. The Scottish Government should use the powers that it has—and build on them, of course—but we should not think that we must reinvent everything, including the framework, just to put the SNP's stamp on it.

11:02

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): In a debate such as this, it is important to start on a positive note and, before we address the very real problem of youth offending, to commend Scotland's young people on their achievements. In my constituency, there are numerous examples of the positive contribution that is being made by our youngsters, day in, day out. From their involvement in youth arts, theatre and music to wider sports and recreation, our youngsters are making a difference and becoming responsible citizens; we all hope that that will sustain them into their adulthood.

Only this week, children from Dunlop primary school won a local sports and athletics competition involving 500 primary school children from

throughout East Ayrshire. All those children now have a taste for sport—perhaps that will encourage some of them to try for a Commonwealth games place in 2014. Mike Pringle made a similar comment. Other youngsters from several schools in the area contributed greatly to a recent exhibition of their local heroes in Kilmarnock. The kids' enthusiasm was incredible. They decided who was in—and who was out—and gathered pictures and illustrations of their heroes. The students from St Joseph's academy put together a production relating to Kilmarnock's railway heritage—including a contribution by Andrew Barclay—which was performed in full costume during a recent visit by the First Minister to Barclay house.

The achievements of those youngsters, and of similar young students throughout Scotland, do not find their way into statistical reports of the kind that we are hearing extracts from today, but it is important to recognise and celebrate the great things that our young people do. There are common threads through those examples, such as positive intervention at an early age; engagement with relevant and exciting topics, in which young people can make a real contribution; and the sense of purpose and achievement that is gained by recognition of a job well done. Those are positive forces in delivering our shared agenda for responsible citizenship in our society.

From those bright and hopeful beginnings, where and when do things start to go wrong for the minority of youngsters? How can we step in and prevent that? How can we reverse negative behaviour when it occurs? There is surely no doubt that the big three Ds in our society—drink, drugs and deprivation—play a huge part in pulling some of those youngsters towards a life of offending and serious crime. Current figures show that 84 per cent of 15-year-olds have admitted to having drunk alcohol and that 88 per cent of all criminal damage offences were committed when the offender was under the influence of alcohol.

Similarly, more than 1,400 children in Scotland were referred to the children's reporter in 2005-06 on the ground of alcohol or drugs misuse and 20 per cent of Scotland's children live in households where the income is less than 60 per cent of the United Kingdom median. To that cocktail of despair, we must surely add the demoralising effect on our youngsters who live in families where parents are substance abusers or offenders of one kind or another.

In Scotland, we have wonderful young kids with great potential who sadly, unless we can intervene positively, will follow a path of offending and a future life of crime at huge personal cost to them and huge financial cost to society.

Pauline McNeill: I compliment you on your speech. I assure you that I am not picking on you—

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan): I certainly hope not.

Pauline McNeill: I reassure you, Presiding Officer, that I would not do that.

Will anyone on the SNP benches—or, indeed, the Liberal Democrat benches—address the point that those who offend should take responsibility for their behaviour? Surely the SNP is not arguing that we can blame society.

Willie Coffey: I am certainly not. Of course we want our youngsters and people in general to take responsibility for their behaviour, but the Government has a duty and obligation to try to address the issues by the kind of intervention measures that are proposed in the strategy.

What is to be done? Should we focus our efforts on the consequences of offending, find new and more ways of punishing the offenders and issue more unacceptable behaviour notices, acceptable behaviour contracts and ASBOs to youngsters; or should we focus more on the root causes and try to prevent problems from developing in the first place?

In my constituency, there are some youngsters under 16 who have been given large numbers of ABCs—34 in one case and 33 in another—but have not been given ASBOs and are, instead, under social work supervision orders. Members might be forgiven for asking what kind of supervision those orders provide when a youngster can go on to commit 34 crimes.

Having been a local councillor for many years, I can say with confidence that our community wardens—who I do not think have been mentioned so far in the debate—have played a significant part in reducing offending within my community. I do not have any figures to prove it, but I can see the difference and so can local people. In addition to reporting to the police and the local authority when necessary, the wardens focus on engagement, intervention and diversion, which are all benefits.

The Government is taking some bold steps in the fight to tackle youth disorder and crime. It is reassessing the antisocial behaviour strategy; tackling the problem of young people drinking alcohol; investing money in alcohol treatment and support services; deploying the test purchasing schemes that were mentioned earlier; investing money to tackle the drugs issue; and introducing the cashback for communities scheme, under which nearly £7 million that is taken from criminals will go back to our communities. Those are all positive measures that will, I am sure, give all

Scotland's children the chance of a brighter future. I am happy to support the Government's motion.

11:08

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): I welcome the framework paper and the tone of the minister's introduction. The debate has been of high quality from all quarters of the Parliament. Speeches of some importance have been made, and I will draw out one or two of them.

I compliment Hugh O'Donnell on his excellent speech. He drew out the importance of putting the debate in a more holistic context than the justice portfolio alone, and many of the speeches have borne out that point.

Bill Aitken, Sandra White and Nigel Don raised issues of play, adventure and open space. I add to those the significant point, which is relevant to the debate, that between a third and half of children who are starting school have some communication difficulty, which contributes immediately to a disadvantage and a potential for frustration and alienation that can follow them right through school.

Bill Butler talked from his professional experience about the need for positive experiences for young people. His speech did not quite have the same tone as those by some of the other Labour members.

Mike Pringle made an important point about the ability of teachers and other professionals to identify problems in five-year-olds when they begin school; most teachers would echo that. He made another point about the influence of good schools and good headteachers. I know from experience that a good school can have strong, supportive values, which can increase motivation and reduce trouble within the school and, importantly, outside it as well. That is a central point in the debate.

Youth justice is a controversial area of public policy. The key policies inevitably require to be assessed over the medium to long term, the challenges are complex and there is no magic wand to wave, but youth offending has too often been the subject of political gesture and tokenism—the victim of the spin doctors, whose influence we can see every time that a politician calls for tough or robust policies. However, we all know that the challenge lies not in sounding the toughest and chasing the easy headlines, but in tackling crime in our communities with policies that work.

There is a vital law enforcement and process aspect to that: a more visible police presence on the streets and in our communities is hugely important. A few weeks ago, at the cost of a night's sleep, I had the opportunity to go round

Glasgow city centre with the police from Stewart Street police station. It was the night after the European football match in Manchester, so it was a bit quieter than usual, but I was impressed by the way in which Strathclyde Police had been able to concentrate resources on making the streets safe at a time of huge pressure—as the pubs and clubs spilled out—and by its proposals to reduce the number of senior posts and divert resources to community policing, all of which the public will welcome.

From my time as Deputy Minister for Education and Young People, I recognise the point that the Conservatives make in their amendment about pressures on the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration. However, as deputy minister, I found that the system was being clogged up by unnecessary referrals that achieved nothing. They were largely neglect referrals, which—contrary to the position when the system began—now constitute two thirds of referrals. Eighty per cent of them did not go to a hearing and did not need to go to one; the issue was to ensure that services were in place to tackle those children's neglect or address their need for support. I tried to set in place mechanisms—which, I think, the current Government has continued—to reduce such referrals and allow the SCRA to concentrate on the cases in which its intervention was necessary.

At the end of the day, youth offending will not be solved by law enforcement alone; it will be tackled by dealing with the basic causes of crime and antisocial behaviour, which will change lives. Those causes are often linked to terrible family backgrounds, fractured families and communities, intergenerational challenges of drug and alcohol addiction—a point that Willie Coffey made—and a lack of employment and life skills.

The Liberal Democrat amendment adds another dimension: empowerment and working with young people. However, it also challenges the SNP Government to give substance to the fine words of its motion and recognise the part that young people—who are often the principal victims of youth crime—can play in developing and implementing policy. In that context, I note how irrelevant and damaging is the SNP proposal to raise the age for obtaining off-sales alcohol to 21. It risks alienating decent young people, who should be our principal resource in achieving a culture change in the challenging and central issue of alcohol abuse.

Unusually—probably uniquely—the Government motion sets the right tone and balance. The problem of youth crime is exceptional, not endemic. Most young people are a credit to their parents, schools and communities; some go off the rails and can be hauled back, but there is a hard core who present more complicated and

endemic problems for which we need more specific, better targeted and earlier interventions of all kinds. Pauline McNeill spoke about the way in which gangs can provide substitute support structures for young people who do not get support at home. That is an interesting point that we should consider.

The minister said that the test of policy is the impact and outcomes for young people, and he is absolutely right. The debate should now be based on research and evidence. It should use and extend the Scottish crime survey, as the Liberal Democrats suggest, and use our knowledge of the importance of early intervention. It should sharpen our ability to identify children and young people who are in trouble and our ability to provide frameworks for them that will strengthen their resilience, give them the life skills that empower them, help them to make the most of the huge opportunities that life should provide and steer them away from the nihilistic desire to cause damage or disruption, which causes much damage to communities. That would be of huge benefit to them, the victims of crime, damaged communities and the future of Scotland.

This is an important debate and I am pleased about the quality of the speeches that have been made in it.

11:14

John Lamont (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): It is the responsibility of Government to ensure the safety of citizens in their communities and in their everyday lives. In recent years, many Scottish citizens have felt unsafe in their communities, because of the increasing problem of youth crime. That is hardly surprising: figures show that, under the previous Scottish Executive, the number of persistent young offenders increased by 19 per cent after 2003-04.

The people of Scotland should not have to deal with the effects of youth crime. We should not have to deal with everyday aggression and foul language on public transport. We should not have to deal with broken glass, graffiti and litter in our town centres. We must stop the effects of youth crime and make our towns and communities safer places to live. We must find a way to change the situation and return a feeling of safety to all our citizens, young and old alike.

My party and I—and, I am sure, everybody in the Parliament—are not looking to demonise the young people of Scotland. The vast majority of them are a tremendous asset to our nation, and they are helping Scotland to grow and flourish. However, it is important not to overlook those who engage in illegal, disruptive and antisocial activities.

There are two aspects to the debate. First, there are the sanctions that are available to deter and punish those who commit crime. Secondly, we must examine the circumstances that cause our young people to turn to crime in the first place.

On 26 March, I lodged a question concerning the number of parenting orders that had been given out in the previous year. Much to my surprise, I was told that no parenting orders had been given out during the previous 12 months; what is more, I was told that no parenting orders had ever been given out.

Parents need to be responsible for their children. If we are to reduce the occurrence of youth crime, we must provide the means for parents to help their children, as well as showing parents that they are accountable for their children's actions. It is imperative that we support parents and put responsibility back in their hands. I believe that the greater use of parenting orders will help to curb youth crime and make Scotland safer.

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): Does the member accept that many parenting problems are addressed by moving towards parenting orders without formally issuing them? Parenting orders might not have been issued, but that does not mean that action has not been instigated through social work departments and other relevant authorities to ensure that appropriate steps are taken. Rather than judging the effectiveness of such orders by the number of them that have been issued, does he accept that we should be ascertaining whether there has been an improvement in the families concerned?

John Lamont: Police officers in my constituency, who deal with many of the issues that we have been discussing today, feel great frustration at not being able to use the powers that parenting orders might put at their disposal. That is their practical experience.

If we are to stop youth crime, we must tackle its underlying causes. Only then will we be able to see real change in youth crime figures. While we must focus on the programmes that are already in place, such as parenting orders, we must also focus on and find ways to reverse the effects of social breakdown. We must focus on the family, on the environment and on the communities where our children are growing up. That point was made by a number of members, including Nigel Don and Mike Pringle.

I remind the Parliament of David Cameron's recent speech on youth crime. In it, Mr Cameron stated that we must fight youth crime on three fronts: the response of the courts; the response of the police; and the response of society. We need to act lower down the scale and focus on the family. We need to curb crime and target criminals

before they start to commit crimes that deserve prison sentences. We need to focus on creating a strong family and community atmosphere in order to target at-risk youth and curb crime before it starts. That can happen only if we give the courts and children's panels the ability to punish youths in a way that will leave the biggest mark and effectively deter them from committing crimes in future.

In 2000, the Westminster Government gave judges the power to disqualify youth offenders from holding or obtaining a driver's licence. That is a good example of a non-traditional sanction, and we should consider it.

We must also focus on the effectiveness of our police. Robert Peel once said:

"The test of police efficiency is the absence of crime and disorder, not the visible evidence of police action in dealing with it."

Like Mike Pringle, I draw the Parliament's attention to the experience of New York. Between 1992 and 1996, New York city halved its murder rate by focusing on more minor crimes. When the communities saw minor crimes being prosecuted, there was a noticeable reduction in crime overall. A focus on stopping youth crime at an earlier stage will help the citizens of Scotland to feel safer in their everyday lives. Bill Butler and Mary Mulligan also made that point.

We have consistently argued for more resources and disposals to be given to children's panels, enabling them to intervene more effectively—and, crucially, at the earliest possible opportunity. Those disposals could include the introduction of weekend and evening detention, community service, supervised attendance orders and drug treatment and testing orders.

Restoring the family is an important step in reducing youth crime. We need to give families the necessary support and help to allow them to feel more responsible for the actions of their children. We need to continue to focus on stopping social breakdown both through social enterprise and by making it easier for voluntary organisations to obtain funding to use to help young people in the way that is needed.

I believe that the youth of Scotland are a valuable asset. We want to hear what the youth have to say, but we also see the need to curb the youth crime that is caused by a very small minority. We need to focus on making Scotland a better place to raise children, ensuring that they reach their full potential. Curbing youth crime will make Scotland safer for all its citizens. I support the amendment in Bill Aitken's name.

11:21

Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab): We in Labour have supported, and will always support, young people who want to be rehabilitated and play a positive role in their local communities. That was the case when we were in government, and it is the case now that we are in opposition. In government, we delivered youth courts—I will come back to that subject later. We were specific about where to place funding in the youth justice system. In 2004, Cathy Jamieson, the then Minister for Justice, announced a package of more than £35 million for the youth justice fund, and we introduced initiatives such as youth courts and the provision of places for young people in restorative justice projects. Not only did we talk about youth justice; we delivered.

I welcome the minister's commitment to operation reclaim, which was mentioned by my colleague Bill Butler. The project, which has been operating for some years in my constituency, was instigated after the murder of Firsat Dag in Sighthill. The minister recently visited my constituency and met a large group of young people—I understand that they had been advised that they would be meeting a famous football star rather than a famous football supporter. The minister welcomed operation reclaim. The project's ethos is not just about dealing with offenders but about ensuring that young people have an alternative to offending in the first place. It is made up of a wide range of young people from different territorial areas within Glasgow.

However, we in Labour have to say that there are currently no tangible proposals for tackling youth crime that are anywhere near as specific as those of the previous Executive. Some members might disagree with the strategy of the previous Executive, but at least there was a specific strategy; very little in the way of specifics is provided in "Preventing Offending by Young People". I would be happy to take an intervention from the minister if he wishes to confirm that point, or he may wish to comment on it in his summing-up speech. We need to be specific.

It has been 13 months since the Government was formed—we are 410 days on—and we are still in consultation or discussion-paper mode. We are still having debates in the Parliament. That is simply not good enough.

Fergus Ewing: Paul Martin knows that I would be happy to mention specific measures that we have introduced. However, does he accept the key findings in the report by the Auditor General that was published last autumn? The report says that

"the impact of this activity ... is not yet demonstrated",

despite the extra funding and the

"earlier commitments made by the Scottish Executive."

The report also mentions “the limited progress made” over five years.

Paul Martin: I always welcome key findings from the Auditor General, but I also welcome key findings by my constituents, who welcomed the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Act 2004. They welcomed the fact that local police officers would have legal remedies at their disposal. The time for the database of excuses is over; it is time for enforcement and action in our local communities. I welcome feedback from people in local communities on their real-life experiences.

Our amendment calls for the
“further rolling out of youth courts”.

I ask the minister, in his summing up, to be specific about the Government’s future plans for youth courts. The Labour Party is committed to the principle that we should have a more focused and specialised approach to the delivery of youth justice. We know that victims find their involvement with the youth courts to be a much more positive experience because the system gives them the opportunity to see the perpetrator being dealt with more quickly and effectively. The youth courts give professionals in the youth justice system the opportunity to work together to ensure that young people understand the impact of their crimes on the victim, and the youth courts also allow more effective disposals to be enforced.

I move on to an issue that many members raised. I do not often disagree with Cathie Craigie but I will do so today. It is valuable to reiterate that a large majority of young people in our communities are a credit not just to themselves but to their parents, and they will play a valuable role in Scotland’s future. That goes without saying.

Cathie Craigie: For the record, I point out to my colleague that I agree with his comments. The point that I wished to make, as we are discussing youth justice, was that only a small minority of young people find themselves having to come before our courts or our justice system.

Paul Martin: I need not say anything else. The point has been well made.

The youth justice system must not ignore the genuine concerns of communities that have to endure the actions of those who persistently reoffend. In many communities, young offenders have been given second, third, fourth or fifth chances—or more—to reconsider their activities. In the real world, police officers regularly complain that it is a waste of time to arrest perpetrators in the first place because there is a lack of parental control. As John Lamont said, we must ensure that parents are accountable. The vast majority are, but some are not.

That is the situation in the real world, and those are the concerns of our local communities and police officers. It is okay for us, in our comfort zone, to raise the issues and to discuss the strategies and the glossy discussion documents that are churned out by our civil servants, but we have to strike the right balance between the rights of the offender and our local communities’ right—which we will always respect—to live in peace and harmony.

Some members sought to make excuses for persistent offenders, sometimes by citing poverty as a reason for offenders’ behaviour. I do not believe that poverty is an excuse. I know many families in my constituency who do not have significant means at their disposal but who are an absolute credit to the local community. I know of many persistent offenders whose parents have significant economic means at their disposal, so I do not believe that poverty is an excuse, as many academics claim.

Our amendment mentions the need for resources to allow youth services and the youth justice system to be effective. The minister will be tired of Labour members calling for the necessary resources to be available to ensure that strategies are enforced, but he can look forward to many more calls for clarity about the Government’s financial plans. The Government has been in power for 410 days and it has had plenty of time to mull over its financial plans. We want action on the issues. I call on members to support Pauline McNeill’s amendment.

11:30

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): It is sad that there has been no media presence during the debate, which has been excellent. The debate was opened by my colleague the Minister for Community Safety, and the tone and tenor that he set were followed in the main—notwithstanding Cathie Craigie’s speech, which was, from the outset, rather begrudging and churlish.

As Robert Brown said, we have heard a number of excellent speeches—not simply from members on the SNP benches, such as Christina McKelvie, Sandra White and Willie Coffey, but from others. Robert Brown was right to praise Hugh O’Donnell for the points that he made, and Bill Aitken gave a measured and temperate speech, perhaps somewhat belying the image that he is cultivating in some of our tabloid papers. His excellent remarks added to the debate.

Bill Butler gave an excellent speech, with which I concur whole-heartedly. The Government makes no apology for reiterating that the overwhelming majority of our kids are good kids who are a credit

not simply to themselves but to their parents, their communities and Scotland. We should always remember that. However, a small minority of young people are difficult and dangerous. Some of them have a group of peers who hang around with them, and, as Bill Butler said, they can become a real nuisance to our communities. We must not forget or ignore those young people—we must challenge them. The Government makes no apology for stating that and continuing to ram home the message.

I have said previously that Mr Martin has never knowingly praised a child in the chamber, but he—rather begrudgingly—also recognised that the majority of young people are a credit to themselves and their parents. I say to him that, if the Government has achieved nothing else, it has changed the tenor and tone of the debate on youth justice and child offending. Where are Hugh Henry and Johann Lamont when we need them to come along with some “hang ‘em high” or “whip ‘em” views? The fact that the debate has changed is fundamentally a good thing for Scotland.

Bill Butler was correct to say that we cannot ignore bad behaviour. I say to Mr Martin that I accept that poverty is not an excuse for offending. It was not an excuse in past generations, when poverty was even more endemic than it currently is, and indeed when it was probably much harsher. The 1920s and other hungry and lean times spring to mind. Other countries that have far worse poverty do not have the level of offending or antisocial behaviour that we have.

However, we cannot ignore the clear correlation between those who offend and those who come from areas of deprivation, or the correlation between those who have poor life chances and little hope or expectation of employment or gainful opportunities in society and those who get into crime. As Willie Coffey said, we must seek to tackle the three Ds of drink, drugs and deprivation.

Contrary to what Mary Mulligan suggested, we were happy to support a great deal of the legislation that came from the previous Administration. We recognise that there is a role for ASBOs, and indeed for criminal antisocial behaviour orders, or CRASBOs. However, we live in a world of limited choices, and if we choose to put in £7 million to achieve 14 child ASBOs at a cost of £500,000 each, we do so at the expense of not being able to put more resources into youth football, youth rugby, the arts, including drama, and leisure.

We must ensure that communities are not blighted. ASBOs have recently been used against several youngsters in Craigmillar in my constituency, and I support the authorities in doing that. However, we do not live in a world of infinite resources and we have to ensure that we get the

bang for our buck. An ASBO can cost £500,000, but perhaps a bit more street football would take some youngsters out of crime.

Mary Mulligan: Does the minister accept that part of the expense is the support that is provided before young people receive ASBOs? Does he agree that the money is well spent if it deters children or young people from getting further into trouble?

Kenny MacAskill: As I was saying, we were happy to support many of the measures that were introduced. It is the way in which those measures are used and where they are targeted that is the issue. That is why the tenor of the debate has changed, not the policy.

Where we criticise the previous Administration—in particular, Labour members and their colleagues south of the border—is on its record on child poverty and early intervention. At the start of the millennium, we are the largest oil and gas producer in the European Union. Oil is \$139 per barrel, so this country should be richer than ever; yet, under a Labour Government from 1997 to 2008, a fifth of children have been living in poverty. One in five Scottish children now lives in poverty—Labour members should hang their heads in shame.

We recognise that, as Mr Butler correctly said, we must challenge bad behaviour. People must take responsibility for their behaviour. Society is fed up, and the Government is ramming home that message. It is not good enough for someone to say, “It wisnae me; it was the drink.” Oh yes, it was them. It is not good enough for someone to say, “I don’t have anything to do.” They are free to make choices. We must challenge individuals about their behaviour.

Equally, we must remember—although Tony Blair seemed to forget this—that responsibility is a two-way street. We must give respect and responsibility to our youngsters and ensure that all our communities—especially those that were marginalised, disfranchised and impoverished by the previous Administration—are given opportunities.

Pauline McNeill: Labour members would say that we have done a lot to tackle poverty. We agree with you on some points, but how are we to judge the Government on the intangible measures that you seem to be putting forward? There is a feeling that you are going to backtrack from your policy of counting the number of persistent offenders. Can you clarify whether that is the case? We were prepared to be judged on what we did. How are we to judge the Government’s progress on law?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind members to address their questions and answers through the chair.

Kenny MacAskill: I remind Ms McNeill of the outcomes of the concordat. I had an interesting and enjoyable meeting with Councillor Harry McGuigan, a Labour Party member from North Lanarkshire. We discussed matters and had a shared agenda. Whatever Ms McNeill may think, Labour councils and Labour councillors do not want to make Scotland a less safe or more lawless place; they seek to work with us to make our communities better, safer and stronger. Mr McGuigan is more than happy to continue to co-operate, as is Councillor Pat Watters. This is another instance of internal Labour Party grief that you should sort out yourselves.

With regard to the points that were raised by Bill Aitken, we believe that the children's hearings system should be reviewed, and we have undertaken to do that. It has passed the test of time, but it is struggling to cope with the volume of cases because of changes in our society. We must, as Fergus Ewing and Robert Brown said, ensure that the system focuses on the cases that need to be dealt with, with others perhaps being addressed in different ways. We believe that the children's hearings system is secure but that it needs to be reviewed.

On youth courts, we see Labour's obsession with laws. We supported youth courts in opposition and we support them in government but, as the old saying goes, there is more than one way to skin a cat. There are other ventures. Have Labour members been to West Lothian to see the system that operates there? Have they seen how the system that is based in Drylaw police station in Edinburgh is working out? We do not need the formal structure—the bricks and mortar of a court—and the expense that goes with it. By freeing up sheriffs' time and embedding a procurator fiscal in with the police, we can ensure that the same service is delivered.

