

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 13 November 2008

Session 3

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 13 November 2008

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

Energy Efficiency

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):

Good morning. This morning is given over to Labour Party business. The first debate is on motion S3M-2864, in the name of Sarah Boyack, on energy efficiency.

09:15

Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): I hope that MSPs throughout the chamber will support my motion today.

My motion calls on

“the Scottish Government to take steps, as set out in the Energy Efficiency and Microgeneration Bill proposals, such as fiscal incentives for householders and businesses, to improve the energy efficiency of new and existing housing stock and ensure that microgeneration technologies become widely available and used.”

My member's bill is drafted, but with the imminent introduction of the climate change bill and John Swinney's announcement that he is prepared to include measures on energy efficiency and microgeneration in that bill, I am keen to work constructively with him to ensure that the measures in my bill are included in the climate change bill. Those measures would greatly strengthen the climate change bill. If we are to have any hope of delivering the 3 per cent annual CO₂ reductions that we need, we must maximise the potential contribution of energy efficiency, microgeneration and local community energy as we move towards becoming a low-carbon society.

I have met John Swinney, and although I recognise that he is keen on targets and monitoring, I do not think that there will be any progress to monitor without the other measures in my bill. I am happy to work with him constructively, but I put it on record that I believe that the cabinet secretary has not gone far enough to date. I hope that today's debate will encourage him to go further in the climate change bill.

I started work on my member's bill three years ago. I wanted to tackle climate change and fuel poverty and I believed at that point that we had achieved a huge amount with our main target of generating 20 per cent of our electricity from renewables, which we achieved early. However, making the shift to becoming a low-carbon society means that we need to involve people in the clean energy debate. We need to bring home to people

their personal role and ability to tackle climate change. It will be a big cultural shift, but having spoken to colleagues at countless meetings throughout the country, I know that there is a powerful appetite for change. Housing associations can demonstrate that measures in new houses, such as high energy efficiency standards and microgeneration technologies, lead to warmer homes, cheaper bills and reduced CO₂ emissions.

When I started work on my bill, every 5 per cent increase in domestic fuel bills led to 30,000 more people being dragged into fuel poverty. Energy bills have shot up and Energy Action Scotland now believes that every 5 per cent increase in fuel bills leads to 40,000 more households being dragged into fuel poverty. The tragedy is that we have the powers in Scotland to do something about that, but we are not using them to the full.

We have targets to reduce our carbon emissions by 80 per cent by 2050 and to increase electricity from renewables to 50 per cent by 2020. If we are to have a chance of achieving those targets, we have to tackle our housing stock. Our homes account for 34 per cent of our energy demand and a third of our emissions. Microgeneration schemes and combined heat and power schemes are efficient, because the power and heat that they produce do not have to be transported long distances across the grid. They can also produce much-needed base-load.

We have made progress in the past three years. I thank the MSPs from all parties who have supported me. I thank members of my party, the Socialist Environment and Resources Association and the trade unions, who have campaigned consistently over the years. I refer to my entry in the register of members' interests and thank in particular the organisations that agreed to form a steering committee to help campaign for my bill—Energy Action Scotland, Energywatch, Friends of the Earth, WWF Scotland, Barnardo's, Age Concern Scotland and the Scottish Renewables Forum. Their support and advice have been invaluable to me. We have secured a number of significant wins, but the work needs to continue.

Planning guidelines that have been in place since March 2007 now require all major developments to include on-site renewables to reduce CO₂ emissions. Research by Friends of the Earth, however, shows that the guidelines are not being applied consistently by every local authority. We need all authorities to follow the examples of Edinburgh and Midlothian.

We have had progressive increases in the amount of money allocated to the Scottish community and householder renewables initiative; we have had the renewables pilot for the warm deal in rural areas that are not on the grid; and we

have had the recent announcement from Gordon Brown of a major energy efficiency programme. That programme needs to be followed by action, which is why my colleague Lewis Macdonald has been lobbying the major power utility companies to ensure that we get the full benefits of it in Scotland.

Only last month, the United Kingdom Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, Ed Miliband, gave the green light to feed-in tariffs, renewable heat incentives and a roll-out of smart meters. Although it is clear that things are happening, barriers remain—not enough trained installers, not enough advice to householders, and none of the economies of scale for renewables kit that a mass market would bring.

There is still planning red tape. SNP ministers' draft proposals to cut the red tape were roundly criticised—we are still waiting for the final Scottish statutory instrument, and it would be great if ministers would tell us today when it is coming. Let us make no mistake: jobs are at stake, particularly in the microwind industry, and jobs will go if we do not get fast action from ministers. I hope that we will get that fast progress.

We are still waiting for the much-vaunted energy efficiency strategy. I quote my opposite number, the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment, Richard Lochhead, who said in 2004 that

“energy efficiency is the missing link in the Scottish Government's efforts to tackle climate change and fuel poverty.”

Again, we are waiting. A lot has been done, but there is a lot still to do. We urgently need fiscal measures to get going so that householders and businesses can install energy efficiency measures and microgeneration kit. People in England are far ahead of us. They have that power, through council tax reductions, and we need the same opportunities in Scotland.

Energy efficiency and microgeneration go together. If we are to tackle climate change and fuel poverty, we need to amend the climate change bill. I am very keen to work with Scottish National Party ministers. We need to make sure that change happens through collective will in this Parliament. We want to ensure that we benefit from jobs, reduce fuel poverty and lower our carbon emissions. There is a great industry out there that is waiting for us to take action.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises the significant role that energy efficiency and microgeneration measures could have in reducing energy costs for householders and businesses, in achieving urgent reductions in greenhouse gas emissions of at least 80% by 2050 and contributing to the eradication of fuel poverty by 2016; notes that research carried out by the Energy Savings Trust suggests that

widespread installation of microgeneration could provide 30 to 40% of our electricity needs by 2050 but that current investment in energy efficiency and microgeneration measures is insufficient to achieve these goals, and calls on the Scottish Government to take steps, as set out in the Energy Efficiency and Microgeneration Bill proposals, such as fiscal incentives for householders and businesses, to improve the energy efficiency of new and existing housing stock and ensure that microgeneration technologies become widely available and used.

09:22

Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): I have supported Sarah Boyack's proposal for an energy efficiency and microgeneration bill since its inception about two and a half years ago. However, there is room for serious debate about scale, pace and criteria. The short version of the Green party amendment states simply that we should prioritise insulation above all. I will give the reasons for that in the next few minutes.

SPREG—the cross-party Scottish Parliament renewable energy group—changed its name 18 months ago to the Scottish Parliament renewable energy and energy efficiency group, of which Sarah and I are co-conveners. There was a good reason for the name change, which is that we should not—now or in the future—debate energy generation and energy efficiency separately whenever there is a useful opportunity to debate the two together. This morning presents such an opportunity.

Before the last election, the Green party proposed a warm homes bill. Unlike Sarah, I have held back from continuing with that bill for the time being in the hope that—as Sarah hopes—most of the ideas in our proposed bill might be included in the climate change bill when it is introduced.

We have to take the fastest route towards reducing our impact on the environment by 80 per cent by 2050. If we take the slow route, by 2050 we could have as much as twice—certainly a third more—carbon dioxide as is already in the atmosphere warming the world. It might be too late if, by 2050, we have reduced our daily output into the atmosphere but have not started to achieve the reductions much faster.

I hope that everybody in the chamber will agree that investment in energy efficiency now is what we need because that will produce the biggest payback. The Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee has received plenty of evidence to prove that point.

The Stern report showed clearly that every £5 that we invest now will save £5 in the future. It is almost a no-brainer that insulation should be our biggest priority. There are so many add-on benefits to our going down the insulation route—it is a case of win, win, win. The Federation of

Master Builders is looking for work just now. The biggest block to that is the 17.5 per cent VAT on home improvements. I know that this is not within our purview, but, under European rules, the Westminster Government could now reduce the VAT on home improvements to 5 per cent, which would make an enormous difference.

Aligned to that, the Green party proposes fully funded, regional rolling programmes to insulate housing in Scotland. Those programmes could be similar to the project that is under way in Kirklees, which is proving to be extremely popular and effective. We really ought to consider that, because we can afford it. If we take the slow route, we will almost certainly not get there.

On rooftop renewables, I think that Sarah Boyack would agree that we need to carry out a careful audit that shows which measures are most appropriate and where. We do not know enough about that. In Amersfoort in Holland—in the Nieuwland quarter—seven different kinds of photovoltaics are being tested on the roofs of houses in a new housing estate. In three years' time, the people responsible for that will be able to tell the rest of Holland, us and Europe which are the best rooftop renewables.

As Sarah said, heating and water accounts for 50 per cent of the energy used in our homes. Those are the easiest areas in which to save money through insulation measures. Insulation costs a fraction of other strategies; maintenance is minimal; its lifetime can be the lifetime of the house itself; and it is extremely easy to install. Therefore, such measures should appeal to people throughout the country.

All the other things that we can do are also relatively simple and quick, such as installing secondary and triple glazing and shutters; ensuring air-tightness; and fitting draught-proofing around doors and old casement windows. All those things can be done swiftly. We could draught-proof and insulate Scotland within a decade if we put our minds to it. We call on the Parliament and the Government to set in motion the achievement of that big vision.

I move amendment S3M-2864.1, to leave out from "improve" to end and insert:

"ensure that microgeneration technologies become widely available and used and to consider other energy efficiency measures for new and existing housing stock to tackle fuel poverty, climate change and security of energy supply; notes the evidence given by Friends of the Earth Scotland to the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee suggesting that an additional £100 million per annum would be a welcome change to the draft budget for 2009-10, and calls on the Scottish Government to consider a comprehensive and fully funded Scotland-wide scheme on this scale to provide energy audits, insulation provision and financial support for micro-renewables where appropriate."

The Presiding Officer: I remind members that the accepted chamber protocol is that they do not call each other by their Christian names, even if they co-convene a very worthwhile cross-party group.

09:28

The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): I thank Sarah Boyack for lodging the motion and I welcome the debate. I hope that all will take heart from our willingness to support the motion. Members should be in no doubt that the Government wants to see a reduction in the demand for energy through greater energy efficiency and through the generation of more renewable energy, which will play a significant role in reducing Scotland's emissions.

Our climate change bill is recognised as ambitious, world-leading climate change legislation that will drive new thinking, new solutions and new technologies, putting Scotland at the forefront of building a sustainable low-carbon economy. Dr Richard Dixon, director of WWF Scotland, has said:

"what we are promising amounts to the best climate change legislation in the world."

We are not in competition; we each have to respond to the circumstances and opportunities that we have, but I think that we are showing the way.

We will be making provisions in the Scottish climate change bill that will give this Government the powers to promote energy efficiency and incentivise the generation of heat from renewable sources. That demonstrates a clear commitment from the Government and recognises the central role that energy efficiency and renewables will play in reducing our emissions.

However, we will not wait for our climate change bill to be passed before we take action. Enabling consumers and businesses to make energy savings is one of our top priorities and is vital in the current economic climate. We led a stimulating debate on the economy yesterday. It is clear that we cannot sit back and wait for things to get better—action is required now.

We are already taking a number of steps within our powers to intensify efforts on energy efficiency, microgeneration, fuel poverty and climate change, representing a total investment of around £226 million this year.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Will the minister respond to the call in our amendment for more resources, which came from Friends of the Earth Scotland, which argued at a recent meeting of the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate

Change Committee that further changes in this year's budget would be necessary if we were to demonstrate the kind of progress that is required?

Stewart Stevenson: I am sure that as we proceed with the budget we will hear interesting debates about the amount of money that we are able to devote to different areas. I am sure that the Greens will pursue the issue in that context.

We are enhancing advice and information to stimulate and encourage consumers and businesses to take action and we are providing financial incentives.

We are working with the energy companies to increase their investment and activities in Scotland; we are helping our most vulnerable citizens, who have been plunged into fuel poverty; we are slashing business rates; we are taking forward proposals to exclude microgeneration investments from business rates; and we are already developing new energy standards for new buildings in the light of last year's Sullivan report.

We are also consulting on proposals for improving the energy performance of existing non-domestic buildings and, shortly, we will consult on additional measures that are needed to reduce energy use and carbon emissions in Scotland's existing housing.

I very much welcome Ed Miliband's announcement that he will make amendments to the Energy Bill for feed-in tariffs. That is an excellent move and I hope that he will follow it up by changing the penal regimes for connecting larger-scale renewable energy to the network.

Debates such as today's debate are critical. They help us to share and develop good ideas. I welcome the discussion and I believe that we can have a consensual and useful debate today. We want to contribute in that spirit, as I hope everyone else does. We want to maintain Scotland's reputation as a global leader in tackling climate change.

09:33

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): I rise not only to support the motion in the name of Sarah Boyack but to pay tribute to the work that she has done on this subject over a long period in the Scottish Parliament. At one point, she and our former colleague Shiona Baird proposed bills that covered similar areas of policy. At the time, the Conservatives considered those two comparable bill proposals and decided that the way ahead was the way that Sarah Boyack had proposed.

We paid further tribute to Sarah Boyack's proposals by, let us say, borrowing some of them and putting them in the Conservative manifesto last year under the heading "Eco-Bonus Scheme".

She might have recognised some of those proposals.

The debate comes at a time that is slightly different from the times when the previous debates took place. One or two other things have to be said. I still receive letters from enthusiastic and—it would appear—honest individuals, who believe that climate change is not the issue that we believe that it is. In all honesty, given the current economic situation, even if there was no carbon benefit to the proposals in Sarah Boyack's bill, the contribution that it would make to alleviating fuel poverty and overcoming the economic difficulties that so many families in Scotland face would in itself mean that it was appropriate for us to support it. We are talking about a genuine win-win situation.

We need to work hard on a number of areas. We still have progress to make on the implementation of microgeneration measures. Microgeneration opportunities in our towns, particularly where strict planning controls exist, are still difficult to encourage and hard to take through the planning process. Planning regulations do not need to be changed, but how local authorities implement those regulations in some areas discourages the investment that could happen, even today.

Such investment is becoming more and more important. As I said, we are entering an economic downturn. Opportunities must be found to create worthwhile employment and to invest Government and private money in measures that will make the world more economically justified, particularly in Scotland, where the weather is still cold, despite global warming. Such opportunities are presented by the chance to make a limited investment that will encourage the development of energy efficiency measures, microgeneration and renewables in domestic and light industrial settings and will give us a new industry that could create new jobs when they are needed more than ever.

It would be inappropriate to end my speech without paying tribute to the Green party for its work to put such issues at the centre of the agenda. I am very interested in that party's amendment and will examine it further during the day to consider whether we can support it. In these difficult times, we must be wary of anything that has a cost placed on it. However, I will discuss that further with Green members after the debate.

We approach publication of the climate change bill, which we expect some time in early December. At the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee's meeting on Tuesday, we went to great lengths to try to obtain a publication date from the minister, but the best

answer that we could get was that it would be some time in the first half of December. Perhaps he will give us a date in this debate.

When the climate change bill is introduced, we genuinely expect it to contain measures that reflect the spirit of Sarah Boyack's motion. We look forward to the opportunity to support such measures and to ensure that Scotland becomes a greener place more quickly than it might otherwise have done.

09:37

Liam McArthur (Orkney) (LD): Scottish Liberal Democrats warmly welcome the debate. We support Sarah Boyack's motion, which mirrors our manifesto, too, and addresses many concerns that were highlighted in our motion on fuel poverty, which the Parliament supported in March.

Sarah Boyack's motion articulates clearly the challenge that we face in meeting our climate change targets and highlights the potential for energy efficiency and microgeneration to help us meet that challenge. It outlines constructively the steps that the Scottish Government must take to make that happen. In that endeavour, ministers know that they can count on the full support of all parties in the Parliament. The development of the energy efficiency and microgeneration bill has been characterised by its cross-party and consensual nature, which was reflected in Sarah Boyack's speech.

The measures in the energy efficiency and microgeneration bill can provide a win-win-win by reducing carbon emissions, tackling fuel poverty and providing security and continuity of supply. Of course, the general principles are scarcely controversial. Only the most ardent flat-earther—who appears to be in regular correspondence with Alex Johnstone—would contest the notion that urgent and radical action is needed to reduce our energy demand and increase our reliance on renewable energy sources.

At the same time, the Government is right to argue that disagreement will arise on details in the bill—I can think of one or two issues on which I am likely to find myself shouldering arms with the minister. However, those are matters for debate in due course. The fact is that the Government still flatters to deceive on energy efficiency and promoting microrenewables. Ministers tend to announce and retreat. Nods and winks are given to the press and selected stakeholders, carefully choreographed photo opportunities are arranged and the sense is created that more progress is being made. However, as the bill's steering group makes clear,

"Despite several Scottish Government announcements, none fulfils the proposals set out for this Bill or will ensure

that energy efficiency improvements and microgeneration measures are mainstreamed across society by requiring and incentivising such measures in homes or businesses".

If ministers support the motion—as they say they do—no further retreat can occur.

It beggars belief that, 18 months since the Government came into office, ministers still have not published their action plan on energy efficiency. The Government was bequeathed a draft by the previous Executive, which was drawn up thanks to input from a wide range of independent experts, so it is hard to find any justification for the Government's failure to set out its intentions and how it plans to achieve them.

The preamble to the much-delayed renewable energy framework is welcome but insufficient, as Scottish Renewables and others have made clear. It would help to hear in the winding-up speech what assessment the Government has made of the Association for the Conservation of Energy's proposals on planning, regulation, finance and information and advice, to which Sarah Boyack and Alex Johnstone referred. ACE suggests that about half of new homes are not built to current energy efficiency standards. If that is the case, it is deeply worrying. It would be useful to know what steps ministers will take to address that.

Given that 85 per cent of existing homes will still be occupied by 2050, perhaps it is more important that the Government sets out its intentions to step up the retrofit programme. I welcome the minister's statement about the Sullivan report's recommendations.

At the heart of any effective strategy must lie fiscal incentives for businesses and households. Agreement on that is fairly unanimous. However, ministers have sought to hide behind the skirts of the local income tax to justify their failure to support the energy efficiency and microgeneration bill. That is a little like ministers saying that they will not bother to introduce any measures until independence is achieved. It is obvious that many nouveau loyalists on the back benches privately agree with that approach, but the First Minister and his colleagues have—rightly—rejected it publicly.

Like the SNP, we support a local income tax, albeit one that is genuinely local and which provides several other safeguards that Mr Swinney is now actively considering. We are happy to work with the Government on ways of using a fairer local taxation system that is based on the ability to pay to incentivise households to adopt energy efficiency measures and microrenewables technologies, but we must establish the principle of such incentives first. Government support for today's motion is the necessary first step.

09:41

Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab): I am of course pleased to support the motion in the name of my colleague Sarah Boyack, who is to be congratulated on having done much in the Scottish Parliament over the years to promote microgeneration.

We have heard much from Scottish ministers about the importance of renewables technologies to tackling climate change and their potential contribution to the Scottish economy. Much of that has focused on large-scale developments, such as offshore wind farms. However, that is only one side of the story. It would be wrong for any of us to underestimate the contribution to tackling climate change and fuel poverty that small-scale individual efforts can make.

One third of the total energy demand and of CO₂ emissions in Scotland is attributable to the residential sector. It is therefore a key sector in which the Government can encourage and facilitate action by individuals, families and microbusinesses to install measures to reduce energy loss and to generate power from Scotland's natural resources.

It is obvious that enabling households to generate their own power can address fuel poverty problems. According to a recent survey by the now-defunct Communities Scotland, a 5 per cent increase in energy prices pushes an additional 30,000 households into fuel poverty. That can be a particular problem in rural areas where properties have no access to the gas network and rely on more expensive electric or oil-fired systems. For the 30 per cent of the Scottish population that are in that situation, renewables technologies such as ground source and air source heat pumps and solar panels can offer a welcome addition to their facilities, so I welcome the recent announcement by the secretary of state, Ed Miliband, that the UK Government is to table an amendment to the Energy Bill to complement the renewables obligation with a guaranteed price for small-scale energy generation that feeds into the national grid.

The barriers for individual households to participating in microgeneration are financial and bureaucratic. The bill proposal that Sarah Boyack lodged in the previous session and again in June 2007 presents several strategic actions and financial incentives, some of which the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth has already accepted, and others of which I hope that ministers will accept as discussions continue.

The SNP's rhetoric in opposition needs to be matched by action in government. Like Liam McArthur, I would like to know the status of the Government's energy efficiency action plan, which

was promised last year but is still unpublished, 18 months after the SNP took office.

Alex Johnstone referred to planning. Households are discouraged from microgeneration installation not only by the cost of technologies, but by the planning system. The previous Scottish Executive commissioned research from Heriot-Watt University on the developments that the general permitted development order should cover. In early 2007, that review advised that the GPDO should be extended to a range of microrenewables technologies. We are still waiting for a response from ministers—I hope that it will be timeous.

As Robin Harper said, we also need to look at energy efficiency measures. We have heard today that the Government is considering adopting the Sullivan report's recommendations, but will it follow the UK Government's lead by agreeing to procure only buildings that are in the top quartile of energy performance? How will ministers respond to the concerns expressed by Energy Action Scotland about the condition of existing housing stock, particularly in the private, owner-occupier and rented sectors? Can the Government answer the Association for the Conservation of Energy's concerns about whether Scotland is sufficiently prepared to meet the European deadline on energy performance certificates? Even if it is, how are we to address the fact that owners are under no obligation to act on the information contained in the certificates?

In October 2004, Richard Lochhead accused Scottish ministers of paying lip service on those issues. Of course, we refuted those allegations at the time. By addressing microgeneration and efficiency measures, the present Scottish Government can prove that its commitment is more than just lip service.

09:46

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I will range over some of my personal experiences in this area. Jack McConnell, Jim Hume, Robin Harper, Mary Scanlon and I have been taking part in an MSP energy action challenge over the past year.

Liam McArthur: Who won?

Rob Gibson: We are about to hear from the organisations who arranged it.

We have all experienced considerable difficulties with our various types of house. My house, which is about 14 years old, started off being among the best insulated, but building regulations have improved since it was built and, through thermal imaging, we found out where the problems were.

Every person should be able to access thermal imaging for free. All councils have thermal imaging equipment and it should be made available to everyone. We could take that first step without any plans or anything else like that. We found out where the thermal imaging equipment was in Highland Council, and it would be a good idea if every council area started to provide a thermal imaging service, because it triggers ideas about what needs to be done.

I could mention many other aspects of the energy challenge, which might be won by the person who most improved their house's energy efficiency capacity; we have yet to hear the results, which we look forward to with interest. We are building an extension that will include a solar panel, which will change our heating system, but that will not happen within the year of the competition.

We must think about how building regulations are applied. If the houses that we are building now are causing more problems for the future, we must bring that to an end, and the sooner the better.

I am more concerned about rural housing, tenemental property and non-standard retrofitting. We must find ways of pinpointing what can be dealt with. That presents an opportunity for a Government agency that is known for its inflexibility. Historic Scotland could set an example by allowing many of the places that are in United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization heritage sites, for example, to use modern methods. Why do we have to maintain Historic Scotland's buildings to standards that were set in the 18th century? That is crazy in this day and age. Such buildings need not look any different, but they could contain modern materials, and it is high time that we asked Historic Scotland to review its policy. Conditions such as those, near my office, in Argyll Square in Wick, which Jamie Stone and I know well, are ridiculous. That is the kind of thing that could be dealt with now.

The fact that 34 per cent of our energy demand comes from houses must be tackled head on. The Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee went to see London's green concierge service, which organises specialist advice for people who can afford to deal with their homes' energy efficiency problems, so that people can get on and spend the money. The Greater London Authority also invests in the affordable housing sector in the same way. We should learn from that plan.

My niece's husband trains people in insulation installation. Given the debate at the moment about what to do about the construction industry and considering Robin Harper's point about VAT reduction, we should be training the many apprentices who might be out of work in

construction in insulation installation. Making progress on that will take the construction industry and the Government working in a genuine public-private partnership.

I have no time to speak about anything else, but I welcome the mostly consensual nature of the debate.

09:50

James Kelly (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab): I support Sarah Boyack's motion, and welcome the opportunity to take part in this morning's debate. There are important matters to be discussed against the background of energy companies having doubled people's bills in the past five years, a 5 per cent increase in fuel costs resulting in 40,000 more people falling into fuel poverty and UK households emitting 153 million tonnes of CO₂ every year. Governments around the world, and in the UK and Scotland in particular, face the challenge of reducing fuel bills, tackling fuel poverty and reducing emissions to help in the fight against climate change.

I welcome the work that is being done on the proposed climate change bill and the fact that some of the measures in Sarah Boyack's proposed member's bill have been incorporated. It is worth noting the work that Sarah Boyack has done over a long period. She has campaigned consistently on the environment, even when environmental issues were not as popular as they are now.

Unfortunately, although some progress has been made, it has been a bit on the slow side. We need to see some practical measures being taken. It is one thing to set a target of an 80 per cent reduction in carbon emissions by 2050, but we need to help households throughout Scotland, particularly at this time of economic decline. From that point of view, some of the practical measures included in Sarah Boyack's bill are very useful indeed. We could look at incentivising council tax payers by giving them a £100 rebate if they install microgeneration. That would encourage the installation of microgeneration and reduce fuel bills.

In my constituency, Cambuslang and Rutherglen Housing Association piloted a scheme to install solar panels. That has directly reduced tenants' bills and has been of tremendous benefit to pensioners. That shows what can happen when the right equipment is installed.

When there is a financial crisis and the economy is under pressure, it is important to stimulate economic growth. Investment in microgeneration would be a step in the right direction.

It is also important to consider renewable energy obligations on new buildings. They should be tightened up to ensure that we have the best environmental standards. Rob Gibson alluded to that. Indeed, it is reckoned that 1.5 million homes in Scotland do not have their lofts correctly insulated.

I support speeding up the process for the removal of red tape so that planning permission can be given more quickly for microgeneration installations.

I welcome some of the UK measures that have been introduced to tackle energy efficiency problems, and the fact that smart metering is going to be mandatory across the six major energy companies. Members on the SNP back benches have been calling for that and motions have been lodged, so I am sure that we all welcome that.

The debate has been good and many important issues have been raised. Progress has been made but we need to speed it up and make action on the issue a priority. Swift action is needed now.

09:54

Christopher Harvie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): I congratulate Sarah Boyack on her motion. She has a fine environmental reputation and is the daughter of Jimmy Boyack, a good architect as well as a stalwart home ruler, who built his own Bauhaus-style villa near Cramond. As I remember, it incorporated part of one of Princes Street's greatest buildings, which was destroyed by corporate vandals in the 1960s.

That gives me my text, because 50 per cent of our carbon emissions involve heating—domestic and commercial. Adapting to a renewables regime will probably involve, for a time, increasing our manufacturing emissions, because manufacturing is necessarily heat intensive. One way in which we can save on industrial emissions is, of course, to import the equipment and fittings that we need and to pay only the transport costs, which seems a brilliant wheeze, except that it does not give us much chance of becoming world leaders in the industry or of creating a lot of jobs.

Robin Harper: Does Chris Harvie agree that an increase in the release of carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere from manufacturing could be avoided if our proposal to introduce a large-scale project for energy efficiency and insulation in Scotland's houses were adopted?

Christopher Harvie: Yes—thank you, Mr Harper.

If we are to be world leaders in such technology, we must not only cope with repairing our deindustrialisation—manufacturing, which accounted for 30 per cent of gross domestic

product in 1970, when we tackled North Sea oil, has come down to less than half that level, and the impact on engineering training and skills, which are well below European levels, has been significant—but be extra efficient across the board. Insulation would give us an important and manageable training phase while fundamental research is conducted on wind, wave and tidal energy.

We face an extremely sensitive challenge in Glasgow and Edinburgh, in particular. Georgian and Victorian Scotland were built in an age of cheap and plentiful fuel, when no conservation questions were asked, so there are plenty of plate-glass sash windows, chimneys, lofts, stairwells and cupolas through which heat can and does enthusiastically escape. The costs of preventing that are potentially huge. The alternative of cheap double glazing does not do our townscape any favours. The lofty astragalled windows of Edinburgh's new town are one of our civic glories, and one does not improve them by visiting one's local DIY store.

The costs of triple glazing such windows are formidable. Furthermore, there are all sorts of problems with ventilation, condensation, maintenance, safety and so on. Much of the heat loss is through the window housing rather than the glazing, so I suggest that insulation and heat retention should come within the scope of the saltire and horizon prizes that are offered by the Government. Retrofitting can be expensive, but if a mass-produced triple-glazed window that would be fitted behind the existing windows could be developed and installed as part of a programme, we would have made a breakthrough that could—given the numerous historic towns of Europe and America—be an export winner. In addition, we would have trained up a generation of technicians to face greater and more rewarding challenges when renewable regeneration comes on stream.

The Presiding Officer: After Marilyn Livingstone, we will come to closing speeches.

09:58

Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab): Thank you for the opportunity to take part in the debate, Presiding Officer.

I think that I can confidently say that everyone in the Parliament agrees that Scotland's ambition should be to lead the world on climate change. Scottish Labour has a strong record on tackling climate change. The Labour-led devolved Government set ambitious targets for renewables generation in Scotland and completely transformed the country's recycling record. I join other members in supporting the target of reducing carbon emissions by 80 per cent by 2050.

The Presiding Officer: I am sorry to interrupt, but could members please check that their electronic equipment is turned off, because we are getting interference?

The problem has been solved—thank you.

Marilyn Livingstone: I warmly welcome Gordon Brown's commitment to work towards the 80 per cent target across the UK.

The measures in Sarah Boyack's member's bill on microgeneration, which proposed incentives to encourage the use of small-scale renewables technology, were supported by the SNP when they were in opposition, but now that they are in power, they seem to be backing away from many of them. I pay tribute to Sarah Boyack for her total commitment to the agenda over many years. The SNP Government talks about committing to an 80 per cent reduction in carbon emissions by 2050, but if we do not take all possible action now to make that happen, we will fail, with the result that we will leave an unacceptable legacy for our children and our children's children.

It is extremely disappointing that the Scottish Government's policies on transport, energy and energy efficiency do not measure up. Examples of those policies are putting out to tender the electricity supply to the Government but requiring only a part of the electricity to come from green sources; capping resources to support bus travel, which amounts to a real-terms cut; and attempting to cut the Edinburgh tram project.

In my constituency, the reduction in northbound and southbound train services for the people of Fife will mean that many commuters will be forced to travel by car if they are to get to work on time, or face lengthy travel times. For example, it will be impossible for Fifers who want to travel to Aberdeen by train to get to a meeting before 10 am. Commuters in my constituency and across Fife are extremely unhappy about the situation and a petition on the issue has gained many signatures. I have written to the minister, ScotRail and Network Rail to find out whether common sense will prevail. I hope that the minister will address those points.

Furthermore, as I know, as the chair of the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on construction, the construction industry is experiencing difficult times, as many of my colleagues have said. There have been many redundancies. The industry is calling on the Scottish Government to bring forward projects that will help to sustain its members through this difficult time and which will allow us to retain jobs and a skilled workforce, which is crucial both now and in the future. I ask the Scottish Government to give serious consideration to increasing local

government's funding to enable it to expand its energy efficiency and retrofit programmes.

The Government must show the political will to develop measures that will be effective in bringing about a substantial change in energy generation methods. Labour members have made many suggestions that the Government could adopt, and I hope that the minister will respond to them. I am pleased that the Government will support Labour's motion, but I ask it to support all the measures that are contained in Sarah Boyack's proposed bill, which they supported in opposition. Tough action is needed on climate change. Progress has been made, but we must now realise our ambitions.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan): We move to winding-up speeches.

10:02

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Members of all parties have united in recognition of the contribution that Sarah Boyack has made over a long period to the debate on energy efficiency. She began her speech by calling for cross-party unity. If her motion remains unamended, I will certainly back it and I hope that the rest of the Parliament will, too.

Sarah Boyack and others, including Robin Harper, Stewart Stevenson, Alex Johnstone, Liam McArthur and Chris Harvie, have explained why the proposed measures are necessary. Chris Harvie is a freer spirit than most and he would be a worthy winner of that title if it goes his way tonight.

Few members and few people outside the Parliament doubt the urgency of the need to tackle climate change or the importance of consuming less energy if we are serious about achieving that target. In today's economic climate, it is clear that the best way of reducing energy consumption while saving households money is to implement programmes such as those that we are debating. Not only people who are technically in fuel poverty would benefit from that; households throughout Scotland would thank us for taking such action.

The only part of Sarah Boyack's speech with which I did not wholly agree was her description of the UK Government's track record in this area. I do not agree that it has been ambitious in tackling climate change. The ambition that is being demonstrated south of the border is attributable to local authorities, such as Kirklees Council, which are cracking on with programmes that are far more ambitious than anything that we are doing in Scotland, and are doing so with smaller budgets and less power than we have. There is no reason at all why we should not be able to match and outstrip their level of ambition.

A large part of Sarah Boyack's proposals relate to fiscal incentives. I will explain why incentives such as the council tax rebate are necessary but not sufficient. Of course, a journey of 1,000 miles begins with a single step, but on its own that step will not take us very far. If we want to achieve the scale of change that is necessary, we must remove all the barriers to uptake. The provision of a council tax rebate would certainly remove one barrier to uptake—it ticks that box. Planning changes would remove another barrier, which is great. Advice to households is good stuff, too. However, loan repayments are a huge barrier for householders, particularly at the moment, as are up-front costs. Another huge barrier is the hassle of getting energy efficiency work done. A geographically based, universal programme that is not means tested and which engages an entire local area at the same time would substantially remove the remaining barriers.

Stewart Stevenson reinforced the Government's frequently stated indications of intent to incorporate some of Sarah Boyack's proposals into the climate change bill but, disappointingly, there was little detail. The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth has repeatedly told the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee that he has been considering not whether but how to integrate her proposals into the climate change bill. By this stage, we should be hearing more about the detail rather than about another delay in the bill's introduction.

Alex Johnstone explained how influential Sarah Boyack has been in helping to write the Conservative manifesto. That may not have been her intention at the time but I am sure that we are all in favour of sharing. He also focused on the win-wins. Energy efficiency is not just about climate change and fuel poverty; energy efficiency measures would be worth implementing even aside from those issues. The green-collar jobs that could be created from an energy efficiency programme will be necessary in the current economic climate.

Alex Johnstone also asked about the price tag. On infrastructure investment, we have a range of priorities. I might suggest that we repair the Forth bridge instead of building another one, which could save £3.5 billion or £4 billion. There is room in the budget, if we are willing to consider the priorities. Investment in our domestic and energy infrastructure is a priority. The Greens' amendment calls for a comprehensive and fully funded programme and asks the Government to consider what can be done. That is all our amendment seeks to do and I commend it to Parliament.

