

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 19 March 2009

Session 3

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 19 March 2009

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

Forestry

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): Good morning. The first item of business is a debate on motion S3M-3727, in the name of Sarah Boyack, on forestry.

09:15

Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): We want to move on from the diversion of the past few months. There were sharply differing views, and the unanimous decision of the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee was a vindication of the campaign by Forestry Commission Scotland staff, unions, members of the public and all those concerned about the future of our forests. I thank Roseanna Cunningham for accepting the inevitable, but I have a question for her. Last Thursday, when she was asked when she would announce the Government's response to the consultation, she said that she would take the decision in her own time. She announced her decision less than 24 hours later. When did she make her mind up? Would it not have been better to have announced her decision in the chamber on Thursday? However, I want to move on.

We have argued all along that the Rothschild proposals were ill thought out and did not have the benefit of a business plan. Having read the Forestry Commission's options paper, I believe that that view has been reinforced but, as I said, our intention today is to enable a debate that lets us move on and focus on the way forward.

The first issue that must be sorted out is the Scottish rural development programme. We have previously discussed the scheme's complexity and excessive bureaucracy, and it is clear that, in relation to forestry, it is not working on any level. The consultation responses demand an urgent streamlining of the process, but it is also clear that the level of support is not sufficient to persuade landowners, foresters, investors and farmers to plant trees.

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment has already set in train a review. It would be good if the minister confirmed today that she is committed to increasing the level of financial support to boost applications, as set out in the Forestry Commission's options paper, because there are opportunities that need to be seized. The common agricultural policy health

check recognises woodland creation as a means of helping to tackle climate change. Land afforested under the SRDP is now eligible for single farm payments, which would offer farmers the chance to remain in farming but transfer some land into forestry.

The Forestry Commission's figures show that its intention is to plant 5,000 hectares but that, if an extra £10 million were made available, the figure would rise to 8,000 hectares. We understand the worries about the loss of prime agricultural land or peatland areas, but enough land of a lesser quality should be available. The expansion needs to be managed properly, and we support the suggestion that a land use strategy be developed.

There is also the issue of CO₂ absorption. The science is complex, and it is clear that forest planting can play a role—but only if it is done in a sustainable way. It is certainly not a get-out-of-jail-free card that means that the rest of us can avoid having to think about making carbon cuts in our use of energy and in our travel. Extra wood for sustainable buildings, for processing and for meeting the growing demand for biomass could play a part in a climate change strategy. Wood is also crucial for thousands of jobs, particularly in our fragile rural areas.

The other major contribution that the Forestry Commission can make to tackling climate change is to develop renewables on its own land. That was one of Labour's key policies at the previous election, and we believe that it is a vital part of the solution to the funding of new planting. Within five years, £10 million a year would be being generated to fund new planting and management—a virtuous circle of creating renewable energy and funding new forests to help tackle climate change. The £10 million would grow to £30 million a year, which would pay for a lot of tree planting and management. The challenge is how to address the crucial short-term period.

The SRDP is clearly important in attracting new planting and, with an uplift in grant funding, more people would be attracted to apply. Labour has consistently argued that we need to be spending Scottish Government money with the carbon implications clearly understood. The benefits that would come from properly managed new tree planting would score highly not only in value for money but in value for the planet. The financial gap is relatively small and short term.

The Scottish Government has choices. If ministers were to make a relatively small injection of investment to boost the value of grants, it would transform prospects. If they are serious about delivering on the target of an 80 per cent reduction in CO₂ emissions, they have to put the financial investment into carbon-saving policies over the next decade.

Under Labour, we introduced the idea of repositioning, in which land is sold off and the income is recycled by the Forestry Commission, but the Confederation of Forest Industries—ConFor—makes the valid point that repositioning must not be the only source of new funding for planting. There is clearly some scope to increase the rate of repositioning in the first few years, but it would have to be done sensitively—there would be no point in knocking out the Rothschild proposal if our forests were to suffer death by a thousand smaller cuts. Repositioning could work on a short timescale—five rather than 75 years—and we would want a guarantee that, once the renewables funding kicked in, the Forestry Commission would buy new land and fund new tree planting to replace areas lost through repositioning for the public good.

In respect of the carbon contribution made by the Forestry Commission estate, there is also RSPB Scotland's point that the Forestry Commission's peatlands should be looked at as an option to lock in carbon.

There are options, and this is a matter of political will and support. Now that the leasing proposals are off the agenda, there is the space to look at better alternatives. It also means that there is confidence for the supply chain and continuity of supply, which means that the processing industry can move forward with greater confidence, and an opportunity to build the biomass industry and strengthen those supply chains.

The Forestry Commission is responsible for only a third of Scottish forests. Any strategy must therefore include the perspective of the forestry industry so that we gain maximum economic benefit from our forests. ConFor makes the point that the Scottish Government's target for planting was nowhere near being met last year. When the economy picks up, there must obviously be a role for the Scottish Government to encourage the building industry to use wood to ensure that our buildings are a much more sustainable product, but in the short term the challenge for the Government is to sort out the SRDP, increase the payment rates and get a move on with joint renewables projects. Given the clear parliamentary support that there is for the principle, ministers should accelerate the process so that, as soon as there is a legislative framework, schemes can be given the green light.

I welcome all the amendments.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the unanimous recommendation of the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee that the Scottish Government drop proposals for leasing up to 25% of the Forestry Commission estate for a period of 75 years; welcomes the decision of the Scottish Government to amend the Climate Change Bill to remove

the relevant clauses, and calls on the Scottish Government to bring forward its review of the operation of the Scotland Rural Development Programme urgently, including reviewing the level awarded for grants, and to pursue proposals for joint ventures to deliver renewables projects in the Forestry Commission estate.

09:22

The Minister for Environment (Roseanna Cunningham): Nothing that I have heard from Sarah Boyack this morning is new; it seems to me that this morning's debate is an exercise in wheel spinning. The fact is that this Government is showing leadership in addressing the urgent global problem of climate change.

It is clear that our forests can make an important contribution and that we must take full advantage of the opportunity that they offer. The technology report from the Atomic Energy Authority, which is not a reference that members will hear me use often, entitled "Mitigating Against Climate Change in Scotland: Identification and Initial Assessment of Policy Options", identified woodland creation as a high-priority measure.

Forests and woodlands have the advantage of bringing a wide range of other benefits. In addition to their environmental and social value, Scotland's forests contribute about £670 million to the Scottish economy and support more than 30,000 jobs in forest management, timber production and processing, and forest-related tourism, which by all accounts will increase this year. The wood processing industry has invested more than £250 million in the sector over the past three years.

The 2006 Scottish forestry strategy included an aspiration to reach 25 per cent woodland cover in Scotland by the second half of the century, which means creating at least 10,000 hectares of new woodlands each year. Achieving that target would lock up an additional 4.4 million tonnes per year of CO₂ by 2050—for comparison, in 2006 total net greenhouse gas emissions in Scotland were 59 million tonnes.

Woodland creation on that scale would therefore make a significant contribution to our target of reducing emissions by 80 per cent by 2050, but it needs additional funding to the order of £10 million to £15 million per year. Our consultation on the forestry provisions in the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill was about identifying opportunities for that funding, and I remind the Parliament that the proposals in the consultation, which were brought forward in the bill, were a means to an end—not an end in themselves.

We are listening because that is what consultation is about. That is what it has been about throughout the Government's tenure in office, although that might not have been what it meant before 2007. The consultation was open,

and throughout the process we said that we would listen to views before taking any decisions, which is precisely what we did.

It is clear that the status quo is not an option. At 4,000 hectares per year, our tree planting rates are well below the aim of 10,000 hectares per year. After five to 10 years, we can expect additional funding for woodland creation on such a scale to come from renewable energy projects on the national forest estate. The estate has considerable potential for renewable energy development, and the Forestry Commission Scotland is vigorously pursuing the opportunities. The power to enter joint ventures will provide greater commercial flexibility.

By dropping the leasing proposal, we face a short-term funding problem for woodland creation for up to five years. The SRDP offers about £23 million per year for woodland creation, but to achieve our ambition for woodland creation we must increase that amount. We cannot simply raid other parts of the SRDP pot or the Scottish Government budget, as some respondents to the consultation thought was possible. That is why we are asking the Forestry Commission Scotland to explore further use of well-established arrangements that were introduced in 2005 for selling areas that are of least public benefit to raise money for investment in new woodlands.

The Forestry Commission Scotland selects for sale land that delivers a low level of public benefits with—for example—relatively little public access and use, limited community involvement and no significant natural or cultural assets that would be put at risk by sale. Potential options to increase funding include bringing forward the programme of sales—we are actively considering that—and using the proceeds to support woodland creation through the SRDP. I will meet the commission's national committee for Scotland next week to hear its views on that option.

Meanwhile, we are actively engaged in strengthening the forestry measures in the Scotland rural development programme. At Mike Russell's request, George McRobbie prepared a comprehensive report on the forestry industry's behalf about improving the SRDP's operation. That work will feed into our wider review of the SRDP, which is considering the extent to which it can assist us in meeting the challenges of the economic downturn. The wider review will also consider necessary changes to the SRDP's priorities and objectives and to the delivery mechanisms, and we expect to take decisions on that in May. That information has been well known to Sarah Boyack all along.

We have already implemented George McRobbie's suggestion that we remove the 200-hectare constraint on annual compensation

payments to farmers, and by this summer we hope to increase the grant rates for woodland creation. The necessary modification is with the European Commission and, if it is agreed by Brussels, it will increase grant rates by about 17 per cent.

Following recent reviews of standard costs, we plan to submit another request to Brussels for further increases in grants. To help the industry plan, the Forestry Commission Scotland will shortly publish on its website information about the proposed increases to woodland creation grants.

The Government is committed to ensuring that forestry continues to make a major contribution to Scotland's economy and that it delivers social and environmental benefits, which include helping to meet our climate change targets. I do not think that there are any serious disagreements about our underlying aims. The challenge that we face is funding woodland creation in the next few years until renewables income comes on stream. I hope that we can look ahead and work together on that, but that means that people must be constructive and not simply negative.

I move amendment S3M-3727.3, to insert after "years":

"; notes that the Forestry Commission makes a major contribution to the economy of Scotland and can also make a major contribution towards helping Scotland meet its climate change targets".

The Presiding Officer: All remaining speeches should be of about four minutes but we have a little flexibility, so members should feel free to take interventions if they wish to do so.

09:28

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): As ever, as a farmer I begin by declaring an interest in the subject, which is particularly important in your constituency, Presiding Officer. I welcome the tone of Labour's motion, which is a deal more positive and reasonable than the views that Labour previously expressed. I also welcome the Government's decision to drop its controversial leasing proposals and its new focus on finding different ways of raising funds to increase planting throughout Scotland.

We all want to find ways of reducing carbon emissions and increasing carbon sequestration. To that end, all members support the principles of the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill. In principle, we all support expanding the forest estate and raising money to do so through joint ventures, such as appropriately sited wind farms and hydro schemes, in which the Forestry Commission is involved in South Ayrshire.

Diversification of our forest estate to create extra income is not a new concept, merely one that

should be pursued more vigorously. Given the rising cost of energy and the returns that can be made now and in the future from wind farming, raising significant amounts of money should not be a problem in the long term. I appreciate that the Forestry Commission has a short-term gap in funding to start land acquisition for extra planting, but that shortfall could be met if the commission sold some of its non-core assets, such as its nurseries or holiday cabins, and concentrated on its core business of growing trees. However, deciding which assets to realise is a matter for the commission.

Security of supply is essential in the forestry industry, which contributes £1 billion a year to the Scottish economy. The abandonment of the policy of blanket afforestation of Sitka spruce was appropriate, but it means that timber production is reducing by about 1 million tonnes per year. That needs to be replaced, and we need to plant about another 7,000 hectares every year to maintain existing supply, but that is a different goal from the Government's target of increasing planting cover from 17 to 25 per cent by 2050. It is important that further planting on such a scale is undertaken in the framework of an integrated land use strategy, because more competing demands are being placed on the finite resources of Scottish land than our Scottish landmass can cope with.

My well-known view is that, in this recession and afterwards, we in Scotland and the United Kingdom must retain our strategic ability to feed ourselves in as much as we can. That is why the first public benefit of land must be food production; other priorities should follow. The necessary housing target of building 35,000 new homes annually must be met, but it will swallow huge tracts of good and productive agricultural land. A target of 25 per cent forest cover by 2050 might be valuable for carbon sequestration, but increasing cover from 17 to 25 per cent will represent a 50 per cent increase and will come at a cost to food production at a time when the amount of land for producing food is reducing worldwide because of climate change.

I merely pose a question that must be asked: does a further huge expansion of our forestry industry still make sense? We must ask whether huge further afforestation is the most effective way of reducing through absorption our carbon footprint, especially if that reduces our food-producing capability. Do more obvious ways of reducing carbon emissions exist? If we are serious about carbon sequestration and reduction, we must create an integrated carbon sequestration and reduction strategy as well as an integrated land use policy.

Scottish Conservatives want a strong, growing and sustainable forestry sector that maintains the

30,000 jobs that it provides in rural Scotland. However, further massive expansion must be delivered in the context of a thought-through and fully developed integrated land use strategy. More work needs to be done to establish beyond doubt the true value to carbon reduction and sequestration of growing trees for timber on Scotland's hills and uplands. The science must be better; at the moment, it is not good enough.

Our party will work positively in and around the subject, which we look forward to debating in the future and at greater length.

I move amendment S3M-3727.2, to insert at end:

"and considers that all forestry proposals in future must be part of an integrated land-use strategy."

09:34

Jim Hume (South of Scotland) (LD): Needless to say, I am delighted to participate in the debate, which highlights the success of the Lib Dem-led campaign to save our forests. Roseanna Cunningham showed excellent timing when she announced the U-turn on the morning of the upbeat Lib Dem conference, so I thank her for that.

As Sarah Boyack was correct to say, it is time to move on, and the Liberal Democrat amendment does so constructively. What we witnessed in the past few months was not about new, inventive ideas to tackle climate change or being creative, although those terms were drummed into us; rather, a brazen and reckless attempt was made to undermine one of Scotland's most valuable assets by selling it off to the highest bidder.

Throughout the discussion, the Government resorted to petty personalised attacks on the Liberal Democrat campaign and treated industry, individuals and organisations—indeed, anyone who disagreed with its so-called great proposal—with contempt. Mike Russell even accused others of being theatrical. Such an attitude from a minister is shocking and, considering the potential impacts of leasing on Scotland and the scale of what was proposed, it was sheer arrogance to assume that the proposal could be pushed through Parliament by piggybacking on the simplistic idea that it would solve all our climate change problems.

Throughout the debate in January, Mr Russell accused the Liberal Democrat contribution and response to the consultation of being "fact free". He said:

"There is nothing so dishonourable as politicians who don't do their homework while confidently trotting out wildly inaccurate statements for political benefit."—[*Official Report*, 29 January 2009; c 14498.]

In fact, the Liberal Democrat response has proven to be entirely accurate and has reflected the views of land-based organisations, tourism providers, foresters and wood processors at every stage. Those businesses have been in serious limbo since last November and, in January, 19 of the main wood processors sent the minister a letter stating exactly that. That limbo was due to the Government's mad proposal and to the Tories, who did not stand up against it initially and made their U-turn only after their Scottish National Party masters had done so. Mike Russell ignored everyone, decried their expertise and passed them off as scaremongers who did not do their homework—what arrogance and ignorance.

Throughout the debate, references were made to the Stern report, but nowhere in that document did Lord Stern conclude that 100,000 hectares of Scotland's most commercially viable forests should be sold to the Rothschild banking group for a notional sum of up to £200 million for 75 years. In that same debate, Mike Russell pronounced in prophetic fashion:

"Although leasing is not a new idea, I believe that its time has come."—[*Official Report*, 29 January 2009; c 14497.]

Its time had come—its time to be buried with all the SNP's other misguided flights of fancy.

Who would have thought that, within a month, Mr Russell would be removed from his minister's position, obviously for flogging that dead horse? I welcome the new minister's U-turn, even though Ms Cunningham had thought the leasing proposal a "cunning plan" in January. I am sincerely relieved that sense has prevailed: the decision has removed the guillotine of uncertainty that was hanging over rural communities, which can now invest for the future.

It is now time to move on. We have an opportunity to implement, under the Forestry Commission's stewardship, sensible measures that will generate income for renewables, access, tourism and new tree planting and will guarantee the wood supply for our businesses. The Government should now concentrate on doing its best for Scotland through real and tangible measures to tackle climate change.

I move amendment S3M-3727.4, to insert at end:

"and further calls on the Scottish Government to introduce a comprehensive sustainable land-use strategy, taking into account the strategic economic, social and environmental impacts and benefits of forestry, agriculture, recreation and other land uses and setting out, where appropriate, the contribution each can make in dealing with the consequences of climate change."

09:38

Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to take part in the debate. People might ask why the member for Dunfermline East, where coal mining has been highly important for many years, is speaking, but the reality is that my constituency is rural as well as having been highly industrial. In fact, Fife is now much greener than it has been for 200 years, thanks to previous Labour administrations in Fife Council that developed some outstanding green projects, helped by European funding. I am immensely proud of my Labour colleagues in Fife Council for the work that they have done on that.

I say to the Liberal Democrats—especially Jim Hume—that success has many fathers and failure is an orphan. My colleagues, led by Sarah Boyack, played a huge part in fighting the important campaign against the leasing proposals but, as we are always modest, we do not claim all the credit and recognise that it is shared.

As Sarah Boyack said, Scottish Labour welcomes the decision that the SNP made last week to ditch its plans to privatise a quarter of Scotland's forests. The decision follows a hard-fought campaign by Labour. Alex Salmond had to reshuffle his Cabinet because Michael Russell attracted so much criticism for the policy, and the SNP should apologise for attempting a hatchet job on Scotland's forest estate. It is shameless that, answering a supplementary to Wendy Alexander's oral parliamentary question last Thursday—which was submitted in writing a week in advance—Roseanna Cunningham said:

"I will make the decision when I make it"—[*Official Report*, 12 March 2009; c 15738.]

and then announced the following morning that she was ditching the policy.

We welcome the fact that the Forestry Commission can now get on with managing our forests effectively over the decades to come. We want there to be more renewable energy ventures—that is the key to tackling climate change—with the money that is generated being available to the Forestry Commission to invest in new planting.

The proposal to sell the forests is a typical example of the SNP rushing ahead with ill-thought-through plans and trying to bulldoze them through rather than set out detailed plans for proper consultation. For example, 133 written questions were submitted—mostly by Scottish Labour's rural and environment team—between the time that the Government made the proposal to sell the forests and Mike Russell's appearance in committee to answer questions on it. Fifty one of the answers to those questions—38 per cent—said in one way or another that a proper reply

could not be given, as the answer would depend on the outcome of the forestry consultation. We all know the hostile responses to that consultation, but the SNP pressed ahead and included powers to sell the forest in its Climate Change (Scotland) Bill, which was published on 4 December.

The real impetus behind the leasing scheme was that timber demand is likely to exceed supply in a few years' time. We realise that more trees need to be planted, but that is nothing to do with climate change and, if that was the motive for the proposal, the bill was the wrong place for it.

I will point to one example in my constituency of actions that members across the Parliament can urge people in their localities to take. I persuaded Exxon, which is one of the big petrochemical firms in my constituency, to plant 5,000 trees, and I am proud that Exxon has taken that action, as it will help my area. If every MSP challenged their local firms to plant 5,000 trees each, we would give tree planting an enormous boost.

As we outlined in the debate in January, we want the Government to consider more alternatives for carbon sequestration. It could first consider protecting and, where necessary, reinstating soils rich in organic matter, such as peatland and blanket bog, which can sequester and store carbon.

The Government could encourage the use of wood for fuel and construction. We have heard much from the SNP about our Scandinavian partners. They use timber imaginatively to build homes for their people, and we should do much more of that in Scotland. The Government should encourage the use of local timber wherever possible to minimise carbon emissions from transport.

The Government could extend crop rotations to maximise carbon storage and promote the use of high-quality hardwoods. The SRDP could be reformed to maximise support for planting woodlands, timber protection and natural flood prevention schemes. Labour members have suggested such measures in the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee during its discussion of the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Bill.

The Government could also develop a comprehensive land use policy that maximises the potential of the land to tackle climate change and its effects. That would best be achieved if the Scottish ministers retained direct control of the forest estate.

09:43

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I am glad that the minister made the point that the debate on the forestry provisions in the Climate

Change (Scotland) Bill was about considering means to achieve an end, the end being to have more money to help our forests contribute to the fight against climate change. The Forestry Commission underlines how important that is when it points out that deforestation is estimated to account for 18 per cent—nearly a fifth—of global carbon emissions and that forest regeneration has taken place in Britain and other industrialised countries to the extent that forests in those countries are now absorbing CO₂ again.

The debate on the forestry provisions was an attempt to get people's ideas about how we can achieve such regeneration, but it has begun to focus on one of the proposals in the consultation, which genuinely sought to get money that would allow us to kick-start at an early stage—as the Labour Party is always saying we should—our attempt to curb climate change through the Forestry Commission's work. Questions remain to be answered: as the minister has said, the gap in the money available for more planting has still to be filled.

When discussing the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill at the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee a week ago, I asked Stewart Stevenson whether any of the people who opposed the leasing proposals, which have been controversial, have made other proposals that might help us to raise funds for planting more forests to mitigate climate change. The minister said:

"The comments in the consultation have focused largely on what should not be done."—[*Official Report, Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee*, 10 March 2009; c 1697.]

He went on to make other points, but—

Sarah Boyack: Will the member take an intervention?

Rob Gibson: Certainly.

Sarah Boyack: I find it astounding that the member is hinting that no other suggestions were made whatsoever—that is not my reading of the responses to the consultation. The criticism was that the leasing proposals would undermine the strategic integrity of the Forestry Commission and would be damaging to its work. That was the problem that everybody had with the proposal.

Rob Gibson: The Forestry Commission's strategic role is in looking after a third of our forests. The Labour Party was in Government for eight years but is now saying to us that we need a positive policy on forestry. What was the Labour Party doing for all those years, when there was little planting? We are now trying to find the means of ensuring that planting takes place—although I think that Sarah Boyack and I agree that we have to speed up.

If we want to sell forestry land, we will have to find people to buy it. If Labour members want communities to buy it, they have to ask whether money will be available from the Big Lottery Fund. Much of that money has been sequestered in the east end of London. Communities are not being allowed to buy Government land with the help of the Big Lottery Fund, so Labour members have to tell us where the money will come from.

Jim Hume: Will the member take an intervention on that point?

Rob Gibson: Not at the moment.

When we talk about how to use our forests, we have to be clear that we need a strategy for land use. The Tories have made that point, and it is also mentioned in the Liberal Democrat amendment. Within the forests, we have to decide what type of forestry to use. We require more than just the clear-fell Sitka spruce stuff; we require managed forestry from which we can get building materials and fuel, and where forest crofts can be set up. However, that will depend on the Forestry Commission having an income.

In the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee and the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee, we will be looking for ideas. I read the Labour Party's press release this morning: it said that we have to have a positive policy. What does LP stand for? Labour Party or lacking policies? The SNP has presented policies and is asking others to engage with them.

As I have said, few realistic efforts have been made to get money into the Forestry Commission for early development. That is our argument, and we should all work to find the answers.

09:48

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): Before I come to my substantive points, I place on record my welcome for the Government's change of heart on its leasing proposals in the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill. It is regrettable that the proposals were ever made, because they have overshadowed the scrutiny of the bill. Had the ideas been introduced in the original consultation, they would never have seen the light of day in the bill. We have to learn from that. However, if there is a silver lining, it is that the importance of forestry with regard to climate change has been highlighted: forestry is not just a cash cow but a means of capturing carbon and providing sustainable materials for energy and manufacture.

We need to acknowledge and appreciate the work of the Forestry Commission. As the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee explored the options, it became clear that the commission worked closely with all its partners, whoever they

were, in industry, government or communities. We need to build on those relationships.

Joint ventures have received overwhelming support. They can provide an income stream for new planting. They can also be used to fight climate change by providing renewable, low-carbon energy generation. Joint ventures can involve wind and hydro power developments, for which our forest estate is perfectly placed. Most forestry land is away from settlements, so the negative impact of any developments would not be great.

Communities could enter into joint ventures with the Forestry Commission. In the past, when a community has been keen to develop renewables on commission land, the community has had to purchase the land at market value. Joint ventures would remove the need for communities to raise funds to buy such land and would allow them to develop their own energy plans and to develop renewables with the commission. The Forestry Commission has a good track record in working with communities, and that expertise will help in developing projects.

The Rural Affairs and Environment Committee scrutinised the use of timber when we considered climate change. Much of the discussion was about timber for energy, but we also need to focus on other uses for timber, such as building. When the leasing proposals were on the table, I was alarmed to learn that many building developments that used timber had stalled because of uncertainty. I urge the minister and the Government to ensure that research and development is restarted. We are in a difficult economic climate, and it is important that the Government ensures that such work takes place. Using timber in building means using more sustainable materials and can also mean providing better insulation.

We are all agreed that there needs to be more planting. However, it has become clear that there cannot be a free-for-all. We need to plant the right trees in the right places. Real fears were expressed by NFU Scotland that quality farm land would be used to speed up planting. It is important that that does not happen. Although we have to increase planting, we will have to ensure that we do not store up problems for the future.

It is vital that we learn from past mistakes, such as the huge square blocks of unsuitable trees that have been planted in the wrong place and which impact on the environment and scenery with no obvious gain, other than possible tax breaks for the landowner.

The Government has already agreed to draw up a land use strategy. However, it appears to be taking a long time to develop. I am not suggesting

that we delay planting until it is complete, but the Government needs to consider the key principles so that decisions can be made on where and what to plant.

I welcome the minister's comments on the SRDP, for which we have been calling for some time. The SRDP will speed up planting.

I am pleased that we have had the opportunity to have this debate. During the previous debate on forestry, the Labour Party put across good, sound suggestions on the use and development of forestry. At the time, the suggestions appeared to go largely unheeded; the then minister was more interested in retaining a discredited policy. However, now that the policy has been ditched, I hope that the positive ideas that we put forward then, are putting forward again today, and will continue to put forward, will be heeded and acted on.

09:52

Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): The Government's welcome and sensible change of heart over the leasing of our woodland has given us time to debate alternative funding sources, about which we have heard already. It has also given us a huge opportunity to continue debating a comprehensive policy on forestry—a policy that could do a great deal to maximise the potential for using home-grown timber in construction. Rhoda Grant has already mentioned that potential.

We have the opportunity to explore the possibilities that are opened up by a construction technique that, for each house built, could offer carbon savings that are equivalent to the normal total greenhouse gas emissions of a standard house—including the emissions from its construction and from its heating throughout its lifetime. Massive timber construction has been developed in Switzerland and is already being investigated in Scotland. The construction technique allows even timber of quite poor quality, such as that from the lowly Sitka spruce, to be fixed together with hardwood dowels to provide solid beams that can span distances of 30ft and are capable of supporting even concrete floors. The wood can be made into slabs of between 4in and 1ft thick, and can be carved and shaped to millimetre accuracy. In relation to the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill, the argument for the development of that construction technique in Scotland is overwhelmingly persuasive.

I will use the example of Acharacle primary school in the Highlands, which will be handed over to Highland Council in the next few weeks. With walls, floors and roofs made almost entirely of massive timber, the school will not only sequester more than a million kilograms of carbon dioxide

over its 100-year lifespan, which is acceptable under the Kyoto agreement, but displace several million more kilograms of CO₂ that would have been produced had the school been constructed from steel, concrete and brick.

However, even if we were not facing climate change chaos, there are other strong arguments for using massive timber, the first of which is cost. If home-grown timber is used, the costs will be comparable to any other form of construction. A great advantage of accurate prefabrication is that buildings perform to expected standards when completed, so there are no hold-ups as a result of mistakes and faults in construction and therefore no ensuing expenses.

The high energy efficiency standard that has already been set for passive houses is met comfortably by Acharacle, with room to spare, in terms of airtightness and heat loss. Acharacle will use 15W per square metre, while an average house uses well over 10 times that. Particularly important for children and schools is the fact that massive timber buildings have excellent acoustics and, indeed, air quality. Because no glues are used in the assembly of Brettstapel massive timber, there is no off-gassing of the kind of chemicals that many paints, finishes and glues give off and which, according to increasing evidence, exacerbate the problems of children who suffer from asthma and allergies.

I should also point out that Gaia Architects had to import all of the massive timber for Acharacle school from Austria, not only at an environmental cost of 50,000 kilograms of CO₂ as a result of transporting the material but at extra financial cost because of currency fluctuations.

Wood is still the best building material that we know for Scotland. It is durable and can be easily cut, formed, steamed, shaped and now dowelled together to provide an all-purpose building material. Counterintuitively, as the necessary tests have demonstrated, it even resists fire better than standard buildings. We have the land, the trees and the expertise to take full advantage of a golden opportunity to build to the very highest ecological standards, save money and the planet, and create hundreds and even thousands of permanent new jobs in a flourishing wood materials industry. All that we need is a forestry policy—and, of course, a research and development policy—to take that vision forward.

09:57

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I am paraphrasing, but I believe that it was Prime Minister Harold Macmillan who, when advising a young, up-and-coming Tory MP on his political career, warned him, "Beware events, young man,

events.” Since our previous forestry debate, a number of things have happened in the wider world outside the Parliament. Two space satellites collided in orbit, a new Minister for Environment was appointed, and the Government dumped plans to lease nearly a quarter of the Scottish forest estate. As I am neither young nor up-and-coming, I will leave it to other members to weigh up the relative significance of each event.

Since the previous debate, Mike Russell, who is seen as a rising star in ministerial ranks, has moved on to greater things and Roseanna Cunningham has been handed the poisoned chalice of the leasing scheme. That said, I have not yet had the chance to congratulate Ms Cunningham on her promotion, but I do so now. In my speech, I will focus briefly on the scheme, as other members have rightly done, and will also consider some of the more positive aspects of the forestry agenda, including joint ventures, which have already been mentioned, and tackling climate change.

Where did the idea of leasing a quarter of the forest estate for 75 years come from? As others have pointed out, the scale is breathtaking. We are talking about around 100,000 hectares, which is roughly the size of Fife, with, of course, the knock-on effect of the loss of around 35 per cent of Forestry Commission income. In response to a parliamentary question, Mike Russell made it clear to me that

“Rothschild approached the Scottish Government with ideas about the national forest estate.”—[*Official Report, Written Answers*, 9 February 2009; S3W-20106]

Subsequent answers have provided evidence that Rothschild, ministers and officials met six times between October 2007 and July 2008. However, I have not received within the time limits a response to my freedom of information request to see the minutes and record of the discussions. Perhaps the minister can speak to her officials to see whether we can move things along.

However, to be fair, I received at the 11th hour an analysis of the consultation responses on the leasing scheme. As members have pointed out, almost 75 per cent of them were negative. For example, one respondent said:

“Offering long leases is tantamount to privatisation”,
while on page 5 of the document we read:

“This land is owned by the people of Scotland and should remain firmly in the control and management of the Forestry Commission.”

Respondents also expressed concern about Forest Enterprise jobs, with at least 3,500 people signing the Forestry Commission trade union petition; the creation of a less predictable wood supply for processors; and experience from abroad of leasing forest estates. In New Zealand,

for example, lessees went bankrupt and jobs were lost. Also, when the Swedish Government sold off much of its national forest estate to a company, the company raised log prices, which caused sawmills to go bankrupt.