As a Government, we are about delivering outcomes, not about being seen to be doing something when we are not achieving anything. As I said at the outset, we are delighted to propose the strategy, and we have changed the tenor of the debate. It might not trip off Mr Martin's tongue, but we make no apology for saying that we believe that our kids are good kids. We will challenge the small minority who are out of control and ensure that they face punishment and make reparation to their communities for the harm that they have done. We are making Scotland safer and stronger. Whatever Labour members may think, this country is going forward and getting better.

Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

General Questions

11:40

Scottish Ambulance Service (Braemar)

1. Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what measures have been put in place for the residents of Braemar, following the relocation of the community ambulance to Ballater, to ensure that the Scottish Ambulance Service meets its 75 per cent target for responding to category A calls within eight minutes. (S3O-3829)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Nicola Sturgeon): The Scottish Government and the Scottish Ambulance Service are fully committed to achieving by March 2009 the national target of responding to 75 per cent of category A calls within eight minutes.

The residents of Braemar are covered by an accident and emergency ambulance that operates on a 24-hour basis in the upper Deeside corridor. The resources are located within the local area, in line with demand patterns. In addition, a variety of local health service unscheduled care providers are working together to sustain and improve access to patient services.

Mike Rumbles: The cabinet secretary should be aware that the community ambulance is now 17 miles away, which means that it is impossible for it to get to Braemar within eight minutes, so the target of responding to 75 per cent of emergency calls within eight minutes will not be achieved for anybody in the Braemar community. A solution would be to place one paramedic in a car in Braemar, in addition to the ambulance in Ballater. Will the minister consider that as a practical solution to the problem?

Nicola Sturgeon: I am more than happy to consider any practical suggestion, and I give Mike Rumbles an undertaking that I will do so. As he rightly points out, the ambulance is based in Ballater, which is midway between Aboyne and Braemar. There were problems with the previous arrangements, of which I am sure that Mike Rumbles is aware. The new arrangements provide, for the first time in upper Deeside, a full-time, 24-hour service that does not rely on on-call arrangements. The number of paramedics and technicians remains the same. In addition, there will be three ambulance care assistants.

As Mike Rumbles will also be aware, the new arrangement was introduced in April and there is a commitment to review it after six months. I am sure that the kind of suggestion that Mike Rumbles has made today will be considered in that context.

Norwich Union (Dundee)

2. Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee West) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it shares my concern that many employees of Norwich Union's Dundee call centre will be unable to accept the company's proposals to transfer their jobs to Perth. (S3O-3801)

The Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism (Jim Mather): We are concerned about the impact on Norwich Union's staff in Dundee. Scottish Development International will work closely with the company to ensure that there is the minimum of disruption for the staff who are affected by the restructuring.

From the early discussions, I am aware that Norwich Union is doing everything that it can to retain its skilled people, for example through offering travel packages. I am also encouraged by the good employment climate in Dundee. Other companies have already been in touch with Norwich Union about opportunities for staff who cannot accept Norwich Union's relocation plans and who would prefer not to relocate or make the longer commute to work.

Joe FitzPatrick: In offering an enhanced package to encourage workers to relocate to Perth, Norwich Union has recognised the high level of skills of its Dundee workforce. The best way to ensure that those skills are not lost to Dundee's economy is for another company to take over the Dundee call centre with its trained staff. Will the minister agree to work with Scottish Enterprise Tayside, Dundee City Council and Norwich Union to ensure that the call centre is marketed, in the hope that it can be taken on as a going concern?

Jim Mather: We have spoken to Norwich Union, which has advised us that it recognises that it may prove challenging for some people to move offices. We understand that it takes approximately 25 minutes to travel from its office in Dundee to its office in Perth. It will obviously take longer for people to get from their homes to Perth and back. However, the company will investigate ways in which it can help its employees with their travel arrangements. It wants to reinforce the message that it is keen to retain all its skilled workforce.

The key consideration is that it is not a redundancy situation at this stage, and we expect to be involved in helping any staff to move forward. We have been advised that Norwich Union will hold staff meetings on the issue. If,

subsequently, it informs us that a number of staff are unwilling to relocate, we expect to be involved in finding a way forward for those staff either through relocation or through finding alternative employment in the area. At this stage, however, it is too early for that, and I do not expect SDI to be involved just yet. As the situation develops, we can be depended on to do everything in our power to optimise the situation for the staff of Norwich Union.

Stroke Services

3. Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive what action is being taken to improve services for patients who have suffered a stroke. (S3O-3789)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Nicola Sturgeon): We remain on track to achieve our target of a 50 per cent reduction in premature deaths from stroke by 2010, taking 1995 as the baseline. The Scottish stroke care audit, which monitors performance against the NHS Quality Improvement Scotland stroke standards, shows that our national strategy has achieved significant improvements in nearly all hospitals admitting people who have had an acute stroke. However, stroke remains one of the clinical priorities of NHS Scotland. The consultation on our revised coronary heart disease and stroke strategy will help to identify the further areas of improvement on which we should concentrate in the next few years.

Mary Scanlon: In a recent debate on the Ambulance Service, I raised the issue of the optimum time of 90 minutes for getting a stroke patient to hospital for a scan to determine the type of stroke and to get a clinical diagnosis to provide thrombolysis treatment, if appropriate. The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing replied:

"all paramedics are trained to deliver thrombolysis."—
[*Official Report*, 22 May 2008; c 8893.]

However, the British Medical Association, the stroke unit at Raigmore hospital and Professor Wootton at last week's meeting of the Health and Sport Committee all confirmed that a stroke patient has to be scanned and seen by a card-carrying stroke physician prior to treatment. Administering thrombolysis without that could cause a catastrophic bleed. Will the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing now confirm that paramedics are not trained to deliver thrombolysis to stroke patients, to ensure that there is no misunderstanding of the situation?

Nicola Sturgeon: I assure Mary Scanlon that there are circumstances in which a paramedic delivering thrombolysis will be essential for the

patient, and paramedics are trained to give that emergency treatment.

Mary Scanlon rightly talks about the need to improve stroke standards. The most recent audit of stroke standards as measured against the NHS QIS standards was conducted in September last year. As I said, it showed significant improvement in hospitals across the country, but improvements are still needed in some areas. One of them was identified by Mary Scanlon: the time taken to get stroke patients admitted to stroke units. Indeed, some issues were raised in Mary Scanlon's area of NHS Highland, and a number of actions are being worked on there to ensure that services improve.

Ian McKee (Lothians) (SNP): Preventing strokes is far more important than treating them. Stroke requires urgent treatment, but if we can keep the number of strokes down, we will not need that treatment. What measures is the Government taking to prevent strokes, so that such treatment will be required less frequently?

Nicola Sturgeon: Ian McKee raises an equally important point. As in many other areas, prevention is as important as cure, if not more so, which is why the Government emphasises the prevention of ill health as well as the treatment.

The revised CHD and stroke strategy will have a part to play in showing what more we need to do to aid prevention. Of course, the Government's work in areas such as smoking prevention, reducing alcohol misuse and improving diet is extremely important in helping to prevent such illnesses, as opposed to simply treating them, as we have traditionally done.

Regeneration (Barrhead)

4. Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what plans it has to support the regeneration of Barrhead. (S3O-3861)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): Regeneration proposals for Barrhead are being developed by East Renfrewshire Council and other local partners. That reflects the recent reforms to the enterprise networks, which saw responsibility for local regeneration pass to local authorities.

Ken Macintosh: The council is pressing ahead with the regeneration, but it is looking for essential Scottish Government support for two projects in particular: a new Barrhead high school and a direct connection to the M77 motorway from Barrhead. Is the minister aware of the growing clamour in the town for a Government statement on financial support for the Barrhead high school? On a more practical note, will the minister undertake to reconsider the case for expanding

junction 4 on the M77 to provide a direct link to the motorway network?

John Swinney: As Mr Macintosh is aware, I made some remarks a few weeks ago during the debate on the Scottish futures trust that made it clear that the Government is keen to take up East Renfrewshire Council's initiative to be involved in the further development of the Scottish futures trust proposal. I imagine that the development of Barrhead high school is one of the candidate projects that the council would be keen to discuss with the Government. During that debate, I indicated that I would be happy to discuss the issue with the local authority. I have now received correspondence from Councillor Fletcher, the council leader, and I will take forward the discussions.

I will examine the issue of the direct connection to the M77 and, if I consider that further action can be taken to advance that project, I will take it. However, I make it clear to Mr Macintosh that our substantial capital investment programme is already under way under the auspices of the Government's infrastructure investment plan, and the Government must prioritise those developments.

A96 (Inveramsay Bridge)

5. Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive what proposals there are to improve the flow of traffic at the Inveramsay bridge, near Inverurie, on the A96. (S3O-3780)

The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): Transport Scotland's strategic transport projects review is examining the longer term needs of Scotland's national strategic transport network. That includes consideration of the A96 as part of the transport corridor between Aberdeen and Inverness.

Nanette Milne: I thank the minister for his response, although it is what I expected.

When I raised the issue of the Inveramsay bridge with the previous Liberal Democrat-Labour Scottish Executive, Transport Scotland's response was that the traffic delays were insignificant. However, when I recently met representatives of the local farming community, it was made clear to me that concern is growing about the bridge's impact on the north-east's economy. Given the increasing numbers of people who commute to Aberdeen along the A96, there is now a real sense of urgency that action must be taken to address that bottleneck. Does the minister agree that this is a real problem? Will the Scottish National Party Government undertake to find a solution to it within the current parliamentary session?

Stewart Stevenson: I have heard much of what the member has mentioned from a number of sources. I have asked Transport Scotland to consider the removal of all traffic lights on all our trunk roads in rural areas throughout Scotland. That is why some work is being done on the A82.

The A96 at Inveramsay bridge has traffic lights. I have had engineers visit the site and make preliminary assessments of possible solutions. That is being actively pursued by the constituency member for Gordon, and I am in regular discussion with him on the subject.

Police Numbers (Strathclyde)

6. Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what progress has been made in increasing police numbers in Strathclyde. (S3O-3845)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): I welcome Strathclyde joint police board's endorsement of Chief Constable Steve House's plans to increase the force establishment from 7,200 to 8,000 by 2011—an increase of 800 officers. I welcome Strathclyde joint police board's endorsement of the force's plans to recruit 864 officers this year. Across Scotland, that means that well over 1,500 officers will be recruited this financial year, which is the highest ever level of recruitment, and more than double the level we inherited from the previous Administration. I also welcome Strathclyde joint police board's announcement last week of an extra 600 dedicated community police officers recruited and deployed across the west of Scotland within one year.

All that demonstrates that, despite inheriting the lowest recruitment levels since devolution, and record numbers of officers being eligible to retire, we are well on track to meet our commitment of 1,000 additional officers available in our communities.

Patricia Ferguson: I thank the minister for his response, and I am sure that he will want to thank the community planning partnerships in Glasgow, which between them will contribute towards the cost of 100 of those officers. It is not all thanks to the Government, I am afraid. [*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): Order.

Patricia Ferguson: When new officers are being deployed in Strathclyde, will the minister consider the needs of the communities into which they are deployed? Will he look at the times at which they are deployed and, if necessary, address any issues with shift patterns, so that officers are on the beat when they are required, not at times of the day when there are fewer problems?

Kenny MacAskill: First, I will clarify the points that my colleagues made from a sedentary position. Our record financial investment in local authorities as a result of the historic concordat has allowed Glasgow City Council to spend its money wisely and as it sees fit. We are glad that it has done it in that way.

A lot of the matters relating to shift patterns are operational matters and are within the domain of the chief constable. They require to be discussed with representatives of all ranks, and in particular with representatives of the Scottish Police Federation.

Ms Ferguson makes a valid point. We as a Government are committed to ensuring that we not only recruit an additional 1,000 new officers but seek to retain valuable experienced officers in our communities, which is what communities want. We are also committed to ensuring that we deploy officers appropriately and wisely. I am happy to do whatever is necessary to encourage and facilitate that. However, chief constables in Strathclyde and elsewhere are on the case. I am happy to work with them, but the issue that Ms Ferguson raises fundamentally is an operational matter.

BEAR Scotland (Meetings)

7. John Lamont (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive when it will next meet representatives from BEAR Scotland. (S3O-3783)

The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): Staff from Transport Scotland have regular meetings with BEAR Scotland. The next meetings will be next week, on 24 and 25 June.

John Lamont: I again draw to the minister's attention a serious problem that is affecting the A7 in my constituency. Due to a landslip, there have been traffic lights a few miles south of Hawick for a year and a half. The A7 is a major trunk route through the Borders and many of my constituents are concerned by the apparent lack of progress at the site and the inconvenience caused by the lights. Many drivers are simply ignoring the lights, which is causing a serious safety issue. When the minister next meets BEAR Scotland, will he ask it to accelerate the work to repair that important route through the Borders?

Stewart Stevenson: The member will be aware that landslips present significant challenges to the road network and the rail network in Scotland. Increased numbers of landslips are one of the impacts of climate change that we are already seeing.

As I said in answer to an earlier question, it is my intention that we do not have traffic lights on rural trunk roads. As the member said, we have

had traffic lights at Branhholme for a year and a half. We are, of course, looking at the ground conditions as well as at what requires to be done in relation to the road itself. I believe that we are making reasonable progress, and the member can be assured that we will discuss the matter with BEAR whenever we meet it.

first time. That is a welcome move towards enabling the project to get serious consideration from this Government.

Redhouse Roundabout (Upgrading)

8. Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):

To ask the Scottish Executive what meetings it has had since May 2007 with the south east of Scotland transport partnership and Fife Council to discuss the possibility of upgrading the Redhouse roundabout and what meetings it has planned with them on this issue in the future. (S3O-3837)

The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): Transport Scotland officials met Fife Council on 21 April 2008, when a range of transport planning issues was discussed, including the Redhouse roundabout. No meetings are planned with it on the issue in the future.

Claire Baker: The minister will be aware that congestion around the Redhouse roundabout in the morning and afternoon rush hours can make travelling a misery for people throughout the south-east Fife area. Does he agree that, along with the Leven to Thornton rail link, upgrading the Redhouse roundabout is a top priority for people in Fife? Will he outline potential funding sources for making the upgrade of the Redhouse roundabout a reality?

Stewart Stevenson: I am sure that the member is well aware of the strategic transport projects review, which is looking at many of our conurbations and the major transport corridors between them. We will be taking forward that review over the summer and we will report on it later this year. I understand that Fife Council is looking at the rail link between Levenmouth and Thornton as one of its strategic objectives and that it also has concerns about the Redhouse roundabout. We will, of course, take account of both those issues.

Tricia Marwick (Central Fife) (SNP): Is the minister aware that, although the Redhouse roundabout upgrade is important, the number 1 transport priority in Fife is the reopening of the Leven to Thornton railway, and that Fife Council has already allocated £2 million to help it to go ahead? I ask the minister to bear in mind Fife's transport priorities when he or his officials meet SEStran and Fife Council officials.

Stewart Stevenson: I congratulate the administration in Fife Council, of which the Scottish National Party is part, on putting aside a significant sum of money for the rail link for the

First Minister's Question Time

12:00

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-897)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): Later today I will have meetings to take forward the Government's programme for Scotland.

Ms Alexander: Today, I want to raise issues on behalf of Scotland's pensioners. Last autumn, the First Minister repeatedly reassured us that the free central heating programme was safe in his hands and that means testing was not on the agenda. I would be grateful if the First Minister would listen to these words. As of 22 May, the Scottish Government has instructed Scottish Gas that it can progress applications only from "specified categories." What does the First Minister have to say to pensioners whom he has now excluded from the free central heating scheme?

The First Minister: I am not sure how much in command of the subject Wendy Alexander is, but she is quoting from the announcement that the Deputy First Minister made in Parliament a few weeks ago. In that statement, not only did Nicola Sturgeon provide reasons for the move, she pointed out that, thanks to the record of this Government, a record number of installations have taken place in the past year.

Ms Alexander: On a factual point, there has not been a record number of installations, so I look forward to a correction being made. The number was only for the private sector, not the total scheme, and was fewer than we achieved in a number of years.

There was no answer given to the key question. On central heating, the First Minister said that there was a review and that the scheme was safe in his hands. However, we have ended up both with means testing and with pensioners being excluded.

And there's more. This week, without so much as a press release on the terms of reference from this rather publicity-hungry Government, the Scottish National Party has now started reviewing pensioner travel. How can pensioners in Scotland have confidence in the outcomes of a review when the membership, the remit, the terms of reference and the timetable are apparently all secret?

The First Minister: Before we get on the buses, let us have a look at the central heating scheme.

Andy Kerr (East Kilbride) (Lab): Oh! So he has got the answer now.

The First Minister: I think that Andy Kerr should be worried about the answer, because not only has there been a record number of installations, the public sector scheme had dried up altogether under the Labour Party. Furthermore, a range of stakeholders back what the SNP is doing to help Scotland's pensioners.

On buses, Wendy Alexander asks about our review, but it is not our review; we are carrying on what the previous Government said it was going to do two years ago. I am looking around the chamber for Tavish Scott, who is my secret weapon. I might have to quote him in absentia. On 15 March 2006, Tavish Scott said:

"The first two years of operation of the scheme will be critical in building up the evidence base for future reflections on the scheme."—[*Official Report*, 15 March 2006; c 24046.]

We are carrying forward the previous Administration's commitment to conduct a review. The one difference between the approach of this Administration and that of the previous Administration is that the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change has already said that we are not changing the eligibility for old people and disabled people in the scheme.

Will Wendy Alexander stop scaremongering? The old people of Scotland have trust in the Scottish National Party.

Ms Alexander: The First Minister should be very careful. He has not given us an answer to the question why he promised Parliament that there would be no means testing for pensioners but has now introduced it.

The pattern is that the First Minister reviews, then reassures and then lets pensioners down. If there is no cause for concern about this secret review—[*Laughter*.]

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): Order.

Ms Alexander: I ask the First Minister to guarantee Scotland's pensioners that he will make no changes to the time of day that pensioners can travel—

The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): No change.

Ms Alexander:—the distance that can be travelled—

Stewart Stevenson: No change.

Ms Alexander:—or the number of journeys that can be undertaken.

Stewart Stevenson: No change.

The First Minister: Let us get back to the central heating scheme. The pensioners of Scotland know two things. First, there have been a record number of installations under this Government. Secondly, people look at the newspapers and see the possibility of a further 40 per cent hike in their energy costs, thanks to a Chancellor of the Exchequer who is accumulating an additional £500 million in offshore windfall, but who will not lift a finger to help the industries, the pensioners or the families of Scotland. We are the only oil-rich country in the world that is suffering from fuel poverty.

I move on to the buses. The review is so secret that Tavish Scott announced it in 2006. The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change has made it clear that there will be no change to eligibility for pensioners or disabled people under the scheme. They will have a great deal more confidence in Stewart Stevenson than in Tavish Scott.

Ms Alexander: I regret that the First Minister has not given an answer to this question: are the times of day, the distance that can be travelled or the number of journeys under consideration?

Stewart Stevenson: No.

The Presiding Officer: Order. The First Minister, and nobody else, will answer the question.

Ms Alexander: If the First Minister is offering a guarantee, he has to forgive Scotland's pensioners for reserving judgment, given that six months ago he gave a similar guarantee on central heating. There is also growing pensioner concern about the local income tax. In the run-up to the election, SNP ministers said that, under SNP proposals,

"There will be no ifs or buts, no means test"

and that pensioners

"will simply have nothing to pay."

Not content with conning parents and students, the SNP is now attempting to con Scotland's pensioners. Will the First Minister confirm that, under his plans, more than 400,000 Scottish pensioners will receive a local income tax bill? Yes or no?

The First Minister: Let us get back to the variety of subjects that Wendy Alexander has raised. Memorably, she said that change is what she does. As far as eligibility for the pensioner and disabled scheme is concerned, there will be no change from the SNP.

I move on to local income tax. The majority of Scotland's pensioners welcome local income tax with open arms, just as they welcomed the council

tax freeze that the Scottish National Party introduced. *[Applause.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

The First Minister: It is not just Scotland's pensioners who support local income tax. Just a few weeks ago, a poll showed overwhelming support for local income tax among the population of Scotland: among Tory supporters in Scotland; among Liberal Democrats, who of course support a local income tax; among the Scottish National Party, which supports fair means of taxation; and—by a significant majority—among Labour Party supporters. If Wendy Alexander cannot even scaremonger among her diminishing band of supporters, what chance has she got of scaremongering among the pensioners and students of Scotland?

Prime Minister (Meetings)

2. Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Prime Minister. (S3F-898)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): I have no plans to meet the Prime Minister in the near future.

Annabel Goldie: There has been deep concern throughout Scotland about the tragic outbreak of *Clostridium difficile* at the Vale of Leven hospital. Our thoughts are with all the families who have been affected by that lethal infection. In 2003, when MRSA levels increased by 4 per cent, the then shadow minister for health and community care, Nicola Sturgeon, said:

"It is up to the Health Minister to ensure that superbugs are kept to a minimum and that patients enter Scotland's hospitals to be treated not infected".

She went on to add:

"These figures highlight that so far the Minister has failed".

We are now dealing with a much worse situation, caused by *Clostridium difficile* and the consequent death toll.

In November the Scottish Government announced a range of measures, including surveillance monitoring for *C difficile*. Will the First Minister undertake to publish this afternoon details of the incidences of *C difficile* in every hospital in Scotland this year?

The First Minister: I will publish all information on *C difficile* and other hospital-acquired infections as soon as the statistics are available.

The most recent comparative statistics for England and Wales and Scotland suggest that there is a serious situation in Scotland, which is why we have increased the budget so massively—to £50 million over the next three years, compared with annual expenditure of £5 million in the past.

We acknowledge the extent and seriousness of the problem and the heartbreak of affected families and individuals. We also acknowledge that the problem can undermine the very heart of confidence in the health service. For all those reasons and because of the suffering and anxiety that has been caused, I undertake to publish all information as quickly as it becomes available.

Annabel Goldie: The disquieting aspect of the First Minister's response is that there is so much that we do not know. How can we tackle a problem when we do not know where it is or how serious it is?

One thing is clear: the tragic outbreak at the Vale of Leven hospital arose because of a basic lack of hygiene practice on the wards. Five years ago, Ms Sturgeon was right to say that

"patients enter Scottish hospitals to be treated not infected".

Does the First Minister agree that we need to restore in every ward and hospital in Scotland a clinical presence such as a supersister, who is a visible point of authority and is empowered to enforce the application of robust hygiene standards? That could make the difference.

The First Minister: The equivalent post in Scotland is, of course, the charge nurse. Annabel Goldie will know that only a few weeks ago the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing announced a review of the functions of charge nurses in Scotland, precisely to address the range of points that Annabel Goldie made.

In 2006 the monitoring system was set up to enable more accurate and immediate assessment of hospital-acquired infections. I do not think that any member will dispute that that was a good system to set up. A real question that must be asked in the light of the tragic circumstances at the Vale of Leven hospital is whether the fact that the monitoring system clearly did not work in that hospital reflects a defect in the system or a defect in Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board's particular surveillance system. I am sure that the commission of inquiry will answer that key question, because the answer will tell us whether structural change in the monitoring system is required or whether change in the individual health board is the key.

I undertake to ensure that all the information is in the public domain as quickly as possible, including the information that we have, and are getting, from the retrospective exercise that Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board is undertaking.

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-899)

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

Nicol Stephen: Will the First Minister say what advice is currently being given to patients and relatives on the life-threatening nature of the C difficile bacteria? What guidance is given on the hygiene steps that people must take?

The First Minister: As Nicol Stephen will know, action was taken by the action teams on 21 May to enforce better hygiene standards, and inspections of the hospital have been made. A great deal of effort has gone into getting across not just to affected patients and their relatives but to the general population, the message about the importance of hygiene in hospitals. As we know, in many cases hospital-acquired infections originate outside the hospital, and are transmitted in the inevitable and welcome visits of people to the hospital. As Nicol Stephen also knows, substantial efforts have been made in the past and even more substantial efforts will be made in the future. We have increased the budget so massively not just to help control infections but to fund the information campaigns that are necessary.

Nicol Stephen: I wonder whether the First Minister heard a radio interview this morning with the daughter-in-law of a patient who died at the Vale of Leven hospital. She said that no one explained that C diff could result in a patient's death and that she had been given soiled clothing to take home with no instructions on how to deal with it. Why is that acceptable? Is the life-threatening nature of C diff still being concealed from some patients and relatives? Is expert advice on hygiene being given to all of them?