10:06

Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD): I got slightly excited there—I am used to the Liberal Democrats starting the summing-up process.

I welcome the debate. I, too, congratulate Sarah Boyack on her work on the energy efficiency and microgeneration bill. She could be seen as a leader in that area; her thinking about the direction that this country needs to take—on not just the environment but the economy—has come very much to the fore. So far-sighted is it that even the Conservatives have caught up and have recycled some of her proposals in their manifesto. I welcome that, too.

There have been some valuable contributions to the debate. Robin Harper talked about the need for investment in energy efficiency and the return that we would get from that. He made an important point about how reducing VAT on house improvements could provide a big boost, not just for energy efficiency but for the economy. I hope that that will be considered by the UK Government in its pre-budget statement.

There has been an outbreak of consensus among members today and support throughout Parliament for Labour's motion. As my colleague Liam McArthur said, the Liberal Democrats support the principles behind the energy efficiency and microgeneration bill and look forward to its progress through Parliament. It is widely recognised that Scotland's housing stock falls woefully short of the energy efficiency standards required to cope with not just climate change but Scotland's climate. I agree with Rob Gibson about the need for new housing standards to be developed. House-building standards today are not yet adequate and the Government needs to move more quickly to develop better building standards to ensure that energy loss in new houses is minimised or eliminated.

We also need to address the existing housing stock. Many local authorities, including the one in my area, Fife, are to be congratulated on the actions that they have been taking over a number of years to improve the insulation and energy efficiency of their stock, although more still needs to be done to tackle the issue. However, it is perhaps in the private housing sector that we need to do more. Retrofitting has become the new buzzword—it is mentioned all the time—but it is essential that we retrofit our housing stock to reduce energy loss and to cut emissions and fuel bills. Further, by replacing some of the many jobs that are being lost because of problems in the housing market, that would provide a much-needed boost to our hard-pressed construction industry.

The Government's six-point plan refers to the need to boost the economy and talks about intensifying work on energy efficiency and fuel poverty. While that would be welcome, to date there has been no detail on it. Perhaps when he sums up the Minister for Communities and Sport will give us more detail on what is intended, as no extra money has been committed in the budget to deliver that. The Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee tried to get information about changes to the budget lines but none was forthcoming. Indeed, the draft budget for energy and telecommunications, which is the area that deals with energy efficiency, and microgeneration and other renewable technologies, will be cut by 1.5 per cent in cash terms—a more significant cut in real terms—between this year and next.

We welcome the additional £10 million for central heating, but that is in the context of a budget that is falling in real terms year on year, as it has been fixed in cash terms since 2007. New, efficient central heating is welcome, but that is not all there is to it. We need to ensure that all houses are insulated, so that people can afford to pay for the energy, and that affordable-to-heat, not just affordable, housing is available. Perhaps the Government will consider transferring some of the £100 million for affordable housing into retrofit housing.

I hope that the Government considers the technologies that are available. I have written to the minister about the problem of getting grants for installing air source heat pumps—perhaps that can be addressed urgently. We need to do everything that we can to reduce carbon emissions.

10:11

Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con): This has been a fairly good and consensual debate. I hope that the ideas that have been proposed will give ministers food for thought as they decide how best to progress matters.

Energy efficiency and microgeneration provide a clean, safe and comparatively cheap way of meeting our climate change commitments. A constituent—who may be related to one of the people who wrote to Alex Johnstone—said to me recently that energy efficiency is just

“a load of eco bling”.

Although it tickled me slightly, I am sure that members would disagree strongly with that statement.

There are long-term benefits from energy efficiency and microgeneration not just for the environment but for householders. Cavity wall insulation, for example, pays for itself over several

years. It gives a householder a warmer house and at the same time cuts down on carbon dioxide emissions. As a whole, it has grown well in recent years. In last night's members' business debate, we heard about actions taken by Community Energy Scotland, which is based primarily in the Highlands but is moving south as we speak. CES has grown well because of the actions of a number of people.

We have pretty close to a cross-party consensus but, as the Energy Saving Trust has pointed out, it is frustrating that while we consider the great progress that has been made over a 10 or 15-year period on the energy efficiency of certain household appliances, such as refrigerators and washing machines, it is possible in the space of a matter of months to invent a television that consumes double the power and has a standby button so that is never switched off. Despite all the progress that has been made, with one or two small inventions we can easily go backwards and depart from the trajectory that we have been on.

What gives me hope, though, is that the technology is adapting quickly and constantly. A couple of weeks ago, I had a flick through *TIME* magazine. Of its 50 top inventions of the year, three related to microgeneration. I am still struggling to get my head around one of them, which is described as airborne wind power. Another is a biochemical energy harvester. However, the one that impressed me most, and which should be coming to our shores soon, is Nanosolar's thin-film solar panel, which is much lighter and cheaper than previous solar panels. It can practically roll off the assembly line, which addresses one of the problems with solar power in the past.

I was struck by a comment in the consultation prior to Sarah Boyack's bill:

“Micro-generation will not become mainstream technology until they are easily accessible by householders across Scotland.”

That hits the nail on the head. We must consider carefully the financial burdens and the start-up costs. That is a large part of the reasoning behind the Conservatives' eco bonus scheme for householders and small businesses, which Alex Johnstone referred to.

We must consider not only the regulatory issues but education—showing people, first, why energy efficiency is so important and, secondly, how it can be done. Most people are probably persuaded of the why but do not know as much about the how.

The Scottish Conservatives support energy efficiency measures and microgeneration for households and businesses. They have the potential to reduce the cost of energy bills; they create warmer households and offices; they are

sustainable; and, most important, they reduce Scotland's carbon emissions.

10:15

The Minister for Communities and Sport (Stewart Maxwell): I thank Sarah Boyack and all other members for a thought-provoking debate. We all agree that energy efficiency and microgeneration have a critical role to play not only in helping us to achieve our climate change targets, but in helping us to tackle fuel poverty and contribute to Scotland's sustainable economic growth. Increased action at individual, community and business levels is essential, so we must ensure that we have in place the right incentives to drive and stimulate that action. Some interesting ideas have been put forward this morning; we will look into how we can use those to build on the work that we are already doing.

This year, we launched the new energy saving Scotland advice network, which helps consumers and SMEs to reduce their energy bills and their carbon emissions. We have also recently introduced a new dedicated personal at-home service to help householders to find the right energy efficiency and microgeneration solutions. We are improving the advice that is given and have committed up to £13.5 million a year for the next three years to support uptake of microgeneration and community renewables—three times the funding that was provided by the previous Administration.

We are investing a further £2 million and are widening the scope of our small business loan scheme to include microgeneration. We also plan to relaunch the scheme later in the year with a more proactive and targeted marketing campaign. In addition, we are producing secondary legislation to exclude microgeneration investments from business rates. We intend that the legislation will come into force on 1 January 2009.

However, we must ensure that we are doing all we can to support Scots who face hardship this winter as a result of rising energy prices. In addition to the £45.9 million that we are already spending this year, we are providing £10 million for free central heating systems and, from next year, will expand the scheme to include families who most need help. We will shortly announce the actions that we will take in response to the recent recommendations of the Scottish fuel poverty forum, thus ensuring that our programmes are as effective as possible in tackling fuel poverty.

Patrick Harvie: I do not think that anyone criticises the programmes for doing the wrong thing; the problem is that they are just not doing enough. Does the minister acknowledge the evidence from the Scottish Renewables Forum,

which tells us that even to reach the Government's 11 per cent renewable heat target we need to increase the number of installations from about 1,200 a year to 25,000 a year? Does he accept that a step change is required?

Stewart Maxwell: As I have said, we listen carefully to all suggestions that are made to us—not only those from inside Parliament, but those from expert bodies outside it. There is much more to do and we will make announcements soon, not the least of which will be on the action that we will take in response to the Scottish fuel poverty forum's recommendations and on the proposed climate change bill, which will be introduced soon.

We must ensure that newly built homes have low carbon emissions. The research that we have done for the next energy standards, on which we plan to consult during 2009, indicates that low-carbon technologies including microgeneration will be a routine element in meeting the new standards. That will provide a flexible approach that will allow developers and designers to incorporate the right low-carbon solution for the building.

I will try to answer a few of the questions that members asked during the debate. A couple of members asked when the report on the renewables pilot will be published: it will be published by the end of the November. Its publication has been delayed a little, but I hope that members will be interested in it. Some members have written to me about it, and I am sure that there will be a debate around what it suggests.

Sarah Boyack asked about the red tape around planning for microgeneration. The Government is making progress on the relevant Scottish statutory instrument, which we intend to lay before the Christmas recess.

The energy efficiency action plan was mentioned by several members. The Government said in response to consultation submissions that the proposed Scottish climate change bill will require Scottish ministers to produce an energy efficiency action plan that will be regularly reported on, reviewed and updated, so that is also part of our plans.

A couple of members tried to suggest that there is a decrease in spending on energy efficiency. That is not correct. It is important to note that the enterprise, energy and tourism budget does not reflect the total spend on energy efficiency across the Government. Efforts to intensify action on energy efficiency will be undertaken by spending in a number of portfolios including housing, fuel poverty, transport, waste and so on.

Another member asked about the EU deadline for the introduction of energy performance

certificates, which is 4 January. The recent indications are that more than 400 people are already qualified to do that work, and a further 200 are in the pipeline. We expect that there will be sufficient capacity to carry out that work.

We welcome today's debate. It has provided food for thought on what more we can do to ensure that we meet our climate change, energy efficiency and fuel poverty objectives. I hope that we can keep building on the momentum and the consensus that we have achieved today. We look forward to the proposed climate change bill and the actions that all of us can take to ensure that we reach the 80 per cent target.

10:20

Lewis Macdonald (Aberdeen Central) (Lab):

This morning's debate has highlighted some important aims and objectives that are shared among all the parties. It has also highlighted how much more needs to be done, although some important progress has been made. The £1 billion that was announced by Gordon Brown in September for action on energy efficiency throughout Britain offers a good framework for further action in Scotland. I am glad, too, that Scottish electricity and gas suppliers have responded positively to the opportunity to invest in energy efficiency measures and to work with communities to reduce carbon emissions and cut bills.

The community initiatives that were launched this week by Scottish and Southern Energy in Comrie and elsewhere, Scottish Power's support for warm zones in Aberdeen and Lanarkshire, and the commitment of Scottish Gas and other suppliers to work with Government on rolling out the community energy saving programme are all welcome signs of the willingness of energy companies to play their part. Further progress, however, does not depend simply on installing more insulation or more energy efficient central heating systems, important though those are.

My involvement with the sector goes back to the early 1980s, when I carried out a number of energy efficiency surveys for Save Cash Reduce Fuel, which was then a brand-new agency. SCARF has since gone on to draught-proof and insulate many thousands of homes throughout the north of Scotland. As other members have mentioned, Fife Council's housing insulation and renewables programme, which has been running since 1997, and Edinburgh's community energy project, which was established by Mark Lazarowicz, offer other excellent models of what can be done.

However, the success of past initiatives means that insulation investment must now be about

homes that are harder to heat. That will require active engagement, both by the Scottish Government and local councils, if Scotland is to win a proportionate share of carbon emission reduction target expenditure and investment. It is also essential that established community projects consider microgeneration as well as energy saving. The Government, too, needs to act to support microgeneration.

I believe that the proposals in Sarah Boyack's proposed bill offer a clear route map for using Scotland's devolved powers to support small-scale renewable energy developments. Ministers have said that the proposed climate change bill will include measures to deal with such matters. They have also mentioned today their intentions in relation to microgeneration and business rates, which are welcome. Nevertheless, if they want to meet the need to cut carbon emissions and tackle fuel poverty, they should go further and follow, as far as they can, the directions that are set out in Sarah Boyack's proposed bill.

Feed-in tariffs are important—Stewart Stevenson acknowledged developments in that respect. They are important at the point at which a generator produces enough power to be able to sell the surplus to the grid. They offer certainty, a fixed price and a predictable return. However, long before that stage is reached, fiscal incentives to install renewable generation technology can make all the difference to the initial decision on whether to go down the route of microgeneration. Householders, like businesses, will consider doing so in the expectation that they will achieve long-term savings and reduce their carbon emissions, if there are short-term fiscal incentives to provide an early benefit and strengthen the business case for their so doing. That is why ministers should not fight shy of acting on that now, even if they hold to their expectation that they will change the local taxation system. As long as households, as well as businesses, are liable for a property tax of any variety, a tax rebate or discount is an effective and legitimate means of promoting greater energy efficiency and more renewable energy generation. Ministers should accept that now and, if the need arises in the future to adjust the mechanism, they can do so in the context of the reforms that will already have been put in place.

The Government could do other things to promote energy efficiency. For example, much needs to be done to implement the recommendations of the Scottish fuel poverty forum, to which others have referred. Energy advice and assistance should be provided to those who need it most.

Ministers must also make the right decision on permissible noise levels, which is an issue that is delaying their commitment to bring microwind

turbines under the general permitted development regime. World Health Organization guidelines could readily be applied through the statutory instrument to which Stewart Maxwell referred. That should be done in such a way as not to put at risk the microgeneration manufacturing sector that we all agree should be supported.

Other things could be done. Aberdeen's award-winning combined heat and power scheme, which has been running for some years in my constituency, could readily be replicated elsewhere and bring benefits to other areas. Much could also be done to improve the energy efficiency of the existing housing stock. Over recent weeks, the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee has heard from many witnesses who have highlighted the severe short-term difficulties facing the construction sector. They have called for Government action on retrofitting existing homes with up-to-date energy efficiency measures. Such action would allow ministers to deliver on their pledge of more action on energy efficiency and fuel poverty in the context of the current economic pressures. I hope that there will be a positive and urgent response on that.

Today's consensus is about the need to act; the responsibility to deliver those actions lies with ministers. If they act, they will, as they have heard today, have broad support.

Health Funding

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan): The next item of business is a debate on motion S3M-2863, in the name of Cathy Jamieson, on health funding.

10:27

Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab): All members say that they are proud of our national health service and that they want to see it not only survive but thrive. We know that the staff are the NHS's greatest asset. Every one of us has examples of staff members who have gone above and beyond the call of duty because they care passionately about patient care and the principles of the NHS. That loyalty and dedication was demonstrated time and again at last week's *Daily Record* health awards, which were attended by the ministers and many others, including me.

To do their jobs as they want to do them, NHS staff must be supported with the resources, time and working environment that enable them to put patient care first. However, the reality—in this year when we are celebrating the 60th anniversary of the NHS—is that the Scottish National Party's spending review has resulted in the lowest increase in health spending since devolution. Within that, individual health boards have received an even lower settlement. That would make things difficult enough, but the Scottish Government's additional demand for a 2 per cent efficiency saving means that, in reality, health boards are not just seeking efficiencies but are actively considering cuts. Let us be clear: no one is suggesting that we want any service to be inefficient. Of course we want resources to be focused on patient care. Indeed, NHS staff themselves are often the best people to offer suggestions on how the patient's experience could be improved and how waste could be cut out.

Although the SNP claims that it is providing record levels of health spending, in reality its spending review is providing significantly lower increases than were provided under the previous Administration, and than are currently being provided for the NHS by the United Kingdom Government in England and Wales. As a result, Scotland's historically higher spending per head, compared with spending in England, is now due to narrow from £260 in 2007-08 to £89 by 2010-11. If that trend continues, we will be overtaken by expenditure south of the border by 2013.

Within that expenditure, the allocations to individual health boards have been given an average increase—

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Nicola Sturgeon): Will the member give way?

Cathy Jamieson: I will finish this point.

The allocation to individual health boards has on average increased by only 3.2 per cent in cash terms, which is the lowest percentage growth within the health budget, which is set to grow by 3.9 per cent overall. Given a 2.7 per cent provision for inflation, boards have only 0.5 per cent growth for dealing with national priorities. Of course, they face the same issues that confront other parts of the public sector in the current economic situation. Along with the requirement for 2 per cent efficiency savings, it is clear that we are seeing an effect on front-line care.

Before the cabinet secretary retreats behind her usual call of “scaremongering” whenever proper scrutiny reveals things that she does not want to hear, let me just put on record what health boards themselves are saying—

Nicola Sturgeon: Will the member give way?

Cathy Jamieson: No. The cabinet secretary ought to listen to what health boards themselves are saying. An NHS Highland document states:

“There was an acknowledgement that efficiency savings alone would not be sufficient to address the deficit and as such this would mean consideration of issues that were previously thought to be scary or untouchable.”

The cabinet secretary will have an opportunity to respond to that later.

Nicola Sturgeon *rose*—

Cathy Jamieson: The cabinet secretary really should hear this—then, I will give way.

NHS Dumfries and Galloway reported that savings are necessary to deal with costs that have risen beyond budget levels in order to “maintain long-term stability”, rather than to reinvest in front-line services.

NHS Ayrshire and Arran told us that its external auditor has highlighted the deliverability of the 2 per cent saving each year as a high-risk assessment. Although the board has made some savings in administrative services, savings in front-line services are around 1 per cent. The strategy of relying on administrative savings in the future was described as “doubtful”.

NHS Tayside reported a high risk of failure to achieve cost-reduction targets.

NHS Forth Valley is making savings of £30m over a three-year period that

“will impact on direct patient services and on staffing levels”.

NHS Shetland reported that it is reviewing nurse numbers, cancer care services and mental health funding in order to try to generate budget savings.

Only this week, we have received reports from NHS Grampian that show that it faces a requirement to save £26.2 million this year and a further £24 million in efficiency savings over the next two years. The board describes those pressures as arising from

“a relatively low level of uplift in our core funding allocation, and at the same time absorbing increases in pay costs, capital charges, drugs costs, and providing funding to enable service re-design.”

In order to implement that, NHS Grampian is now instructing every department to cut 5 per cent. Those are not backroom savings or administrative savings but savings that will have an impact on front-line services, which is unacceptable.

Perhaps the cabinet secretary will respond to those points.

Nicola Sturgeon: I have a simple question for Cathy Jamieson. When Jack McConnell said before the election that every penny of additional resources would go to education and that health would have to “cut its cloth”, what exactly did he mean?

Cathy Jamieson: I am surprised that the cabinet secretary has completely ignored the serious points that I have raised. She must understand that, if she wishes to be in government, she must take responsibility for what is happening on her watch rather than constantly hark back to the past. It is important that the cabinet secretary and the Scottish Government move away from what is becoming their hallmark—complacency. They do not listen to what people are saying, refuse to listen to how their policies are affecting people on the front line, refuse to accept that proper scrutiny involves highlighting concerns on which they must act and refuse to accept any responsibility for what is happening on their watch.

Other members will cover a wide range of issues about the impact on front-line services but, in summary, the reports that we have received from health boards make it clear that the efficiency savings will have an impact by cutting staff and services for our most vulnerable people.

I ask the cabinet secretary to agree to look at the situation urgently, to review the situation in all health board areas and to ensure that there are no cuts that will adversely affect the ability of our NHS staff to do their jobs. There must be no cuts that impact directly on patient care.

I move,

That the Parliament condemns the emerging cuts to frontline services in Scotland’s health service as a direct

result of the SNP's budget settlement, which provides the NHS with its lowest spending increase since devolution; notes with concern that NHS boards across Scotland are facing extreme financial pressure as evidenced by the comments of NHS Highland that it needs to find savings that "would mean consideration of issues that were previously thought to be scary or untouchable"; further notes that NHS Shetland is reviewing the number of nurses, cancer care services and mental health funding to generate budget savings and that the Director of Finance and Planning at NHS Forth Valley has reported that the size of the savings required "will impact on direct patient services and on staffing levels", and therefore calls on the Scottish Government to take urgent action to ensure that NHS boards receive sufficient funding in order that they are not forced to consider cuts to frontline services.

10:35

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Nicola Sturgeon): Today I want to address the facts, the dishonesty of Labour's position, Labour's complete lack of credibility, and the fact that Labour spectacularly misses the point.

First—the facts. Fact number 1 is that the NHS has considerably more money to spend now than it ever did under Labour. Over this year, and over the next two years, health board allocations will increase by £1.5 billion, even before we take into account additional funding for cutting waiting times, for tackling alcohol misuse and for other key national priorities.

Fact number 2 is that within the tightest budget settlement since devolution, health gets its fair share. Average increases of 4.2 per cent over the next three years are in line with overall budget increases.

Fact number 3 is that health under this SNP Government has precisely the same share of total Government spending as it did under the previous Labour Government. The budget that I inherited from Labour gave health 33.7 per cent of the total. At the end of the current comprehensive spending review period, the health budget will be 33.7 per cent of the total. If Labour's point this morning was that the total cake is not big enough, we might have found a point of agreement. However, I suggest that Labour members direct their complaints to their friends in London who decide the size of the cake, and that they join this Government in demanding a fair deal for Scotland.

Fact number 4 is that efficiency savings that are reinvested in front-line patient care are not "cuts". They are, in the words of Jack McConnell when, as First Minister, he first set a public sector efficiency target,

"sensible"

and

"for the good of public services."

Those were the hard facts.

Let us now consider the dishonesty of Labour's position. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it ignores two key facts that Labour desperately wants to forget but that everyone else clearly remembers. First, the 2 per cent efficiency savings that Labour complains about today, and derides as "cuts", would have been 3 per cent efficiency savings if Wendy Alexander, Labour's former leader, had had her way.

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): Will Ms Sturgeon give way on that point?

Nicola Sturgeon: No. Cathy Jamieson did not take an intervention, and nor will I.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): She did take an intervention.

Nicola Sturgeon: So she did. I will take an intervention.

Dr Simpson: On a—*[Interruption.]*

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am sorry, is this a point of order, Dr Simpson?

Nicola Sturgeon: I am taking an intervention.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Is this a point of order?

Dr Simpson: Is it in order—

Nicola Sturgeon: I am taking an intervention.

Dr Simpson: On a point of order Presiding Officer. Is it appropriate for Nicola Sturgeon to say that Cathy Jamieson did not take an intervention when she did?

Nicola Sturgeon: I made a mistake.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Would Dr Simpson sit down? I am not responsible for what members say, by and large.

Nicola Sturgeon: I made a mistake about Cathy Jamieson and was therefore allowing Richard Simpson to make an intervention. I am sorry that he refused to take the opportunity.

Cathy Jamieson: Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention now?

Nicola Sturgeon: No, I want to go on to the second key fact that Labour wants to ignore. The 4.2 per cent annual increases in the health budget that Labour now derides as being too small would have been 0 per cent if Labour had been in charge. Let us remind ourselves of what Jack McConnell said before the election. He said:

"The additional resources"

including efficiency savings—

"will be committed to education. That will mean other budgets having to cut their cloth".

In other words, the health budget would have been cut under Labour.

What did Wendy Alexander and Jack McConnell have in common? Oh, yes—they both had Cathy Jamieson as their deputy leader.

Cathy Jamieson *rose—*

Nicola Sturgeon: For Cathy Jamieson to stand here today and criticise the budget that has been set by this Scottish Government, when the policies that she supported would have led to swingeing cuts in the NHS, is rank hypocrisy.

Labour's position is wrong on the facts, it is dishonest and it lacks credibility. This Parliament has a fixed budget; that fact is not of our choosing, but of Labour's choosing. If Labour members want to argue now for more money for health, then they have some tough choices to make elsewhere. I will take Cathy Jamieson seriously when I hear her tell Rhona Brankin, who wants more money for education, not just that she cannot have it but that she will have to take a cut. I will take her seriously when she says that to all Labour members who ask for more money for this, that or the other every time they open their mouths. Until that happens, Cathy Jamieson and the Labour Party simply do not deserve a hearing on this issue.

Cathy Jamieson: Will Ms Sturgeon take an intervention?

Nicola Sturgeon: No.

Perhaps the worst thing about Labour's position is that it completely misses the point. What this Government puts into the NHS stands scrutiny by anyone. However, it is what comes out that matters; it is what the NHS delivers that counts.

I will close by reminding Parliament of just some of the improvements that we have seen in the NHS since the SNP took office—by reminding Parliament of what is happening on my watch, to use Cathy Jamieson's word: two major accident and emergency departments; four children's cancer hospitals; and four neurosurgery units. Maternity services at Vale of Leven hospital and Inverclyde royal hospital—which were facing the axe as a result of Labour cuts—are now safe with the SNP. A total of 5,000 more staff are working in our NHS, waiting times are at a record low and prescription charges are down and on the way out. The largest hospital in the history of the NHS has been built in the public sector without the use of the private finance initiative, and car parking charges, introduced by Labour, have been abolished by the SNP.

Those are but a few of the many achievements of this Government and the fantastic people who work in our NHS, and just a few of the reasons why Labour is no longer trusted on the NHS, and why the NHS is safe in the SNP's hands.

I move amendment S3M-2863.1, to leave out from "condemns" to end and insert:

"notes that the Scottish Government's spending plans are set against the background of the 2007 spending review settlement from the UK Treasury that represents the lowest increase for Scotland since devolution; recognises that the NHS has received a fair share of the financial settlement and that the Scottish Government is increasing spending on health in Scotland; further recognises that in this context it is right that the NHS should strive to make sure that resources are spent as efficiently as possible; commends the NHS's record in achieving efficiency savings linked to good quality care; welcomes the Scottish Government's decision to continue the practice whereby all efficiency savings generated by the NHS will be retained by the NHS for local reinvestment in frontline services, and condemns the Labour Party, which instituted efficiency savings while in government but has irresponsibly attacked them in opposition."

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab): On a point of order Presiding Officer. I understand that the Presiding Officer has no remit over the ministerial code of conduct, but I ask that the cabinet secretary carefully look at the *Official Report* of today's meeting and consider her position under the code of conduct.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That is not a point of order, and I strongly counsel other members against attempting to make similar interventions.

10:42

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Following the Punch and Judy show, we can now move to calm reflection from the Scottish Conservatives.

We welcome this debate on health spending, and I make no apology for focusing on NHS Highland. There is no single reason—or, indeed, excuse—for the financial pressures that the board faces. The reasons include NHS Scotland resource allocation committee funding, the inclusion of part of NHS Argyll and Clyde, pay rises, and increased fuel costs and other costs. I could go on. On current projections, the savings, or "cuts", of £36.6 million that are required over four years, have led the board to consider what were previously considered to be, as Cathy Jamieson said, "scary and untouchable" cuts.

Redundancies, freezing recruitment, and reductions in emergency admissions are but three of the 39 measures that have been suggested by NHS Highland in order to balance its budget. I would like to consider the background to that more closely.

When NHS Highland took over the Argyll part of the previous Argyll and Clyde NHS Board, the financial fault lines that had led to the previous board's large financial deficit were not fully known. What was known was that the funding per person

in Argyll was £80 less per annum than the figure for Highland, despite Argyll's many remote islands. I want to ask the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing whether she will examine the resources that are given to NHS Highland and consider whether the board has inherited responsibility for the provision of NHS services without being given sufficient resources.

NHS Highland is responsible for an area that covers 41 per cent of the Scottish land mass, including 30 islands. The restructuring that was brought about by the previous Government's intervention has led the board to conclude that

"the challenges and risks faced by NHS Highland were unprecedented",

even by NHS standards. The travel and communication issues of island communities and areas of supersparsity link with fragile economies to produce particular challenges for delivery of NHS services. I remind the cabinet secretary that that point was often raised by the SNP MSP Duncan Hamilton in the first session of Parliament.

Highland also faces significant consultant travel time and costs: out-of-hours services in Highland are five times more costly than those in urban areas, and specialist peripheral outpatient clinics and other facilities are required to provide NHS services.

Nicola Sturgeon: I acknowledge the points that Mary Scanlon makes, although I remind her that NHS Highland is represented on the NHS Scotland national resource allocation committee working group and the points can be raised there. In return, will she acknowledge that, during the current year and the next two years, NHS Highland will get an additional £86 million in its budget?

Mary Scanlon: It will get an additional £86 million, but it is certainly facing "scary" cuts. It is important that we reflect calmly on the matter and consider the background. I think I am doing that responsibly.

If it is fully implemented, the NRAC formula, which is the replacement for the Arbutnott formula, will lead to £21 million of cuts. I understand and welcome the fact that the NRAC formula is constantly under review, as the cabinet secretary said, but the fact remains that NHS Highland is facing £21 million of cuts, and that will remain so until the formula changes. NRAC, which was set up by the previous Administration and is accepted by the SNP Government, has led to an excess cost adjustment based on changes around hospitals and not on community data. It fails to take into account the remote, rural and island issues in health provision.

We support the reallocation of efficiency savings to front-line services. On recent visits to Orkney and the Western Isles, I was impressed by the joint working on asset and estate management, human resource management, maintenance and payroll systems. However, I ask the Government to encourage boards to introduce more integrated working, because economies of scale have the benefits of leading to greater efficiencies and reducing the need to cut front-line services.

My final point would also lead to savings for the taxpayer, NHS staff and patients. I mentioned it last week and I do not apologise for mentioning it again. Personnel departments should do much more to manage staff who are sitting at home for months and years and get them back into work.

We are minded to support the Government's amendment, but we will reserve judgment until we have heard the SNP's contributions to the debate. We cannot support the Labour motion because the Labour Party must take some responsibility for the NRAC cuts, for the dissolution of NHS Argyll and Clyde, and for the closure of accident and emergency departments.

10:47

Ross Finnie (West of Scotland) (LD): I am sure that, even after the time for which we have been on our feet, there are patients out there somewhere whose care we must be concerned about.

The Liberal Democrats find this debate a slightly strange one in some ways. There are issues about where within the health budget one ensures that front-line services are secured, and there are points in the Labour motion that must be addressed, but I say to Cathy Jamieson that if we have learned anything in the past five weeks, it is that growth has come to an end. Indeed, we were in error to believe that growth would go on for ever. The idea that, somehow, there is a pot of money that can be endlessly tapped for public expenditure is not one that I would wish to pursue. On the other hand, I say to Nicola Sturgeon that, although she is right to say that the Government is spending more money, the central issue is whether front-line services are being protected.

The Liberal Democrats fundamentally disagree with the simple statement that the principle of having an NHS Scotland resource allocation committee formula is wrong. Members are entitled to go to NRAC and have explained to them what the formula is and what it means. Under the NRAC formula, there will be winners and losers because it reflects the rurality of areas, deprivation, and other indices. We cannot simply have everyone getting the same. If one objects to the fact that those factors are taken into account, that is a

matter of principle, but I do not think that criticising the NRAC or Arbutnott formulas in principle is sustainable in dealing with front-line services.

Mary Scanlon: I do not object to the use of a formula, be it Arbutnott's or NRAC's. What I object to is the fact that the NRAC formula does not take into account remoteness and rurality, community data, or supersparsity. That is reflected in lower settlements for certain areas.

Ross Finnie: My point is exactly that that is not what NRAC said when it gave evidence to the Health and Sport Committee on the way in which the formula works.

The fundamental issue is the conundrum that is before us this morning. The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing appeared before the Health and Sport Committee on 29 October. I refer to columns 1207 and 1209 of the *Official Report*. At that meeting, she was pressed—indeed, I was one of those who pressed her—on the rate of inflation that health boards are experiencing, but she did not provide a figure. Having narrated the various pressures and stated that some of them are difficult, she concluded that the health boards are managing them. She went on to deal with efficiency savings, reporting not just that the health boards are achieving the planned savings but that they are likely to exceed them by £60 million, taking the savings to £277.08 million. As she did this morning, she made the point that the efficiency savings are reallocated to front-line patient care. That is fair enough.

The clear inference to be drawn is that front-line services are not affected when boards make and apply the savings. If that is the case, however, the cabinet secretary or the Government must address at some point in the debate the fundamental points in the Labour motion about what NHS Highland, NHS Shetland and NHS Forth Valley are saying. With all due respect, their claims that they are being badly affected do not square with what the cabinet secretary says. I take what she says in good faith, but it is of concern that, in the current difficult circumstances, health boards that are responsible for delivering care to individual patients are not satisfied.

The Parliament is entitled to ask the Government how it squares the two positions, because there is a clear gap between them. We need an answer. Like Mary Scanlon, I will be interested to hear how the Government squares the two positions, which at present seem irreconcilable.

10:52

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): In the short time that is available to me, I will deal with the assertions in the SNP amendment. The politics of

assertion that is practised by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing is no match for facts and evidence. Her statements hide a very different picture.

The SNP's first assertion is:

"the NHS has received a fair share of the financial settlement and ... the Scottish Government is increasing spending on health in Scotland".

Now for the real facts as opposed to Nicola Sturgeon's spin. The Scottish budget is rising by 1.8 per cent in real terms, but the SNP's allocation to health boards is only 0.5 per cent, so the SNP has chosen to spend less—this, at a time when spending is rising at a higher rate south of the border. Allocations to individual health boards are also poor, at only 3.2 per cent, and with inflation outstripping the provision of 2.7 per cent, there are real pressures.

Indeed, the rate of increase in funding for the NHS in Scotland is so low that we need to go back to the days of Michael Forsyth in the Scottish Office to witness anything comparable. I seem to recall that his nickname was Scissorhands, because of the cuts over which he presided.

Nicola Sturgeon: Overall spending is low as well, and responsibility for that lies elsewhere. I assume that Jackie Baillie does not really misunderstand health spending, so I have to conclude that she is being disingenuous. Will she confirm that, over and above the basic health board allocations that she mentioned, significant additional resources—from the money that is retained by the health department centrally—are allocated to health boards for key priorities? She should be accurate in what she says in the chamber.

Jackie Baillie: That was more of a speech than an intervention. I point out to Nicola Sturgeon that I expect her, as the minister in office 18 months on, to reflect the circumstances and the economic climate that are causing the problems that health boards are experiencing.

I move on to SNP assertions 2 and 3. The amendment proposes that we commend

"the NHS's record in achieving efficiency savings linked to good quality care".

On the face of it, who could disagree with that? However, freedom of information requests to health boards throughout the country show that cuts are being proposed to front-line services.

In my area, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde is making £42 million of cuts this year and £72 million next year. These real, tangible cuts are not just about reducing red tape; they will affect out-of-hours services, physical disability services and learning disability services. The board's finance director, Douglas Griffin, claims that drastic

measures are needed because the funding provided by the SNP Government is “significantly lower” than it has been in previous years. Moreover, as Mary Scanlon pointed out, NHS Highland is talking about making painful spending cuts, including considering options that were once regarded as “scary or untouchable” because

“efficiency savings alone would not be sufficient to address the deficit”.

We have to stop talking about efficiencies; these are cuts that will happen to services in my area. In order to deliver savings beyond their efficiency targets, boards are cutting front-line services. The SNP’s assertion that giving the NHS the ability to retain its 2 per cent efficiency savings is somehow doing it a favour is on the one hand laughable and on the other stunningly complacent. These are real cuts to real services and they affect real people. I am also disturbed to find growing evidence that capital savings are being used to underpin revenue. Such an approach only stores up problems for the future.