Edward Shepherd, the Forestry Commission’s trade union secretary, predicted in *The Scotsman* of 4 December 2008 that the whole 25 per cent would be given out in “one whopping great lease” to an international investment company. He went on to say that

“Although the minister”—

Mr Russell—

“is not attempting to privatise the land, he would be privatising its management and control.”

Now that the leasing liability is behind us, I welcome the fact that the Forestry Commission will be able to get on with managing our forests effectively in the decades to come. For example, joint ventures in renewables will provide a win-win by raising funding, developing renewable capacity and helping to mitigate climate change.

As we all know, timber demand is likely to exceed supply in a few years’ time, which means, of course, that more trees will need to be planted. In my few remaining seconds, I ask the minister to confirm in her winding-up speech that all new planting, including planting that is not in receipt of grant, and work under planning consent should meet United Kingdom forestry standards.

We have a high-value product with strong export potential. Indeed, I will finish with a snapshot from history: pulp from Irvine was once exported to Manhattan for the production of *Time* magazine. Through skilful management of the economic, environmental and social dimensions, we can preserve and develop Scotland’s rich, natural assets.

10:02

Dave Thompson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): It is important that we remember why the Government proposed the leasing of some of our forestry in the first place and ensure that forestry’s climate change benefits are not overlooked as the Opposition gloats over its apparent success in being listened to in a consultation. What a novelty—the Government listened. Obviously, the concept is alien to the Opposition.

Our Scottish Government is committed to tackling climate change and is preparing to deliver the challenging target of reducing Scotland’s greenhouse gas emissions by 80 per cent by 2050. It also wants 50 per cent of Scotland’s electricity to be produced from renewable sources by 2020. In 2006, the Stern review highlighted forestry’s potential role in dealing with climate

change and the benefits of strong, early action, and the consultation on the forestry provisions in the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill was part of that approach.

As everyone will agree, there is absolutely no doubt that woodland creation can contribute cost effectively to net emissions reduction and that there is great potential to increase Scotland's woodland and forest area to take more carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere. Indeed, one aspiration in the Scottish forestry strategy is to achieve 25 per cent woodland cover in Scotland by the second half of the century, which would lock up an additional 0.2 million tonnes of carbon per year by 2020 and an additional 1.2 million tonnes by 2050.

Those are great ambitions, and they are exactly the kinds of actions that we need to take to counter the dangers of climate change. However, as soon as our visionary Government puts its head above the parapet and makes a new and exciting suggestion, the moaning Minnies appear with a hundred thousand reasons why it will not work. Those people oppose everything but propose nothing.

Jim Hume: By "the moaning Minnies" does the member mean the Scottish Wildlife Trust, the wood processing industry or the 9,000 people who contributed to my survey on the issue, 97 per cent of whom stated that they were against the leasing proposal?

Dave Thompson: The Opposition parties—the majority of them, anyway—misled the public and misrepresented the situation.

Members: Oh!

Dave Thompson: Those moaning Minnies, who never come up with anything positive, oppose everything but propose nothing. We have heard nothing new from any of them today. In addition, they resort to distorting the truth to mislead the public. Indeed, we have heard more of that during this debate. Honest debate is not helped by misrepresentation.

I will give members an example of what I mean. The proposals to lease part of our forests were thoroughly worked out and a decision was made to include an area of 115,000 hectares of productive forest in the south and west of Scotland. If my geography is correct, Inverness is not in the south or west of Scotland, which would have meant that forests in the Inverness area, such as Culloden wood and Craig Phadraig wood, would not have been affected by the proposals. How silly of me! I had completely forgotten that the truth is a stranger to the Liberal Democrats, who contrived to conjure up headlines in the local press that said that Culloden and Craig Phadraig woods were in grave danger.

Jim Hume: Will the member take an intervention on that point?

Dave Thompson: I say to Mr Hume that that was misrepresentation. According to the Lib Dems, the popular forest walks would be cordoned off, never to be available for public use again. They either did not understand or did not care about the truth.

Our London-based Lib Dem MP, Danny Alexander, said:

"The Government is using 'slash and burn' tactics, when some of the Highlands' most iconic and well-used outdoor attractions are at stake."

John Farquhar Munro MSP joined Danny Alexander and a local Lib Dem councillor for a photograph in Craig Phadraig wood, and waded in with his false predictions of doom, saying:

"The potential impact on key Forestry Commission sites for public access and for wildlife—from Culloden and Craig Phadraig to Glen Affric and Glenmore—is only half the story."

What complete and utter tripe. They misrepresented the truth and misled the public. Such dishonest and disreputable politics disillusion people and gives us all a bad name. The perpetrators of deceit may gain some short-term political advantage, but we all lose out in the long run and democracy suffers.

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

10:07

Liam McArthur (Orkney) (LD): I did not participate in the debate on forestry in January. My constituency can lay claim to many wondrous attributes, but a tree-covered landscape and a vibrant timber industry are not among them. It was more appropriate, therefore, that my Highland and South of Scotland colleagues took the lead in giving voice to the serious concerns that constituents were expressing. However, I did sit through the debate and, like many, I was staggered by Mike Russell's approach. Like David Stewart, I make no apology for taking the opportunity to spend a little time looking back, but I probably will not go back as far as the Macmillan era. The self-styled listening minister refused to take interventions and lectured members in the chamber on what he called "the facts". That was a dangerous tactic, as he was later required to return to the chamber to apologise for misleading MSPs, albeit inadvertently.

The contrition shown on that occasion was commendable, but I believe that a further apology is due to my colleague Jim Hume, who successfully led the broad-based campaign in opposition to Mr Russell's ill-conceived proposal.

Notwithstanding Helen Eadie's claim about the parenthood of success and failure, a measure of Mr Hume's effectiveness was surely the extent to which he discomforted the former Minister for Environment, whose response was highly personalised and insulting. An apology is perhaps owed, too, to Mr Russell's colleague Rob Gibson, who was left as the last man in the trench defending a proposal that was hatched in the Rothschild boardroom in New York. However, an apology is certainly owed to all those individuals, businesses, organisations and communities—dare I say, an historic coalition and not “moaning Minnies”—that raised their voice in opposition to the Government's plans.

For Dave Thompson's benefit, I say that those plans came from nowhere, lacked any real detail and were rushed through a consultation that spanned Christmas and new year. Stuart Goodall of the Confederation of Forest Industries told the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee, but obviously not Mr Thompson, that the confederation

“would have preferred more time, or perhaps an opportunity prior to the consultation, to focus on alternative ways of ... delivering an increase in new planting and finding funding for that.”—[*Official Report, Rural Affairs and Environment Committee*, 11 February 2009; c 1422.]

With a mixture of assertion, bombast and hubris, however, Mr Russell declared his proposals a “win-win for Scotland” with “no downsides”. That was frankly ludicrous, and it was made clear in evidence to the committee, despite Mr Gibson's touching confidence in Stewart Stevenson's assurances, that the afforestation objectives could be achieved through joint ventures.

Rob Gibson: The Liberal Democrat amendment suggests that we require a land use strategy. When are we going to hear how we will raise the money to plant more trees?

Liam McArthur: Well, we certainly will not necessarily go to Rothschild for advice.

We will never know whether Mr Russell would have had the good grace or sense to ditch his plans, but I welcome the speed with which his successor moved to deal with what ConFor rightly described as an unnecessary “distraction”. Welcome, too, was the Tories' belated recognition that even they could not find a way to back the Government on this issue. It was at times painful to watch the intellectual contortions that Tory MSPs performed to avoid agreeing with Liberal Democrats that the leasing plans were unworkable.

John Scott: Will the member take an intervention?

Liam McArthur: I am sorry, but I do not have the time.

It is imperative that there is no slippage in the timetable for ministers bringing forward a comprehensive and integrated land use strategy. Ideally, such a strategy—and, indeed, the national waste plan—should have preceded Parliament's consideration of the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill, given the range and extent of the enabling powers that ministers seek in it. I hope that the minister can reassure members that that will remain at the top of her to-do list over the coming weeks.

Vital though forestry is, for the reasons suggested in Roseanna Cunningham's amendment, it is nonetheless part of a wider debate about land use. That is the essence of our amendment and of John Scott's, which we support, and it is also a point that the RSPB Scotland made. The debate about forestry really cannot be seen in isolation and, as the RSPB suggests, we need to consider more broadly

“how sustainable land management can help address some of the impacts of climate change.”

For example, Sarah Boyack suggested that the role of peatland is considerable and perhaps underestimated.

Beyond climate change, we need to consider the economic impacts. Forestry and wood-using businesses contribute £700 million to the Scottish economy, often sustaining some of our more fragile communities. However, ConFor estimates that tree planting fell last year to a low of 3,000 hectares, which presents real challenges economically as well as environmentally. ConFor has made constructive suggestions, including on short leases and changes to the SRDP. I welcome the minister's commitment to produce conclusions in May from the review of the SRDP. However, as John Scott made clear, as we consider food security and the dramatic loss of livestock in some parts of our country, there are no easy solutions to managing competing demands for land use.

Our amendment looks ahead, but the minister and her SNP colleagues cannot complain about the tone of the debate. The tone was set by Mike Russell, and dismissing criticism as scaremongering is simply not good enough. I hope that lessons have been learned by the Government. I urge Parliament to support the motion and all three amendments at decision time.

10:12

Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): Although I wondered about the wisdom of Labour's decision to debate forestry for the second time in seven weeks, we have had a worthwhile debate that has moved our thinking on significantly from the debate that we had in January. However, as usual, the tone of the Lib Dem speeches was

somewhat discordant with the mood in the chamber.

There is clear consensus that, in view of the uniformly hostile response to the Government's proposals to lease 25 per cent of the forestry estate, the Government was right to drop them. We were pleased by the minister's statement last Friday in that regard. There is no doubt that forestry is important to the Scottish economy in terms of tourism, recreational and sporting activity, and, of course, as a source of the timber that is increasingly being used by the construction industry as a substitute for concrete and steel, and as a fuel source, with the potential to make a serious contribution towards meeting Scotland's renewable energy targets. Forestry is also important for our biodiversity, because it provides a habitat for many species of wildlife and vegetation. It has a significant contribution to make, too, in locking up carbon, although how much is debatable. We welcome the Forestry Commission's on-going review of carbon science, which is perhaps much more complex than was hitherto realised.

Commercial forestry's 39 per cent growth in the past decade is indicative of its economic potential. However, we are still far from achieving the 25 per cent forest cover to which the Government aspires and which would mean expansion of our woodland by 10,000 hectares per annum, as several members have said. That could have serious implications for biodiversity and agriculture. Like the RSPB and NFU Scotland, we hope that the Government's forthcoming land use review will enable a strategic approach to be taken to managing Scotland's land in relation to food production, wildlife adaptation and climate change mitigation. Forestry must not be looked at in isolation. It must be considered alongside other, competing land uses, not least because an increase in afforestation from 17 to 25 per cent could have a significant impact on agricultural land, much of which has already been lost to housing and industrial development.

Food security is increasingly important in a hungry world, and careful thought must be given to any significant diversion of land from primary food production. On the other hand, sensitive and well-thought-out woodland expansion, involving the sustainable maintenance of forests alongside other land uses, will help to safeguard biodiversity. It will also allow us to address some of the impacts of climate change and help us to meet our climate change targets.

We have heard about some of the opportunities that could come from the pursuit of joint ventures between the Forestry Commission and other interested parties and which would help to generate the huge financial investment that will be

needed if planting targets are to be met. There are exciting possibilities for renewable energy and other projects, and we agree that the Government should pursue them.

Rob Gibson: Would the Conservatives consider helping us to urge the Treasury to examine how tax incentives can be used to generate more planting? Is that a good idea?

Nanette Milne: That is debatable. The use of tax incentives has brought bad as well as good results, so I would need to give the idea careful thought.

We agree that with appropriate and well-directed resourcing, the SRDP could make a more significant contribution to sustainable and carefully targeted woodland expansion. The issue should be addressed with some urgency. The Government's other fundraising proposals, such as the sale of surplus Forestry Commission land, are also worthy of consideration.

If Parliament accepts what has been proposed and debated this morning, I hope that we will look to forestry playing an increasingly important role, but if we are to achieve a successful and sustainable future for the people of Scotland, forestry must be integrated with agriculture, housing development and all the other activities and industries that must coexist in our relatively small land mass.

10:17

Roseanna Cunningham: I would like to say that the debate has been useful and constructive, but as I am not allowed to lie to the Parliament, I will not. I kept waiting for the positive stuff, but with one or two honourable exceptions, most Opposition members appeared to run out of time before they got to that bit of their speech.

When I saw the Press Association coverage of what the Labour Party had put out, I was highly amused. Apparently, the Scottish Government faces calls for a programme of tree planting across the country's forests. Well, duh! What have we been talking about for the past two years? Labour talks about joint ventures, even though it is obvious that such ventures are being actively pursued. We have in front of us a motion that starts with a restatement of the obvious, calls on us to do something that we are already doing, asks us to pursue proposals on joint ventures that we are already pursuing and mentions the need for the SRDP to be reviewed, when a review is weeks away from completion.

Although the amendments are perfectly acceptable, one of them asks us to consider forestry proposals as part of a land use strategy, when that is already happening. I remind all

members that land use issues are key to almost all the areas that are covered by the rural affairs and environment portfolio, so we are fully conscious of the competing demands and priorities.

Interestingly, the motion says absolutely nothing about climate change.

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab): The minister mentioned joint ventures. I ask her to re-examine the joint venture in the Carron valley forest that was scuppered by her predecessor. That venture, which involved the voluntary and private sectors, was scuppered to suit her Government's policy.

Roseanna Cunningham: I will undertake to do that, if the member is so desirous of pursuing the matter further. We know that joint ventures are under way. Sarah Boyack mentioned the challenges of the next five years, but she offered no ideas on what could plug that gap, which is the one that needs to be filled.

We then heard from the Liberal Democrats. Jim Hume and Liam McArthur need not congratulate themselves too fulsomely because their campaign was one of disgraceful misrepresentation and scaremongering. We saw that again today—the Liberal Democrat speeches were negative and backward looking, and they contributed nothing.

The leasing proposal is, of course, the one that created all the controversy and argument, but we forget what its purpose was. I remind members that it was a means to an end. The end was helping us to meet the challenge of climate change. We must think out of the box when we deal with climate change. The leasing proposal was an example of that approach, to be sure. As someone who lived abroad for many years, I think that one of the most depressing things about Scotland is that when anyone does any out-of-the-box thinking, there is a queue down the road and round the block of 100 folk who can give thousands of reasons why what has been proposed cannot be done. Ninety-nine of the people in that queue will be members of the Labour Party. On today's evidence, the other person will be a member of the Liberal Democrats.

One of the most depressing aspects of our society is that too many people say what cannot be done, but they do not follow that up with what can be done. Helen Eadie exemplified that attitude. She called on us to do what we are already doing, quoted chunks of the Labour Party's briefing and gave us nothing by way of a positive response. Rob Gibson and Dave Thompson made excellent points about the negativity that has been evident in the debate.

I acknowledge that Robin Harper, at least, had a positive suggestion to make. He raised the issue of massive timber with me on a previous occasion,

so I raised it with the Forestry Commission. I can advise that the Forestry Commission is aware of the potential of massive timber and that at least one Scottish company is already investigating the technology. That is a positive contribution, but it still does not deal with the next five years. I think that even Robin Harper would accept that the use of massive timber does not offer an immediate, short-term answer, because we must get the technology in place.

Frankly, I am disappointed by the ridiculous response to a consultation that put out ideas for consideration. That response was all about what we could not do and had very little to say about what we could do. This Government is about what we can do, and we will continue to take that approach.

10:22

Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab): When the motion was lodged, we had not had the announcement that the Scottish Government was to abandon its plans to lease out 25 per cent of the Forestry Commission's estate, even though, as Helen Eadie pointed out, the Government had the opportunity to make the announcement in Parliament last Thursday.

Roseanna Cunningham said nothing new and was remarkably churlish, given that the motion congratulates her. We have argued for the alternatives to the SNP's proposal all along, and I am pleased that the Government is now pursuing them. An extraordinary grumpiness pervaded all the speeches of SNP members, and they made little in the way of positive suggestions. The expression "sore losers" comes to mind.

Most members of the Parliament were genuinely pleased by last Friday's announcement, which meant that today's debate has given us an opportunity to explore alternative ways of increasing forest cover and to examine the role of forestry in mitigating climate change. As Rhoda Grant said, it is heartening to learn how highly the Forestry Commission's work is regarded. Congratulations are due to the Forestry Commission trade unions, the timber industry representatives, such as ConFor and the UK Forest Products Association, the environmental non-governmental organisations, the tourism and leisure interests, and the political parties—the Labour Party, the Scottish Liberal Democrats, the Green party and, latterly, even the Tory party. We welcome their campaign and last Friday's decision.

John Scott: Will the member give way?

Elaine Murray: I am sorry—my time is limited.

I am not sure that Roseanna Cunningham's

predecessor would have been as able to make the sensible decision, give the sometimes arrogant way in which he dismissed genuine concerns as “scaremongering”. The spirit of Mr Russell seems to live on in his colleagues. In December, in answer to an oral question, Mr Russell stated:

“Labour members will be judged on their inability to engage with forestry and climate change or to think constructively.”—[*Official Report*, 11 December 2008; c 13367.]

In January, in response to another oral question on the issue, he said:

“There are members in the chamber whose behaviour has been disgraceful.”—[*Official Report*, 22 January 2009; c 14321.]

On that occasion, I think that he was referring to Jim Hume and me.

In February, Mr Russell told the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee:

“I believe that the leasing proposal is worthy of the committee’s support ... and ... needs to proceed.”—[*Official Report, Rural Affairs and Environment Committee*, 11 February 2009; c 1449.]

Time has told whether it was Labour members or Mr Russell who engaged most effectively with the forestry sector. David Stewart described the problems that Mr Russell’s pet project would have caused. Let us all be grateful for a fresh pair of eyes at the ministerial desk, however ill-natured those eyes seem to be this morning.

Contributions to the debate have brought positive, thoughtful suggestions for alternatives to leasing out the forestry estate and have reflected on the wider issues of land use, and other action that can be taken to reduce carbon emissions and to sequester carbon. There has been strong support among members for joint ventures, and for renewable energy projects such as small-scale hydro, biomass and wind generation. However, I sound a note of caution with regard to some of the major large-scale wind turbine developments in forests, which require the felling of trees on a large scale. Sometimes, those trees cannot be used by the timber industry because they have not been certified. In addition, there is major soil disturbance when the concrete bases are inserted. The projects that take place on the forest estate must be the right ones.

The Scottish Government could provide a budget for the purpose of forestry planting, should it wish to do so. After all, £70 million has been allocated every year to freezing the council tax, and the small business bonus scheme cost £73 million in 2008-09. If the Scottish Government really wanted to allocate a budget, it could do so. However, in the absence of additional Government funding, a recent review of options suggested that increased funding could be generated by the

repositioning of the estate. I am pleased to learn that ministers are pursuing that. Whatever Rob Gibson thinks, such a policy was brought in by the previous Labour Administration.

Woodland creation on private land is supported through the rural development programme, which is another area that Labour believes needs to be considered. I welcome the fact that the minister is talking to Brussels about increasing the amount of funding that is available for forestry planting.

However, an element of caution needs to be applied. As other members have said, planting woodland is not a magic wand for mitigating climate change. Although 33 per cent of the land of Scotland is considered appropriate for woodlands, there are other competing demands; as John Scott said, agriculture and food production is one such demand. As he also said, the science of carbon sequestration is very complex, and woodland expansion must be environmentally sensitive. We need to avoid the mistakes of the past.

The land use review is an opportunity for a strategic examination of the competing requirements for land. We believe that plans for increasing woodland cover must be balanced with the demands for food production, flood prevention and nature conservation.

As others have said, afforestation is not the only answer. Several alternatives are proposed in the consultation responses. I have mentioned them previously, but since the SNP seemed unable to listen, I will mention them again. First, restoration of conservation of peatlands and wetlands to maintain and increase carbon sequestered in soil is vital. Secondly, longer crop rotation cycles would allow trees to reach maturity and maximise their role in sequestration. The third option is the appropriate use of native woodlands and broadleaved trees, and the fourth is the use of wood for construction instead of concrete. I was interested in Robin Harper’s contribution regarding the way in which wood construction techniques can produce energy-efficient buildings. That is well worth considering.

The slogan, “the right tree in the right place at the right time” has been repeated during our consideration of the forestry proposals in the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill. The decision to drop the leasing proposals may not have been made at the right time, and it may not have been made in the right place, but it was the right decision. I give the minister that, despite the rather grumpy nature of her contribution.

Police Numbers

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan): The next item of business is a debate on motion S3M-3726, in the name of Richard Baker, on police numbers.

10:29

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab): Ever since the Scottish National Party came to power, the Parliament has sought to hold it to its manifesto commitment for 1,000 more police officers in Scotland. This is not simply a debate about numbers; it is about a clear promise to communities in Scotland that that commitment on extra police would be kept when so many of the Government's manifesto commitments have been jettisoned. However, trying to get clarity from ministers on the commitment has been like trying to nail blancmange to a wall. By September 2007, the SNP had moved away from the pledge of 1,000 more police to

"the deployment of the equivalent of 1,000 additional police officers".

When the cabinet secretary was asked, on "The Politics Show", how many police officers there would be, he said:

"I find that, actually, a rather silly question. The number will, you know, be whatever that will be."

The Parliament, and others without, has ensured that the Scottish Government returned to a commitment of 1,000 more police officers. Alas, though, even now it has been necessary to seek further clarity from ministers on that pledge. Yesterday, they published a police force projection study that they said showed that the target would be met. The cabinet secretary attacked what he called doom-mongers—unlikely as it may seem, the phrase "doom-monger" may have been aimed in my direction. All I can say in response to the cabinet secretary is "Physician, heal thyself", because it was not me but the cabinet secretary who, when asked by Colin MacKay,

"Will there be 17,265 officers by 2011?"

said no.

At a recent First Minister's question time, the First Minister, in his best Tony Soprano impersonation, issued me with a dire warning that I would have to apologise to Parliament on the issue. I am afraid to say that no such apology will be forthcoming—not because I seek to follow his example in failing to apologise for the Government's litany of broken promises, but because we had to raise our concerns about the fact that the cabinet secretary said in the interview that the target of 1,000 more police than in May 2007 would not be met.

In the SNP amendment, Mr MacAskill returns once again to the issue of 1,000 extra recruits, but 1,000 recruits 1,000 more police officers does not make. Between 1999 and 2007, the previous Scottish Executive delivered 1,500 more police officers to create a record number of police in Scotland. When the cabinet secretary talks of record numbers, that is nothing new—we achieved that and we are proud of it. However, to do that over eight years, nearly 7,000 new officers were recruited.

It is still not clear to us from the projection study that the level of planned recruitment will result in 1,000 extra police officers. If the cabinet secretary is so confident that it will, why does he not simply sign up to our motion? His projection study predicts that the lowest possible number of new officers that there will be is 10 more than we refer to in the motion, so it should have been easy for him to sign up.

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): Perhaps I could put it on the record. Will there be 1,000 more officers? Yes.

Richard Baker: I am pleased that the cabinet secretary has made that clear commitment, but it raises the question why he could not sign up to the motion, which would have made that absolutely clear.

Labour councillors in Strathclyde, through the good offices of the Strathclyde police board, are investing the funds of their own councils to put more police on the beat there—nearly 200 extra officers. We have not even said in the motion that the extra 1,000 funded by the Scottish Government should be above and beyond that.

The extra recruitment in Strathclyde shows that a postcode lottery on police recruitment is opening up, with recruitment forging ahead in Strathclyde, while in Grampian, recruitment targets are having to be scaled back by some 60 officers—the First Minister may care to reflect on that. I am sure that it will become clear that Grampian is not the only force to be affected in that way.

It is important that those who come forward to join the police now receive exactly the same level, length and high quality of training that have been the hallmark of the Scottish police. Reports in two newspapers in November raised serious concerns about pressures on training provision.

On this crucial issue, it is time to have a clear strategy for delivery. Today, the cabinet secretary said yes but three weeks ago he said no. For too long, with the mibbes aye, mibbes naw approach that has been taken, it has seemed as though Kenny Dalglish rather than Kenny MacAskill has been in charge of the pledge. That is why we wish to see new, independent scrutiny, not simply of the reporting of the figures but of the projection study

and the plans to make the pledge a reality. Despite all the statements about the projection study, and despite the comment that Kenny MacAskill has just made, the amendment in the name of the cabinet secretary still does not bind the Government to a clear target. It simply refers to the projection study. If the cabinet secretary has moved on from that, we welcome that.

However, on that basis we cannot support the Scottish Government's amendment; nor can we support the Conservative amendment, which is merely an addition to that. The Liberal Democrat amendment is not only a more accurate reflection of the history of the issue; it is far more productive in looking forward, and we are happy to support it.

If the SNP cannot accept independent scrutiny of its progress on the issue and cannot make a clear commitment, doubts will remain. In any event, it will still be the job of the Parliament to hold the Government to account on this key pledge—it is clear that the pledge will not be kept unless we do so. We are gratified that, on this occasion, our debate has resulted in further information and, hopefully, the clarity that we seek from the Scottish Government. Nevertheless, we will continue to press the Government to keep its pledge on police numbers. That is why we have brought this debate to the chamber today.

I move,

That the Parliament believes that the Scottish Government must ensure that there are 17,265 full-time equivalent police officers by March 2011, calculated on the basis currently used by the Chief Statistician in the reporting of the official Police Officer Quarterly Strength Statistics, for the SNP's stated manifesto pledge for 1,000 more police officers to be met.

10:36

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): I welcome this debate on police numbers. I am extremely grateful to Richard Baker for bringing it to Parliament, particularly as it gives me the opportunity to set out the good news about how the Government is delivering on its promise to put more police officers on our streets and in our communities.

Following the publication yesterday of the police force projection study, we can say not only that recorded crime is at a 25-year low and police numbers are at an all-time high, but that the SNP Government will deliver 1,000 additional recruits; that the total number of police officers will be 1,000 higher than in 2007; and that we will go further by using the three Rs of recruitment, retention and redeployment to maximise the number of officers on our streets and in our communities. We will do all that despite our inheriting a spike in retirements and the lowest level of police recruitment since devolution.

Therefore, although I welcome the debate, I am a bit surprised that Richard Baker wanted a debate celebrating the Government's success on police numbers. Over and over, he told anyone who would listen that we would never recruit 1,000 additional officers. He was a doomsayer and a Jeremiah, but that argument is bust. Over and over, he told anyone who would listen that the head count would never go up by 1,000 officers. Now, that argument is bust, too. He needs to learn that saying something over and over does not make it so. In four quarters, we have seen four increases and we now have record numbers of police officers in Scotland.

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): The cabinet secretary earlier gave a definition regarding the way in which police numbers will be worked out. That was a different definition from the one that he has repeated several times before. Can we take the latest definition as the final definition of the Government's position on the matter?

Kenny MacAskill: The proof of the pudding is in the eating. We inherited from the Liberal Democrat-Labour Administration the lowest level of police recruitment since devolution. We also inherited a record number of retirements. Despite that, we are delivering 1,000 additional recruits and are committing to in excess of 1,000 additional police officers come 2011 than we inherited in 2007. That is a good news story. However, doubtless, Richard Baker will wish to continue with his doomsaying.

Richard Baker: I simply pose a question. We certainly want the Scottish Government to put those additional police officers on the beat. If the cabinet secretary is so confident about that today, why did he say just three weeks ago that the total figure would not reach 17,265 officers? Is he saying that the figure will be at least 17,275, which is the bottom of the range that is set out in the projection study?

Kenny MacAskill: We inherited a frankly dreadful situation—the lowest level of recruitment since devolution and a record number of retirements, with more than 2,300 officers projected to go. Despite that, the Government is committing, the proof of the pudding is in the eating and our additional officers will be on the streets.

Richard Baker continues to plough on, but the fact of the matter is that we are delivering. Looking at the faces of Richard Baker's colleagues, I do not think that they are too admiring of his having brought the issue for debate this morning. I suspect that they feel that, a little like the grand old Duke of York, he has marched his Labour colleagues up to the top of the hill only to find 1,000 police officers waiting for them at the top.

As members know, on 31 March 2007 there were 16,234 full-time equivalent police officers in

Scotland. In our first budget, the Scottish Government funded our pledge to recruit an additional 1,000 police officers over this session of Parliament. We have also provided police authorities with sufficient resources to maintain the numbers with which they started, including £20 million in 2009-10 to cope with the bulge in retirals that we inherited and £55 million in 2008-09 to 2010-11 for police and fire pensions, which were dropped on us by Westminster.

Now that we are at around the midway point in our first term in office, we can project what the impact of that investment will be. The police force projection study uses published statistics, together with forecasts from the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland. There is always some uncertainty in making projections about the future; therefore, we have modelled variations in the number of officers retiring and leaving the service. As a result, the report cites a range of figures. However, the study clearly shows that the number of police officers in March 2011 will likely be at least 17,275 and possibly as high as 17,484.

Because of the Government's investment and the work that it has undertaken in partnership with the chief constables, I can say with confidence that we will see the number of police officers rising by 1,000 or more. The Jeremiahs and the doomsayers will just have to accept that. I can also say with some confidence that Richard Baker now needs to march his weary troops back down the police numbers hill. I suggest that, the next time that he is tempted to march them up it, he should remember that saying something over and over again does not make it so.

I take pleasure in moving the amendment in my name and confirm to Mr Baker that we will recruit 1,000 additional officers. There will be 1,000 additional officers in 2011. The Government is delivering on its commitment to the three Rs and is providing a visible police presence in our communities.

I move amendment S3M-3726.1, to leave out from "believes" to end and insert:

"notes that police officer numbers are at a record high; welcomes the findings of the Police Force Projection Study that show that by March 2011 police officer numbers will have increased by more than 1,000 over the March 2007 level and will reach between 17,275 and 17,484 officers; commends the Scottish Government for its investment in funding 1,000 additional recruits; further commends the eight Scottish police forces for delivering additional police officers, and calls on the Scottish Government to continue to maximise the total number of police officers through a combination of recruitment, retention and redeployment."

10:42

Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con): At least we now know where we are. I like to think that I am

regarded as a fair man and a person who will adopt a reasonable approach to all the difficulties that we run up against. However, I am slightly impatient that this matter is before the chamber again, although I can see the justification behind the Labour Party's raising the matter following a far-from-clear statement from the cabinet secretary some three weeks ago that caused doubts to arise in all our minds. Nevertheless, I pay credit where it is due. The situation has been clarified today beyond peradventure. I congratulate the cabinet secretary and, at the same time, encourage him to be as forthright and as clear on other subjects in the days ahead.

We were promised the projection study, which duly arrived and which has clarified events to an extent. People who are less cynical than me might regard it as a passing coincidence that the document arrived on our desks yesterday morning, after Mr Baker's motion had been lodged. However, I appreciate the fact that, at times, I can be a little cynical.

Let us return to the history of the matter. As I say, Labour was perfectly justified in raising the issue today. However, its record with regard to the 1,000 additional police officers is perhaps not so praiseworthy, bearing in mind the fact that, in last year's budget deliberations, it did not come up with any constructive suggestions in that regard. I pay tribute to the fact that the Liberals acknowledged the point at that stage.

The projection study stands up to reasonably robust scrutiny. Nonetheless, I take the point that there seems to be an imbalance in the recruitment numbers throughout Scotland. That is something that Mr MacAskill and others may have to address, but it can be sorted out. Another issue of concern is that—despite the arguments about the changing financial climate, which I accept—the figures under the retention heading of the three Rs might not be as comfortable as we might think. However, that issue will take its course.