Patients and relatives throughout Scotland are anxious and confused, and rightly so; after all, we go into hospital to get better, not worse. The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing has launched an inquiry into the causes of the current outbreak, but patients and their relatives need help and examples of really poor practice need to be stopped now. Will the First Minister tell us what advice is being given today to patients, and what expert advice on hygiene is being sent to our hospitals right now?

The First Minister: I heard the interview. I do not believe that the situation is acceptable, and that aspect is being looked at and will have to be improved substantially.

Having watched and read the statement yesterday by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing, I do not think that anyone who has listened to the debate can be under any illusion whatever about the seriousness with which she is

taking not just this issue but the range of issues that have arisen from it. We, as a Government, were aware of the situation when we so massively increased the budget for controlling hospital-acquired infections. Such infections have not just arisen in the past year or even in the past few years, but have been a steadily growing challenge, and our country and health service have to meet it. Certainly, information on, and disclosure of, the full extent of the seriousness of C difficile must be given to patients and relatives.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): On 14 February, a Scottish Government official attended a meeting with the Department of Health to discuss the United Kingdom Government's new infection guidelines covering C difficile, which were published in January. On returning, the official urged the Scottish Government to issue new guidelines. In the light of the scale of the mortality at the Vale of Leven hospital—a staggering 30 per cent—why, some five months after that meeting, do we still not have any guidance on C difficile in Scotland? Why, when the Scottish Government was advised by Health Protection Scotland on 14 May of deaths from C difficile in Aberdeen royal infirmary, Stobhill hospital and the Vale of Leven hospital, did it only press-release the incidents at Aberdeen and Stobhill and remain silent on the Vale? I am sure that the First Minister agrees that clarity on this serious matter is of the utmost importance.

The First Minister: As the constituency member well knows, the information about the cluster at the Vale of Leven hospital came to light on 21 May. Moreover, what came to light at that time was not what was cited yesterday about six cases and four deaths; the information then was about six cases, three of which were linked to the Vale of Leven. That is why action was taken then. Of course, the retrospective exercise has revealed the full horrific extent of the problem in the Vale of Leven hospital.

Officials in the health directorate are aware of developments in England. Since then, work has been carried out on advice that is specific to Scotland, which will—because of the seriousness with which this Government takes hospital-acquired infections and, in particular, C difficile—be published as quickly as possible.

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): Will the First Minister say why the Government did not call in the plans for Caltongate, given that the area is central to Edinburgh's status as a world heritage city? The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization is to meet to discuss the danger that the development might pose to that status.

The First Minister: The proposal was returned for decision and determination to the City of

Edinburgh Council because we believe that it is well placed to judge the city's development and direction.

Shell (Strike Action)

4. Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP): In welcoming the settlement of the Shell oil tanker drivers' dispute since my question was framed, I ask the First Minister what contingency plans are in place to deal with the consequences of any possible future disruption.

The Presiding Officer: Your question is not exactly as written, Mr Neil, but I will hand it over to the First Minister.

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): We welcome the announcement that the threat of a second strike has been lifted and that restocking arrangements are at normal or above normal levels. I thank Scottish motorists for their patience and restraint over the past few days and I acknowledge the excellent work of the emergency services and others in ensuring that the supply situation in Scotland was managed with the minimum of inconvenience to the people of Scotland.

I assure members that contingency arrangements are in place to manage the local consequences of any future disruption to fuel supplies and to ensure the prioritisation of essential services. A national emergency plan for fuel is also available for use in exceptional circumstances—but those circumstances would need to be exceptional for it to be used substantially. The Scottish Government liaised closely with local responders and the United Kingdom Government during the recent events. Our on-going resilience activity will build on those arrangements to ensure that any lessons that are identified are addressed and implemented.

Alex Neil: I thank the First Minister for that detailed reply. For the longer term, given that we have had two disruptions to oil supplies recently, are there any lessons to be learned on how the companies and employees might settle their disputes before they reach the point that they reached on both those occasions?

The First Minister: I think that every member of Parliament would agree that jaw-jaw and settlement of negotiations before striking would be infinitely preferable to the difficulties and—more than inconvenience—the potential disruption to the wider economy and to essential services that are threatened during such disputes. The fact that we have managed substantially to avoid that inconvenience and disruption is a tribute to the extraordinary amount of effort that was put in in the local area committees around Scotland.

In the past few days, the resilience room committee has met 11 times to supervise arrangements around Scotland. Such planning takes up a dramatic amount of the time of local authorities, police and other services. Therefore, I certainly agree with Alex Neil that it would be infinitely preferable if such arrangements—however well rehearsed and however well utilised they may have been in Scotland—were not necessary because workers and management were able to settle their differences before strike action as opposed to after it.

National Concessionary Travel Scheme

5. Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): To ask the First Minister whether sufficient funding will be found to maintain existing entitlements for pensioners and disabled people under the national concessionary travel scheme between now and 2011. (S3F-922)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): The previous Administration, as we discussed earlier, agreed that there should be a review of the free bus travel scheme for older and disabled people. That review began on 17 June and ministers will consider the outcome towards the end of this year. As the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change has made clear, the Scottish Government has no plans whatsoever to increase the qualifying age for concessionary fares on buses and will not consider such an increase as part of its review of the scheme. Around 1.1 million older and disabled people currently benefit from the scheme.

Des McNulty: The answer that pensioners and disabled people want to my question is yes.

Will the First Minister ensure that the criteria for the review of the national concessionary travel scheme are made public, so that people can see in black and white what the Government's intentions are? Bearing in mind that funding for concessionary travel has been scaled back in real terms, will he ensure that any shortfall in funding for concessionary travel will not be made up by fare increases for adult and child passengers who pay for their journeys? Such a form of indirect taxation would be unnecessary and unacceptable.

The First Minister: Yes—we will be delighted to make the review criteria public because that will be the most effective answer to the disgraceful scaremongering on the issue by Des McNulty and others.

Des McNulty should have some command of the subject—the review was announced two years ago by the then Minister for Transport, Tavish Scott—and should be aware that, due to low take-up in the young persons scheme because that scheme was not particularly good, funding for

concessionary fares for disabled and older people is rising not only in nominal terms within the overall budget for the scheme but in real terms. Year on year, we expect that, on average, perhaps £10 million a year more will be spent than in the current calendar year.

Given that Des McNulty now has that information, and although it is awkward to the campaign that is taking him out of obscurity, away from parliamentary questions and into the light of day, will he join me in welcoming the fact that we are publishing the criteria for the review and that we can give an absolute commitment to older people and disabled people in Scotland that we will maintain the scheme and that there will be no change to the eligibility criteria?

Ian McKee (Lothians) (SNP): To avoid confusion, will the First Minister say whether the outgoing Government made adequate provision for continuation of the national concessionary travel scheme?

The First Minister: The outgoing Government's sole contribution to the scheme was to say that there would be a review. That was what Tavish Scott said. When I was criticising earlier—which I regret was in Tavish Scott's absence—I noticed that I even got nods of assent from the Labour benches. I am afraid that the outgoing Government did not indicate its on-going commitment to the scheme. It said what Tavish Scott said in 2006. Therefore, given the budgetary commitments that the present Government has made and the assurance on publishing the eligibility criteria, can we perhaps come to the conclusion that the disabled and pensioners of Scotland will be a lot safer on the bus with the Scottish National Party than they would have been with the Labour and Liberal parties?

If the Labour Party is anxious, as I am, about the present pressures on public transport, perhaps its members will have a word in the ear of the Chancellor of the Exchequer—the £5 billion man, who is raking in excess oil revenues, but without a scintilla of concern for the pressure on the pensioners, families, industries and—yes—on the public transport and bus operators in Scotland.

“Lessons for Mental Health Care in Scotland”

6. Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the First Minister what action is being taken following the publication of the report, “Lessons for Mental Health Care in Scotland”. (S3F-914)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): The Scottish Government welcomes the report, as the Minister for Public Health has already indicated. We have written to all health boards and local authorities to ask them to consider and take

forward the report's key recommendations on the management of risk in relation to suicide and homicide by people with mental illness.

One of the headline issues in Professor Appleby's report is the link between alcohol and drug misuse and homicide. Members will be aware that, last month, we announced the new national drugs strategy, "The Road to Recovery: A New Approach to Tackling Scotland's Drug Problem", with a great deal of support from Mary Scanlon's party, and that this week we launched a consultation on an approach to alcohol misuse in Scotland, with substantially less support from Mary Scanlon's party. In December 2007, we published "Mental Health in Scotland: Closing the Gaps—Making a Difference", which specifically addressed the issues around service provision for people with mental illness and substance misuse problems, which were the primary focus of Professor Appleby's excellent report.

Mary Scanlon: If the First Minister is looking for our support, he will perhaps answer my question positively. During the six years of the study, about 5,000 suicides were recorded in Scotland and 500 murders. In the Highlands, many young men who were at risk of suicide never got beyond their local general practitioner or the repeat prescriptions for antidepressants. Will the First Minister take action to improve early intervention and to shorten waiting times for people with mental health problems to ensure that they can remain in work and at home with their families, and that they receive the appropriate treatment when they need it?

The First Minister: I acknowledge Mary Scanlon's work on the issue over a long period. As I said, we have written to the health boards and local authorities on Professor Appleby's review and we are asking them to consider his recommendations, including the ones that Mary Scanlon supports so strongly, and to report back to us. We are taking the issue seriously.

We are also considering the extent to which, on consideration, mental illness and aspects connected with it could for the first time be brought into the waiting times guarantee. The Minister for Public Health gave an interview on that point earlier this week.

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): The First Minister will be aware that there are no local outcomes or national priority outcomes for child and adolescent mental health services, that there are no structures in place to collate centrally waiting times for accessing those services, and that there is no accurate picture of transition services between youth and adult services. There is often an arbitrary cut-off at the age of 16 for young people who receive such services.

The Presiding Officer: Ask a question, please.

Jeremy Purvis: Will the First Minister take specific measures in response to Professor Appleby's report to correct some of those aspects, so that young people who have complex needs receive child and adolescent mental health services before they need to access adult mental health services?

The First Minister: As I said, we are taking the report extremely seriously. I will write to Jeremy Purvis to provide him with as much information as possible on the issues that he raises. Members should have no doubt that we take the recommendations in Professor Appleby's report extremely seriously and intend to implement them.

Jack McConnell (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I hope that you will take this point of order in the constructive way in which it is offered and recognise that my occasional experience of ministerial and First Minister's question time over recent years allows me to say that protection of the integrity of question time is paramount.

There have been a number of occasions in recent years when the subject matter for questions that have been lodged in writing for ministerial or First Minister's question time has been overtaken by events in the course of the week. On those occasions, members have withdrawn their questions and, if the matter was appropriate and topical, the Presiding Officer has asked them to ask a supplementary question at another point during question time, so that they can put across the point that they wished to make. With all due respect, Presiding Officer, that would have been appropriate today. It is wrong under the rules—not just in practice—that members should be allowed, when asking it in the chamber, to change the content of a question that has been lodged in advance in writing.

I hope that you will reflect this afternoon on what has happened and ensure that new advice is issued to all members from the chair, so that the practice that I have described is not allowed. In the future, members should withdraw questions that must be changed and ask to be allowed to raise the issues concerned at another point during question time.

The Presiding Officer: I take the point of order in a constructive manner and thank Jack McConnell for it. Today the member concerned was given the option of withdrawing question 4, but was within his rights to choose not to do so. I will reflect on what Jack McConnell has said for future occasions.

12:32

Meeting suspended until 14:15.

14:15

On resuming—

Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Europe, External Affairs and Culture

Common Fisheries Policy

1. Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it still considers that continuing membership of the European Union requires Scotland to participate in a common fisheries policy. (S3O-3838)

The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani): We continue to believe that the common fisheries policy does not serve Scotland well. We welcome the fact that the rejection of the Lisbon treaty by the Irish people presents another opportunity to prevent the extension of exclusive EU competence over the conservation of marine biological resources, which entrenches the discredited policy.

At the joint ministerial committee on Europe on 17 June, I urged the United Kingdom Government to make that competence a red line issue in any renegotiation of the treaty. In the meantime, we shall, as always, take every opportunity to increase national control over fisheries policy, as we did successfully at the December agriculture and fisheries council with the new conservation credits scheme.

An independent Scotland would, of course, be far better placed to conduct such negotiations.

Sarah Boyack: I asked the question because my colleague Karen Gillon and I have been asking a series of questions of both the minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment. In his foreword to his quotas consultation, the cabinet secretary says that

"The Scottish Government is seeking to withdraw from the CFP."

However, as Ms Fabiani has revealed, that is not something that it can do.

Was the minister consulted on the wording used in the quotas document? In the light of her previous answer, does she think that it is appropriate for official Government documents to say that the Government is attempting to do something that it is clearly not competent to do?

Linda Fabiani: It is entirely competent for a Government always to let people know what is best for the country that it is governing. It is clear that Scottish opt-outs from the CFP should be

possible, because member states of a similar size to Scotland—nation states with the right to determine their own futures in Europe—have successfully managed to negotiate opt-outs from particular elements of the European treaties. I suggest Denmark as a good example, as it has four opt-outs.

Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): With John Scott on Royal Highland Show duties, I felt that it might be safe to pose a supplementary question on fishing.

Does the minister agree that in 1974 the UK ceded to the European Economic Community control of fisheries, rather than sovereignty over UK waters, and that it would be perfectly legal for a national Government to withdraw from the CFP? Of course, as the minister is aware, that national Government would be the UK national Government.

Linda Fabiani: The sad thing for Scotland is that the UK Government does not stand up for Scottish fishing interests. Indeed, it tried to entrench the position even further by refusing to negotiate the exclusive competence out of the Lisbon treaty—on which it refused even to have a referendum.

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): The minister will be aware that Bridget Prentice, a minister in the UK Ministry of Justice, has allocated the extra MEP to the West Midlands. She will also know that Luxembourg, with six MEPs, has the same voting power as Scotland will have. Does she agree that it is indefensible that landlocked Luxembourg, with a population the size of Edinburgh, can vote on fishing and the common fisheries policy while Scotland cannot?

Linda Fabiani: Yes, I agree—it is ridiculous that that is the case. Let me also put it on record that the Scottish Government objected to Scotland's representation in Europe being reduced by one MEP.

Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): Does the minister believe that the statement that

"The Scottish Government is seeking to withdraw from the CFP"

is compatible with her obligations as a minister for Europe in a devolved Administration and the Scotland Act 1998?

Linda Fabiani: Sorry—I did not catch the entire question. Could the member repeat it?

Karen Gillon: Does the minister believe that the statement that

"The Scottish Government is seeking to withdraw from the CFP"

is compatible with her role and devolved responsibilities as a minister for Europe and the Scotland Act 1998?

Linda Fabiani: We will continue to press the Government of the United Kingdom, which is currently the member state, to withdraw from the common fisheries policy in the interests of Scotland, which has the vast majority of the UK's fisheries.

International Development Strategy (Business Involvement)

2. Jackson Carlaw (West of Scotland) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive what plans it has to engage the wider business community in the strategy for international development. (S3O-3785)

The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani): Sustainable economic development is of course an important element in tackling the underlying causes of global poverty, which we recently discussed in detail at a European and External Relations Committee meeting. We recognise the important role that the wider Scottish business community can play and is ready to play in achieving that aim. For example, the Scottish Government has supported the Scotland Malawi Business Group to facilitate links between the business community in Scotland and Malawi. Our new international development policy and the funding guidance that will be published shortly encourage inclusion of the private sector.

Jackson Carlaw: Following our exchange at the European and External Relations Committee, will the minister confirm that she will seek imaginative solutions to reach beyond the national business organisations, in whose affairs many businesses of all sizes choose not to participate, and that she will energise companies and their employees, many of whom are willing to become involved with specific and practical projects in support of international development? Will she agree to use clear and non-contradictory language in promoting such projects?

Linda Fabiani: We want to make best use of the broad spectrum of specific skills and expertise that the business community offers. The new funding guidance will proactively encourage applications from the private sector that demonstrate relevant expertise and which will enable the sharing of expertise. Of course, that will not be for a private company's profit. I do not have time to go into the many examples of how we are proactively encouraging such activity. A natural progression in an international development policy is to move from engagement with schools, colleges, universities, churches and other

institutions to the business community. We have excellent examples of that.

Ian McKee (Lothians) (SNP): Would the greater economic freedom that would arise from independence help the engagement of our business community with the strategy for international development?

Linda Fabiani: An independent country that has the identity and strength that independence brings is naturally better placed to link with any initiatives in the world.

News Coverage (BBC Trust Report)

3. David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will be responding to the report of the BBC trust into the coverage of news across the United Kingdom and, if so, in what terms. (S3O-3781)

The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani): We are studying Professor King's report to the BBC trust and we strongly support the report's recommendations. It is clear that the BBC needs to do much more to serve its viewers in Scotland.

The Scottish Broadcasting Commission is also studying the report. It has already highlighted in its interim report on the democratic phase of its work the importance that Scots attach to television news and the fact that a majority are confused about whether items in network news programmes apply to Scotland.

David McLetchie: Does the minister agree that one way of ensuring improved news coverage from a Scottish perspective of national, international and local events would be to have a new Scottish digital channel, which could also take on many of the regional responsibilities that ITV is trying to ditch? That could provide the core schedule for a range of television channels that were based on our major cities, which would be similar to those that are found in the United States and Canada. Does she agree that we should have such a forward-thinking digital-age solution for Scottish broadcasting rather than hark back to outdated and irrelevant notions such as a "Scottish Six"?

Linda Fabiani: I refute the idea that that notion is outdated, but I agree that support is building for a Scottish digital channel. Evidence on that was given to the Broadcasting Commission and I look forward to reading its report, which will be issued in the next few months and which will address such questions.

However, that does not take away from the central point that the BBC should be fair to licence payers throughout the network. Terrestrial TV still

has its place in ensuring democracy and fairness for Scotland.

Intergovernmental and Interparliamentary Contacts

4. Andrew Welsh (Angus) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to improve its contacts with other Governments and Parliaments. (S3O-3816)

The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani): The Scottish Government's international framework, which was published in April, sets out our objectives for contacts with other countries. Those objectives make it clear that, in representing Scotland overseas, the efforts of ministers, the Scottish Government and the wider public sector will focus on maximising the contribution to fulfilling the Government's purpose of increasing sustainable economic growth.

Andrew Welsh: I congratulate the minister on the positive and successful approach that she has taken so far to ensure that national and international ties and cultural contacts reaffirm that Scotland is a distinct and identifiable part of the wider world family. However, will she alert sister Parliaments and parliamentarians worldwide to the forthcoming year of homecoming, which will be excellent, and encourage everyone who wishes to come to Scotland to join us in the homecoming celebrations?

Linda Fabiani: The promotion of the year of homecoming has, until now, not specifically targeted Parliaments and parliamentarians in other countries, but Andrew Welsh's idea is excellent. One way in which I would like to promote the year of homecoming is through alerting the consular corps in Scotland to the fantastic array of homecoming events that will take place in 2009. The year of homecoming is being woven into all VisitScotland's marketing; it started with the Scotland week marketing in the United States and Canada in April earlier this year and it will continue until autumn 2009. Networks such as the globalscot network and Caledonian societies worldwide are also being targeted, of course.

I thank Andrew Welsh for the work that he has always done on promoting Scotland, and I thank Angus Council, which has promoted Scotland for many years. The year of homecoming is important to us all and it is good to know that everyone in the country wants it to be a success.

Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab): I welcome this discussion. The Parliament's Burns club discussed the same issue at its annual general meeting less than an hour ago and its members would support what has been said.

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): That was not a question. We will therefore go to question 5.

European Union (Alliance of Southern European Members)

5. Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it plans to support the alliance of southern European members of the European Union supported by President Sarkozy but opposed by Chancellor Merkel. (S3O-3776)

The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani): The Scottish Government has noted the proposal to create a union for the Mediterranean, which would be open to all EU member states and 12 southern Mediterranean and middle eastern partners, as agreed by the European Council on 13 and 14 March this year. We recognise that there have been disagreements between Chancellor Merkel and President Sarkozy on how the proposal should be progressed.

Margo MacDonald: Presiding officer, with all due respect, I asked the minister which side the Government will back. We have a real interest in supporting the development of regional alliances in the European Union. We have such an alliance between the United Kingdom and Ireland—the offshore group of islands. It would be a much better thing to believe that the Government understands that the development of regional interests with which people can identify is preferable to supporting the centralising requirements of the Lisbon treaty, with which no one can identify.

Linda Fabiani: Regional interests are, of course, extremely important to the Government. That is shown in the international framework that we published earlier this year. That framework mentions the Nordic regions and the arc of prosperity, for example, quite a lot.

I recently informally discussed the proposed union for the Mediterranean with a representative of the French Government during a visit to Paris, but I have not yet had an opportunity to discuss it with a representative of the German Government.

Christopher Harvie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): What efforts are being made to enhance cultural and economic co-operation between Scotland and the EU and non-EU states of Scandinavia and northern Europe?

Linda Fabiani: Under our draft action plan on European engagement, which I launched in April, the Scottish Government is actively seeking to work with our European partners in policy areas in which there is scope to benefit from collaborative working and to learn from and share past policy experiences. We are also willing to engage with

European partners who are keen to learn from Scotland's experiences and policies—as an aspiring nation we should be doing that.

There will be a focus on closer engagement with the arc of prosperity countries—Norway, Finland, Iceland, Ireland and Denmark—particularly in relation to economic development. We can learn from the Scandinavian countries on a range of issues—indeed, we have a range of cultural links.

Robert Burns (250th Anniversary)

6. Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what is being done in preparation for the 250th anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns and, in particular, to ensure that Scots language and traditional arts organisations will be able to organise, contribute and participate fully in next year's homecoming Scotland events. (S3O-3871)

The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani): I am delighted by what I heard about the AGM of the Parliament's Burns club this lunch time.

The homecoming Scotland 2009 programme will formally begin on the weekend of Robert Burns's 250th anniversary. The programme, which was launched by the First Minister on 16 June, will begin with six Burns events in key locations throughout Scotland. There will be a further 13 Burns-related events in the homecoming programme and the total projected spend during 2009 will be £789,000. The programme overall contains a significant cultural element and key events will celebrate the best of our traditional heritage, arts and language.

Cathy Peattie: Is the minister aware that Scottish Language Dictionaries has issued redundancy notices to staff? Some 20 years' work on Scots dictionaries is under threat. Is she also aware that traditional arts organisations face severe problems and simply cannot wait until next year to hear about funding? Given that the minister has expressed a commitment to traditional arts in the past, will she please find a way of supporting our traditional arts and language now?

Linda Fabiani: We commissioned an audit on Scots—the first ever such audit—and I have committed to considering its results and developing a way forward for our Scots traditional heritage. The Scottish Arts Council is in discussion with Scots language groups about the way forward.

Members might be interested to know that VisitScotland told me that it received 55 applications for traditional arts events, of which 27 were granted funding.

Scottish Opera (Subsidy)

7. John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive how much subsidy Scottish Opera will receive for 2008-09. (S3O-3819)

The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani): The public subsidy expected to be paid to Scottish Opera during the financial year 2008-09 is £8,782,427.

John Wilson: Is the minister aware of other funding sources or opportunities for Scottish Opera during 2008-09? Will she review the current Government subsidy and place the company on a funding level that is equitable with that of Opera North, which received £9.153 million in 2007-08?

Linda Fabiani: There are two aspects to the member's question. Scottish Opera's new production of Smetana's opera, "The Two Widows" is a beneficiary of the new expo fund, through which Edinburgh International Festival bid for moneys and received £277,000 to enable it to fund the performance.

Scottish Opera operates on a scale that is very different from the scale on which Opera North operates and in a very different context, so it is not appropriate to compare directly the funding that the two companies receive.

I am delighted and impressed by the range and quality of the work that Scottish Opera delivers to audiences throughout Scotland and I look forward, as I know John Wilson does, to the company's continued success with its strong artistic programme, which I understand includes an exciting co-production with Opera North.

Education and Lifelong Learning

Kinship Carers (Financial Support)

1. Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what progress it is making to ensure that all kinship carers are receiving adequate financial support. (S3O-3863)

The Minister for Children and Early Years (Adam Ingram): One of the commitments in our historic concordat with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities is to pay approved kinship carers of looked-after children a weekly allowance. That means that, for the first time, more than 2,000 such carers will be entitled to receive financial support. Progress against each of the commitments in the concordat will be reported annually by COSLA at the end of each financial year.