Finally I want to nail the SNP’s defence that, because the previous Government instituted efficiency savings, they are not necessarily a bad thing. A 1 per cent efficiency saving—half the amount demanded by the SNP—in the context of considerably higher year-on-year funding increases to health boards is simply not comparable to the current situation. At that time, services were growing; in the current economic climate, they are being cut. The cabinet secretary is in the driving seat. She cannot deflect blame on to others. She has the power to ease the problems faced by the NHS in Scotland and I ask her to consider suspending these efficiency savings. If she does not, one can conclude only that the legacy of Michael “Scissorhands” Forsyth is alive and well in the corridors of St Andrew’s house.

10:56

Stuart McMillan (West of Scotland) (SNP): The speeches so far have been, to say the least, interesting and robust. I did not expect anything less.

With its scaremongering and attempts to strike fear into the hearts of the Scottish public, new Labour’s motion is a typical example of its negativity. If the public listen to its nonsense, they will think that Scotland is some third-world country, constantly in-fighting, and that we are too small, too stupid and too insignificant. I know that Scotland is not too small, stupid or insignificant to matter and that it is moving forward with an SNP Government.

Some of the SNP Government actions that deserve welcome include record health board funding, which will rise to £11.5 billion in this

spending round; the approval of a new southern general hospital, which will be built not through public-private partnerships or PFI but with £842 million of public investment; an extra £40 million for free personal care, a policy that was short-funded by the previous new Labour and Liberal Democrat Executive; and the policy of reinvesting 2 per cent efficiency savings in the NHS and not, as new Labour promised during the 2007 election campaign, transferring them to other budgets.

Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab): Does the member not agree that the cuts being made by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, which amount to £42 million this year and £72 million next year, will have a devastating effect on front-line services? Will he join me in making representations to the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing for a review of the situation?

Stuart McMillan: What I will say is that, compared with what happened under the previous Labour and Liberal Democrat Executive’s cuts agenda, the NHS is moving forward under the SNP Government. I could highlight many more positives for the NHS in Scotland under this Government—indeed, the cabinet secretary did so earlier—and long may the situation continue.

If new Labour had been in power, its cuts agenda would have amounted to £771 million, which is 50 per cent higher than the sum that will be achieved by the SNP’s efficiency savings. Although the SNP Government has been accused of being draconian in introducing 2 per cent efficiency savings, I point out that, in May 2007, Wendy Alexander criticised the SNP for lacking ambition in not insisting on the 3 per cent efficiency savings that she and new Labour wanted and that were in line with the United Kingdom Government’s policy.

I commend the SNP Government on certain actions over the past 18 months. First, I say well done for scrapping car parking charges at NHS hospitals. That tax on the sick was introduced on the previous new Labour and Liberal Democrat Executive’s watch. I also say well done for keeping open Monklands and Ayr hospitals’ A and E units, which had been threatened with closure by the new Labour—

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. The member cannot continue to misname the Scottish Labour Party as new Labour. Surely we are entitled to our proper title in this chamber.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): That is not a point of order.

Stuart McMillan: Branding is everything.

Finally, I say well done to the Government for instigating the independent scrutiny panels that

recommended that the community maternity units at Inverclyde Royal hospital and the Vale of Leven hospital be kept open. Consultant services that were cut on the watch of the previous new Labour and Liberal Democrat Executive have been secured under this SNP Government.

While we remain part of the union, Scottish Administrations will continue to receive the block grant. Last year was no different—apart from the fact that the money came a couple of months late, which had a knock-on effect for public services. When we received the grant, inflation stood at 2.7 per cent; it is now a massive 5.1 per cent. That will have an effect on public bodies and the best thing that they can do is to manage their resources as effectively and efficiently as possible to get through a financial mess that has been aided and abetted by the UK Government.

Given that the Scottish Government has limited financial powers and no power whatever to deal with inflation, any increase in spending in one department will mean taking resources from another budget. Until such time as Scotland gets the powers to deal with its economy and does not have to rely on the whims and mismanagement of London Governments, we will always find ourselves in a restricted position.

As I said, the motion is typical scaremongering nonsense from the Opposition and I urge the chamber to reject it this afternoon.

11:01

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): This debate is extremely important. After all, we must remember that health cuts will affect every one of our constituents. We thought, for example, that we had seen the last of long waiting lists, but I fear that that is not the case. That is not scaremongering—it is fact.

What good is it for someone to have a free car parking place if they cannot get a hip replacement? Their free prescription might cover the cost of their pain-killers, but they will not get their life back. What good is being able to vote in health board elections if a person cannot access health services? I am not criticising those initiatives; they have been popular and, if they were affordable, I would welcome them wholeheartedly. However, it is difficult to welcome the icing when there is no cake.

The Minister for Public Health (Shona Robison): Will the member explain why, despite her comments, NHS Highland's chairman Garry Coutts has said that the savings

"will not affect outcomes for patients. Patients might see the way that they get services is different, but waiting times are going to come down, cancer waits are going to come

down, the length of time you wait for a consultant is going to come down"?

How does that comment square with Rhoda Grant's scaremongering?

Rhoda Grant: Although I have some confidence in NHS Highland's attempts to mitigate the effects of these budget cuts, I do not think that it will be able to mitigate them in full. Indeed, that is why it is talking about looking at "scary or untouchable" areas. The minister should consider those comments as well.

Given that resources in this area are scarce—we have been told just how scarce they are—it seems ludicrous to spend valuable money on measures that deliver no health benefits. Since the implementation of the NRAC formula, rural health boards have lost out in the allocations that have been made. We are not criticising the need for a formula; however, when the Health and Sport Committee took evidence on the resource allocations, it became very clear that the formula being used was damaged, because the data on which it was based had no bearing in reality. For example, as Mary Scanlon pointed out, the cost of the out-of-hours GP contract shows that it is much more expensive to deliver rural health services, but the Government has ignored that information.

Health service staff are happy to be efficient, want to make changes and want to work hard to find savings. However, they want the savings that they are being asked to identify to be put back into patient care. If working harder and making savings do not improve such care and instead have a huge impact on morale, where is the greater good? NHS Highland is looking at having to make £36.6 million in savings, and it has said that it is not able to do so.

Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Rhoda Grant: No—I am running out of time and have a lot to cover.

NHS Shetland has reported that it is reviewing the number of nurses, cancer care services and mental health funding to find savings. Patients in Shetland have to travel far enough to access specialist care and any cuts that their board has to make will only disadvantage them further.

In its election manifesto, the SNP promised a major expansion of the health service, which was to be funded by efficiency savings in bureaucracy and backroom functions. The released resources were to be invested in front-line services. However, that has not happened. Indeed, the Scottish Government has written to NHS Shetland to ask it to deliver the financial outcomes that are included in its plan by holding a clinical review assessment as opposed to a backroom review

assessment. We are talking about clinical services and front-line patient care.

No matter how the Government tries to dress things up, NHS Highland has had to revise its budgets because it has less money than it expected to receive from the previous Executive. NHS Shetland is considering the services that it delivers and the number of nurses that it employs. So much for investing in front-line services. The Government needs to act now and give patients access to health services that they deserve.

11:05

Keith Brown (Ochil) (SNP): It has become quite fashionable of late for certain politicians to talk about serious times requiring serious people and serious policies, but Labour's—or should I say new Labour's—motion for this debate, unlike its motion for the previous debate, is shot through with inconsistency, hypocrisy and doublethink. It is anything but a serious attempt to question health budgets. At its root, it seeks to put forward a case that health budgets are being cut and that the Labour Party would do something different if it were still in office. Neither proposition stands reasonable scrutiny.

The best antidote to cant and posturing is the application of hard facts, although I realise that for the new Labour Party at least, the facts are difficult. First, Cathy Jamieson's motion refers to the

"lowest spending increase since devolution",

but it pointedly avoids referring to the fact that the health settlement was made in the context of the lowest spending increase to the Scottish Government under devolution. That is a relevant point. If new Labour is to treat the issue seriously, it should recognise that the massive cut in the Scottish budget's rate of growth has an impact on health funding. It cannot then reasonably complain that separate budget heads are not increasing enough; that is simply not a serious point to make.

Perhaps that awkward fact could be overcome if new Labour—which, I presume, would have received the same settlement if it had clung to power last May—said that it would have cut other budgets in order to grow the health budget by more than the cabinet secretary has done, but we know that Labour would have sacrificed all other budgets in order to boost education. That is a legitimate aspiration, but it is not legitimate to pretend that it would not have impacted on the health budget. Aside from favouring education over health, Labour would have increased the efficiency savings that the Scottish Government asked of health boards by 50 per cent—that is Wendy Alexander's position and no Labour member has yet acknowledged it—and then

turned those savings into cuts by taking them from health budgets and putting them into education.

That takes us to the crucial issue of efficiency savings versus cuts. Anyone who had to contend with the Labour-Liberal efficiency savings that were imposed on Scottish local government during the long, dark years from 1997 to 2007 is well able to tell the difference between efficiency savings that are redirected into the services that produce them and new Labour cuts that involve taking money from those services—as it was taken from local government—and redirecting it to other priorities.

Cathy Jamieson: Does the member want to consider the facts as reported by Forth Valley NHS Board? It has said that, to balance the books, it must review children's and women's services in this financial year. It is talking about cutting resource transfers to councils in 2009-10, and schemes worth £48 million will be under review. Surely that is a fact and surely the member is concerned about it.

Keith Brown: I met Forth Valley NHS Board recently. It has given no indication that the efficiency savings that it is currently making are any different from what Labour previously proposed. In fact, it will get an extra £17 million over the three-year period.

Arguments are reinforced by relevant examples. I cite as an example of a cut rather than an efficiency saving the Labour Party's recent scandalous decision in Clackmannanshire Council to cut school crossing patrols. That service will not come back; the money will not go back into it.

It is a depressing fact that Labour knows that it is not being serious. It knows that comparisons with England are false because of the fiddling with projections and actual spend to cut Scottish funding in the first place. It did not raise an ounce of protest about that. It was not concerned about the cut to the Scottish Government's budget. It knows that, given the choice, it would take money out of health budgets and it is well aware that the health budget was agreed following the stingiest-ever settlement from London. The fact that Labour did not oppose the Scottish Government's health budget is more depressing still. We all recall Labour's fantastically assertive and decisive leadership when it decided to boldly abstain—I am sorry for the split infinitive—on the budget last year.

It is apparent to everybody that there is no real principle, far less substance, in new Labour's motion. Such can be the stuff of opposition politics—that is fair enough—but the motion has nothing to do with a sincere and sustained commitment to higher health budgets.

I am not entirely sure what the Liberal Democrats' position is. However, if they want increased health funding, that will have to be added to the growing list of things for which they want to increase funding and must be seen in the light of the £800 million of savings that their tax-cutting programme would introduce.

In conclusion, Labour politicians should listen to one of their own. These are serious times that call for serious people making serious proposals. Labour politicians misread the public's willingness to put up with puerile posturing at a time of rising economic distress. I am sure that Labour will not withdraw its stupid motion, but perhaps Labour members will think a bit more seriously before they submit another one like it.

11:10

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab): The cabinet secretary made a typically robust defence of her budget, and I am sure that her debating skills and other qualities will win her the top award tonight. I am equally sure that she would have argued for more money for health at the time of the spending review and that she would have been disappointed not to have received it.

Her main defence was that the percentage increase for health was the same as that for the Scottish budget as a whole and that the percentage of the total budget that is going to health will remain constant over the spending review period. However, at a time when the overall budget is not increasing as fast as it has done in the past, there is a strong argument for increasing the percentage of money that goes to health. I will give an example. A year or two ago, if there was a 6 per cent overall increase in the Scottish budget, a 6 per cent increase in health funding would have covered health inflation plus a bit more, but if the overall increase in the Scottish budget is roughly 4 per cent, a 4 per cent increase in health funding as a whole will not cover health inflation and a bit more.

Nicola Sturgeon: Malcolm Chisholm makes the legitimate argument that in days of smaller increases, we could choose to increase a particular budget disproportionately. To follow the logic of his argument, I presume that he is saying that we should have done that for health. Will he complete his argument by saying which budgets under the Scottish Government's control he would have cut to pay for that increase?

Malcolm Chisholm: I will talk about that. I am not arguing for a massive increase in health funding; rather, a small increase could be made by finding more money from somewhere else and perhaps also by postponing the abolition of

prescription charges. I support the abolition of prescription charges, but the cabinet secretary should at least consider postponing that when there is pressure on the health budget.

Members probably know the general facts about health inflation and how drugs, demography and so on affect it, so I will not go into that. However, health inflation and other factors mean that a 3.2 per cent funding increase is presenting boards with great difficulties. The cabinet secretary was lucky to inherit a strong financial position for the health service and, indeed, a strong health service in other ways—for example, the problem of non-recurring savings supporting recurring budgets had almost been stripped out of the system. Therefore, she had a strong start, but seven months into the new spending review period, she must listen to what boards are saying and respond in some way. I am not saying that she is or would be able to find large sums of money, but she should, in deciding the budget for next year, argue with her colleagues that a little more or some more money should be found for health, perhaps from another budget or by postponing the abolition of prescription charges.

Alasdair Allan: Will the member confirm to the many patients who have benefited from the reduction in prescription charges that the Labour group's policy is that the proposed measure should be postponed and they should wait longer? Is the member speaking in a personal capacity or for the Labour group?

Malcolm Chisholm: I am a back bencher now, so everything that I say can be taken as being said in a personal capacity. I responded to the point that the cabinet secretary made. She should consider other budgets—I am not putting things any more strongly than that—because she must respond in some way to what health boards are saying. The whole point of the debate is to put on the record what various health boards in Scotland are saying about the difficulties that they are facing seven months into the spending review period. We have two years and five months more of similar increases. The problem must be addressed.

I will make two final points. The big picture is not the total amount of health spending, but how that money is being spent. The general direction of health policy is to spend more money on community-based services. We need to try to track that money and ensure that more money in the budget is going in that direction. I was concerned that Audit Scotland's "Overview of Scotland's health and NHS performance in 2006/07" stated that there is no evidence of that shift taking place.

Today, we are talking about health budgets, but we must also monitor closely what is happening in local authority budgets. I will not go back over the

debate about ring fencing, although I have concerns about that, for example on the abolition of the mental health-specific grant. We must monitor closely the single outcome agreements and what happens to health-related spend in local authority budgets.

11:15

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): I usually start such speeches by saying that the debate has been consensual, but that would not be true today. Nice guy that I am, I find myself amidst the storms on either side of me.

Cathy Jamieson laid out her case pretty well. She rightly gave the NHS staff their proper place—they are our greatest asset. The fact is that we have one of the lowest increases in health spending since devolution. That is set against the fact that, as Ross Finnie pointed out, growth is no longer an option because of inflation and rising costs, to which Mary Scanlon referred, such as wages and fuel. The trouble is that the inflation graph may not even be a straight line—the increase could be accelerating. That would bedevil any Government's figures.

I am afraid that it is a fact that the health spending increase here is lower than that in the rest of the UK—we can substantiate that. Cathy Jamieson rightly referred to the situation in Highland NHS Board, which Mary Scanlon fleshed out. The chairman of the board has said that there is a £21 million cut and that the board may consider reducing emergency admissions. The fact that such comments have been put on the record by the chairman of the health board should surely concern each and every member who cares about front-line services. Mary Scanlon made two useful points. The first was about the Argyll pig in a poke. We do not know what price came with Argyll when it was added to Highland NHS Board, but that must be examined. I politely request the cabinet secretary to consider that, because it might be bedevilling the board's figures. Mary Scanlon's second important point was about people who are not working and staying in their houses when they could be put to work. That is an issue for personnel and it should be examined.

Nicola Sturgeon, who I am sure has a high chance of winning a prize at tonight's politician of the year dinner, put her case eloquently and well, as one would expect. Her rebuttal was about the increases in money and about Scotland not having a fair deal. We have allegation and counter-allegation. However, when anyone says that there is more money in the budget, that must be measured against inflation and rising costs. There might be an increase in pounds and pennies, but not in the trend of spending.

Nicola Sturgeon: My question is genuine and is not simply to make a party-political point, as I do not know the answer. Will the member explain what impact the Liberal proposal to take £800 million out of the budget to pay for tax cuts would have on NHS budgets?

Jamie Stone: No, I will not, because I am not here to discuss that. I am here to try to get the Scottish Government to accept that health boards out there are saying those things and that there really is a threat to patients. That is what we are talking about—the debate is not about hypothetical spending; it is about patients getting the services that they deserve. The Scottish Government must acknowledge that the issue is very serious.

When Jackie Baillie mentioned Michael Forsyth, it was as if Banquo's ghost had entered the chamber. He is almost unmentionable. One of Jackie Baillie's points has not been dealt with by other members, so I ask the cabinet secretary to address it. Jackie Baillie said that capital savings might be used to underpin revenue, which is a chilling thought. The chairman of Highland NHS Board has written to the cabinet secretary asking for capital funding for a new four-surgery dental facility in Thurso but, if Jackie Baillie is correct, it begins to seem as if that could be scuppered. My colleague Jackie Baillie has made a hugely important financial allegation, which must be answered, because the issue is crucial.

Dr Simpson: Will the member give way on that point?

Jamie Stone: I do not think that I have time.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You do have time.

Jamie Stone: I will certainly give way, then.

Dr Simpson: From the replies that we received to our freedom of information requests, we have found that £42 million of property sales have been included in efficiency savings. Property cannot be sold more than once.

Jamie Stone: I accept that.

I am interested in who decides whether a member takes an intervention—the member or the Presiding Officer. However, I will give leeway to the Presiding Officer on that one.

Rhoda Grant mentioned car parking. That is not hugely pertinent to the debate, but it is fair to say that free car parking has been talked about in the Highland area as something that perhaps did not need to be given. However, that is a debate for another day.

We must remember that growth is not an option any more and that the pot of money is limited. The debate takes place against the background of inflation. We must therefore consider what has to

be done to meet the threat of cuts or reductions in front-line services for patients in Scotland.

11:20

Jackson Carlaw (West of Scotland) (Con): In 18 months in the Parliament, I have not been called on to participate in a more bizarre or disingenuous debate, nor one that has conjured up such a profound sense of déjà vu. In opposition through the 1980s and 1990s, the weary and lazy refrain from Labour was, "Stop the cuts." In my first Westminster parliamentary election—a by-election in 1982—the Labour candidate challenged me to fight the cuts. When I asked to which cuts she was referring in particular, she replied, "I don't know about that, but what are you doing to fight them?" When the Labour candidate was finally confronted at a public meeting by a constituent who inquired why the local library closed early on a Wednesday night, she replied, "I have absolutely no idea, but I am sure it's Mrs Thatcher's cuts."

Such childish rants did not win Labour power then, although, just as now, they may have helped it to retain a seat or two in by-elections. Finally, in the 1990s, Labour elected a new leader, who abandoned that shameless and lazy rhetoric and progressed an agenda that discarded almost everything that his party had fought for in the previous 18 years. Has Labour learned from that? Why, no. Battered in opposition, it falls back on the same old chants, as Pauline McNeill, no less, confirmed in an intervention. There is the same old opportunism and scare-and-smear tactics. What a shambles; what a sham.

Rhoda Grant: Will the member take an intervention?

Jackson Carlaw: I am sorry, but I am too far gone on my hobby-horse to dismount.

How dispiriting that approach is when there are serious funding issues to discuss, as Mary Scanlon detailed at length on NRAC. Ross Finnie suggested what might have been a much more interesting debate. I excuse Malcolm Chisholm, too, as he made a typically intelligent and reasoned speech.

The irony of it all. At the top of the list of reasons why Labour was kicked unceremoniously out of office in Scotland last year was its contempt for the public mood on health. Labour championed the real health cuts—cuts in accident and emergency health services throughout Scotland—and the Government, with Conservative support, reversed even more damaging accident and emergency closures that were planned in Ayr and Monklands. When in government, Labour planned regressive cuts in the net take-home pay of nurses and health service workers through the

introduction of its hospital car-parking tax, which, to paraphrase, was a tax under which even a consultant married to a duke paid the same as a nurse married to a binman. Annually, that tax was to be greater than the net increase in the average health worker's annual wage. The shame of it—the Labour shame of it. Again, the Government, with Conservative support, has abolished that disgraceful tax.

Labour is so desperate to find a strategy back from an emerging wilderness that out comes the old scattergun of scare and shame. I know that Labour, when confronted with today's reality check on its health record—which I freely admit is not entirely without merit—will react true to form. I can hear the familiar charge coming, so before Labour members gobble on their spittle, I remind them again of uncomfortable facts. Labour is the only party in history that, when in government, forced through real cuts in the health service. A generation ago, Labour cut nurses' pay by 3 per cent; doctors' pay by 16 per cent; surgeons' pay by 25 per cent; and overall health spending by 3 per cent.

The Labour chancellor, Scissorhands Darling, chose to change the health baseline for calculating the Barnett consequentials, resulting in a budget to the Scottish Government on health that is about £342 million less than it would otherwise have been. However, Labour has the brass neck to look in our direction when talking of threats to the Barnett formula. In the election last May, the Labour Party pledged that education would come first. The then First Minister said that other departments would have to "cut their cloth". I presume that that would have included health. That would have been on top of the efficiency savings that Labour advocated of 3 per cent, not 2 per cent, as we have now.

The time will come when the SNP Government has to account for its record. It has argued for a disastrous local income tax and has put the continuity of our electricity supplies at risk by dogmatic hostility to nuclear power as part of the future energy mix. However, on health, the cabinet secretary demonstrated in a magisterial performance why she is a shining beacon of hope in comparison with the tawdry arrogance of Scottish Labour. She is held in such regard that she may even rival Governor Sarah Palin in the esteem of Scots. That may seem like faint praise but, truly, it is not intended as such, for it was the Labour Government at Westminster that chose such a damaging basis for the calculation of Scotland's health service budget; a Labour Government in Scotland that proposed and partially implemented devastating cuts to accident and emergency services; and the Scottish Labour Party in government that forfeited the trust of the Scottish people. When the general election

comes, Labour will get its just deserts. The most liberating cut of all will be the people's cut on the dead weight of the Labour Government at Westminster.

Labour's motion is shabby, opportunistic and shallow—indeed, it is contemptible. It is the motion of a small-minded party—from a front bench grey in spirit and character, led by a man grey in name. We will support the Government amendment at decision time, and be done with it.

11:25

The Minister for Public Health (Shona Robison): How does one follow that? I do not think that I could be any nicer to the cabinet secretary.

I wish that the debate had been constructive, but it was based on a false premise and opportunism. I will start with a little list—actually, it is quite a big list—of spending commitments that the Labour Party has made during the first 18 months of this SNP Administration. The list, which amounts to just over £0.5 billion, covers areas such as buses, student funding, apprenticeships in the creative industries, Scotland's sports ambassadors fund—a proposal from Cathy Jamieson—and pledged support for higher bursary funding. All those things add up to a fair bit of money.

Labour members stood before the chamber this morning demanding more money for the health service, yet they did not, of course, specify where the money would come from. Labour member after Labour member, in every speech, failed to give an indication of which budget they would cut to fulfil the party's desire for higher health spending. That is not worthy of an Opposition party, let alone a party that wishes to be in government again. Labour members cannot come to the chamber and tell the Government what it should be doing without putting forward any solutions.

Cathy Jamieson: Does the minister accept that the health boards are saying that they face the pressures that we raised in the debate? Will the cabinet secretary and the minister, at the very least, take that seriously? Will they take away the information, look at it and report back to Parliament at a later date? The SNP has said that this side of the chamber is scaremongering, but we are not. The words that we used are those of the health boards—the boards are saying that patients will suffer.

Shona Robison: Cathy Jamieson did not offer up any answer to the question: where is the money to come from?

Cathy Jamieson: That is the minister's job.

Shona Robison: No; when the Opposition calls for extra spending, it is the Opposition's job to tell

us what budget cuts it will make to fund that spending.

I return to Cathy Jamieson's misinformation and selective quoting. She said that NHS Shetland is making cuts in cancer services, but the fact is that NHS Shetland said:

"One-off savings achieved by the Board include vacancy savings in a nursing post. No services have been withdrawn and these specific savings total £10k.

Absolutely no savings have been made in Mental Health."

Saying that savings would be made in mental health services was another piece of Opposition misinformation from Cathy Jamieson. That is only one example; there are many more that show the level of misinformation, opportunism and selective quoting that Cathy Jamieson used in introducing this shoddy debate.

Gary Coutts, the chair of NHS Highland made his position on the savings clear. I repeat:

"It will not affect the outcomes for patients. Patients might see the way that they get services is different, but waiting times are going to come down, cancer waits are going to come down, the length of time you wait for a consultant is going to come down."

What a different picture he paints from the scaremongering about people dying—I think that that was what Rhoda Grant said—because of what were described as cuts to the health service. That is unacceptable language for any member to use about our hard-working staff in the NHS. Such language would not be good enough for members on any side of the chamber, but especially not for a member of a party that has been in government. Labour members should know better; they know about managing budgets.

I need say nothing more on the misinformation in Cathy Jamieson's speech, other than to repeat that it was misinformation.

I turn to Mary Scanlon's speech. I reiterate the point that, given that NHS Highland is on NRAC, it will consider issues including the future funding formula, which Mary Scanlon raised. Of course, joint working with the island boards is very important in making more efficient use of the services that they provide.

Mary Scanlon: I remind the minister that the funding for someone who lives on Coll or Tiree is around £700 less than for someone who lives on Barra in the Western Isles. That is an example of the funding differences that Highland NHS Board faces.

Shona Robison: That is one of the very issues that NRAC will look at in taking forward the important piece of work with which it is tasked.

Ross Finnie made an interesting speech, some of which was reflective. As always, he said some interesting things. However, he cannot get away from the fact that the efficiency savings that will be made will be reinvested in front-line services. We have made that very clear from the outset. If Ross Finnie does not want those efficiency savings to be made and if he does not believe that that is the best way to free up resources to reinvest, he has to answer the question: where will the £800 million of savings that his party advocates come from? It is not good enough for any member, on any side of the chamber, to demand more money from the Government without saying where the money should come from. It is also not good enough to advocate cuts but not to say where the cuts will fall.

I turn to Jackie Baillie. Frankly, she surpassed herself in opportunism today. She raised the issue of efficiency savings. Who was in charge in 2005-06? Oh, sorry—it was Jackie Baillie's Government; she might even have been a minister at the time. Efficiency savings under that Labour Government that year were £169,383. In 2008-09, under this Government, the savings are £158,129. Our efficiency savings are less than those that were expected or made under the Labour Government.

Jackie Baillie: Will the minister give way?

Shona Robison: I am in my last minute.

Jackie Baillie said that we should scrap efficiency savings, but yet again she gave no indication of where that money would come from. That is not good enough. No Labour member other than Malcolm Chisholm had the guts to offer up suggestions. He suggested that the abolition of prescription charges should not go ahead. No other Labour member had the guts to tell us where alternative savings should be made. Labour is not worthy of opposition, never mind government.

11:33

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): Like Jamie Stone, I would have liked to welcome the debate as constructive, but this has been one of our least constructive debates. I say to our Conservative friends that I did not recognise the two Conservative speeches as coming from the same party. Mary Scanlon rightly talked about the problems that NHS Highland faces, but Jackson Carlaw mounted his hobby-horse and disappeared into the far distance.

Serious issues are involved; Ross Finnie, Malcolm Chisholm and other members raised them in their speeches. The Government—and the SNP is the Government—made the decision in the comprehensive spending review to cut revenues by £1 billion. I hope that the cabinet secretary and the minister accept that. The SNP Government

decided to cut revenues in a variety of ways. As a result, it has £1 billion less to spend on public services. Our public services have to take the strain of that reduced revenue.

That would be fine if the settlement to health boards reflected the allocation that Scotland has been given, but it did not—it is the lowest uplift since devolution. The SNP Government also failed to recognise the new situation of increased inflation and the fact that health service inflation always outstrips ordinary inflation. Furthermore, it failed to lay out clearly what should be included as so-called efficiency savings and what should be proscribed as cuts.

There are some incontrovertible facts in the debate. The SNP Government's budget was increased by 1.8 per cent in real terms. However, based on headline inflation of 2.7 per cent, the real-terms uplift in the Government's general allocation to health boards was 0.5 per cent. The Wanless King's Fund report stated that the NHS needs an annual increase of 4 per cent in real terms just to stand still, and in England Labour has provided the necessary uplift to achieve that, even though it, too, is faced with the new situation of higher inflation.

It is true that, on the calculations that we have been given by economists, our per capita health expenditure is on a trajectory to go below that of England by 2012-13. Labour in England is giving more to health than the SNP Government is giving in Scotland—that is a fact.

The special NHS inflationary pressures are recognised, and the Audit Scotland report demonstrates them: an ageing population; agenda for change; the European working time directive; new and more drugs, including a 4 per cent uplift in drug expenditure predicted for Grampian; and new and expensive technology. I would also include the need to clean our hospitals, as demonstrated by the audit report this week.

That is health inflation, but we must also consider general inflation. General inflation is not 2.7 per cent, as the headline inflation was, but considerably higher. If we consider fuel and food, which the NHS has to deal with, the level is even higher than the headline inflation of 5.2 per cent. Those are all realities that the cabinet secretary will have to face in the next year or so. We may be lucky—inflation may drop to zero and there will not be the same pressures in later years. However, for this year and next, the pressures undoubtedly exist.

Another incontrovertible fact, which disappoints me, is that both the cabinet secretary and the Minister for Public Health have said repeatedly that Labour is scaremongering, when the reason for the debate—I see Keith Brown nodding as well,

although I welcome Christine Grahame as no other SNP member of the Health and Sport Committee has been present, which is a shame—

Nicola Sturgeon: Will the member give way?

Dr Simpson: Time is short; I must get on. Anyway, the cabinet secretary refused my intervention, decided to take it and then messed around.

The Labour Party made a freedom of information request to every health board in Scotland on the efficiency savings that they were making and the pressures that their budgets might be under. That is a responsible approach for the Opposition to take, and everything that Labour members have said today has been lifted from the reports that we have received from health boards. Nicola Sturgeon and Shona Robison might sit there, shaking their heads yet again, but are they saying that the health boards are lying to us in response to freedom of information requests? If so, they are making a dangerous assertion.

Nicola Sturgeon: My central charge is about the deep dishonesty of the Labour Party. Will Dr Simpson answer the question that Cathy Jamieson failed to answer: what impact would there have been on NHS budgets under the Labour policy to put all resources into education and cut NHS funding? That is central to today's debate.

Dr Simpson: I will not answer that question, because this debate is about the SNP Government facing the reports that we have received from individual health boards about the cuts that they are having to make.

Let me go into that point in more detail. We have heard about NHS Highland, which is talking about £10 million of cuts in addition to the efficiency savings. NHS Forth Valley has spoken about cuts of 1 per cent across the board, while NHS Grampian is having to consider a 5 per cent cut to balance its budget.

What are the efficiency savings, and will they affect front-line services? Shona Robison referred to dealing with vacancies—

Shona Robison: It was one case.

Dr Simpson: In Shetland, but I am talking about other areas. *[Interruption.]* Shona Robison may sit there and laugh, but the fact remains—

Nicola Sturgeon: Will the member give way?

Dr Simpson: No, I will not take another intervention.

We have heard from a number of health boards that they will use a delay in filling vacancies to achieve efficiencies. Are the ministers really sitting there and saying, from a sedentary position—

Shona Robison: Will the member give way?

Dr Simpson: No, I will not. The minister is commenting enough from a sedentary position. Is she saying that the health boards are not delaying vacancies? *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): Not from a sedentary position, please, ministers.

Dr Simpson: Is the minister saying that delay in filling vacancies is a reasonable way of achieving efficiency savings? Such delay puts pressure on front-line staff who have to cope without the consultant or nurse who has not been appointed. That is not an efficiency saving.

Many of the savings that were noted in the responses to us were one-offs, which are not efficiency savings. I will list them: property sales of £42 million; cuts in supplies, not improvements in procurement; capital to revenue virement reductions; accountancy adjustments; and freezing uplifts to budgets.

In summary, it is not Labour members who are saying that there are problems with efficiency savings; we are repeating the reports that we have had from health boards. The higher levels of inflation and the reports from health boards are serious issues that, as Ross Finnie said, need to be addressed seriously.

Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

General Questions

11:40

Anthrax (Importation of Animal Skins)

1. Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what representations it has made to United Kingdom import agencies with regard to the importation of animal skins from Africa used in the manufacture of drums, in light of deaths from anthrax in Scotland and England. (S3O-4822)

The Minister for Public Health (Shona Robison): The rules governing the importation of skins are set out in European Union legislation that has been transposed into domestic Scottish legislation. The legislation is enforced at points of entry by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and official veterinary surgeons. In light of recent events, the Scottish Government has written to Scottish importers reminding them of the import rules that are applicable to the products.

Christine Grahame: As the minister may know, the fatal accident inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the death of Borders man Pascal Norris is to commence next week. Does the minister share my concern that not enough lessons have been learned by UK import agencies in light of Mr Norris's death and the death in London? I do not want to pre-empt the FAI, but both deaths appear to have strong connections to contaminated and imported animal skins. What assessment has been made by the civil contingencies unit and Government health officials to prepare for—I hope that this does not happen—a possible outbreak of anthrax in Scotland?

Shona Robison: We have reviewed the recommendations in the report with Health Protection Scotland and animal health officials. As Christine Grahame will know, the Public Health etc (Scotland) Act 2008 introduced new legislative controls to address issues that are faced during such incidents regarding access to property and other matters. We will review the need to take further action following the outcome of the fatal accident inquiry to which she referred. I am happy to keep the member informed of the discussions that my officials have on that matter.

Equality and Human Rights Commission (Meetings)

2. Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive when the Cabinet

Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth last met representatives of the Equality and Human Rights Commission and what issues were discussed. (S3O-4788)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): I have not so far met representatives of the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Johann Lamont: I find that disappointing, and I urge the cabinet secretary to meet them as a matter of urgency, particularly on single outcome agreements.

The cabinet secretary may be aware that Morag Alexander, the Scotland commissioner, has said that the equality impact assessment is a requirement of the public sector equality duties, which are legally binding, and that it should be central to policy design, not policy review. In light of that, what advice did the cabinet secretary seek or receive from the commission on whether equality impact assessments are necessary for single outcome agreements? He is on record as saying that that is a matter for local government and local authority representatives have told the Local Government and Communities Committee that equality impact assessments are not necessary for single outcome agreements.

John Swinney: I respect the considerable interest that Johann Lamont takes in equalities, which she has pursued both as Deputy Minister for Communities and in other aspects of her parliamentary activities. However, the formulation of single outcome agreements is properly undertaken by individual local authorities. There is a duty on each authority to ensure that it takes equalities issues fully into account in the formulation of its policy positions.