Certainly, the recruitment element of the equation is highly satisfactory. Tulliallan seems almost to have set up a production line that is turning out new, effective police officers. On the streets, there is a positive improvement in the visibility of police officers—Glasgow city centre is a classic example. That is not just my view, but has been put to me by members of the public.

Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): Is the member aware of the situation with Grampian Police? Its projected figure of 98 additional officers is welcome, but that does not compare well with the 138 extra policemen that the force received over the period of the previous parliamentary session. Does the member agree that, although the figures are welcome, they should be kept in perspective?

Bill Aitken: I have already underlined the point that an imbalance exists in the recruitment figures around the country. The Grampian Police figure is less than satisfactory. I hope that the cabinet secretary, along with the force's police board and chief constable, will take measures to resolve that situation. I accept that that is an issue.

We need to consider where the credit is due for the increased figures. Frankly, I think that credit is due to members on the Conservative benches. With all due modesty, I point out that, if we had not put pressure on the Scottish Government last year, we would not be in the position today of knowing that we will have a minimum number of 1,000 additional officers.

This is a serious issue because the primary duty of Government is to ensure the protection of its citizens. It has been proved beyond peradventure that safety and security are provided by having police officers actively patrolling the streets. As a result of the input of my colleagues on the Conservative benches and as a result of the Scottish Government's recognition of the realities of the situation, we are on course to achieve that increase. That can surely only be a satisfactory situation.

I move amendment S3M-3726.1.1, to leave out from first "commends" to "further" and insert:

"notes that this figure has been achieved as a result of the funding secured by the Scottish Conservatives in the 2008-09 budget negotiations;"

10:47

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): I will begin, if I may, with Mr Aitken's second-last point, which was about the seriousness of the issue. The debate is not just a numbers argument: it is about holding the Government to account on an issue that is very important to the public. Today's debate should never have been necessary, but the blame for it lies entirely with the Government and the Cabinet Secretary for Justice.

We all know that the SNP's reputation as a party that made manifesto promises that it never intended to keep was first established in the debate on police numbers—an issue that was first raised by our then leader, Nicol Stephen—and has become entrenched with its breaching of other key pledges on student debt, local income tax and class sizes.

Let me remind members of the sorry history of the SNP Government's obfuscation on police numbers. The SNP's 2007 manifesto said:

"we will set out plans in our first Budget for Scotland for 1000 more police".

That was very clear. However, the manifesto pledge that was put before the nation was

recalibrated shortly after the election. In the famous phrase, Kenny MacAskill said:

"our commitment is to deliver ... the equivalent of an extra 1,000 officers".—[*Official Report*, 6 June 2007; c 406.]

As a consequence, the word "equivalent" might acquire a new meaning in the "Oxford English Dictionary". However, the phrase was repeated on various occasions, notably by the First Minister on 5 September and 4 October 2007. As Richard Baker has already mentioned, Mr MacAskill also said, in his "silly question" comment, that

"The number will ... be whatever that will be. Whether the number will be 16,201 or 16,222, I don't know."

As a result of its embarrassment on the issue, the SNP Government was forced to increase police funding to support 1,000 police officers above the established number. However, two further questions need to be asked, which echo points that other members have already made. First, does the cabinet secretary's pledge—I am grateful to him for redefining it once again this morning—exclude the increased officer numbers that are being paid for by redeployment within forces such as Strathclyde Police? Does the pledge go above increases that are being paid for by other people, or is it a simple comparison with the 2007 figures? Secondly, in the retention figures—which Bill Aitken rightly raised—is there any progress or improvement in the 30-plus scheme?

Kenny MacAskill: The answer to Mr Brown's question is quite clear. We are committed to recruiting 1,000 officers and we are committed to there being 1,000 more than the figure in March 2007. It is straightforward and simple.

Robert Brown: The answer to the question is obviously that the number does not take account of any additions. To be precise, the additions that Strathclyde Police have made are part of that 1,000 figure; they are not over and above the Government's commitment, as some of us might have thought.

In any event, the position should have been pretty straightforward. If the cabinet secretary had earlier defined the matter as he did this morning, there would have been no problem. The pledge should have meant that we would have 17,265 officers by the end of the session, but no—that was not the case. On 3 March this year, Kenny MacAskill said that there would not, after all, be an extra 1,000 police by 2011. He said that that was not the target that the SNP had set itself, which was to have 1,000 additional recruits. Apparently, the promise did not account for the 2,000 officers who are due to retire by 2011. Once again, the cabinet secretary could not say what police numbers would be in 2011. Even in the cabinet secretary's amendment today, the matter is not as clear as it was in his speech.

I genuinely welcome the police force projection study, which—as Bill Aitken rightly said—was carried out rather hastily after a rather confusing interview. I welcome the news that 450 extra recruits have come out of Tulliallan this year. I have recently visited the Scottish Police College and I much admire its work. Until March I had thought, to be frank, that we had moved on from the issue. Let there be no mistake that achievement of the 1,000 police officers pledge—in the precise terms that are laid out in the motion—is the job of the SNP Government and no one else. Richard Baker was quite right to lay down the challenge. If the SNP Government has no concerns about the issue, why does it not agree to the motion in the terms that the Labour Party has laid out? There is no real reason why the Government should not do so, given that the motion matches exactly what the cabinet secretary has said today.

The Government has the tool of workforce planning to deal with the problems, which are exactly those that have confronted us in recruiting more social workers, nurses and—when I was a minister—teachers. The SNP should stop redefining, qualifying and recalibrating its pledge. The SNP is in government and Parliament has given it the tools, so it should not need any excuses or circumlocutions. The police do not want this distracting and rather boring issue and the public want to continue to see more police in their communities. It is time for the SNP to stop messing about and to deliver.

I move amendment S3M-3726.2, to insert at end:

“; notes the Police Force Projection Study carried out by the Scottish Government estimating that police officer numbers are likely to be between 17,275 and 17,484 by 31 March 2011; notes that the SNP's attempt to alter its commitment to the delivery of the equivalent of 1,000 officers would not have achieved this result; welcomes the fact that the Scottish Government was forced by opposition parties and public opinion to firm up its commitment; regrets the Scottish Government's repeated efforts to confuse and obfuscate the figures, noting that, as recently as 3 March 2009, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice cast further doubt on the Scottish Government's intention and ability to achieve the target, and calls on the Scottish Government to work with the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland to retain skills and expertise in the police force through appropriate workforce planning and ensure that police officers are working effectively and visibly in Scotland's local communities.”

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We now move to the open debate.

10:52

James Kelly (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to support the Labour motion in this morning's debate.

There is no doubt that crime and antisocial behaviour are issues that dominate many of our constituencies. We see—as I have seen in Cambuslang and Rutherglen—community facilities that have been vandalised, pensioners afraid to leave their homes and families who have grown up in an area feeling intimidated, and there is no doubt that such matters are of grave concern. We must stand firm alongside our communities in combating such crime and antisocial behaviour.

There is no doubt that, in doing so, we look to Parliament's and the Government's responses. A few weeks ago, a debate on community policing showed the many advantages of increased visibility of the police in our towns and cities, and we heard about how community policing is reassuring for many of our families and citizens. There is no doubt that communities want us to back up the measures that councils have introduced and the actions that their antisocial behaviour units have taken to combat crime and antisocial behaviour, but there is also no doubt that more police on the streets and a more visible police presence provide reassurance.

From that point of view, I note the publication of the police force projection study and the cabinet secretary's announcement that he believes that the number of police officers will reach 17,275 by March 2011. However, the projection study has to be closely examined, because there are some questions about its methodology. As Richard Baker said, the previous Executive successfully managed to put 1,500 additional officers on the streets, and that was done on the basis of there also being 7,000 additional recruits. The figures in the projection study show 3,500 recruits going through Tulliallan so, on a like-for-like basis, that will give 750 additional officers. It seems to me that the cabinet secretary has made some optimistic assumptions about retirements.

Kenny MacAskill: The member obviously does not believe the statements that I have made that there will be 1,000 recruits and that there will be 1,000 more police officers than in March 2007. If the matter is of such concern, why did the Labour manifesto commit to not one new recruit? Would we not be in an awfy state if Labour was in power and not us? There would not be 1,000 recruits and we would be going backwards.

James Kelly: Labour delivered 1,500 additional officers in the eight years in which it was in power. The SNP is beginning to show itself as a party that said anything to get a vote in the 2007 elections. That is the issue that is before the Parliament today, and that is why people will scrutinise closely the projection study and the methodology behind it.

The SNP is beginning to make a name for itself by dropping election pledges like confetti at a

wedding. It told students that it would dump the debt, but it went back on that promise. It told first-time buyers that they would get £2,000 grants, but that was ditched, as well. It told Scotland that it would introduce a local income tax, but that has also been dumped. Some people quote the cliché that politicians will say anything to get a vote. To me, the SNP is becoming the embodiment of that cliché. It is getting politicians a bad name. We are beginning to see signs of that. An opinion poll at the weekend showed that the SNP has fallen behind for the first time since 2007.

There is no doubt that the matter is a serious one that deserves proper scrutiny. The cabinet secretary has given us a projection study, but my projection is that, in the weeks and months ahead, the people of Scotland will begin to see through the false promises of the SNP.

10:57

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): Zero. Zilch. Nil. Nada. That is the precise number of additional police officers that Labour promised in its 2007 manifesto. Indeed, the statistics that were released on 3 March on police officer quarterly strengths show that police numbers were in decline in the first two quarters of 2007, before we came into office. Despite that, we are on track to exceed our target of 1,000 extra police officers. If Labour did not promise a single extra police officer in its manifesto, why is it suddenly feigning interest? As we heard from the cabinet secretary, the SNP Government has also successfully dealt with the significantly higher than expected numbers of police officers who are leaving the force through retiral, resignation or ill health. Labour did nothing to prepare for that.

Labour must apologise for misleading voters on police numbers. I am sorry that Mr Baker has decided that Labour will not do that today. He has consistently told voters that we have broken our manifesto pledge even though there is no evidence to back that up. Voters have been deliberately misled.

It is great that Labour wants us to hold on to our manifesto commitments, although it is a shame that that does not apply to our commitment to an independence referendum.

Richard Baker: I did not say the things that Mr Gibson suggests I said. Unlikely though it might be, perhaps he can provide some enlightenment. Why did Mr MacAskill clearly say in an interview three weeks ago that the target would not be reached? Why did he say that if that was never going to be the case?

Kenneth Gibson: The information that Mr MacAskill required was not available. It is available today, and Mr Baker has already heard it.

As for the Liberal Democrats, in 1999, I asked the then Minister for Justice, Jim Wallace, what plans he had to increase the number of police officers. His response was that increasing the number of police officers does not reduce crime—a lawyer and politician who seemed to think that the police have no deterrent effect and do not reduce crime by catching criminals.

We heard a rather bizarre intervention from Mr Rumbles, who said that the previous coalition introduced 138 officers to Grampian in eight years but that we are only introducing 98 officers in four years. Apart from the fact that on an annualised basis that represents more officers, the 98 officers will be in addition to the 138 that he mentioned. Mr Kelly made similar points in his speech. I say to him that the previous regime may have introduced 1,500 officers when it was in power, but we are adding to that. Labour and Liberal politicians seem to be unable to comprehend that.

Of course, Labour did invest in additional police officers. I recall that, when Parliament met in Glasgow, Angus MacKay went on television to announce that £10 million had been found to fund 300 additional police officers. That was great news, but he did not say that in that year, non-domestic rates would for the first time be imposed on police buildings. The sum that was raised was £10 million a year.

There were 16,234 police officers when we took office. As the cabinet secretary has made clear, an additional 441 officers are already in post. In one town—Largs—in my constituency, five additional police officers started on the beat in December. This year, they will provide 10,000 additional hours of policing for the people of Largs, which will help to reduce crime and the fear of crime.

What would have happened if Labour was in power? We should consider what is happening south of the border, where police numbers are falling, as detailed in *The Times* on 24 February. Recorded crime in Scotland has fallen to a 25-year low, and violent and drug-related crime is already low. All eight Scottish police forces recorded less crime in our first year in power than in Labour's last year.

Funding for the police is at record levels. In 2008-09, it will reach £1,082 million, increase to £1,115 million in 2009-10 and to £1,150 million the following year. Since we took office, Labour has repeatedly, and tediously, accused us of breaking our manifesto promise. If anything, ministers should be commended for their Stakhanovite overfulfilment on the four-year plan. That has come despite the necessity to find for police and fire service pension commutations an extra £55 million that should have come through under Barnett consequentials. We have heard little from Labour politicians about that because they never want to criticise their bosses in London.

The SNP met police pay in full. We gave them the full 2.5 per cent increase while the police down south got only 1.9 per cent. The feeble excuse from Labour's London bosses was that the measly £27 million that was involved would stoke inflation. How hollow that silly comment now sounds. It came from a United Kingdom Government that will put VAT up again by 2.5 per cent in January and which put 2p on fuel duty in December.

Of course, Labour members will never give the SNP credit for anything. If we invented a cure for cancer and brought it to Parliament, given their visceral hatred of the SNP and what we stand for, which is to give Scots more control over their own national life—shock horror!—their instinct would be to vote against it.

I commend the cabinet secretary's amendment.

11:03

Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab): It is almost always a pleasure to follow Kenny Gibson.

I support the motion in the name of my colleague Richard Baker. Last night, when I was thinking about what I would say in the debate, I made a number of assumptions. I assumed that the debate was unlikely to be consensual, that passions would be high on all sides, and that charges would be hurled and thrown back. It seems that my assumptions have been proved correct.

The subject of the debate caused me to cast my mind back to the events of April and May 2007. I recalled some of the more striking proposals in the SNP manifesto, including a local income tax, the cutting of the pupil teacher ratio to 18:1, and the cancelling of all student debt. Those proposals were all uncoded, they all lack intellectual coherence, and they are all wanting any real financial resilience. At the time, I wondered how on earth the SNP, if it won, would be able to give those pledges practical effect. Ironically, that same puzzle has proved to be beyond the SNP ministers who are in charge of those policy areas. The solemn and binding promises have evaporated.

However, when I read the section entitled

"A stronger focus on safer communities"

on page 58 of the SNP manifesto, I thought I had found a popular policy that might actually have been thought out and coded. It stated:

"we will set out plans in our first Budget for Scotland for 1000 more police and will encourage Chief Constables to focus these new resources on community policing."

There were no ifs and no buts and no hedging of bets by the man who would be First Minister. An unconditional and unambiguous promise was made—a solemn, if not historic, concordat with the

people of Scotland. However, we have heard the present First Minister's present Cabinet Secretary for Justice this morning, and I am afraid that he has not been persuasive, to say the least. I say to him that mere assertion is not enough, no matter how loud it is.

Over the months, the cabinet secretary has bobbed and weaved, ducked and dived, and bluffed and blustered. He has been the very model of an SNP cabinet secretary. When I listened to him trying to explain his party's shifting position on police numbers and attempting to invest its position with a degree of certainty, I was reminded of the old saying, "He used to be indecisive, but now he's not so sure." His flip-flopping would be laughable if it were not so serious. People in my constituency and in constituencies throughout Scotland want more visible and readily accessible police officers in their communities.

During the previous Labour-led Executive's period of office, we delivered 1,500 additional police officers. People want their communities to be safer, but they also want their political leaders to be straight with them. I say to the cabinet secretary that the talk of the equivalent of 1,000 additional police officers in September 2007 cut no ice with my constituents in Glasgow Anniesland. Mr MacAskill's new wheeze of a police force projection study, which was announced by his ministerial colleague Nicola Sturgeon—it is ironic that it was announced in a debate on a Labour motion on the Government's broken promises—has left voters in Scotland similarly underwhelmed. Projection studies do not offer additional protection to the decent majority—more police officers on the beat do. More police officers on the beat are required.

Mr MacAskill would do well to heed the warning of the chairman of the Scottish Police Federation, Norrie Flowers, whom *The Herald* of 5 March quoted as saying that

"Neither the public nor police themselves will be conned on officer numbers. We all know what the promise was after the last election."

That promise was that, by 2011, there would be 17,265 officers in Scotland. Mr Flowers was absolutely correct. Kenny MacAskill needs to stop showering the people of Scotland with more excuses than an alleged fraudster under police interrogation would.

Kenny MacAskill: Will the member take an intervention?

Bill Butler: No. I am sorry—I am in my final minute.

Kenny MacAskill needs to deliver. If he does not, apologies, excuses and projection studies will not do. The electorate will deliver its own condign community punishment and sentence in May 2011. I support the motion.

11:08

Nigel Don (North East Scotland) (SNP): I am delighted that, despite what Mr Butler has just said, he does, in fact, support Kenny MacAskill's amendment. He notes that police numbers are at a record high and welcomes—grudgingly—the findings of the police force projection study, which show that police officer numbers will increase by 1,000 to between 17,275 and 17,484 officers. To be fair, I do not think that he commended the Scottish Government for its investment in 1,000 additional recruits, but I am sure that he had it in his heart to do so, particularly for the sake of the recruits and the forces that they will work with. Furthermore, he commends the eight Scottish police forces for delivering additional police officers and calls on the Scottish Government to continue to maximise the numbers of police officers through a combination of recruitment, retention and redeployment. That is what I have just heard, and I welcome it.

Bill Butler: I have listened carefully to my colleague Nigel Don in the Justice Committee; he is usually a fount of good sense. However, why does his cabinet secretary keeps changing his mind from week to week? How can we believe someone who does not know his own mind from one week's end to the next?

Nigel Don: I know what I have just heard, what I see in front of me and what that means—and I know that it is exactly what everybody wanted it to mean. That is why we are struggling to find other things to say.

I point out to Mr Butler, and others who have spoken about the rise in police numbers over the previous eight years, that the numbers of police officers on the streets did not significantly increase. Indeed, it is possible that they did not increase at all, as the Justice Committee has been told many times, because the police unfortunately had to do a good number of other things in their back rooms. That is not a criticism of the police or of those who produce the work for them to do. It is clear that the number of police officers on our streets dropped significantly in the public's perception, and that problem is now being addressed.

I would like to address a few other issues in my remaining minutes. When Mike Rumbles made an intervention earlier, I thought of the distribution of police officers among the different forces. As a North East Scotland regional member, I would of course like to see the maximum possible number of police in Grampian and Tayside—other members would make cases for their regions—but I say to the cabinet secretary that we need perhaps to reflect on the distribution of funds among the forces over a period of time to ensure that it is consistent with what we are asking the

forces to do. That is not a criticism of the current numbers, which may be perfectly right. However, we need to check periodically that funding and, therefore, police officers are reasonably distributed. We also need to reflect on the additional resources for community wardens, albeit that they are within the control of local authorities, because we need to ensure equity and fairness throughout Scotland.

I draw members' attention to operation Lochnagar. That major Grampian Police operation will remind us why we need policemen. According to the latest data that I can find, which are a few days out of date, Grampian Police has, over the past few weeks, pursued 102 drug search warrants, taken 151 folk into custody, visited 150 addresses, seized £77,000-worth of drugs and 15 weapons, visited 88 licensed premises and detected some 35 other crimes. That reminds me why we need police officers.

I will give examples of other things that are happening in the Aberdeen area. An intelligence-led operation on four break-ins to houses in the Rosemount area of west Aberdeen has led to a man being taken into custody. There was a sudden death in Mastrick—such events are always sad, of course, but they happen—and there has been a case involving reckless conduct with a firework in which a youth was taken into custody and eventually charged. I mention those examples simply because such things happen pretty much every day in our cities and towns. Who do people want to see when a house has been broken into, there has been a sudden death, or there has been an incident involving assault or violence? They do not want to see a local council official—however well meaning that official might be—but a police officer. That is why it is important that we maximise the number of police officers in our forces, and especially on the streets and facing our communities.

11:13

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab): It is vital that governing parties are held to their manifesto commitments, and doing so is the job of Opposition parties. No pledge by the SNP has been more widely expected and accepted than its promise to put 1,000 extra police officers on the beat. Perhaps that is not quite correct. What about the young couple who voted for the SNP because it said that it would give them £2,000 towards their first home? What about the pensioner who voted for the SNP because it said that it would abolish the council tax? What about the young family who voted for the SNP because it said that it would match Labour's school building programme brick for brick? What about the construction workers who have lost their jobs

because the SNP has dithered on how it will fund capital projects? I could go on and on about the promises that the SNP Administration has broken, but we are focusing on police numbers today.

We know from what has been said this morning that the SNP has difficulty with numbers. It promised to put 1,000 more police officers on the streets. That promise was made to the people of Scotland and to the Tories to secure their votes for last year's budget—some may say that it was made to them to buy their votes. Despite the promise, the cabinet secretary told the press this month that he cannot give a total for the number of police officers who will be on Scotland's streets in 2011. We have heard much about that this morning.

The cabinet secretary said in *Scotland on Sunday* that providing 1,000 more officers than in May 2007 was not what the SNP promised. In the same article, he said that the SNP promised "1,000 additional recruits". A few months ago, the SNP said that what it had really meant was additional policing capacity—the equivalent of 1,000 officers.

Perhaps the cabinet secretary needs to be reminded again of what his manifesto said—Robert Brown and other colleagues have also quoted from it this morning. It clearly states:

"It is essential that we have sufficient police on local streets. That's why we will set out plans in our first Budget for Scotland for 1000 more police".

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Cathie Craigie: No, I am sorry; the member has just arrived in the chamber, so I will carry on.

There were no fudges in the SNP manifesto about "additional capacity" and no clarifications about "new recruits". The SNP can change its mind and its words all it likes but, unless drastic action is taken, it is set to break another promise—the promise of 1,000 more police on the beat. I am aware that the cabinet secretary intervened this morning to try to clarify the position, but why should we believe him today when his statements over recent weeks and months seem to change weekly or whenever he is questioned on police numbers?

My constituency is within the Strathclyde Police boundary. The Strathclyde joint police board is keen to develop its community police numbers, so let us look at the figures in the official statistical publication. I have read the minister's letter to the Justice Committee convener and the police force projection study. I am sorry that I have to disagree with the convener and I hope that he will not hold it against me at future committee meetings, but I do not believe that the study stands up to scrutiny at all. It comes with the health warning in the cabinet secretary's letter that

"The actual figure will likely be different from this because retirements and leavers cannot be predicted precisely and because police authorities do not have to stick to their forecast of recruitment."

It is the job and responsibility of Government to ensure that it can make predictions that are based on figures that it is happy to stand with. In other words, the study is just a wish list that has been prepared to try to get the cabinet secretary out of a hole.

Richard Baker pointed out that, because Glasgow City Council wants there to be police on the beat in its area, it is funding nearly 200 officers. However, the number of police officers in Strathclyde has declined since March 2007.

I ask members to please support the Labour motion tonight, to hold the cabinet secretary to account and not to accept any of the fudges in the amendments.

11:18

Mike Pringle (Edinburgh South) (LD): Police numbers have been the subject of intense speculation and debate throughout this session of Parliament. The Government's story has changed so many times that it has been difficult to keep track. Its manifesto promise of "1000 more police officers" has since been described ambiguously and selectively by Kenny MacAskill as "an additional policing capacity",

"the equivalent of 1000 new police officers"

and "one thousand additional recruits". I am delighted that the Government has finally bowed to public opinion and cross-party pressure to firm up its commitment to provide 1,000 new police officers and end the constant speculation. I also welcome the results of the police force projection study in the hope that it will finally open up the Government's previously undefined numerical target to proper scrutiny and accountability, and, more important, ensure that Scotland gets the extra police that it needs.

Serious questions remain about the Government's conduct in the matter, particularly regarding why it has had to issue a press release nearly two years after the election and under cross-party pressure, claiming that it only now knows for sure that it can fulfil a manifesto promise that has held cross-party support since the beginning of the session. The press release attributes the prediction of the target being successfully reached to increased recruitment as well as investment in police authorities, allowing them to maintain current officer numbers. It mentions in particular £20 million of recent investment to cope with a bulge in retirements. Surely factors such as the projected number of retiring officers should have been taken into account

before the manifesto commitment was made, not as an afterthought to be shored up with additional funding on an ad hoc basis while the Government flip-flops between policies trying to determine exactly how many more police it can deliver.

To use Kenny MacAskill's words, although the announcement did in many ways "confound the doom-mongers" who said that the Government would not meet its commitment, it did so only because, as recently as 3 March, it appears that the Government was still unsure as to exactly what its commitment was. In future, the Government should be more careful about making promises when it is unsure of the detail of their fulfilment. That is why the Scottish Liberal Democrat amendment calls for a quarterly update of the police force projection study to ensure that the target is met and that future police numbers are maintained.

Now that the Government has finally firmed up its commitment, it is time to look at the next step and, vitally, at how those valuable new officers will be deployed as a visible presence in our communities and on our streets. That is what our voters want. Before the 2007 election, the Scottish Liberal Democrats also pledged to deliver 1,000 new police officers. Part of that pledge was to recruit two new community police officers for every council ward in Scotland—a total of 706 officers.

Following last month's debate, I think that I speak for everyone in the chamber when I say that we agree on the excellent value of community policing. Now that it is clear that the officers will be available, I hope that the Government will consider—perhaps the cabinet secretary will answer this point when he sums up—the two officers per ward option and that other parties will get behind that plan. Although there is value in the Labour Party's suggestion of increasing the number of community wardens, they should not be seen as a cheap substitute for community policing.

I welcome again the results of the police force projection study and call for a constructive cross-party dialogue with the aim of fulfilling the ambitions of the valuable framework for progress set down in last month's community policing report. I hope that members will support the Liberal Democrat amendment and the Labour motion.

11:22

John Lamont (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): The debate has been useful for a number of reasons, but perhaps it is most important in again highlighting the role of the Scottish Conservatives in bringing 1,000 more police officers on to the streets of Scotland.

Although we welcome Labour and the Liberal

Democrats to our way of thinking, it is important to record that in government, the Labour and Liberal parties failed to recruit enough police officers to make Scotland safer. With rising crime rates during its term in office, my Conservative colleagues continually asked the Lib-Lab pact to employ more police officers. Under the Labour-led Executive, crime and offences rose by 8 per cent and, according to the Scottish crime survey in 2003, only one in four crimes was recorded by the police. Despite its best efforts during the 2007 election campaign and since then in opposition, its eight years of failure cannot be spun away.

Robert Brown: Will the member take an intervention?

John Lamont: I want to make some progress.

Labour and the Lib Dems talked about how they had a record number of police officers in Scotland, but the truth was that only 147 were walking the streets of Scotland at any one time. We should also not forget that, when they had the opportunity to support extra police going into our communities in last year's budget, Labour and the Liberal Democrats sat on their hands and abstained. They had a perfect opportunity to repent, show the errors of their ways and vote for extra police, but they chose not to do so. We cannot trust Labour and the Liberal Democrats when it comes to making our communities safer.

I turn to the Scottish Government. In its 2007 manifesto, the SNP proposed 1,000 more police officers. However, by the end of 2007 it had changed its mind and decided that the 1,000 new officers would be made up not only by extra recruitment but by the creation of equivalent police officers—not new additional police officers but equivalent police officers. Thank goodness for the budget process that allowed the Scottish Conservatives to pressure the Scottish Government to provide the 1,000 newly recruited police officers that it promised in its election manifesto.

It was our job as an effective Opposition party to ensure that the SNP honoured its election pledge of 1,000 extra police officers, which was set to be ditched at one point. It is the SNP's job now to ensure that those 1,000 extra officers are delivered by 2011. That is the minimum that the SNP must achieve if it is to justify the trust that it was given when its first budget was passed. We secured the additional funding to recruit those extra officers; the SNP must now deliver them.

However, the SNP Government should not stop there. It must do more to ensure that our police force is freed up from paperwork to allow officers to get on to our streets and serve our communities.

Thanks to eight years of Labour and the Liberal Democrats, an increasing burden of administrative and procedural bureaucracy has come to consume more and more of police officers' time, keeping them away from the front line of crime fighting. That situation is not of the SNP's making, but it must do more to set our police free to do their job, rather than setting criminals free from our jails. We need to take the handcuffs off the police and put them on to the criminals.

The Scottish Conservatives are clear that more police out in our communities are needed to provide a visible deterrent and to boost public confidence. Traditionally, communities throughout Scotland would have had the reassurance of a local police officer as an integral part of their neighbourhood, building up relationships and reducing the fear of crime. The Scottish Government needs to do more to reduce crime and the fear of crime.

Labour did not promise a single extra police officer during the election. The Liberal Democrats and Labour failed in government. There is only one party with any credibility on this issue: the Scottish Conservatives, with our pledge of additional police officers. That is why I urge the Parliament to support the amendment in Bill Aitken's name.

11:26

Kenny MacAskill: This has been a rather rumbustious debate. Throughout the debate, the tenor from Labour in particular but also the Liberal Democrats to an extent seemed to be, "It's not fair." Well, it's a fair cop, guv: there will be 1,000 additional recruits delivered by this Government and there will be 1,000 additional officers beyond what we inherited in March 2007. The doomsayers will just have to accept that and get over it.

Mr Baker made a variety of points. He went on about recruitment in Grampian. Let me be clear: we have record numbers of police officers in Grampian. On Monday, it was my pleasure to be briefed about operation Lochnagar, which Nigel Don mentioned, and to meet some of the young recruits—to which the Scottish Government had committed—who had been involved in operations to make their communities in Torry and elsewhere safer and stronger. Labour and the Liberal Democrats should acknowledge and welcome that good-news story.

Mr Baker also went on about training. Yesterday, I met Calum Steele of the Scottish Police Federation, who told me that the SPF has no problem with how matters are being dealt with at Tulliallan, which Robert Brown mentioned. If anything, the problems at Tulliallan are a result of the success of squeezing through the current

number of officers; such problems go with the volume and capacity being delivered.

Yesterday, the Scottish Police Federation said:

"Whilst police recruitment is ultimately a matter for Chief Constables the Scottish Police Federation is aware government is delivering the necessary funding (for the 1000 extra police officers)".

Indeed, ACPOS said last year:

"All eight Scottish Police Forces are working very actively to recruit the thousand police officers that are to be directly funded by the Scottish Government. They are also recruiting to replace officers who are expected to retire within the current financial year ... Forces recruited 697 officers during 2007/2008 and are planning to recruit 1648 officers during the current financial year".

That is the situation. We are delivering on our manifesto promise.

It is all very well for Mr Kelly, Cathie Craigie and others to say how important police officers are and for Bill Butler to emphasise the importance of policing in Anniesland but, as Bill Aitken pointed out, let us remember that the Labour manifesto committed to not one new or additional police officer being recruited. Under Labour, not only would we not have 1,000 additional officers or 1,000 recruited officers, we would be facing the retiral spike of 2,300 officers.

Richard Baker: Does the minister not accept that our manifesto commitment was to increase the number of police officers year on year and that we stood on our record of 7,000 new recruits and 1,500 more police on the beat? It is interesting that, yet again, he tries to divert attention from his own manifesto, which is what is in question here.

Kenny MacAskill: The Government's position is quite clear: we are delivering on our manifesto commitment. Labour's manifesto commitment was for zero officers at a time when 2,300 officers will be retiring.

As Kenneth Gibson pointed out, the situation here contrasts with that south of the border. This Government recognises the service of our police officers. We did not seek to equivocate on paying them. We did not seek to renege on what should be provided as part of their salary. We stumped up and we paid up. Sadly, that is not reflected south of the border.

Although we are not getting Barnett consequential to address the pension fund debacle that we face, the Government recognises the importance of the police service to the fabric of our communities. Despite not being given what is due and owing to our country from the Treasury, we are ensuring that our communities are protected by our police forces.