We are also supporting all kinship carers on a number of other fronts, including meeting United

Kingdom ministers to discuss improvements to the benefits system and providing funding to Citizens Advice Scotland to launch a specialist advice and information service for all kinship carers later this year.

Duncan McNeil: In his contribution to the debate on fostering and kinship care in December, the minister outlined the key principles that he said were at the heart of the strategy, one of which was

“identifying at an early stage those families who need more support. Then, we can mobilise agencies, under the getting it right for every child framework”.—[*Official Report*, 5 December 2007; c 4086.]

In its publication on kinship care, the Scottish Parliament information centre said that there may be up to 10,000 looked-after children who are not known to local authorities. What action have the minister, his department, the local authorities and other agencies taken since the debate to identify those children and improve their life chances?

Adam Ingram: The figure of 10,000 that the member gave refers to all children, not just looked-after children. The strategy focused in particular on the payment of allowances to the kinship carers of looked-after children, of whom we have around 2,000 in Scotland. The figure of 10,000 relates to children and young people who live with relatives and not all of those children and young people are deemed to be looked after.

I hope to gain the member's support for what I am trying to do in this area, which is to look at the UK-wide benefits system. Next month, I will visit UK ministers to discuss welfare benefits for carers in this situation so that we might be able to support families in these circumstances better than we can at the moment.

Graduate Endowment (Costs)

2. Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive what the cost of providing student loans to the 2,457 postgraduate students who received demands for immediate payment of the graduate endowment will be, following the enactment of the legislation to abolish the endowment. (S3O-3790)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Fiona Hyslop): The costs that are associated with providing student loans to postgraduate students who have chosen to settle their liability for the graduate endowment fee are the same as the costs that are incurred for providing all other student loans. Those costs, which are referred to as the student loans subsidy, amount to 31p for every £1 of loan paid out. The enactment of the legislation to abolish the graduate endowment fee has no bearing on those costs.

The member should be aware that this Government has now laid regulations to allow postgraduate students to pay their fee liability by loan and to do so legally, in order to close the loophole that the previous Administration created and honour the previous promises that were made to those students. We will also allow eligible postgraduate students to continue to defer payment.

Murdo Fraser: The cabinet secretary will be aware of the unnecessary and entirely avoidable concern that has been caused to Scottish graduates who face demands for immediate repayment of the graduate endowment and are without any resources to do that. I welcome the fact that she has responded to pressure to resolve the situation, but it should never have arisen in the first place. Who was to blame? Was it the cabinet secretary or her officials?

Fiona Hyslop: It was of some concern to us that, when we looked into the issue, we found no legal basis for the previous Administration's offer of loans to these students. We moved swiftly to rectify the situation, which—as I said—has no bearing on or relationship to the abolition of the graduate endowment but relates to the legal mess that we inherited from the previous Administration. Clearly, in order to honour the promises that the previous Administration made, we are moving quickly on this. I hope that members across the chamber will help to support us in honouring the commitment that the previous Administration made. We will see these students all right.

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): The reality is that the legal status of students taking out loans was not an issue for these postgraduate students until the Scottish Government decided that they could no longer defer paying the endowment. Responsibility for the situation lies squarely with the minister and no one else. When she reversed the decision on deferment, she stated that she was exploring options to ensure that postgraduate students did not lose out. Can she confirm whether she will reimburse the postgraduate students who have already paid in full? Will she pay the interest on the student loans that postgraduate students were forced to take out after receiving their final demand letter?

Fiona Hyslop: The member's understanding and analysis of the situation are completely wrong. I have written to the Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee to explain the provisions that we have had to put forward in the regulations to rectify the problem that was created by the previous Administration. She should have the good grace to acknowledge that we are moving swiftly to help the students and to honour the commitment to them.

The member asked a specific question about interest. It was clearly wrong for the Student Loans Company to apply interest on a loan that had no legal basis in the first place. We are taking steps to help these students and to honour the promises that were made by the previous Administration by ensuring that any interest that has been charged to any student is rewound so that they do not have to pay interest. We are also making provision for them to defer their payment until they become liable. We will sort out the previous Administration's messes and will ensure that its promises are adhered to. More important, if the graduate endowment fee had not been introduced in the first place, we would not have had this mess to sort out.

Free School Meals

3. Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how the extension of free school meal eligibility to families in receipt of working families tax credit will be funded. (S3O-3864)

The Minister for Children and Early Years (Adam Ingram): We are investing record levels of funding in local authorities; there is a total funding package of £34.9 billion over the next three years. That reverses the previous decline in the proportion of Scottish Government funding that goes to local government.

It is the responsibility of each local authority to allocate the total financial resources that are available to it on the basis of local needs and priorities, having first fulfilled its statutory obligations and the jointly agreed concordat commitments, which include the commitment to extend entitlement to free school meals to all pupils whose parents or carers are in receipt of both maximum child tax credit and maximum working tax credit from August 2009.

Pauline McNeill: The minister said much the same thing to me on 7 February in relation to school meals. My question relates to funding. On 10 April, Glasgow City Council confirmed to me in writing that the extension represents a significant change in eligibility for free school meals and that the council is not in a position to meet the full costs of the commitment. Who will provide the funding for the commitment? Will it be central Government or local government? As the minister has heard—I am happy to provide the letter from Glasgow City Council—the council has no money for it in its budget. Will the Government provide the funding?

Adam Ingram: I indicated in my first answer that the Government has provided new moneys to local government. Local government has agreed a set of commitments. I assume that Glasgow City Council is still a member of the Convention of

Scottish Local Authorities and is signed up to agreements that COSLA makes. What Pauline McNeill has said is news to me—perhaps she can write to me with her information, which seems to be at odds with the information that this Government possesses.

Tricia Marwick (Central Fife) (SNP): It is certainly true that the Government has provided the money and COSLA has created the framework within which all local authorities should act. Does the minister agree that the Labour councillors in Glasgow City Council are intent on following the lead of the previous Labour Administration, which ruled out free school meals for children in receipt of working families tax credits?

Adam Ingram: I certainly hope that those councillors are not following that lead and that they will comply with the commitments that they have signed up to. I believe that the extension of the free school meal entitlement will be widely welcomed, particularly in Glasgow, where there is a concentration of poverty and deprivation and of people who are struggling to make ends meet. They will welcome with open arms the joint commitment from the Scottish Government and local government under our historic concordat.

Additional Support Needs

4. Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what action it is taking to ensure that pupils' additional support needs are being met. (S3O-3872)

The Minister for Children and Early Years (Adam Ingram): The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 and its associated code of practice set out the duties and responsibilities of local authorities and other agencies in meeting the additional support needs of Scotland's children. A consultation document on proposed amendments to the act was launched on Friday 9 May 2008. Although there is no intention to change the thrust or ethos of the act, the proposed amendments aim to strengthen the rights of children with additional support needs and their parents.

Dr Simpson: The minister will be aware of the attainment gap between deaf children and their hearing peers. In the light of the United Kingdom children's commissioners' collective report to the United Nations on the poverty of information on the performance of disabled children in mainstream education, what steps will the Government take to monitor that performance? In view of the fact that the Scottish National Party made a manifesto pledge to make available an additional £10 million for support needs, has the pledge been kept and, if not, when will it be kept?

Adam Ingram: I can confirm that it has. As the member knows, through our agreement with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, ring fencing has come to an end. We are rolling up all the funding and presenting it in a block grant to local authorities to distribute as they see fit. The additional support for learning moneys are part of that.

On the first part of Richard Simpson's question, he will be aware of the reports by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education on visual and hearing impairments. The Government tries to make progress on the recommendations in such reports. One particularly interesting HMIE report was the one that it produced last year on the 2004 act. One finding of that report on which I hope to act swiftly was that not enough parents are aware of their rights under the act or of what they can do to push local authorities to support their children. I want to make progress on that issue as a priority.

Hugh O'Donnell (Central Scotland) (LD): Will the minister clarify how he intends to protect children with assessed needs who move from specialist units or schools to mainstream education and whose support services are being diluted as a result of cuts and alterations to education provision in mainstream schools?

Adam Ingram: I would be grateful if the member passed to me any information that he has about that. Obviously, I would not find that kind of practice acceptable. On where we go from here, I have laid out our intention to strengthen and enhance parental rights under the 2004 act. That is one reason why we will introduce amendments to the act in September. I encourage the member to write to me with the details of the situation that he mentioned.

Primary Schools (Catchment Areas)

5. Mike Pringle (Edinburgh South) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what legal rights the parents of primary 1, 2 and 3 pupils have in ensuring that their children attend the appropriate school for their catchment area. (S3O-3827)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Fiona Hyslop): Local authorities have a legal responsibility to provide adequate and efficient education for their area. It is for the authorities themselves to determine admission policies for their schools.

Mike Pringle: The minister knows that, in effect, there are two ways of reducing class sizes: providing more teachers and facilities; and reducing the number of pupils who are admitted to schools with overcrowded classes. With the Scottish futures trust still in the development stage, the Government has not yet provided a mechanism by which funding for new facilities can

be secured. What assurances can the minister offer to parents of primary 1 to 3 pupils in my constituency who have contacted me, who fear that their child may no longer be able to attend the school in their catchment area because of class size reductions?

Fiona Hyslop: The member raises a number of issues. I ask him sincerely to be careful in the advice that he gives to parents, in order not to scaremonger or to concern them. I understand that the City of Edinburgh Council is able to guarantee a place at their catchment school at the start of next term to everyone in Edinburgh who is seeking one. I assume that that guarantee covers the member's constituency. If any parents think that their child will not receive a place as part of this autumn's primary 1 intake, the member may want to take up the issue with the City of Edinburgh Council. We understand that every child who is seeking a primary 1 place in the City of Edinburgh Council area at the start of the autumn term will get one.

The member mentioned the provision of resources for additional classrooms and teachers. There has been a record distribution of funds to local government—an additional £115 million in capital expenditure has been made available in the forthcoming year alone. The member was right to highlight the issue of resources for teachers, as we need to ensure that there are additional teachers who can be employed in early years. Our agreement with local government is that there are sufficient resources to maintain teacher numbers at 53,000. With falling school rolls, that will enable local authorities to reduce class sizes by providing sufficient headroom for teachers to be deployed in primary schools, especially in primary 1, 2 and 3.

Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): Is the minister aware of the evidence that the Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee has heard on the subject—specifically, that there has already been a successful appeal by a parent against a local authority that rejected their placing request on the ground that it was reducing class sizes? Does the minister have plans to issue guidance or to lay a statutory instrument on the issue? Does she believe that it is acceptable to leave local authorities and parents to battle it out in the courts?

Fiona Hyslop: The member may recall that, as far back as June last year, I gave evidence to the Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee in which I indicated that there had been a court case—in North Ayrshire, I think—regarding placing requests. The case related to the previous Administration's policy of reducing class sizes in P1 to 25. We should consider the issue that the member raises and identify the best way forward. I know that there are already

pressures in the member's constituency because of existing statutory instruments, regardless of the Administration's policy on class sizes. I am not promising that we will change regulations. A variety of methods, including circulars, legislation, the McCrone agreement and teachers' terms and conditions, have been used previously to determine class sizes. Currently there are three or four different ways in which class sizes are monitored. We will look at that issue as we implement the policy of class size reduction.

Class Sizes

6. Hugh Henry (Paisley South) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it has any concerns about local authorities that are increasing class sizes. (S3O-3852)

The Minister for Schools and Skills (Maureen Watt): Class configurations in particular schools are matters for individual local authorities. Under the terms of our concordat with local government, we will work towards reducing primary 1 to 3 classes to a maximum of 18 as quickly as possible.

Hugh Henry: That is fascinating. According to the minister, class sizes are a matter for local authorities but, before and since the election, ministers have been vocal in arguing for reduced class sizes, explaining their value and promulgating that policy. Now the minister seems reluctant to comment on the issue. I am asking for the minister's opinion: does she agree with, and approve of, those councils that are increasing class sizes in secondary 1 and 2 in maths and English?

Maureen Watt: As I said in my initial reply, it is entirely up to local authorities how they configure classes; it is their responsibility. I understand that the council in Hugh Henry's area is refocusing its attention on early years and that all parties in the council supported that proposal. We are glad, as a Government, that that council is in line with the central Government strategy.

Hugh Henry: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. You are keen to allow MSPs to hold Government to account and you believe that this forum is one way of doing that, but that can work only if ministers attempt to answer the questions that are asked. In this case, the minister ended by making a personal observation and comment supporting a council on early years class sizes, but she refused to answer and give her opinion on secondary 1 and 2 maths and English. In terms of the standing orders of the Parliament, how do you expect Parliament to hold ministers to account when they will not answer the question that is asked but instead attempt to answer a different question?

The Presiding Officer: I am afraid that Mr Henry knows exactly what I am going to say. The content of ministerial responses is a matter for ministers. That matter is not covered by standing orders, I regret to say.

Health Inequalities

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is a statement by Shona Robison on the report of the ministerial task force on health inequalities. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of her statement and there should therefore be no interventions or interruptions during it. I give her a moment or two to get settled into her place.

I inadvertently just gave the minister a title that I understand is not yet hers to take. I meant, of course, that the minister will take questions at the end of her statement.

14:57

The Minister for Public Health (Shona Robison): Thank you for that very temporary promotion, Presiding Officer.

I am delighted to announce that the Government is publishing today the report of the ministerial task force on health inequalities, which I have chaired since last October. The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing and I have said repeatedly that reducing Scotland's shameful inequalities in health between the wealthiest and the poorest is our top health priority. This report, "Equally Well: Report of the Ministerial Task Force on Health Equalities", will put us on the road to real improvements.

I thank my six ministerial colleagues who took part, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, NHS Scotland, the third sector and the research community, who have worked creatively together. The task force's work also reflects consultation through the "Better Health, Better Care" action plan last autumn and, more recently, with front-line staff, third sector organisations and young people.

The Government accepts and will implement all the task force's recommendations. Indeed, action has already started. One of the task force's strengths has been to align with the development of other Government strategies and frameworks, ensuring that they all work together towards improving health and reducing inequalities. There are clear links to the joint policy statement on early years and early intervention, which was published by the Government and COSLA in March, and to the smoking prevention action plan, the alcohol misuse consultation, the drugs strategy and the forthcoming obesity action plan.

It is widely agreed that inequalities in health are mainly due to underlying causes and not primarily to what health services themselves do. We heard evidence on that from an international audience in Edinburgh back in April. We also heard from Europe and across the Atlantic that no country has

yet achieved a genuine and effective cross-Government approach to addressing those underlying causes, which are, primarily, children's start in life, adults' low income, lack of employment and poor physical and social environments.

The task force embodies that new way of working across Government and across sectors. Together, we have set clear priorities, focused on the health outcomes to be achieved and put real emphasis on delivery. Change can and will happen now through joint delivery at national level and through local authorities and their community planning partners.

Scotland's health is improving, but there are stubborn and unacceptable differences between rich and poor. For example, in the figures for healthy life expectancy for men, a 10-year gap exists between the national average and the figure in the most deprived areas. We will not achieve our overall purpose of sustainable economic growth if such gaps persist.

In January, we set out the task force's priorities for reducing inequalities in health and wellbeing: children's very early years; reducing the burden imposed by mental illness, and improving mental wellbeing; continuing to tackle the big killer diseases and the direct risk factors for those diseases, such as smoking; and the linked problems, particularly for younger men, of drugs, alcohol and violence.

The task force ensured that actions on all those priorities are informed by scientific knowledge of how children's brains develop and how their earliest experiences shape their physical and psychological development. Their interactions and relationships with parents and carers are vital to their future health and their capacity to learn and thrive. Evidence tells us how poverty, deprivation and chronic stress lead to poor health and premature ageing. The task force has been rigorous in using such evidence, which marks out its thinking as different from the thinking behind previous Government strategies in Europe and beyond.

Turning round Scotland's health inequalities will take time and will require sustained effort by all the agencies involved. The task force recommended how Government, local authorities and their community planning partners should manage and report on progress in the medium as well as the long term. That will be part of the new relationship between central Government and local government, underpinned by the national performance framework and the single outcome agreement approach.

Until now, we have mainly targeted health inequalities that are based on where people live. That is not sufficient, however, to tackle

unacceptable poor health across Scotland—in rural areas as much as in some of the most deprived urban neighbourhoods. The task force has been clear that action is needed across the whole population. Diversity, and who people are, matter as much as where they live.

The task force found that an enormous amount of action is already taking place to reduce inequalities in health, funded through the global budgets that are allocated to health boards and local authorities. Those are very significant public sector resources, addressing many of the critical factors that influence health—there is £11.2 billion for health and wellbeing this year, and £11.1 billion for local government. For example, funding is improving people's chances of decent employment, making access to green space easier, anticipating the risks of illness, and supporting people to reduce those risks.

Within those global sums, specific amounts contribute directly to tackling health inequalities and their underlying causes. The task force report identifies £1.8 billion over three years to 2010. That includes the fairer Scotland fund, which is used locally to tackle the root causes of poverty and unemployment; more than £120 million to address alcohol misuse, and a similar amount for drug problems; £56 million for improving Scotland's diet and levels of physical activity, and for combating obesity; and £42 million for tobacco control. All those sums are being used to reduce inequalities in health; they will have a positive impact on the health of the next generation. There are also promising initiatives such as keep well, which has given 35,000 people a health check in the most deprived communities in Scotland. We are also investing £97 million to phase out prescription charges in the three years to 2010. That will be of particular help to people who suffer inequalities as the result of a long-term illness.

Much of the action that the task force recommended can be achieved within existing public sector budgets. However, it is clear that, too often, our services are not reaching those who need them most. That requires the redesign of public services, from education to social work, so that services work better together to meet their clients' most challenging needs and requirements. The report discusses improving client pathways or routes into, through, between and eventually out of the whole range of services. If clients who are already living with poverty and all the associated problems can be better supported by the public services that they use, that will reduce stress, improve the way in which families function, and lead to better health and wellbeing in the longer term.

We will therefore support the task force's proposal for a number of local test sites, in which

clusters of public services will be developed, with a particular focus on improving clients' health and wellbeing. Test sites will address complicated issues such as giving children the best possible start, preventing violent behaviour among young people and improving chances of employment. What will make those test sites unique will be public services working together, with input from their clients and from front-line staff, using evidence and understanding of how clients' interactions with services affect their wellbeing.

New Government funding of £4 million in the next three years will support those test sites with information, evidence and continuous improvement techniques. Changes to services will initially be made within the resources that are already available locally. The test sites will, however, explore where further investment may be needed in the longer term to help shift the emphasis of services from dealing with the effects of health inequalities to addressing the underlying causes. That will help to support longer-term resource plans, both nationally and locally. We expect to learn a great deal from the test sites and will set up new ways to do that. We are clear that we need to influence service change elsewhere more effectively than has previously been achieved. The community planning approach will continue to give us the overall framework within which the test sites and the learning from those will operate.

The task force recommended areas in which specific new action and improvement is needed, within the global resources that I have described. It put its main emphasis on giving children the best possible start in life by improving antenatal services and support for families with very young children. The Government will therefore adopt recommendations to improve intensive support for families that are most at risk of health and other problems. That will start in pregnancy and continue through the school years. With NHS Lothian, we will explore implementation of the nurse-family partnership approach, to give intensive support to young mothers. We will also work with four national health service boards, including Ayrshire and Arran, Forth Valley and Lothian, and their partners, to strengthen school nursing, and the wider school health resource, especially in the most deprived areas. Work has already begun and will accelerate in the autumn. We will provide £7 million of new funding over three years to take forward that important work.

Learning in school supports better health. The curriculum for excellence will highlight the importance of health and wellbeing, alongside literacy and numeracy. The task force emphasised encouraging young people to remain in learning and training after the age of 16, to boost their

future chances of employment. That is also being taken forward through curriculum for excellence.

The task force identified key links between poverty and poor health and proposed how Government and public services could help to break that cycle. Employment has huge potential to improve people's health and wellbeing. The task force recommended measures to engage more of the business community in the healthy working lives award scheme that supports healthy work and workplaces. The task force wanted more employers to open up job opportunities for people claiming health-related benefits who are able to move into work. The NHS has led the way in doing that, and other public sector employers should follow its approach. Health services such as vocational rehabilitation will work more actively in conjunction with other local organisations that are supporting people into work. The Government will refresh its healthy working lives strategy to take account of the task force's recommendations and Dame Carol Black's report on the health of the working age population.

Physical and social environments and services have the potential to improve health and wellbeing. The task force is keen that children and young people should benefit from their environment, through safe and healthy surroundings. As a result, the Government is making £4 million of funding available to the Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland's inspiring Scotland programme, to lever in further resources from philanthropic sources to improve play opportunities for children most in need.

I referred earlier to increasing inequalities in deaths from drugs, alcohol and violence, particularly among younger men. The task force heard how those risks to health and wellbeing link up with children's early years, family circumstances and the environment in which people live. We are particularly concerned with prevention and early intervention, and in seeing strong leadership for joint working locally. Those aims are reflected in the Government's recent policy statements on drugs and alcohol.

Health services can do more to anticipate and prevent health problems. That is why future keep well checks will also identify and then support people with depression and anxiety. The task force report identifies a number of particularly vulnerable groups, and its recommendations will improve their access to health services. For example, the Government will lead the development of a framework for regular health assessments for people with learning disabilities across Scotland.

The task force's approach has been to build on the evidence and the good things that are already going on and to look for consensus about new

action that will help with the difficult and complex factors that are responsible for Scotland's health inequalities. The Government will continue to collaborate with local government and a range of organisations in the public, private and third sectors to implement its recommendations. We shall produce an implementation plan by the end of 2008 to turn the recommendations into specific action with milestones and timescales.

Producing the plan will not prevent action from going ahead. For example, we want the test sites to be identified this autumn and, as a result of the task force's recommendations, we are making available new resources from health and wellbeing budgets—which I have already detailed—to back the test sites and developments that will be of particular benefit to children.

Real progress on reducing Scotland's health inequalities will come about only in the longer term, but we want to be accountable for reporting progress along the way, so the Government will review progress on implementing the task force's recommendations during 2010. The task force will reconvene to examine the review and identify any further action that is needed at that point.

Scotland's health inequalities are unacceptable and the Government will not tolerate them. The task force has faced up to the problems and used the best evidence to develop a radical approach that stands a real chance of success. We do not underestimate the scale of the challenge but, if we address it whole-heartedly, we can drive a generational transformation in Scotland's health and wellbeing.

The Government accepts the task force's recommendations and looks forward to working with others to put them into practice to make the people of Scotland "Equally Well".

The Presiding Officer: The minister will take questions on the issues that were raised in her statement. We have around 30 minutes for questions, after which we will move to the next item of business. I remind members that all contributions should be made through the chair.

Margaret Curran (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab): I promise to do my best to do that, Presiding Officer, although I know that I fail from time to time.

I thank the minister for the copy of her statement. I am sure that there is much of interest in the report, and I make a request—which I am sure will be accepted—for further debate on the report in the Parliament after the recess, so that we can test exactly what is in it, extract the substance and debate it.

I am sure that everyone recognises that any action to tackle health inequalities is welcome and

that we should all support determined efforts to prioritise our consideration of it. The minister referred to the budget, which is substantial. It is proper that we question how such substantial funds are marshalled towards tackling inequalities and producing real and effective outcomes. As I understand it, the minister has said that £1.8 billion is directed towards inequality measures. What new moneys that the Government has introduced are specifically directed towards tackling health inequalities? Does the minister agree that health board expenditure should be disaggregated so that we know what is spent in deprived communities and what it is spent on?

What work was undertaken, in compiling the report, with equality organisations—specifically those that are concerned with disability, race and gender—and what input did those organisations have to the recommendations?

I support the minister's conclusion that we should not wait until we can implement the full report but that we should take action where we can. Therefore, when will the Scottish National Party Government implement its manifesto commitment to provide free fruit for pregnant women?

Shona Robison: I thank Margaret Curran for those questions. I am very happy to have further debate on this subject—and I accept that the report is fairly lengthy. We will bring forward the action plan, which will detail the implementation, later in the year, after the summer. I am sure that there will be ample opportunity for Margaret Curran to probe the matter further.