On Johann Lamont's specific question, I did not seek advice from the Equality and Human Rights Commission because I felt effectively advised on local authorities' legal responsibilities. I will monitor the situation as I monitor all aspects of the development of single outcome agreements in the policy process.

Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): In 2006, Tom McCabe, who was then Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform, said on a similar issue:

"We can do our best ... to mentor local government and to encourage it to reach agreements that will strike the balance".—[*Official Report, Finance Committee*, 21 February 2006; c 3419.]

Does the cabinet secretary agree with that? Does he agree that it is up to local government and not central Government to move equal pay forward?

John Swinney: The issue of equal pay has been a significant part of the discussions that I have had with committees on the budget for 2009-

10. I took part in an extensive discussion on the issue with the Equal Opportunities Committee, in which Sandra White participated.

The issues of equal pay and single status are properly matters for local authorities. As Sandra White will know, the Government believes that local authorities must be given the freedom and the flexibility to carry out their duties and obligations. I am pleased that local authorities are now making further progress on tackling the issues of equal pay and single status, and the Government supports them in that work.

Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab): Does the cabinet secretary agree that for equalities organisations—and, indeed, for the people of Scotland—it is essential that equality impact assessments are implemented in a timely fashion? Will he outline how he is monitoring single outcome agreements, for which he has ultimate responsibility, and will he issue an interim report on the progress that is being made towards meeting the equality duties, which are legal requirements?

John Swinney: I consider the progress of single outcome agreements on an on-going basis. Many members told me that it would not be possible to put in place single outcome agreements by April 2008 and, not for the first time, they were proved wrong. The single outcome agreements are in place, and a fresh set of agreements will be formulated by community planning partnerships, which will involve local authorities, in April 2009. The Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities are working together to monitor single outcome agreements and to advise authorities on the approach that they should take.

I point out to Marlyn Glen that the Government makes clear in our national outcomes the focus that we expect in national and local policy on tackling some of these questions. I refer her to one of those outcomes, which states:

"We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society."

That outcome is to be part of the focus of policy making in Scotland, and our performance framework is designed to monitor progress towards achieving it.

Buildings at Risk Register

3. Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive what powers it has to hold local authorities to account when a building has been placed on the buildings at risk register. (S3O-4754)

The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani): The Scottish Government has no powers to hold local

authorities to account when a building has been placed on the buildings at risk register. Placing a building on that non-statutory register creates no new legal powers or duties for either the Scottish Government or the local authority. Local authorities have a range of powers to choose from to prevent the deterioration of buildings, where they believe that it is appropriate for them to do that.

The Government is strongly committed to local decision making. It is properly for the local authority to decide whether to intervene in any particular case. Historic Scotland funds the Scottish Civic Trust to compile and administer the buildings at risk register. It prioritises grant aid towards buildings that are at risk and is always willing to discuss individual cases with local authorities when they wish to seek advice.

Ted Brocklebank: Is the minister aware that Hamilton hall, which is the historic B-listed former Grand hotel overlooking the Old course at St Andrews, has been placed on the register? Is she aware that development work on the building stopped a year ago, and that it is now open to the elements? Is she also aware that Fife Council has tried—so far without success—to contact the American owner of the building to ask him to effect urgent repairs? With the open championship returning to St Andrews in just 18 months' time, what can the Scottish Government do to save that iconic building?

Linda Fabiani: I understand Ted Brocklebank's concern—the building is certainly showing signs of neglect. Internal works took place, but they ceased more than a year ago. The building has broken windows and is an eyesore on the back of the golf course, which is one of Scotland's jewels. Our inspector is in touch with Fife Council; we understand that a solution is being sought and we will monitor the situation.

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): Question 4 has not been lodged.

Student Hardship

5. Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it expects levels of student hardship to increase in this academic year. (S3O-4771)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Fiona Hyslop): Like everyone else, students will be affected by the current economic climate. We recognise that that may mean that more students are facing hardship, so we are working closely with colleges and universities to establish what demands are being made on the money that we provide to alleviate student hardship through the Student Awards

Agency for Scotland and the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council.

A total of £16 million—up from £14.7 million last year—has been allocated to the higher education discretionary funds in this academic year. That funding will enable students who are facing particular financial hardship to continue their course of higher education in college or university. For students studying in further education colleges, a total of £6 million, which will be administered by the Scottish funding council, is available.

In addition, the funding council has undertaken an early in-year redistribution exercise, and has been able to reallocate an additional £5.4 million. That reallocated money will be used to provide additional bursary support and meet requests for help with child care costs. We should not underestimate how quickly and effectively the funding council has responded to the pressures on college budgets. That has been recognised and supported by the college sector.

Claire Baker: Can the cabinet secretary confirm that a student in England with a parental income of £50,000 receives more Government support than does the very poorest Scottish student? Does she agree that stripping over £12 million from funding for grants, bursaries and loans over the next three years, which is a result of the Scottish Government's decision to reduce the number of students who are eligible for Government support, risks increasing student hardship and drop-out rates, and threatens the widening of participation at Scottish universities?

Fiona Hyslop: I do not think that the member's second point is true, and I am happy to write to her on the matter. A recent announcement by the Westminster Government shows that it got its sums wrong and now has to cut £200 million from grant support for students in England.

The member's question might have slightly more credibility if she had supported the abolition of the graduate endowment fee. If it had been left to her and her colleagues, students in this country would have to pay an additional £2,300 in student fees. We are pleased to have abolished the graduate endowment fee and I am disappointed that the member was not able to support that.

Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee West) (SNP): In the light of the announcement by Labour's Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, John Denham, that £200 million will be cut from student grants south of the border, can the cabinet secretary confirm that the Scottish Government will not follow suit and that we are still committed to increasing financial support for Scottish students?

Fiona Hyslop: We have introduced £38 million of additional support, which did not previously exist, for part-time students, to ensure that they no longer have to take out loans to study but can obtain grants to help them to further their studies. That is particularly important in the current economic climate, and it is only one element of the additional student support that the Government has already introduced. It will enable 20,000 students to take part in part-time study. That is very welcome in the current financial climate.

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): Does the cabinet secretary agree that, either through a minimum income guarantee or a full exemption, students should not pay local income tax?

Fiona Hyslop: The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth has indicated that he will examine that issue. We have some sympathy with the position of students in relation to exemption. We have indicated that we are sympathetic to the idea of consulting on a minimum income guarantee in relation to any developments with regard to student support in the future.

Architecture and Design Services

6. Christina McKelvie (Central Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what support it is giving to architecture and design services. (S3O-4828)

The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani): We have increased funding for architecture to more than £1.8 million in this financial year. Within that sum, we increased our annual support for the Lighthouse from £350,000 to £450,000 and we increased our support for the Sust. programme on sustainability, which is based at the Lighthouse, from £200,000 to £450,000, which includes £150,000 to establish a Sust. resource centre.

This year, I have also committed £75,000 towards the Scottish presence at the Venice biennale on architecture; increased annual funding of the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland Doolan award by £10,000 to £25,000 to enable the development of public touring exhibitions; and committed £35,000 over three years for a new civic trust award for place making in Scotland. That is a clear demonstration of the Government's commitment to architecture and design in Scotland.

Christina McKelvie: Will the minister expand on what she is doing to encourage education and outreach through the support that she is providing to architecture and design services?

Linda Fabiani: We have further developed the outreach programme that is managed by the

Lighthouse to support organisations, communities and individuals in ways that best meet their ambitions to create a better built environment. That support is wide ranging and can take the form of residences, workshops, events or festivals.

Our proposals for the sustainable resource centre, as part of our enlarged Sust. initiative, will provide clients, design teams and users with opportunities to extend their understanding of sustainable materials and renewable energy sources.

We continue to support the SIX student awards for architecture in collaboration with the RIAS. The awards exhibition, which is managed by the Lighthouse, supports our emerging talent. Of course, I will continue to explore how funds can best be utilised to support young and emerging design talent in Scotland.

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab): That was indeed a long answer; I look forward to reading the *Official Report* to appreciate its content. What support might the minister offer the people of Cumbernauld and North Lanarkshire Council to retain and improve Adam house—known as Cumbernauld house—in my constituency?

Linda Fabiani: The issue that the member raises has been on-going for a long time and I have had representations from people who care very much about the building. Consideration of the situation will continue.

Gaelic (Pre-school Learning)

7. Jamie Hepburn (Central Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive how it supports the learning of Gaelic at pre-school level. (S3O-4823)

The Minister for Children and Early Years (Adam Ingram): The Scottish Government is committed to supporting Gaelic and makes specific grant funding available to local authorities to support the development of Gaelic-medium pre-school education in Scotland.

Jamie Hepburn: The minister might be aware of the Croileagan Bogha Frois organisation in Cumbernauld—I apologise to Dr Allan and John Farquhar Munro for my pronunciation. The organisation was set up by parents to help to teach their pre-school children Gaelic. I urge the minister to visit it, if he can. Does he agree that organisations that have been set up and run by communities have a big role to play in teaching Gaelic to young children?

Adam Ingram: Yes. I will not attempt to pronounce the playgroup's name, but it is a small, volunteer-led group that has recently had to move from Condorrat primary school because of space restrictions. The local authority supported the

move by identifying premises for it and providing resources for the children's play and staff training. The move took place over the summer and the service was relaunched at the start of this academic year, generating a lot of local interest. That is a good example of the concordat in action.

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): The historic concordat!

Adam Ingram: The historic concordat, yes. It gives local authorities the freedom to allocate the resources based on local needs and priorities. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order. There is too much noise in the chamber.

Mortgage Rights (Scotland) Act 2001

8. Ross Finnie (West of Scotland) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what action is being taken to ensure that home owners facing repossession orders receive protection under the Mortgage Rights (Scotland) Act 2001. (S3O-4839)

The Minister for Communities and Sport (Stewart Maxwell): The Mortgage Rights (Scotland) Act 2001 provides significant protection for those at risk of repossession. Owners have the right to ask the sheriff to give them time to pay off arrears and lenders are obliged to comply fully with Financial Services Authority regulations.

In addition, Scottish Government officials met the Council of Mortgage Lenders on 23 October. The CML confirmed that its new guidance on repossession, which was issued that day, applies to all United Kingdom members and that it emphasises that lenders should consider all alternative options to repossession when dealing with home owners who are in mortgage difficulties.

We will continue to review whether the 2001 act requires any additional provisions to improve legal protection for home owners in Scotland.

Ross Finnie: The minister will be aware that the Scottish Legal Aid Board has, since last year, routinely applied the preservation of property rule, which has the effect of depriving even those on low incomes of legal aid in house repossession cases. Although the Cabinet Secretary for Justice's announcement on increasing those thresholds is welcome, they do not affect the preservation of property rule. What steps will the minister take to ensure that mortgage holders who are threatened with repossession have access to free legal representation and thus access to the protections under the 2001 act?

Stewart Maxwell: I am glad that the member agrees that the announcement by the Cabinet Secretary for Justice was welcome. We provide protection and support for members of the public, but there are also a number of free advice

services in relation to legal protection. There are also services and support through citizens advice bureaux and there are a number of other areas where people can access support and advice in taking cases. Of course, there is also the in-sheriff-court advice service. There are a number of protections and a number of support services are available. We will always keep these things under review and ensure that people in Scotland have the level of protection that they should. They have that level of protection at the moment, but we will always ensure that, if anything else is required, we take the necessary action.

First Minister's Question Time

12:00

Engagements

1. Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what engagements he has planned for the rest of the day. (S3F-1165)

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

Iain Gray: The First Minister's Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning was in my constituency yesterday to open a beautiful new primary school. I believe that she is opening four schools in a fortnight, and every single one of them—like Sanderson's Wynd primary school in Tranent—was commissioned, planned, funded and started by Labour—[*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): Order.

Iain Gray: What is Ms Hyslop going to do when she runs out of Labour schools to open? What are our construction workers going to do when they run out of Labour schools to build? We have yet to see a single school project initiated on this First Minister's watch. When will his education secretary be able to open a school that has been commissioned, planned and built by the Scottish National Party?

The First Minister: I do not know whether Iain Gray was conscious of the fact, but his claim about the achievements of the previous Administration—such as they were—caused some disconcertion in the Liberal ranks, who felt that they should share in the glory.

Of course, the truth is that the schools are not Labour schools or Labour-Liberal schools; they are the people's schools. [*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order.

The First Minister: As are the 250 that will be built and refurbished in the term of this Administration. One thing was wrong with Iain Gray's suggestions: it is true that the schools that the cabinet secretary opened—one would have thought that Iain Gray would be grateful that she opened them—were planned under the previous Administration, but it is certainly not true that they were paid for under the previous Administration. They are public-private partnership and private finance initiative schools and the people will be paying for them for the next 20 or 30 years.

Iain Gray: The First Minister should check his facts: the school that his education secretary opened yesterday—just like the other one in

Tranent that he opened last year—was not a PPP or PFI school and it was certainly planned and built by Labour.

Last Thursday, the First Minister was in Glenrothes saying, “Yes we can,” and the people of Glenrothes said to him, “Oh no you won’t.” When it comes to building schools, today he is trying to say, “Yes we are,” but parents, teachers and councils are saying, “No you are not.” The people know who has built their schools.

The problem now is this Government and its unworkable Scottish Futures Trust. The Government should listen to Glasgow City Council, which has said that, since last year’s election, no new schools have been commissioned anywhere in Scotland. Glasgow had intended to consult on the next phase of its primary school investments using the SNP’s preferred Scottish Futures Trust. Unfortunately, it says that the Scottish Futures Trust has proved to be “an embarrassing let-down”. Will the First Minister admit again this week that he has got it wrong, ditch the Scottish Futures Trust and allow Scottish councils to start building schools?

The First Minister: I will give Iain Gray a few facts to interrupt his assertions. Since May 2007, when the Scottish people threw out the Labour—or Labour-Liberal—Administration, 11 projects have been signed off and about 55 schools have been planned, which involves 30,000 pupils and a combined capital value of £1 billion. Those schools are coming forward. Where will they be? In Falkirk, Perth and Kinross, West Dunbartonshire, East Dunbartonshire, West Lothian, Dumfries and Galloway, and of course—as of a few days ago—Inverclyde. Schools are in the pipeline in Moray, the Western Isles and Orkney.

I welcome Iain Gray’s apparent conversion away from the PFI and PPP. The major difference with the schools that are being signed off and planned under this Administration is that a growing number of non-profit-distributing models are being used. That provides good value for the people and new buildings for pupils. The Government is prepared to face up to its financial responsibilities, instead of leaving them to future generations.

Iain Gray: The trouble with the pipeline of schools that the First Minister describes is that it stretches back to before May 2007 to the previous Administration. The 30,000 pupils will have new classrooms in new schools that Labour set in motion.

Of those who are trying to build schools, let us consider North Lanarkshire Council. Previously, the council built 26 schools. It would like to build more. The plea of the council’s education convener to the Government is:

“I would ask the Scottish Government to reconsider their plans for the Scottish Futures Trust. If they cannot find a way to make it work quickly, I would urge them to return to other funding mechanisms”—

yes—

“such as PPP. The alternative is that we continue to teach pupils in buildings which are no longer fit for purpose. I do not find this acceptable”.

None of us finds that acceptable. I ask the First Minister again: in the interests of Scotland’s schoolchildren, will he stop messing with his Futures Trust and start building schools?

The First Minister: It is clear that Councillor Jim Fletcher of East Renfrewshire Council does not share Iain Gray’s views, as the councillor has accepted an appointment to the board of the Scottish Futures Trust. In case members were wondering, he is a Labour councillor. He has accepted that appointment because he realises—as do the vast majority of people in Scotland—that the PFI/PPP system of school building is redundant, because it has placed huge obligations on future generations and because the Treasury has decided that all such arrangements must be on the balance sheet as of next April. Perhaps Iain Gray’s conversion away from PFI/PPP has less to do with his own analysis of the situation and much to do with further orders from London, where people seem to have changed their minds.

Iain Gray: To tell the truth, I have little interest in the First Minister’s putting one councillor on a board. I am interested in the First Minister’s lack of ability to put our schoolchildren in new classrooms.

As for London, let us talk about it. The newest parliamentarian in Britain, Lindsay Roy, is here today. He has been the MP for Glenrothes for only one week, yet he has already seen—[*Interruption.*]

Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife (Con): Has he lost his way?

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Iain Gray: In one week, Lindsay Roy has already seen Labour in Westminster give the go-ahead for the rebuilding of 1,500 primary schools in England and he has seen councils in England being given £1.75 billion of additional support to make that happen. That is real money to build real schools, which will provide better conditions for hundreds of thousands of pupils and jobs for tens of thousands of construction workers when those jobs are needed most. Why cannot Scotland have some of that? The First Minister has had 18 months. He already has Scotland’s share of that money. When do we get our schools and our jobs?

The First Minister: I note Iain Gray's conversion to telling the truth—that was a nice introduction to his question.

I welcome Lindsay Roy to the gallery. Perhaps we should swear him in to this Parliament—and, just for completeness, invite John Mason, the new MP for Glasgow East, to attend.

Iain Gray does not like Labour councillors who take a proper, practical and constructive view of the Scottish Futures Trust, and he does not want to talk about London, so I will try him with some statistics. He will find that the 250 new and refurbished schools that will be built within the term of this Administration is more than the figure that he cites for the United Kingdom school-building programme. Iain Gray's conversion to ploughing his own furrow is welcome, because he will not be overshadowed by the new Secretary of State for Scotland, Jim Murphy, who seems to be the new leader of the Labour Party in 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-1166)

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

Annabel Goldie: Yesterday, official figures revealed that 126,000 Scots are out of work. The much respected Fraser of Allander institute has predicted that, at worst, a further 117,000 jobs could be lost, and that there will be long-term negative effects on many of our businesses. Already, countless families in Scotland are feeling the pain of recession and fearing for their futures. Fewer people will be in work, more jobs will be lost and tax revenues will fall.

That harsh reality impacts on Scottish Government policy. Does the First Minister accept that his Government's cosy assumptions about a local income tax are now smashed to pieces? Is it not time to ditch that discredited, unmanageable and now economically flawed tax on work?

The First Minister: First, I acknowledge the severe problems with the economic downturn. We had a full debate on that yesterday, and I was pleased that the Parliament supported the constructive approach in the SNP Administration's six-point plan, under which we are doing what is within our powers to combat the forces of the economic downturn.

Annabel Goldie is quite right that economic circumstances change forecasts. I point out to her as gently as I can that forecasts on house building and expected council tax revenue have also changed. However, underlying the question of taxation is a question about parity and fairness.

We all accept that no tax anywhere and at any time is popular, because people do not like to pay tax, but if we have to pay tax and fund services—as we all do—are we not better paying a fair tax that is based on the ability to pay as opposed to an iniquitous and hated tax, such as the council tax?

Annabel Goldie: The First Minister revels in creating the illusion that he is an economics guru, or Scotland's very own financial prophet—the Brahan seer of Buchan. Earlier this year, he said:

"The Scottish banks are among the most stable financial institutions in the world."

If only.

What we need now is real help in tough times. The Scottish Conservatives have laid out how we can bring such help to every council tax payer in Scotland. In these unprecedented times, is the First Minister arguing that a council tax freeze is enough? Is he seriously ruling out any cut in council tax for the duration of this parliamentary session?

The First Minister: We should all accept that there are severe difficulties in the financial sector, and, incidentally, that some of its practices will have to change substantially in the new environment. However, I deprecate people who regard the problem as particularly affecting the Scottish financial sector, because that is simply untrue, for two reasons. First, Scotland has outstanding financial institutions that are pursuing their business through the economic downturn and the financial crisis, and they are doing so exceptionally well. Secondly, the difficulties that are affecting the clearing banks have affected banks throughout the world. The situation is not specific to any one bank, and it certainly is not specific to Scotland.

As to whether the council tax freeze is enough, no, it is probably not enough, but at least it is a good start for the people of Scotland. It is a good start because council tax increased by 40 per cent under the Conservative party from 1992 and increased by another 60 per cent under the Labour Party from 1997. One reason why the council tax is hated is that it is unfair; another reason is that, between the Labour and Conservative parties, it doubled in the space of very few years. Is the council tax freeze enough? No, but it is a lot better than the record of the Labour and Conservative parties.

Cabinet (Meetings)

3. Tavish Scott (Shetland) (LD): To ask the First Minister what issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Cabinet. (S3F-1167)

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

Tavish Scott: In response to the damning child protection inspection in Aberdeen, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning said this morning that she was

“reassured that considerable efforts are being made and things are moving in the right direction.”

The recovery action plan that is being driven by the inspectors could take four months to produce, and the follow-up inspection will wait for a year. How can that possibly be urgent enough when children in Aberdeen face living in high-risk situations with drug-abusing parents and without adequate support or protection, and with services that do not intervene quickly enough in cases involving parental substance abuse and neglect? None of that is acceptable, is it?

The First Minister: No, it is not acceptable. Yesterday, I saw the exchanges in the House of Commons on the very distressing case in Haringey, but I did not think that they were particularly edifying, so let us try to consider such serious matters in the way in which they should be considered.

In Scotland, we benefit from having an extraordinarily rigorous system of inspection through Her Majesty's inspectors of child protection services. There have been 24 such inspections over the past two years. It should be said that some councils' performance has been exemplary. The performance of councils in West Lothian, Renfrewshire, East Renfrewshire, the Scottish Borders and North Lanarkshire has been extremely good. However, the performance of some councils—the latest example is Aberdeen City Council—has been totally and utterly unacceptable. In recent times, the only report that is comparable to the one that Aberdeen City Council has received is the one that Midlothian Council received towards the beginning of last year.

I make that point because, as a result of the inspection system and the identification of the problems, it has been possible to improve substantially the situation in Midlothian, and the same will happen in Aberdeen. It is not just that that will happen: because of our system, action has been taken since early indications of the report emerged in June. It has not been a case of waiting around for the report to be published; effective action has already been taken. I hope that, just as happened in Midlothian, there will be a substantial improvement in the ability of the social work department to fulfil its duties to the most vulnerable sections of the community—children

who are at risk and people who need child protection.

Tavish Scott: I agree with the First Minister that the situation is totally unacceptable. Children in Aberdeen are at risk, so when he returns to the north-east, as I am sure he will this weekend, will he meet the political leaders of Aberdeen? Yesterday, in response to Aberdeen City Council's lack of Government funding, they published 317 pages of new council cuts, including more cuts to children's services. Will he tell them that they must deliver a first-class child protection service? This morning in Aberdeen, there is a child in a flat who has drug-abusing parents. The council needs to act and so does the First Minister's Government. Will he today promise more resources to help that child?

The First Minister: I do not know whether Tavish Scott is aware of this, but we have agreed in principle—exceptionally, because of the council's historical funding problems, which stretch back over many years—to allow the council to capitalise a significant element of its expected revenue costs, including those from equal pay compensation payments. That proposal is subject to the receipt of a detailed business case. We have been in touch with the council about the proposal over the past few weeks. Obviously, we have to get Treasury permission, but the indications are that, subject to a detailed business case being received, that can happen in time for the council to make its final decision on its revenue budget on 17 December.

Meetings have been taking place since June on the expected report, involving all of the authorities that are responsible for child protection. While no one could claim that the situation in the social work department as it affects child protection is perfect—we will wait for the re-assessment to see what improvement has been made—seven extra full-time social workers have been employed over the past few months, and initiatives have been taken to ensure that children are assessed by new staff in the maternity unit, to allow early intervention to take place. Significant staffing improvements have been made over the past few months. I stress once again that it was not a question of waiting for the report to be published. Luckily, because of our robust inspection system in Scotland, for which we should be grateful, we intervened early and took action to ensure that the situation improved now, as opposed to waiting until the report was published.

HBOS

4. Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what further discussion the Scottish Government has had about the proposed

merger of HBOS and Lloyds TSB and the impact that this will have on jobs. (S3F-1173)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): I most recently met Lloyds TSB on Tuesday. I reaffirmed that the Scottish Government would continue to work closely with Lloyds TSB, and anyone else with alternative proposals, to ensure an outcome that minimises potential costs for Scottish workers, customers and the wider economy.

Alex Neil: Is the First Minister aware that within minutes of the United Kingdom Government being informed confidentially of the Bank of China's interest in bidding for HBOS, that information appeared in the blog of Robert Peston of the BBC? That is hardly the proper way to do business. Given the apparent attempts by the UK Government to sabotage any possible alternative to the Lloyds TSB bid for HBOS, will the First Minister remind the Prime Minister of his promise to treat any rival bid for HBOS on a level playing field with Lloyds TSB? Will he ask the Prime Minister to keep a promise for once?

The First Minister: First, I emphasise, as I have done before, that I make no criticism of Lloyds TSB, which is, quite properly, pursuing its commercial objectives. It also is a bank with a fine record in Scotland, both in banking and in insurance. I do not know the detail of the situation that Alex Neil described, but I find it difficult to reconcile what I interpret as clear political hostility to any alternative but the merger with the public pronouncements of a level playing field. The difficulty is this: with the best will in the world, a merger between two UK-based domestic clearing banks, involving synergies of £1.5 billion, will inevitably, even with the best of motives, result in substantial job losses and a diminution of competition.

While I support the means to stabilise the financial sector, many people will think it ironic, to say the least, that while substantial quantities of public money can be inputted to stabilise the financial sector, the outcome may well be a reduction in employment of the order of tens of thousands of jobs and a reduction in competition that will affect families and businesses throughout the country. Under those terms, I wish that the Prime Minister and the chancellor would live up to their public declarations of a level playing field for all options for the future of HBOS.

David Whitton (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab): Yet again we have heard more nonsense from Alex Neil, who seems to see a conspiracy around every corner.

In the First Minister's discussions with Lloyds TSB, did he ask it—as I have previously asked him to do—to ensure that there is no offshoring of Scottish jobs? He said that his first priority is to

protect jobs in Scotland. One way to do that is to ensure that Lloyds TSB does not send those jobs to India. As the First Minister is well aware, Lloyds TSB's bid is the only bid on the table. I hope that he is putting his full effort behind ensuring that the merger goes ahead to protect the jobs that are so necessary here in Scotland.

The First Minister: For a number of reasons, people will find David Whitton's point rather breathtaking. It is true, as I understand it, that it has been the business practice of Lloyds TSB to offshore a number of back-office jobs. That has not been the practice, to the same extent, in HBOS. If Mr Whitton is looking for guarantees, would it not be better for him to turn to the major shareholder in both banks—which happens to be Her Majesty's Government—and ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister whether, in all their other observations on the banking situation, they have mentioned to either bank the question of the offshoring of banking jobs?

Efficiency Savings (First Minister's Portfolio)

5. Andy Kerr (East Kilbride) (Lab): To ask the First Minister for what reasons his own portfolio has not achieved the 2 per cent efficiency savings asked of all directorates, including those responsible for health and education. (S3F-1183)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): As the minister who was responsible for introducing the 2005 to 2008 efficient government initiative to which he refers, Mr Kerr should be aware that his Administration did not set a 2 per cent target for any parts of government. Indeed, only since the current Administration launched the 2008 to 2011 efficient government programme have all ministerial portfolios been set a clear, unambiguous target of 2 per cent. Mr Kerr will appreciate that, as we have just passed the midpoint of the first year of the new programme, it is too early to report on whether any portfolio has reached its 2 per cent target for the year 2008-09. Nevertheless, the signs are good.

Andy Kerr: I am not sure that I concur with the view that the signs are good. The First Minister previously mentioned the economic downturn. From all the information that is available to me, it appears that his Government's efficiencies are fast becoming cuts in services and in jobs, especially in local government. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities understands that and Mr Swinney understands it, too. The Prime Minister has risen to the challenge of the new economic environment. Will the First Minister do likewise and stop the job cuts?

The First Minister: Andy Kerr seems to have forgotten that the Labour Party's argument against our efficiencies in government—which came from

the former leader—was that they were too small. In the famous hungry caterpillar speech, Wendy Alexander said that our efficiency savings were too small: the record speaks for itself. Also, the difference between our efficiency savings and the previous Administration's efficiency savings is that Government departments are getting to keep and reinvest their efficiency savings under Mr Swinney's wise tutelage.

I am not surprised that Andy Kerr wandered off his initial question. When I saw it in the *Business Bulletin*, I decided to make some detailed investigations into the period when he was the Minister for Finance and Public Services and Jack McConnell was the First Minister. I found that the entire explanation for a £7 million underhit in efficiency savings was that BBC Alba, instead of being launched in 2007-08—the year in which Andy Kerr thought that it was going to be launched—was launched only in September this year. I put it to Andy Kerr that it is difficult for any department or for BBC Alba to make efficiency savings before it starts production.

Domestic Abuse Against Men

6. Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the First Minister what action the Scottish Government intends to take following the publication of figures showing that domestic abuse against men has increased by 110 per cent since 1999. (S3F-1176)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): The Scottish Government recognises that domestic abuse is always wrong, regardless of gender. The Government is committed to tackling domestic abuse and ensuring that all those who are affected by it are given the support that they need and that those who perpetrate it are dealt with effectively.

The Scottish Government's approach to tackling domestic abuse is based on evidence that has been gathered over several decades in Scotland, in the rest of the UK and internationally, which tells us that women are disproportionately affected by domestic abuse, both in its severity and in its sustained nature. That is why we target resources and work with partners to develop services as we do.

Mary Scanlon: Although it acknowledges the fact that the majority of domestic abuse cases involve male abuse of females, Home Office and British crime survey research has repeatedly found that men are much less likely to report violent domestic abuse. Given that the Welsh Assembly now funds a project that provides services that are appropriate for men and same-sex couples, will the Government ensure that all the victims of violent domestic abuse and the children who witness it are given the same support?

The First Minister: Yes, the support should be given regardless of gender. I am glad that Mary Scanlon acknowledged in her introduction that the evidence base shows that the vast majority of domestic violence cases—which are deplorable whoever they affect—affect women. Women are victims in the vast majority of such cases. However, we will keep the situation under review. Mary Scanlon will be interested to know that the new statistics for 2007-08 are due for publication on Tuesday 25 November, after which she may want to return to the issue.

The Presiding Officer: We started late, so I will take a brief supplementary from Ian McKee.

Ian McKee (Lothians) (SNP): Will the First Minister broaden his comments to include elder abuse, which is an underreported and serious social problem?

The First Minister: The Scottish Government recognises that elder abuse is a sad reality that is too often hidden. However, the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007, which became law on 29 October, just a few weeks ago, puts in place modern and strengthened measures to afford greater protection to those adults in Scotland who are most at risk of harm.

12:30

Meeting suspended until 14:15.

14:15

On resuming—

Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Rural Affairs and the Environment

Chlorofluorocarbons

1. Hugh Henry (Paisley South) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what steps it is taking to ensure that materials containing CFCs in buildings being demolished are disposed of in such a way as to minimise the release of these greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. (S3O-4784)

The Minister for Environment (Michael Russell): This is an important issue. The recovery and disposal of CFCs in demolition waste forms part of a European Commission proposal to recast and amend the existing European Community regulation covering the elimination of man-made ozone-depleting substances. In light of that proposal, the Scottish Government is working with the United Kingdom Government and the building industry to assess the current infrastructure that is available for disposal of materials containing ozone-depleting substances from buildings that are being demolished, and the technical and economic issues that may arise.

Hugh Henry: Minister, like you I recognise the significance of the problem. Across Europe, foams are estimated to account for 16 times the amount of CFCs and 3.5 times the amount of hydrochlorofluorocarbons accounted for by refrigerators, so there is clearly a major problem. Has the Scottish Environment Protection Agency issued guidance on the issue? If so, what checks are being carried out? What enforcement action is being taken against those who transgress?

Michael Russell: I am happy to ensure that SEPA provides the member with information on the enforcement action that has been taken under the present regulation. As the member is aware, we are dealing with the way in which the regulation will be recast and recodified to meet increasing need; his question referred to that. On 28 November, the European Union working party on the environment will discuss a firm proposal for regulations. The Government is keen that the existing regulation should be recast in an effective way, and we are taking SEPA's advice on the issue. As soon as the regulation has been recast, we will take all appropriate steps to ensure that the building industry and some wider organisations are aware of the issues and act promptly and effectively to ensure that releases of CFCs do not

take place, because such releases make a significant contribution to climate damage.

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): I remind members that all contributions should be made through the chair, rather than directly to other members.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Hugh Henry reminds us that CFCs are greenhouse gases, although they are not often recognised as such. What measures will be included in the forthcoming climate change bill to ensure the recording, monitoring and inclusion in reduction targets of less well-recognised greenhouse cases such as CFCs and nitrogen trifluoride, which may become a more serious issue in future?

Michael Russell: The member raises an issue of importance. We must ensure that we do not keep our eye on a single ball—there are many balls in the air, so to speak. However, I hope that when the bill is published the member will be satisfied by the actions for which it provides. If he is not, I am certain that he will say so.

Rural Development Priorities

2. Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what its priorities are for rural development. (S3O-4785)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment (Richard Lochhead): Our priorities are to improve business viability, to enhance biodiversity and our landscapes, to improve water quality, to tackle climate change and to promote thriving rural communities.

Cathy Jamieson: Earlier this year, an award of more than £1.3 million was made under the European regional development fund programme for 2007 to 2013 for lowland and upland Scotland, under priority 4 of rural development funding, to contribute to homecoming Scotland 2009. Given the priorities that the minister has just outlined, what specific outcomes would he like to see in south-west Scotland, especially Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley?

Richard Lochhead: I hope that the generous funding that the Scottish Government has made available will have the same outcomes in the member's constituency in south-west Scotland as it will have in the rest of Scotland—thriving rural communities. I ask the member to advertise to her constituents the many funds that are available and to encourage them to apply, to ensure that her part of the world gets its fair share of that valuable funding.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): The minister will agree that ensuring a supply of affordable housing in rural areas must be a top priority. To help sustain

strong rural communities, will the Scottish Government consider granting powers to local authorities to relax planning rules in certain localities, so that they can create rural home zones along the lines suggested by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors?

Richard Lochhead: I thank the member for raising what is a huge social problem in rural Scotland. Just a couple of weeks ago I attended a meeting of the Scottish Government's housing task force, at which many potential solutions to the rural housing crisis were discussed. We await the outcome of the task force's deliberations.

I welcome ideas from members across the chamber. A range of issues are being considered by the task force and I ask the member to be assured that the Scottish Government is treating the issue very seriously.

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I welcome the fact that the minister recognised this week that the Scottish rural development programme is not fit for purpose, and I welcome his intention to review it. During that review, will he consider cutting the bureaucracy of the proposed scheme, ensure that the scheme is available to people who do not have internet access and ensure that the funding for the scheme reaches those who need it, rather than lining the pockets of accountants?