We inherited a spike in police retirals, with 2,300 officers due to retire, and the lowest level of police

recruitment since devolution. We should contrast that with the Labour manifesto commitment to not one additional officer. Nevertheless, we are able to commit today: we are delivering our additional 1,000 officers into the community and we will ensure that there are at least 1,000 officers above and beyond the number that we inherited in March 2007. To answer John Lamont's fair point about doing more, we are not stopping there, given our commitment to the three Rs of recruitment, retention and redeployment. We will seek to retain valuable officers who might otherwise retire. That depends to some extent on the economic situation and the personal choice of those officers. Mr Aitken is quite correct about that. The study shows that there is flexibility about that.

Equally, we recognise that we have to redeploy officers, who give great service to our communities, away from sitting behind desks doing needless paperwork. Paperwork has to be done in every area of life, but far too much of police work is bureaucratic. We are freeing up front-line officers where we can.

The doomsayers should just get over it and recognise that the Government is delivering 1,000 additional officers into our community and that it is going to deliver 1,000 additional officers.

11:32

Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab): Given that the Government so enjoys subject debates and Government debates that, on many occasions, are to discuss absolutely nothing, it is a pity that we have had to use our Opposition time to extract from the Government its so-called commitment to delivering 17,265 officers, as promised in its manifesto. We will not allow the Government to hide behind the police force projection study and will hold it to account on its commitment to delivering the 1,000 police officers.

For so long, the Government has sought to condition our thinking on this issue. Perhaps we were mistaken. As Robert Brown said, perhaps the manifesto commitment was to deliver the equivalent of 1,000 more police officers. Perhaps the commitment was to set up a fund that would allow police authorities to bid for money to put police officers on our streets.

It is time for the Government to be open and accountable. When Alex Salmond was elected as First Minister on 16 May 2007, he said that this is

"a Parliament of minorities where no one party rules without compromise or concession."—[*Official Report*, 16 May 2007; c 24.]

This is an opportunity for the Government to deliver the principles behind those fine words.

I find it unacceptable that I had to appeal to the Scottish Information Commissioner, following the Government's rejection of my request under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 for information on how it would deliver its police recruitment figures. I am delighted that the commissioner has upheld my request and I look forward to receiving the information by 23 March.

As I said in a recent debate, Labour members are reasonable and fair individuals. We simply want to be given the opportunity to scrutinise a minority Government. That is why I support Richard Baker's call for an independent report. That would give the Parliament an opportunity to appraise properly many of the challenges that face Government on a day-to-day basis. Perhaps the Justice Committee could assist the Government in the process.

That would also give the Parliament an opportunity to highlight the support that Labour councils throughout Scotland have given the Government on recruitment. My council—Glasgow City Council—has contributed to the recruitment of more than 200 police officers and yet we have heard not one reference from a Government minister on the subject. Perhaps the cabinet secretary might like to intervene. I am happy to let him credit Glasgow City Council for its contribution.

Kenny MacAskill: I have praised Paul Rooney before in the chamber in relation to a variety of matters, including policing and the Scottish Police Services Authority. This is a partnership. We have to work with chief constables, police board conveners and police boards. It is a pity that the Labour Party is still so negative and begrudging and that it just will not get on board. If Paul Rooney can, why can Paul Martin not?

Paul Martin: That was yet another contribution of the sort that we have had to take from the Government today. That said, I welcome the commitment to and the fine words about Glasgow City Council.

Community groups in my constituency in Glasgow have told me of their concern that community planning budgets are being used to pay for police recruits. They have told me that that is to the detriment of many local projects, which are experiencing budget cuts. The groups welcome the deployment of recruits in their communities, but not to the detriment of local community projects.

Labour will support the Liberal Democrat amendment in the name of Robert Brown, which sets out eloquently the frustration that many members feel in trying to extract any clarity from the Government on its position. Once again, I am happy to give way to the cabinet secretary to

enable him to say those magic words, "There shall be 17,265 police officers in Scotland by 2011."

Kenny MacAskill: I repeat what I said at the outset: we will recruit 1,000 additional officers and we will deliver 1,000 additional officers beyond the figure that we inherited in March 2007. That is a good-news story. Labour members should recognise and accept that.

Paul Martin: Once again, we failed to hear the magic words.

Let me be clear that we will not take lectures from members opposite on police numbers. We not only provided additional officers when we were in government but gave them the legal remedies to do their job of attacking antisocial behaviour through the delivery of the Antisocial Behaviour etc (Scotland) Act 2004. That act was widely acclaimed by police forces throughout Scotland, which said that it provided them with the toolkit that they required to fight crime.

Now that this Government is in power, it is making clear its intention to dismantle all the remedies that are available to our officers. New recruits have the thankless task of being governed by the hug-a-hoodie alliance of the SNP and the Tories. We will not support the Tory amendment. Its content reeks of this sad alliance's desperation for attention. It reminds me of a saying of the great Abraham Lincoln:

"I am a success today because I had a friend who believed in me and I didn't have the heart to let him down."

We are delighted to have extracted key information from the Government on its manifesto, but we have yet to extract one bit of information. I ask the cabinet secretary again to say the magic words that he will deliver 17,265 police officers. That is a pledge that we will hold him to.

I call on members to support the motion in Richard Baker's name and the amendment in Robert Brown's name.

11:38

Meeting suspended.

11:39

On resuming—

Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

General Questions

Fishing Quotas and Licences

1. Ross Finnie (West of Scotland) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will seek a joint legal opinion with the United Kingdom Government on the Scottish Government's fishing quota and licensing proposals. (S3O-6276)

The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment (Richard Lochhead): Our proposals have been warmly welcomed by the fishing industry, and are designed to modernise fishing vessel licensing and quota management to help safeguard the future of our fishing communities. Of course, we firmly believe that our proposals are within the competence of this Parliament.

We have worked very closely with the fishing industry to shape our proposals. The final round of consultation is under way. We will continue to work with the industry and, indeed, the UK Government to take forward our policies. We will continue to discuss with them any concerns that they may have.

I have no doubt that the people of Scotland wish our fishing communities to benefit from the rich fishing grounds that are on our own doorstep and future generations of active fishermen to have similar opportunities to those that are available to the current generation. That is one of the aims of our proposals.

Ross Finnie: I am sure that the fishing industry will find that all very interesting, but the fact is that the Scottish Fishermen's Federation has made it very clear that it cannot address the important substance of the cabinet secretary's fishing quota and licensing proposals because of the English Government's statement that the proposals are illegal.

Whether that statement is right or wrong, the important matter for Scottish fishermen is their ability to engage in the discussion on these important proposals. What steps is the cabinet secretary taking—with his opposite number—to enable Scottish fishermen and the Scottish Fishermen's Federation to discuss the proposals in the knowledge that they are legal and not contested?

Richard Lochhead: Mr Finnie brings a great deal of knowledge and experience to the issue. I understand that discussions on the subject began when he was in office—indeed, they began as far back as 2004. That illustrates why the time has come for the Scottish Government to act within our powers to address this important issue. We have to do that, given the lack of progress under previous joint agreements.

I reiterate what I said at the outset: we will continue to engage with the Scottish Fishermen's Federation and other organisations in Scotland, most of which widely support the vast majority of our proposals. Indeed, given that the proposals are about protecting the viability of our fishing communities, they have been warmly welcomed by those communities in particular.

In the absence of a UK policy on licensing and quota management, we have taken the view that we need to modernise the current arrangements, under our own powers. We firmly believe that the actions that we are taking are within the competence of the Scottish Parliament. We will continue to engage with fishing organisations to make that point clear.

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): What legal advice did the cabinet secretary seek on the proposals? Will he publish that legal advice in its entirety?

Richard Lochhead: As the member will be aware, when her party was in government, it never published its legal advice on such issues. Of course, in keeping with convention, that will always be the case with any Scottish Government.

Given that the member represents fishing communities, I will be very surprised if she does not support the proposals that have been put forward, which are within the powers of the Parliament, to protect the long-term future of our fishing communities in Scotland.

Many people believe that we need to modernise the licensing arrangements for fishing vessels and quota management in Scotland so that we can put in place safeguards. Many people believe that it is not right that the current generation of fishermen can sell their quota to the highest bidder—should they choose to do so—and that no safeguard is in place to ensure that the benefit is retained in Scotland. As part of the current consultation process, the industry has given a warm welcome to the wide range of proposals.

Dave Thompson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Does the cabinet secretary agree that it would be a disaster if the UK Government were to go down the road of effectively privatising fishing quotas—a policy that is apparently supported by Brussels? If that were to happen, fishing quotas could be sold to the highest bidder—most likely a

foreign-owned company. Does he share my anger that Labour members who represent fishing communities are supporting the attempts of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to prevent the Scottish ministers from putting in place safeguards to ensure the long-term future of our traditional fishing communities?

Richard Lochhead: I am perplexed by the UK Government's stance on what we consider to be a very worthwhile policy intention. I am even more perplexed by the fact that Labour members, who at times come across as DEFRA's spokespeople, tend to oppose everything that the Scottish National Party Government does on fishing policy. That is unfortunate.

The member may be aware of the UK Government's unilateral action on under-10 licences south of the border, as a result of which the fleet south of the border is re-registering its licences in Wales. Is any further evidence needed that the current regime is not working for Scotland or for England? The example shows why the Scottish Government is right to modernise the policy and to make progress.

Liam McArthur (Orkney) (LD): I accept that any move in the direction of individual transferable quotas at European Union-level has the potential to be hugely damaging and that it requires to be resisted. However, does the cabinet secretary accept that legal uncertainty over aspects of his quota management proposals is not welcome by anyone in the industry? Like Ross Finnie, I urge him to lift that uncertainty as a matter of urgency and to work with not only the industry but the UK Government on the matter.

Richard Lochhead: I am keen to lift any uncertainty and to work with the UK Government towards that end, but there is only so much that the Scottish Government can do when the UK Government will not engage with our policy intentions for north of the border.

As I indicated to the member's party colleague in my earlier answer, the discussions have been going on since 2004. It is now 2009. The UK Government's latest position is that it will sit down and talk to us—but over the next few years. How long does it take to reach a sensible policy conclusion? We have voluntary joint arrangements among the devolved Administrations and the UK Government; we believe that the time has come to move forward to safeguard the future of Scotland's fishing communities.

I hope that the member, as a representative of a fishing community, will support the SNP Government's policy intentions and that we can get some cross-party support for them, rather than having party-political point scoring, which would be to the detriment of fishing communities.

Tourism (Ayrshire)

2. John Scott (Ayr) (Con): To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to attract tourism business to Ayrshire and in particular southern Ayrshire. (S3O-6257)

The Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism (Jim Mather): As with all areas of Scotland, Ayrshire is marketed by VisitScotland, based on its considerable strengths and its ability to deliver what visitors are looking for on their visit to Scotland. VisitScotland uses a range of channels including websites, direct mail and public relations to reach potential visitors throughout Scotland and the United Kingdom and in international markets.

In addition, Scottish Enterprise is helping tourism businesses with a package of support including capital investment, advice and mentoring, customer feedback workshops and the development of tourism intelligence.

John Scott: As the minister will know, I believe that key tourism destination status could bring a significant boost to the tourism sector in Ayrshire. I know from our previous discussions that he is keen to explore means to achieve that end. What further consideration has the Government given to the matter? What progress has been made towards awarding Ayrshire key tourism destination status? Is he able to say how soon that status might be granted so that Ayrshire can take full advantage of it?

Jim Mather: I recognise the desire to promote individual elements of Scotland with local knowledge and local passion. We are entering a new, industry-led, collaborative era. The Scottish Tourism Forum and the tourism framework for change are coming together to take a lead in offering scope for other organisations—including VisitScotland, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, EventScotland, local councils and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities—to evolve and collaborate more closely.

South Ayrshire Council is very much on the front foot in that regard, and we recognise its great brand, its association with Burns and its huge portfolio of attractions. We had meetings with Councillor Hugh Hunter in January, and I am prepared to work directly with him further. I think that, together, we can allow destinations to evolve properly, while focusing on the main destinations at the same time. We are not precluding further development, and we will work with Councillor Hunter—and with John Scott—to ensure that that development happens.

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): The minister might be aware that the new Burns monument centre opened in Kilmarnock on Monday. It adds significantly to the Burns

attractions throughout Ayrshire and provides state-of-the-art family history and local history research facilities. Does he agree that that type of facility can play a vital part in attracting tourists to Ayrshire? Will he ensure that the Scottish Government and its agencies play a full part in developing the potential of the new centre?

Jim Mather: I have visited the new Burns monument centre, and it is fabulous. I had my photograph taken there, and it is a photograph that I will cherish. We can contact everybody in Scotland and everyone with a connection with Scotland about it—people will want to go there and have their photographs taken, too. It is a must-visit site that has huge potential for the homecoming and real pulling power. I understand that the First Minister will open it in May.

Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab): I certainly agree that it would be excellent if people were to visit any part of Ayrshire. Does the minister agree that one possibility for increasing tourism potential in South Ayrshire lies in walking and outdoor activities? In that context, does he agree that it is rather bizarre that Tory-led South Ayrshire Council has decided to close the majority of public conveniences in the locations throughout South Ayrshire to which walkers are attracted?

Jim Mather: The issue is about bringing people together. I look forward to going down to Girvan to join the member and the community there in April. Equally, I am looking forward to further engagements on a tourism and pan-Ayrshire agenda with a view to maximising the assets that are Ayrshire and giving the area every chance to attract people for all purposes.

Legal Aid Rules (Mortgage Borrowers)

3. Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will re-examine the operation of legal aid rules that in practice mean that many mortgage borrowers facing repossession are not eligible for assistance or, where they are eligible, that many lawyers will not assist because they are required to recover fees from clients if successful. (S3O-6290)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): The Scottish Legal Aid Board helps hundreds of people to defend repossession actions every year, and the Government is making changes to legal aid rules that will benefit many mortgage borrowers facing repossession, along with thousands of others.

Regulations to increase the financial eligibility limits for civil legal aid were approved by the Justice Committee earlier this week. That increase means that almost 1 million more Scots will be able to receive free or subsidised legal advice.

About three quarters of the population should come within the scope of the scheme from this April.

The Government is also taking steps to secure legal assistance where there might be gaps in private sector provision. We have invested an additional £3 million over the next two years to strengthen the provision of legal advice services, particularly for people facing difficulties as a result of the economic downturn. The Legal Aid Board will use that funding, in the first instance, to employ a small number of solicitors to work in areas where the level of provision is currently low.

Ms Alexander: I acknowledge that the area has been of wide concern to the Government. However, given the scale of the challenge when it comes to repossession, and given that the burden of many such cases falls disproportionately on Scotland's small number of law centres—it was Paisley Law Centre that drew the matter to my attention—will the cabinet secretary undertake to meet representatives of Scotland's law centres as a matter of urgency to discuss with them how we can ensure that the best possible support is available to families facing the burden and strain of repossession?

Kenny MacAskill: As a lawyer of 20 years' standing, I had a great deal of involvement with law centres: I was an agent for them, and I sat on a variety of law centre boards. Therefore, I have a great deal of time and respect for them, although Paisley Law Centre is not one that I know, as it started to operate more recently than my periods of practice.

The Government is happy to engage with all parties, and the Legal Aid Board is involved in discussions. We recognise that we have to tackle the situation and that we have to provide facilities where the private sector cannot. We also have to ensure that in-court advice—which sometimes comes from people who are not legally qualified—is provided. If representatives of the law centres wish to meet me, they should write in the normal manner. I would be more than happy to have discussions with them—many of them will be former practising colleagues of mine.

Green Behaviour

4. Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive, in the light of the findings of the Scottish environmental attitudes and behaviours survey 2008 that the main barriers to green behaviour are cost, convenience, a lack of alternative options and practical considerations, how it plans to tackle these barriers. (S3O-6303)

The Minister for Environment (Roseanna Cunningham): We understand the importance of people's everyday actions for the environment,

and we will use the SEABS findings to help inform our work to encourage greener behaviours through education, media campaigns and targeted actions to make greener choices easier in areas such as travel, recycling and energy use in the home.

Marlyn Glen: Attitudinal change is indeed important. However, what was the rationale for not including mini wind turbines in the recently issued regulations? When will the minister answer the question whether the Government will include them?

Roseanna Cunningham: I was rather hoping for a supplementary about sock darning, and I am sorry that I did not get that.

The recent wind turbine regulations are not a matter for me. Perhaps the member would care to take up the issue directly with the department concerned, rather than bringing it in on the back of a question about the survey. The results of the survey were published only last week, and we hope that they will give a number of departments useful information so that we can begin to address many of the issues that the survey threw up.

Clyde Tunnel (Maintenance)

5. Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what plans it has to contribute towards the maintenance of the Clyde tunnel in Glasgow. (S3O-6319)

The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): I have no plans to contribute to the on-going maintenance of the Clyde tunnel. The tunnel is part of the local road network. Therefore, responsibility for its management and maintenance rests with Glasgow City Council.

Pauline McNeill: Surely the minister must recognise that the Clyde tunnel is an integral part of the road network, not only for Glasgow but for the west of Scotland, and that Glasgow City Council bears the £700,000 operational cost entirely on its own and also provided the £12 million that was recently needed to protect the tunnel from fire and to meet fire regulations.

Does the minister agree that it is about time that Glasgow City Council got some assistance through the creation of a distinct funding mechanism, such as exists for the Tay and Forth bridges? It is not appropriate to treat the Clyde tunnel like any other road. Surely he could at least consider contributing to the costs of the further modernisation that the Clyde tunnel needs, which includes the installation of important emergency communications systems and replacement of the lighting system, at a cost of £5 million.

Stewart Stevenson: Glasgow City Council received a 3.4 per cent increase in its funding in the current year and a 4.7 per cent increase in the next year. Those are very substantial increases.

The Clyde tunnel is, of course, part of the road infrastructure in Glasgow, and we are making substantial investments in road infrastructure in Glasgow. At long last, the M74 is progressing—that will affect the traffic flows in Glasgow. I am always happy to discuss matters with the council if it feels that that is appropriate.

Scottish Fair Trade Forum

6. Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will renew funding to the Scottish Fair Trade Forum to support the small grants scheme. (S3O-6316)

The Minister for Culture, External Affairs and the Constitution (Michael Russell): The Scottish Government has committed funding from its international development fund to the Scottish Fair Trade Forum until 31 March 2010. Any requests for future funding will be considered in discussion with the forum.

Ken Macintosh: Does the minister agree that the fair trade movement has thrived and expanded in recent years through the work of many individuals and small groups in local communities? Does he further agree that it is therefore vital, if we are to achieve fair trade status as a country, that we continue to build on the work of that grass-roots movement through the provision of easily accessible small sums?

Michael Russell: I am happy to agree with the member on that matter.

Leadership on the issue has come from a range of individuals who have been committed to co-ordinated actions that have been brought together within their own communities. I pay tribute to my predecessor, Linda Fabiani, who had a very strong commitment to this area of activity and was keen to ensure that as many organisations as possible participated.

The Scottish Government provides funding of £60,000 a year to the Scottish Fair Trade Forum. Additional funding, of £40,000 in 2007-08 and £20,000 in 2008-09, has been awarded. That money has gone, in great part, towards helping the grass-roots movement. All of us want that work to continue.

Postbus Services

7. Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will make representations to the Royal Mail regarding its decision to withdraw five

postbus services from the north and west Highlands. (S3O-6288)

The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): At a recent meeting with Royal Mail Group, the Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism took the opportunity to express the Scottish Government's concerns about the withdrawal of the Highland postbus services. The provision of local bus services is, of course, a matter for commercial bus operators and local authorities. However, the Scottish Government would urge partners to work together to ensure that those vital services continue.

Jamie Stone: I put on the record my gratitude to Jim Mather for saying what he said to the Royal Mail.

Will the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change instruct his officials to point out to the Royal Mail the absolute undesirability of discontinuing those services and the potential, in respect of tourism, of not only retaining the services but building on them in the future, for tourists and for our pensioners, who desperately need the postbus so that they can access vital services?

Stewart Stevenson: I associate myself with Mr Stone's remarks and concur with them.

The whole future of Royal Mail is being debated. I note that 130 Labour members of the United Kingdom Parliament have indicated their opposition to the UK Government's plans. In that context, I hope that the UK Government takes a much more supportive attitude to the Royal Mail that enables it to support, through postbus services and otherwise, the needs of rural and urban Scotland.

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): I ask Peter Peacock to be brief.

Peter Peacock (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): Can the minister confirm that the Scottish Government has powers under transport policies to offer support to the Post Office's network of postbuses? Is he considering doing that in this instance?

The Presiding Officer: I ask the minister to be equally brief, if possible.

Stewart Stevenson: We are supporting local authorities by appointing someone from the Scottish Government to work directly with them on bus services. I hope that that will be one means by which we have greater and more effective engagement with local authorities and bus service providers such as the Royal Mail.

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-1547)

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

The Parliament will wish to know that I wrote to the Opposition party leaders this morning to inform them of a joint statement that the Scottish and UK Governments are issuing at noon—right now, in fact—on the Somerville judgment. The statement announces that we have reached agreement in principle to deliver the one-year time bar in Scotland by the end of June. I hope that the Parliament will join me in welcoming that announcement and the rapid progress that has been made since the statement to Parliament last week. [*Applause.*]

Iain Gray: During the budget negotiations, I suggested to the First Minister a summit of apprenticeship providers as part of a Labour package of support in the economic crisis. I welcome the announcement earlier this week that that summit will take place on 28 April.

Sadly, a further increase in unemployment was reported yesterday. Does the First Minister agree that that simply means that we must redouble our efforts to ensure that everyone—and especially our young people—is given the skills to make their way in life?

The First Minister: Not just yesterday's unemployment figure, but the whole economic environment means that each and every one of us must redouble, treble and focus our efforts on the economic situation in Scotland. As Iain Gray knows, we have a six-point recovery plan that contains 51 measures, many of which were suggested by social partners. Within the Scottish Parliament's powers, we are straining every sinew and obtaining best value from every pound of investment to boost the Scottish economy in these times.

Yesterday's unemployment figures show that, although Scotland has huge difficulties in the economy, what we have done has been relatively successful, as our rise in unemployment—grievous though it is—is lower than that in many other places. However, there is no room for a shred of complacency from anyone. Tough and difficult times are to come. Of course, that makes it an absolute priority that we do not—we must not—

have a substantial reduction in Scottish public spending next year.

Iain Gray: It is true that we must strain every sinew. The better, or less bad, employment situation puts us in a good position to make good another promise that the First Minister made during the budget negotiations—the apprenticeship guarantee. That is a personal guarantee to every apprentice that, if they are made redundant, they will still be able to finish their training. My constituent Lewis Doig from Tranent is in exactly that situation—he is to be made redundant and he does not know what to do. He is not alone. Lewis needs that guarantee now. Where should he go for it?

The First Minister: Skills Development Scotland is responsible for pursuing that guarantee. An apprenticeship guarantee was first proposed to me by the Scottish Trades Union Congress, which had examined a scheme that was first developed in Northern Ireland. In the budget debate, we presented a more extensive scheme for Scotland, which Skills Development Scotland is responsible for introducing. We will deliver the scheme. That will not be easy, but it shall be done. If Iain Gray would like to write to me about his constituent's case, we can reply specifically.

Given the extent of the efforts that were made in dealing with the budget and the eventual unity that the Parliament showed in passing the budget, I hope that all parties welcome our introduction of an apprenticeship guarantee that is unrivalled in any country in the United Kingdom.

Iain Gray: I very much welcome the guarantee, of course. I have already written to Fiona Hyslop, who is the responsible cabinet secretary, about Lewis Doig. In her reply, which I received yesterday, she said that he should contact his training provider, then Skills Development Scotland and then partnership action for continuing employment, then visit a website and then ring round his local colleges.

All those bodies and institutions existed before the First Minister gave the guarantee. Lewis is 19, has spent almost four years as an apprentice and is three months away from being a qualified joiner. However, next month, he will be out of work and his efforts will be wasted. He and all those like him do not need call sheets of places to go; they need someone whose job it is to set them up with the places that they need to finish their training. Can I tell Lewis that the First Minister will sort that out so that he can finish his training as promised?

The First Minister: I point out as gently as possible to Iain Gray that, when we deal with individual constituents' cases, we must ensure that

each individual is treated with the respect that they deserve.

Skills Development Scotland combines a skills programme that was previously dispersed across many organisations. I would have thought that Iain Gray and all other members would welcome the introduction of the guarantee and that a letter that specifies who is responsible for ensuring that that guarantee is delivered for each individual would be the right way to go.

The measures that we have discussed are being introduced. They involve ambitious targets and will be done. One of the interesting things about the Scottish economy of late is the speed at which developments and initiatives have been introduced in it compared with economies elsewhere. I tell Iain Gray that the apprenticeship guarantee will be introduced in Scotland. I hope that, when it is, the Labour Party will welcome it with good grace.

Iain Gray: My question is exactly about how quickly a promise that was made in the Parliament is being introduced—not quickly enough for my constituent. It is exactly about the respect that we have for young Lewis. The measure of our response to the economic crisis will be the extent to which we protect the jobs and futures of people such as him.

Today, Lewis is very close to being a qualified tradesman with a future of his own and a big contribution to make to Scotland's future. I do not want him to be part of next month's unemployment figures and I do not believe that the First Minister does either, but he will be unless the First Minister makes good his guarantee now. The First Minister has 5,000 officials; will he give just one of them the job of matching such young apprentices with the opportunity to finish their training?

The First Minister: That is exactly the responsibility of Skills Development Scotland, which is why this Government set it up. It will be done and implemented.

I have every sympathy for young Lewis. We will ensure that his case is looked at and delivered, as we will ensure that the case is delivered for the hundreds—indeed, thousands—of other people who will end up in the same position. As and when that is done, members will look around and be glad that the Government and the Parliament agreed to such an apprenticeship guarantee.

At some stage, Iain Gray will have to recognise that many of the measures that are being introduced at present across the economy are dependent on Scottish Government intervention and the Scottish Government's budget. How many of them will be at risk if £500 million is chopped out of the Scottish budget? What will Iain Gray say then to his constituents, not only those who are looking for apprenticeships but those who come to

him about the health service, education system and vital social services? Will he say, as he did two weeks ago, "Just find the efficiency savings, chop the public spending and put people out of work"? What will the Labour Party's alibi be then?

Iain Gray: I will say to my constituent that, when the First Minister was given the chance to lift him up, he chose instead to try to put others down.

The First Minister: I have already said to Iain Gray that we will deal with the individual constituency case, as I have the courtesy to deal with every individual constituency case that comes up. I have said to him that the guarantee extends not only to one constituent but to hundreds and thousands of apprentices throughout Scotland. That is the purpose of the guarantee. I have said to him that Skills Development Scotland, which was brought into being by this Government, is the body responsible for delivering skills and development in Scotland—hence the name. However, I have also said to Iain Gray, and he can regard it as a put-down if he wishes, that any political party that says, in the teeth of a recession, that it should chop public spending by £500 million in Scotland will have to live with the political consequences.

Secretary of State for Scotland (Meetings)

2. Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con): To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Secretary of State for Scotland. (S3F-1548)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): I have no plans to meet the Secretary of State for Scotland in the near future, but I did speak to him last night on the telephone.

Annabel Goldie: Despite what the Scottish National Party Government says, there is no such thing as a free prescription. Abolishing prescription charges will cost the health budget £40 million every year—£40 million every year that will be cut from somewhere else in the health budget. The First Minister needs to come clean and tell the people of Scotland which national health services will suffer as a result of this SNP cut.

The First Minister: I remind Annabel Goldie that our proposals to cut prescription charges, to help those who are suffering, and in particular those who are suffering from long-running illnesses, were in the budget that Annabel Goldie's co-operation allowed to pass through the Parliament.

Annabel and I agree on a number of things, but here I think we have a positive disagreement. I do not think that it is right and proper to tax the sick in society. I think that we should abide by the original obligations of a national health service free at the point of need. Only the Conservative member voted against the proposal in committee this week,

so perhaps Annabel Goldie will be willing to accept, on this issue, that she is isolated in the chamber.

Annabel Goldie: There has been only one vote on the reduction of prescription charges this year and it was yesterday. The First Minister should stop ducking the issue and dodging the question. I repeat: there is no such thing as a free prescription. While Two-salaries Salmond over there will be getting his prescriptions for free, patients all over Scotland will be losing out—losing out on 2,000 nurses, or nearly 200,000 magnetic resonance imaging scans, or huge quantities of life-saving cancer drugs, or a massive increase in the budget for hospital cleaning. As ever, the First Minister has chosen cheap headlines over responsible governance.

It is not evil, and it is not lack of compassion, to expect those such as the First Minister and every MSP in this Parliament, who can pay for prescriptions, to pay. How can Two-salaries Salmond justify his position, as—

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): Order. Miss Goldie, I have warned members before that I do not like the use of nicknames in the chamber. I ask all members to abide by that wish.

Annabel Goldie: I defer to your position, Presiding Officer.

The First Minister: A double for the Conservative party—pulled up in two different chambers in two different Parliaments over the course of two days.

I say to Annabel Goldie that the increase that I welcomed most particularly of all in the public sector information on employment that was given yesterday was the substantial increase in health service numbers in Scotland. Under this Government, there are more doctors, more nurses and more consultants. The budget—which Annabel Goldie asked for, and which was voted for in this Parliament—combined investment in health service personnel with doing justice to those in society who were faced with a tax on illness. I think it right and proper that this chamber moves to abolish prescription charges in Scotland.

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-1549)

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

Tavish Scott: A global research study by HSBC bank shows that the United Kingdom is investing less of its economic recovery package in tackling

climate change and reducing carbon emissions than anywhere else in the world except Spain. The UK proportion is just 6.7 per cent; the United States Government is spending double that proportion.

Governments should be creating new green jobs and supporting economic recovery by tackling climate change. Will the First Minister publish the equivalent figures for his economic plans, so that we can know that his Government is not making the same mistakes as the UK Government?

The First Minister: I am perfectly happy to do that. However, we should draw attention to the fact that, even in these troubled times, almost £1 billion of private sector investment has been announced in renewable projects in Scotland over the past nine months or so. I am sure that, as a keen student of these matters, Tavish Scott will have read the report that was published very recently by the electricity networks strategy group—which includes the Governments and the Office of the Gas and Electricity Markets—which looks forward to network solutions that will allow the massive power produced from renewable energy in Scotland not only to power this country, but to be exported south of the border. I hope that, eventually, we will become the green energy powerhouse of Europe.

Tavish Scott: Most people accept that marine renewables can create 7,000 jobs across Scotland and, of course, the industry conference is being held in Edinburgh this week. However, on Tuesday, Shell announced that it was stopping investment in wind, wave and hydro energy. Surely such a loss is significant. Did Shell consult the First Minister? Did he try to convince the company that this is the wrong time to be copping out of investment in green energy jobs? The cheque for the saltire prize will not be signed until 2015, but Shell is pulling out this year; meanwhile, this week, Labour started its latest dash for nuclear energy. What new investment in green jobs can the First Minister offer today?

The First Minister: I point out to the member that in its term of office this Government has approved 18 major renewable energy projects—one a month. The number of such projects approved under the previous Administration averaged four a year. Tavish Scott should welcome what the Government is doing.

Shell did not consult me on its decision, but I will give Tavish Scott some information that he might find of interest. The saltire prize has now attracted 90 declarations of interest from 21 countries, and we should welcome the fact that many publications around the globe are seeing Scotland as the centre of developments in tidal and wave power. Indeed, I rather liked the headline in *Fortune* magazine, "Scotland rules the waves".