On the point about the £1.8 billion, page 49 of the task force report shows an extensive breakdown of the funds. They include a great deal of new money that the Government has put in. Much of the drugs strategy and alcohol misuse moneys will be geared towards tackling health inequalities. I am sure that Margaret Curran will appreciate that much of the brief interventions roll-out will impact directly on people who suffer disproportionately from the impact of alcohol misuse. The detail is there for members to see.

On the question of health board funding being disaggregated, boards are expected to ensure that the way in which they spend their money in each area is reflective of local needs and takes into account the levels of deprivation in their areas. The cabinet secretary and I probe health boards on that when we conduct annual reviews, to ascertain exactly what the boards are doing to tackle health inequalities. I can assure the member of that.

There was widespread consultation with a number of organisations, which I would be happy to list for the member if she wants. I can write to

her with a list of those organisations. Part of the announcement on the obesity action plan covered the £19 million of funding, a good deal of which goes towards nutrition and food support for pregnant women and children under five in the most deprived areas. The member will hear more about that when I launch the obesity action plan in the very near future.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

I thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement and for the report on health inequalities, which we broadly welcome, although it will take some time to examine the document thoroughly.

The minister has given a commitment to strengthen school nursing. Will the minister confirm the SNP manifesto commitment to double the number of school nurses? I also wish to ask about the obesity action plan. Will the minister ensure that there will be equality of access to those services throughout Scotland? On mental illness and improved mental wellbeing, when will the "evidence of what works" be known? When will it be applied, as outlined in recommendation 50 in the task force report?

Given that it is more difficult to identify deprived areas in the Highlands and Islands and other rural areas, how will the keep well health checks benefit people who are suffering from depression, stress and anxiety and who live in remote and rural areas?

Shona Robison: I thank Mary Scanlon for her questions. As I outlined in my statement, and as she will see from the report, the task force's recommendation is that the school-based health resource should be made up not just of school nurses but of other health professionals too—including mental health professionals and physiotherapists—to ensure that the package supports the needs of children in the broadest sense. We have accepted that recommendation. Work is proceeding to test how that model will work. A lot of work has already been done to ensure that the model is tested well, with a view to rolling it out.

As far as what works in mental health is concerned, Mary Scanlon will be aware that there have already been a number of developments in respect of access to psychological therapies to reduce reliance on antidepressant prescribing. We know that a disproportionate percentage of people in our more deprived communities are being prescribed antidepressants because of the stress and anxiety that they face due to the underlying causes of their health inequalities and poverty.

As I said in my statement, we want to extend the keep well programme, which currently focuses on cardiovascular problems, the associated factors and its underlying causes. We will extend that

focus to include anxiety and depression so that we can pick up those problems earlier in our most deprived communities.

Mary Scanlon mentioned remote and rural areas. As I said in my statement, tackling health inequalities does not involve identifying just people who live in deprived communities in urban settings; it also involves picking up smaller pockets of deprivation in rural areas. The well north programme is a good example of work that is designed to do that. More detail on exactly how that will be done will come out in the near future.

Ross Finnie (West of Scotland) (LD): I thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement and also for the report. As the minister said, the report is based on sound evidence. It is the sort of thing that we have come to expect from any report that is associated with our chief medical officer, Dr Harry Burns.

We welcome much that is in the report. In the short time that is available to me, I will hasten through the report to the section on delivering change. I do not wish my comments to be misconstrued, because the Liberal Democrats are anxious to encourage the delivery of services through co-ordinated approaches. However, I am puzzled by the minister's claim that the test sites will be unique because public services will work together. I do not wish to be picky about that, but Liberal Democrats have been trying to promote and encourage the development of community planning partnerships and community health partnerships.

If I have a slight concern about the report, it is not about the principles but about how the minister will develop things before she delivers the plan. I ask her for an assurance that we will not end up with test sites, community health partnerships that do not work terribly well, and others that work well but wonder whether they are part of a test site. I do not want to exaggerate the danger of that, but the best community health partnerships are already operating close to where the minister wants them to be. In the west of Scotland, where we have the Glasgow centre for population health, the community profile gives them a basis—

The Presiding Officer: You must come to a question, please.

Ross Finnie: I would like an assurance that we will not end up going against the thrust of the report. I do not think that the test sites will be unique, but they are a basis upon which we can do much better.

Shona Robison: I can give Ross Finnie that assurance. He is right to say that joint working is going well in many areas and is delivering benefits to those who receive services. The report, however, will take that work on to a new level. The

learning networks will consider how to redesign services across the board so that they have better reach for the most deprived and vulnerable people and those who suffer the greatest health inequalities. That has not been done before in such a comprehensive and planned way.

We will work closely with COSLA to identify the areas in which want to go a step further and are keen to take the work to the next level. That will prove and demonstrate what can be achieved. I hope that I have assured Ross Finnie on that point.

The Presiding Officer: We come to back-bench questions. As always, if members keep their questions short, sharp and to the point, we will get in everybody who wants to be brought in.

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): I welcome the interaction between cabinet secretary portfolios. I advise the minister that during the summer recess, in the light of the report and other evidence, the Health and Sport Committee will determine the remit for its inquiry into health inequalities. I note that the implementation plan will be available at the end of 2008. That information will be useful to us in timetabling.

I refer to page 19 of the report, and particularly to the point about antenatal care. I recall that the chief medical officer advised the Health and Sport Committee that we should start tackling health inequalities in the womb. What initiatives is the minister considering for the identified test sites—in addition to those that encourage good nutrition, which she has already mentioned—to improve the wellbeing of the mother and unborn child?

Shona Robison: Christine Grahame makes an important point. When I talk about support in the early years, I include the period before the baby is born, so I include support to pregnant women in the period up to the birth and beyond. Age zero to three has been identified as the critical time at which bonds are formed or, if they are not, at which damage is done.

That is why we want to take forward the nurse-family partnership—pioneered by Professor David Olds at the University of Colorado—which has worked effectively in America and in some parts of England. It is an intensive programme of home visits to young mothers by highly trained nurses, which aims to improve pregnancy outcomes and child health and development. It is important that it also aims to improve families' economic self-sufficiency by encouraging the aspiration to get into employment, by ensuring that doors are opened and by supporting families in accessing the services that are required to take that forward. Instead of dipping in and out of families' lives at times of crisis, the service is about supporting

families from the very early stages and throughout their lives. Participation in the programme is voluntary—families have to sign up to it—but we believe that there is strong evidence that the approach can work.

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): We need to study the report in detail. No one can disagree with the general thrust of it. I have about 100 questions, Presiding Officer, but I know that you will allow me only one, which is really an extension of Ross Finnie's question. Where does the joint future agenda lie within the new proposals, and where do initiatives such as family centres, sure start and home start lie? Has the Government still abandoned the policy of providing nursery places for two-year-olds in deprived areas?

I realise that that is more than one question, Presiding Officer.

The Presiding Officer: It was better than 100 questions, Dr Simpson.

Shona Robison: In my statement, I talked about other linked strategies, which we have already started. The joint work with COSLA on the early years framework is well advanced. A key focus of that work will be targeting of additional services for zero to three-year-olds. That work is progressing well, and the plan of action will be made available in the autumn. It will fit well into the recommendations that the task force report makes on that front.

Ian McKee (Lothians) (SNP): I strongly welcome the statement and its recognition that inequalities in health are due mainly to underlying causes and are not the problems solely of the health services. However, does the minister recognise that, among the health and other professionals who care daily for those who suffer from health inequalities, there is an immensely valuable pool of knowledge and experience, including knowledge of measures that could improve outcomes? Does she acknowledge that the current organisation of primary care services disadvantages those who work in that field? Will she consider discussing measures that will remedy the situation with people who work in the front line, such as the members of the Lothian deprived interest group?

Shona Robison: I am aware—as the task force was—that there are good examples of local projects and services. Many of them feature in the report. However, the problem has been that a good idea here perhaps never sees the light of day there. Part of the learning networks' job is to consider best practice and what can be maximised to achieve the best outcomes for people and to encourage people to share knowledge and practice throughout Scotland. That is the work that we are doing on the test sites.

Ian McKee also mentioned primary care. We are committed to finding a more equitable basis for core funding of general practice—we have made no secret of that. We will endeavour to continue to work with general practitioners to ensure, for example, that future changes to the GP contract work for, rather than against, practices in deprived areas. I give the member an assurance on that.

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): There was nothing in the statement about tackling specific health inequalities in rural areas, where it costs five times as much to deliver the most basic health services. Will the minister give a commitment today that a remote rural area will be included as a test site, so that the unique challenges for service delivery in such areas can be focused on?

Shona Robison: I am sure that Rhoda Grant will appreciate that the test sites have not yet been finalised. We want variation in the areas in which we will do the testing. If we are going to have learning networks, we must make sure that the learning from those networks can be spread to other similar areas. What works well in an urban setting might not be the same as what would work well in a more rural area.

I refer Rhoda Grant to the answer that I gave to Mary Scanlon. The well north programme looks at the needs of the rural population and applies the principles of keep well and anticipatory care to rural areas, and considers the appropriate way of delivering anticipatory care in such areas. As the detail of the well north programme is rolled out, I hope that Rhoda Grant will welcome it.

Jackson Carlaw (West of Scotland) (Con): I welcome the statement, particularly the allusion to the need for greater focus on men's health outcomes. Will the minister confirm what assessment has been or will be made of the negative consequences that might arise from the proposed transition from what has been national and universal health provision to a targeted approach—which I understand—in which, for the first time, some people are to be excluded as an act of policy, for example in respect of routine access to health visitors?

Shona Robison: We must ensure that our universal services provide the level of support that people require. Surely, after everything I have said about widening health inequalities, every member, no matter which part of the chamber they sit in, will agree that such inequality is not acceptable. That is why we must make sure that our services are redesigned and refocused so that we can begin to address the lifelong inequalities that people suffer in Scotland, here and now. We can do that only by making sure that support goes to where it is most required. That does not mean that people who require support are no longer going to get it. It is

often those who need it most who are least likely to get it. That is not acceptable and we are determined to address it.

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): Given the nature of the constituency that I have the honour to represent, I am interested by the minister's reference to strengthening school nursing. What measures are being proposed? Will it include a significant rise in the number of school nurses, particularly in constituencies such as mine, in which a large number of schools are scattered far from each other?

Shona Robison: As I said earlier, the first thing we want to do is test that the initiative will deliver what we want it to deliver, so it will initially be introduced on a small number of sites to check out the make-up of the health team, the type of work in which it engages and how it relates to staff in the school and other staff in the community. We want to work all that out before we roll out the project.

However, we are absolutely committed to ensuring that additional resources go where they are required. That is why the school health resources will initially be focused on our areas of deprivation, where we know school-age children require support. We want a continuum of support from the pregnant mother, to zero to 3 years, through to nursery and on to the school years for the most vulnerable children throughout their lives. We believe that that will lead to better outcomes for them in their teenage and adult years.

Michael Matheson (Falkirk West) (SNP): The minister will be aware of the damage that alcohol misuse does to individuals and communities across Scotland. In launching the Government's consultation on tackling Scotland's drink culture, it is clear that targeting cheap alcohol and its availability is to be made a priority. What impact will ending deep discounting of alcohol in off-licences, particularly in supermarkets, have in tackling health inequalities?

Shona Robison: The evidence tells us that price is closely linked to consumption: the lower the price, the higher the consumption. That is why we are proposing to tackle deep discounting in the ways we laid out in the consultation earlier this week.

We also know that people from our most deprived communities suffer greater alcohol-related harm. They are seven times more likely to die an alcohol-related death. There are many complex issues around comorbidity, but we know that the people who live in the 20 per cent most deprived communities are about six times more likely to be admitted to hospital as a result of alcohol misuse than are people from more affluent

areas. There is a clear link: that is why, if we can get the alcohol strategy right, there will be a disproportionate benefit for our most deprived communities.

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): One word is missing from the report: "Glasgow"—or perhaps I should say the phrase, "west central Scotland". The statistics that underpin the report and the work that has been done by Harry Burns and Carol Tannahill are excellent, but their focus is strongly on the particular conditions that exist in Glasgow, and their underlying causes. Do we need a strategy that focuses on Glasgow and the surrounding areas and that takes account of the particular issues that exist there? Do we not also need to reflect that in the resource allocations?

The Government—

The Presiding Officer: Briefly, please.

Des McNulty: Recommendation 68 of the report states:

"The Government should protect current resources targeted at reducing health inequalities and consider the need for further investment".

It seems to me that that problem is particularly focused in west central Scotland and Glasgow, and we need to know what the minister is going to do about—

The Presiding Officer: I call the minister.

Shona Robison: I am surprised by what Des McNulty has said, particularly given that Carol Tannahill was an adviser to the task force and gave us much of the evidence on which the report is based. Every part of the report is relevant to tackling deprivation in the city of Glasgow and the west of Scotland.

Without tackling the deep-rooted health inequalities in Glasgow and the west of Scotland, we will fail in our duty to tackle health inequalities. I can assure Des McNulty that a clear priority in tackling health inequalities is to ensure that we tackle inequalities in Glasgow and the west of Scotland.

James Kelly (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab): The minister's statement made no specific mention of the role of GPs in areas of social deprivation. In Rutherglen and Cambuslang, there is one GP for every 1,600 people. However, more affluent areas with greater life expectancy have a higher number of GPs per head of population. What steps will the minister take to ensure that additional GPs are allocated to areas of social deprivation?

Shona Robison: I hope that James Kelly heard my earlier response to Ian McKee that we are committed to finding a fairer basis for the core funding of general practice. We want to work with

GPs to ensure that future changes to the GP contract work for, rather than against, practices in deprived areas.

Let me remind James Kelly that we were not in power when the GP contract was designed, but we are clear that we want to improve it. That is why funding for the new Scottish enhanced services programme—£20 million in 2007-08 and 2008-09—has been specifically targeted at deprived areas, using the Scottish index of multiple deprivation. We have been especially keen to allocate resources to reflect needs in deprived areas, but there is certainly more work to do and we will pursue that vigorously.

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab): In her statement, the minister emphasised early years intervention, but I did not hear any specific mention of breastfeeding support and promotion. Does the minister agree that breastfeeding is critical to improving health from the start? Can she provide detail on how the low rate of breastfeeding can be improved in deprived areas especially, but also throughout Scotland?

Shona Robison: I point Elaine Smith to page 22 of the report, which states:

“NHS Boards should improve breastfeeding rates in deprived areas and among disadvantaged groups. The Government’s new infant nutrition co-ordinator will concentrate efforts on reaching these groups.”

That is one of the task force recommendations. Breastfeeding is clearly an important aspect of early years intervention and the support that we give to new mothers, particularly young mothers. A lot of good work is already going on in that domain, but there is clearly more to do. Elaine Smith can be assured of our commitment to doing it.

Scottish Register of Tartans Bill: Stage 1

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan): The next item of business is a debate on motion S3M-2072, in the name of Jamie McGrigor, on the Scottish Register of Tartans Bill.

15:40

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I welcome the stage 1 debate on my member’s bill to create a Scottish register of tartans. I also welcome the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee’s detailed and thoughtful scrutiny of the bill, and I am pleased that the committee supports specifics in my proposals and recommends that the Parliament agree to my bill’s principles. The committee’s stage 1 report can help to shape and further enhance the bill as it progresses. I will say more about that shortly.

The bill will create the first-ever publicly held statutory Scottish register of tartans. The register will be independent, accessible and sustainable. It will be established permanently and in perpetuity for the Scottish nation. The register will be maintained and run by the National Archives of Scotland, with continuing support and expertise from Scotland’s tartan industry and tartan experts. The keeper of the records of Scotland will also be the keeper of the Scottish register of tartans. The committee agrees with those proposals. The approach will minimise bureaucracy and costs to the public purse and—this is important to me—will avoid creating an additional public body, which my original bill envisaged.

In taking evidence, the committee heard some of the passionate and deeply held views on tartan. The wovenist view is that tartan must be woven, and the modernist view is that tartan is a design that is mostly woven but which can be produced commercially in other forms. The bill envisages that the keeper will accept registrations of tartan designs that are woven, as the vast majority will be, and non-woven, of which the current registers receive only a handful each year.

If we are serious in our commercial intent to help the tartan industry promote and market itself, we should not discount the commercial and intrinsic value of both woven and non-woven tartan. We should do all that we can to draw through potential commercial opportunities for the industry. I am confident that the criteria for registration that are set out in the bill and the classification of tartans in the register by the keeper will strike the right balance between accepting genuine tartan designs, as happens at the moment, and recognising the woven use of the design. Section 4(2)(c) allows the keeper to deal with the

classification of tartans. The minister will say more about that later.

The committee has heard some of the powerful arguments for helping to position the tartan industry in Scotland to maximise the commercial and creative opportunities from tartan as a design and as a product. For that reason, we should not unduly restrict the use of that design to one iteration or mode of production as a woven product.

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): I am concerned about the definition of tartan, because how tartan is distinguished from tweed or gingham, for example, is fairly crucial to the bill. The member has talked about design, but will he elaborate on the definition?

Jamie McGrigor: The definition is for the bill's purposes only. I am sure that arguments about the definition of tartan will continue in perpetuity.

The keeper will accept woven and non-woven tartans for registration. For that reason, section 6(9) says that an application to the keeper

"may include a woven ... sample".

However, that will not and should not be mandatory.

I recognise the inherent and historic value of the woven tartan. The requirement in the bill to provide thread count information will mean that designs that come to the keeper must be capable of being woven. In recognition of the importance of tartan as a woven product, and to embed that recognition further in the bill, I am minded to take on board a suggestion that the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee made, and to lodge at stage 2 an amendment to the definition of tartan in section 2 of the bill in order to emphasise that the tartan is capable of being woven—which it will be, because of the provision of thread count information. I intend to use the words "capable of being woven".

The committee asked me to address whether a swatch of tartan should support an application for entry in the register and whether that would present opportunities for the textiles industry or a possible disincentive to tartan registration. Further views have been sought from industry sources that confirm a number of important points. They confirm that the possible opportunities that would result from requiring a sample are far outweighed by the possible costs of doing so and that there is a risk that requiring a sample would deter people from seeking to register tartans.

First, approximately 120 new tartans are registered each year. The volume of possible business from weaving samples is therefore low.

Secondly, there is no guarantee that a Scottish weaver would be approached to produce any such swatch—it could be produced overseas or at home on a hand-loom.

Thirdly, the likely size of a swatch or sample will not be large. If it is to be provided at all, the Scottish Tartans Authority seeks a piece 9 inches by 7 inches. However, weavers do not weave swatches; rather, swatches are cut out of sample production runs. The minimum quantity that a professional weaver would produce would be a sample length of between 4m and 10m.

Fourthly, in the light of an approximate swatch or sample cost of around £50 a metre, the process could quickly become very expensive and could deter individuals or groups from registering tartans. It would be unfortunate if a woven sample were provided and subsequently not accepted for registration because it replicated an existing tartan.

The committee heard about schoolchildren designing their own school tartans. A cost of between £200 and £500 for providing a swatch in addition to the registration fee could become a barrier to fostering interest in tartan among young people and more widely in Scotland and elsewhere.

Therefore, the best way forward is the way that has been proposed—to leave open the option of supplying a swatch, but not to make supplying a swatch a requirement of registration. That would still draw through any opportunities that might exist for weaving swatches or samples and for any woven or non-woven products that swatches end up being used in before or after registration. Such an approach would also reduce the risk of the cost of producing a swatch or sample deterring people or groups from applying to register tartans. In any event, I have stated my intention to amend the bill to include the words "capable of being woven" in the definition of tartan. That will clearly establish the importance of the woven tartan fabric. Requiring a woven sample is inconsistent, redundant and unnecessary.

In conclusion, the bill shows that tartan is an important part of Scotland's heritage and culture that we can be extremely proud of. I strongly believe that my bill strikes a balance between the exclusivity and the accessibility of tartan, and that it offers a valuable and workable way forward towards achieving a goal that has wide support in the industry: a Scottish register of tartans.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the Scottish Register of Tartans Bill.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I gave the member in charge of the bill a little leeway.

However, it does not take much imagination to realise that, with 16 more speeches to come, we are pressed for time. Members must therefore stick strictly to their time limits, please.

I call Tavish Scott to speak on behalf of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee. He has six minutes.

15:48

Tavish Scott (Shetland) (LD): In my capacity as convener of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, I will deal with the wider debate before I deal with some of the points that Mr McGrigor has rightly raised.

I am a Ronald of Clanranald, which is a sept of clan Donald. My forefathers died fighting for Charles on Culloden moor, and I have, of course—dangerously—married a Campbell. The Campbells and MacDonalds scrapped it out up and down Scotland's west coast for many years—the Campbells were ultimately successful. In the interests of marital harmony, I may or may not agree with the considered view that the Campbells were more politically adroit than others. I also note—purely in the interest of stimulating an important family debate—that two Dukes of Argyll were executed for treason during the Scottish civil wars.

I have been told that, in times of yore—I hasten to add that—the McGrigors were a lawless bunch of cattle rustlers with a panache for publicity. That may or may not be the case—I am sure that Jamie McGrigor will keep me right. We think of Rob Roy in that context. Their name was proscribed at one stage, which meant that if any member of the clan were caught they could be beaten, robbed or even killed, without fear of punishment on the part of their captor. I have no doubt that Mr McGrigor will take issue with all that, given that he has introduced such a worthy bill. However, I note that his clan survived for 200 years as outlaws—no doubt as a Conservative, Mr McGrigor knows how that feels.

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Does the member realise that the Campbell clan gave sanctuary to the MacGregors in the old days? I hope that that would still happen today.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I hope that we will hear something about the bill shortly.

Tavish Scott: This has been rather more entertaining. I take Mr Gibson's point.

I mention two incidents that I think are directly relevant to the bill. First, this morning at the Royal Highland Show I encountered the new top team of the Scottish Crofting Foundation, who were resplendent in the new crofters tartan—a

corporate tartan. We might talk more about such tartans, which Mr McGrigor mentioned.

Secondly, earlier this week I and colleagues on the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, a number of whom are in the chamber, were in Vienna to consider tourism marketing and promotion. As we took in the Turkey versus the Czech Republic game on the big screen in a Vienna fanzone—purely in the interests of research, members will understand—we encountered four Scottish lads in kilts. Even when our team does not qualify, the tartan army goes on tour.

The Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, which I convene, strongly recommends that the Parliament agree to the general principles of the bill. I pay tribute to Mr McGrigor's work on the subject in this and the previous session of the Parliament. His success is the more notable because he has been able to bring together the Scottish Tartans Authority and the Scottish Tartans World Register and to secure a commitment from those bodies to make over their existing collections to the proposed statutory register.

The committee's discussions on the bill were rather more lively than we might have expected them to be. We came across the interesting and passionate debate between wovenists and modernists, which Mr McGrigor aptly described. The committee's collective view was that tartan has historically been defined by its woven character, so we asked Mr McGrigor to consider whether the definition of tartan in the bill should refer to the tartan being woven. We did not think that the suggestion was incompatible with his overall aim, which we share, and I note what he said about the matter.

The committee suggested that there should be a requirement to include a swatch with an application to register a tartan. Such an approach would help to promote the textile industry in Scotland, which the committee regarded as an important point. Members will want to consider the committee's arguments in the context of Mr McGrigor's comments about his concern that such an approach might have a deterrent effect. Members will want to return to the issue during the bill's later stages.

The committee acknowledged the importance of protecting and preserving the archives that relate to tartan and thought that it was important to make the archives more accessible to interested parties by linking the register to the family history centre that will shortly be opened at the National Archives of Scotland.

We had one or two reservations about the bill. First, we urge the keeper of the register carefully

to consider how to develop the classification system in order to differentiate between tartans that have played an important role in our nation's history and tartans that have been registered for entirely separate reasons, for example for corporate or sporting purposes. Tartans that are designed for football clubs, in particular, were discussed in that context. The role of such tartans is surely quite distinct from the role of tartans that have historic links with particular clans or regiments. Mr McGrigor might want to reflect on the issue.

In our report, we also noted our concern about

"the lack of definition on the face of the Bill as to what constitutes a sufficient link between an applicant and their right to authorise the Keeper to register a tartan."

Mr McGrigor might consider how the matter might be clarified, either in the bill or in guidance that the keeper would develop.

On fees, we stressed the importance of finding a level that deters frivolous applications but not genuine applications. A balance must be struck in that regard.