Richard Lochhead: It is striking that the member thinks that the SRDP is not fit for purpose, given that her party's Administration largely designed the programme that we are now implementing.

We all agree that it is essential that the rural development programme, which equates to £1.6 billion for our rural communities over the next six to seven years, is fit for purpose in 2009 and beyond. Once the first round of awards has finished, in late December, it will be an appropriate time to take stock. We must take into account the impact of the global situation on Scotland, as well as the experience of the first year of the programme. That includes some of the bureaucratic elements that have been brought to the Government's attention by farmers, land managers and rural interests the length and breadth of Scotland. It is important that we respond.

We have already taken steps to address some of the concerns that have been expressed and some of the teething problems of the first year, but we should bear it in mind that the SRDP has been largely successful over the past year, and that awards have been flowing out the door. Many innovative proposals are emerging from across rural Scotland. There have been 4,500

applications for the rural priorities element alone in the seven months since applications opened.

Seabirds (Breeding Populations)

3. Elizabeth Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive what action it is taking to address the decline in breeding seabird populations. (S3O-4761)

The Minister for Environment (Michael Russell): The member will be aware of the report from RSPB Scotland that was published on 30 October, which issued details of the levels of seabird breeding success on the RSPB's Scottish coastal reserves. The key issues that were highlighted in that report include a substantial lack of breeding success for the Arctic tern, Arctic skua and kittiwake in 2008. However,

"other seabird species appear to be weathering the storm. Great skuas, gannets and cormorants have experienced modest increases in their numbers, while herring gulls have remained stable."

The Scottish Government is committed to protecting our world-renowned seabird populations. We are working closely with bodies such as the RSPB to actively monitor our seabird colonies to find out just what the problems are. To strengthen seabird protection, we have recently consulted on proposals to extend 31 special protection areas into the marine environment, and we expect to make an announcement in the new year.

Climate change could well be an important factor. The Scottish Government is taking a leading role in developing our understanding of the impact of climate change on the natural environment. We have announced proposals for an ambitious climate change bill, which will help to develop solutions for global action to moderate the effects of climate change. That should be beneficial.

Elizabeth Smith: Is the minister aware that the number of breeding puffins on the Isle of May in my region—they are one of our most popular and iconic seabirds—has dropped by a staggering 28,000 pairs in the past five years, after almost 40 years of rapid population growth? In light of their tremendous value to the ecosystem and to tourism in north-east Fife, will the minister take action to address, and I hope reverse, that deeply worrying decline in puffin numbers?

Michael Russell: I am sure that the member would accept that action that we would like to take for the Isle of May must be in the context of action throughout the whole of Scotland and in the context of climate change and variations in the availability of sand eels, in the case of puffins in particular. I am sure that the member is aware that the tendency of puffins to eat pipefish instead of

sand eels when supplies are scarce adds to the problem, as very little nourishment is available from that fish.

Scotland has a good track record of being positive with respect to the needs of seabirds. For example, the efforts that were taken at the Wee Bankie off the east coast specifically focused on sand eel availability. We continue to be concerned about the problem and to address it, not just on the Isle of May—which I am concerned about—but in every area where there has been a decline.

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Is the decision to extend 31 special protection areas into sea areas based on sound science? Can the health of breeding seabirds be monitored in one of those areas, Cape Wrath, which is part of a live bombing range?

Michael Russell: The proposed boundaries of the extended areas are based on robust scientific data, but it is obvious that there must also be a justification that local people accept and understand. In all the work that I and my colleague Mr Lochhead have done with communities on such issues, we have been determined to ensure that proposals are acceptable and have support, because the health of the local environment should be important to every citizen.

The proposals on Cape Wrath were endorsed in the context of the science by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and Scottish Natural Heritage. The proposed 2km extension for Cape Wrath is part of the Scottish Government's commitment to protecting seabird populations. I have communicated with the member many times about bombing activities at Cape Wrath, which I think could be undertaken more sensitively—if bombing can ever be undertaken sensitively.

Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab): Presiding Officer, the breeding seabirds problem extends to your constituency, given the kittiwake population in the Mull of Galloway.

The minister mentioned sand eels. We have expressed concern in the past about the effect of commercial fishing on sand eel stocks. Has research been done into whether commercial fishing might also affect breeding seabird populations? If so, are discussions on the issue going on at European level?

Michael Russell: The member makes an important point. There is an extremely limited sand eel fishery—if there is one at all; I would have to come back to the member with the exact details. The decline in sand eels appears to be partly a result of climate change and partly a result of previous overexploitation, which is a problem that we have to address. SNH and others are working to find ways of increasing populations. However,

we must remember that climate change is a factor and will mean change.

Flood Defences

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

To ask the Scottish Executive what steps it is taking to support the provision of flood defences. (S3O-4768)

The Minister for Environment (Michael Russell): The provision of flood defences is of great importance in a time of climate change. Earlier this week I launched the Scottish flood forum, which will support people who are at risk of or have suffered flooding. The Scottish Government has given local authorities the freedom, flexibility and respect to meet national and local priorities and to manage their own resources, as agreed in our concordat with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. That is why in 2008-09 we have rolled up more than 40 specific grants, worth almost £1.7 billion—an amount that includes record sums for flood defences.

Ms Alexander: Has the Scottish Government received written representations from any local authority that has been affected by flooding during the past six months and is seeking additional financial support from the Scottish Government? I appreciate that the minister might not have that information at his fingertips, so will he undertake to write to me with the information if he cannot provide it now?

Michael Russell: I am happy to undertake to write to the member and to co-operate positively with her on this and any other matter. The issue of flooding should unite members of all parties.

I am unaware of specific representation. However, the member has more experience as a minister than I have, so she will know that although local authorities and others write to ministers regularly to ask for more resources, that does not mean either that those resources exist or that—perish the thought—the demands are always justified.

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Will the minister implement the recommendation of the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee that the fire and rescue service, which has massive experience, should be tasked with co-ordinating flood rescue activities?

Michael Russell: We are considering the issue to do with the fire and rescue service, which is the responsibility of my colleague the Minister for Community Safety. I have agreed to meet representatives of a number of bodies to discuss the service's involvement.

We must ensure that there is a speedy, prompt and effective response to any flooding situation. I visited victims of flooding in Broxburn on Monday afternoon and I know the tremendous suffering, upset and disruption that flooding causes, with the tremendous loss of precious items and, occasionally, the loss of life. We must do everything to guard against such loss, which is why the Scottish flood forum is working effectively to support victims of flooding.

Scottish Agricultural Wages Board

5. Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what plans it has to reform the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board. (S3O-4770)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment (Richard Lochhead): In a consultation exercise from 20 June to 30 September, we asked whether it would be appropriate to continue to set separate minimum rates of pay and other conditions for agricultural workers in Scotland and, if so, whether it should be done by the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board in its existing form or some other way.

We are evaluating responses and will announce our decision on the board's future as soon as possible.

Richard Baker: Will the minister acknowledge that the wages board has ensured that strides have been made in addressing the issue of low pay among many agricultural workers? How does he respond to trade unions' fears, including those of my union, Unite, that abolition of the board threatens progress?

Richard Lochhead: As the member will be aware, we are reviewing a number of public bodies in Scotland. A number of concerns have been expressed to the Scottish Government about the fact that the board dates back to 1949 and it is now 2008. It is therefore only right that the board should be reviewed, and we brought that forward by a year or so.

The Scottish Government has received a range of responses, none of which has come from the Labour Party, Richard Baker, or John Park, who has also raised the point in Parliament. Those responses have ranged from abolition to increased flexibility or maintaining the status quo. It is the Government's duty to listen carefully to all the views that are being expressed and ensure that we take the right decision for Scotland's agricultural workers and the wider farming sector.

Plastic Carrier Bags

6. Angela Constance (Livingston) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it accepts evidence that a 90 per cent reduction in plastic

carrier bags will result in 13,700 tonnes of additional waste per annum. (S3O-4816)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment (Richard Lochhead): The Scottish Government is focused on reducing the unnecessary use of all carrier bags, not just plastic ones. At the First Minister's supermarket summit in September, retailers committed to working with the Scottish Government to reduce carrier bag usage by 50 per cent by spring 2009. We accept that if householders just switch from using plastic bags to paper bags, there could be an increase in the amount of waste produced, given that paper bags generally weigh more. That is why we are working with retailers to support the reuse of all bags.

Angela Constance: Given that 75 per cent of consumers reuse plastic carrier bags at least once, does the cabinet secretary agree that a 50 per cent reduction in carrier bags will reduce waste by a negligible 4,000 tonnes? Would it not be a far more effective policy to increase existing opportunities to recycle plastics as opposed to any counterproductive and narrow focus on plastic carrier bags?

Richard Lochhead: We should congratulate consumers on reusing bags and, of course, we congratulate those towns in Scotland that are trying to become plastic bag-free. That is a sign that the general public and consumers are taking their environmental responsibilities very seriously indeed. By cutting down on the single use of bags, we help to address litter problems and reduce waste to landfill, as well as helping to change the attitudes of people in Scotland to their valuable resources. There are benefits to reducing the use of bags and there is much support in the chamber and throughout Scotland for continuing to head in the direction of reducing the single use of bags.

Recycling (Glasgow)

7. Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what action it is taking to help improve rates of recycling in Glasgow. (S3O-4838)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment (Richard Lochhead): The results being published by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency today indicate that, over the rolling year period to the end of June, the recycling and composting performance of Scottish local authorities increased to 32.2 per cent.

Glasgow's recycling rate for the same period is just over 18 per cent, so there is scope for improvement, but it is fair to say that Glasgow has come some way since 2004-05 when it was only recycling around 9 per cent. My officials are in dialogue with Glasgow to identify what further opportunities might exist to improve recycling

performance and I met representatives a few months ago. Options might include the further roll-out of kerbside recycle collections from households; the collection of a greater range of materials; and focused campaigns aimed at increasing householder participation.

My officials are scheduled to have a further meeting with Glasgow tomorrow.

Robert Brown: The minister made the point that Glasgow's recycling rate is only 18 per cent, which is well below the national average. Given the size of Glasgow, that figure is significant, especially as the Government's target is 40 per cent, to be met by 2010.

Does the minister agree that the lack of progress on developing the Scottish Government zero-waste strategy is highly regrettable? Can he comment on the fact that, after five meetings of the Government's zero-waste strategy think tank, the last minutes indicated that the Scottish Government was to have prepared mind maps, but that they were still outstanding, and that even the mapping of public funding streams that are available to support waste management has not yet happened?

The Presiding Officer: Briefly, please.

Robert Brown: Does the minister further agree that it is time for the SNP Government to show more leadership and work more closely with local authorities to develop more levers so that the push towards vastly increased recycling rates is sharper and quicker. In particular—

The Presiding Officer: Briefly, please, Mr Brown.

Robert Brown: Does the minister have any suggestions to make on the issue of tenemental properties?

Richard Lochhead: I point out to the member that, when his party was in power, there was a massive underspend in the funds that were made available to Scotland to help address this issue. I have to say that, given the number of local authorities across Scotland that are making substantial progress towards our recycling targets, I think that our local authorities should be congratulated, irrespective of the fact that there are significant challenges in Glasgow and elsewhere.

Justice and Law Officers

The Presiding Officer: While ministers are changing seats, I remind any members who have not been in the chamber during the past couple of weeks that, as their business managers will have told them, questions are expected to be short, succinct and to the point, and answers should follow suit.

Off-sales (Licences)

1. Tom McCabe (Hamilton South) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how many licences have been removed from off-sales for selling alcohol to people under 18 since May 2007 and how many of those have been reinstated by a sheriff. (S3O-4792)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): Licensing boards cannot yet remove licences in the circumstances that Tom McCabe describes. The situation will change from September next year, when legislation that was brought in by the previous Government will give boards much wider powers to take tough action against rogue retailers. We expect boards to use those powers to complement our ambitious programme for rebalancing Scotland's relationship with alcohol.

Tom McCabe: I thank the minister for that answer but, in my experience, local government licensing boards can remove licenses from retailers who have sold alcohol to people under 18.

Under the proposals in the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Bill, if someone has been charged with having sex with a minor, that person no longer has access to certain statutory defences. Given the emphasis that the Scottish Government has, rightly, placed on the need to prevent alcohol abuse and reduce the impact that it has on our society, would the cabinet secretary consider operating similar guidelines in connection with those who sell alcohol to people under 18?

Kenny MacAskill: There is a significant problem, which is why we are seeking to address it. I would have thought that Mr McCabe would support the legislation that the previous Administration brought in and which we supported, because the position at the present moment is that, although licence applications can be suspended, immediate action cannot be taken by the boards. The boards can only suspend, not remove, licenses, and their decisions can be immediately appealed.

The legislation that we supported and which we inherited from the previous Administration will enable boards to take immediate action, and that is action that we will fully support.

HMP Addiewell

2. Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether the opening of HMP Addiewell will be brought forward to help reduce current overcrowding in prisons and how soon it will be able to take its full capacity of prisoners. (S3O-4773)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): HMP Addiewell will open on 12 December 2008. The opening of a new prison requires careful planning and careful, staged testing of operational provision. The staging of the opening of HMP Addiewell has been planned over the past three years. In order to preserve both public safety and operational stability, it is important to adhere to that plan. Precipitous opening would jeopardise that.

The prison will take its full capacity of 700 prisoners by early March 2009.

Rhona Brankin: Will the minister explain why he has ruled out any expansion of HMP Kilmarnock? Will he undertake to consider all the options for expanding the prison estate, such as the possible expansion of Kilmarnock prison that was reported in today's *Scotsman*? Will he give that priority over the rebuilding of HMP Greenock and HMP Inverness, which, although welcome, might not increase capacity? Will he publish the details of any proposed expansion of Kilmarnock?

Kenny MacAskill: If Ms Brankin wishes to increase prison capacity beyond the aims of this Government, I look forward to her telling us what elements of public expenditure she wishes to cut. Prisons are not cost free; they come at a significant cost to the public purse, and, if we build prisons, we cannot provide schools, houses and hospitals.

I reiterate that this Government is committed to the opening of HMP Addiewell. We will then, through the public sector, build the new HMP Bishopbriggs and HMP Grampian, and commence site searches for HMP Inverclyde and HMP Highland. If Ms Brankin wishes us to build beyond that, she should tell us what cuts she would make. We want to look after our pensioners rather than pander to our prisoners.

Angela Constance (Livingston) (SNP): Does the cabinet secretary share my concerns that talk of opening HMP Addiewell early, which has continued for some weeks, is both irresponsible and anxiety-provoking for my constituents, many of whom initially opposed the prison? The Scottish Prison Service has worked long and hard with the community to reassure people that the opening of a prison is a well-planned and well-tested process. The phrase that comes to mind is, "Marry in haste; repent at leisure."

Kenny MacAskill: I said in my initial response that it would be precipitous to bring forward the opening earlier than had been arranged or is actually possible.

The editorial in *The Scotsman* to which Rhona Brankin referred made it clear that public sector prisons scored higher than private sector prisons on public safety and security. The Government

believes that the paramount role of a prison is to provide safety and security for our communities rather than to pander to private profit. We will not put private profit before public security, and that is why we will neither bring forward the opening date nor undermine the important role that the public sector plays in running prisons.

Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con): Given that opening HMP Addiewell ahead of schedule is probably not a viable option, does the cabinet secretary recognise that what he says today is inconsistent? There is a problem, which he should be exploring every way of resolving, and the most obvious solution that is facing him at the moment is to extend the existing facilities at HMP Bowhouse in Kilmarnock.

Kenny MacAskill: The possible extension at Kilmarnock would be limited and extremely costly. We are committing to public sector prisons in Bishopbriggs and in Grampian, and we are site-searching in Inverclyde and Highland. Mr Aitken has written to me to suggest that we should consider the use of the Royal Air Force bases at Machrihanish and Edzell. That idea has understandably been treated with some disdain by local members. Planning applications, security and barbed wire would be needed. The idea might have worked in a second world war movie, but it will not work in 21st century Scotland.

Kirkwall Sheriff Court

3. Liam McArthur (Orkney) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it considers the Kirkwall sheriff court building to be fit for purpose. (S3O-4841)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): Kirkwall sheriff court was completed in 1877 and has undergone numerous renovations, most recently in 1996. It is an old building but it serves its purpose, being suitable and sufficient for the volume of business that is conducted at that location. A balance needs to be struck between the resources that are spent on Kirkwall and the need for improvement across the wider Scottish Court Service estate.

Liam McArthur: The cabinet secretary will be aware of correspondence from me over recent months that raises serious concerns about access to and space constraints in Kirkwall sheriff court. I have been told of occasions when meetings have taken place in a toilet next to a detention cell, due to the lack of available rooms for meetings and interviews.

Can the cabinet secretary indicate the specific findings of the most recent quarterly assessment by the Scottish Court Service's property specialist? Can he outline what feedback SCS has had from local court users in relation to those

findings? Does he accept that a court building that is neither accessible nor equipped with sufficient meeting rooms cannot be considered fit for purpose?

Kenny MacAskill: I do not have information regarding the most recent assessment, but I am happy to write to Mr McArthur about the matter. I can confirm that ramps are available to facilitate access to the disability legislation-compliant counter and the disabled toilet on the ground floor. The courtroom on the first floor has sound enhancement and hearing loops for the hearing impaired. In addition, local arrangements are in place to house the court in council facilities on the limited number of occasions when a specific mobility requirement cannot be met.

We accept that, in some instances, people who come to court in whatever capacity will have some difficulties, and the Scottish Court Service is addressing those. We need the right balance between the public purse and the ability to provide services. Mr McArthur might be suggesting that we have a new building at great cost, but I believe that the action that the Scottish Court Service is taking is appropriate for the current volume of users, and it appears to have been acceptable to previous incumbents of the post of Minister for Justice, including the member who represented Orkney before Mr McArthur did.

Summary Justice Reforms

4. Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive what plans it has to monitor and analyse the effectiveness of the summary justice reforms. (S3O-4765)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): We have put in place a comprehensive programme of detailed monitoring and evaluation to ensure that we can monitor the impact of the summary justice reforms. The initial data are encouraging, and we are seeing early resolution of summary prosecutions. In July, more than 2,000 witnesses were spared being called to court and more than 1,000 police officers were released from court paperwork and appearances to do other work. Clearly, we must continue to monitor the impact of the reforms to ensure the maximum benefit for all those who come into contact with our criminal justice system.

Gavin Brown: In the first three months of the reform, April to June this year, the number of people who got a direct measure for assault doubled. Will the figures for assault from July onwards tell the same or a different story?

Kenny MacAskill: The Lord Advocate informs me that the number of those who were involved in assault was only a small proportion. Like many common-law offences, assault is a wide category.

A charge of breach of the peace, which is often welcomed by the police as their best weapon, can cover everything from an extremely serious offence to a minor matter. Equally, assault can cover a variety of offences, ranging from the serious to the minor.

Clearly, we cannot have a serious assault being dealt with in the way that I have described. We have had an undertaking from the Crown Office that, if any errors have been made, it will investigate them. The public can be assured that assault, per se, will be treated seriously and that any serious assault will not be countenanced. Nevertheless, there are instances—both for breach of the peace and assault—when the offence is relatively trivial or minor and it is appropriate for us to free up the witnesses and our police officers. The police should be out there, protecting our community, not reading newspapers while they wait for trials that never take place.

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab): There is consensus on the issue of the reform of summary justice, and debate has taken place over how the new system is being deployed. Has the cabinet secretary received any preliminary results from the forthcoming review by the Inspectorate of Prosecution in Scotland of the operation of fiscal fines? When will the Government's response to that report come before Parliament?

Kenny MacAskill: Those matters are under discussion. We receive information from the Crown Office, the police and all those who are involved, and in due course we will advise members about when the matter will come before Parliament. We continue to be kept apprised of the views of members, the public and all those who are involved. Information is being provided, but we must collate that information over a reasonable period to ensure that we get a broad snapshot, not a view based on a one-off occasion.

Criminal Justice Services (Voluntary Sector Cuts)

5. Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what monitoring it is carrying out of the impact of voluntary sector cuts on criminal justice services. (S3O-4799)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): The Government is strongly committed to a robust voluntary sector delivering services that meet local need. The voluntary sector provides a range of services to the justice system, from Women's Royal Voluntary Service facilities at courts to criminal justice social work services for offenders who are serving sentences in the community and support for victims. The Government does not routinely monitor the voluntary sector's share of the spend.

To ensure that the voluntary sector is fully engaged in the development of single outcome agreements with community planning partnerships, we are taking part in a task group with local authorities and the voluntary sector.

Mary Mulligan: I thank the cabinet secretary for his reply, although I am not sure that it referred to any monitoring.

The Scottish Government welcomed the Scottish Prison Commission's report, including the options for alternatives to custody. How are such options to be delivered if voluntary sector organisations such as Sacro, which deliver the programmes, are experiencing cuts to their budgets that are resulting in their—I quote—"withdrawing valuable services"? When will the cabinet secretary meet the voluntary sector criminal justice strategy group to discuss those cuts?

Kenny MacAskill: I do not know to what cuts the member refers. I meet voluntary sector bodies on a variety of issues. The Government is delivering section 10 funding of £874,563 to support the head office operations of Apex Scotland, Sacro, Families Outside and Action for Children Scotland. We are also providing ring-fenced funding to the community justice authorities, and we committed to £1 million in additional expenditure for those authorities a few weeks ago.

Fire-related Deaths

6. Michael Matheson (Falkirk West) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to help to reduce fire-related deaths. (S30-4826)

The Minister for Community Safety (Fergus Ewing): Any death from fire is a tragedy. I recognise the vital work of our fire and rescue services across Scotland, particularly on fire safety and prevention. There has been a long-term declining trend in fire deaths. However, the recent increases in fire fatalities and injuries clearly show that more needs to be done.

In response, with the support of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, I announced the establishment of a short-life working study, which will be chaired by Brian Sweeney—the chief officer of Strathclyde Fire and Rescue—to examine how fire deaths and injuries can be reduced in Scotland. Mr Sweeney will work with a small group of core staff, including representatives from Scottish resilience, which will consult widely with all stakeholders who have views and ideas to offer.

Michael Matheson: I am sure that the minister shares my concern about the figures in the fire services inspectorate's recent annual report, which

reveals a 62 per cent increase in fire-related deaths and a 23 per cent increase in injuries related to fire incidents and also confirms that three firefighters lost their lives in the course of their duty last year.

Will the minister ensure that the working group that he has established under COSLA gives open consideration to the possibility of greater use of domestic fire sprinkler systems, which international experience demonstrates have an important part to play in reducing fire-related deaths?

Fergus Ewing: The study will be chaired by Brian Sweeney. COSLA supports the initiative.

Michael Matheson has pursued the issue of fire sprinklers diligently. His previous work led to the introduction of a mandatory standard for the installation of sprinklers in shopping centres, residential care buildings, high-rise domestic buildings and sheltered housing complexes. However, we want to do more. Scottish ministers are currently considering proposals for amending the regulations through a major review by the Building Standards Advisory Committee. Briefly, the review will consider new standards and guidance for the introduction of sprinklers and automatic fire suppression systems in schools. I would very much welcome any other contributions from members of all parties on this vital issue, which Michael Matheson has campaigned on with diligence and tenacity over many years, as it is an issue of concern to members of all parties.

Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab): As the minister may be aware, cigarettes or other tobacco products were responsible for 30 of the 76 fatal fires in Scotland in 2004. I am sure that the Parliament welcomes the European Commission's decision to introduce proposals that will ban traditional cigarettes by 2010 and force smokers to buy fire-safe cigarettes. What discussions has the he had with his colleagues in Westminster to raise public awareness about that?

Fergus Ewing: Plainly, public awareness of the risks of death through fire is being pursued by this Government and our counterparts in Westminster as it was by our predecessors. On the example that the member mentioned, certainly the message should be sent out to everyone about the risks of fire from cigarettes when smokers fall asleep and also from the abuse of alcohol, which, I am sad to say, is the cause of a great many fire deaths in our country.

Rape Trials (Sexual History Questioning)

7. Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what action it will take to prevent intrusive and

humiliating questioning of women on their sexual histories in the course of rape trials. (S3O-4775)

The Lord Advocate (Elish Angiolini): All those working in the justice system must play their part in ensuring that the law is made to work to protect victims from unnecessary questioning about their sexual history and the right of the accused to a fair trial. For our part, following our review of the investigation and prosecution of rape and serious sexual offences, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service has provided comprehensive new guidance and training on the issue to all prosecutors.

Malcolm Chisholm: Is the Lord Advocate concerned about the increasing use of sexual history and character evidence in rape trials, as highlighted in a report to the Scottish Government in September 2007? Does she share the concerns of Rape Crisis Scotland, which states, in its written submission on the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Bill, that such questioning

"adds to the distress experienced by complainers, ... is potentially highly prejudicial for juries and ... acts as a deterrent to women coming forward to report rape in the first place"?

Can she tell us what the Government will do about that? Can she also tell us when the guidance to which she referred was issued?

The Lord Advocate: There is no doubt that the prospect of giving evidence in any context in a sexual offence trial is traumatic. The prospect of being questioned on sexual history and character adds to that. Unfortunately, there is no question of there being an absolute bar on questioning of sexual history and character.

There is also no doubt that the legislation that has been brought in is an attempt to achieve, as far as is possible, the exclusion of collateral and irrelevant matters. The court has to balance the rights of the victim under article 8 of the European convention on human rights against the rights of the accused under article 6. That balance will depend on the facts of the particular trial.

Since the commencement of the legislation there is no doubt that the defence has become much more focused on these issues than it had been hitherto. That is part of a general increase in the litigiousness of the defence in the way in which it approaches trials. During the early days of the legislation, jurisprudence was developing and there was a degree of uncertainty about what was happening at the coalface in such cases. Since then, decisions from the appeal court and the Privy Council have given greater certainty as to the interpretation of the legislation. However, it is ultimately for the judge to decide whether an issue is specific to the trial, whether it is significant and relevant and whether it has significant probative

value. That is a test for the court; the Crown has to apply it. Training means that it will be applied in an extremely consistent way that ensures that a robust approach is taken by prosecutors.

The review related to an earlier period, shortly after the legislation was commenced. However, there is no panacea. We cannot give a guarantee to the victims of such crimes that they will not be questioned about their sexual history. That makes it difficult for prosecutors, and difficult for victims when choosing to come forward into what is already an adversarial and difficult process. There is no immediate resolution—no quick fix—in any jurisdiction.

The guidance was issued to all prosecutors as part of the training that is taking place as a result of the review. It is now being implemented and is almost complete.

Scottish Futures Trust

14:57

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. At the weekend, under the section “Six figure salaries” in *The Sunday Times*, I saw an advertisement for a chief executive of the Scottish Futures Trust. The advertisement has no salary attached to it, but it states that

“remuneration will reflect the responsibilities and experience and will include an attractive salary, a performance-related bonus and a pension scheme.”

The advert also says that

“This is an exciting, high profile leadership role operating at the highest levels of government”.

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth stated to the Parliament on 10 September that the Scottish Futures Trust would be

“a company that is owned by ministers”.—[*Official Report*, 10 September 2008; c 10601.]

I looked on the Scottish Government’s website for information on the appointment, but there was no mention of it. I have since received confirmation from the Scottish Parliament information centre that there was no mention because SFT is a private limited company.

Having considered the rules in chapter 13 of our standing orders, I am concerned that Parliament will not be afforded the opportunity to scrutinise the operation of the SFT—if, indeed, it carries on. We would have such an opportunity with other Government departments and agencies.

Do you, as Presiding Officer, have any information from the Scottish Government on this issue? Will you be able to ensure that Parliament will be able to scrutinise properly this private limited company that is wholly owned by ministers? So far, public information is lacking from the Government website.

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): I thank Mr Purvis for warning me of that point of order, which—I am glad to say—really was a point of order.

I have had no communication from Government ministers on this issue. However, under standing orders, any member may put a question to the Scottish Government that relates to any matter for which ministers have general responsibility. Rules of admissibility are applied to each question on a case-by-case basis.

Jeremy Purvis: Further to the point of order, would it be for you, as representative of the Parliament, to secure information that would

confirm that “general responsibility” includes a minister-owned private limited company? I am not sure whether the principle also applies in other areas.

The Presiding Officer: It is not for me to secure information from the Government, but questions will be analysed and assessed case by case. That should allow all members to scrutinise these matters.

We now move to the debate, for which time will be tight. The debate is on motion S3M-2862, in the name of John Swinney, on the Scottish Futures Trust.

14:59

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): Earlier this year, I undertook to update Parliament on progress with the Scottish Futures Trust, and I am happy to provide that update now. Before I go into detail, I can perhaps assist in dealing with the point of order that Mr Purvis has just made.

Ministers carry responsibility for a number of private companies. Caledonian MacBrayne comes to mind, as does NorthLink Ferries. We regularly answer questions in Parliament about those and various other organisations—that will be the case with the Scottish Futures Trust, into the bargain.

Jeremy Purvis: I am grateful for that clarification from the cabinet secretary. In order to provide utter transparency, will he provide, on the Scottish Government’s website, information on the recruitment of professionals to the SFT?

John Swinney: Information will be provided to Parliament. I have just opened a debate on the Scottish Futures Trust, so I will share some information with Parliament this afternoon. If members want more information, there are plenty of opportunities to pursue it through parliamentary questions as, indeed, many members have already done. I am delighted to answer such questions as part of my ministerial responsibilities.

Following discussions with the chair of the Scottish Futures Trust, Sir Angus Grossart, I announced on 7 November the appointment of two additional non-executive directors—Councillor Jim Fletcher and Colin Maclean. Councillor Fletcher is known to many in Parliament as the experienced leader of East Renfrewshire Council. Many members will be aware of his commitment to excellence in delivering public services. He brings to the SFT valuable experience of local government and public infrastructure and I am delighted to welcome him to the board. Colin Maclean has a wealth of business experience from a long and successful career in the oil and gas sector, mainly with BP, which has taken him to the

far corners of the world. Among the posts he has held with BP are group head of procurement worldwide and director of the BP Grangemouth complex.

Those individuals bring significant and different perspectives to the SFT board and I welcome them both to their posts. I intend to make two further appointments to the board shortly. On executive capacity, members might have seen in last weekend's press the recruitment advert for the SFT's chief executive. Mr Purvis mentioned it. In advance of that appointment, an executive team is in place and has been working under Sir Angus's leadership to establish the SFT and take forward the work streams that are identified in the strategic business case that we published in May.

The business case contains a specific pledge that one of the SFT's early activities will be to commence programme delivery of hub pathfinders for community-based infrastructure. The hub's aim is to encourage development of the joined-up infrastructure that is needed for the vital core services that support communities throughout Scotland. Today, just a few weeks into the operation of the Scottish Futures Trust, I can announce a significant step forward. The early focus of hub development and resources will be on two pathfinder areas: the south-east and the north. All the public bodies in the south-east area have committed to the pathfinder and the next stage of development will commence immediately.

The initial focus on primary and community care facilities is being widened, with the possibility of other services being added. With a broader remit and an efficient model of delivery and funding—under our direction, and now with SFT expertise—the hub has emerged quickly and at the pace of development that is required for the initiative. The SFT is discussing with bodies in the north territory what the right boundaries and partnerships are so that we can move ahead there, too.

Each pathfinder will receive expert advisory and structural support from the SFT and the Scottish Government will provide financial backing of about £1.4 million for each pathfinder during the development stages, and an additional £30 million of capital provision to fund hub facilities throughout Scotland. The pathfinders will seek private sector development partners through a procurement process during 2009.

Another specific pledge in the business case was that the Scottish Futures Trust would establish programme development arrangements for a schools investment programme. On 11 September, the day after the SFT was established, Fiona Hyslop pledged that, during the current session of Parliament, 100,000 more school pupils will benefit from a 21st century education that is delivered in first-class schools.

Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab): Is the cabinet secretary aware that Lasswade high school in my constituency is one of only eight secondary schools in category D? Can he confirm today that there will be an early start to a new Lasswade high school?

John Swinney: I cannot give Rhona Brankin that specific commitment about Lasswade, but I can tell her that the Government is taking forward exactly what Fiona Hyslop announced, which is a partnership with our local authority colleagues, working through the SFT, to take steps on continuing improvements to our school estate. I will say more about that in a moment.

Scotland's school building programme is continuing apace—it is expected that 250 schools will be delivered during the current session of Parliament. Under the concordat, we have substantially increased the capital resources that are available to local authorities by between 13 and 15 per cent, and many local authorities are making schools investment their priority.

In the light of certain exchanges at First Minister's question time, I want to set out what the Government has helped authorities to achieve for the benefit of pupils and communities. More than £1 billion-worth of construction work is under way on almost 50 schools in eight local authority areas, including Dumfries and Galloway, Falkirk, West Lothian and East and West Dunbartonshire. All eight projects have been signed off with a firm funding offer from this Government since May 2007. Moreover, under the infrastructure investment plan that we published last March, authorities will invest another £1 billion in dozens more schools over the next three to five years.

That list covers only large-scale projects in excess of £5 million. In addition to that £2 billion of investment, hundreds of millions of pounds have already been invested in and will, over the settlement period, continue to be spent on smaller-scale projects of less than £5 million.

Improvement of the learning and teaching environment in many more schools the length and breadth of Scotland is an absolute priority of this Government. With our local authority partners, we are already looking strategically at ensuring further significant investment in the schools estate. In September, Fiona Hyslop announced the establishment, with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, of a joint working group to develop a new strategy for the school estate that will be tailored to meet the needs of pupils, teachers and communities and will contribute to the Government's education agenda. The SFT has met the strategy working group to discuss how they can best work together to ensure that the aspirations of the Scottish Government and local government for improving the school estate can

become a reality. Those discussions will focus on issues such as that which Rhona Brankin highlighted in her intervention.

A third pledge in the SFT's business case was that the trust would provide guidance, structuring and compliance assistance for non-profit-distributing schemes. Moreover, when the SFT was debated in June, members identified the need for a robust option appraisal framework for NPD schemes. I am pleased to say that that guidance, which has been developed and issued by the trust, is now available on the Government's website, thereby discharging the undertaking in the business case and meeting the needs that members identified in June. I commend that guidance to all parts of the public sector that might be considering major infrastructure projects.

At this stage, I put on record my appreciation to the chair of the SFT, who over the past couple of months has put a lot of energy and commitment into giving shape and substance to the trust's collaborative ethos. Sir Angus Grossart has met many key stakeholders, including COSLA, the Confederation of British Industry, a range of local authorities and other public infrastructure interests to discuss and come to an understanding of their priorities and the expectations that they have of the SFT. Such examples demonstrate the progress that has been made under the trust and which will continue to be made over the coming weeks and months.