Tavish Scott should understand that there is huge interest from a range of companies that are moving forward with renewable projects in Scotland. In fact, as far as marine, tidal and wave energy is concerned, there is even more interest to come. Some companies might well fall by the wayside, but we should welcome the fact that major companies are investing or proposing to invest in Scotland. We should, above all, welcome the delivery of one major renewable project a month, given the rather miserable record of the previous 10 years.

The Presiding Officer: I will take a constituency question from Michael McMahon. *[Interruption.]* I beg your pardon—I meant Michael Matheson.

Michael Matheson (Falkirk West) (SNP): McMahon is actually Irish for Matheson.

The Presiding Officer: Exactly.

Michael Matheson: As the First Minister will be aware, earlier this week, bus manufacturer Alexander Dennis, which is based in my constituency, announced that up to 150 employees will be made redundant. He will also know from his recent visit to the plant that the company is a world leader in hybrid buses, which it exports around the world.

Does the First Minister share my frustration that none of the major bus operators in Scotland—or, for that matter, in the rest of the United Kingdom—uses hybrid buses? Will the Government look at what action it can take to encourage bus operators in Scotland to move towards using such buses, as it will not only help our economy but benefit our environment?

The First Minister: Yes, we will. We will do everything in our power to help this outstanding company.

I am seriously concerned that the employment figures that were released yesterday—and that were generally better news than many people had expected—showed a decline over the year in manufacturing employment in Scotland. Alexander Dennis, for example, employs 1,000 people in Scotland and 2,000 people world wide and is innovative in bringing forward new projects. The fact is that we have some choices to make. Many people in this city—and, I hope, in the Parliament—might be thinking that if we had ascribed even a fraction of the money that has been devoted to the trams project in Edinburgh to buying hybrid buses from a Scottish manufacturer we would all be better off.

The Presiding Officer: I will take a further constituency question from John Lamont.

John Lamont (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): This week has been another terrible week for job losses in the Scottish Borders. Hawick

Knitwear is shedding jobs, construction firms are running on skeleton workforces and many other employers are asking their staff to take pay cuts or work reduced hours. No one knows where the axe will fall next. John Swinney has visited Hawick in my constituency on two occasions already to discuss the jobs crisis—lots of warm words, but very little concrete action so far.

The Presiding Officer: Question, please.

John Lamont: What action will the Scottish Government take to ease the pain of Gordon Brown's recession in the Scottish Borders?

The First Minister: We are taking the action—the 51 measures—in the recovery plan. That is not just John Swinney visiting the Borders, as the constituency member said. For example, we are doubling the capability of the partnership action for continuing employment initiative—PACE—which intervenes in redundancy situations. We are straining every sinew, as I said earlier, to combat the recession and we are combating it rather better than elsewhere. I hope that the constituency member, in acknowledging the efforts of the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth and the Government in helping every area of Scotland, will not just join us in condemning Gordon Brown for the recession, but unite with us against the threatened cuts in Scottish public spending.

Somerville Judgment

4. Stewart Maxwell (West of Scotland) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what progress has been made with the United Kingdom Government in addressing issues arising from the Somerville judgment. (S3F-1567)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): As I indicated earlier, the UK Government and the Scottish Government have made a joint statement on the Somerville issue. That statement says in detail that, following intensive discussions between officials, we have reached agreement in principle on a quick and practical solution to the anomaly exposed by the House of Lords judgment on Somerville.

We will work together to deliver, first, a one-year time bar in Scotland by the summer. Later, the UK Government will seek the support of the UK Parliament to bring forward a comprehensive solution extending the same protection to the devolved Administrations of Wales and Northern Ireland, so putting all the devolved Administrations on a consistent footing and consolidating the proposed changes to the Scotland Act 1998.

Our joint aim is to restore the situation to what it was before this anomaly became apparent and to protect the public interest in Scotland. I am pleased and grateful that, in the course of

discussions over the past week, I was able to confirm that there is all-party support in this Parliament for bringing forward the required legislation before the summer recess.

Stewart Maxwell: I welcome the announcement that the Westminster Government is to rush to close this loophole only 18 months after it was first asked to do so.

The First Minister will be aware of cases in England where people who were compensated for wrongful imprisonment have had money withheld from their compensation payment to cover the cost of their board and lodging while in jail. Such deductions are completely wrong. Does the First Minister agree, however, that in cases where compensation has been or will be paid out as a result of the Somerville judgment to those rightly imprisoned, the responsible authority should pursue a similar course of action and deduct board and lodging expenses from that compensation payment so that those rightly imprisoned do not benefit financially from that imprisonment? Will the First Minister support such a course of action and ask the Cabinet Secretary for Justice to investigate the issue?

The First Minister: Stewart Maxwell has an important point and I share his concerns about public money going to criminals. The issues are complicated, of course, and I am sure that Stewart Maxwell will appreciate that I cannot give a commitment now to any particular course of action. However, I agree that the matter ought to be looked at. The Cabinet Secretary for Justice and his officials are already considering the matter that Stewart Maxwell has raised and will take it further now that agreement has been reached on addressing the Somerville issue.

Reflecting on the Somerville judgment, I can see the advantage—perhaps the Parliament sees it too—of not just conducting discussions and reaching agreements between authorities, which is hugely important, but making public statements to the Parliament when it is necessary to do so and the time is right. The Parliament has a role in ensuring that the required political consensus can be reached to effect progress.

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab): Does the First Minister agree that the direct intervention of the Secretary of State for Scotland to resolve the issues around the Somerville case was welcome and effective? *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Richard Baker: Can the First Minister say whether money saved as a result raises the possibility of ending the current sanitation arrangements at Peterhead prison without the closure of the community prison in Aberdeen?

The First Minister: Given that we have reached an amicable settlement that is in the public interest in Scotland, I will not ascribe a word of criticism to anyone today.

Tavish Scott (Shetland) (LD): What about tomorrow?

The First Minister: Tavish Scott must not judge my motives by his own.

It is a joint agreement, which I will do nothing other than welcome. I welcome the progress that has been made and the all-party support in the Parliament that has enabled us to bring forward with confidence the emergency legislation that will be required.

I say to Richard Baker that the cases that underlay Somerville dealt with conditions that existed in the Scottish Prison Service some years ago. If he checks the record, he will see exactly why some of the judgments went against the then Scottish Executive. Perhaps we can all come together to agree that the new prison estate in Scotland—the estate that this Government progressed and sanctioned in its early weeks of office—will be something of which all parties in the Parliament can rightfully be proud.

The Presiding Officer: Robert Brown—very briefly.

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): On the principle that it is vital to get the legislation right to achieve the desired effect, will the First Minister undertake to publish the Scottish Government's draft legislation now? Will an urgent consultation be undertaken with stakeholders such as the Law Society of Scotland and the Faculty of Advocates to ensure that the law of unintended consequences does not arise as a result of the haste with which the legislation is introduced?

The First Minister: We published the proposed legislation last week. It might be amended slightly following the discussions over the past week. That is exactly why we published it.

Robert Brown mentions the haste with which the legislation is being introduced, but there has been no haste at all in the consideration of this matter. A lot of consideration has gone into the legislation, which I will gladly publish.

Energy Options Study

5. Lewis Macdonald (Aberdeen Central) (Lab): To ask the First Minister whether the Scottish Government will publish the report of the study that it has commissioned on future energy options. (S3F-1573)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): The Scottish Government published volume 5 of the Scottish energy study in October 2008. That

independent study examined the prospects for future energy supply and demand in Scotland, and the implications of those trends for energy-related CO₂ emissions up to 2020. In particular, it presented projections of how the electricity generation portfolio in Scotland could evolve to achieve the renewable energy targets for 2011 and 2020.

I am sure that the whole Parliament will be delighted to know that we can say with considerable confidence, as we can on police numbers, that the 2011 target will not just be reached but exceeded.

Lewis Macdonald: I am sorry that the First Minister appears to have forgotten the undertaking that he gave after the publication of the Scottish energy study, at the behest of his Council of Economic Advisers, to commission a study of energy options. I look forward to receiving an answer from the First Minister on that subject in due course.

He has already mentioned the report on the electricity transmission network across Great Britain that was published this month. Given that that report confirms that urgent action is needed to provide grid access for future renewable generation and that that action goes beyond what the Scottish ministers have included in the national planning framework, will he, when he publishes the energy options study, which I hope that he will do in due course, set out a timetable for the decisions that the Scottish ministers will need to take to realise that vision, starting with a decision on the Beaulieu to Denny transmission line?

The First Minister: The Beaulieu to Denny public local inquiry has been held under the provisions that were operated by the previous Government and has taken some considerable time. As Lewis Macdonald will know from local experience, under the new legislation public local inquiries can go through rather more quickly and ministers can take related decisions expeditiously.

I am glad that he mentioned the grid study, which I have with me. The proposals for the offshore gridlines will not just help the Scottish renewable energy targets—which, as he will understand, we are confident of meeting—to be met; they will contribute to the meeting of the UK's renewable energy targets. The study suggests that, between them, the two major offshore lines might accommodate 3.6GW of renewable electricity, which could be exported from Scotland down the east and west coasts to England. I mention that because I think that it is a good idea to generate electricity and to export it. However, it makes the position of people in his party, such as Iain Gray, who sometimes suggest that there will be an energy gap in Scotland, appear rather curious. I put it to them that if 4GW of renewable

electricity—which amounts to two thirds of Scotland's entire electricity consumption—will be exported offshore, it hardly sounds as if we will be short of electricity.

Confiscation of Assets

6. Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con): To ask the First Minister what steps the Scottish Government intends to take to make the law more effective in respect of the confiscation of assets of criminals. (S3F-1566)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): Asset recovery is a vital tool in the fight against organised crime in Scotland. We will be consulting shortly on adding to the list of specific offences that are deemed to be criminal lifestyle offences in Scotland; for example, illegal money lending. We also intend to reduce the criminal benefit amount—the minimum amount that can be targeted—from its current £5,000 level to £1,000.

We have recently allocated an additional £400,000 for this year and the next two years to the Crown Office to help bolster its efforts in recovering criminal assets.

Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary for Scotland and Her Majesty's inspectorate of prosecution are currently reviewing performance in asset recovery, and we will act on their recommendations as soon as they become available.

Bill Aitken: Despite the best efforts of all concerned, the present policy is largely ineffective at combating the actions of a small group of ruthless individuals who create havoc in some of Scotland's communities. *[Laughter.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Bill Aitken: In Ireland, the situation is quite simple. Where an individual has a lifestyle inconsistent with his work record—where he has a £2 million house, two Mercs in the driveway and a villa in Marbella, and he has not worked for years—he has to prove where he got the money from or his property is forfeited to the state. The balance of proof is entirely on that individual. Will the First Minister undertake to consider the Irish experience and whether it is worth importing into Scots law?

The First Minister: Bill Aitken should understand that when he referred to a small, dedicated group trying to undermine Scottish society, some of the baser elements in the chamber were looking at the Conservatives.

Yes, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and I will consider the Irish experience and whether to add it to our weaponry in the matter.

The proceeds of crime legislation has secured more than £23.5 million in Scotland. We can and will improve it through the measures that I have suggested, and we will consider any proposals to improve it further. However, let us remember that in the past financial year, the costs for the civil recovery unit were £1 million, and the unit managed to remit £2.7 million to the Scottish consolidated funds, helping a range of organisations and communities, including YouthLink Scotland, the Scottish Football Association, the Scottish Rugby Union, basketballscotland and the sports facilities fund

While we hope to bolster the unit's efforts through increased funding and legislation, let us not, in any sense, give the impression that the proceeds of crime legislation has not been a success. It is doing a great deal of good in Scottish society.

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I regret raising this point of order, and I do so with the greatest respect, but I believe that the exchanges that took place following Mr Maxwell's question to the First Minister constituted an abuse of the criteria for the conduct of question time, which are set out in standing orders. Might I suggest that it would be more suitable to have such an important topic discussed after a statement, instead of using First Minister's question time in this way?

The Presiding Officer: I am afraid that I am not entirely aware of what Ms MacDonald is referring to. I will consider her point of order, but at this time I am afraid that I am unable to give an answer.

12:33

Meeting suspended until 14:15.

14:15

On resuming—

Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Health and Wellbeing

Housing (Edinburgh)

1. Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what action it is taking to support the City of Edinburgh Council in tackling the city's acute housing issues. (S3O-6286)

The Minister for Housing and Communities (Alex Neil): The Scottish Government is committed to helping tackle housing issues in Edinburgh, working closely with the City of Edinburgh Council. Support to the city is provided through a range of measures. For example, the city will receive £46 million in this financial year for a range of affordable housing measures and I recently announced that, next year, the city will receive nearly £50 million. In addition, the city will have access to a share of the demand-led £60 million national open market shared equity scheme. The recently submitted bid to help fund new council houses in the city is being examined. I expect to make announcements on that bid fairly soon.

Margaret Smith: I welcome the recent affordable housing investment programme allocation to the city and the allocation for strategic land acquisition, both of which are important. Those allocations recognise that the Scottish Government must invest more in areas where the shortage of affordable housing is most acute. What discussions does the minister intend to have with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to achieve a longer-term and fairer distribution of the Government's housing investment funds, so that they are distributed on the basis of need, bearing in mind the acute needs in areas such as Edinburgh?

Alex Neil: I have instituted several meetings with COSLA and individual councils. Indeed, I met the leadership of the City of Edinburgh Council this week to discuss the long-term housing pressure on Edinburgh. I have arranged to have monthly meetings with COSLA to discuss the issues to ensure that we move ahead on all aspects of housing policy.

Shirley-Anne Somerville (Lothians) (SNP): Two weeks ago at question time, I drew to the minister's attention the fact that 45p of every pound of rent in Edinburgh goes to paying off housing debt. I ask the minister for his thoughts on

the important campaign on that issue by Edinburgh Tenants Federation, which is run by committed tenants throughout the city.

Alex Neil: As the member knows, I have arranged in principle to meet Edinburgh Tenants Federation to discuss the issues of concern. As I said to the member two weeks ago, the Scottish Government's position remains firmly that Her Majesty's Treasury should write off the housing debt throughout Scotland with no strings attached. That would make a substantial difference to housing investment in Scotland.

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab): I acknowledge the increase for Edinburgh, which has been achieved by bringing forward money from 2010-11. Will there be a corresponding reduction from the pre-announced indicative allocation for Edinburgh for 2010-11, or will the minister move speedily on to a new distribution formula that pays proper regard to the shortage of affordable housing as the key indicator?

Alex Neil: We will make the announcements on the allocations for that financial year at the appropriate time and once the final decisions are made. I should point out that, as I said in an earlier answer, our decision on the bids for the £25 million-worth of investment in council housing throughout Scotland will be announced in the next few weeks. Edinburgh, being an ambitious city with an ambitious council, has applied for only 40 per cent of the total Scottish funding.

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): I take it that Edinburgh's ambition will not be punished in any way and that its bid will be recognised as expressing not just the city's ambition but its need, which has not been acknowledged until now. In that vein, can the minister assure me that, if the homelessness figures for Edinburgh continue to rise, there will be flexibility in any response that he might be asked for?

Alex Neil: On Tuesday, I discussed the issues that Margo MacDonald has raised with the political leadership and housing chiefs of the City of Edinburgh Council. The Government is aware of the particular pressures on housing in Edinburgh and is keen to agree with the council a medium-term plan to address them.

The mid-term homelessness target for Edinburgh, starting from a baseline of 75 per cent, was for 87 per cent of allocations to be made on the basis of priority need. Early indications are that the city has reached only 81 or 82 per cent, which underlines the need for us to do more in Edinburgh to meet the homelessness target by 2012.

Medicines (Postal Delivery)

2. Aileen Campbell (South of Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what arrangements are in place to ensure the safe delivery of medicines for patients who receive them by post. (S3O-6333)

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Shona Robison): Under their code of ethics, pharmacists must ensure that medicines are delivered safely and securely. In particular, they must ensure that there is a verifiable audit trail for medicine from the point at which it leaves the pharmacy to the point at which it is handed over to the patient or carer.

Aileen Campbell: Recently, a constituent of mine in Lanark reported delayed receipt of medicine in a parcel that was damaged. Does the minister agree that the public service aspect of the Royal Mail must be maintained, especially where the delivery of medicine is concerned, and that that is threatened by the United Kingdom Government's determination to press ahead with privatisation of the Royal Mail?

Shona Robison: As my colleague the Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism said at question time last week, the Scottish Government shares the widespread public concern about the UK Government's proposals to part-privatise the Royal Mail. As he explained, we will continue to express our concerns and to monitor developments, to ensure that service levels in Scotland are protected.

Fuel Poverty Programme

3. Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what progress has been made with the fuel poverty programme. (S3O-6292)

The Minister for Housing and Communities (Alex Neil): Our review last year identified that the programmes that we inherited from the previous Administration were not targeting the fuel poor effectively. We re-established the Scottish fuel poverty forum and announced in November that we will adopt its key recommendation, which is to replace the central heating and warm deal programmes with the energy assistance package. The package will start next month and will present an holistic approach, targeting a wider range of fuel-poor groups, better addressing energy-inefficient homes and, for the first time, tackling rural fuel poverty.

Richard Baker: We all want measures that will tackle fuel poverty effectively. However, the minister will be aware that the number of central heating installations fell from 1,236 in October last year to 520 in November—a fall of more than 50 per cent. Can the minister justify a cut of such

magnitude five months before the new fuel poverty programme is scheduled to start?

Alex Neil: Last year we installed a record number of central heating systems in Scotland. When the member gets this year's figures for the warm deal and the central heating programme, I trust that he will be satisfied by another record achievement over the piece in the remainder of both programmes. I hope that he is looking forward to the new programme, which, for the first time, will make the service available to families with children under five and families with disabled children under the age of 16.

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): The minister makes the point that we must ensure that fuel poverty schemes target those who are most fuel poor. Can he provide me with more information on the efforts that will be made to ensure that household fuel prices are affordable and that energy efficiency measures are implemented for young families that are vulnerable to fuel poverty?

Alex Neil: I am happy to give that undertaking. The new programme involves a four-stage approach that will ensure that even those who do not qualify for the fourth stage receive advice. If they get to stage 3, they will receive assistance with insulation from energy providers under the carbon emissions reduction target programme, to help to make their homes fuel and energy efficient.

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Is the minister aware of the concerns of pensioners in rural Argyll, who faced days of continuous freezing weather but did not receive cold weather payments? One of my constituents has a sister who lives in the midlands and received £100 in cold weather payments. However, the pension service told my constituent that people in the Paisley postcode area, which covers Argyll, would not receive any payments, because they were not affected by cold weather. Would the minister like to comment on that?

Alex Neil: I agree with Jamie McGrigor and share his concerns that the United Kingdom Government is not recognising the particular needs of people in Scotland, where temperatures are colder and the weather is damper. We have taken up, and will take up again, with Her Majesty's Treasury the need to reconsider cold-weather payments and ensure that people in situations such as those in which Mr McGrigor finds his constituents get a fair reward from cold-weather payments in future.

Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab): I am sure that the minister is aware of the advice that is given to individuals who apply to the central heating programme. I am also sure that he is aware that many people who could be categorised as fuel poor or who have children already receive

central heating through schemes to which their local authority housing provider or other registered social landlords apply. How will RSLs and other housing providers in the social rented sector benefit through the new scheme?

Alex Neil: The scheme has four stages. Anyone is free to contact it and get the initial advice that is given at stage 1. In some cases, they will be able to take their inquiry to stage 2 and possibly even stage 3. The issue is that existing programmes are mainly targeted at private sector owners because we rely on local authorities and housing associations to ensure that the homes that they own are properly heated.

Human Papilloma Virus (Immunisation)

4. Ian McKee (Lothians) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what progress is being made in immunising eligible women against the human papilloma virus. (S3O-6348)

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Shona Robison): The first year of the human papilloma virus vaccination programme is proceeding well. National health service boards are currently administering the third dose of the vaccine for girls in school, and we understand that uptake has been very good. ISD Scotland will publish the first set of uptake statistics for school-age girls on 26 March.

NHS boards are also currently vaccinating older girls who are out of school. That work commenced in most board areas in January and February, so it is too early to gauge the level of uptake for that group. The first set of statistics for older girls is due to be published later this year.

Ian McKee: Recent press comment suggests that some young women who are not immunised at school will miss out on the HPV immunisation catch-up programme because of the refusal of general practitioners to take part. Will the minister provide an update on the situation and inform the Parliament what arrangements are in place to ensure the success of the catch-up programme?

Shona Robison: We have worked closely with NHS boards to ensure that alternative arrangements are provided. Some GPs are taking part in the programme and co-operating with their local boards. However, in most areas, NHS boards have put in place alternative arrangements based around additional community clinics, which are provided in a variety of ways according to identified local needs. We will continue to monitor progress.

The Scottish Government provided £1.5 million to NHS boards last year to support the implementation of the programme in 2009-10. Early this year, we provided a further sum of around £200,000 specifically to support the

alternative arrangements for the out-of-school girls.

NHS Scotland (Dignity at Work Programme)

5. Christopher Harvie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive whether statistical information is available on complaints raised under the dignity at work programme and their outcomes for representative authorities within NHS Scotland and what external monitoring or mediation is being undertaken in contentious cases. (S3O-6342)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Nicola Sturgeon): Statistical information on complaints about dignity at work is available at individual board level. However, information is also collected every two years by the staff survey that the staff governance team within the health workforce directorate carries out. The staff survey results that were published in January 2009 showed a decrease in the number of staff who indicated that they had been subject to bullying and harassment in the workplace. However, because of the seriousness of the issue, the Scottish Government is putting in place a pilot project for dignity at work, which will form part of the partnership information network policy, which is currently under review. Individual boards have their own processes through their staff governance committees for monitoring and mediation in contentious cases.

Christopher Harvie: Will the cabinet secretary consider further whether there is a uniform approach to this sensitive issue across NHS Scotland? Issues have been raised about cases of bullying-induced stress at work being settled without external reference, with the authorities under question acting as judge and jury. That is something for further investigation.

Nicola Sturgeon: Chris Harvie raises an important point. I put on record the fact that bullying, harassment and intimidation should not be condoned in any way, shape or form in the NHS. Well-established research shows that staff who are subject to such conduct are more likely to suffer from work-related stress or to take time off work sick.

Consistency across the country is one thing that the pilot project is intended to deal with. That project is housed in NHS Dumfries and Galloway and is supported by NHS Fife. It exists to promote a positive working culture and positive behaviours across the NHS in Scotland. It seeks, in the first instance, to establish what is currently being done across the NHS. Once it has done that, it will share best practice and promote the most effective methods to promote positive behaviour and tackle bullying and harassment. I am more than happy to

keep Chris Harvie up to date as that work progresses.

Junior Doctors (Ayrshire and Arran)

6. Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what steps it is taking to encourage the deployment of junior doctors to work and train in Ayrshire and Arran. (S3O-6339)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Nicola Sturgeon): Junior doctors are employed in training posts in national health service boards after graduating from medical school. Selection and recruitment into such posts is organised initially on a regional basis to ensure that the ultimate allocation of junior doctors to individual NHS boards is fair and equitable. The deployment of junior doctors to Ayrshire and Arran is part of that process.

Kenneth Gibson: I am sure that the cabinet secretary will accept that there are concerns that the Ayrshire and Arran area is not getting its fair share of junior doctors. The health board has raised its concerns about that directly with me. Perhaps the bright lights of Edinburgh and Glasgow attract more junior doctors than they should.

Does the cabinet secretary agree that it is important, particularly for the development of specialist services in areas such as Ayrshire and Arran, that those areas not only get their fair share of junior doctors but get the cream of the crop on occasion, rather than those people always going to Glasgow and Lothian?

Nicola Sturgeon: Kenneth Gibson raises an important point. As he will be aware, in 2008 there were issues about selection and recruitment into junior doctor posts. NHS Ayrshire and Arran had particular difficulties in that regard. It put in place contingency arrangements to ensure that service provision was not compromised. I understand that NHS Ayrshire and Arran is currently carrying a small number of vacancies out of its 272 training-grade posts across a range of specialties and sites and that it has in place contingency plans. In addition, recruitment for 2009 is now under way.

I agree with Kenneth Gibson's point about equity. He will be interested to know that the Scottish Government supported the development of three regional workforce planning structures. In the west—the area in which NHS Ayrshire and Arran is situated—the regional group is concentrating on medical staffing to ensure that junior doctors rotate through training programmes in a way that is fair to all the boards involved. The medical directors of each board will approve plans for the placement of doctors across the region

before they are implemented. The postgraduate dean for the west of Scotland has given an undertaking that he will lead a piece of work to consider the equity of the current deployment of junior doctors across the region.

Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab): I thank the cabinet secretary for the extensive information that she has just given us. I point her to work that is on-going in Ayrshire and Arran, which identifies that a number of risks can arise from a failure to recruit people for all of the training posts and suggests that there could be a knock-on impact on rotas and compliance rates, particularly around the requirement for consultants to cover more work out of hours, leading to a subsequent knock-on effect on work that is delivered during the day. In turn, that could impact on waiting times, for example. What specific discussions has the cabinet secretary had around that issue?

Nicola Sturgeon: My officials and I discuss those issues with all health boards. The contingency measures that I said NHS Ayrshire and Arran has put in place are meant to ensure that the board can manage the situation regarding junior doctor vacancies without compromising the provision of services. NHS Ayrshire and Arran should be supported in that regard. As I said earlier, it is carrying only a small number of vacancies out of its 272 training-grade posts. In addition, attention is very much focused on recruitment for 2009. National application to vacancy ratios were high in every speciality across Scotland, but we still have some way to go. The issues that the member raises are matters of on-going discussion with NHS boards, because the most important factor is to ensure that high-quality services are delivered to patients.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): I was contacted recently by a constituent who is employed at Crosshouse hospital, who highlighted the increased workload that is being placed on staff as a result of the need to meet Government waiting list targets. Although it is clear that there is a need to reduce waiting lists, it seems equally clear that additional staff are required so that the reduction can be achieved without placing unreasonable workloads on existing staff. Will the cabinet secretary consider the situation at Crosshouse and throughout Ayrshire and Arran, with a view to ensuring that additional staff are provided?

Nicola Sturgeon: I will always consider situations about which concerns have been expressed. Everybody who works in the NHS does a sterling job, so if someone expresses concern or raises an issue it is my duty to listen and to respond.

No NHS board is operating with stand-still staffing. Mr Scott will have seen the public sector

workforce statistics that were published yesterday, which show that under this Administration the NHS workforce has increased by a figure in the order of 6,000. As the First Minister said to Annabel Goldie at First Minister's question time, the figures show that under this Administration more doctors, more consultants and more nurses are working in the NHS, which should be welcomed by members of all parties.

We do not have "waiting list targets"; we have waiting time targets, which are hugely important to patients. Patients want treatment speedily and are entitled to expect that, so I make no apology for continuing the progress that started under the previous Administration in driving down the time that patients must wait for treatment.

National Health Service Boards (Elections)

7. Anne McLaughlin (Glasgow) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what progress has been made in reducing any democratic deficit in the provision of health care by establishing elected NHS boards. (S3O-6347)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Nicola Sturgeon): Many people in Scotland think that there is a democratic deficit in the operation of our health boards. We started to change the situation on 12 March, when the Parliament gave unanimous support to the Health Boards (Membership and Elections) (Scotland) Bill, which will introduce, by way of pilots, direct elections to health boards, thereby ensuring that the public's voice is heard and listened to at the heart of the decision-making process.

Anne McLaughlin: Last week's unanimous vote showed members' strength of feeling on the issue.

It is unarguable that the gap between the public and their health board is widest in the NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde area, so will the cabinet secretary consider making that board one of the pilot boards? There is little doubt that people in Glasgow are becoming less involved in the decisions that are made on their behalf by the unelected health board. Will the cabinet secretary meet me to discuss the idea of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde being a pilot board?

Nicola Sturgeon: I will be delighted to meet the member to discuss that or any other issue. I have not yet decided which boards will be included in the pilot. I have said that the two boards that will be included will be representative of Scotland's geography. It is likely that one board will cover a predominantly urban area and the other a predominantly rural area. I am considering all options and would be happy for Anne McLaughlin or any other member to make a case for the inclusion of a particular board.

Members are aware that I have also given a commitment to carry out a further two, non-statutory pilots, which will consider alternative ways of better engaging the public in health boards' work. Members might want to bear that in mind when they make a case for a health board to be included in the pilot.

Dentists (Fife)

8. Tricia Marwick (Central Fife) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what proposals it has to improve levels of dental provision in Fife. (S3O-6345)

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Shona Robison): Responsibility for the overall provision of national health service dental services in the area rests with NHS Fife. The board has put in place a number of measures to improve access to NHS dental services, including expansion of the salaried dental service.

Tricia Marwick: I thank the minister for her reply and for the Government's commitment to improving dental health provision not only in my constituency but throughout Fife.

The minister announced that two new dental centres will be provided in Glenrothes and Levenmouth. Notwithstanding that it is for NHS Fife to take the matter forward, can the minister offer a timescale for the expected completion of the buildings?

Shona Robison: NHS Fife has been allocated funding under the primary and community care premises modernisation programme for 2009 to 2011 to develop the projects to which the member referred. It is currently in initial discussions on proposed sites in those areas. Given that the projects are only in the initial stages, it is estimated that it will be early 2011 before they are completed.

Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab): Is the minister aware of the previous Administration's commitment in injecting £4.5 million of funding, which was made available to NHS Fife and which resulted in development of a new dental clinic in each of the five constituencies across Fife? Since that injection of funding in 2006, nothing more has been announced for the Dunfermline East constituency. What plans does the minister have to address the unacceptable situation in my constituency, which is one of the most deprived and disadvantaged constituencies outside Glasgow and has the highest—and record—disadvantage and unemployment in the whole of Fife?

Shona Robison: This Government inherited a situation of neglect in investment in NHS dentistry. It was neglected over a number of years, which led to the situation that began to be rectified at the

latter end of the previous Administration's tenure and which has been picked up very much by our Government—so much so that it has been made clear to boards that investment in dental premises should be a priority for the primary and community care premises modernisation programme. I would have thought that the member would welcome that.

Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I refer the minister to an article in *The Scotsman* on 28 December last year that referred to more than 80,000 Scots being stuck on waiting lists for an NHS dentist. Despite my best efforts, I cannot find how many are on the waiting lists in Fife. Can the minister obtain those figures so that we can judge how many more NHS dentists might be required and, specifically, whether adequate dental provision has been made for the new St Andrews community hospital and health centre?

Shona Robison: NHS boards are very active in ensuring that they address the needs of their areas. I can say to the member that six salaried surgeries are to be opened, probably this summer, at the new St Andrews hospital. Including those, a total of 27 new salaried surgeries will have opened since autumn 2008. Again, I would have thought that the member would welcome that.

Early Years Strategy (Health Visitors)

9. Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): To ask the Scottish Executive what further steps have been taken to ensure that the deployment, training and recruitment of health visitors is at the centre of the early years strategy. (S3O-6273)

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Shona Robison): The delivery and implementation of the early years framework will be taken forward in partnership between the Scottish Government and local partners. Health visitors, who are key to the delivery of the early years framework, work as part of multidisciplinary, multi-agency teams to support parents and identify risks to health. Working with others, NHS Education for Scotland is running a number of education initiatives to ensure that the training and development needs of health visitors and practitioners are met.

Robin Harper: I am also looking for some comfort about whether the relevant ministers concerned with the early years strategy, notably the Minister for Public Health and Sport, the Minister for Children and Early Years and the Minister for Schools and Skills, consult one another on the strategy's development and, in particular, whether there is recognition not just that health visitors are an important part of the strategy but that the health visitor service requires much increased staffing and that health visitors are critical to the success of the early years strategy.