Those appear to be the most important points on which Mr McGrigor might want to comment in his closing speech.

15:54

The Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism (Jim Mather): On behalf of the Scottish ministers, I am pleased to indicate Government support for Mr McGrigor's bill. I am glad that, in its stage 1 report, the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee recommended that the general principles of the bill be agreed to and acknowledged the potential benefits to the textile industry of creating a Scottish register of tartans.

The tartan industry in Scotland makes a significant contribution to the economy. An economic impact study that was commissioned as part of the work on the bill shows that the industry contributes some £350 million to the economy and supports 4,000 direct and 7,000 indirect jobs. It is therefore important and proper that Scotland's Parliament and the Scottish Government work to help promote and preserve key parts of our existing economic base, while also working to achieve our overall unifying aim of increasing sustainable growth. It is clear that the tartan industry is an important part of that, and an important part of Scotland's textile sector. We must do what we can to help it endure, grow and thrive.

I share the committee's view that the register will have a tangible economic impact. It will position the industry in Scotland to capitalise on the commercial opportunities that will flow from it;

provide a springboard to promote the Scottish tartan industry; and open up marketing opportunities for the unique, authentic, high-value and high-quality products that the tartan industry in Scotland produces.

However, creating a definitive statutory register of tartans in Scotland will also have a number of wider benefits. It will preserve an important and unique archive of tartan designs and, in so doing, it will also preserve an important part of Scotland's identity. This cultural archive will be held independently, and—I like these words—in perpetuity for the Scottish nation. The register will make those tartan records more accessible and open than has previously been the case and remove the potential risk that access to them could be lost or restricted for commercial gain. It will help to raise an interest in tartan, thereby helping to keep tartan alive and vibrant and building economic value from what has been thus far an underleveraged brand.

In addition, the register will provide a focus on tartan for academic, family and genealogical research and capitalise on the huge interest in Scotland among diaspora Scots and others with an affinity for and an interest in Scotland. Furthermore, I am sure that the register will act as a stimulus for further academic research into tartans, including research into how they have evolved. As the committee heard, there are many diverging and passionately-held views on tartan, its genesis, origin and correct production and how and where it is displayed, worn and used.

The committee recognised that questions are being asked about the accessibility and long-term preservation of tartan records. I share those concerns. However, the establishment of the register will address those questions by capturing, for the first time, the tartan designs that are held by the two main private registers in Scotland. As the committee heard in evidence, both the STA and the STWR will cease to register new tartans in future. I assure the committee that the keeper will work with both those bodies to ensure clear signposting to the focal point of tartan registration—the national Scottish register of tartans.

In its stage 1 report, the committee welcomed the functions of the keeper and agreed that the classification of tartans is a detail that need not be included in the bill. However, it urged the keeper to devise a classification scheme that is easy to use and search and which differentiates historic and family tartans from the more commercial ones. I agree whole-heartedly with the committee on both counts. As Mr McGrigor mentioned, section 4(2)(c) of the bill achieves those aims by obliging the keeper to ensure that the register can be used "efficiently and effectively". We are working to

adapt the existing classification schemes of the STA and the STWR to ensure distinct categories for the older, historic clan and family tartans and the more recent corporate and commercial tartans.

The National Archives of Scotland will work to preserve and enhance existing tartan records. Access to the register and information on the tartans that it contains will be free of charge. That will take tartan to a new level of universal accessibility and availability, which is crucial in helping to raise interest in tartan and Scotland and in promoting the Scottish tartan industry. However—given that this is Scotland—a fee will be charged for registration of a new tartan. We share the committee's view that an important balance needs to be struck between a fee that achieves genuine accessibility and one that deters frivolous or inappropriate registrations.

In his speech, Tavish Scott mentioned his interesting connection to clan Donald and Clanranald. I spend a lot of time at Kinlochmoidart and those connections are close to my heart. What he said about Culloden was also interesting. For many years, I looked in books on the clans for the name Mather but did not find it. However, I found it in the muster roll of Prince Charles's army. There were seven Mathers: some from the Forfar area and some from Aberdeen. It is nice to know that, at one time, Tavish Scott and I were on the same side.

I stand here with my MacDonald, MacIntyre and MacKenzie forebears to the fore. My uncle Hugh, who used to run Highland Homespun in Fort William and sold tartans very effectively, would be proud to see that we are looking after this great, iconic brand and, I hope, taking it to a new level. I congratulate Mr McGrigor on getting the bill so far and look forward to the bill making continued progress.

16:00

Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab): Scotland is uniquely fortunate in having a fabric that is recognised as Scottish across the world. Arguably, no other nation has as distinctive a national fabric as tartan or as distinctive a national dress as the kilt. Tartans have been created and adopted throughout the world. Canadian provinces and American states have their own tartans, and there is a Scottish Parliament tartan. There is even an Elvis Presley tartan. Earlier this year, the only Scots-born rabbi resident in Scotland created the first official Jewish tartan.

Those are new tartans, but the official clan tartans are not as traditional as many people suppose. The original tartans would have depended on the dyes and materials that were available. The first industrial manufacturers of

tartan, Wilson and Sons of Bannockburn, began creating tartans in 1765, as they had the technology to create a reproducible repeat pattern. They originally allocated numbers to their designs, but later gave them place names or the names of clans to identify them and make them more saleable.

In 1815, the Highland Society of London wrote to clan chiefs asking them to supply samples of their clan tartans, but most of them had no idea what their clan tartans were and either referred the inquiry to older clan members, in case anyone had a recollection, or asked Wilson's to tell them what it was.

Tartan had been proscribed for 32 years after the second Jacobite rebellion—not because it represented the clans but because it was seen to represent Highland identity and rebellion. George Murray, the military adviser to Bonnie Prince Charlie, would not have been wearing clan Murray tartan at the battle of Culloden, even if he was fighting on the same side as Jim Mather's and Tavish Scott's relatives.

The mythology that surrounds ancient tartans does not detract from tartan's symbolism or importance. Tartan is popular, fashionable and, despite its adoption across the globe, unequivocally identified with Scotland and Scotland's heritage. Tartan-clad football supporters are recognised and welcomed as Scots wherever they travel, whether they be our own beloved national tartan army or supporters of the individual teams whose tartan-clad followers will adorn European terraces later this year. By the way, Queen of the South has its own tartan, too.

Tartan not only promotes Scotland's worldwide image but contributes significantly to our economy, as Jamie McGrigor's bill recognises and as the survey undertaken by Scottish Enterprise's textile team proved. The survey indicated that approximately 3 per cent of all Scottish manufacturing jobs are in tartan-related industries, which contribute £350 million to Scotland's gross domestic product.

There is strong support for the principles of the bill among businesses involved in tartan manufacture. A single publicly held online register should raise the profile of Scotland-based businesses that rely on tartan, create new marketing opportunities to promote Scotland's international brand and stimulate further interest in broader Scottish culture.

The register will be kept by the National Archives of Scotland, with the keeper of the records having responsibility for its maintenance. As Jamie McGrigor said, that arrangement will overcome concerns about the creation of more public bodies.

The only controversial issue in the bill is how tartan is to be defined. As Jamie McGrigor said, there is a divergence of opinion between the wovenists and the modernists, who argue that non-woven tartans, which could be created through screen printing or ceramics or by computer, should be registrable.

Labour believes that weaving is such an integral part of tartan that any design described as tartan ought to be capable of being woven. I listened to what Jamie McGrigor said about the further work that he has done on the matter. The concern is how someone can prove that a design is capable of being woven without weaving it. My Labour colleagues will expand on that issue during the debate.

Labour is happy to support the passage of the bill through stage 1.

16:04

Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): As we have heard, tartan occupies a unique multimillion-pound place in our textiles industry and, along with the kilt and bagpipes, has come to symbolise our nation's cultural identity.

My friend and colleague Jamie McGrigor is to be congratulated on his perspicacity and his tenacity over two sessions of Parliament in bringing the Scottish Register of Tartans Bill before the Parliament. Many Scots are fortunate enough to be associated with a particular clan or organisation that has a recognised tartan but, until now, there has been no official register of tartans as such. It is to Jamie McGrigor's credit that he has secured agreement from the two private organisations that hold registers to support and to provide advice and information to the new and official national register of tartans.

Of course, there are temptations on such occasions to seek to debunk tartans, as Elaine Murray gently sought to do. I note that Hugh Trevor-Roper has been getting a bit of posthumous acclaim for his book, which was published only recently, in which he claims that Scots history is more mythological than factual. Trevor-Roper, whose own historical credentials were debunked somewhat when he authenticated the forged diaries of Adolf Hitler, claims in his book that the kilt was invented in the 1720s by a Lancastrian industrialist and that most tartans that are now associated with the clans were bought off the peg in the early 19th century from the enterprising Bannockburn haberdasher to which Elaine Murray referred. Trevor-Roper also claims that one of those off-the-shelf tartans, which was labelled simply as number 155, was first authenticated by clan Kidd before being taken over by the McGregors a mere 200 years ago. I

am sure that Mr McGrigor will be able to give us chapter and verse on that clearly scurrilous claim when he sums up.

It is certainly true that the tartan industry expanded mightily following the visit of George IV to Edinburgh in 1822 when, at Sir Walter Scott's instigation, the hefty Hanoverian appeared swathed in acres of royal Stuart tartan. The truth is that the forerunner of the kilt—the belted plaid—was traditional Highland garb and that identification of differing regional Highland groups by their colourful woven tweed check or tartan plaids was common in the 16th century and probably much earlier. If there were no tartans prior to George IV's visit, why was the wearing of the kilt and tartans specifically banned in the disarming act of 1746, in the wake of Culloden? Although wearing the kilt was forbidden in Scotland for 36 years after Culloden, the Black Watch had already adopted its distinctive dark tartan and, along with the other Highland regiments, it was allowed to retain the kilt and regimental tartans as part of its uniform. As Highland soldiers distinguished themselves in the creation and defence of the empire, clan chiefs and major landowners were attracted to the idea of personal tartan setts.

I have absolutely no problem with an official national register of tartans, no matter how recent the derivation of individual setts. Tartans make a lot of money for Scotland and, as the diaspora buys into its roots for occasions such as the forthcoming year of homecoming, tartans are likely to earn the nation a great deal more. For those of us who perhaps shake a less-mean shank than we once did and who are understandably wary of kilts, there is surely nothing to equal the sartorial splendour of a well-cut pair of tartan trews. Sadly, there is no Brocklebank tartan—despite appearances—although the rather grand golf club to which I belong has produced a splendid tartan of its own. Therefore, along with previously and similarly disenfranchised thousands, with the advent of an official national tartan register I, too, can become a bona fide member of the tartan industry.

For all the right reasons—a sense of history, belonging and style as well as the setting up of an official Scottish register of tartans making excellent business sense—it gives me great pleasure to support Jamie McGrigor's motion.

16:08

John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD): We have heard many reasons why we should have a tartans register. I am pleased to welcome Jamie McGrigor's initiative in introducing a bill to support the tartan industry. The proposal to enshrine an official register of

tartans in law is an example of Scotland taking control of its identity. The register will bring order and clarity to the current haphazard arrangement of commercially run registers of tartan, of which there have been many over the years.

Tartan epitomises generations of Scottish history. The register will be recognised as an authoritative national register of tartans and will function as a useful public service that is accessible to all. Just like whisky, tartan is a symbol of Scotland. The bill will ensure legal protection for the wealth of Scottish culture that is embodied in tartan. The register will assist in the marketing and promotion of a culturally rich Scotland.

It is important for the public to be able to refer to an official register that is a reliable resource and can be used for information purposes worldwide by individuals and industries. The increasingly popular pastime of genealogy will be helped by the register, which will provide an historical record of existing and new tartans.

As we all know, tartan has an international reputation. There is tremendous potential for media coverage of the register that will enhance Scotland's tourism industry. Every day, we see tartan products flood into Scotland from across the world, so it is especially important that we assert our ownership of tartan in this country. We must protect our tartan industry from competition from inferior imported tartan products. By safeguarding tartans in the register, we will provide security for our tartan. Once the register is established and our genuine tartans are registered, everyone will be able to know what is and is not a real tartan.

In my constituency of Ross, Skye and Inverness West there is still a strong culture of the clan system. Each clan is proud of the fact that it has had its own tartan over centuries. Ted Brocklebank mentioned the Black Watch. I think of the wild Macraes of Kintail, who took over Eilean Donan castle with the Mackenzies, both exhibiting their clan tartans. The system extends further than that. The identity of the Aran islanders on the west coast of Ireland is reflected in the weaving pattern of Aran sweaters, which is different for each family. In the Shetlands, the patterns of Fair Isle sweaters are identified with particular families. The tradition is strong not just in mainland Scotland but on our offshore islands.

Under the Scotland Act 1998, the area of intellectual property is reserved to the United Kingdom Parliament. For that reason, we will have to work with Westminster to ensure that we secure this asset—the register—for Scotland on the international stage. I am pleased to support Jamie McGrigor's Scottish Register of Tartans Bill.

16:12

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):

Tartan is one of the priceless symbols of Scotland—money cannot buy such recognition as it gives us. There are other symbols of Scotland, but tartan is the most universally known. The tartan industry is worth an estimated £350 million each year to the Scottish GDP, so it is important. It is entirely possible for us to grow it as part of the Scottish Government's policy of enabling our economy to do better. The ECOTEC survey showed exactly how it can grow, because of tartan's marketability. The register that Jamie McGrigor proposes should not be knocked, as it has the ability to raise tartan's profile and is the key to producing real growth.

It is suggested that people invented the short kilt—the fèileadh-beag—because it was easier for quarry workers and others to work in it. The fèileadh-mòr, or large kilt—the belted plaid that Ted Brocklebank mentioned—is the garment that was banned by the orders issued after Culloden. People have a right to develop the kilt in many different forms—there are some rare sights at American Highland games—and the plaid can be worn in a modern sense. We should encourage the use of the plaid as well as the short kilts that many of us wear on special occasions.

In my view, including an official definition of tartan in the bill is a somewhat limited approach, because it is tied up with the idea that tartans must be woven. At the same time, when people are designing tartans, they will eventually want to make them out of cloth. The issue of whether they will have to produce a piece of cloth in order to register the tartan is fraught with difficulties. Of course, they must accept that Pantone colours and so on must be defined for designs. As was suggested, people must be careful, because a picture is not a tartan in itself. Looking at the tartans of different clans in books of tartans is different from seeing the woven tartans. We must find a way through all that. Perhaps we need to investigate how we can create tartan swatches more cheaply, so that people who want to innovate and create are not disadvantaged. I hope that, at a later stage in the bill, we can find out what can be done.

John Farquhar Munro mentioned copyright. We must try to work with Westminster on that, but it would be good if we could find a way of incorporating tartan copyrighting in the powers of the Scottish Parliament in order to bring that power together with the bill's powers. I say that because of the obvious way in which copyright affects Scottish things. New designs crop up all over the world. It is recorded in my register of interests that I am the president of the Kilt Society de France. People have registered tartans in

Scotland from there. They want to produce tartans and are not trying to compete with the Scottish industry in the way that Lidl tried, and such foreign producers must be encouraged, because their tartans also spread the story of Scotland.

I, too, was at the Royal Highland Show today and saw the Scottish Crofting Foundation's tartan. I said that I would give the foundation a mention in the debate. The tartan is a fine green and brown one, and it is excellent. I do not know whether I got there first with that, or whether Tavish Scott did. However, the SCF is a great example of a body producing its own tartan. I want to see whether the Scottish Rural Property and Business Association designs itself a tartan.

16:16

Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab): Thank you, Presiding Officer, for the opportunity to contribute to the stage 1 debate on the Scottish Register of Tartans Bill. I thank Jamie McGrigor for giving Parliament the opportunity to debate the bill.

Tartan is an important part of our history, culture and economy. It is internationally recognised and plays a significant role in Scotland's tourism sector and, importantly, our textile industry. The register will incorporate 3,000 tartans that are held in the Scottish Tartans World Register and 6,000 tartans that are held in the Scottish Tartans Authority register. Those collections will form the cornerstone of the new register. It is a major and positive step for both organisations to agree to share their collections. Jamie McGrigor and the team involved are to be congratulated on taking forward this significant achievement.

We heard much in evidence about the bill's benefits, and I welcome and support much of what was presented. It is hoped that the register will increase the authenticity and standing of Scottish tartans. Furthermore, a single register will provide an enhanced marketing capability and profile. Given the importance of tartan to Scotland, I hope that the bill will receive cross-party support at decision time.

In written evidence to the committee, Alastair Campbell of Airds said:

"It is probably not fully understood how important tartan is as an icon to many ... around the world ... To the millions of overseas Scots, tartan plays a major part in identifying and recording their Scottish connection."

We see that at tartan week in America.

Tradition perhaps best encapsulates the main dividing issue around the register of tartan, namely the division between the wovenists and the modernists, which we have heard much of in the debate. Tartan has always been woven, but there is an argument about whether it is a pattern or a

cloth. It was said in evidence to the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee that by not referring to "woven" in the bill, we would limit work for the weaving industry in some respects. As we have heard in the debate, the modernists believe that tartan is a design that can be reproduced in a number of formats, but the wovenists believe that tartan is historically a woven design and that that should be reflected in the definition in the bill.

The committee, as our convener stated, listened to much evidence on the issue. I have been persuaded by the arguments that tartan ought to be capable of being woven. I referred earlier to the importance of tartan to our history, culture and economy, so I am pleased that Jamie McGrigor has agreed with the points that were raised at committee and agreed to include the wording "capable of being woven" in the bill.

The committee highlighted that the requirement to include a swatch rather than just the thread count should be considered. I have much sympathy with that point.

Although I have no objection to tartan being reproduced—that is the modernist within me speaking—I believe that, as has been said, a picture is a picture, but a tartan is unique. I quote from written evidence that was given to the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee:

"tartan is first and foremost a fabric, distinguished from other fabrics in that it is woven ... the Scottish Register of Tartans MUST BE A CLOTH ARCHIVE."

As the convener of the committee has said, at stage 2 we will have to examine closely the arguments and seriously consider placing a requirement on people to produce a swatch before registration. As 70 per cent of employment in textile weaving and 25 per cent of employment in textile finishing is directly related to the tartan industry, I suggest, as a modern wovenist, that there is a strong argument for producing a swatch. I look forward to debating that point at stage 2, and I urge members to support the general principles of Jamie McGrigor's bill.

16:20

Christopher Harvie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): I, too, congratulate Jamie McGrigor on what is perhaps the most distinguished service that a member of his clan has given to Highland society since the demise of Rob Roy. I suppose that the one major figure from the Highlands to impose himself worldwide was invisible for most of the time and was a reptile. I refer, of course, to the Loch Ness monster.

In looking at the history of tartan, it is important to note that we are still too generalised about it. Ted Brocklebank introduced us to the wonderful world of Hugh Trevor-Roper, an expert in forgeries

of all sorts, who ultimately was tripped up by a man from Stuttgart. Nonetheless, the story of tartan is one of myth covering myth. I would like more attention to be paid to the role of the prince consort, Albert the good, that German innovator and scientist who saw to it that tartan met its necessary partner—aniline dyestuffs—in the 1850s.

The impact of Balmoral must be considered, as must the Crimean war—from the thin red line through to the notion of bravery and heroism—which really gave tartan its impact. The impact of tartan at that time was not felt only in Scotland. For example, the German Tracht movement—the German movement for peasant culture and clothes—arose in the 1880s. It was one of the themes of the historicism of people such as mad King Ludwig of Bavaria—who, logically I suppose, would have been the monarch of Scotland, had Rob Roy had his way. The Scottish tradition made a breakthrough that other national movements followed.

I must emphasise the importance of protecting the definition of Highland Scotland. I have no axe to grind—I do not think that the Harvies penetrated north of Motherwell during the Victorian period—but we must remember that the Victorian period witnessed the industrialisation of not only tartan production but tweed production. Tartan and tweed should go together.

I made a film on Harris tweed for the Open University in 1978. At the time, there were 800 weavers there, but now there are fewer than 100. We ought to apply to tweed the same degree of protection—a good Tory principle, I suppose—that we are applying to tartan in the bill.

The great trinity of Scotland is tweed, tartan and whisky, and they must all receive special consideration. In a competitive world, one can either go global and be wiped out or stand four-square for one's own particular interests. There is a bit of Scottish bloody-mindedness in that.

Finally, I make a plea. Professor Susan Manning, of the University of Edinburgh institute for advanced studies in the humanities, told me today about a farm on Mull where the tartan that the people weave comes from the coats of the local sheep and uses local dyestuffs. I hope that the register of tartans will protect our tartans—the absolutely original and unrepeatable tartans that we get from that sort of production. I like to think that an organic tartan is waiting in the wings.

16:25

David Whitton (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab): Members have a choice: they can be either a wovenist or a modernist. Jamie McGrigor is a modernist. I am a wovenist. Rob Gibson has said

that he is kind of a wovenist. Marilyn Livingstone said that she is a modern wovenist. In evidence to the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, the minister said that he was a pragmatist. He will find that sitting on the fence can be somewhat painful.

A terrific array of woven tartan ties is on display. I will happily give way to any member who cares to identify the tartan of my tie.

Tavish Scott: MacDonald of Clanranald.

David Whitton: Wrong. That was said only because I said that I was a MacDonald of Clanranald.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am not looking for many interventions of this sort.

David Whitton: I will take one more, Presiding Officer.

Ted Brocklebank: Polo by Ralph Lauren.

David Whitton: No, that is my underwear, but we will not go there.

There is no divide on the demand for a register. The industry has wanted one since 2002, and probably even before then. We should have one. We should keep a record of an iconic Scottish product that is recognised worldwide as uniquely Scottish. However, there is a clear divide at the heart of the argument: wovenist or modernist? As Marilyn Livingstone explained, wovenists are on the side of the Scottish Tartans World Register, which maintains that tartan is a piece of woven cloth and that any tartan on the register should be produced in cloth form. The modernists, including the Scottish Tartans Authority, say that tartan is a design, and that as long as it has a sett and a thread count to prove that it can be woven, that is enough. I do not agree.

In evidence to the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, Mr Keith Lumsden—who I am delighted to see is in the public gallery—said that he was a die-hard wovenist. He said, “Tartan is three-dimensional”, and that weaving creates a pattern that is two-dimensional. We have heard about the tartan army. Why is it called the tartan army? It is not because its members tour the world supporting Scotland, wearing designer gear—although some do. It is called the tartan army because its members wear tartan kilts and other tartan clothing. That is what distinguishes them. As we have heard, tartan is as iconic to Scotland as whisky, golf and haggis.

When he appeared before the committee, the keeper of the register, Mr George MacKenzie, raised the issue of tartan design on shortbread tins and so on. Those designs are usually a clan tartan and are not designed on a computer. We also heard of an airline wanting a tartan design on the tailfin of its aircraft. To me, that is not tartan; it is

just a striped design, and an attempt to gain kudos from Scottish branding.

Why should we support the wovenist argument? There is an economic argument for having a national register. The tartan industry supports some 7,000 jobs—0.5 per cent of all employment in Scotland, or 3 per cent of manufacturing employment—and contributes £350 million to Scotland's GDP. If a swatch of cloth was required for all new tartans, the industry would gain further benefit.

Mr McGrigor mentioned schools. Mulbuie primary on the Black Isle—I apologise if I have pronounced that incorrectly—and St Stephen's primary in Sighthill in Glasgow have designed and produced their own tartan. Others could do the same. Cost is not a barrier.

Mr McGrigor mentioned the rules for application. He said that he is prepared to accept that the design should be capable of being woven. I welcome that, but I give notice that while I welcome the bill, I am minded to lodge an amendment stating that in applying for registration to the keeper, all new tartans must come with a sample to prove that they can be woven.

So far, no one has identified my tie. It is the Al-Maktoum tartan, which was designed by a pipe major for the pipe band of the former ruler of the United Arab Emirates. It is based on the Cameron, and was produced for the Al-Maktoum Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies in Dundee.

I support the bill but give notice of a possible amendment.

16:29

Stuart McMillan (West of Scotland) (SNP): As a McMillan, I am spoiled for choice for tartans—I have six to choose from. As a piper, a tartan kilt is a must, as it is for festival-goers, wedding-goers and sports fans alike, although I am sure that some of my friends and officers in the London Scottish Regiment, with whom I used to be a regular player, would disagree, as they wear the hodden grey.