Andy Kerr (East Kilbride) (Lab): Is it fair to say that under the previous Administration's private finance unit, which was managed by Sandy Rosie, all those functions were carried out by civil servants—and not at a cost of £17 million over four years?

John Swinney: What the Government is determined to do—this, I think, is the meat of any discussion about the SFT—is to guarantee that we deliver greater value by bringing together the different projects and interventions of different public sector partners and ensuring more collaboration. That is the intention behind the SFT's work in the period ahead. I hope that Mr Kerr will, in the course of the debate, demonstrate greater willingness to support the Government in implementing its infrastructure investment proposals.

That is one element of the Government's wider infrastructure investment programme, which also covers significant investment in a variety of school, health, transport and water sector projects. More projects in the Government's capital programme are under way: there are schools developments in the Western Isles, in Moray and on Orkney. There are health projects such as the development in Tayside and the new Southern general hospital in Glasgow, and there are various transport

improvements that we have already set out to Parliament.

As part of the investment programme that I have described, we intend to ensure that the SFT maximises value for money on the ground for the Scottish taxpayer. The trust provides Scotland with a new capability: the know-how and expertise to support value for money in infrastructure investment. I have set it the goal of releasing savings of up to £150 million per annum for additional investment. The Government will focus its work on securing that objective.

There are important points about the funding regime in which the SFT will operate that require to be clarified. Not least, we need clarity from Her Majesty's Government on the practical implications of the application of the international financial reporting standards that are due for incorporation into the accounting practices of the Scottish Government and the United Kingdom Government on 1 April 2009. Important clarity is required on whether the Scottish Government and Scottish public services will be given the same assurances and guarantees that have been given to Whitehall departments on budget cover for off-balance sheet public-private partnership and private finance initiative schemes. I have asked the Chief Secretary to the Treasury for that clarity and look forward to receiving it.

The Government is making important progress on development of the Scottish Futures Trust, in line with the business case that we made in May as part of the Government's infrastructure investment plan. I encourage members to support the Government's motion, which sets out that progress.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that modern infrastructure is essential to economic well-being and excellent public services in Scotland; notes actions to invest in public infrastructure set out in the Scottish Government's £35 billion Infrastructure Investment Plan; notes efforts to promote collaboration among public authorities and agencies in planning and developing capital projects to maximise value for money; believes that identifying and managing risk effectively through the capital project life cycle and providing a range of approaches to structuring and financing infrastructure investment are important objectives to be pursued; notes the steps being taken by the Scottish Government to develop the non-profit distributing model for capital schemes to achieve an appropriate balance of risk and reward; believes that the establishment of the Scottish Futures Trust, with its role of maximising value for money by facilitating and encouraging effective and efficient investment in public infrastructure schemes, is in the public interest, and calls on the Scottish Government to ensure that the Scottish Futures Trust makes a full contribution to these objectives.

The Presiding Officer: There is no spare time available in the debate, so the Presiding Officers

will be rigorous in ensuring that members stick within the times that are available to them.

15:11

David Whitton (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab): I am pleased to be taking part in this debate.

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth delivered his speech in his usual combative style, but we have just heard an 11-minute defence of the indefensible. He may earn points for style, but he gets nothing for content.

Yesterday, we had a debate on the Scottish economy, in which Mr Swinney claimed that it was Westminster's fault that the Scottish economy had "flatlined", to use the word that he used. Labour members offered him helpful advice from our 15-point plan on how he could stimulate the Scottish economy. A key part of that stimulus is getting major infrastructure projects approved and started.

The Scottish National Party has placed great faith in its proposed Scottish Futures Trust funding model, but SNP members seem to be the only people who have any faith that the Scottish Futures Trust will deliver. In May this year, in "Taking forward the Scottish Futures Trust", the SNP published its strategic case for its preferred model. Since then, the economic landscape has changed dramatically, as we all know. Now is not the time for experiments with new funding proposals. Mr Swinney will no doubt reject my arguments, but he may find it difficult to answer the many critics of the Scottish Futures Trust. He will no doubt hear during the debate that there are many such critics.

"If the Scottish Futures Trust is not yet ready then the Scottish government should recognise the crisis affecting industry and be bold by allowing councils and health boards to use existing PFI models to bring new schools and hospitals forward now."

Those are not my words; they are the words of the Scottish Building Federation, which is the lead voice in the construction industry in Scotland. To put things in perspective, the construction industry is the largest source of private investment in Scotland. It contributes more than £13 billion to Scotland's gross domestic product—10 per cent of it—and employs more than 220,000 people. Crucially, it also invests in skills and training; more than 4,000 new apprentices were taken on last year.

The Scottish Building Federation has reported that the construction industry is losing capacity at an alarming rate. It is predicted that 20,000 jobs will be lost by Christmas. As I said in my speech in the debate on the economy yesterday, it is not only tradesmen who are being laid off;

redundancies have hit solicitors, surveyors and estate agents.

The many firms and workers in the construction industry are looking to the SNP Government for assistance. The Scottish Building Federation has said:

"In the current climate Scottish construction firms look to the Scottish government for a continued pipeline of public sector work that has underpinned growth in the sector over the last decade."

John Swinney: Will Mr Whitton acknowledge that the Government has a £3.5 billion capital investment programme that is 100 per cent committed in this financial year and will be for the duration of the spending review period? Will he acknowledge the contribution of that programme, not to mention the schemes outwith it, to boosting the construction industry in Scotland?

David Whitton: I do not accept that. The programme always existed. We are talking about plans for the Scottish Futures Trust, which people have said is providing a logjam and preventing further projects from coming on board.

The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): Where?

David Whitton: The minister should allow me to continue.

A Scottish Building Federation representative has said:

"Whilst a number of projects are underway no, I repeat no, new contracts have been signed for major projects announced since the Scottish Futures Trust consultation was published."

The consultation paper was published in December last year. Therefore, there has been complete stagnation in the past 11 months.

It is interesting to consider the list of projects that the SNP Government has announced or approved since it took office in May last year. There are 35 of them. Of that number, 11 have started work and, of those, seven are being funded by public-private finance initiatives. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order. I am sorry, Mr Whitton. Members should know by now that I do not encourage sedentary conversations between members while another member is speaking. I hope they will stick to that.

David Whitton: Thank you, Presiding Officer. We are well used to Mr Stevenson getting a little excited.

I am happy to report that among those seven projects is a £134 million project to build six new secondary schools in my constituency. Some of them are nearing completion and the pupils will move into their state-of-the-art premises in time for

the start of the new school term next summer, but where will the workers go who are currently working hard on those six new schools? Work could be done to refurbish several primary schools in my constituency that are regarded as being class C, which means that they are in need of major repair. The Labour-led East Dunbartonshire Council would like to get on with that work, but it has not heard from the Scottish Government what funding model it should use. That state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue.

Ministers have been asked for clarity, but I fear that Parliament will be waiting a while if a recent exchange involving Mr Mather, the minister for the economy, is anything to go by. Last Wednesday, he appeared before the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee. When my colleague Lewis Macdonald asked him when he expects the Scottish Futures Trust to be fully established and when the first project would go to market, Mr Mather replied:

"It will be established as soon as possible."

He continued:

"Absolutely stellar people are involved in it, and they are conscious of the need to get it to an operational level as soon as possible"

and said that he is

"loth to see the process rushed."

When Mr Mather was asked whether he expects contracts to be let in this financial year, he replied:

"I have a folk memory that that will happen."

When pressed on whether he was confident that that will happen, he replied:

"I have been told that it will."—[*Official Report, Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee*, 5 November 2008; c 1231.]

If he carries on like that, it could be Mr Mather who is a folk memory.

Mr Mather was not the only minister who gave evidence to a committee last Wednesday—his boss, Mr Swinney, appeared before the Local Government and Communities Committee. He, too, was asked how the SFT would operate. He replied:

"The Government is in the process of setting out how the trust will operate and how any future revenue flows will be deployed to support investments in the years to come."—[*Official Report, Local Government and Communities Committee*, 5 November 2008; c 1364.]

So there we have it—almost a year after the consultation was started, of the "stellar people" running the Government, one minister is relying on folk memories about whether projects will start in this financial year and another is still wondering how the trust and its revenue streams will operate. Meanwhile, thousands of workers from Scotland's

construction industry and associated trades are being put out of work.

There is no doubt that the Scottish Futures Trust idea is causing a logjam in public infrastructure procurement. The facts speak for themselves.

Stewart Stevenson: Name one.

David Whitton: The Raith interchange. How is that?

No new contracts have been signed since the consultation was announced. Is it any wonder that the Scottish Building Federation and others have appealed to the SNP Government to ditch SFT and allow contracts to be placed by using existing funding models, including public-private partnerships and the private finance initiatives.

The most telling evidence on the current crisis in the construction industry came at a meeting of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee on 29 October this year, in which several witnesses from construction-related industries took part. In summary, they said that no one knows what the SFT will do and how it will do it, that the construction industry is in crisis because of the hiatus in building projects, and that the delay is putting off international contractors from investing in Scotland. That situation cannot and should not be allowed to continue. Only last week, the SNP achieved a remarkable breakthrough when, for the first time I can remember, the First Minister, Mr Salmond, admitted that he had made a mistake. I hope that Mr Swinney follows that lead and is big enough to admit that he, too, has made a mistake by trying to introduce the Scottish Futures Trust at this difficult time for the Scottish economy.

On Monday, my colleague Andy Kerr asked the SNP to end the uncertainty surrounding public building projects by dumping the Scottish Futures Trust. We repeat that call today. For the sake of Scotland, which Mr Swinney says he cares so passionately about, he should accept the Labour amendment, drop the plans for a Scottish Futures Trust and do what the construction industry is appealing for by bringing major infrastructure projects to market now, even if that means using public-private partnership models. That would show some leadership and give a much-needed boost to the Scottish economy, and it might save hundreds, if not thousands, of jobs.

I move amendment S3M-2862.3, to leave out from "notes actions" to end and insert:

"believes that the Scottish Government has failed to deliver a workable method of funding for public infrastructure projects, a view supported by, among others, the building industry, the financial services community and the trades unions; considers that this damaging hiatus is costing jobs and harming the Scottish economy, and therefore calls on the Scottish Government to bring an end to its Scottish Futures Trust proposals immediately."

15:19

Derek Brownlee (South of Scotland) (Con): I must confess that, unlike Jeremy Purvis, I did not spend Sunday flicking through the recruitment section of the newspapers, although perhaps some might argue that I ought to have. I make the case that modesty forbade Mr Purvis from making: what an excellent chief executive of the Scottish Futures Trust he would make, given that he would save not merely £150 million—he tells us that he would save £800 million each year.

Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP): Does the member agree that the downfall would be that Mr Purvis would not get the performance bonus?

Derek Brownlee: Another candidate speaks.

We have consistently said that we have no problem with the Scottish Government developing a new approach to funding capital infrastructure and no objection to the creation of the Scottish Futures Trust. We also have no problem with the aggregation of projects, better contracting within the public sector or, if it is attainable, lower-cost finance. We know from the business case for the SFT that it is pursuing a number—14 to be precise—of objectives. One of those is the non-profit-distributing model of PPP/PFI, so it is not exactly new and it may not be improved, either.

We do not share with the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats an obsession with PPP, just as we do not share with the SNP an aversion to it. Our approach is simple and straightforward: the only issue should be the delivery of best value for taxpayers. If the SFT provides better value than PPP, it should be used. If it does not, it should not be used. If PFI/PPP represents better value, it should be available and used where it is the best option. I would have thought that that would be uncontroversial; sadly for the taxpayer, it is not.

It is clear that, in the current financial situation, there is less interest from private sector funders for PPP or any new variant. We cannot be sure for how long that will continue, but it should give those on all sides of the argument pause for thought.

Labour's amendment mentions the concerns of the building industry, the trade unions and the business community. It is true that the unions want the SFT to be scrapped, but they also want PPP to be scrapped.

The building industry is not calling for the SFT to be scrapped. The Scottish Building Federation, which Mr Whitton mentioned, has made it clear that its problem is with what happens in the meantime before the SFT is finalised. CBI Scotland does not want the SFT to be scrapped either; its concern is the same as the SBF's.

Once again, the Labour Party and Liberal Democrats are out of step with business and

public opinion, but in step with each other. It is about time they showed some consistency. Today, the Liberal Democrats state in their amendment that the SFT is

"nothing more than a ... quango".

Barely five months ago, Liam McArthur issued a press release in which he said that it was all his idea.

The Labour Party's amendment states that the Government has

"failed to deliver a workable method of funding",

but in May Andy Kerr was claiming the credit for having invented it.

Labour's amendment prays in aid the condemnation of the SFT by the trade unions. Andy Kerr is right: they hate it because they see it as being PPP in all but name. PFI offends them—although not enough to stop various trade union pension funds investing in it—because profit to anyone other than trade unions appears to be a problem.

We have no objection to equity profits in PPP schemes, and if the non-profit-distributing model of PPP delivers better value for the taxpayer, it will over time squeeze out other versions, because no public body will sign any other form of deal.

Judging by the First Minister's comments earlier today, his primary concern is to reduce the level of private profit. The key for us is not the level of profit to the private sector, but the cost to the taxpayer, the quality of the service, the level of flexibility and future proofing. If the SFT beats other models on those fronts, that will be fine, but if it does not, ideology should not prevent options such as traditional PPP from being used.

In our previous debate on the SFT, we expressed concerns about the impact of refinancing provisions in current versions of NPD schemes. I understand that the Government agreed to look into the matter, but it is about time we got some answers on what precisely it will do to make the refinancing provisions of less concern to potential bidders.

The United Kingdom Government has recently updated its guidance to increase the share of refinancing gains that can be retained by the public sector. That guidance also affects projects in Scotland. Commenting on that guidance, the Business Services Association said that it would

"substantially reduce the attractiveness of being involved with PFI deals and they come at a time of serious economic challenge and testing of confidence."

In addition, we are told that the margins on PPP deals are rising, making them more expensive. Coupled with the potential issues arising from moving those deals on balance sheet, PFI and

PPP are less attractive than they were. That is another reason why we think the Labour and Liberal Democrat amendments, which would rule out the SFT, are wrong. However, it is also another reason why the SNP needs to demonstrate in what ways, if at all, the SFT is better.

It is clear that the construction industry believes that there have been delays and that new projects would have come on stream if the Government had not taken a policy decision to prevent them. Whether or not that is true, no one should believe that the level of PPP projects would have been maintained if the previous Executive had continued in office. How many PPP deals would have been signed in the national health service, with its proposed zero per cent increase in spending from the Labour Party, or in transport, which was also to receive no additional funding?

What will happen when all PPP schemes come on balance sheet? Will it be cost neutral? Would the previous Executive have taken a different view from the current one? At what point will Government, the NHS or a council decide that it has reached the ceiling for the proportion of its budget that it wants to commit for a generation?

There are big questions about the future of PFI and PPP, but there are also big questions about the future of the SFT. However, the only question that members need ask is this: why should public bodies not be able to choose the method of procurement and funding that they consider most appropriate? Why is ideology more important than infrastructure? I leave it to those who are against a choice to argue their case.

I move amendment S3M.2862.1, to leave out from “notes the steps” to “public interest”.

15:26

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): It is always a pleasure to follow Mr Brownlee, who today gave—to paraphrase another quotation—the longest application letter in history.

Given the delays in procuring projects in rail, health, schools and roads, and given that the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee was told by a representative of Grant Thornton that private sector procurement jobs are being lost because of delays in bringing forward a pipeline of projects, there is an urgency to the SFT debate that the SNP Government is simply setting its face against. Ministers have got themselves into a zone in which they genuinely believe that the schools that they are opening were conceived, designed, built and financed by them. It is a kind of reverse Munchausen’s syndrome—they are craving

sympathy for good things that have happened but were not caused by them.

There was sufficient clarity from Nicola Sturgeon on the BBC website during the election campaign. A voter asked:

“If I vote your party into power next May, will you promise to immediately stop all PPP funding for schools in Scotland?”

Nicola Sturgeon replied: “Yes”.

There was still clarity a month later. On 27 June last year, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning told the Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee:

“We think that schools and pupils will obtain far better value from a futures-trust funded school than from a PPP-funded school.”

That is clear. She went on:

“We will have a school building fund to which local authorities can request access ... However, the futures trust will provide a very attractive option for local authorities and I think that many are waiting with great anticipation to use it.”—[*Official Report, Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee*, 27 June 2007; c 40.]

Mr Brownlee and the SNP still think that there will be a schools fund from the SFT, but councils are now waiting not with anticipation but with desperation. They are not putting forward any feasibility or architectural studies for new schools or other new buildings because they simply do not know whether there will be central Government support for the projects.

As last year moved into this year, the terminological inexactitude began. In the Finance Committee, I asked the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth whether the Falkirk schemes, which both he and the Deputy First Minister cited on several occasions, are a replacement for PPP. He replied: “Yes”, but on 21 May, shortly before that committee meeting, I had received the following answer to a parliamentary question:

“Scottish Government revenue support for the Falkirk schools project will average £5 million per year for the 30 year duration of the PPP contract.”—[*Official Report, Written Answers*, 21 May 2008; S3W-12863.]

Faced with that answer in committee, John Swinney replied:

“PPP is a generic family term for all such approaches.”—[*Official Report, Finance Committee*, 27 May 2008; c 578.]

Within the space of two minutes in a committee meeting, the Government’s favoured option as a replacement for PPP became a member of the PPP family. I do not know what choices Derek Brownlee thinks that councils will ask for, but no money has been put on the table.

When the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth came to Parliament on 10

September, we hoped that the delay and uncertainty would be ended and that there would be clarity. However, there is still no clarity today. The cabinet secretary failed to explain why, when he said that the SFT was the result of work with local councils, Glasgow City Council and the City of Edinburgh Council had told the Parliament the previous day that they did not know what the Government was planning to put in place.

Two months on, after a meeting with Sir Angus Grossart, COSLA sent council chief executives and leaders a bulletin saying:

"However it was clear from Sir Angus' introduction that the type of detail we are looking for is still not there."

The cabinet secretary's statement said that the trust will fund infrastructure but did not say how. Indeed, COSLA asked the SFT whether it will provide funding; this is what the COSLA bulletin says about the response:

"They were clear that they don't have the funding themselves and local government will have to make its representations to Scottish Government on money. However by strengthening the case for projects SFT has the potential to influence Govt's mind about their merit and this would then open up the possibility of centrally provided funding."

That is an absolute contradiction of the SFT's memorandum of association at Companies House, which states that it will fund infrastructure. Now, local authorities are being told that the SFT is simply a lobbying arm that will try to influence the Government to invest.

The cabinet secretary's statement in September said that the trust will build infrastructure but did not say when. We have already heard quotations from Jim Mather, the minister who says that it is "above my pay grade" to attend the meetings of the Council of Economic Advisers and that it is a "folk memory" whether the SFT will let financial contracts this year.

The Government now says that the SFT will be a new advisory body but makes no reference to the central Government centre of procurement expertise or, indeed, the brand new infrastructure investment unit that it has just set up. The Government's website says:

"The IIU will provide policy support to Scottish Ministers on planning and public funding of infrastructure as well as providing support to the Scottish Government's Infrastructure Investment Group."

That is exactly what is in the advert for the chief executive of the SFT.

Why does the Government not mention the new body's payroll costs, which come to £14.5 million over the next five years out of a budget of £22.95 million? Page 39 of the strategic business case for the SFT stated:

"The details of how investment will be raised from the private sector has not been explored in any detail as part of this SBC".

Nor is it part of any current considerations. Councils are crying out for that information; our schools and communities need certainty. Bland assurances that the Conservatives seem to accept are not good enough for us. That is why the Scottish Futures Trust should cease and the money should be spent elsewhere.

I move amendment S3M-2862.2, to leave out from "agrees" to end and insert:

"considers that the proposed Scottish Futures Trust is nothing more than a £22.95 million quango that will duplicate existing functions of government and therefore believes that the Scottish Government's Scottish Futures Trust should not proceed."

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): We now move to the open debate. I warn members that they are on a very tight six minutes each.

15:32

Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee West) (SNP): The debate is an important one made even more important by the current UK financial crisis. Thanks to the union, we are part of the UK economy, which has the biggest budget deficit in the western world. A significant part of that deficit is thanks to PFI and its credit-card interest rates. In that climate, the SNP Government is concerned first and foremost with ensuring maximum value for money from capital investment projects and achieving that value without burdening future generations with huge debt.

Jeremy Purvis: Would Joe FitzPatrick be concerned if, for example, the Waverley line was to be privately built, privately financed through private borrowing and leased back from a private sector operator? That is what his Government proposes.

Joe FitzPatrick: We need to ensure that each of our capital investment projects represents best value for the Scottish taxpayer. That is what the Scottish Government is doing. The cabinet secretary has set out plans for the largest ever investment in Scotland's infrastructure, which amounts to £14 billion over the next three years and a total of £35 billion over the next 10 years. That is some pipeline. We must ensure that the money is spent wisely and avoid the costly mistakes that we have witnessed with PFI, under which excessive profits and windfall gains have been made on investments and public access to community facilities has suffered.

During the Finance Committee's inquiry into methods of funding capital investment projects, other committee members and I attended

extensive evidence-taking sessions. There was little evidence in favour of PFI. There was a lot of opinion—largely from organisations with vested interests—but no hard evidence to show that its continuation would be in Scotland's national interest. However, there was an abundance of shocking evidence on the travesty that it represents. Let us examine some of that evidence—we do not have time to examine it all, so I will be as brief as I can—starting with a statement from economist Dr Jim Cuthbert that sums up why PFI went so badly wrong. He told the committee that there was a

“push to get schemes off the Government's books, almost at any price”.—[*Official Report, Finance Committee*, 29 April 2008; c 446.]

Clearly, that is Dr Cuthbert's opinion. However, unlike those who extolled the virtues of PFI, the Cuthberts backed up their opinions with hard facts, much of which they obtained under freedom of information legislation. Their evidence on Hairmyres hospital was damning and concluded that the PFI contract for the project had delivered one hospital for the cost of two. They found that the companies behind the deal stood to gain around £145 million from an investment of just £8.4 million.

Andy Kerr: Is the member prepared to respond to the Cuthberts' recent findings? They say:

“There is a danger that the Futures Trust will be hailed as a great success even if all it achieves are marginal improvements over PFI.”

Joe FitzPatrick: In the same paper, the Cuthberts compare the cost of borrowing under the non-profit-distributing organisation model that is at the heart of the Scottish Futures Trust with that under PFI. The ratio is 1.32 for NPDO, compared with 1.49 for PFI. The Cuthberts looked at early NPDO models that were produced to comply with rules set by the Government of which Andy Kerr was part. It is well known that Andy Kerr and the previous Government were strongly against moving to NPDO. Councils that used NPDO had to do what they could to comply with the Government's rules. I am confident that the Scottish Government and the SFT will improve on the early NPDO models to ensure that we get better value for taxpayers' money.

The Finance Committee also saw material from an internal presentation by a construction company that is a major player in several PFI consortia. It included an illustration of the company's expectations from a generic PFI project, which showed that high returns on equity were not the exception in PFI projects but the norm. The presentation went on to suggest that such returns were possible because the complexity of the PFI system reduced competition.

We heard about schemes such as the Inverness airport terminal PFI project, which was bought out by the Scottish Executive shortly after completion at a cost of £27.5 million. The construction cost of the terminal was £9.6 million but, due to the PFI contract, the private company concerned walked away with a 200 per cent profit. That bung of nearly £18 million did not come from some Labour-Lib Dem Executive slush fund; it was £18 million of taxpayers' money—Scotland's money—squandered by Labour.

With the Scottish Futures Trust, we aim to avoid repeating the costly mistakes of the previous Administration. We will learn the lessons of PFI/PPP and existing NPDO projects to ensure that we deliver better value for money, with greater public accountability, public ownership and community access to facilities at a price that the public can afford. With the Scottish Futures Trust, we will achieve all that without burdening future generations with huge debt at credit-card interest rates.

In contrast to the wasteful spending under PFI, the Government is bringing forward a model of capital investment that, for the first time, will have the public interest at its heart. The Scottish Futures Trust will not only provide more bang for the public pound but provide better management of projects and greater public accountability. I commend the motion to the chamber.

15:38

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): It was noticeable today that Mr Swinney spoke a good bit faster than usual, which made it more difficult for us to follow the steps that the Scottish Government is taking to develop its non-profit-distributing model for capital schemes to achieve, as the motion says,

“an appropriate balance of risk and reward”.

The issue is not just the speed at which Mr Swinney spoke but, as Jeremy Purvis said, the fact that we are dealing with proposals that have changed significantly. The Scottish Futures Trust started as a fund, became a funding mechanism and now appears to be an advisory board. The problem lies in the fact that, in that process of change, the whole basis of the Scottish Futures Trust has altered. We heard a lot of rhetoric from Mr Swinney, but there was little indication of progress in developing something that will work. No one who is dependent on the establishment of the Scottish Futures Trust believes that it is a workable proposition at present.

The SNP has made efforts to lend its scheme some substance. Mr Mather told the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee:

"Absolutely stellar people are involved in it".—[*Official Report, Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee*, 5 November 2008; c 1231.]

I presume that he was referring to the retired investment banker, Sir Angus Grossart, who has been appointed as the chair of the trust. With all due respect to Sir Angus Grossart, it is the endorsement of today's, rather than yesterday's, bankers that is needed to take the proposition forward.

It is not just people from the financial sector who have expressed doubts. Week after week, committees of the Parliament hear from representatives of various sectors, including the construction industry. As Mr Whitton said, they are concerned about interruptions to the flow of projects. Business leaders spoke to the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee last week; they are pleading with ministers to return to tried and tested models of procurement to get new schemes into the pipeline. Local authorities' vital school projects have been held back, as they have waited for a chimera that never materialises. So far, no bank, no chamber of commerce and no local authority—no one whose involvement would be required to make it a success—has endorsed the SFT.

As we have been seeking details from the Government week after week, some poor civil servant has no doubt been sent off to rack their brains and come up with another excuse for the non-delivery of a manifesto promise. Everyone in Scotland who is remotely concerned with investing in public services recognises that the emperor has no clothes. There is a black hole at the heart of the SNP's approach to public procurement, which jeopardises jobs and vital industries as well as vital services, and which has been created—regrettably—because of the ideological blinkers that are being worn by Mr Swinney and his party.

When Mr Salmond said today that PPP was redundant, whose redundancies was he referring to? Was it those of the construction workers up and down Scotland whose jobs are threatened by the SNP's failure to come up with a workable scheme? It beggars belief that Mr Swinney has referred to the West Dunbartonshire Council and East Dunbartonshire Council school building projects—they are not all in Mr Whitton's constituency; some of them are in mine, I should point out. Those schools were built under PPP, not under the Scottish Futures Trust.

We should be straightforward and honest about this. The SNP accepted that there were projects in the pipeline. Those projects have, quite rightly, been allowed to progress. The problem is that there are no new schools projects getting into the pipeline. Six, 12 and 18 months down the track, we will all pay a very substantial penalty for that.

Gordon Matheson, Glasgow City Council's education convener, summed up the position clearly. He said:

"the Scottish Futures Trust has proved an embarrassing let-down. It has been scathingly critiqued by economics experts for simply not stacking-up, and being incapable of delivering what it promised. Every Council, of whatever political party, desperately needs the Scottish Government to get a grip on its capital plans. A large-scale school building programme such as that currently underway in England, would help to stimulate our economy and provide 21st century learning environments."

We need the schools now. Scotland's children and parents, and our construction industry, deserve much better from the Scottish Government.

There needs to be a serious response to what Gordon Matheson has said. It is all very well engaging in rhetoric about the shortcomings of PPP, as Mr FitzPatrick did. Indeed, there were some shortcomings to PPP, and it is not the only procurement method, but the Government's problem is that it has put all its eggs into a basket that is empty. The Scottish Futures Trust has no substance. Nobody can come up with a project or mechanism that actually works for the people who need to use it.

The danger is that the issue will affect not just schools but health centres and transport projects. We do not know how major transport projects will be advanced. I am not talking only about the Borders railway but about very substantial projects such as the new Forth crossing. How is the Government going to provide a funding framework for such major projects, which are crucial requirements for the future of Scotland, if its core flagship mechanism is not a mechanism but simply an advisory board with no substance? That is the problem that we face, and that is the reality that Mr Swinney must address. I hope that, in slower, easier words, he can tell us what he will do and what steps we should be taking.

15:44

Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con): It is often said that political parties campaign in poetry but govern in prose. When it comes to the Scottish Futures Trust, the Scottish National Party is certainly governing in prose.

Today's speech from John Swinney was a damp squib. We heard about a pathfinder in not one but two areas. We heard about the working group on the strategy for the school estate, but I think that most members and councillors in Scotland are quite clear about which schools need urgent work. We heard about an option appraisal framework, which is available on the internet. We will treat the framework seriously and review it, but it does not take the project much further forward, although the cabinet secretary tried to suggest that it does.

From day 1, the Scottish Conservatives have taken a pragmatic approach to the debate, and we continue to do so. I see that an angry Andy Kerr is shaking his head. He can shake his head all he likes, but today when a front-bench member of his party was asked whether he acknowledged that there is £3.5 billion of capital expenditure in the budget, he said that he did not accept that. I do not know how anyone can miss a clear budget line that shows £3.5 billion.

We do not allow ideology to enter into our thinking on the issue. If the Scottish Futures Trust can offer an additional stream that can add value and add to the range of options open to local authorities and public bodies, we will support it. However, we will support it on the basis that it is additional and not the only game in town.

Jeremy Purvis: The member knows that one of the budget lines in the business case is the £22 million that will be the cost of the SFT, £15 million of which is simply the payroll. When will the member make up his mind about whether that money is being properly spent? We have had nearly two years of this Government, but there is still no information about the funding mechanism. When will Conservatives make up their minds about the waste of money that is going on?

Gavin Brown: Our position is clear. We think that we should continue with PPP and PFI at the moment. If the SFT can add value and will improve the range of options, we will support it. It is for individual local authorities and public bodies to consider, project by project, which funding model is the most appropriate, taking account of the whole-life value of the project and other factors such as how quickly a project needs to be built and the servicing and maintenance that will be required.

We are pushing for PFI and PPP in the current climate because there has been a delay. We accept that capital spending is going on—we do not pretend that nothing is happening—but I hope that the Government accepts that there has been a hiatus and that a number of capital projects are delayed.

The Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee has taken evidence on the matter recently, as members said. A witness from Grant Thornton put the matter neatly when he said that about £200 million-worth of PPP projects are currently online whereas, in the peak years—although not in every year—of the previous Administration, about £1 billion-worth of PPP projects were online. The drop in spending from £1 billion to around £200 million indicates that there has been something of a hiatus.

The witness from the Scottish Building Federation put it neatly to the committee, too. He said:

“We are already losing significant capacity in the industry by the week.”—[*Official Report, Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee*, 29 October 2008; c 1127.]

A witness from Reform Scotland told the committee:

“We need leadership ... and a timetable.”—[*Official Report, Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee*, 8 October 2008; c 1088.]

The witness from Grant Thornton told us:

“People will not be able to hold on until 2010 in the hope of seeing a pipeline then.”—[*Official Report, Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee*, 29 October 2008; c 1129.]

If the SFT can add value and come up with something that adds to the range of options, we will be happy to endorse and support that. However, in the meantime it is critical that the Government does not allow a delay until 2010 and that we continue with capital projects, particularly in schools and hospitals, where there has been a delay.

There are still difficulties, and questions remain to be asked of the SNP Government about its plans. We heard that there will be £150 million of savings, but we have yet to hear where those savings will come from. It was said today that finding those savings will now be set as a goal for the SFT. Where will they come from?

We heard the First Minister and several SNP members saying that they are against PFI and PPP because people will still be paying for the buildings for the next 20 years. Well, there will still be a unitary charge on an NPD model, so if owing money for 20 or 30 years is the problem, the SNP has not solved it by using the NPD model. The unitary charges are just slightly different from the charges that are made under PFI and PPP.

We also heard about the lower cost of finance, but we have still to hear any detail on that. Why will private sector organisations accept a lower premium for the risk? We need to hear details about that.

The SNP manifesto clearly states:

“it will be open to local authorities and other public bodies to choose between PFI/PPP and Scottish Futures Bonds for planned and future projects.”

That should continue.

15:51

Bill Wilson (West of Scotland) (SNP): Our economy has been built on unstable sands; it has been built on debt. PPP has transferred vast sums of money to the private sector and it has allowed the resultant debt to be hidden. The Scottish

Futures Trust is an attempt to return sanity to our economy. All Governments use the tool of debt, but it must be used openly, its aim being to serve the public and not to divert public wealth from the many to the few. That is why the SFT must be the way forward. In an independent Scotland, there might be other ways forward, but we are not independent, and the SFT makes the best use of our limited powers.

No debate on PPP and SFT can go on without considering the wider economy. There can be no doubt that responsibility for our present financial crisis rests with new Labour. It is simply not good enough for new Labour to blame the wider economy. One only has to look at Norway, Sweden and Finland, which are still doing so much better than we are and are likely to avoid recession, to see that the desperate pleas of a failed Westminster Government are simply not acceptable.

Andy Kerr: Does the member recognise that the nations that he has mentioned are using PPP?

Bill Wilson: Those nations' economies are strong, so Gordon Brown's desperate excuse that it is somehow the fault of the wider world economy is shown to be nonsense. The harm is being done to Scotland by Westminster. Brown attempted to build a strong economy on Keynesian principles but, unlike previous Governments, he has not used public money to fund that. Rather, he has used irresponsible borrowing. He built the economy on the unstable foundations of individual indebtedness, financial services indebtedness and, through PPP, vast and hidden Government indebtedness.

The failure of Brown's Government and other similar neo-conservative Governments to regulate borrowing has impacted on our banks, bringing to their knees Northern Rock, Bradford and Bingley and, of course, Lehman Brothers in the USA. Equally, deregulation of lending has resulted in ever-increasing personal indebtedness. As with the banks, now the individual pays the price. Gordon Brown has built UK growth on the back of unsustainable debt.

PPP is just one more example of new Labour's economic incompetence. PPP could stand for "promoting the profits of plutocrats", or "plundering the public purse", because that is what it did and, alas, continues to do.

It has been said of capitalism that it worships at the altar of wealth. The possession of wealth stands above all other considerations. Wealth comes before community and society and is above all.

Jeremy Purvis: Will the member give way?

Bill Wilson: Not just now.

Under new Labour and Gordon Brown, the worship of wealth has been subordinated to a new god—the god of credit, which Brown and new Labour have exalted above all. PPP put the public sector into debt to the private sector. By doing little to curb the reckless excesses of the banking system and individual borrowing, it encouraged indebtedness in institutions and individuals.