Shona Robison: I reassure the member that ministers have been discussing the early years framework across the ministerial portfolios. We also worked together to produce the report "Equally Well: Report of the Ministerial Task Force on Health Inequalities", which focuses on early years and early intervention. We recognise that there is a clear need to support parents with children at that stage of life, and the framework asks local partnerships to ensure that they develop clear leadership for zero-to-three services over the next few years.

We are developing a number of extremely important initiatives in that area. For example, we will test the nurse-family partnership approach to young, first-time mothers in NHS Lothian, which I am sure will be of interest to the member. As was highlighted in "Equally Well", the approach will allow us to have a sustained input into families from an early stage in an effort to prevent some of the problems that appear later in children's lives. I hope that the member will welcome that initiative, and I will be happy to keep him informed of progress.

Junior Doctors (Support)

10. Jim Hume (South of Scotland) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what it is doing to ensure that junior doctors are given the right support to allow them to carry out their duties. (S3O-6277)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Nicola Sturgeon): Junior doctors are employed in training posts after graduation from medical school and work as part of integrated health care teams. Through arrangements between NHS Education for Scotland postgraduate deaneries and NHS boards, a network of consultant doctors provides support, supervision and guidance to junior doctors throughout their training.

Jim Hume: Newly qualified doctors recently lost their right to accommodation allowance. That has placed an extra burden on those young doctors. Although the accommodation allowance scheme is UK wide, does the cabinet secretary not agree that there is scope for a Scottish solution to address the significant financial difficulties that some junior doctors experience? Should the Scottish Government not now confer with medical professionals and organisations to discuss the best solution for Scottish doctors? Will such discussions form part of a review?

Nicola Sturgeon: The accommodation issue stems from the fact that it is no longer a requirement for certain junior doctors to be resident on site, so there is no longer a contractual requirement to provide them with accommodation.

In deciding the way forward on the issue that the junior doctors committee of the British Medical Association has raised, we have closely examined the advice and opinions of the Doctors and Dentists Review Body, which in its 2008 report considered that, because free accommodation for junior doctors had not been a necessity for some time, it would be appropriate for junior doctors to be treated in the same way as other national health service staff.

A slightly different approach has been taken in Wales, where significant recruitment and retention issues affect foundation-year doctors. There are no similar issues in Scotland, so there are no plans to provide that group of staff with free accommodation.

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): Question 11 was not lodged.

Hospital-acquired Infections

12. Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee West) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what further action ministers are taking to combat hospital-acquired infections. (S3O-6338)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Nicola Sturgeon): The Scottish Government's health care associated infection task force has published its third programme of work, which sets out the detail of the actions to be taken. The programme, which covers the period March 2008 to April 2011, is available on the Scottish Government website.

Joe FitzPatrick: The cabinet secretary has announced the establishment of a new care environment inspectorate. Can she explain the inspectorate's role in combating health care associated infections and how the public can use the inspectorate?

Nicola Sturgeon: The care environment inspectorate will have an extremely important role to play in tackling health care associated infection. It is intended that it will build on established processes for quality assurance and improvement. In particular, it will ensure robust scrutiny and appropriate follow-up and escalation procedures where appropriate. Every acute hospital will be visited once every three years on an announced basis and once every three years on an unannounced basis, and additional visits will be factored in, depending on circumstances. Reports and recommendations for improvement will be published, and boards will have an obligation to respond to them. In addition, an annual overview report on the national picture and the picture in individual boards will be presented to the Parliament.

A crucial part of the inspectorate's operation relates to the public as it will be possible for direct

referrals to be made to the inspectorate. The arrangements are being developed so that any member of the public who has any concerns about the environment in any hospital will be able to raise them and have them looked into by the inspectorate.

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): Given the 25 per cent mortality rate for the first 16 cases of *C difficile* ribotype 078 that have been identified in Scotland and Health Protection Scotland's view that ribotype 078 is as toxic as ribotype 027, why will the protocol that requires samples to be submitted for typing to the national laboratory not be amended to include a requirement to submit samples from any hospital where ribotype 078 is identified?

Nicola Sturgeon: Richard Simpson knows, from the large number of written answers that I have given, that Health Protection Scotland has considered its guidance and considers that it is appropriate to the circumstances. He is also aware of the work that HPS is doing on that particular strain. I am more than happy to discuss with any member of Parliament, in as constructive a way as possible, what additional steps we require to take to beat infections. I have made it clear that that is my top priority. I do not have a monopoly on wisdom, but I hope that the Parliament can take the issue forward in a united fashion, such is its importance to the public.

Oesophageal Cancer

13. Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what organisations it has met to discuss the need to raise awareness of oesophageal cancer. (S3O-6296)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Nicola Sturgeon): Since the publication of "Better Cancer Care, An Action Plan", the Scottish Government has not met any specific organisations to discuss the need to raise awareness of oesophageal cancer. However, cancer prevention and awareness raising are key aspects of "Better Cancer Care", so opportunities are being taken to discuss raising awareness of cancer more generally at, for example, cancer-related meetings, conferences and ministerial visits.

Bill Butler: Earlier this year, I met representatives of Ochre, a charity that aims to raise awareness of oesophageal cancer and provide advice for sufferers and their families. The charity highlighted the fact that oesophageal cancer is difficult to diagnose and challenging to treat, which often results in poor prognoses and outcomes for most sufferers. It is the ninth most common cancer in the United Kingdom, with an even higher incidence in Scotland, and is predicted to rise by 64.3 per cent by 2020.

Given those worrying statistics, is the cabinet secretary willing to meet Ochre to discuss how best the Government can encourage research into the causes of oesophageal cancer and develop information and support services for patients and their families?

Nicola Sturgeon: I would be delighted to undertake such a meeting, and if the organisation—or indeed Bill Butler—wants to contact me, I am sure that that can be arranged.

I note Bill Butler's interest in the issue, and he is right to raise it. Oesophageal cancer is the fifth most common cancer for men in Scotland and the 10th most common for women. Relative survival rates remain poor for men and women—there has been too little improvement in that over the past 20 to 25 years. It is an issue of great importance.

Notwithstanding the particular issues Bill Butler has raised about oesophageal cancer, the general issue of raising awareness of cancer symptoms is very important. Earlier this month, I had a meeting with the Scottish cancer coalition, and one of the items on the agenda was how we can better raise awareness in order to aid earlier diagnosis. The coalition is a member of the cancer task force that will take forward "Better Cancer Care", and I would be more than happy for Bill Butler to feed his views into that process.

Asbestos-related Diseases (Screening)

14. Gil Paterson (West of Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it has plans to screen for asbestos-related diseases. (S3O-6352)

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Shona Robison): There are currently no plans to introduce a national screening programme for asbestos-related diseases. The Scottish Government has been committed to an evidence-based approach to screening and is given expert, independent advice on screening programmes by the United Kingdom National Screening Committee. The UKNSC sets out the criteria to assess screening programmes, the introduction of proposed new population screening programmes, the modification and withdrawal of existing programmes, and the quality and management of such programmes. It keeps a watching brief on and an on-going review of developments in the field.

Gil Paterson: Since early diagnosis clearly produces good outcomes, will the Government consider an initiative to encourage those who have come into contact with asbestos to come forward for screening?

Shona Robison: No useful test is currently available that detects people who have been exposed to asbestos and are likely to get

mesothelioma, although we hope that there will be such a test in time. The Scottish Government has a policy to encourage clinicians to ensure that as many patients as possible are included in relevant clinical trials, and there is significant evidence that outcomes are improved for patients treated in environments where research is the norm and for patients who are involved in cancer trials.

The decision on eligibility for inclusion in a specific clinical trial is a matter for agreement between clinicians and their patients in individual cases. All three of the regional Scottish cancer research networks are actively recruiting for a mesothelioma and cancer study, and I am happy to provide the member with further details of that study if he will find that helpful.

“Science for Scotland”

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan): The next item of business is a debate on motion S3M-3728, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on “Science for Scotland”. I call Fiona Hyslop to speak to and move the motion.

14:55

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Fiona Hyslop): Scotland has a tremendous scientific past that we can rightly be proud of and celebrate. However, the excellence of our scientific present is something that we should be more aware of, and that we should shout about. Our current scientific achievement is remarkable for a nation of our size. We are first in the world for the number of research citations in relation to our gross domestic product. Our market share of science funding in the United Kingdom grew faster—to 14.2 per cent, which was up nearly 2.5 per cent—than the market share in any other part of the UK last year. In the recent UK research assessment exercise, more than half the assessed research in Scotland was rated as being either internationally excellent or world-leading.

Furthermore, we are increasingly successful in attracting a wealth of new international talent, largely as a result of our investment in research pooling. We also have some world-class infrastructure. For instance, the high-end computing terascale resource—HECTOR—at the University of Edinburgh is the UK’s largest computer and is among the largest in the world. In addition, we heard only today of a breakthrough by Edinburgh and Manchester scientists that will bring superfast quantum computers a step closer.

We have recently seen new international investment in science-based businesses. For instance, last month, Schering-Plough Ltd announced a \$30 million investment in drug discovery at its Newhouse facility. In many areas of science, we are among the world leaders in terms of quality—in life sciences, energy and computational science to name just three. The recent announcement by Professor Sir Ian Wilmut on stem cell research, which offers the prospect of using non-embryonic stem cell lines, is another fantastic example of our contribution to world science.

In January, the energy research partnership, a consortium of Scottish universities, won £20 million of funding from the UK’s Energy Technologies Institute for research into wave and wind power technologies. There is already much that we can build on, but we cannot afford to stand still. Yesterday’s developing nations are becoming today’s knowledge economy nations, so we must

be ambitious for Scotland. We must be ready for the economic upturn when it comes, and “Science for Scotland” sets out how we can do that.

A debate on the science framework is also very timely. The global economic position has worsened, so we must consider even more urgently how science can contribute to economic recovery, as is being recognised by many countries. In January, we set out our economic recovery plan, which includes support for several investments in the science base, such as increased investment in the Edinburgh BioQuarter. The science framework supports the economic recovery plan and will help Scotland to get into better economic shape so that it is ready to take advantage of better times.

In this debate, we have an opportunity for the whole Parliament to send out a clear statement of its support for science. I know that many people in Scotland will be listening to how Parliament discusses the issues today.

The science framework sets out a clear and ambitious vision of where we think Scotland should be. It states:

“Our vision is of a nation of world-class scientific achievement, a magnet for talent and for investment, a powerhouse of technology innovation and enterprise, increasing sustainable economic growth.”

We need to set our sights high, and that vision is not a castle in the sky, but something that Scotland is already a long way towards achieving.

I acknowledge the work of the previous Executive, whose science strategy, which was published in 2001, ensured that science was given a higher profile, and laid good foundations for the current science framework. The science community will be looking to see how politicians use the debate and will note how Labour members want to use it as a constitutional political football.

“Science for Scotland” is a common reference point for the science base. It sets out a common vision and enables our public agencies to pull together. I will comment briefly on the plans in “Science for Scotland”, which appear under five main headings, and the progress that we are making on them.

Under the first heading—“Developing Individuals”—the framework recognises that we need a good supply of trained individuals that matches the demands of the economy if growth is not to be held back. Given that science-related sectors are projected to grow more than others are over the next 10 years, parents and teachers need to consider promoting science-related careers. We also need to challenge commonly held perceptions about such careers, which is why I launched a new campaign—do something creative, do science—that will run for three months. Today I

met pupils of Lenzie academy, who won a UK science challenge competition by designing a superaccurate ping-pong ball firer.

On the Conservative amendment, members might wish to know that entries for higher and advanced higher science subjects increased across the board in 2008. Reports that Govan high school has abandoned all science subjects are simply inaccurate: the school is offering higher chemistry this year and plans to offer higher physics in 2009-10. We had some disappointing news on school science in the recent trends in international mathematics and science study—TIMSS—which showed a worrying weakening in our performance against international benchmarks for the period 2003 to 2007. Therefore, we will take no lectures on science education from Labour—the party that presided over the period when Scotland was overtaken by others. To tackle those challenges in school education, I will convene a summit on science education chaired by Sir Andrew Cubie in May to discuss how we can improve our performance.

The Liberal Democrats’ amendment makes a point that has been consistently pushed by them. I acknowledge that, as in many walks of life, debate on the importance of science tends to focus on traditional measures of success, existing references and rigid power structures. I agree with the amendment that such measures do not always work for women. After Margaret Smith raised the same point in committee recently, I responded by raising the issues both in person and in writing with the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council. I should also point out that we have some great women scientists, who have produced some of the RAE’s most exciting results in chemistry. I was lucky enough last year to meet one of the University of Edinburgh’s rising stars, Dr Polly Arnold, who is recognised as one of Britain’s most creative chemists and who has built a growing reputation for her research into heavy metals.

“Scientific Research” is the second heading in the framework. When the UK minister, John Denham, told me at a recent meeting that Scotland receives a disproportionate amount of UK research council allocations, I told him that our share was perfectly in proportion to our talents. I have recently discussed the issue with the chair of Research Councils UK, Professor Ian Diamond, and I will have a meeting with the UK science minister, Lord Drayson.

Science research cuts across national and international boundaries, so let me come to Labour’s amendment. Despite the importance of science, Labour has tried to hijack the debate to promote a constitutional argument for party means. [*Laughter.*] If Labour acknowledges that

knowledge and research know no boundaries, why on earth should not Scotland be strengthened, either now or through independence, by the rest of the UK science base, as happens in the Nordic Council arrangement? Why stop there? Scotland is strengthened by the European science base, given the £20 million in funding that has been provided for the Energy Technologies Institute. Next month, I will go to China to advance Scotland's interests as part of the global science base.

The third heading in the framework is "Economic and Business Demand". Business demand for science is a real challenge because it remains very weak. In Scotland, business expenditure on research and development runs at less than half the UK rate which is, in turn, lower than the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development average. OECD studies confirm that R and D is the optimum driver of economic growth, but in the current economic climate, the pressures on R and D budgets will become even greater. We are determined to do what we can to help businesses with their research and development.

The Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council has recently launched an innovation voucher scheme, which will help small and medium-sized businesses to draw on the expertise within Scotland's world-class universities. The scheme will offer vouchers of up to £5,000 to meet up to 50 per cent of the cost of any collaboration between a university and an SME. That will contribute to our on-going efforts to secure the future of such business in order to safeguard jobs and contribute to the economic recovery of Scotland's local and national economies.

Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): It is generally recognised that scientific research should support our industries and our economy, but does the cabinet secretary agree that it is also critical that there is room for supporting open-ended, blue-skies research in our universities?

Fiona Hyslop: Absolutely. It is essential that we become proficient at operational science in the short term for economic gain, but we cannot make the big discoveries and progress knowledge and understanding unless we do blue-skies research, so I agree with Robin Harper's comments.

We are also looking forward to proposals from Universities Scotland to establish a unified consortium approach for all available intellectual property. That approach should significantly enhance the way in which intellectual property is managed in Scotland's universities and it will help to streamline and accelerate the commercialisation process, which has been of variable quality and effectiveness for too long.

Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab): Can the minister explain to Parliament why the science strategy has been separated from the innovation strategy? Are not the two inextricably linked? What is the point of having two separate strategies?

Fiona Hyslop: That is a reasonable question and one that I asked when I became a minister, given the work that had been done previously. It was scientists themselves who were keen to have a distinct science strategy. I assure Rhona Brankin that the science strategy and the forthcoming innovation strategy will sit together and will be harnessed as far as delivery is concerned.

The fourth element of the framework deals with international connections. The broader international strategies that we are drawing up for key economies regard science as a key element that helps to forge links between countries. We are making progress on that and are increasing our funding for international scholarships through the British Council. That relates specifically to businesses.

I am delighted to tell Parliament that the international triple helix conference has been attracted to Glasgow in June, and I have been asked to represent Scotland. That will give us an opportunity to explain triple helix concepts—*[Laughter.]*

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): Will the member take an intervention?

Fiona Hyslop: I need to move on. *[Laughter.]* The conference will also give us an opportunity to promote Scottish science on the world stage.

The final theme of the framework is about playing to our strengths and connectivity. Research pooling has been extremely effective.

Any country that is serious about science wants a serious science framework. We have one. In a time of recession, what the world outside Parliament wants is a constructive and co-operative consensus on science in Scotland. We have the opportunity to create that in today's debate.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the publication of the Scottish Government's strategic framework for science, *Science for Scotland*, on 27 November 2008; agrees with its vision for Scotland as a nation of world-class scientific achievement, a magnet for talent and for investment and a powerhouse of technology, innovation, enterprise and increasing sustainable economic growth; supports the strong message that *Science for Scotland* sends out to Scotland and the world about this vision; agrees that maintaining a strong science base in Scotland is vital because it will underpin economic growth, help improve public services, enhance quality of life and help solve the world's most pressing problems; notes the detailed ambitions and commitments made around the five themes

of *Science for Scotland* about developing individuals, scientific research, economic and business demand, international profile and connections in Scotland and government; further notes that *Science for Scotland* calls to action many bodies and sectors of the economy and asks them to work with the Scottish Government to help progress the aspirations of *Science for Scotland*, and asks the Scottish Government to monitor and report to the Parliament on the progress being made.

15:07

Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab): I begin with an apology. I will have to leave the chamber shortly after my speech as I have a meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing about an urgent constituency matter. I am sorry that I will miss some of the speeches in the debate and I assure members that no discourtesy is intended to them.

The Nobel prize-winning physicist Isidor Isaac Rabi once said:

"Science is a great game ... The playing field is the universe itself."

Scotland has supplied many of the great players on that field, including James Watt, Alexander Fleming, John Logie Baird and James Clerk Maxwell. Just as science has played a hugely important part in shaping Scotland's past, it will play a big part in shaping Scotland's future. We all know that we are going through challenging economic times, yet the world economy is projected to double in size in the next 20 years. That growth will be driven by people in countries such as China and India becoming consumers for the first time. When the economic outlook improves, the big winners will be the industrialised countries that create high-value-added products and services, and which train people to have the best possible skills. Our science sector is key to that. Science, engineering and technology-related products and services account for 70 per cent of Scotland's exports—we can expect that to grow even further in the decades ahead.

Beyond the hugely important role that science plays in our economy, it is the biggest weapon in our arsenal for improving health, wellbeing and quality of life and tackling the challenges that not just Scotland but the world faces, including tackling climate change, eliminating poverty, fighting disease and hunger, and preserving our environment for future generations. Science must play a major role in tackling those challenges.

In my Midlothian constituency alone, the cluster that comprises Pentlands Science Park, Edinburgh Technopole and Roslin BioCentre—the birthplace of Dolly the sheep—provides more than 1,500 highly skilled jobs in world-class research institutes, universities and cutting-edge companies, but there is potential for the science

sector to employ thousands more people there and throughout Scotland.

The Scottish National Party Government needs to demonstrate leadership if Scotland is to continue to punch above its weight in the science sector.

Labour finds much to agree with in the SNP Government's "Science for Scotland" strategic framework paper, perhaps because much of it has drawn together existing commitments as opposed to setting out a longer-term policy agenda, but we are still no clearer about how the SNP will resource its science strategy. We know that universities are vital to securing the future of our science base, but the SNP appears to take them for granted. Last year, we saw cuts in real terms in funding for Scottish universities. I will give one example. The University of Dundee, which is one of the most respected centres for biomedical research in the UK, had to cut more than 100 staff. The principal of that university, Sir Alan Langlands, directly attributed that decision to the SNP Government's insufficient funding for higher education.

Fiona Hyslop: The member may want to revisit her comments, bearing in mind what Sir Alan Langlands has said subsequently. Does she accept that the universities' share of the Scottish budget under this Government is higher than it was under previous Administrations?

Rhona Brankin: I do not accept that. In fact, there was a cut in real terms last year. Of course, university principals are saying that there are real fears for the future and about how Scotland will remain competitive, depending on what happens south of the border.

The Government's motion says that Scotland should be

"a magnet for talent and for investment and a powerhouse of technology, innovation, enterprise".

That aim appears to be borne out by the fact that our higher education institutions receive around 12 per cent of UK research spending—we all know about that—but that could decrease if some of the English universities succeed with their calls for higher university fees south of the border. Scottish university principals have very real fears that world-class scientists will potentially be attracted to better-funded universities south of the border. There is nothing in the motion and there was nothing in the cabinet secretary's speech that indicates how the Government would match any increase in resources that English universities might receive. I hope that the minister will address that point in summing up. Is it any wonder that a former principal of the University of St Andrews, Dr Brian Lang, stated last week in this building:

"Higher education is not a priority for this government"?

I turn to science in schools. The cabinet secretary has made much of the proposed science baccalaureate, but a recent TIMSS report indicates that Scotland is falling behind other countries, particularly in the primary 5 to secondary 2 age range. The baccalaureate will do nothing to address that. It has been heralded as something that will be special for science, but the minister has since announced, rather to the surprise of the science sector, that other subjects will also have a baccalaureate.

The Scottish Government's marketing campaign to encourage young people to study science subjects is well intentioned, but it comes at a time when some schools are reducing science options to save money as a result of the appalling local government settlement from the SNP Government. Even the slickest marketing campaign will do nothing to address the fact that many primary teachers are simply not confident about teaching maths and science—the TIMSS report identified that major concern. If our teachers do not have the confidence to teach, or the enthusiasm for, science subjects, what hope is there of enthusing a generation of young people? The Government must come up with a plan to tackle that problem.

We need more science graduates to go into primary teaching. The uncertain economic climate presents an opportunity to attract into teaching science graduates who have been lost to the financial sector. We may need to encourage more such people to come into teaching. Down south, specific plans have been announced to attract into teaching science graduates who have been made redundant. Primary pupils should also be benefiting more from the expertise of science departments in local high schools. I hope that the minister will talk about that in detail in summing up.

There is work to be done on continuing professional development for science teachers. While the Scottish Government has provided a £2.1 million grant for continuing professional development in science, it has rolled up £13.5 million of ring-fenced CPD money into the local government settlement. It is clear that the £2.1 million is not enough to meet demand for the Scottish Schools Equipment Research Centre's training. All its courses in 2008-09 have been fully subscribed; indeed, most courses have been oversubscribed by more than 50 per cent, so there is clearly unmet demand. What does the minister plan to do to address that?

Members may be aware that Gordon Brown announced on 27 February that UK Government spending on science will be ring fenced until 2014. That will safeguard long-term investment in science despite the obvious short-term funding

pressures. The Prime Minister is also committed to boosting investment levels to keep them at least in line with economic growth for the next five years. Gordon Brown is putting science at the heart of the UK's economic growth strategy.

The motion contains warm words, as did the cabinet secretary's speech, but there is not an awful lot of beef. Will she put her money where her mouth is and make the same pledge that Gordon Brown has made, to ensure that science funding in Scotland is ring fenced and is not squeezed?

I turn now to my amendment to the motion. I talked earlier about how Scotland punches above its weight in research funding, as part of the UK. Some might suggest that it is in the SNP's political interests to allow the union dividend to diminish, as that would make it easier for the party to argue the case for the increasingly unpopular independence policy. The cabinet secretary smiled wryly when she accused us of making political capital out of constitutional issues. Of course, that is a joke—given that we consistently attack the SNP for doing just that. However, this is not a joke. There is genuine concern among Scotland's scientific community about the dangers of any move towards loosening the ties between Scottish institutions and the rest of the UK's science base.

Fiona Hyslop: Will the member take an intervention?

Rhona Brankin: No, I am sorry. I am finishing.

Project-based funding at Scottish universities comes largely from UK research councils; and our Scottish institutions play important roles in UK-wide consortia. If SNP members want to do more than pay lip service to Scotland's science sector, I ask them to put their constitutional dogma to one side and support Scottish expertise and Scottish jobs, and to join other members in supporting the amendment in my name.

I move amendment S3M-3728.1, to insert after "problems":

"... agrees with the comments of the Royal Society of Edinburgh that "It is vital that Scotland remains an integral part of the UK science base", that the "integration offsets one of the problems of small countries in research, that they cannot be internationally competitive in all sectors of research and the businesses that rely on it" and that, consequently, "an attempt to devolve Research Council functions would be a seriously retrograde step"".

15:16

Elizabeth Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Both the cabinet secretary and Ms Brankin are absolutely right to say that Scotland should be proud of a very successful history of scientific invention and innovation, and I am sure that we all share the desire to see that tradition continue. Science is profoundly important, both in its level of

academic inquiry and in its ability to help us to extend the frontiers of our understanding of a complex world. We should be under no illusion about the increasing importance of science subjects to our economy and wellbeing.

On this side of the chamber, we warmly welcome the strategic approach. I am sure that we also look forward to the cabinet secretary explaining the triple helix and reporting back on her trip to China. However, I want to use the debate to point out why we believe that the strategy cannot be fully successful until the Scottish Government's line of thinking is more consistent.

First, there is the basic question of the science curriculum in schools. I say to the cabinet secretary that I do not want to scaremonger on this issue, which would be inappropriate to both staff and pupils, but it is a matter of considerable concern that there are signs in a growing number of schools that higher and advanced higher science courses are being cut or are undersubscribed, although I accept that some schools are reversing that.

On 22 February, *The Sunday Times* highlighted quite a serious situation in Glasgow. I await the full results of a freedom of information inquiry—they will arrive on 30 March—but results so far indicate some cuts in advanced higher science subjects in Midlothian and the city of Edinburgh. I regret to add that a result came in today that suggests that the picture for highers will be bad, as well.

If we consider the period from 2001 to 2008, we see that although the total number of presentations for highers rose by 10 per cent in Scotland, the total number for science subjects fell by 6 per cent. Physics and technology suffered most. I have the statistics in front of me; I went through them extremely carefully and they are worrying.

Fiona Hyslop: Does the member acknowledge that *The Sunday Times* reported the situation in Govan high school incorrectly? She gave some figures, but does she also accept that, at least from 2007 to 2008, the number of applications for science highers and advanced highers has increased rather than decreased?

Elizabeth Smith: I acknowledge the concern about the report on Govan high school, which I do not think was particularly accurate. However, I suggest to the cabinet secretary that the trend for presentations for highers and advanced highers is worrying. The FOI inquiry will perhaps shed more light on that by the end of the month.

Another concern is that people coming out of universities with science degrees are not necessarily finding science-related employment. I know that everyone has concerns about ensuring

that pupils at school—dare I say it, girls in particular—have the best opportunities to take up science subjects. I share the Liberal Democrats' concern about that. That is even more important in 2009, but it simply will not be possible if schools feel that they cannot staff or resource the science subjects.

I note the comments of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, which highlights its concerns and its request that the Scottish Government, along with the General Teaching Council in Scotland, do more to improve the quality of CPD training for science teachers. Ms Brankin made a very good point about that being extended in primary schools.

The RSE report also highlights the need for a slightly more American approach to how we take on board advice from the many scientific bodies that present to the Government. There is a feeling in some of our specialist science areas that that process is sometimes just a mechanism by which the Government will operate something, rather than being about presenting information on key issues. We should consider that message.

The Scottish Government believes that the twin approach of the curriculum for excellence and the introduction of the Scottish baccalaureate exam—a group award based on highers, advanced highers and an interdisciplinary project—can resolve the science problem in schools. That is fine, up to a point. The curriculum for excellence brings the potential for much greater innovative work in science in primary schools, but there is a fundamental issue about the Scottish baccalaureate. I have absolutely no problem with the principle of a baccalaureate; in fact, I am strong supporter of the international baccalaureate exam, because of the breadth of its approach and its compulsory units in the theory of knowledge and community service, as well as the academic disciplines. However, if the Scottish baccalaureate is really to be made to work properly, we need to address the specific issue that its component parts have to be available in schools. I am referring especially to the advanced higher element. If, to use the words of Brian Lang, universities are to continue to believe that

“university places must continue to be awarded on academic merit”,

we need to ensure that we retain that strength in our university system.

In recent times, it has been good to see the upgrading of the tariffs for the advanced higher, but that will mean something only if we know that pupils have the opportunity to take the advanced higher. I believe that, within the Scottish baccalaureate, the advanced higher will matter more than the higher and the interdisciplinary

approach. That is something for the cabinet secretary to think about.

As I understand it, we are still waiting for the University and College Admissions Service to look at the tariff points. That is crucial, because they matter to youngsters who are about to make their decisions. The more we can speed that up the better.

A science strategy is extremely important, but it has to be consistent right through primary school, secondary school and into tertiary education and beyond. There is a lot of scope for development within business and industry and to have partnerships and more teachers and pupils on exchanges. In ensuring consistency, it matters that the Government has an approach on science. If it is going to introduce science baccalaureates, we have to know where they sit in relation to the arts and social sciences. If youngsters—and their parents—want one thing, it is to know what their qualifications from school mean in terms of their continuing on to university. There is huge vagueness about that at the moment, so I hope that the minister will address the issue when she sums up.

We will be supporting the Labour amendment and the Liberal Democrat amendment.

I move amendment S3M-3728.3, to insert after fifth "*Science for Scotland*":

"further notes the concern that some secondary schools in Scotland are reducing the availability of SQA Highers and Advanced Higher courses in science subjects".

15:23

Hugh O'Donnell (Central Scotland) (LD): I welcome the debate. I do not think that anyone in the chamber, or indeed in wider society, would underestimate the role that science plays in our lives. Many of the everyday things that we take for granted are here only because of the hard work and innovation of scientists. Very often, we stand on the shoulders of giants. In Scotland, we are not short of those giants. I am thinking of James Clerk Maxwell, John Logie Baird, Alexander Fleming, Watt, Kelvin and many others. Members might be interested to note that there are no women among the scientists whom I just mentioned. That was quite deliberate on my part, because my colleague Alison McInnes will refer to women in her contribution. Not just historically but currently, Scots feature highly in every scientific discipline, including in many new fields, some of which might even have baffled the historical giants of the past. They certainly baffle me, but I am an arts graduate, so what would you expect?

Scotland is pre-eminent and internationally recognised in the field of science. In fairness to the Government, it has produced a strategic science

framework. However, if we take the covers away, it has only 12 pages and it is aspirational rather than substantial, as Rhona Brankin said.

Fiona Hyslop: The science sector requested that the overarching framework should be succinct. As the member will see from the references, the website and everything that underpins the framework, there are lengthy, extensive and detailed developments of all aspects of the summary framework.

Hugh O'Donnell: I thank the cabinet secretary for that information. Notwithstanding what she has said, concern has been expressed, certainly from the university sector, that the framework is weak on the policy and budgetary commitments that will deliver the vision. In fairness to the cabinet secretary, the framework reiterates existing commitments and does not aim to lay out a coherent agenda in one place.

The success of Scotland's universities in science is widely recognised, whether that is Heriot-Watt University moving up the research assessment exercise results table or Glasgow Caledonian University's applied knowledge exchange.

I will make a small plea for Scotland's colleges. As we rightly sing the praises of our universities and their research activity, the danger is that we miss the fact that many of the challenges that we face are at the technical level. For example, we need technicians. In many respects, the level of qualification that is required for such posts is provided by our further education colleges. We need to ensure that the colleges buy fully into the strategy as far as their ability to contribute is concerned. We need to hear from the cabinet secretary how she envisages that the colleges will do that. In light of Elizabeth Smith's legitimate concerns about the Scottish baccalaureate, colleges also have to become involved in that. I understand that one college has recently been authorised to deliver the international baccalaureate. Welcome as that is, the concern is that it indicates that, for Scotland's colleges at least, there is a question mark over the Scottish baccalaureate.