Alongside our tartan heritage we often find our clan history. Translated, the McMillan clan motto, perhaps fittingly for a politician, is, "I learn to succour the unfortunate." At times, however, it is impossible to aid those unfortunate souls in opposition parties.

These days, most proud Scots will happily don tartan and, as the industry is generating more than £350 million for the Scottish economy every year, we cannot afford to ignore it. For a small country, Scotland is fortunate in having five major global brands: golf, whisky, bagpipes, haggis and tartan, predominantly for kilts. They bring huge sums of

money, and thus jobs, into the Scottish economy. That being the case, I welcome any methods of protecting the integrity of any of those brands for Scotland's benefit. The Scottish Register of Tartans Bill certainly appears to do that with tartan. Having a public body as the keeper of the register will ensure that not only Scots, but anybody with an interest in tartan, will be able to source information about it for many years to come.

I welcome the actions of the Scottish Tartans Authority and the Scottish Tartans World Register, which support the bill. Furthermore, as Rob Gibson mentioned, the ECOTEC study into the economic impact of tartan found that a single register would give the industry enhanced marketing capability and profile so, in addition to protecting part of Scotland's heritage, the register should provide economic benefits.

There is no denying the affinity that Scotland feels with tartan. As Iain Finlayson writes, tartan and tartanry

"like many other Scottish fetish, has taken on wider, almost global significance."

The bill does not say that Scotland equals tartan tat; rather, it safeguards part of our society that has become an internationally recognised symbol. There is nothing wrong with supporting an industry that provides more than 4,000 jobs directly and 7,000 indirectly.

David Whitton: I have a simple question: are you a wovenist or modernist?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am neither.

David Whitton: I beg your pardon, Presiding Officer.

Stuart McMillan: That is a debate for other people, if they want to have it; I just want to ensure that Scottish tartan is registered in Scotland and that it can progress with the register.

By defining tartan within the register and providing a point of reference for tartans, the bill seeks to preserve the plaid as we know it. Therefore, I am pleased that many in the industry support the bill, which asks the Court of the Lord Lyon and the National Archives of Scotland to play a vital role in maintaining the records. Tartan is an immense asset for Scotland. If the national register, which will be overseen by the keeper of the Scottish register of tartans, will protect such an important factor of Scottish life, it deserves to be welcomed.

I notice that Jamie McGrigor has commented on the BBC that the previous Administration asked him to put his original member's bill on hold while it assessed tartan's economic value to Scotland. Thankfully, the current bill is now progressing

through the Parliament. I have a few points to raise about it, which I will do at a future date, but I congratulate Jamie McGrigor on introducing it to the Parliament and the Scottish National Party Government on recognising tartan's importance to Scotland as a nation by supporting the bill.

16:32

Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): Despite the broad support that we have heard today, there have been several occasions over the past few years when I, for one, doubted that the proposal for a register of tartans would ever make it to the statute book. It is a matter of congratulation that we have reached the stage 1 debate today, albeit this is the proposal's second stage 1 process. Everyone whose efforts and persistence have got us to this point—particularly Jamie McGrigor—should be applauded.

My interest in and support for the bill is long standing and primarily due to the persuasive powers of my mother-in-law. Deirdre Kinloch Anderson is one of the prime movers, if not the prime mover, behind the bill. I welcome her and many others to the public gallery for the debate. For the avoidance of doubt, I should say that although I have strong family ties to the industry I have no financial or commercial interest in it and I doubt that my endorsement will add much to the custom of the Kinloch Anderson business.

If we look at other areas where there is a particular manufacturing interest—Champagne and Parma, which is responsible for Parma ham, are just two examples—we see industries and Governments working together and often using trademark, copyright or intellectual property legislation to defend that interest and heritage. The bill does not offer us that level of protection, but it is a significant step in the right direction. This is not about Scotland taking control, but about asserting our authority over tartan and not allowing others to cheapen the brand—although, before we get too superior about our sense of history and tradition, it is important to acknowledge that two of the most popular tartans in our kilt hire shops are those of the good old Scottish clans Celtic and Rangers.

Notwithstanding the arguments between modernists and wovenists, the industry has united around the idea of a tartan register. The different sectors concerned—the weavers, the kilt makers, the genealogists, and the two existing registers—have not always, or perhaps ever, agreed on the way forward, and it has been no mean feat to bring them together.

The whole dynamic of the bill has been fascinating. At one point, the support of the then Deputy Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong

Learning, Allan Wilson, was crucial. More recently, the momentum gained through the involvement and support of the Lord Lyon and the keeper of the records of Scotland—as well as the Government's support for the bill, of course—has given the proposals added credence.

It is fair to say that Jamie McGrigor and I do not see eye to eye on every political issue. I was asked by a friend who saw me on the news, at the launch of the bill, why I was attending the Tory party conference. Whatever our political differences, however, it was easy for me to appreciate the merits of creating the tartan register.

I am only too aware of the hammering that the Scottish textiles industry has taken in recent years. Daks-Simpson, William Baird and Coats Viyella are just a few of the companies that have closed or moved abroad. I do not believe that any member here would feel comfortable at the thought of Scottish tartans, our weavers or our kilt makers moving offshore and of our tartans being sold back to us. We can take action. Before us today is a modest but practical proposal that will support and encourage this vital Scottish industry.

The new register will not be commercially or privately controlled; it will be a public, non-judgmental and inclusive document. It will make the brand that is tartan more Scottish, and I believe that it will be of benefit to our country and our businesses. The creation of the register will itself generate further interest in tartan.

We are rightly proud of our history. As well as protecting our heritage, Parliament's job is to look to the future. I believe that the register does just that, and I am happy to lend my support to the bill.

16:37

Keith Brown (Ochil) (SNP): First, I apologise for coming in a bit late, after Jamie McGrigor started speaking. I congratulate him on introducing the bill and acknowledge the support of the Scottish Government and the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee so far.

Like many other members, I have a substantial constituency interest in tartan. Daiglen of Scotland is based in Tillicoultry. It is the last of a long line of textile and tartan-producing concerns across the hillfoots of the Ochils. It is where I got my most recent kilt. AS Campbell is based in Alva, and the oldest manufacturer of tartan is in Bannockburn, part of which is in my constituency.

To my mind—although I am not nearly as expert as some previous speakers—the bill is about using the credibility and integrity that would arise from the establishment of a register for the further exploitation, if I may use that word, of the

commercial and cultural potential of tartan. That is entirely right.

Although we should consider classification and accept the reason for it, we should not be at all snobbish about tartan. What Rob Gibson had to say was true: many people have tartans for many reasons, and we should not seek to circumscribe those reasons. We obviously wish to protect tartans with an ancient history and a cultural background, but people will see that from the register and will know exactly what kind of tartan they are looking at.

We have heard about modernists, wovenists and modern wovenists, but not yet about woven modernists. I am not sure what that would look like. We could also have dye-hard wovenists—is that a woven one that is hard to dye? I am not sure. Anyway, we should not be snobbish about classification, and we should make it as open as possible.

Kenneth Macintosh was right to say that Celtic and Rangers have their own tartans. So does Hibernian. It is a very nice green tartan that I am holding up now, if anybody is interested to see it. As Elaine Murray said, each Canadian province has a tartan, and they all have official status in Canada. The Royal Marines have a tartan, which surprised me more than the fact that the United States Marine Corps has a tartan, too. Our universities have tartans—and even individual university departments are now declaring that they have a tartan. Apparently the Hare Krishna movement has its own tartan. I find that very interesting. On a more serious note, the veterans have the Erskine tartan, which is interesting to note as we are about to go into veterans week.

Members have spoken about their own tartans. I have a choice of two. I was surprised to hear Stuart McMillan say that he has a choice of six. One of my choices is the MacMillan tartan; the other is Lamont. The MacMillan was named, I think, after a haircut sported by a 12th century monk—which counts against using that one. The clan motto, which Stuart McMillan mentioned, contains the word “disco”, which put me off a wee bit—although it means “I learn” in Latin. The clan fought at Bannockburn, of course.

Lamont, to commend it, is believed to have come from the Norse for “law man”. It is associated with great legends of the statesman-like rulers of Cowal and Argyll of Irish and Norse descent. As against that, we have Johann Lamont, John Lamont and Norman Lamont. In any event, I chose the Lamont tartan in the end because it is nice and is more like the Hibs tartan.

The bill has a lot to commend it. I do not have the background on it that other members have, but

I wish it every success and will certainly support it when it is brought back to the chamber.

16:40

Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con): Like the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee's debates on the bill, this afternoon's debate has been interesting. I, too, congratulate Jamie McGrigor on introducing this extremely important bill.

There is a strong economic case for the bill, and a strong cultural case. On the economic case, most of the statistics that we heard come from the ECOTEC report, which was commissioned last year by Scottish Enterprise's Scottish textiles team. In Scotland, there are 17,000 jobs in textiles, 7,000 of which it is estimated come from tartan. As we heard, tartan contributes about £350 million to the economy each year, or about 0.5 per cent of GDP.

The Scottish Register of Tartans Bill presents an opportunity to lift the industry to the next level. The textiles industry in Scotland is trying to reposition itself to an even higher end of the global market. We cannot compete on price, so we have to compete on value and quality. The register will give businesses a marketing tool to do that and a springboard to promote their wares. Further, it is a chance for the tartan industry as a whole to take a more joined-up approach to worldwide marketing, as the cashmere subsector has done. The register will be good for individual businesses, for the tartan industry, and for the textiles industry as a whole. Those are the direct benefits.

Indirectly, because there has been a lot of interest in tartan, particularly with the year of homecoming 2009, there are massive potential tourism gains the length and breadth of Scotland. The study of family history could be boosted even further by an officially sanctioned register, and there will be a boost to other industries in the supply chain. Most of the 7,000 jobs, or at least a healthy proportion of them, are indirectly related to the tartan industry.

On the cultural case, having an official register will help with the authenticity of tartan and of Scotland's image. Having a definitive national repository will give tartan an even higher place than it already has. The register will be public, it will be easily accessible and it will be safely preserved in public hands, we hope for ever. The danger with private registers is that if the organisations that hold them fold, a lot of the information goes with them. That danger was pointed out clearly to the committee.

The register will enable us to claim tartan as our own, or at least to ensure that it remains claimed as our own. Evidence was led that Canada might

have considered creating a register of tartans, and one person who gave evidence voiced concern that Australia might be thinking about doing it as well. A Scottish register of tartans will make it crystal clear that tartan belongs to Scotland and will continue to do so.

The debate between modernists and wovenists was raised in the committee and again today. Rather than go into one camp or the other, I will try to look one step beyond. The important thing is to ensure that the definition of tartan and the process in the bill do not stifle innovation but protect the brand in the long term. The bill must not allow tartan to become diluted. There is a danger of that, and if it happened we could have a problem with tartan in the long term. It is important to get the right balance, but we do not necessarily need to jump into one camp or the other.

The classification issues that we heard about are better dealt with by the keeper, who can issue guidance, than in the bill.

There are strong economic and cultural reasons for the bill. For that reason, I urge members to support it.

16:44

Elaine Murray: There is a lot of cross-party support for the bill and agreement on the importance of tartan to the Scottish economy, now and in the past, so, in closing the debate for the Labour Party, I return to the main issue of disagreement at this stage—whether a tartan must be proved to be capable of being woven in order to be registered. We have heard a variety of wovenist positions, ranging from the extreme wovenism of David Whitton to the positions of other members who had a degree of wovenism in their arguments. For good reason, I, too, am a wovenist, partly because of the history of tartan.

Tartan probably originated from the French word “tiretaine”, which referred to a woven part-wool, part-linen cloth rather than to any particular type of design. I am not arguing that tartan did not exist prior to the 18th century, but it did not exist in the forms in which we know it now, which is not necessarily a bad thing. Evidence of material with a chequered design, dating from somewhere between 250 AD and 350 AD, has been found in Falkirk. It is possible that the Romans, who were in Britain at that time, observed people wearing an ancient form of tartan.

Prior to the 19th century and the development of mechanical looms that could reproduce patterns easily, each tartan would have been uniquely created by the weaver using the dyes that were available. Bright colours were used for celebratory occasions, symbolising the wealth and status of the wearer; darker colours were used when the

wearer wished to blend into the natural environment. That may be the origin of the notions of dress and hunting tartans.

What is clear is that tartan was a woven material long before specific designs were allocated to particular clan names or geographical locations. During the mid-19th century, weaving and the textile industry were the predominant manufacturing industries in Scotland. Ken Macintosh referred to the decline of the textile industry over the past century.

The tartan industry in the early 21st century accounts for around a quarter of the remaining textile jobs in Scotland. So, in supporting the wovenist position, those of us who describe ourselves as wovenists believe that we are supporting the Scottish textile industry and the retention of the skills of its designers and manufacturers. As David Whitton informed us, the Scottish Tartans World Register strongly supported that position, arguing in written evidence that, historically and culturally, tartan has been woven and that computerised tartan images could easily be produced by mathematical formulae. It argued that the inclusion of such designs in the register would trivialise tartan. As Marilyn Livingstone and Rob Gibson pointed out, a picture of tartan is very different from the actual cloth.

The success of tartan worldwide is a testament to Scotland's entrepreneurialism. I recently discovered a story about a Japanese golfer called Tsuneyuki “Tommy” Nakajima. I had not heard of him before, but I do not know a great deal about golf. Apparently, while he was in Scotland, he went into a tartan shop on Princes Street to ask whether he would be entitled to wear a tartan. He received the response, “Do you want to see the hunting Nakajima or the dress Nakajima?” Let there be a hunting or a dress Nakajima; I hope that, as long as it is capable of being woven, it will be accepted into the register of tartans.

The issue of wovenism notwithstanding, Labour members are pleased to support the general principles of the bill and to see it progress to stage 2. We await with interest the arguments about how to address the issue of a tartan's ability to be woven and whether a cloth sample should have to be provided to allow a tartan to be registered.

16:48

Jim Mather: I welcome members' contributions to the debate, especially John Farquhar Munro's statement about Scotland controlling its own identity. I liked that. I am sorry that he is no longer in the chamber, as I thought that the war stories that he could tell might lead on to stories about a

few dances in the 1950s and 1960s in his neck of the woods.

In a debate on the bill back in February 2007, I said that I welcomed a more detailed examination of the rationale for a register of tartans. I also quoted Professor Michael Porter, the world expert on competitiveness, who noted that Scotland is one of only 15 or 16 countries on the planet that has a truly vivid national brand and a high standing that it owes, in great part, to tartan. Along with whisky and golf, tartan accounts for the fact that Scotland means something to 98 per cent of the world's population. That appreciation of who we are and what our values are is a function of our iconic national brands. The images conjured up by golf, whisky and tartan play into that. Our open and welcoming aspect, innovative spirit, and being the birthplace of Hume, Smith and Scott and the cradle of the enlightenment mean that we are well-placed to promote our nation and values. The new tartan register will help us to do that.

I am pleased by the involvement of the Government, particularly through its agency, the National Archives of Scotland, which has further refined and developed the proposals to the stage that they are workable, straightforward and affordable and will streamline, improve and enhance existing public services. I was particularly taken by what Ken Macintosh said about the united industry and the bringing together of the registers, the industries, the Lord Lyon and the national archive. That is important, because the fact that the records have survived is due largely to the committed effort of a small number of tartan experts and enthusiasts. Prominent among them are Brian Wilton of the Scottish Tartans Authority, and Keith Lumsden of the Scottish Tartans World Register.

The progress that has been made is also a direct result of the dedicated input of industry experts such as Ken Macintosh's mother-in-law, Deirdre Kinloch Anderson, of Kinloch Anderson Ltd in Leith, who has been very much on the front foot on this issue. Nick Fiddes of Scotweb has also been instrumental in helping to shape the proposals for the register. I am grateful to them and to all who have contributed to the project.

As a result, the register will be comprehensive and credible, and it will rely on the on-going support and involvement of Scotland's tartan experts and industry. It may not have gone unnoticed that the Government is supporting Jamie McGrigor and his bill to the hilt. Although it might strike some members as an unusual arrangement, the Government sees this as an innovative and far-sighted collaboration with Mr McGrigor. *[Interruption.]* I believe that Mr Rumbles wants to say something.

Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): I was just commenting on your point that co-operation between the Scottish National Party and the Conservatives is an unusual arrangement.

Jim Mather: We are co-operating on this bill, but we are open to collaborating and co-operating with others, given the strength of our agenda.

I will talk more about the listening pragmatism that Mr McGrigor has shown. Overall, this is a pragmatic, reasonable and realistic approach to legislating in areas such as this. It transcends political boundaries where there are good ideas to be developed, and it shows a level of practical, issue-by-issue collaboration that was the widely held aspiration when people voted in the 1997 referendum and in the first election in 1999.

David Whitton: I appreciate the fact that the minister supports Mr McGrigor's bill, but will he support the textile industry by saying that a swatch of cloth must be produced along with the tartan design?

Jim Mather: We will support Jamie McGrigor's listening pragmatism and his proposed amendment about the tartan being able to be woven.

There is a delightful irony here. In 1603, the Privy Council issued an edict banning the use of the name MacGregor. Many adopted the names of Murray, Graham, Stewart, Grant and even Campbell, and MacGregor was not fully restored until 1774. Now a McGrigor is playing his part in protecting and enshrining the tartans of many of the other family names in Scotland. I delight in that irony and believe that it adds to the appropriateness of the bill. I am equally delighted to offer the Scottish ministers' support for Jamie McGrigor's bill, and I commend it and this way of joint working to the Parliament.

16:53

Jamie McGrigor: I thank members for their amusing and good contributions to the debate, and for their broad support for the bill.

I turn to David Whitton's remarks about tartan being woven or not. I feel strongly that the register should be inclusive. We have achieved consensus after a five-year debate and to exclude one sector, even if it is just a few registrations a year, would be a mistake. I prefer to sing from "Hymns Ancient & Modern" rather than favouring one expert over another, because I have so much respect for the experts whose names have been mentioned today. It is because of their consensus that we have got as far as we have, and I would hate to lose that at this stage.

Members may remember that I first introduced proposals for a Scottish register in the previous session. That bill attracted a good level of support, but I withdrew it to allow work on the options for a register to be undertaken. That has happened, and I am grateful to the minister for allowing me to remain in charge of the legislation. He might have introduced an Executive bill, but he chose not to. I am very grateful for that.

With Government support and on-going engagement with the tartan industry in Scotland, the revised bill retains my original proposals. They were for a statutory footing for a Scottish register of tartans, a statutory definition of tartan and a keeper of tartans to operate the register.

On the question of a definition, Jamie Stone asked how to differentiate between tartan and gingham or another check. As the committee heard, reaching a universally acceptable definition would be difficult, but the definition in the bill has been agreed by the tartan industry experts and will be applied on a consistent basis by the keeper.

The bill now proposes a much more cost-effective, streamlined and less bureaucratic way to deliver the register—and that is very welcome. It will minimise cost to the taxpayer and reduce bureaucracy. It will use existing public and private sector expertise and infrastructure and, importantly, avoid adding to the public sector landscape by creating a new public body.

I am pleased that the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee welcomed the fact that the keeper of the records of Scotland will be the keeper of the Scottish register of tartans. I am also pleased that the committee recognised that the functions of the keeper will ensure that the register is maintained in a way that protects and preserves the tartans in it while making them more publicly accessible.

David Whitton: Will the member give way?

Jamie McGrigor: I want to make some headway.

Over time, a quality assurance approach by the keeper to tartan registration will help to develop the credibility of the Scottish register and the authenticity of the tartans that it contains. It will be the first and only national register of tartan maintained in the spiritual home of that important and iconic symbol of Scotland.

As well as including existing tartans and tartan designs, the bill empowers the keeper to ensure that new tartans meet certain criteria for entry into the register. In my view, those criteria are stringent and will enhance the tartans in the register. They include meeting the first ever statutory definition, as endorsed by Scotland's Parliament, and showing that the design has been considered in

detail, including colour, thread count—the DNA of tartan—and sett.

David Whitton: Will the member give way?

Jamie McGrigor: I would prefer not to; the member has made several interventions.

There will also be criteria to ensure that the person seeking to register a tartan has a clear link to its name. The committee raised a valid point about how to prove a sufficient link to a tartan, but we can do that in several ways. For an individual, it may simply be through proof of surname, region of origin or residence. On behalf of an association, business or organisation, it could be a letter or other confirmation from a body or organisation confirming the link.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order. Too many conversations are taking place.

Jamie McGrigor: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

In either such case, I suggest that the appropriate way forward is for the keeper to have discretion to consider each application on its merits. I envisage that the keeper will develop guidance on the issue, which he will have power to do under section 4 of the bill.

The bill is the culmination of long and assiduous work by many in the tartan industry in Scotland and among tartan experts and enthusiasts. Let me say again that I am grateful to them all for their efforts. Their on-going engagement with the register will be important. The register can become a focal point for tartan and tartan research and it can help the tartan industry in Scotland to capitalise on the commercial opportunities that will flow from the register and increased interest in tartan. Nested alongside the family history centre at the National Archives of Scotland, the register will help in the wider aim of promoting Scotland and interest in Scotland.

However, the bill is about more than that. It will create a register that will be a valuable national asset in that it will preserve Scotland's tartan records in perpetuity—not just for Scotland but for all who have an interest in and affinity with our proud nation and who have an interest in our iconic Scottish tartan product.

I return to Tavish Scott—

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): You should be closing now, Mr McGrigor.

Jamie McGrigor: I should close—okay. In that case, I will not return to Tavish Scott, other than to reply to his remarks about clan Gregor. He was correct about the proscription of the name. The words of defiance on Rob Roy's grave sum it up: "MacGregor Despite Them".

Points of Order

17:00

Jack McConnell (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I understand that you may plan to take longer than this afternoon before giving us your reflections on the point of order that I raised at lunch time, but I wish to put two points on the record before that point of order is addressed.

Rule 13.7.7 of standing orders says clearly that

“A member asking a question shall, in asking the question, not depart from the terms of the question.”

Paragraph 4.12 of the guidance on parliamentary questions, which was circulated to all members and which the Parliament published for our use and to guide people outside the Parliament, says clearly:

“Rule 13.7”—

to which I referred—

“deals with the procedure for asking oral questions in the chamber. When asking the question, the Member must repeat the full text of the question as printed in the *Business Bulletin*.”

I raise the issue again because it is important for members to have clarification before the deadline on Monday for lodging questions for next week's First Minister's question time. I respectfully ask the Presiding Officer to give us such clarification before Monday, so that next week's questions can be dealt with appropriately.

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): Thank you for the point of order. I make it clear that I did not undertake earlier to come back to the chamber this afternoon. I said that I took the point of order in the constructive way in which it was made and that I would deliberate on it. I will do that, but I gave no undertaking to come back to the chamber.

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): Further to that point of order, Presiding Officer.

The Presiding Officer: I have not finished answering the first point yet, Ms MacDonald.

I will reflect again on what Mr McConnell has said. If necessary, I will take steps to clarify the situation before the deadline for lodging questions next Monday. Members should be aware that, in general, they should ask only the question that was lodged and which appears in the *Business Bulletin*.

Jack McConnell: Further to that point of order, Presiding Officer. I am sorry to persist with the point; I tried initially to raise the matter constructively. I believe that the rules as written

and agreed by the Parliament and as circulated for the Parliament's use and for the understanding of those outside the Parliament are not to be interpreted generally but to be adhered to. Therefore, it is important to receive clarification that, when a member lodges a question that is selected for answer, that question will be read out in full or withdrawn. If you decide in due course, following reflection, not to provide further clarification to the chamber or to members in writing, it is important that you advise members on how best to raise the issue through the Procedures Committee or otherwise, to ensure that the Parliament's rules are followed to the letter.

The Presiding Officer: I cannot add to what I have said. I will take away the matter to ponder and deliberate on. If it is necessary to take further steps before midday next Monday, I will do so.

Margo MacDonald: Further to that point of order, Presiding Officer. I hope that you will be patient with me, because I seek only to add to what Mr McConnell said. He might be absolutely technically correct, but I think that I speak for several members when I say that how we prescribe the question time period that is open to us does not serve the Parliament's interests. Will you take a wider view than just considering the point that Mr McConnell asked you to address?

The Presiding Officer: As Ms MacDonald is well aware, that is not a point of order. If she wishes to raise the matter through the Procedures Committee, she is welcome to do so.