PPP is not simply credit; it is expensive credit, and a costly way of paying on the never-never. It keeps expenditure off the books and hides enormous debts but, like all irresponsible borrowing, it cannot be kept secret for ever.

Andy Kerr: Will the member take an intervention?

Bill Wilson: Mr Kerr has had one go; that will have to be enough.

Jeremy Purvis: What about me? Can I have a go?

Bill Wilson: Very briefly.

Jeremy Purvis: Given that most PPP projects in the world today are in Sweden, Finland and Norway, could they not be said to be worshipping at the altar of the same god?

Bill Wilson: There is a fundamental difference. We would not find the same levels of personal indebtedness in any of those countries. The idea that an economy can be driven solely through indebtedness does not exist there. I am glad to see that Jeremy Purvis is converting to the idea that small, independent countries do so much better, and I welcome the Liberal party's support for such small, independent countries.

What has new Labour's irresponsibility cost Scotland? This year, the cost is £500 million; in 2024, it will be £979 million, and the last repayment will not be made until 2049. What has it cost Renfrewshire? In education, it cost £4.4 million in 2006-07 and £9.9 million this year—money taken from Renfrewshire children's education to feed the monster of PPP.

There is no doubt that PPP must be brought to an end, and that many in Scotland, when they cast their vote in 2007, voted for the SNP to bring an end to the Thatcherite economics of Brown and new Labour. Equally, there is no doubt that ending the expensive PPP programme will not halt investment. There is £842 million for the new Southern general hospital, £95 million for a replacement prison in the north-east of Scotland and £80 million for Inverclyde Council's schools project. Those are but a few examples of the investment that is going ahead under the Government team.

The SFT will ensure that future SNP Governments are not saddled with the huge debts

that result from irresponsible borrowing. What will future Governments have to thank us for? No more West Lothian College disasters—it cost the taxpayer £20 million to sort that one out. No more Hairmyres hospital failures—a one-for-the-price-of-two deal. No more Inverness airport rip-offs—bought at a cost of £27.5 million, it cost less than £10 million to build.

The fundamental principle of SFT is that it uses the non-profit-distributing model. The Tories themselves described PPP as the unacceptable face of capitalism, and quite right they were.

SFT will ensure that there will be essential expertise in new deals. It will aggregate capital investment—one advantage of that approach that has already been seen is the fact that the Government has saved £15 million on its electricity bill, which is a saving of almost 8 per cent.

PPP must come to an end. Even Labour has to accept that. On 1 April 2009, the UK will adopt the new international financial reporting standards, which will mean that expensive errors can no longer be hidden.

Some semblance of sanity must return to Government borrowing. When we look to the future, it is clearly a future without Brown's credit-card PPP. It is clearly a future of rational and sustainable development by the SFT. The future is bright, the future is SNP.

15:57

James Kelly (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab): How can I follow that thunderous address?

I welcome the opportunity to take part in this debate. It is logical that we have it the day after we had a debate on the economy. It is absolutely correct that we discuss such issues at this time, given that unemployment has increased by 13,000, there are forecasts that the economy will shrink by 2 per cent and there might be between 50,000 and 117,000 job losses in Scotland in the coming years. Added to that, as David Whitton noted, the Scottish Building Federation fears that 20,000 jobs will be lost in the construction industry by Christmas. The human impact of those job losses and the recession will be felt throughout Scotland's communities. When such events occur, people look to Governments for a response. One way in which the SNP Administration can respond is by speeding up its infrastructure programme in order to boost the economy.

The school building programme is crying out for investment. A third of Scotland's schools are in need of repair or new build. However, the programme has ground to a halt. The clock continues to tick on the Scottish Futures Trust, but

as yet it has produced no new projects and no new finance. There continue to be questions about the Scottish Futures Trust. Despite the cabinet secretary's comments today, people will continue to ask questions about how the SFT will attract finance. The cabinet secretary reiterated the objective of attracting savings of £150 million a year, but we have been given no details of how that will be achieved. In addition, we have been warned that building inflation is starting to rise.

Against that backdrop, the cabinet secretary's ambitions appear to be overstated. We still do not know any detail about the use of local authority bonds, which, it turns out, have been legal since 1975. Scotland's councils are still asking questions about the funding that will be available to them. Under traditional PPP projects, the Government provided 80 per cent of funding, but there have been no clear answers on whether that will continue.

Joe FitzPatrick spoke about the evidence that the Finance Committee heard on the NPD model. In my opinion, very little of that evidence suggested that the NPD model was value for money, and the Institute for Public Policy Research shares my view on that. There are only a few examples of the NPD model: more are needed in order to back up SNP members' bold claims.

I will not be negative—I do not want the SNP to accuse the Labour Party of negativity for the second week in a row. I will offer some practical suggestions for ways in which the SNP Administration can bring forward extra moneys to boost the capital investment programme. First, it could abandon the Scottish Futures Trust, which would release £22.9 million, and bring that extra money to the table.

The Government has said that £3.5 billion is committed to the capital investment programme in each financial year of the spending review period. It would make sense to bring forward some of the £3.5 billion from each of the two final years of the period in order to boost capital investment.

John Swinney: Mr Kelly makes an interesting point. Does he accept that my ability to do that is restricted by the United Kingdom Treasury rules under which I operate? Will he join me in arguing for such flexibility to ensure that we front load our capital investment programme, which I would be happy to support?

James Kelly: I believe that the cabinet secretary has received a letter from the Chief Secretary to the Treasury that indicates she has not placed any restrictions on him in relation to bringing projects forward.

The Government should bring forward the results of the strategic transport projects review

and implement it immediately. The Government should also examine the use of end-year flexibility moneys. In 2009-10, £174 million of end-year flexibility money is available in addition to the £42 million underspend from last year.

Those are a few of the positive measures that can be brought forward. It is time for action. The SNP needs to wake up to that or it will suffer further drubbings at the polls, like the one last week in Glenrothes.

16:03

Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD): During the SNP's election campaign, we were promised that the Scottish Futures Trust would be up and running by Christmas last year—a brand new, more effective way of funding new schools and much-needed new infrastructure projects. Members can imagine my disappointment when it did not arrive by Christmas day, and all I got was a Marks and Spencer jumper instead.

Now Christmas is approaching again, and I wait with bated breath. The plans are still murky at best, with no indication of how long it will be before the SFT builds anything. Children, patients, public transport users and people all over Scotland will be disappointed, as the infrastructure that they want and need does not arrive. We find that instead of a funding body, we are getting a very expensive advisory body.

The Scottish Government has tried to mislead the public on its progress on school building projects and to take credit for infrastructure successes that were not of its making but of the making of the previous Liberal Democrat Executive, and has stalled much-needed investment across the country with its indecision.

The SNP Government promised to match the school building programme of the previous Liberal Democrat Administration “brick for brick”, but what it really meant was that it would allow the programme that was in place prior to the election to continue without scrapping any of the planned projects, which is hardly the same thing. Many people voted for the SNP not so that it could take credit for our work in building and improving hundreds of schools, but because they had been promised more.

I do not believe that dogma should be the driving force here. Mr Brownlee will recall that it was Lib Dem-led Argyll and Bute Council that pioneered the non-profit-distributing method. We should not be driven by dogma, but I believe that the SNP Government has been. It has been guided by blind opposition to PFI and PPP down a road that has taken us to the SFT, which has described itself as being part of the same family. We are going round in circles instead of driving forward and building

the schools and infrastructure that our country needs. The vehicle is not the important thing; value for money and the delivery of infrastructure are. The important thing is that the building projects that are needed in our schools and elsewhere are brought forward and completed quickly and effectively.

I am sorry that the Conservatives are again propping up the SNP. They should listen to Grant Thornton Ltd and others instead of ooh-ing and aah-ing over the cabinet secretary's new clothes.

Derek Brownlee: Can Margaret Smith point us to anyone or any organisation—including Grant Thornton—that has given evidence to either the Finance Committee or any other committee over the past year calling for the Scottish Futures Trust to be abandoned?

Margaret Smith: Derek Brownlee's colleague, Gavin Brown, mentioned the comment by the representative of Grant Thornton and others that they had heard that 2010 was when the SFT would have its own funding capability, which is quite a way off. They talk about that being “a big hiatus” and “very uncertain”. They know the reality of what that means for the economy in which we find ourselves.

Mr Swinney has now had to admit that the first school to be built under the SNP will not be commissioned until 2009. That is clearly not the same as a new school being available now. Right now, no SNP schools have been contracted, none is being built and none is opening its classroom doors to Scotland's children, yet that is what we need to happen.

The cabinet secretary claims that the certainty of the Government's investment plans is a “particular strength” in these troubled times. Again, that is simply not true. Nothing about the plans is certain. There is no accelerated capital programme for schools in Edinburgh or elsewhere to help to boost the economy, and no decisive action whatever is being taken. COSLA describes the Scottish Futures Trust as “a joke” and, in recent weeks, a series of construction industry stakeholders and others have given evidence to parliamentary committees about the lack of detail in the Government's plans and the economic impacts of the delays, including job losses and the loss of key skills from our country.

All the delays would not be quite so galling if the end result was worth it—a revolution in finance that would change investment in Scotland for ever. However, in its plans for the trust the SNP has delivered not only a close relation of PPP, which the SNP claims to oppose, but a complete and utter shambles. Unions, business interests and local authority organisations are queuing up to complain about the trust model, with their views on

the initiative ranging from “sketchy” and “imprudent” to “unworkable”. It is clear that the SNP Government is losing the confidence of the business community and others and that its proposed model may be unaffordable for local authorities and unattractive to investors. Given the economic climate, exactly why would banks leap at the chance to sign up to projects under such an unworkable vehicle with absolutely no track record?

Throughout Scotland, we see the Government’s failure on infrastructure funding. As the pipeline stalls and the projects dry up, we will have a black hole in infrastructure investment and projects across the country, which will mean job losses in the construction industry and all sectors. Uncertainty and confusion over what the Government is doing and when changes will happen are already causing problems and will continue to do so as long as they continue.

In my constituency, the new Forth crossing remains a pressing concern. As I have said to the cabinet secretary before, the people of Queensferry, whom I represent, want to know how the new Forth crossing is going to be funded, and they need to have answers soon. In opposition, Jim Mather told us that the SFT could save as much as £450 million on the cost of the new Forth bridge—enough, in fact, to dual the A9. Is it not a pity that in opposition, SNP members knew so much, yet in government, they do so little?

16:09

John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP): I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate. I listened with interest to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth’s opening remarks. It should be clear to everyone that we cannot continue to support the public-private partnerships and private finance initiatives that were established under the previous Conservative and new Labour Administrations.

One of the main arguments from the new Labour Government and the previous Scottish Executive was that PPP projects would be off balance sheet so would not count under the public spending rules. We are now told that all those projects are liable to come back on balance sheet, with the potential that future public procurement programmes will be jeopardised. Without direct intervention from the Exchequer, it is possible that there will be no future public works programme in Scotland.

In evidence to the Local Government and Communities Committee, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth advised that the cost of servicing PPP debt will reach £1 billion a year within the next couple of years. My

colleague Bill Wilson has already indicated how long that situation will last.

The cost of PPP to the public purse has been damaging. The profits made by the private contractors have been, and continue to be, obscene.

Andy Kerr: One of the greatest critics of PPP, Professor Allyson Pollock, has stated:

“the Scottish Futures Trust ... is not so much an alternative as a PFI hybrid.”

Is the member not comparing like with like?

John Wilson: That has still to be evidenced, Mr Kerr. For example, a recent Unison document states:

“Unison Scotland has previously estimated the sums wasted on PFI as £5.8 billion, taking into account a whole range of factors including higher financing costs. These new figures show that is in fact likely to be an underestimate.”

In February 2008, the Kier Group announced that it had made a 500 per cent return on its investment in the Hairmyres hospital PFI project. It sold a 50 per cent share to Innisfree M & G PPP for £13.8 million in cash, which was on top of £2.2 million of deferred profit from an August 2004 refinancing deal.

Many PPP projects have led to other issues, particularly for workers in schools and hospitals. Many cleaners and caretakers found that they were transferred to contracted-out services, often with an offer of “take it or leave”.

I put on record my tribute to the work of Jim and Margaret Cuthbert, who have attempted to follow the trail of many contracts that were let under PPP funding arrangements. Through freedom of information requests, they received direct access to contract details that enabled them to highlight some of the worst examples of excessive profiteering. Such profits, it must be added, have been made at the expense of the public purse.

During the inquiry into the proposed closure of Monklands hospital’s accident and emergency unit, a number of those who gave evidence highlighted that one possible reason for the proposed closure was Lanarkshire NHS Board’s financial commitment to servicing the PPP debts of the hospitals at Wishaw and Hairmyres. Vital services in the Monklands area were therefore being sacrificed to feed the profits of construction contractors.

I am also aware of the implications of local authorities failing to get the design right under PPP contracts. On one primary school project, an extra £1.5 million had to be spent on additional classroom space just prior to completion, due to the failure to get the right school roll number. On a community school/centre project, the council failed

to ensure that the design provided adequate disabled access for wheelchair users. That flaw was pointed out only upon completion of the project. The operator's proposed solution was to put a doorbell on the entrance that the janitor could respond to and open the door for wheelchair users. However, the janitor pointed out that, due to cutbacks in staffing levels that had been imposed by his new employer, as well as being expected to open the door he could also be cleaning up after a school child had been sick or dealing with other essential duties. He was expected to drop what he was doing and run to open the door. The problem was eventually resolved at additional expense to the local authority. In the same building, community groups that wanted to store equipment such as chess boards were advised that the storage cost would be £1,000, because the building was designed with inadequate cupboard space.

Such examples are repeated throughout the country. The main difference is that when the building is owned and controlled by the local authority, the authority can send in its own workers to carry out the work. Under PPP contracts, the work is carried out by the contractor's staff and charged at its rates.

In the past, I have commented on the role of some civil servants in promoting the procurement of public buildings through PPP. A recent *Private Eye* article highlighted the issue of proper scrutiny of the PPP agenda by the National Audit Office. That body, which was created to hold the Government to account, was accused of being actively involved in promoting the PPP mantra, along with the PFI industry, at conferences to plug the initiative.

I urge Parliament to support the motion in the name of the cabinet secretary. Let us move forward to provide the public infrastructure that is required throughout Scotland.

16:15

Tom McCabe (Hamilton South) (Lab): Nineteen months into this Government's period of office, finding ourselves in recession, and having exhausted, I hope, rhetoric about private profiteers—although, after Mr Wilson's contribution, that might be a triumph of optimism over experience—we should surely be at the point where the Government has a workable financing model for the provision of public infrastructure. Irrespective of what we call the model—and even if, as many believe, the Scottish Futures Trust is just PPP by another name—the priority surely must be to resolve the issue, start refilling the pipeline of public infrastructure projects and contribute with deeds, not words, to offsetting what will undoubtedly be a very painful recession.

Before I say any more about the Scottish Futures Trust, or whatever the financing model is, let us remind ourselves what painful recession means. It means that successful Scottish companies might cease to exist; it means that many of the critical skill sets that underpin our economy might be lost; and it means that some families' breadwinners will become redundant, with all the attendant breakdown and personal pain that goes with economic stagnation. Those are terrible prospects, and they are understood better by those who have experienced them than those who talk about them.

This is no time for prevarication, and no time to create considerable uncertainty in the construction industry and all the supply-line companies that feed off it, but there is no doubt that that has happened: civil engineering contractors and the Federation of Master Builders say so. Among the providers of many vital services in Scotland there is increasing concern about a lack of direction and a lack of clarity.

One can only wonder why a Government that seeks to change the financing model has taken so long to bring forward a workable alternative, and— even more important—why it has been so difficult for the Government to win friends for the scant ideas that have been put forward thus far.

A few months ago, the cabinet secretary announced that Sir Angus Grossart would chair the Scottish Futures Trust. Sir Angus's comments indicate that the changes required are far from seismic, and that, in fact, they employ not much more than common sense. He gave an informative interview to *The Times* on 12 September, and it is worth while reflecting on what he said:

"My basic assumption is that, with a small, experienced specialist team, there will be improvements through better procurement, better co-ordination and a more effective use of experience."

That is hardly rocket science, and it is certainly not 19 months of science. However, to be fair, I add that Sir Angus shared some other thoughts. He said:

"We would hope to refine the processes,"—

which, incidentally, are the PPP processes—

"the mechanisms and the skills so that the public sector retains a greater part of the benefits while still engaging with the private sector. It seems a perfectly straightforward and clear objective."

I could not agree more. But again I have to ask why, 19 months into the process, we still have no model. Anxiety levels are increasing among service providers and the Scottish construction industry.

In the interests of good governance and of the economic wellbeing of companies and individuals,

we need to stop the prevarication and get a model that suits the economic circumstances that we find ourselves in, provides high-quality facilities for the general public, and is attractive enough for the private sector to see merit in becoming involved.

Perhaps in an attempt to lay to rest once and for all wild assertions about private profiteers, the Government and its supporters could desist from happily giving the impression that there is something wrong with private sector involvement, and accept the fact that the private sector always has had, and always will have, a hand in the provision of public sector infrastructure.

Perhaps we should listen again to the wise counsel of Sir Angus Grossart. When he was asked how the private sector will be encouraged to invest, he reminded us:

"There has got to be sufficient return for the capital and the risk which is involved".

Let us remind ourselves that the private sector, quite justifiably, needs to cover its risk. If that cannot be done in part by selling on assets, it will surely be done through a different scale of up-front charges. No matter what we call the model, we will not encourage private companies to take risks with their shareholders' money without an adequate premium.

The cabinet secretary was at pains to mention his partnership with local government. Will he assure us that, under whatever model is used, the level playing field support—the 80 per cent revenue support—that was previously available to local government will continue? That support from central Government will allow local government to continue to provide infrastructure.

16:21

Alex Neil (Central Scotland) (SNP): I do not agree with Tom McCabe on many issues, but I regret that he is no longer a member of the Finance Committee because he brought a great deal of intellectual power to its work.

The case that the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats have put today is based largely on the mythology that they are trying to spread throughout Scotland. The first myth is that we are not matching their record on the provision of schools. The reality is that, in the first 18 months of the SNP Administration, the Government has given the go-ahead for 49 schools, which is more or less equal to the number that got the go-ahead in the last 18 months of the previous Administration.

Andy Kerr: The cabinet secretary made that point too, but the West Dunbartonshire schools were announced on 17 December 2005. They are

projects of the previous Administration. Does the member accept that point?

Alex Neil: When the previous Administration started, it inherited projects as well. That is the ongoing life of Government. There is no big secret about that. We made a firm commitment that we will build or refurbish 250 schools in the four-year period, and unlike the previous Administration we will keep that promise.

The second big myth is that there is a black hole in the flow of projects since we came to power. Let me confuse that argument with some facts. The reality is that the value of projects for which contracts have been signed since the SNP came to power in May 2007 is £1.8 billion. The value of projects that have been approved since we came to power is £2.5 billion, and £1.4 billion-worth of those will be funded under not-for-profit models. The value of projects that have been announced since May 2007 is £5.7 billion. That is an unprecedented record and one for us to be proud of. I defy any member of the Labour Party or the Liberal Democrats to identify an 18-month period in the first eight years of devolution in which they announced £5.7 billion-worth of projects.

We heard some other myths. Margaret Smith made the incredible statement that no new schools have been contracted since we came to power. She does not know her facts. The fact is that £870 million-worth of schools have been contracted since the SNP came to power.

Margaret Smith: The point that I was making, and which other members have made, is that all those projects were started by us. I am happy to accept that that is the way of Governments—that one leaves and another comes in and takes over. The problem is not what we have been saying, but the fact that your guys have been taking the credit for things that the previous Administration did.

Alex Neil: The member says that that is what she intended to say, but when she checks the *Official Report* tomorrow she will find that she actually said that no schools had been contracted. That is factual nonsense, because £870 million-worth of schools have been contracted.

Much mention has been made of the £22 million that has been committed to the Scottish Futures Trust so far. However, those who made the point typically looked at only one side of the income and expenditure account; none of them mentioned that when the SFT is fully up and running it will save up to £150 million every year. For those on the Labour and Liberal benches who cannot make the calculation, that means a saving of £600 million over four years. As Jim Mather has been quoted as saying, £600 million is roughly the cost of dualling the A9 between Inverness and Perth. As a

result, the savings made by the SFT will far outweigh the costs of setting it up.

I say to Labour members in particular that one of the reasons why we have to use instruments other than normal mainstream funding for investment is that their Government at Westminster is denying us the right not to money that we are not entitled to, but to money that we are. If the UK Government gave us our fossil fuel levy money with no strings attached, our share of the Olympics regeneration money and our share of the prison money, investment in Scotland would be even higher than it already is under this successful SNP Administration.

16:27

Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab): I welcome the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth's update on the Scottish Futures Trust. The cabinet secretary talked about the trust as if it were up and running and already existed as an arm's-length company. There might well be a new model of financing, but there is still no board, no chief executive and no agreed management statement on how the trust will operate. No wonder there is anxiety in the marketplace.

As a result, I seek some clarity from the cabinet secretary on the trust's corporate governance structure. This afternoon, he offered us pretty thin gruel with the announcement of two additional non-executive directors. However, he has also indicated that he intends shortly to make another two appointments. When he sums up, will he tell us the size that he envisages the complete board will be and, crucially, the date that he envisages the board being in place?

Given that the advertisement for the chief executive has been published, will the cabinet secretary tell us whether that person will be appointed by the board, the chairman or ministers? By what date does he envisage the SFT's chief executive and the full senior team being in place?

I turn from that corporate governance guddle—and it is a guddle—to the operation of this trust that has yet to be established. When the issue was previously discussed, the cabinet secretary said:

"we will set"

the SFT's

"objectives and direction through a management statement, which we will publish, that is agreed between the Scottish Government and the new company's chair and board."—
[*Official Report*, 10 September 2008; c 10601.]

When is this governing management statement expected to be agreed between the SFT's board and the Government? Is there a target date?

The SFT's business case, which as the cabinet secretary says was published in May, proposed in addition to the SFT board an infrastructure board for Scotland to oversee the SFT's activities. Does that infrastructure board for Scotland still form part of the business case or has it been ditched? If it has been ditched, will the cabinet secretary tell us what has happened?

I turn from that corporate governance guddle and operational spaghetti of boards that we do not know will be appointed to the question whether any of this actually matters in the real world where people fear recession and fear for their jobs. It is fair to say that all business organisations and construction organisations in Scotland believe that the guddle, confusion and delay matter greatly. I happily accept that things are slightly different in local government because a non-profit model has been tried in it, but I want to focus on central Government procurement.

The Government claims that there are absolutely no delays in procurement in Scotland, but those in the industry overwhelmingly say that there are delays. Ministers will have seen the Scottish Building Federation's list of projects that have been approved, but—crucially—not procured. The cabinet secretary basks in a reputation for being a reasonable man and a business-friendly minister. He should publish a list of central Government projects that have been approved but not yet procured and clear up the issue. As a start, perhaps the cabinet secretary, aided by his expert officials at the back of the chamber, will name for us in his summing up any capital projects that have been approved and procured in the past two years by central Government or its agencies, rather than by local government.

In his summing up, the cabinet secretary can either gracefully admit that there have been dangerous and damaging delays in moving from agreeing and approving projects to the procurement stage because the model is largely untested in central Government and its agencies, or he can deny that there have been any delays, as we have heard. I simply say that the evidence will speak for itself. The cabinet secretary should not leave it to interest groups throughout Scotland to try to cobble together what is happening on the brink of the biggest recession that we have faced certainly for a decade or two—perhaps for more decades than that. He should publish the data. That is the least that he owes to every Scot who works in a business and is struggling to deal with the consequences of the recession. I am looking for a commitment from the cabinet secretary when

he sums up that he will publish a list that shows what has happened over the past two years in central Government.

16:32

Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD): I am sure that we had all hoped to leave the chamber with a greater understanding of how the Scottish Futures Trust will deliver infrastructure, but sadly we do not have that understanding so far.

Not many members will agree with Bill Wilson's assertion that the SFT brings sanity to the debate; rather, it is sowing the seeds of confusion, delay and contradiction, as Wendy Alexander pointed out.

Jeremy Purvis and Des McNulty exposed the truth. In its most recent manifestation, the SFT is no more than an advisory body. I am not sure that the Conservatives or any of the SNP back benchers are up to speed on that yet. They keep on talking about the SFT as an alternative to PPP/PFI. It is worth emphasising that a range of options, from PPP to NPD to straight capital funding, was available to the previous Administration, which pressed ahead with two rounds of school building programmes. Each project increased understanding of managing PPP/PFI schemes to get better value. Indeed, the Liberal Democrats in Argyll and Bute Council introduced a much-praised NPD scheme in response to concerns about early costs.

Joe FitzPatrick: Will the member take an intervention?

Alison McInnes: I will not, as we are tight for time.

In the Lib Dem manifesto, we promised continued public sector investment. We said that there would be 250 new or refurbished schools in this session and 100 new or refurbished health centres, as well as major new investment in public transport. We wanted to build on the record investment that was made in previous years, and we acknowledged the importance of on-going investment. We do not have a bright future under the SNP Government; instead, the already gloomy outlook of recession is being further darkened by the SNP's SFT proposals.

As Margaret Smith pointed out, Alex Salmond spent the election campaign promising that he would scrap the public-private partnership system. He said that his Scottish Futures Trust would be up and running by Christmas 2007. He did not tell the electorate that no new building would be commissioned until the SNP had set up the mythical new trust.

The Government's school estate statistics, which were published less than six weeks ago, are revealing. They show that 551 primary schools and 107 secondary schools are in the poor condition category, which means that they are showing major defects and/or not operating adequately; and that 106 primary schools and 11 secondary schools are in condition D, which is the bad category, meaning that their economic life has expired.

Alex Neil: Will the member take an intervention?

Alison McInnes: I will not.

As David Whitton and Margaret Smith pointed out, the SNP is one and a half years into government but it has commissioned nothing to speak of to address that situation. How can the Government be so comfortably numb about that?

Then there is the new Forth road bridge, which my colleague Margaret Smith mentioned. According to the infrastructure investment plan, the new Forth crossing is the Government's number 1 national development, yet no money has been confirmed to pay for it. Ministers were still reviewing various funding options in September this year. It is not good enough for the SNP to avoid answering such questions; it is time to stop hiding and give a straight answer. Where will the £4 billion come from? It is one thing to say that a bridge will be built and it will be ready in time, but it is entirely different to have worked out where the money will come from, how the project will be managed and therefore whether it will actually be built.

We believe that a strong and successful Scotland needs a level of investment that allows schools, hospitals and new transport infrastructure to be built, and to be built in a planned and steady way. Unfortunately, confusion and delay continue to be the hallmarks of the Government's approach. Nothing that we have heard today will allay the fears of communities throughout Scotland. The situation must be rectified urgently if Scotland is not to be plunged further than necessary into recession. The Government undervalues what infrastructure investment delivers. Among other things, it connects Scotland to markets; ensures that children learn in modern facilities and that our hospitals are fit for purpose; and has a role in securing thousands of jobs. The Government chooses to focus only on dogmatic opposition to the PFI. The uninformed and sometimes hysterical stances to the PFI that the Government took in opposition would have benefited from mature reflection on its taking office. Instead, the unthinkable happened and that approach has been rolled into the Government without review.

The situation is worse than that, because the Government consulted on its plans and, now that it has done so, it is clear that Alex Salmond has, for once, succeeded in uniting civic Scotland—although, mind you, it is united in opposition to his plans. Responses to the SFT consultation from key stakeholders have been utterly disparaging of the draft proposals. Businesses, councils, Audit Scotland, the Scottish Council for Development and Industry and the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce have used all sorts of descriptions, including “flawed”, “sketchy”, “window-dressing” and “unworkable”. What does the SNP do in response to that united opposition? It ploughs on regardless. That is not good enough.

The Government must listen and change direction urgently. It should start by ditching the new quango and signalling today that it will free up investment immediately for schools and transportation projects.

16:38

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):

The Conservatives welcome the contribution that the cabinet secretary has made to our understanding of how the new mechanism for funding public projects will work, although our understanding has been progressed by only a limited margin.

Since the Government came to power, it has been particularly keen to avoid any attempt to introduce PPP projects or to suggest that that is how projects should be funded. It has been most interesting to hear the complaints from Labour and Liberal Democrat members about how we have turned our backs on the mechanism that they used to use. Of course, that is not true of the Conservatives—we still believe that those mechanisms are effective, but there is a certain irony to those complaints when we consider the record of the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Party in opposition in Westminster. Labour was fervently opposed to PFI and said that it would deal with the problem when it arrived in office. Well when it arrived in office it evolved the PPP system, which was—give or take some—almost indistinguishable from the mechanism that it replaced.

However, that evolutionary approach is reasonable. It was and remains a concern for us that the new Government in Scotland has decided to progress several new funding mechanisms to replace PPP. The problem is that time is passing as the system evolves and we get more news about how it will operate: 19 months have elapsed since the election of this Government and, in spite of the unbridled enthusiasm of members such as Alex Neil, there is without doubt a hiatus in the investment that is required for projects that would

have been funded by PPP. In my backyard, a Liberal Democrat and Conservative council is looking for funding for new secondary schools in places such as Laurencekirk and Kemnay. The council is ready to take advantage of a mechanism once one is presented to it, but no mechanism seems to be available, as yet.

Jeremy Purvis expressed legitimate concerns about the amount of money that is being invested in setting up the SFT. However, the fact that the SNP set itself ideologically against PPP, but has now begun to progress towards something that is almost indistinguishable from it, means that this is something that we need to encourage the Government to get on with. The problem is that we have not made progress.

We must make the scheme attractive to investors. If we rule out incentives for investors, there will be no investment. The sooner we have an attractive project and an attractive scheme that will encourage investors and investment in our infrastructure development, the sooner we will have something that will work.

As the Conservatives have said consistently, we will evaluate proposals on their merit, because value for money is more important than ideology. Although much detail is still to be produced, two points are clear: the SFT will advise on PPP projects and in 2010 a new private futures trust will be established to provide private investment. It will be interesting to see how the left wingers among the SNP back benchers react to that—I will be particularly keen to hear Bill Wilson’s reaction.

The SFT has changed from the original plans: it is not what it was in the SNP’s manifesto, nor is it what it was in the consultation paper. However it is dressed up, the key principle of PFI or PPP is maintained: the levering in of private investment in public infrastructure. Concerns remain about aspects of the Government’s proposals, including the length of time before the SFT starts to commission real projects. The current estimate is that it will do so in 2009 at the earliest. Furthermore, there are no details of exactly how investment will be raised from the private sector, with the exception—of course—of use of the non-profit-distributing model of PPP.

Let us move the SFT forward. Why does the Government not consider the option of putting in place a choice? It should allow those who are choosing to invest public money to let the market decide what gives best value for money.

There is no doubt in my mind that today we need public investment more than we have at any time during the 10 years of the Scottish Parliament. The actions of this Government in setting itself ideologically against PPP have created a delay in delivery of projects, which may

occur now or in the future. Parliament's priority today is to move forward and to offer encouragement to the Government to deliver a working model at the earliest possible opportunity.

16:44

Andy Kerr (East Kilbride) (Lab): There will, sadly, have been no great sigh of relief from our construction industry, our construction-related businesses or workers in the industry after the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth's speech. We had the announcement, which had previously been made to the Finance Committee, that there are two more members of the SFT's board, and that two more are to come. He announced the pathfinders for the community hubs, which were in the system anyway and were delayed by the SNP. I share Gavin Brown's view that what we have had today is a damp squib, and that we are no further forward.

On the pragmatic approach, at the heart of everything I have sought to do in the SFT debate is an attempt to ensure that we retain value for money—I will expand on that later—and focus on the jobs that, because of the opportunity costs that result from the SFT not being available, are being lost to Scottish businesses and workers.

Mr FitzPatrick and Dr Bill Wilson adopted a vehement attitude to PPP—

Joe FitzPatrick: PFI.

Andy Kerr: And to PFI.

Let us consider the evidence that they used and examine what people are now saying about the Government's new model. Allyson Pollock, a great critic of me and of PPP, said in recognising that the SNP's policy is simply PPP, that

"A new name can't save a poor policy".

She also said that

"it is not so much an alternative as a PFI hybrid."

Mark Hellowell of the University of Edinburgh said:

"Evidence suggests this form of public-private partnership does not lead to lower levels of profit-making than PFI."

All the private sector profits that Dr Wilson spoke about will in no way be stopped by the model that is proposed by the cabinet secretary.

Joe FitzPatrick: If Andy Kerr is saying that the SFT is exactly the same as PFI/PPP, what is he complaining about?

Andy Kerr: Like every sector of the Scottish community, I am complaining about the fact that we do not have a model or an alternative to PPP. The member should listen to what the construction

industry is saying. It does not have a clue what the SNP is proposing.

COSLA met the deal maker, Angus Grossart, but the deal maker had no deal. He had no detail, and COSLA left the meeting none the wiser, despite the fact that Angus Grossart is the very man whom the cabinet secretary put in position to solve problems.

Considering Mr Brownlee's comments, I hope that he searches the job pages this weekend. If he sees an advert for a cheerleader for the SNP, he should apply. His analysis of what is happening in our infrastructure and economy does not reflect the views of our financial sector, construction industry and others who know most about what is really happening and those who most fear the loss of jobs in Scotland.

Dr Wilson suggested that the Scottish Futures Trust is somehow debt free and that there are no charges attached to it. That is not, and never was, the case. John Wilson spoke about all the problems of PPP contracts for schools. Does he not understand that there were, sadly, problems with traditional contracts throughout the public services? The point is that, although no model is perfect, PPP has delivered and continues to deliver, with value for money, schools, hospitals and other infrastructure projects throughout the country.

Alex Neil spoke about savings, but I have not seen one bit of evidence to associate £150 million savings with the SFT. We do not have a model, so how can he assert that savings can be made?

Many members commented about the delay, including Tom McCabe, Margaret Smith and Des McNulty. Let us look at wee bit further back into the history of the Scottish Futures Trust. Page 19 of the SNP manifesto said:

"we will introduce a not-for-profit Scottish Futures Trust".

That is another manifesto promise broken because we all know that we are not talking about a not-for-profit Scottish Futures Trust.

The ultra-loyalist Alex Neil and I regularly appear together on "Newsnight Scotland". On 28 August 2007, he said on the programme that, within three months, the SNP would announce its detailed plans for getting rid of PPP and for introducing a not-for-profit futures trust. It was not the first broken promise, and it will not be the last. It will certainly not be the last time Mr Neil gets it wrong. More than a year later, the construction industry, the financial sector and the trade unions are none the wiser.