Rhona Brankin mentioned schools, one issue for which is teacher training, particularly in the primary sector. We have to give our teachers confidence in their delivery of science at primary school level, but we have no detail on how that will be done. I will not repeat the figures that other members have given, but there are worrying indications in the OECD report that Scotland is not where it should be in comparison with other countries. For example, in secondary 2 science, 14 out of 49 countries scored above Scotland and, in primary 5 science, 21 out of 36 countries scored above us. The trend is worrying. I would like to see more

substance in the strategic framework to address issues such as that.

Valuable though it may be, we need to ensure that we back up the summit to which the cabinet secretary referred with practical measures to support teachers, whether by way of teaching materials or opportunities for CPD. There are a number of issues that we need to address.

The business sector has also expressed concern on the subject. I understand that employers are increasingly looking for graduates with an international perspective to their education. There are some signs that our universities are not as able—perhaps because of financial considerations—to facilitate international exchanges in science, outbound rather than inbound. However, all the signs are that international multinationals are keen to recruit scientists who demonstrate an international perspective. Unless the universities, with the support of the Government—moral or financial—can expand on international learning opportunities for our students, we will be in some difficulty.

The strategic framework continues the good work that has already been done. As other members have said, a little more meat on it would have been welcome, although I will allow for the fact that there are other relevant websites around.

We will be supporting the Labour and Tory amendments at decision time.

I move amendment S3M-3728.2, to insert after fifth “*Science in Scotland*”:

“; regrets that, although half a million women in the United Kingdom are qualified in either science, engineering or technology, less than a third work in those sectors, noting in particular the high fall-off rate at postdoctoral research level; calls on the Scottish Government to include within its strategy for science specific action to improve the participation and employment of women in the science sector”.

15:30

Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP): It is not uncommon in a debate such as this to reel off a list of great Scottish scientists from history, but I would rather concentrate on the hard scientific work that is going on today. I am fortunate to live in the East Kilbride constituency and, as it is part of Central Scotland, to represent Scotland's oldest new town.

East Kilbride houses a small but very significant science park that demonstrates Scotland's edge in science. Among the range of successful companies there is Controlled Therapeutics, which develops and produces pharmaceuticals. The workforce in East Kilbride developed a vaginal insert to aid childbirth in cases where the birth is medically induced. That product is now the world

leader, and Controlled Therapeutics estimates that

“Every minute of every day a woman somewhere in the world will give birth assisted by one of our pessaries.”

That is science at its best, with a Scottish company's expertise used and recognised across the world.

In September last year, the Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism, Jim Mather, announced the Scottish Government's support for Controlled Therapeutics under the regional selective assistance scheme, which helped to protect the existing jobs and to create 23 new ones. That is building success on top of success—it is making the most of what we have.

East Kilbride's science park also houses Crucial Technology Europe, a division of Micron. It direct-sells memory upgrades for computers and other electronic devices. Filtronic Comtek designs, manufactures and markets components for cellular infrastructures. We are also fortunate to have the headquarters of the Worldmark group, which began in East Kilbride. Its logo is “Global Solutions ... Locally”. Worldmark's operation in East Kilbride includes the company's research and development functions, as well as manufacturing. That is crucial.

We all recognise that business enterprise research and development expenditure is not as high as it should be in Scotland and that it does not reflect our capabilities. Studies have shown that, despite Scotland's universities having punched above their weight for research framework programme grants from the European Union, for example, that is not reflected in the private sector. Some of that can be put down to methods of accountability, with some company branches in Scotland having their R and D work registered at headquarters elsewhere, but it is vital to recognise and to promote further the interface between academia and business. The cabinet secretary recognises that, through objectives to increase public-private knowledge transfer, to address issues of intellectual copyright—she mentioned that today—to encourage private sector research collaboration, and to take forward the proposal from Universities Scotland for a single forum for all available intellectual property from Scottish institutions.

I note from the Royal Society of Edinburgh's paper, which was kindly supplied to us all prior to the debate, its view that

“since the joint RSE/Scottish Enterprise *Commercialisation Report*, there has been a dramatic improvement in the efficiency and drive of the Scottish universities in connecting with business.”

That is welcome. I also note from the RSE paper the reiteration of the European Union's move towards a European research area. With its skills

and expertise, Scotland should take full advantage of that, working and collaborating with partners, with our UK neighbours and with others. Scientific research and development is a discipline that is ripe for collaboration, whether among national and international academic institutions, through regional initiatives, through private enterprise or indeed—I say this to Rhona Brankin, in her absence—through independent nations sharing expertise with mutual trust and respect.

Scotland has a good and justified reputation internationally for the quality of its science base. We should celebrate that, but we should do so without complacency. There has been much discussion about enthusing laypeople and, particularly, pupils and scholars. The Government is taking that on board, as are others. In that regard, too, science has a home in East Kilbride. One of our residents, retired physicist Dr Ravi Singhal, gives free public lectures in the James Watt auditorium, which are filled by people who are eager to learn about physics. He has just completed his sixth series of lectures as part of the community education initiative under the science for all programme. I hope that Mr Singhal repeats the endeavour, because I would very much like to go along and learn.

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning has mentioned in the past the importance that she places on science development. I will continue to support her and the Government in driving Scotland forward and keeping us ahead of the game. Fiona Hyslop has long stressed, in opposition as well as in government, that science and technology are allied but distinct topics. I look forward to hearing from the Government how those linked streams will be progressed, in parallel with the skills and innovation strategies.

15:36

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab): Science is the key to Scotland's future prosperity, central to our understanding of the world, the gateway to many employment opportunities and endlessly fascinating and exciting, yet, for many, it is a closed book and an unknown world. Some people were perhaps turned off science at school, whereas others may be stuck in a two-cultures time warp, precisely 50 years after C P Snow's landmark lecture. Whatever the reason, science should be for all and for life. Of course, not everyone will be a scientist, but everyone should have a basic understanding of science and should be able to engage as a stakeholder in the many science-related issues and debates that confront us all.

The key to all that is, of course, what happens at school. I welcome the marketing strategy that the

cabinet secretary launched at Trinity academy in my constituency a few weeks ago. However, I am sure that she will agree that the curriculum and the teachers are central. Science, in addition to literacy and numeracy, should have core status in the curriculum, as it has in England. It should be far more prominent in primary schools and it must be central to the secondary school curriculum. We should all be concerned by the findings of the recent trends in international mathematics and science study—TIMSS—report that Scotland is falling behind, particularly in the primary 5 to secondary 2 age bracket.

One reason for that is that very few primary teachers have a science background. Action is already being taken at some schools in my constituency to deal with that by linking primary schools with secondary school science teachers. The Government should consider seriously the suggestions by the former assistant chief inspector of education Jack Jackson that we need a new cohort of science teachers working across the primary-secondary interface. He has also floated the idea of a quota whereby 20 per cent of primary teachers in training would have science degrees, as well as the idea that primary teachers should be taught science as part of their university training. Those suggestions must be considered seriously.

Fiona Hyslop: The member might be interested to know that Professor Jack Jackson inspired me, as he was my biology teacher at school, and that he has provided great advice on the science education summit that we will hold in May, when some of those views can perhaps be developed.

Malcolm Chisholm: I thank the cabinet secretary for that welcome information.

As other members have said, good-quality CPD in science is crucial for primary as well as secondary teachers. Good programmes are available from the Scottish Schools Equipment Research Centre. CPD for secondary teachers is particularly urgent because of the curriculum for excellence. One factor in the genesis of the curriculum for excellence was the need to do something about science in secondary 1 and 2, but there is a big concern, most clearly articulated a few months ago by the Royal Society of Edinburgh, about the science part of the curriculum for excellence.

I know that the situation has moved on since then, but it would be good to hear from the cabinet secretary where that debate has got to. In summary, the Royal Society of Edinburgh was positive about the underlying principles of the curriculum for excellence and broadly supportive of its defined learning outcomes, but it was very concerned that, in the rush to cross-disciplinary working, insufficient attention would be paid to the

building blocks of the individual subject disciplines. The society also indicated that, without a common understanding of the structure of the curriculum, there was a danger of different agendas developing across Scotland. I would welcome the cabinet secretary's comments on the situation following her discussions with the society.

What happens in higher education is equally important; when it comes to making or exploiting leading-edge innovation, it is more important than what happens in schools. The big worry is how Scotland can match the increasing resources that are coming to English universities for scientific research and other areas. As our amendment indicates, UK-level integration and UK research council funding are important, and the strategy should address how we maximise the benefit of that. However, there is still the wider issue of university funding. Sooner or later, the Scottish Government will have to initiate a major review of the issue, as called for again by Dr Brian Lang at last week's meeting of the proposed cross-party group on the Scottish universities.

An equally important and related issue is the effect of science on the wider economy. The cabinet secretary flagged up some of the problems—for example, when she pointed out the low level of business expenditure on R and D. Central to the science framework are those pages that list the many actions that are being taken in the area, mainly by Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, such as supporting science-based business innovation. I hope that those actions will be implemented with great urgency.

We should not get too depressed and should recognise the progress that has been made in connecting the universities with businesses—an issue that was highlighted by Linda Fabiani. We should also recognise the great successes that have been achieved in recent years, especially in the life sciences. What we need to do, especially in these difficult economic times, is to build on the solid foundations that have been laid. Dundee's success is often cited, but Edinburgh has also made great strides. Further development of the life sciences may be particularly important for Edinburgh now that financial services are under such pressure.

In conclusion, I welcome the summit that is shortly to take place on the issue. I welcome the fact that Jack Jackson will be present and hope that the summit will be as inclusive as possible. I do not know whether Opposition spokespeople have been invited, but I suggest that they ought to be.

15:42

Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD):

The number of women who are employed in science, engineering and technology is half the number of men who are employed in the same industries. The Greenfield report identified that the UK economy was losing considerable talent because women who were qualified in science, engineering and technology were not working in those sectors. Half a million women in the UK are qualified in science, engineering and technology, but less than one third of them work in the sectors.

In November 2008, I pointed out that gender imbalance and highlighted the fact that the Government's newly announced strategy—a 17-page document—was silent on the matter. In a written response to me, Fiona Hyslop claimed that the reason for the omission was that

“this issue was not identified by the wide range of contributors and stakeholders as a priority area requiring new action.”

To her credit, she then acknowledged that there is

“a clear need ... for better gender equality in this area”.

I thank the cabinet secretary for agreeing to meet me to explore the matter further; I have been heartened by her willingness to engage on the issue. However, I am appalled that stakeholders in the scientific community did not raise the gender imbalance that I have highlighted as a matter requiring action. That lack of sectoral self-awareness may explain why it is so difficult to make headway on tackling the issue.

There are initiatives, such as the women into science, engineering and construction campaign—WISE—to improve the participation of girls in science, and there is evidence of improvement in take-up, although we still have some way to go on entry to the profession. At undergraduate level, female students account for 43 per cent of the total in chemistry, around 39 per cent in mathematics, 20 per cent in physics and only 15 per cent in engineering. Of equal, if not more, concern to me is what happens after that. In physics, 25 per cent of postgraduates are women, but the figure drops to 15 per cent among those gaining research posts. Only 8 per cent of those working as senior lecturers and less than 4 per cent of professors are women. Even in biology, only 12 per cent of professors are women. That is quite a leaky pipeline.

It is not enough to attract women into the sectors—we must keep them there. In 2002, Baroness Greenfield wrote:

“If you are not a woman, and if you are not a scientist, the issue of ‘women in science’, might seem to be fairly low down in the pecking order of national and international preoccupations nowadays. But if you happen to be both those things then, as a woman in science, you may well be

feeling apprehensive, aggrieved or simply unsure of where your career and, indeed, your life is going”.

Last month, I met a group of young female academics working in physics, astronomy and life sciences. Sad to say, they are indeed aggrieved and apprehensive. The discussion that we had supported Greenfield's analysis that a significant issue for women researchers was that,

“in the critical period of their early 30s, just as they had gained their scientific credibility, and were amassing data and the ensuing all-important published papers that impress the university search committees, so there was the shadow of the biological time-bomb for women.

If a woman takes time out to have a child at this highly critical phase in her career, it could be very hard for her to compete on a level playing field with men who have had a consistent track record of publishing.”

In universities at postdoctoral research level—where some of our best bright young women scientists should be working—short-term research grants, the constant moving around that is required and the inflexibility of conditions of research awards are all unintentional barriers to participation. We need to move away from assessing somebody's competence purely by the number of papers that they have published. There should be more recognition of soft skills and teaching skills. Improved mentoring is urgently required and support for returners would also help.

Although there are role models for young women to look to—Baroness Susan Greenfield, Dame Professor Jocelyn Bell Burnell, Professor Neva Haite and Professor Anne Glover to name a few—the reality is that there are few women in senior posts in science departments to set an example to them. There is no magic solution, but a consistent and pragmatic approach is needed to nurture young women scientists. The UK resource centre for women in science, engineering and technology, which is based at Napier University, is tackling some of the issues, but much more needs to be done. The Athena project aims to increase the number of women who are recruited to the top academic posts in science. It works with universities on staff development, mentoring and networking schemes. It is extremely disheartening to me that only three Scottish universities have shown any interest in the project and I urge all Scottish universities to sign up to it.

A complex web of interactions has a negative impact on the retention and advancement of women within the sector as a whole. To reduce attrition at all levels of scientific, engineering and technology-related employment, workplace policies, practices and whole cultures need to change to make workplaces fair places to work for everyone. We need workplaces in which it is acknowledged that family life is at least as important as working life and in which every individual can progress to attain their full potential

and reach the top if they have the capacity to do so.

We should be under no illusion: this is not a women's problem but a problem for us all. Britain's future depends on finding or creating far more professionals in science, engineering and technology and keeping them in work. The Confederation of British Industry has said that, to maintain the UK as a competitor in the global economy and keep manufacturing companies in Britain, the number of graduates in science, engineering and technology will have to double by 2012. Where will the new recruits be found if not through greater participation by women?

The Government's science strategy highlights the need to strengthen Scotland's capacity for innovation. With a wider variety of people working on new products or projects, we would surely be more likely to find new ideas and different approaches. Common sense tells us that a diverse workforce—including one that is gender diverse—results in greater innovation.

If each sector and influencer agreed to take responsibility for improving equality practices within the area over which they have influence or control, the barriers to women's participation, retention and progression could be minimised. The Scottish Parliament and the Government are key influencers. We must encourage fresh thinking to tackle the inequalities that are leading to disillusionment among young women scientists. I hope that everyone will be able to support my amendment.

15:48

Ian McKee (Lothians) (SNP): In my research for this speech, I came across a reference in a scientific paper to the importance of the SNP in the development of major advances in translating the benefits of sequencing the human genome into practical clinical use. I was perplexed, as our speciality is really the triple helix, but I reasoned that, at last, the scientists were beginning to recognise the benefits of Scottish National Party Government—until I read in a footnote that, in this context, SNP refers to single nucleotide polymorphism. How speedily one's sense of pride and optimism can be dashed. My sense of elation took a further plunge when I found that the author was referring to dense SNP.

Notwithstanding that, I welcome the motion and the importance that it gives to Scotland's scientific heritage and potential for the future. So important has science been to Scotland that it is easy to dwell on the past—I have a tea towel that shows that Scots invented everything from the steam engine to the telephone—but the future is what must concern us, as that is where the jobs lie and where our country's prosperity is shaped.

Although there can be no grounds for complacency in this competitive world, there are grounds for cautious optimism. There is no time in this short speech to cover every aspect of this protean topic, so I will concentrate on two. The first is the advantage that we have in Scotland that is shared by almost no other country: a comprehensive medical record for every citizen. True, there is a national health service in England as well, but the growing privatisation of that service means that there is a greater risk that medical records will be dispersed and left incomplete. Our knowledge base is a massive advantage when encouraging public or private scientific medical research. There can be no objection to its use in that way, as long as ethical protocols are scrupulously observed.

It has been said that the UK pharmaceutical industry conducts up to 20 per cent of its research in Scotland, despite our having only about 9 per cent of the UK population. I want that research activity to be actively encouraged and ultimately mirrored by the establishment of head office functions in Scotland. Control of our own taxes, especially corporation tax, would help greatly in that regard.

If I may concentrate on my constituency for a while, I would like to emphasise the enormous contribution that is made in the Lothians and surrounding areas to scientific advancements, especially in the field of biosciences.

Just about everyone in the world remembers Dolly the sheep, the first cloned mammal ever to be created from an adult cell, but spectacular developments such as the creation of Dolly are only a tiny part of the work that is undertaken at Edinburgh's famous Roslin Institute. Roslin is associated with the Royal (Dick) school of veterinary studies, the number 1-ranked veterinary school in the UK for 2008, and conducts research into the health and welfare of animals and applications of basic animal sciences in human and veterinary medicine, the livestock industry and food security. Together with scientists from the Moredun Research Institute and the Scottish Agricultural College—or the SAC, as I think we are supposed to call it these days—the Roslin Institute will soon move into a state-of-the-art veterinary campus to the south of Edinburgh, forming one of the largest centres of animal science research excellence in the world.

The cabinet secretary has already referred to Professor Sir Ian Wilmut, who is closely associated with the cloning of Dolly, and who is now director of the Scottish centre for regenerative medicine, working on the biology of stem cells, their potential value in medical treatments and the protocols and technologies that must be established in that connection. The centre is

already one of the largest critical masses of basic and clinical researchers in Europe and works, at the institute for stem cell research, with clinicians from the University of Edinburgh medical school. Shortly, they will be located in another state-of-the-art building, this time on a site adjacent to the Edinburgh royal infirmary at Little France.

That brings me to the really exciting piece of this story, which is the establishment of the Edinburgh BioQuarter in a large greenfield site adjacent to the ERI. Already, more than 1,200 researchers work on the site and, ultimately, it will provide more than 500,000ft² of further academic research space and 900,000ft² of accommodation for commercial, research-based organisations. Working together in that 21st century environment in perfect harmony—well, almost perfect harmony—we will have the university, the NHS and Scottish Development International. The importance of the venture cannot be overestimated, because the synergy that will be created by all those bodies working together will allow the smooth development of scientific discovery into commercial possibility and clinical application—a genuine win-win-win situation if ever there was one.

Members will be relieved to hear that I do not have time to cover the vast areas of scientific work that is taking place in this great city of ours. Heriot-Watt University's research park, which has more than 20 research-based enterprises, is just one more example.

Scotland is not just an integral part of the UK science base, as is suggested in Labour's very parochial amendment, which is supported by the unionist parties—they are always criticising the SNP for thinking small but appear unable to think big themselves. The amendment emphasises those parties' complete poverty of aspiration. Scotland is a key part of the European and world science base, and will remain so long after independence has been gained.

I welcome the strategic framework and commend the motion to Parliament.

15:54

Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab): I declare an interest, in that I am a visiting professor at the University of Strathclyde.

As almost everyone who has spoken today has testified, there is a widespread commitment to science, Scotland and advancing science in Scotland. Supporting science is about much more than merely providing resources; it is about attitudes, approach and society in the widest sense.

However, money merits a mention. The cabinet secretary will be relieved to know that I am not thinking about the most recent spending round, when the settlement for universities in Scotland attracted much criticism. I am thinking of a much more fundamental concern, which Malcolm Chisholm mentioned: the looming funding crisis for Scottish universities relative to universities in the rest of the UK. The current call by vice-chancellors in England for higher fees will intensify the pressure for increased funding north of the border.

Ian McKee: Is the member arguing that we should introduce tuition fees in Scotland, to match fees in England?

Ms Alexander: No. I am saying that, as the Royal Society of Edinburgh said in the briefing to which Linda Fabiani referred, the issue should be addressed

“in a forthright and rigorous manner.”

The issue is developing on this Government's watch and is being debated by academic scientists in every university in the country. It is the elephant in the room, but the cabinet secretary could not bring herself even to acknowledge that the issue is on the table. We do not serve the debate well by not acknowledging that.

However, I do not want to dwell on money. I will use my remaining time to talk about the final aspect of the “Science for Scotland” framework, which is science in society. In its excellent briefing, the RSE drew our attention to the need to raise the level of scientific literacy of all Scots, whether or not they go on to become scientists. The RSE drew attention to the fact that most of us, who are not scientists, gained our knowledge through our experience at school, but school science remains based around learning basic scientific laws. At school, we learn the immutable laws that apply in all circumstances—Newtonian laws of physics, the periodic table in chemistry, biological evidence and so on. In consequence, many non-scientists assume that science is about facts. However, modern science, at the frontier of knowledge, is rarely about facts. Groundbreaking science does not give unambiguous, definitive answers; it leaves uncertainty, for example about potential side effects and risks.

The consequence is that schooling in science in Scotland—in common with many other places—does not prepare people for the real world of science that they meet in later life. I hope that the forthcoming seminar on science in schools will dwell on the issue and that the cabinet secretary will work closely with the RSE on the matter. Part of the challenge in science education is to familiarise pupils past and present with the concept of uncertainty and the provisional nature

of scientific understanding, without eroding confidence in the scientific process.

Fiona Hyslop: Does the member acknowledge that constant assessment might mean that many pupils want to know what they need to pass tests, as opposed to wanting the opportunity to explore and discover? Pupils might want to know something for certain, to pass a test—that might be easier than learning that things are uncertain as part of a life of learning.

Ms Alexander: I agree whole-heartedly. Given the time constraints in the debate, we probably should not pursue the issue now, but I hope that the matter will be pursued at the forthcoming seminar.

Science's contribution to society was explored recently by Professor John Beddington, who is Her Majesty's Government's chief scientific adviser and head of the Government office for science. In a speech to the RSE in Scotland, he outlined how science can come to the rescue in many of the challenges that we face. Members will be pleased that I do not have time to describe how science could come to the rescue on population, demand for food, energy and water and so on. On climate change, which the Parliament will soon debate, Professor Beddington said that science is the only way by which we might be able to meet our target to reduce emissions by 80 per cent by 2050.

Professor Beddington urged policy makers to be guided by scientific evidence. I note in passing that he suggested that we should make a bigger effort on home insulation and energy efficiency, that nuclear energy is, for him, a no-brainer and that genetically modified crops are a key technology, to which we should give time. I understand that those ideas will not find favour with many in the chamber, but it is important that we look to deepen our understanding of the scientific evidence as we move forward on the climate change debate.

Notwithstanding the cabinet secretary's point about the dangers of scientific endeavour simply becoming a question of the number of presentations for formal examinations, there are important issues around the number of presentations. I welcome the cabinet secretary's determination to take a fresh look at that area, and I hope that she will commit to working with the Royal Society of Edinburgh on the curriculum for excellence.

I conclude on the point with which I began. In delivering for Scotland's scientific community, we must deal not simply with issues that we might find more comfortable, such as the school curriculum, but with those that we find uncomfortable, such as challenging our own pet policy positions, whether on genetic modification or nuclear power, and the

importance of Government in Scotland addressing the competitive threat that our universities face in the years ahead.

16:01

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): The cabinet secretary started her speech by rightly indicating that the University of Edinburgh has perhaps the biggest computer in the UK. This is where I start to compete with Linda Fabiani, with my own advertorial for the area that I represent, because the first Apple computer was brought into the Scottish economy through McQueen Ltd of Galashiels.

Scotland's record in developments in information technology and pure science has rightly placed this country on the very top tier of the nations that are associated with science and scientific endeavour. The cabinet secretary—again, rightly—pointed to the work of the Scottish Government in carrying on its predecessor's work on science. While there were elements in her speech that suggested that she was tempted to say that the previous years were barren, I think that the consensus in the Parliament is that the work of the current Government on science continues that of its predecessor. Indeed, previous Liberal Democrat ministers, including Jim Wallace and, in particular, Nicol Stephen, and others recognised not only the benefits of science to the pure benefit of research and learning for the good of the nation, but the key economic benefit of nurturing, supporting and developing the sector. That is why we are still on the path of trying to get even better connections between our universities and private sector investment.

As Ian McKee's tea towel showed, Scotland has a fantastic record in inventing, but we need a much better record in translating inventions into economic, gross domestic product gain for our country. Whether the benefits come from epidemiological research in the health sector—the structure of the NHS in Scotland gives us a competitive edge for such research—or from the Heriot-Watt University school of textiles and design in Galashiels in my constituency, which the cabinet secretary knows well, we can not only be at the cutting edge of research, but develop it further for our economy. As far as Baroness Greenfield, the chancellor of Heriot-Watt University, is concerned, that is on the Scottish universities' agenda.

Members may well have in their wallets the Bank of Scotland £20 note, which is regrettably being phased out. They should be aware that, on one side, the banknote shows an image of Sir Walter Scott, a former constituent of mine; more important for this debate, the other side shows an image of Janet Mullen, a scientist who lives in

Peebles and who is a current constituent of mine. When the image was taken, she was a scientist and technologist at the school of textiles and design in Galashiels. However, as my colleague Alison McInnes said, it was about 20 years before Janet Mullen's identity was publicised. Her work in the area of textiles and design is an image of science that should be recognised and promoted in Scotland, but she was not known for her contribution, which is what I seek to correct.

Alison McInnes also pointed out the complex relationships that exist between different elements of the science community and industry, which have differing priorities and interventions. Ian McKee referred to another constituent of mine, Ian Wilmut, indicating again, if it needed to be reinforced, that we have an outstanding, excellent future in the Edinburgh BioQuarter project. That project was conceived by the previous Administration and is being advanced by the present Administration. Such cross-party, cross-agency developments are necessary, as science requires the Parliament to take a long-term view of its development.

Ian McKee also mentioned the "dense SNP", which, as he indicated, stands for single nucleotide polymorphism. I am not sure whether that is a small particle struggling to break away from a larger particle in a larger fluid, but I am sure that Dr McKee will inform me after the debate. It is by taking a long-term view of the role of science in economic development that we will support businesses such as ProStrakan in my constituency—there is a pattern developing in this speech, as members may well have noticed. A scientist called Harry Stratford moved into the Borders and set up what is likely to be Scotland's most exciting pharmaceutical company. He loved the area and his enthusiasm for his work was infectious.

The same model should be adopted in our schools. Hugh O'Donnell was absolutely right—the existence of an entrepreneurial, exciting and challenging teaching environment for science that is also fun is the best basis on which to make progress. That is why I would like to see more links being made between our universities and our schools, including our primary schools, as part of networks in a different type of teaching. Such a model would involve people talking to local primary schools about climate change or about the new water treatment plant that Scottish Water is building in my area; it would involve people talking about engineering in the local college or university PhD students talking about hygiene. Such a model would be consistent with the Government's strategy and the work that it is doing.

I hope that the consensus on the contribution that science makes to Scotland and, in particular,

to the Borders will be reflected in this afternoon's votes.

16:07

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

This has been an extremely good debate. We have had several excellent speeches on the subject of science from members of different parties. As we have heard throughout the debate, not least from Linda Fabiani, we have a rich and proud history of science innovation and invention. I was somewhat disappointed that more speakers did not give us a long list of historic achievements by Scots in the field of science—I thought that MSPs' researchers would have sought to pad out their members' speeches for six minutes with long lists of historic achievements, but perhaps I am far too cynical.

Like Jeremy Purvis, I enjoyed Ian McKee's reference to "dense SNP". At least on this occasion he did not refer to the Conservative amendment as malicious and evil, although I dare say that he was tempted to.

Science is important for its contribution to learning and the betterment of mankind. In addition, it is a key component of economic growth and wealth creation. Although we support the Government's science strategy, we have a number of concerns on the issue. I will concentrate on two specific points that have come out of the debate.

The first was raised by Elizabeth Smith in her amendment, and it relates to the availability of highers and advanced highers. We will never develop science in our society and our economy unless youngsters in our schools have the opportunity to take science courses and achieve qualifications that might lead them to study science in further and higher education. It must be a real concern that, despite the cabinet secretary's protestations, there are indications that, in some schools, the availability of science as a subject is in decline.

Elizabeth Smith quoted a number of examples of schools in which we are aware that courses in chemistry and/or physics are being cut. That must be of concern to the Scottish Government. A proper mapping exercise must be carried out on the availability of science in our schools, and more must be done to encourage the availability of science subjects.

In the briefing paper that the Royal Society of Edinburgh prepared for the debate, the point is made that schools play a key role in developing people who have an interest in science. That means that we must have enough science teachers and that we must provide them with access to high-quality CPD. The RSE's paper also

refers to the science baccalaureate, which must be properly resourced if it is to be a success.

The second area of concern is in connection with scientific research in our universities. The Royal Society of Edinburgh and the campaign for science and engineering in the UK have highlighted their concerns about the funding of Scottish universities. As we have heard during the debate, there is a concern that Scottish universities are becoming less competitive relative to universities elsewhere in the UK because of the current funding settlement.

I and my colleagues, and members of other parties, have raised the issue in the chamber and elsewhere on many occasions in the past year. Some of our concerns were highlighted by Dr Brian Lang, the recently retired principal of the University of St Andrews—he has been well quoted in the debate already—when he spoke at the inaugural meeting of the proposed cross-party group on Scottish universities last week.

The cabinet secretary will know that there is real concern in the university sector that universities in England, with their ability to charge top-up tuition fees, are becoming better funded than universities in Scotland. That means that English universities are better placed to attract talented individuals and corporate investment, and can compete more effectively for research funding.

As Wendy Alexander said, even this week, a debate has been initiated by universities down south for the current cap on tuition fees to be lifted. While we cannot say for certain whether that will happen, it is clear that it is a real and present threat to Scottish universities.

In its briefing paper, the RSE says:

"At the moment it is not clear how Scotland might match the increasing resources coming to English universities through top-up fees. It is vital that this issue is addressed in a forthright and rigorous manner."

At the proposed cross-party group's meeting last week, Brian Lang called again for an independent review of universities in Scotland to consider what universities are for, how they are funded and who should control them. I am pleased to endorse that call. It is a stance that is winning increasing support throughout the university sector. The Scottish Government cannot continue to sit on its hands and pretend that there is no problem to be addressed.

That leads me to a related issue that Rhona Brankin addressed in her amendment: access to research funding. Such funding is currently derived from United Kingdom research councils and, at present, Scottish universities punch above their weight and attract a greater share of research funding at the UK level than we would be entitled to simply on a population basis. The logic of the

Government's position is that that research funding would be devolved, because the Government wants everything to be devolved. However, that would have the consequence of cutting research funding to Scottish universities. It is not surprising that the Government's approach is vigorously opposed by everyone in the higher education and science sectors.

Fiona Hyslop: By whom, and when, has the devolution of research funding been argued for?

Murdo Fraser: I would have thought that a party that argues for independence would not hesitate to argue for the devolution of research funding. Presumably, if we were independent we would not still be participating in the UK research set-up, but perhaps the cabinet secretary, in her winding-up speech, can clarify SNP policy on that area. A move to devolve that funding, or indeed a move towards becoming independent, would be directly contrary to Scottish universities' interests and should be vigorously resisted.

There are many more points that I could touch on, but time does not allow. I believe that we will get our science strategy right only if we get science education right, which means having the science teachers in place and making science courses in schools available to all interested pupils. For that reason, I am pleased to support the amendment in the name of Elizabeth Smith.

16:13

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I am pleased to take part in the debate. Like many arts graduates, my connection with science came to an end not long after second year at high school, when it no longer seemed relevant, yet our day-to-day contact with science and all that it generates has become greater and greater. Our growing interest in our health, in the environment and in meeting our energy needs increasingly demands a science-literate society.

There has been a broad welcome for the "Science for Scotland" framework, and a will throughout the Parliament to see it implemented. As many members have said, Scotland has been a world leader in scientific research, but the environment in which that reputation has been built is becoming increasingly competitive. Scotland faces challenges to its position, with the prospect of those who work in the sector being attracted by developments abroad. We need to be ready to respond to that.