Decision Time

17:04

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):

There are five questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S3M-2204.2, in the name of Pauline McNeill, which seeks to amend motion S3M-2204, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on youth justice, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 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)
 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)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (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)
 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)
 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)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 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)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 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)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 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)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 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)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 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 58, Against 63, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The second question is, that amendment S3M-2204.1, in the name of Bill Aitken, which seeks to amend motion S3M-2204, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on youth justice, 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)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (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)
 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)
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (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)
 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)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 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)
 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)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (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)
 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)

ABSTENTIONS

MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 16, Against 104, Abstentions 1.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The third question is, that amendment S3M-2204.3, in the name of Mike Pringle, which seeks to amend motion S3M-2204, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on youth justice, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)

AGAINST

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)
 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)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (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)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 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)
 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)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 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)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 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

MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 17, Against 103, Abstentions 1.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The fourth question is, that motion S3M-2204, in the name of Fergus Ewing, on youth justice, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament acknowledges the positive contribution that children and young people across Scotland make to society; believes that every young person deserves the best start in life; is committed to giving young people more positive choices and chances and removing the barriers that prevent some from realising their potential and leading successful lives; notes that there are a number of young people who do not realise their potential and get into trouble and recognises the need to intervene quickly and effectively to turn their lives around; further recognises the need to support victims of offending, and considers that communities, the third sector, the private sector, public services, local authorities and the Scottish Government need to work together to build a more successful Scotland by preventing offending and intervening early with children and families at risk.

The Presiding Officer: The fifth question is, that motion S3M-2072, in the name of Jamie McGrigor, on the Scottish Register of Tartans Bill, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the Scottish Register of Tartans Bill.

Glasgow Passport Office

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S3M-1811, in the name of Sandra White, on Glasgow passport office. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament expresses deep concern at the plans to stop passport-processing services in Glasgow, resulting in the loss of over 100 jobs and leaving Scotland without a fully operational passport service; notes with further concern what appears to have been a deliberate run-down of the service in the lead-up to this announcement; believes that this streamlining process will see a further three or four passport offices throughout the United Kingdom affected, and further believes that concise information as to the effect of these changes should be issued immediately in order to remove the doubt and uncertainty surrounding the plans.

17:09

Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): Although the debate is entitled, "Glasgow Passport Office" the matter affects not just Glasgow but the whole of Scotland. I welcome this opportunity to debate this important issue and I hope to have the support of all parties in sending a clear, united message that the proposals for Glasgow passport office are unacceptable to the Scottish people.

Many issues could be raised, such as identification cards, passports for members of the armed forces and emergency passports, but I will not have time to cover them all. I expect that members will talk about such issues.

I welcome to the public gallery members of the Public and Commercial Services Union and I thank the PCS for its excellent briefing, which makes it clear that throughout the process serious concerns have been expressed about inaccuracies, contradictions and disregard for staff and customers in the Identity and Passport Service's approach. Those have been compounded by discrepancies in the evidence that the IPS provided to staff when they were told about the proposed changes.

Staff were told that the Glasgow passport office currently processes around 350,000 passports a year. However, according to a House of Commons written answer from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Identity, Meg Hillier, in 2005 the number was nearer to 600,000; in 2006 it was 650,000; and in 2007 it was 550,000. Staff were also told that Glasgow was chosen because of its small production capacity. However, in another written answer Ms Hillier acknowledged that the London and Belfast offices have consistently had lower processing figures. A serious issue must be

addressed. The figures do not add up and staff are being deliberately misled, which might call into question the legality of the proposed changes. Perhaps the Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism will seek advice on that.

More sinister and worrying is evidence of a deliberate run-down of services at Glasgow. Again, the IPS and Ms Hillier have provided conflicting information. The IPS told staff that no decision had been taken on where postal applications would be sent. However—lo and behold—in response to another question, Ms Hillier said that 40 per cent of post office deliveries have been diverted from Glasgow to other passport offices since January, which is almost unbelievable. The two positions cannot stand up side by side. Questions must be asked about such discrepancies.

We are witnessing the deliberate run-down of services, a campaign of misinformation and a blatant disregard for the workers and people of Scotland. I hoped that if I expressed my concern directly to Ms Hillier I would receive a response that would enable me to come to the Parliament today with a glimmer of hope and faith that she is listening to the people of Scotland and to passport office staff. However, that did not happen, which is sad. I wrote to Ms Hillier in April, and only by constantly haranguing her—I am not generally known for constantly haranguing people—did I get a response, which was faxed to me today.

It is unfortunate that the response is short, dismissive and curt and contains more contradictions. It says that a decision has not been made. However, in the document that staff were given on 2 April, in answer to a question about whether the consultation period means that changes might not happen, it says, “No. The board has taken the decision.” That is contradicted by the response that I received today, which is ridiculous and would be laughable if it were not for the seriousness of the situation and the contempt that Ms Hillier has demonstrated.

I ask the minister urgently to seek clarification on the matter. The United Kingdom Government cannot treat passport office staff like that and it should not be allowed to treat Scottish people like fools.

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab): For the record, will the member clarify that in line with its partnership agreement PCS requires to have input into proposals before decisions are made? We should clearly call for such input.

Sandra White: Elaine Smith is absolutely right—I was going to come on to that. The IPS will make a decision on 1 July, which is worrying.

The consequences of the decision, which has undoubtedly already been taken, as I said, are very worrying. There will be no emergency passport or passport printing services. In future, will Scotland have no passport office? That would mean that people would have to travel outwith Scotland, perhaps to England, to get a passport, and would mean the loss of more than 100 jobs—an alarming point is that given the history and make-up of the Glasgow office many members of the same families have jobs there.

The minister should be aware of the concerns of the business community that it will no longer be able to get passports at short notice. I believe that those passports are called jumbo passports; union representatives have told me that. The economic impact that the possible closure would have on Scotland, particularly on our oil industry, is worrying indeed.

We should be clear that this is only the start. With another three to four offices to close throughout the UK, could all areas with devolved Governments be without a passport office? Given that possibility, I urge the minister to encourage his Cabinet colleagues to raise the issue at the next meeting of the joint ministerial committee. I draw the minister's attention to information that I learned about only today about Northern Ireland, where there is legislation to protect such services from closure.

A recent PCS magazine included the headline, “Scotland's Going: Who's Next?” That says it all. An irate passport office worker told me:

“Once again, Scotland is being used as a guinea pig to see if these cuts will be accepted before another three to four offices throughout the UK face the same fate. Will it be Wales, Northern Ireland or England?”

It is time that the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish people sent out a clear message that the cuts are unacceptable, that we will fight tooth and nail to ensure that the only passport processing service in Scotland is retained and that staff must not lose their jobs. We should have a passport service in Scotland.

17:16

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): I thank Sandra White for giving Parliament the opportunity to debate the Glasgow passport office. The matter is, of course, reserved, but it is fair that members should be able to raise their general concerns on the service impact and the impact on jobs.

It is important to establish and to deal with the facts in this case, which has not been easy. Glasgow MPs are active on the issue, including Ann McKechin and Mohammad Sarwar, with whom I have been working and who have kept me

in touch with their work. I thank the PCS officials for taking the time to brief us on their concerns. It is important to note that Glasgow MPs have secured a commitment that there will be no compulsory redundancies.

Sandra White: I acknowledge what Pauline McNeill is saying on the matter. How many Glasgow MPs signed the early-day motion on the subject at Westminster? Will she encourage other MPs to do so?

Pauline McNeill: I do not know the figure off the top of my head. I do not read Westminster's daily business bulletin; I usually read the Scottish Parliament's one. As Sandra White is aware, the point that I am making is that MPs are at the forefront of the campaign, as they should be. As members of the Scottish Parliament, we have a legitimate interest in the matter. It is important to have the debate today.

As I said, MPs have secured an important commitment that there will be no compulsory redundancies. It is important to put the information into perspective. In a press release earlier this year, the SNP said that many people may have to go to England to get their passports, but there has been no evidence that that will be the case. Although I have my concerns, it is important to debate the issue with the facts before us.

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Pauline McNeill: No.

The Glasgow passport office is located in my constituency of Glasgow Kelvin, which is why I am taking an interest in the matter.

Bob Doris: Will the member give way on that point?

Pauline McNeill: I am sorry, Presiding Officer. If I say to a member that I am not taking an intervention, surely that means that I am not taking an intervention.

The Presiding Officer: Absolutely. It is entirely up to members whether they take interventions. The member has made it clear that she does not want to do that, Mr Doris. You are down to speak in the debate, so you will get your chance.

Pauline McNeill: There is a lot of conflicting information on the issue. There may be common points of interest, but we need to ensure that we move ahead on the basis of the facts.

I turn to the issues that I am concerned about as the constituency MSP. I am not clear why Glasgow is first in line for restructuring and a redundancy process and I am not happy with the answers that I have seen thus far on the subject. The Glasgow passport office is, because of the expertise of its staff, an efficient office that deals

with most of the complex applications, so why is it first in line when no announcement has been made on offices anywhere else in the country?

In many ways, I am looking for assurances about the service. I believe that Sandra White is right to say that the business community service that is currently on offer will no longer be available. On the counter service and the premium service that enables people to get a passport in four hours, we have been told that the counter service will remain, but I am concerned about the language in the document, which states that it will remain "for the foreseeable future". It sounds to me as if it will not be there for the long term, so I want an assurance that it will be.

I also want an assurance that the service that Glasgow and Scots people get from the office will remain the same as it is now. We know that the Glasgow office will specialise in countering fraud, which is one of the jobs that it will take on, but I want an assurance that it will remain part of the mainstream service.

I call on the Government to ensure that it properly consults the trade union, which not only represents its members but has many important points to make about the future and the structure of the service. I would like an assurance on that too.

There are issues to be raised, but we must get them into perspective. I ask, on behalf of my constituents, that the excellent service that they get at the Glasgow passport office remains as it is, if it is not improved, in the future.

17:21

Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con): I, too, congratulate Sandra White on securing the debate. The loss of more than 100 jobs is a concern for Glasgow and for the whole of Scotland that merits substantial debate now and in the future.

I will pick up on points that Sandra White made. I agree with some of them pretty strongly, but I disagree at least mildly with one or two others. The first crucial point that she made was about the need to get to the bottom of the discrepancy between the official reasons that have been given for removing services first from Glasgow, and those that were given in a parliamentary answer. I understand that the official reason is to do with processing capabilities in the Glasgow office, but the number of passports that were thought to be produced, which I think was 350,000, seems to be in stark contrast to the figures that were given in a House of Commons written answer. Sandra White's suggestion—although she did not mention the size or capabilities of other offices—that other offices have fewer capabilities than Glasgow, is

also worthy of further investigation and is an important point.

I agree strongly with the final part of Sandra White's motion, which states:

"information as to the effect of these changes should be issued immediately in order to remove the doubt and uncertainty surrounding the plans."

The loss of 100 jobs or more obviously affects 100 families and 100 breadwinners within their families.

Sandra White's suggestion that the issue could be raised at the next joint ministerial committee meeting is constructive and might shed some light on the issue. I am in tune with all those points.

Although Pauline McNeill was right to say that the issue is reserved, debates such as this one focus the minds of all who are involved in the process. I hope that it can have a positive impact. If the proposals are passed and jobs are to be lost, the Conservatives want as many jobs as possible to be retained within the identity of the passport service in Glasgow, whether it involves moving people to other departments or people retraining and moving to different functions. It is important that employees are treated as fairly as possible and are given the notice and the information to which they are entitled.

I note in passing that it was suggested that Glasgow passport office may increase its fraud prevention role. If that is the case, perhaps jobs will be available in that function. Although that would probably not counteract the loss of 100 jobs, it would at least go part of the way.

The point on which I am in slight disagreement with Sandra White is that it is very important not to overstate the case and not to elaborate on or exaggerate the arguments. From what I can see, this is about the loss of potentially more than 100 jobs, but I have not seen any evidence to suggest that it is about closing down emergency passport services. I was, unfortunately, unable to attend today's information session, but I sent a researcher who asked specifically whether, if the proposals go ahead, emergency passports will still be available. PCS was candid in its answer, which was "Yes—they will still be available." It is important to make that point and the point that the office will remain open.

In the worst-case scenario, which I agree is a bad case, a quarter of the present jobs will remain in the office. The proposals are not to shut down the office, so it is wrong to scaremonger and to exaggerate the size of the issue. However, we agree strongly with Sandra White on some issues—it is important that we get to the bottom of them.

17:25

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): I will need a pair of sunglasses by the time that I have finished my speech, because the sun is shining straight into my eyes and blinding me.

I thank Sandra White for bringing the debate to the Parliament and I thank the union that is involved for helpfully providing detailed information. The matter is reserved, but the debate should not give rise to a turf war about which matters should and should not be reserved. When jobs in Scotland are under threat, every member of the Parliament has a duty, a right and a responsibility to stand up for those jobs. We are clear about that. During Pauline McNeill's speech, I tried to put on the public record the fact that there can be no assurances about front-of-office jobs at the Glasgow passport office—it is wrong to say that there can be. I will return to that issue. It is absolutely right that we must deal with the facts—it is not scaremongering to talk about the facts.

I want to talk about the human cost of the proposals. More than 100 workers will be affected. Because of the close-knit nature of the IPS, many of those workers could be husbands and wives or fathers and daughters. This is not the first time that their entire lives have been thrown into turmoil because of UK Government reforms, as many of them were transferred from the Department for Work and Pensions during previous reforms. We should always bear in mind the human and social cost of the proposals.

Unions often get a bad name because they are not constructive, positive or optimistic when reforms are suggested. We must give credit where it is due. The PCS has considered not only the Glasgow passport office, but the entire UK infrastructure of passport offices. The union has made an incredibly worthwhile submission, arguing that if there is to be reform of the offices, we should consider everything in the round and not single out Scotland. Credit must be given to the PCS for that. It is clear that the workers and the union have been progressive, positive and optimistic, for which I commend them. I hope that every job survives and that the reforms are thwarted.

The IPS has been completely irrational about the entire process. There are seven passport offices in the UK, but the IPS has decided that there should be three, for reasons to do with ID cards. Did the service consider the seven passport offices in the round and think about which to keep and which to ditch? No—it singled out Scotland's passport office and said that it is going. That is what the IPS has decided. It will go from seven offices down to six and worry about the other three offices later. Scotland's passport office is under

deep threat. That is not scaremongering; it is a fact.

Some members are the lamest defenders of Scotland's jobs that I have heard in an awful long time. They must be stronger than they have been this afternoon. If a juggler has one of their arms cut off and somebody throws six balls at them and asks them to juggle, trust me, they will not be very good. The suggestion is not for a death by 1,000 cuts; it is for a death by two cuts—seven offices down to six, and then six down to three. Scotland will be out next time round in 2010 unless we resist the proposals. However, let us not be parochial. There is solidarity among all passport offices in the UK. Scotland needs a national passport service—it is a vital piece of Scottish infrastructure.

The Conservative member talked about scaremongering. Some people have told scaremongering stories about an independent Scotland. I remember the stories that people in an independent Scotland would need a passport to visit their granny in Blackpool. Under the IPS reforms, people will not even be able to get a passport in Scotland, never mind use one to go down to England. The proposals are ridiculous. The passport office is a piece of Scottish infrastructure that must stay in Scotland. I will finish with a final anecdote about Scotland. The Proclaimers had a great idea when they said:

"I would walk 500 miles".

I thought that they were talking about unrequited love; I did not realise that it meant a 500-mile walk to England to get a passport.

17:30

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): In some ways, I am loth to follow Bob Doris—I do not think that I can match his closing anecdote. I welcome the debate and congratulate Sandra White on obtaining it. I thank members of PCS for the briefing and background information that they have provided.

Rightly, the Identity and Passport Service is reserved to Westminster. The Scottish ministers are not accountable for the lamentable decision that has been made to run down the Glasgow passport office, but we are entitled to make known our views on it. It seems to be a centralising decision that is based partly on a view that the powers that be have taken on the future operating model. As Bob Doris indicated, the target is to reduce the number of offices to three in the course of time.

I will raise three issues, the first of which is technology. Undoubtedly, I am on the Luddite wing of the Parliament, not just because of my personal

limitations in operating information technology systems—they break down in my very presence—but because the history of Government IT is littered with disasters on a truly epic scale: the Child Support Agency and Criminal Records Bureau IT systems and the electronic passport application, to name but three. Every MSP knows that after nine years of the Parliament's existence, remote access to our IT still leaves something to be desired. Even when the IT has worked, there has often been a grave mismatch with predicted employee support needs. We have been told that predictions of passport demand, changes in pattern and staff needs have consistently been wrong. That should be a warning sign to us as we consider this issue.

Secondly, there is a need for on-going face-to-face customer contact at convenient points throughout the United Kingdom. Having used the same-day service recently for a family member, I recognise its value. I also understand that the service is valued not just by private individuals generally but by businesses, which frequently need urgent passport renewal, by oil workers and by the armed forces, for which Glasgow is the centre of excellence in the UK. It is not clear whether that service is threatened in the short term—we have debated the matter this afternoon—but I recognise a salami-slice cuts agenda when I see one.

The third point is just as significant. From the beginning, Liberal Democrats have been strongly opposed to the multibillion-pound national identity card system. It has been suggested that one of the factors driving the proposal that we are debating is the way in which the ID card scheme has gone over budget, the consequence of which has been pressure on the general IPS budget. If that is correct, is it acceptable for the service that provides necessary passports to British citizens for purposes of travel for business, pleasure or duty to be truncated or reduced because of a crazy, illiberal scheme that was dreamed up by someone in Downing Street and has become a monster in financial and organisational terms, as well as being objectionable in principle?

Finally, I would like to mention the likely job losses. Sometimes jobs become redundant as a result of changing technologies. If that were not the case, we would still employ men with red flags to walk in front of trains. However, the loss of more than 100 quality jobs in our biggest and most challenged city, on what seems to be a flawed and unproven prospectus, is utterly unacceptable.

I hope that responsible ministers at Westminster will take note of our debate this evening, will have urgent second thoughts on the wisdom of what they seem set on doing and will change their minds.

17:33

The Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism (Jim Mather): I congratulate my colleague Sandra White on securing the debate. Many of the speeches that members have made, including Robert Brown's just a moment ago, have been illuminating.

The Scottish Government recognises that this is an anxious time for employees who are affected by the Home Office's decision to remove the processing of postal applications for passports from Glasgow. This afternoon members from all parties have made a strong case for the IPS to pause and to consider and evaluate fully the likely effect of the proposed move on staff and the ability of the IPS to serve Scottish customers and the Scottish economy fully and properly. We will watch carefully to see how the 90-day consultation process progresses, how the IPS reacts to this debate, and what steps it takes to address the concerns of staff and, if necessary, to find suitable alternative employment for the staff affected.

I am aware that in April the IPS wrote to Kenny MacAskill, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice, to inform the Scottish Government of the changes that it proposes to the operation of the Scottish passport service. The rationale that the IPS offered for the mooted change is that the Glasgow office has a relatively small production capacity and that currently its output per full-time equivalent member of staff is lower than that of larger offices.

However, I share the concerns about centralisation and the impact on passport applicants—the Scottish customer. What makes those concerns so vivid is that we are told that the proposed move is part of a broader IPS efficiency strategy that its board is considering to move to two or three application processing centres over the next few years up to 2011. We are also told that the IPS will consider the proposed changes and their impact on the other offices across the nations and regions of the UK over the summer. I believe that the debate will reinforce that previously declared intent.

The Public and Commercial Services Union wrote to the First Minister back in April to ask him to look into the situation. He has done that and has assured the PCS that he has passed on its concerns to Scottish National Party MPs so that they might make appropriate representations at a United Kingdom level.

We know that the IPS has recently created 47 new jobs with the opening of the new passport interview offices, and the expansion of its Glasgow operational intelligence unit has created a further 36 jobs. We are pleased to see that counter service in Glasgow will continue. However, if the proposed changes go ahead, how passport

applications from people in Scotland will be affected by being processed outside Scotland remains a concern.

Obviously, this Government believes that there must be no significant increase in the time that people must wait between sending an application for processing and receiving a new or renewed passport. We also believe that there must be no impact on people who make telephone inquiries: they must be understood and their issues must be promptly and accurately dealt with—not least because any such impact would be at odds with the IPS's assertion that the proposed changes will help to improve operational efficiency while simultaneously providing the best possible service to its customers.

While it would be inappropriate for the Scottish Government to comment directly on claims that there has been a deliberate run-down of the service in the Glasgow office, it is undeniable that there were almost 100,000 fewer postal applications to the Glasgow office in 2007 than there were in 2006. Weight is added to that by Sandra White's evidence on the conflict between the IPS position and that of Meg Hillier.

I am aware of Sandra White's data and the anecdotal evidence that suggests that postal passport applications from the south of Scotland, Lanarkshire and the Lothians were processed in Peterborough and Durham instead of going to Glasgow, as had previously been the case. The Parliament, the IPS employees in Glasgow, PCS officials and the people of Scotland need and must have an open explanation of that anomaly. In other words, there is a need for a full reconciliation that shows the postcode make-up of the total Glasgow throughput in a timed series, so that we can view it over time.

Meanwhile, we also need to pay attention to the consultant John Seddon, who has studied the effects of centralisation and has grave reservations about situations in which that is not done effectively, with staff fully consulted and proactively involved in the change process, or in which customers' full needs and expectations are not fully catered for.

Mr Seddon believes that excessive back-office centralisation often produces waste and poorer customer service. He tells us that one of the most alarming drivers of what he calls failure demand—that is, the waste of resources and the creation of work that adds no value for the customer and builds in delays, frustration and disappointment—is the drive for more and more centralisation and concentration of back-office functions.

In Mr Seddon's experience, moving to an overly centralised back office, unless it is done with extreme care, removes a system's ability to handle

cases speedily and deliver the consistent crisp responses that busy people expect. He also believes that overcentralisation destroys continuity by removing skills and experience; creates waste through additional handovers, rework and duplication; lengthens the time taken to deliver a service; and consequently creates more failure demand. He also contends that overcentralisation inhibits the system's ability to absorb and cope with variety—in, for example, accents and place names—and eliminates the ability to generate the empathy that can put people at their ease, to accelerate the administrative process, or to avoid or rapidly fix errors or omissions in application forms.

I genuinely hope that the IPS is listening to the debate and is prepared to learn from what has been said in the chamber and by the unions and staff. We will watch the situation very closely. We are familiar with many previous false economies that delivered no savings but instead delivered increased costs and worse service. I restate my clear advice and hope that the IPS pauses, considers and re-evaluates the situation.

Meeting closed at 17:39.

Members who would like a printed copy of the *Official Report* to be forwarded to them should give notice at the Document Supply Centre.

No proofs of the *Official Report* can be supplied. Members who want to suggest corrections for the archive edition should mark them clearly in the daily edition, and send it to the Official Report, Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP. Suggested corrections in any other form cannot be accepted.

The deadline for corrections to this edition is:

Thursday 26 June 2008

PRICES AND SUBSCRIPTION RATES

OFFICIAL REPORT daily editions

Single copies: £5.00

Meetings of the Parliament annual subscriptions: £350.00

The archive edition of the *Official Report* of meetings of the Parliament, written answers and public meetings of committees will be published on CD-ROM.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS weekly compilation

Single copies: £3.75

Annual subscriptions: £150.00

Standing orders will be accepted at Document Supply.

Published in Edinburgh by RR Donnelley and available from:

Blackwell's Bookshop

**53 South Bridge
Edinburgh EH1 1YS
0131 622 8222**

Blackwell's Bookshops:
243-244 High Holborn
London WC1 7DZ
Tel 020 7831 9501

All trade orders for Scottish Parliament documents should be placed through Blackwell's Edinburgh.

Blackwell's Scottish Parliament Documentation
Helpline may be able to assist with additional information on publications of or about the Scottish Parliament, their availability and cost:

Telephone orders and inquiries
0131 622 8283 or
0131 622 8258

Fax orders
0131 557 8149

E-mail orders
business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk

Subscriptions & Standing Orders
business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk

Scottish Parliament

RNID Typetalk calls welcome on
18001 0131 348 5000
Textphone 0845 270 0152

sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk

All documents are available on the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.scottish.parliament.uk

Accredited Agents
(see Yellow Pages)

and through good booksellers