As recently as 29 October 2008, here in our Parliament, John Watt of Grant Thornton said:

"It is uncertain; we just do not know what SFT will look like. A number of people in the industry are concerned about what SFT is and what it will mean ... The last date that I heard for SFT having its own funding capability was 2010, which is quite a way off. People will not be able to hold on until 2010 in the hope of seeing a pipeline then."—*[Official Report, Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, 29 October 2008; c 1129.]*

The cabinet secretary has set out no further detail today. Wendy Alexander and others have asked for the detail to allow us to judge the trust, but ministers simply do not have that detail. We do not know what the SFT will look like, although, as Tom McCabe hints, we have had some understanding from Sir Angus Grossart—it will probably look like PPP.

As we all know, the SFT is not a not-for-profit model. Unison has described it as "PFI-lite", but it is looking increasingly like full-blown PFI/PPP. John Wilson quoted Unison to aid the point that he was trying to make; I suggest that he read Unison's more recent briefings, which undermine his Government's policy and stance.

The Scottish public have been misled on the not-for-profit point and the non-profit-distributing model, but the real tragedy is that the debate, the dithering and the Government's inability to deliver the model are causing untold damage in our construction industry as work and skills are lost to Scotland. People in the financial sector will tell members that most people who are involved in infrastructure development in Scotland are leaving and working in England or the rest of Europe because they do not have a clue what the Scottish Government is up to. I suggest that the cabinet secretary does not have a clue either.

Inaction is costing jobs and ideology is costing futures. The loss of skills and jobs to Scotland is utterly unacceptable. The First Minister and his Administration have personally turned off the pipeline that has been talked about so much in the debate. There is a brain drain and a jobs drain because of the Scottish Government's ideology. That is unacceptable, which is why our amendment and, indeed, the Liberal Democrat amendment call for an end to the nonsense.

The Government has had long enough and does not have a clue about how it will deliver its alternative to PPP/PFI. That is unacceptable. When asked when the work will run dry and the building sector will be in crisis, the Scottish Building Federation responded:

"We are already there. If we do not take action now"

on the SFT—to take Mr Swinney's sedentary comment into account—

"there will be no point in doing so in six months' time when the work dries up."—*[Official Report, Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, 29 October 2008; c 1133.]*

That is why members must support the Labour amendment and draw an end to the farce.

16:52

John Swinney: Among the many fascinating speeches in the debate, the most fascinating was perhaps that of Alison McInnes, who made a compelling argument for an acceleration of capital investment projects to ensure that we speed up the programme and get more activity into the marketplace. How does that sit comfortably with the £800 million of swingeing cuts about which we hear from the Liberal Democrats every day of the week?

Alison McInnes: There is growing recognition that tax cuts have a contribution to make at this difficult economic time. We have challenged everyone in the Parliament to work together to try to make those tax cuts while protecting services; £22 million for a new quango is only one example of wasteful expenditure.

John Swinney: There we have the answer. If we cut £22 million over five years, that means that there is £778 million to go by next April if the Liberal Democrats want to make £800 million of public spending cuts.

Mr Whitton made a couple of interesting remarks. He refused to accept that the Government has a £3.5 billion infrastructure investment plan. I even intervened on him to try to save him from himself, but he refused to take up my kind invitation to him to correct the record. I tell him that there is, without a shadow of doubt, a programme in excess of £3.5 billion in the Government's capital investment programme.

Mr Whitton went on to make the startling revelation that the construction industry is in crisis because of the Government's approach to the Scottish Futures Trust. However, yesterday, we got a lecture about the global financial crisis from all Labour members as they tried to absolve Gordon Brown of any responsibility for the mess that the economy is in.

Andy Kerr: John Swinney should listen to and read about what happens in the Parliament's committees. Every witness who has been asked detailed questions on the Scottish Futures Trust has given evidence to suggest that it is at the heart of many of our problems.

John Swinney: Mr Kerr always used to be on message, with his pager at the ready to tell him what to say. He should go off and listen to the Prime Minister's explanation of the global financial crisis with which we are dealing.

That brings me to Wendy Alexander's points about the content of the programme. I apologise to Parliament, as it will take me some time to go

through this part of my speech. Since May 2007, the following contracts have been signed and approved by the Government: the NHS Forth Valley Clackmannanshire community health services project; the NHS Forth Valley acute hospital project; the NHS Fife St Andrews community hospital and resource centre project; the East Dunbartonshire schools project; the West Lothian schools project; the Aberdeen city schools project; the Falkirk schools project; the Perth and Kinross schools project; the Dumfries and Galloway schools project; the West Dunbartonshire schools project; the Inverclyde schools project; the A7 Auchencroft improvement project—

Jeremy Purvis rose—

John Swinney: I will take no interruptions from Mr Purvis at this stage—we will have the whole list.

There is the A77 Haggstone climbing lane and Glen App improvement project; the state hospital project; and the Royal Botanical Gardens gateway visitors centre project. The icing on the cake—the project that Mr McCabe waited for ever to secure—is the M74 completion. Mr Harvie hates that project, but I must put it on the record for Parliament today.

Jeremy Purvis: How many of the schemes that the cabinet secretary has listed were in the 2005 infrastructure investment plan? All of them were.

John Swinney: We have delivered the projects that the Administration that Mr Purvis supported never managed to deliver.

I say to Wendy Alexander that the board of the Scottish Futures Trust is in place; two more members will be appointed. We are recruiting the trust's chief executive, and its management statement will be based on the business case that I have put to Parliament. That demonstrates the operational strength that is emerging in the Scottish Futures Trust.

Mr McCabe made a point about potential delay to projects. I remind Parliament of what I said in answer to a parliamentary question from Wendy Alexander on 9 October. If I am not being ungallant, my answer rather took her breath away. I told her that in 2009 the Scottish Futures Trust would commission its first new school building programme. I went on to say that the previous Administration approved its first projects in 2001-02—two years after it was established. We are on track to deliver the capital investment that Scotland requires.

Mr Kelly made a fascinating and helpful contribution to the debate. He said that when there is unemployment, people expect Governments to accelerate capital investment programmes. This

Administration has done precisely that on affordable housing; I am delighted that we have attracted Mr Kelly's support for our decision. Crucially, he went on to say that I should change the structure of our capital programme and invest money from the year 3 programme in the year 1 programme. I would love to be able to change the shape of our capital programme, but that requires the consent of HM Treasury, which I do not have. Mr Kelly claimed that he has a letter to me from the Chief Secretary to the Treasury saying that the Treasury has placed no road blocks on my capital spending programme in that regard, but the letter says no such thing. It is interesting that a private letter that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury sent to me is in Mr Kelly's hands. I may be able to explain why that is the case—the letter was also copied to Jim Murphy. That tells us something about the flow of information from Her Majesty's Government to the crowd on the Labour benches.

The Administration is taking forward the Scottish Futures Trust. Today we have demonstrated the progress that has been made in establishing the organisation—

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

John Swinney: We have demonstrated that we have an agenda to invest in schools and health care facilities and to deliver aggregation within capital expenditure, effective project management and a lower cost of capital, delivering value for money for the taxpayers of Scotland. That is the direction in which the Government is taking capital expenditure, through the Scottish Futures Trust. It builds on the £3.5 billion of capital expenditure that we will spend, to the letter, in this financial year, to assist the construction sector in Scotland. If Labour Party members want to support us in securing greater financial flexibility for that programme, I will be delighted to welcome their support.

Energy Bill

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is consideration of motion S3M-2843, in the name of John Swinney, on the Energy Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the relevant provisions of the UK Energy Bill in Part 2 (Electricity from Renewable Sources – the Renewables Obligation), introduced in the House of Commons on 10 January 2008 and that the relevant amendments to Part 5 (Miscellaneous Provisions – Renewable Heat Incentives), tabled by Her Majesty's Government on 29 October 2008, should, insofar as they relate to matters within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament or alter the executive competence of the Scottish Ministers, be considered by the UK Parliament.—[*Jim Mather.*]

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is consideration of Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Bruce Crawford to move motion S3M-2870, on the establishment of the Review of SPCB-supported Bodies Committee; motion S3M-2871, on the establishment of the Scottish Parliamentary Pensions Bill Committee; and motions S3M-2879 to S3M-2882 inclusive, on committee membership and substitution on committees

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees to establish a committee of the Parliament as follows—

Name of Committee: Review of SPCB-supported Bodies;

Remit: To consider and report on whether alterations should be made to the terms and conditions of the office-holders and the structure of the bodies supported by the SPCB; to consider how any proposals for future arrangements should be taken forward, including by way of a Committee Bill, and to make recommendations accordingly;

Duration: Until the Parliament has concluded consideration of the committee's report;

Convenership: The Convener will be a member of the Scottish Labour Party and the Deputy Convener will be a member of the Scottish National Party;

Membership: Jackson Carlaw, Ross Finnie, Joe FitzPatrick, Trish Godman, Jamie Hepburn, Johann Lamont.

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) to establish a committee of the Parliament as follows—

Name of Committee: Scottish Parliamentary Pensions Bill Committee;

Remit: To consider the Scottish Parliamentary Pensions Bill at Stage 2;

Duration: Until the Bill is passed, or falls or is otherwise no longer in progress;

Convenership: The Convener will be a member of the Scottish National Party and the Deputy Convener will be a member of the Scottish Labour Party;

Membership: Bill Aitken, Keith Brown, Nicol Stephen, David Stewart;

and

(b) that "4" be substituted for "5" in Rule 6.3.2 of Standing Orders for the purpose of the membership of the committee.

That the Parliament agrees that—

Keith Brown be appointed to replace Gil Paterson as a member of the European and External Relations Committee;

Gil Paterson be appointed to replace Keith Brown and Aileen Campbell be appointed to replace Christina McKelvie as members of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee;

Bob Doris be appointed to replace Gil Paterson as a member of the Subordinate Legislation Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that—

Nanette Milne be appointed to replace Jamie McGrigor as a member of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that—

Gil Paterson be appointed to replace Keith Brown as the Scottish National Party substitute on the European and External Relations Committee;

Christina McKelvie be appointed to replace Bob Doris as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Public Petitions Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that—

Jamie McGrigor be appointed to replace John Scott as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Public Petitions Committee.—[*Bruce Crawford.*]

Decision Time

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):

There are 15 questions to be put as a result of today's business. I should inform members, in relation to the debate on the Scottish Futures Trust, that if the amendment in the name of Andy Kerr is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Derek Brownlee will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S3M-2864.1, in the name of Patrick Harvie, which seeks to amend motion S3M-2864, in the name of Sarah Boyack, on energy efficiency, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)
 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)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)

Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 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)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)

Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 91, Against 15, Abstentions 14.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-2864, in the name of Sarah Boyack, on energy efficiency, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)
 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)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 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)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)

Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 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)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)

Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 90, Against 15, Abstentions 14.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament recognises the significant role that energy efficiency and microgeneration measures could have in reducing energy costs for householders and businesses, in achieving urgent reductions in greenhouse gas emissions of at least 80% by 2050 and contributing to the eradication of fuel poverty by 2016; notes that research carried out by the Energy Savings Trust suggests that widespread installation of microgeneration could provide 30 to 40% of our electricity needs by 2050 but that current investment in energy efficiency and microgeneration measures is insufficient to achieve these goals; calls on the Scottish Government to take steps, as set out in the Energy Efficiency and Microgeneration Bill proposals, such as fiscal incentives for householders and businesses, to ensure that microgeneration technologies become widely available and used and to consider other energy efficiency measures for new and existing housing stock to tackle fuel poverty, climate change and security of energy supply; notes the evidence given by Friends of the Earth Scotland to the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee suggesting that an additional £100 million per annum would be a welcome change to the draft budget for 2009-10, and calls on the Scottish Government to consider a comprehensive and fully funded Scotland-wide scheme on this scale to provide energy audits, insulation provision and financial support for micro-renewables where appropriate.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S3M-2863.1, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, which seeks to amend motion S3M-2863, in the name of Cathy Jamieson, on health funding, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)

Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 64, Against 42, Abstentions 14.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-2863, in the name of Cathy Jamieson, on health funding, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)

Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)

McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 65, Against 41, Abstentions 14.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament notes that the Scottish Government's spending plans are set against the background of the 2007 spending review settlement from the UK Treasury that represents the lowest increase for Scotland since devolution; recognises that the NHS has received a fair share of the financial settlement and that the Scottish Government is increasing spending on health in Scotland; further recognises that in this context it is right that the NHS should strive to make sure that resources are spent as efficiently as possible; commends the NHS's record in achieving efficiency savings linked to good quality care; welcomes the Scottish Government's decision to continue the practice whereby all efficiency savings generated by the NHS will be retained by the NHS for local reinvestment in frontline services, and condemns the Labour Party, which instituted efficiency savings while in government but has irresponsibly attacked them in opposition.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S3M-2862.3, in the name of Andy Kerr, which seeks to amend motion S3M-2862, in the name of John Swinney, on the Scottish Futures Trust, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)

Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)

Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 56, Against 64, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S3M-2862.1, in the name of Derek Brownlee, which seeks to amend motion S3M-2862, in the name of John Swinney, on the Scottish Futures Trust, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)

Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)

Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 64, Against 56, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S3M-2862.2, in the name of Jeremy Purvis, which seeks to amend motion S3M-2862, in the name of John Swinney, on the Scottish Futures Trust, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division. I think that members will have got the hang of this by now.

FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)

Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)

Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 56, Against 64, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-2862, in the name of John Swinney, on the Scottish Futures Trust, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Ahmad, Bashir (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)

Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)

Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 64, Against 56, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Parliament agrees that modern infrastructure is essential to economic well-being and excellent public services in Scotland; notes actions to invest in public infrastructure set out in the Scottish Government's £35 billion Infrastructure Investment Plan; notes efforts to promote collaboration among public authorities and agencies in planning and developing capital projects to maximise value for money; believes that identifying and managing risk effectively through the capital project life cycle and providing a range of approaches to structuring and financing infrastructure investment are important objectives to be pursued, and calls on the Scottish Government to ensure that the Scottish Futures Trust makes a full contribution to these objectives.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-2843, in the name of John Swinney, on the Energy Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the relevant provisions of the UK Energy Bill in Part 2 (Electricity from Renewable Sources – the Renewables Obligation), introduced in the House of Commons on 10 January 2008 and that the relevant amendments to Part 5 (Miscellaneous Provisions – Renewable Heat Incentives), tabled by Her Majesty's Government on 29 October 2008, should, insofar as they relate to matters within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament or alter the executive competence of the Scottish Ministers, be considered by the UK Parliament.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-2870, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on the establishment of a committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees to establish a committee of the Parliament as follows—

Name of Committee: Review of SPCB-supported Bodies;

Remit: To consider and report on whether alterations should be made to the terms and conditions of the office-holders and the structure of the bodies supported by the SPCB; to consider how any proposals for future arrangements should be taken forward, including by way of a Committee Bill, and to make recommendations accordingly;

Duration: Until the Parliament has concluded consideration of the committee's report;

Convenership: The Convener will be a member of the Scottish Labour Party and the Deputy Convener will be a member of the Scottish National Party;

Membership: Jackson Carlaw, Ross Finnie, Joe FitzPatrick, Trish Godman, Jamie Hepburn, Johann Lamont.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-2871, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on the establishment of a committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) to establish a committee of the Parliament as follows—

Name of Committee: Scottish Parliamentary Pensions Bill Committee;

Remit: To consider the Scottish Parliamentary Pensions Bill at Stage 2;

Duration: Until the Bill is passed, or falls or is otherwise no longer in progress;

Convenership: The Convener will be a member of the Scottish National Party and the Deputy Convener will be a member of the Scottish Labour Party;

Membership: Bill Aitken, Keith Brown, Nicol Stephen, David Stewart;

and

(b) that "4" be substituted for "5" in Rule 6.3.2 of Standing Orders for the purpose of the membership of the committee.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-2879, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on committee membership, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that—

Keith Brown be appointed to replace Gil Paterson as a member of the European and External Relations Committee;

Gil Paterson be appointed to replace Keith Brown and Aileen Campbell be appointed to replace Christina McKelvie as members of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee;

Bob Doris be appointed to replace Gil Paterson as a member of the Subordinate Legislation Committee.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-2880, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on committee membership, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that—

Nanette Milne be appointed to replace Jamie McGrigor as a member of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-2881, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on substitution on committees, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that—

Gil Paterson be appointed to replace Keith Brown as the Scottish National Party substitute on the European and External Relations Committee;

Christina McKelvie be appointed to replace Bob Doris as the Scottish National Party substitute on the Public Petitions Committee.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S3M-2882, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on substitution on committees, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that—

Jamie McGrigor be appointed to replace John Scott as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Public Petitions Committee.

Voices in Paisley

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan): The final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S3M-2657, in the name of Wendy Alexander, on Paisley Festival Company and Voices in Paisley 2008.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament congratulates the continued success of the Paisley Festival Company and the Voices in Paisley 2008 choral programme between 24 October and 8 November 2008; notes that the Paisley Festival Company is a recognised Scottish charity committed to increasing the accessibility and impact on the local community through a wide variety of magnificent music and choral events from classical through to folk and jazz, and notes the company's aims to establish Paisley and its environs as a nationally-recognised centre for all types of choral activity and deserving of the title Scotland's Choir Town.

17:11

Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab): I thank the members who have stayed for tonight's debate after a long day. I particularly thank Annabel Goldie who, on a previous occasion, drew the festival to the Parliament's attention.

Voices in Paisley is an annual festival of choral music that is held each year at the end of October. The fifth annual festival has just ended and I, along with many others, took great pleasure in sampling this year's exceptional programme. The festival provides a musical mix that appeals to everyone. Five years after its formation, it is becoming a truly international festival. It is the basis of our claim for Paisley to become Scotland's choir town, so that Paisley can become to choral music what Wigtown has become to books. That ambition is well founded in local history. Renfrewshire has a long tradition of choral music that dates back to Paisley abbey's foundation in 1163, and it carries on today through local choirs from the Arkleston Singers to the Coats Memorial Choral Society.

The festival is perhaps best known for the cultural benefits that it provides. There are unique opportunities for local people to hear prestigious national and international choirs in their own town. There are opportunities for local choirs to participate in the festival and for individual singers to join the specially formed festival chorus. There are also opportunities for local schools to participate in a range of types of music, from classical to folk to jazz.

My real purpose in drawing the matter to the attention of Parliament today is to highlight the growth of the festival's economic benefits. The festival's long-term objective is to contribute to Paisley's regeneration by attracting visitors to the town. Web-based ticket sales are already

attracting festival-goers from far beyond the environs of Renfrewshire.

The scale of the festival grows with every passing year. It was just four events when we started five years ago and it is now nearly 25. As well as the choral events, a fringe event has recently been introduced that involves different vocal styles. This year, there were also two weeks of free lunchtime recitals by young performers from the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama and elsewhere in Scotland who are in the early stages of their careers.

Looking forward, there are ambitious plans. The Paisley Festival Company board plans to establish an international choral competition to place the town firmly on the international choral stage.

Receipts from the festival are rising. Payments for the use of venues in the town preserve the town's architectural assets such as Paisley abbey, Coats memorial church and Holy Trinity church, which are regularly used as venues. An estimated £20,000 has been contributed so far for venue hire. The festival also contributes to the improved public image of the town.

Young people are being introduced to the joys of singing in schools throughout the area, and there is now a local branch of the National Youth Choir of Scotland. One particular highlight of this year's festival was the pre-festival public lecture on the theme "Singing is Good for You!", which was given by Professor Phil Hanlon, the professor of public health at the University of Glasgow, who lives in Paisley. He inspired all those present with the virtues of singing.

As our thoughts turn to next year's festival, we must recognise that it is right to talk about the support that is required.

Since its inception, a dedicated group of people, including the Paisley Festival Company board and volunteers from Renfrewshire's many choirs, have worked tirelessly to mount the festival. I want to put on record, on behalf of the Parliament, our applause for all those volunteers who have made Voices in Paisley possible by giving generously of their time.

Paisley Festival Company is a recognised Scottish charity. It channels all the funds that it raises into promoting concerts locally. Those endeavours have been supported by a number of organisations including Renfrewshire Council, Paisley Vision, Reid Kerr College, the University of the West of Scotland and the Musicians Benevolent Fund.

The festival is increasingly trying to attract matching private sector sponsorship so that it can contribute further to the regeneration of the town. I and some of my MSP colleagues have sought to

encourage local businesses to think about supporting the festival. However, in the current economic climate, it is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain funding from private trusts and foundations.

At the moment, the company is run on an entirely voluntary basis by a board of directors. I pay special tribute to its founders, Fred Hay and Tom Wright, and to Alistair Campbell, the current chair, and Mairi Paterson, the festival administrator, who are assisted by the board as a whole and by a small team of local helpers.

The festival is run through an official registered office, but the main work of running the festival is done from a volunteer's home.

Some support has been forthcoming from EventScotland, the awards for all programme and the Scottish Arts Council, but further growth depends critically on the future attitude of those bodies. That is the matter that I wanted to put on record today.

I will close by reading out an e-mail that I received on Sunday from a woman whom I do not know. It reads:

"Dear Ms Alexander

As a Paisley resident who bought a season ticket for the Paisley Music Festival, I just wanted to say to you what a fantastic fortnight it has been.

I saw that you were at the Swingle Singers concert and hope you enjoyed it as much as I did.

There was a great variety of music on offer, all of excellent quality, and the Festival was really well organised. I'm already looking forward to next year and hope the Festival will continue for a long time to come.

It was also good to have something so positive happening in Paisley, particularly just now and particularly given some of the adverse publicity that the town gets.

I do hope the town succeeds in becoming Scotland's choir town – it would be well deserved recognition!

Best wishes

Jennie Hynd"

I did not think that I could put it any better myself, which is why I thought that I would share the e-mail with the chamber.

I hope that this evening's debate, by giving visibility to the enormous success of this largely voluntary festival, which has been running for just five short years, will allow the Parliament to signal its support for this new Scottish cultural landmark and to urge our official arts, lottery and cultural bodies to consider what they can do to ensure that the festival goes from strength to strength and that Paisley's status as Scotland's choir town is assured.

17:19

Bill Wilson (West of Scotland) (SNP): Ms Alexander and I do not always agree, but on Paisley Festival Company and Voices in Paisley 2008 our opinions might be in perfect harmony. To maintain that harmony, I will make no effort to sing whatsoever.

Ms Alexander's motion prompted me to look into the benefits of music and singing. I discovered that simple enjoyment and the promotion of a sense of community are just two of the many virtues that have been identified. So great are the benefits that Heart Research UK has planned a sing for your heart week from 8 to 15 December. I am sure that many members in the chamber, including the Presiding Officer, will be delighted to join in. The idea is not only to raise money for charity but to benefit directly the participants' health and wellbeing.

Heart Research UK's website quotes Professor Graham Welch, of the University of London, who notes:

"The health benefits of singing are both physical and psychological. Singing has physical benefits because it ... increases oxygenation in the blood stream and exercises major muscle groups in the upper body ... Singing has psychological benefits because of its normally positive effect in reducing stress ... Psychological benefits are also evident when people sing together ... because of the increased sense of community, belonging and shared endeavour."

The website also cites evidence that singing can prolong life, boost the immune system and keep people looking young. We could all do with that—except, of course, the Presiding Officer.

The website is not alone—anyone who types "health benefits of singing" into a well-known search engine will find more than half a million references. I was pleased to note that one of the Fringe Voices events was a lecture—which Wendy Alexander mentioned—by Professor Phil Hanlon of the University of Glasgow on that very topic.

I do not need to spell out the considerable health challenges that we face in the west of Scotland. It is, however, important to note that the low life expectancy and high levels of heart disease, lung cancer, alcohol abuse and smoking that are found in some pockets of the West of Scotland are interrelated in complex ways. An underlying sense of hopelessness is a major factor in all those health problems, and we must recognise that rather than blame individuals. The arts in general—not least singing and music—should be viewed in the context of doing as much as we can to give people a sense of self-worth, belonging and, therefore, hope.

The Paisley Festival Company ticks all the boxes. The company says that it

“builds on the long and strong musical tradition in the area, the continuing high level of accomplished choral activity and the availability of a range of beautiful and interesting venues dating from Paisley’s monastic and industrial past.”

Voices in Paisley 2008 and Fringe Voices 2008 not only showcased regional and national talent but featured a healthy sprinkling of international performers, which helped to reinforce Paisley’s reputation as a regional and national centre for the vocal arts and boosted its international profile. I was particularly pleased to learn that Fringe Voices included a series of free young artists events, which leads me to two further points, about accessibility and the involvement of young people.

Access to the arts is a human right, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states:

“Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts”.

In light of that, Fringe Voices should be commended for making many of the events free. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states the right of the child

“to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.”

It is gratifying to see the explicit inclusion of young people in Fringe Voices events. Not only was there a series of young artists events, but there was a competition for young soloists up to the age of 18, which involved Scots song, musical theatre and other categories.

I am convinced that every pound that is spent in supporting such activities, particularly ones that are grounded in local and national tradition, yields several times the return. The return can probably be calculated in narrow monetary terms—reduced costs for the national health service and the justice system—but I am convinced that the intangible benefits for individuals and communities are worth far more. The Scottish Arts Council might like to take note of that when considering the long-term funding of Scotland’s traditional arts.

I congratulate all those who are involved in Voices in Paisley, including Renfrewshire Council, which has been very supportive and has promoted Paisley as Scotland’s choir town. I am happy to commend Ms Alexander’s motion, and I thank her for lodging it.

17:23

Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): I thank Wendy Alexander for lodging the motion, and for her kind remarks about the motion that I lodged three years ago. I recall that, on that occasion, Ms Alexander said:

“I begin by congratulating Annabel Goldie. In fact, I might go as far as to say that I did not disagree with a word that

she said. This may be the only time for a number of years that I can make that statement”.—[*Official Report*, 7 September 2005; c 19005.]

I can do no better than quote her words back to her, and say that I entirely agree with her contribution.

As Wendy Alexander said all those years ago, when that embryonic thought emerged in the minds of some musical people in Paisley, it was regarded as a pretty brave aspiration and ambition. I recall—as I mentioned in the previous debate on the subject—going to a concert in Paisley one fairly wet Friday evening, at which the suggestion for the event emerged. The venture is, as Wendy Alexander said, greatly to the credit of the organisers—not just the current chairman and his colleagues, but their predecessors—who have seen it through to considerable effect.

I remember saying that I thought that the festival had three attributes. First, I felt that it represented a particular spirit of determination, not to mention musical talent, that is to be found in the Paisley area, which is to be applauded. Secondly, I thought that it was a good example of partnership with local organisations, including Renfrewshire Council, which is also to be applauded. Thirdly, I thought that it was important that the Parliament recognised the festival not just as the welcome emergence of a cultural activity in Paisley, but as relaying a bigger message and as a means of putting Paisley back on the map after a challenging period for the town. Wendy Alexander and Bill Wilson have articulated clearly just what a triumph that has been for the organisation.

I have a sorry confession to make. This year, for the first time, I was unable to attend any of the festival events. The intrusion of a by-election was more than a little responsible for that. I do not know whether that was a triumph over anything, but cultural enjoyment in Paisley was denied to me, which was a matter of considerable regret.

When one considers some of the organisations and musical groups that the festival attracts, one sees just what it has achieved. Wendy Alexander referred to the Swingle Singers, and the festival has also attracted the King’s Singers, Capella Nova, the Dunedin consort and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra chorus. Those are prestigious musical groups. Coming from Bishopton, a village just down the road, I feel privileged that such prestigious music can be found a few miles from my door. I think that that is a tremendous cultural achievement for the festival company.

As Wendy Alexander said, the economic benefits of the festival have never been lost sight of, and I think that they play a role in the festival company’s activities. There is no doubt that Paisley is blessed with many rich architectural gems, such as the abbey, the Thomas Coats

memorial church and the church of the Holy Trinity. To be able to contribute to their fabric, wellbeing and preservation is very important. I know that the local council aspires to have Paisley identified as a suitable venue for the Royal National Mòd. That is something that all of us from the local area would applaud. If there were any possibility of that happening, we would do everything that we could to promote that objective. In my opinion, Paisley would be a very fine location indeed for the Mòd.

The other, less direct, activity of the festival company and the festival in making links with other organisations, musical education and other institutions in Paisley and the west of Scotland has again been brought to fruition. It has resulted in a good and healthy engagement with the University of the West of Scotland, Reid Kerr College and the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. Those important connections extend out into the University of Glasgow's school of Slavonic, central and east European studies, with the visit of the Estonian Philharmonic chamber choir. Those are not names just to bandy around; they are solid evidence of what the festival is achieving in the area.

I am very glad to take part in the debate and thank Wendy Alexander for bringing it to the Parliament. It is an opportunity for us all to pay tribute not just to the town of Paisley, which is deserving of praise, but to people such as Alistair Campbell, the directors of the organisation and all those who assist with the festival for doing such a splendid job.

I think that I am correct in saying that, this year, the schoolchildren's concert was unable to go ahead. That ought to be able to go ahead in the future because, of all the events that I have attended at the festival, it really stuck in my mind as a showcase for the talent that is to be found among young people in Paisley. We should also keep a focus on what brings in the money. What is esoteric may be good entertainment for the cultural high-brows of the world, but musical pops are more likely to pay the bills. So, a pragmatic eye must be kept on the economics.

I applaud the resolve, fortitude and resilience of all those who have made the festival happen, and I conclude with a couple of suggestions. First, the festival choirs should come and sing for us here in the Parliament. I am sure that, if Wendy Alexander and I promised not to participate but merely to facilitate, the rest of the Parliament might be minded to support that endeavour. The company would find a very warm welcome awaiting it here.

Secondly, given the tremendous heritage of the Paisley pattern, the Paisley Choral Festival could have a musical tie or scarf in which the Paisley pattern is interwoven with a tonic sol-fa or two—or

whatever it is that, in musical parlance, might be interwoven in such matters.

It has been a great pleasure to take part in the debate to support and encourage the participants and organisers of the Paisley Festival Company.

17:30

The Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture (Linda Fabiani): I, too, thank Wendy Alexander for bringing the motion for debate. It is interesting to note the quite stunning degree of consensus that was achieved some three or four years ago. That tradition has certainly been kept up tonight, with members saying that singing is good for us and that they will bring the Paisley choir through. I have a vision of us all dressing up in Paisley pattern and singing a Parliament song before we start business every day—perhaps we would all be a lot cheerier if we did.

Since it was established, Paisley's choral festival has certainly made its mark on the calendar of cultural events. As Wendy Alexander said, it builds on a long tradition of music in the area. The festival brochure quotes the provost of Renfrewshire Council, Celia Lawson, who states:

"Renfrewshire has a long tradition of choral music, dating from the Abbey's foundation in 1163".

The tradition certainly goes back a long time. For a long time, too—not nearly that long, I hasten to add, as I mean decades rather than centuries—I have been attending the odd choir performance in Paisley. It is a fact that Paisley abbey and Renfrewshire's choirs have very much been at the centre of choral music. I have been fortunate enough to have a friend who has been involved in those, so over the years I have seen that aspect of Paisley and it has been a great joy. It hardly seems possible that the vision of Voices in Paisley should have become a reality over the short period of four years. The festival has done exceedingly well.

Hugh Henry (Paisley South) (Lab): Will the minister take an intervention?

Linda Fabiani: I will if the member will agree with me and keep up the consensus.

Hugh Henry: I do not disagree with anything that has been said this evening. Everything that has been put on the record testifies to a vibrant festival that not only adds value to Paisley but contributes to cultural life throughout Scotland.

Wendy Alexander highlighted some of the financial pressures that are associated with such an event. Will the minister use her undoubted influence and long-standing connection with events in the area to encourage the funding organisations to see what they can do to sustain the event in the future?

Linda Fabiani: I very much acknowledge and support the ambitions for the Paisley festival. I encourage the people involved to continue to build on the connections that they have already made with the Scottish Arts Council, EventScotland, Renfrewshire Council—which has been absolutely ace in the way that it has supported the event—Making Music Scotland and the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama.

There is no doubt that local festivals always bring many benefits. As well as the financial benefits, they provide a sense of community, an inflow of tourists and—as Bill Wilson mentioned—an opportunity for people to participate in cultural activities. As Annabel Goldie and Wendy Alexander said, such festivals not only provide performances by leading artists—the Paisley festival is a class example—but involve local young people, which is particularly good. That should carry on. A sense of achievement and of community spirit comes from performing with local choirs and taking part in workshops on singing. The festival builds a sense of community, pride in Paisley's past—which is clearly evident—and a distinct culture in the west of Scotland. At a concert last week or the week before, I was told that about 3,000 people now participate.

Last year, I was able to attend the Starlight Youth Music Theatre event, which was a mark of exactly what Annabel Goldie talked about. I was also able to attend the last Sunday afternoon concert—when they had the Sunday afternoon concerts—which involved Cadenza, an Edinburgh-based choir, and the Russian choir that is based in Glasgow. That was an absolutely super way to spend a Sunday afternoon. I was interested to hear that Wendy Alexander had received an e-mail from Jennie Hynd, because I met Jennie that afternoon. That was another delight that Paisley brought me—I knew her many years ago through work, and Jennie was hugely enthusiastic about the benefits that the festival was bringing to Paisley.

The festival committee has built up good connections with the local community and with educational, cultural and local government bodies. That kind of outward-looking attitude can draw attention to Paisley itself—highlighting a community that is justly proud of its heritage and confident in its future.

Many of the performances at the festival have been noted by other members. I was interested to hear Annabel Goldie talk about Paisley's aspirations to host the mòd. A marked characteristic of the people running the festival is that they are outward looking and willing to grasp opportunities. This year, in a first for the festival, there was a gathering of Gaelic choirs, which marked Paisley's newly formed branch of An

Comunn Gaidhealach. The community is moving towards that aspiration.

I understand that Paisley is unique in having a festival dedicated solely to choral music, and it is good that the festival has been supported by the organisations that I mentioned earlier when responding to Hugh Henry. Making Music Scotland is worthy of particular mention: it is one of the 13 volunteer committees in Making Music, which is the UK's largest umbrella body for amateur music. The National Youth Choir of Scotland is also worth a mention. It comprises national choirs and 11 area choirs, which have had a tremendous impact in encouraging singing among children. They do something that is very important for people's sense of wellbeing: they maintain an emphasis on fun. An esoteric performance can be wonderful and a great privilege to see, but we should never forget the importance of straightforward fun. The youth music initiative and the National Youth Choir of Scotland have worked together to ensure that many children can have that fun.

After only four short years, the Paisley choral festival is decidedly on the map and its success has been acknowledged. As the organisers know, success depends on hard work in dealing with administration, raising funds and building relationships. The organisers have proved beyond doubt that they are more than capable of doing that work. I know that Parliament will join me in wishing the festival every success in the future.

Meeting closed at 17:37.

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