We all want Scotland to remain a magnet for talent and investment but we need to be serious about the challenges that we face, particularly on university funding. Many concerns have been raised recently by university leaders regarding Government investment.

In its briefing for members, the Campaign for Science and Engineering in the UK raised its concern that the strategy is weak on the policy and budgetary commitments that would deliver the vision, with which it is broadly in agreement. The Government's intention to monitor and report to the Parliament on progress is welcome and perhaps goes some way towards that. However, in the current economic climate, a bolder response is needed. If the Government heeded Rhona Brankin's call to match the Prime Minister's commitment on science funding, that would be a welcome start. I look forward to the minister's response on that in closing.

Several key issues have been addressed in the debate. The TIMSS survey clearly identifies challenges for schools, and those points were well made today by Malcolm Chisholm. The survey paints a picture of Scotland standing still while other nations make progress; the weak stages for science are identified as late primary and early secondary education. The RSE, in its briefing, raised wider concerns about the implementation and content of the curriculum for excellence. Again, those points were made by Malcolm Chisholm. I appreciate that discussions on the issue are continuing. The cabinet secretary might want to refer to those in closing.

Students must be confident in the nuts and bolts of science subjects, and it is vital that teachers are suitably supported through greater investment in CPD. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the TIMSS report has led to major increases in staff CPD. However, as Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education's chief inspector, Chris MacIlroy, said in evidence:

"There was no parallel massive-scale CPD here."—
[*Official Report, Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee*, 11 February 2009; c 2027.]

Nevertheless, I very much welcome the forthcoming schools science summit, which the cabinet secretary mentioned. There are clearly issues that need to be addressed.

I am pleased that the contribution of colleges was recognised in the debate by Hugh O'Donnell. Science has always been seen as something that happens only in universities, where the significant bulk of the research takes place, but that is not the case. The different learning styles that are offered by colleges in science, engineering, technology and maths offer routes to achievement for students who might not otherwise consider working in those sectors.

As the briefing from the Association of Scotland's Colleges identifies, Scotland's economic recovery will rely to a significant extent on innovation, and colleges play an important part in that. The breadth of skills that is needed in the science-based industries is delivered not just by

universities. Well versed in partnership working, colleges can provide a key route to the improvement of skills and the generation of new knowledge. A great example of that is Forth Valley College and Heriot-Watt University, which, in partnership with INEOS, have created a five-year programme that offers students a blue-collar/white-collar qualification. That programme is merging research and skills with industry and creating the kind of graduates that we need to build the science sector.

I acknowledge Alison McInnes's contribution to the debate on the subject of women in science. I am pleased that the cabinet secretary is responding positively on the issue.

Several members focused on the contribution to science that is made by universities. Scottish higher education institutions currently receive around 12 per cent of UK research funding, which, as other members have recognised, shows that Scotland is punching above its weight. Scottish universities recently demonstrated that they are at the cutting edge of innovation in the latest RAE.

Nevertheless, we are familiar with the funding challenges that Scotland faces, as outlined by Murdo Fraser in his closing comments. As Wendy Alexander said, only this week we heard reports of chancellors in English universities calling for the cap on tuition fees to be raised. Although we do not know when or whether the UK Government will go down that road, it presents the potential for greater pressure on Scottish university funding, especially as the "New Horizons" report commits funding in Scotland to broad comparability with funding in the rest of the UK. If we see increased investment in universities in England, how will the Scottish Government keep up?

There are questions around the additional funding that has been mooted in the strategy for knowledge exchange. The simple question is this: when will that funding be made available? What is the timescale for the shift in priorities within the horizon fund? I look forward to the minister addressing those points in closing. The Scottish Government must do better than the financial settlement that has been offered to universities for the current spending review period if we are to ensure that universities and research institutes in Scotland are able to compete within the UK and globally for research funding, for talented individuals and for corporate investment.

I welcome the strategy's recommendation that the Scottish Government enhance links with the UK Government, research councils and the EU. It is important that the Scottish ministers engage in UK and EU policy debates. In closing, the minister may be able to give an update on the work that Lord Drayson, the UK science minister, is

undertaking on the future direction of UK science funding.

Although our universities lead on research, our businesses do not engage with R and D to the level that they must if we are to grow and innovate. There are notable successes in Scotland, which have been highlighted by Linda Fabiani and Ian McKee, although Jeremy Purvis probably won the competition with references to successes in his constituency.

A continuing challenge is how to translate the excellent research in our universities into a greater research base that is utilised in R and D. We need a much stronger pull from business—I welcome the challenges to business that are set out in the framework—but we also need a greater push from Government to stimulate demand in the business sector. We need to link and match research and researchers in universities and colleges to private, public and third-sector bodies.

Scotland was built on Scottish ingenuity within the UK. Many of the leading scientific breakthroughs in history have happened in our country within the UK and in partnership with UK institutions. Indeed, today's huge breakthrough in research into quantum computers that the cabinet secretary mentioned involved the University of Manchester and the University of Edinburgh. In science as in other areas, Scotland clearly benefits hugely from being part of the UK. It is naive to assume that we would have the same relationship with the research councils under a changed constitutional arrangement. The Labour amendment highlights the RSE's strong concerns about the need for Scotland to continue to engage with UK research councils, so I was disappointed by the cabinet secretary's dismissal of those concerns.

We all know that science graduates are crucial to the future of our country. Science graduates get jobs. Research shows that 58 per cent of science graduates are in full-time employment within six months of graduating, compared with 50 per cent of business graduates, 38 per cent of sport, leisure and care services graduates and 26 per cent of arts graduates.

As we are all aware, our universities and colleges are capable of producing world-class researchers and have been doing so for hundreds of years. The challenge for the Government is to bring together those winning ingredients by backing up the science strategy's warm words with funding and with action.

16:21

Fiona Hyslop: This helpful debate has drawn out a range of useful and, indeed, interesting contributions. One of the more interesting was that

of Jeremy Purvis, who claimed Sir Walter Scott as a former constituent. I had not realised that Jeremy Purvis would cast himself as the Benjamin Button of the Scottish Parliament.

There has been no disagreement today on science's contribution to the economy. Indeed, that is a vital part of Scotland's economic recovery plan. Ensuring that we make that a reality is a task not just for our public agencies but for us all, in the sense that we must present a united and clear message on that to the rest of the world.

We have all agreed that developing individuals is key to ensuring that we have the skills necessary to meet tomorrow's demands. As well as through formal education, we need to do that, as Wendy Alexander said, by encouraging the public to take an interest in science. Our science campaign is off to a flying start, with many schools already participating in a custard run—to demonstrate that custard is both a liquid and a solid.

The education summit in May will be key in helping to ensure that we reverse the trends that have emerged since April 2002, as outlined in the TIMSS report. I advise Malcolm Chisholm that the RSE is involved in the curriculum for excellence, in which it is helping particularly on the chemistry agenda. I also gently remind Hugh O'Donnell that the TIMSS report covers the period 2003 to 2007, during which time his party was, as part of the Government, in charge of education.

There has been an upturn in interest in school science subjects, which is an interesting point. I hear the concerns that have been expressed, but I reiterate that, between 2007 and 2008, the number of entrants for higher and advanced higher across the science subjects increased. In addition, there has been a positive reaction to the baccalaureates, whose focus on science will help the economy.

I was interested in Hugh O'Donnell's reference to college science, which is an important issue that should be raised as part of this debate.

In a very thoughtful and informed speech, Alison McInnes prioritised the issue of involving women in the science agenda. She is quite right to ask why stakeholders did not consider that a priority in their responses to the consultation. In itself, that identifies a deep-seated and deep-rooted problem that must be addressed. I am more than willing to take up that challenge and take on that agenda.

We have all agreed that supporting our academic science base and celebrating the scientific advances of our scientists will help to attract new investment and raise Scotland's profile in the world. We will ensure that clear and consistent messages on that are contributed by

giving prominence to the ground-breaking work in which our scientists are engaged.

Rhona Brankin highlighted the issue of funding, as did several other members. Rhona Brankin wanted more money for universities, local government and science, but I do not remember Labour proposing anything in that direction in the recent budget negotiations.

I acknowledge that an important point has been made about the possibility that the cap on fees in England will be lifted, but I remind the Parliament that, for that to happen, the Treasury would need to meet the costs upfront and bankroll that. At a time of tight public spending, that has become less possible than it might have been in the past.

I want to quote David Eastwood, who is the chief executive of the Higher Education Funding Council for England—he is about to be replaced by Alan Langlands. In November 2008, David Eastwood urged universities in England to dampen their expectations. Speaking at the council's annual general meeting in London, he said:

"Institutions would be foolish to plan on the assumption that there will be an early rise in the fee cap. I think it's inconceivable that the cap will rise significantly before 2013."

Perhaps Wendy Alexander and others are more informed about what the Westminster Government wants to do, but the point that Mr Eastwood made is important, and we must consider it in addressing the points that members raised in the debate.

On scientific research, Ian McKee made the important point that 20 per cent of the UK's pharmaceutical research takes place in Scotland. He eloquently extolled the contribution of the science base in the Lothians. Particularly against the backdrop of the current world economic situation, we all agree that we need more than ever to encourage business innovation and increase the demand for science.

I say to Claire Baker in particular that the horizon fund is already being used for knowledge exchange. That is particularly important for companies as they seek just to survive the current difficulties, but we must also keep our eye on the horizon. The voucher scheme that we introduced recently will help companies that have perhaps decided not to take projects forward to think again.

Claire Baker: On the funding for knowledge transfer, the strategy clearly commits to greater investment in the area, but does the cabinet secretary have any idea what the timescale for that will be? At present, the horizon fund is a limited pot of money and the funding has already been accepted by universities. When and how will the cabinet secretary create the shift to greater investment?

Fiona Hyslop: I am sure that the member is aware that the Scottish funding council makes allocations to individual institutions. The existing pot of resources for the current spending review period will be allocated as part of that process in the next few months. The member will see the direction that is taken as the horizon fund is implemented for individual institutions. However, I reiterate that it is already being used for knowledge exchange, and the voucher system is an example of that.

We recognise the international aspects of what we have to do. Hugh O'Donnell raised the issue of scientists and the importance of their international perspective. Ian McKee was absolutely right to stress Scotland's integration not just with the rest of the UK science base, but with the European science base, the European framework, and indeed the global science base. In ensuring that Scotland's science profile is better appreciated throughout the world, we need to ensure that it is integrated with our international strategy, and the Government is doing that.

Murdo Fraser: Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

Fiona Hyslop: I am conscious of the time. I am afraid that I need to move on.

The saltire prize will be a beacon for activity around our international profile in the coming years.

On connections, the Scottish Science Advisory Committee is helping us to ensure that we have further collaborations. That initiative is a model of what can be achieved through collaborations. Research pooling has been extremely successful. We can see that in economics and other areas in which we have perhaps not performed well previously. In such areas, we are seeing excellent results across the board from the RAE.

In "Science for Scotland", we have set out the path that we will take. We will publish reports on progress as we proceed. There is much to look forward to, and there are many challenges. The vision in the framework sets out a national mission for science in Scotland. We have seen other economies achieve remarkable growth as science nations by harnessing a common will to regard science as the future, and that is where we, too, should try to be. I invite members to support the framework. Many people in the science community in Scotland will be watching and listening to our debate, and I hope that members will show them support by supporting the motion.

Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Bill

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The next item of business is a debate on legislative consent motion S3M-3652, in the name of Kenny MacAskill, on the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation.

16:30

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): The motion seeks approval for the UK Parliament to apply provisions in sections 1 to 4 of the UK Borders Act 2007 to Scotland. Those sections allow a designated immigration officer to detain for up to three hours, pending the arrival of the police, somebody who is subject to an outstanding arrest warrant. That provision will ensure that Scotland's borders are as secure as those elsewhere in the UK and that Scotland cannot be perceived as an easy way in.

Currently, there is a potential loophole in the law that could mean that an immigration officer would have to allow a wanted person to enter or leave Scotland in spite of the officer being aware of an outstanding arrest warrant. The provision will put Scotland on a par with the rest of the UK, but with appropriate safeguards. In practice, matters will be largely unchanged. Police are routinely present at our major sea ports and airports; even when they are not, notification of passenger data normally allows immigration officers to alert them in advance.

I turn to issues that were raised in the Justice Committee's report on the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Bill. I am grateful for that committee's thorough consideration, and I have acted on its concerns as far as possible. It identified concerns that the Scottish Refugee Council raised, which highlighted that UK Border Agency staff in Scotland may not be subject to as rigorous a complaints mechanism as that in England and Wales. I wrote to the minister of state responsible for that issue at the Home Office, Phil Woolas, and reiterated the committee's concern that a clear position needs to be established on how allegations of non-criminal misconduct against immigration officers are managed.

Powers exist that allow the Home Secretary to make an agreement with the police complaints commissioner for Scotland, so that the commissioner can review complaints that have been made against immigration officers in the same manner as complaints that have been made against police officers, but such an agreement is not yet in place. I have asked for all possible steps to be taken to establish such an agreement as

soon as possible. Clause 54(11) of the bill provides that the Scottish ministers are to be consulted before the power of detention is commenced. I have stressed to the UK Government that I would not support commencement until the position on complaints is clear. It is clear that any immigration officer who is charged with a criminal offence is dealt with under the normal course of events. Mr Woolas responded to my letter yesterday, and provided a reassurance that steps were being taken to resolve the matter as soon as possible. I have sent a copy of the exchange to the Justice Committee.

The Law Society of Scotland and the Scottish Refugee Council expressed concerns about clause 50, which would make it possible for immigration judicial reviews to be moved from the Court of Session to the UK immigration tribunal. Clause 50 is not relevant to the legislative consent motion, as it does not touch on devolved matters, but as we have an interest in the effective management of the Scottish courts, we asked the UK Government not to proceed with that provision before the recommendations of our on-going civil court review under Lord Gill are known. The Scottish judges asked for the same consideration. Unfortunately, the UK Government has chosen to plough ahead with clause 50 regardless, and the current devolution settlement prevents us from stopping it. The Scottish Government does not have power over that, and the matter is not within the domain or control of the Parliament.

Those aspects are concerning, but they are for another day and another forum. As I said, the Scottish Government has reiterated its position, and I am conscious that there are significant concerns around the chamber. If it is thought that the mood of the Parliament about how the UK Government is acting on clause 50 should be expressed, I will be more than happy to do that.

However, I call on members to support the motion today. Opposing it will do nothing to change the UK Government's position on clause 50. As I say, concerns raised by the Scottish Refugee Council remain to be addressed. However, if we do not support the motion, we will leave a loophole that could allow criminals to enter or leave our country when they could and should be stopped. The motion will help to close that loophole and will ensure that immigration officers can support the police in tackling crime effectively.

I am aware of the concerns that were raised by the Justice Committee. One particular matter is being addressed by Mr Woolas, and I ask members to accept his indications of support and action in the spirit in which they have been offered.

I understand the concerns over clause 50, which have been expressed in the chamber and

elsewhere. However, those concerns are for another day. The Government will be more than happy to take up those concerns, but I ask that the motion is supported, in order to close the loophole and ensure that people who are subject to a warrant cannot access or egress Scotland with impunity.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that the relevant provisions of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Bill, introduced in the House of Lords on 14 January 2009, relating to the power of detention for individuals subject to an outstanding arrest warrant and their enforcement, so far as these matters fall within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament, should be considered by the UK Parliament.

16:36

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab): Labour supports this legislative consent motion because it is important that our borders are perceived as having the same levels of security as those of the rest of the United Kingdom. However, some valid questions have been raised about a couple of issues relating to the legislative consent motion, and it is right that we have the opportunity to discuss those questions in Parliament today.

The UK Government is acting to strengthen the law in relation to the security of borders, and it is important that this Parliament takes action to ensure that the same legislative provision can apply here in Scotland. At the Justice Committee, the cabinet secretary pointed out the legal loophole whereby an immigration officer would have to allow a wanted person to enter or leave Scotland even if the officer was aware of an outstanding arrest warrant in that person's name. It is indeed important that immigration officers in Scotland are given the same powers as their counterparts in England and Wales, so that they have powers of detention with the appropriate safeguards. We think that the effect of the legislative consent motion will strike the right balance between giving police officers primacy in enforcing the law in such areas and allowing immigration officers to detain someone who is subject to a warrant for three hours until the police arrive.

Because of the presence of police at the vast majority of locations in Scotland that are points of arrival and departure, the powers may require to be used only infrequently. Nevertheless, it is important that immigration officers here have the same powers as officers in the rest of the UK, so that we are not perceived as having any weaker border controls. It is of course right to have the appropriate powers in place to deal with every eventuality, and I understand from the cabinet secretary's evidence to the committee that the police support this measure.

As the cabinet secretary said, the Justice Committee's report pointed out two concerns expressed by the Scottish Refugee Council about the legislation. The first is the SRC's concern that the enforcement powers of UK Border Agency staff in Scotland would not be subject to the same degree of scrutiny and accountability as in England and Wales, as asylum seekers and others subject to enforcement powers in Scotland would not have parity of recourse to an independent and direct complaints mechanism. However, the cabinet secretary has sensibly suggested that the police complaints commissioner for Scotland could be given powers to oversee certain complaints made about UK Border Agency staff. I understand that the cabinet secretary has written to the Justice Committee with information on further progress on the issue; and this afternoon he has assured the chamber that he is in further dialogue with UK ministers. We seem to be moving sensibly and effectively in the right direction, which we welcome.

The second SRC concern has also been expressed by the Law Society of Scotland. It relates to clause 50 and to the transfer of two classes of work away from the Court of Session—immigration appeals and judicial review, which would instead go to an upper tier tribunal. Clearly, that would have practical impacts. Further dialogue on those points between Home Office ministers and the cabinet secretary would be welcome as the bill progresses through Westminster. I do not want to pre-empt any wider view from my group on the points, but I think that it is fair to say that I look forward to being in further contact with the cabinet secretary. Valid concerns have been raised, and I hope that there can be further constructive dialogue among ministers here and at UK level.

Clearly, the overarching priority is to ensure that Scotland has the same appropriate ability to secure its borders as the rest of the United Kingdom has. I therefore once more confirm our support for this legislative consent motion.

16:40

Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con): When this matter came before the Justice Committee, a series of concerns were expressed. We can claim that some progress has been made and that we have got the system going in order that the matter can be resolved satisfactorily.

There was a loophole that simply had to be plugged. We would not wish to live in even more of a soft-touch Scotland than exists today. It is extremely important that we ensure that our component of the borders of the still United Kingdom is kept secure.

That said, there were complaints. The issues raised by the Scottish Refugee Council had some veracity and were of concern to the Justice Committee. Somebody—either here or, more probably, at Westminster—should have anticipated that this situation would arise somewhere down the line and it should have been sorted long before we got to this stage. However, it is a common-sense approach to have the police complaints commissioner for Scotland carry out the appropriate inquiries in the event of allegations of misconduct. It is one of those situations where things are much simpler if the misconduct is criminal misconduct, because it is then investigated purely by the police and the procurator fiscal, in accordance with any other criminal allegations. Of course, the allegations that we are talking about would not be criminal misconduct but concern the way in which individuals had been treated by officials at an airport, for example.

We are perhaps talking in a bit of a vacuum in that these situations will not arise frequently, because, as Richard Baker said, police officers will almost invariably be in attendance. However, even in the best organised society, things happen. We might face a situation whereby, if there were no police officers present, the UK Border Agency might get itself into some sort of confrontational situation. There clearly has to be some recourse in the event of that happening and a complaint being made.

This is work in progress. I note from the correspondence that the cabinet secretary sent yesterday that discussions are on-going. It is perhaps a bit of pity that those discussions did not take place earlier.

I turn to clause 50 and its application. It is perhaps a little unfortunate that the Westminster Government is taking a wee bit of a hard-nosed attitude in that respect. The Justice Committee and, I would like to think, all members of the Parliament take Scots law very seriously indeed and would seek to protect its powers. We have a situation whereby appeals would be taken out of the Court of Session and transferred down south, which is regrettable.

The cabinet secretary will be aware that he has in his office other correspondence from me about appeals against tribunals in general. I received a phone call earlier today from one of his officials indicating the extent of the work that has been carried out on that. I hope that I will have a reply next week that I can share with my colleagues on the Justice Committee about the general aspect of tribunal appeals being transferred.

It is a little unfortunate that the change is being introduced while we are awaiting the report of the Lord Justice Clerk on the full review of civil law

procedures in Scotland. If we had waited a matter of a few weeks, we could have resolved the situation in perhaps a tidier manner.

There is no great issue. I maintain that the Justice Committee was correct to have the matter debated in the chamber, albeit in a half-hour slot. What has happened has enabled a lot of clarity to come in through our encouraging the cabinet secretary—although I know that he was quite willing—to write to his opposite number at Westminster and to get a reply that allays our concerns, at least partially.

16:45

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): The Liberal Democrats support the primary purpose of the legislative consent motion, for the reasons that the cabinet secretary set out. Indeed, the co-operation that has developed on justice matters between the cabinet secretary and his UK colleagues is gratifyingly warm to the cockles of one's heart.

In debating legislative consent motions, it is always necessary to distinguish between issues of substance in the Scottish Parliament's sphere of competence on which we legitimately empower Westminster to legislate and issues on which we may not like the UK Government view—and on which we want to express strong opinions—but which are nevertheless a matter for the House of Commons and the House of Lords to sort out and decide on. There is a view that Scots law in its entirety is the preserve only of this chamber. That is not, of course, the case. Scots law is largely the preserve of this chamber, but bits of it—immigration law is a good example—are the preserve of the reserved jurisdiction at Westminster.

The LCM raises both kinds of issues. An example of an issue of substance is the matter of the oversight of complaints about UK Border Agency staff and various linked issues of training and information, which I hope are being resolved. I am grateful to the cabinet secretary for the copies of correspondence that he made available in that regard. As the convener of the Justice Committee said, the office of the police complaints commissioner for Scotland is the proper and reasonable forum in which to deal with the matter.

Other members have also mentioned the substantial concerns that the Law Society of Scotland, the Scottish Refugee Council and others have raised. I turn first to concerns about clause 50 on the transfer away from the Court of Session of jurisdiction in immigration appeals and judicial reviews on immigration cases. We all can take a jaundiced view on why the Government in London may be in such a hurry to do that. Immigration has become a sensitive point of contact, with the views

of many MSPs on the subject differing from the view of the Labour Government in London. We can question the need for such haste on some aspects of the bill, particularly against the background of the review of civil procedure and tribunals.

It is a matter of regret that no separate consultation was undertaken on the transfer of jurisdiction. It is also unsatisfactory that the transfer pre-empts the civil justice review, particularly given the clear intention of reducing the rights of refugees. In addition, the arrangements for the proposed replacement of the Court of Session with the so-called upper tier tribunal are entirely unclear. We do not yet have an assurance that a judge will be present in every case and at every stage. These are matters of reserved jurisdiction for our colleague MPs at Westminster to consider. However, it is undoubtedly the case that they raise substantive issues on the quality and independence of the rule of law in these situations and the position of the Scottish courts, in which we have the primary interest.

The second area of concern, which has not been touched on thus far in the debate, is that the UK Government—itself a party to immigration cases—apparently wants to write the tribunal rules. Clearly, the tribunal is a reserved matter, but it will be something of an outrage in terms of natural justice and independent decision making if that ends up being the position. The Scottish Government can engage with the Westminster Government on behalf of the Scottish Parliament on broader issues that are beyond our formal powers, even if they are reserved. It is entirely appropriate for the chamber to ask the cabinet secretary to take forward such matters on behalf of the Scottish Parliament.

In his recent correspondence, the cabinet secretary did not raise the issues that I have just highlighted. I hope that he will express to the UK Government the concerns across the Parliament on these matters, and in fairly forceful terms. I am asking him to pray in aid the keen interest of the Scottish Parliament on the standing of and independence from Government of the Scottish judicial system.

Given that we are debating reserved matters, members on the Liberal Democrat benches do not intend to oppose the LCM. That said, like the Justice Committee, we feel entirely justified in saying that the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government should be able to express concern to Westminster on such matters. The committee consideration that preceded today's chamber debate, and this debate, have given members useful opportunities to raise these issues.

The subject of immigration always gives rise to difficult issues. We need think only of Dungavel and dawn removals. The people of Scotland are concerned about many of these issues. The LCM falls into the same ball park. It is appropriate that the Parliament should speak out on these issues.

16:49

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Robert Brown says that there are “concerns across the Parliament”. In this part of the chamber, there is astonishment and dismay about the legislative consent motion that is before us. I understand that the UK Government and the main Opposition party at Westminster are beginning to obsess about “protecting our borders”, out of all proportion to the extent of any problem or its impact, and I recognise that at least some of those who once competed for the crown of being “tough on crime” are now competing for the crown of being tough on foreigners.

I have not just mild concerns about, but fundamental objections to the LCM, the first of which is to the police-like powers that may be exercised by immigration officers. There are reasons why, in establishing a Scottish Parliament, we took the view that the police should be under the devolved competence of this Parliament and the Scottish Executive, as it was then. As an MSP, I do not want to control the design of the uniforms that they wear or the sign over their headquarters doors; it is the exercise of powers that is important. If the proposed powers are to be given to the self-same immigration officers who have been kicking in doors in Glasgow at 6 in the morning and dragging children from their mothers’ arms, we should not just be expressing concern; we should fundamentally be saying no, that is not acceptable.

The Court of Session offers critical protection to people in the asylum system who appeal against the wrong decisions that are often taken by tribunals. How can we justify taking that critical right of appeal away from the Court of Session and out of the justice system, and giving it to the tribunal system, a system whose purpose is not to deliver justice but to say no to the maximum number of people? It is clear that the immigration tribunal system is designed for that purpose. Anyone who has witnessed its operation in Glasgow or elsewhere should share that view. It is a mockery of justice to argue that a fair appeal could be heard at that tribunal, which is the same body that made the decision in the first place.

I agree with the Scottish Refugee Council, which says:

“it is highly questionable whether this Tribunal”,

which

“writes its own Rules ... will in fact have the status and independence of the Court of Session and hence whether this contentious area of law will continue to receive the ... scrutiny it requires.”

I agree with the council, and I would go further: it would be a mockery of justice.

There are other issues in the bill, some of which are devolved and some of which are not. Some of them seem as if they should be covered by the LCM, but are not. Clause 47, for example, allows an additional condition to be imposed on those who are granted leave to remain—a condition restricting their studies in the United Kingdom. The Scottish Government has done far better than its predecessor in allowing asylum seekers and refugees who have been granted leave to remain to take up opportunities to study. Do we really want to wave our hands and say to the UK Government that it can impose restrictions on those whom we wish to welcome as valued citizens to Scotland and as valued contributors to our society, and that it can now restrict their right to study?

Should we examine the powers that have been exercised in relation to children? Do we see anything in the bill that would end the detention of children? Even the UK Government has accepted that that is clearly in breach of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Any bill on immigration that sought to put some compassion back into the system would scrap the detention of children. But no, there is not a word in the bill to that effect.

I ask the cabinet secretary this: do his party colleagues at Westminster, including the First Minister, who represents his constituency at Westminster, intend to vote for or against the bill? If they are voting for it, what does that say about their track record in relation to asylum seekers and refugees? If they will vote against the bill, why on earth is the SNP introducing an LCM to approve parts of it for Scotland?

16:54

Kenny MacAskill: There have been three clear issues in the debate and there is uniformity from Mr Baker, Mr Aitken and Mr Brown about how to deal with the issues before us.

To Patrick Harvie I say that the bill is being considered at Westminster and it is for those who have been elected there to address it. As a Government, we have made our position on clause 50 quite clear and I am happy to reiterate that point.

The issue before us involves dealing with a small existing loophole. A person who is subject to a warrant and whom we do not wish to access or egress Scotland could enter or leave. The

measure will give immigration officers at ports—sea or air—powers to detain such people for three hours until a police officer arrives. I make it clear to Patrick Harvie that the measure is not designated against foreigners; it is designated against anyone who is subject to a warrant. That is what matters, whether the person is a Scottish citizen seeking to leave or somebody from abroad seeking to come in.

At an airport, when a police officer is not available, it might be clear to a UK Border Agency immigration official that a person whom they think should be detained is about to enter or to leave, which is perhaps more likely. Rather than allow that person to escape without justice being served, the official will be able to detain them for three hours and hand them into the custody of a Scottish police officer. Nothing more is being asked. Nothing is being specified against anybody on the basis of their nationality or immigration status. The issue is whether somebody is subject to a warrant. If they are, and if a police officer is not present, it is appropriate that we should allow a UK Border Agency officer to detain them for a maximum of three hours, until a police officer arrives.

Patrick Harvie: Will the cabinet secretary explain why he, as a Scottish National Party cabinet secretary, thinks that those functions should be under the control of a UK agency and not a Scottish one?

Kenny MacAskill: The functions will not be under the control of that agency, because primacy is given to the Scottish police force. The measure has the consent of the Scottish police, who see merit in it. We will allow Border Agency officials to detain somebody for a maximum of three hours if a police officer is not present. If police officers at Edinburgh or Glasgow airports are called away for some reason, rather than allow somebody to avoid justice and to endanger our communities or other communities, Border Agency officials should have the power to detain that person for three hours, and no more. Primacy will remain with the Scottish police force. That is why I welcome the support from Justice Committee members.

We acknowledge that the issues to do with the police complaints commissioner for Scotland are being addressed and we welcome the co-operation from Phil Woolas and the Home Office on that.

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): Will the cabinet secretary give way on that point?

Kenny MacAskill: Let me make progress, as I am short of time.

I turn to the final outstanding matter, which relates to clause 50 of the bill. Tribunals are a

complex matter as some are entirely devolved, some are hybrids and some are entirely reserved. The Government believes that the UK Government has acted inappropriately in ignoring our and the judiciary's request to delay the process because we have an on-going review of the structure of civil courts and law in Scotland. I am more than happy to join other members in raising the issue and making it clear that we would prefer Lord Gill to be given the necessary time and space to complete his review before the clauses to do with tribunals are addressed. I ask members of other political parties to ensure that their representatives in Westminster make those points.

Jeremy Purvis: Will the cabinet secretary give way?

Kenny MacAskill: I do not have time.

I am happy to go back to the UK Government to make it clear that many members in the Parliament have expressed the view that the UK Government's attitude is not as we would wish. We cannot do anything about that.

I ask members to vote for the motion as it is not, as Mr Harvie suggested, about prejudicing anybody on the basis of their nationality; instead, it is about ensuring that people who are subject to a warrant cannot access or leave our country, thereby endangering others and fleeing justice. The motion is not about removing powers from the Scottish police; it will allow minimum detention powers to the UK Border Agency to ensure that our communities remain safer and stronger. The measure has the consent of the Scottish police force, which under no circumstances would allow another organisation to take over its role and remit.

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): I must suspend the sitting until 5 o'clock.

16:59

Meeting suspended.

17:00

On resuming—

Decision Time

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):

There are 13 questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S3M-3727.3, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, which seeks to amend motion S3M-3727, in the name of Sarah Boyack, on forestry, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The second question is, that amendment S3M-3727.2, in the name of John Scott, which seeks to amend motion S3M-3727, in the name of Sarah Boyack, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The third question is, that amendment S3M-3727.4, in the name of Jim Hume, which also seeks to amend motion S3M-3727, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The fourth question is, that motion S3M-3727, in the name of Sarah Boyack, on forestry, as amended, be agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

That the Parliament notes the unanimous recommendation of the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee that the Scottish Government drop proposals for leasing up to 25% of the Forestry Commission estate for a period of 75 years; notes that the Forestry Commission makes a major contribution to the economy of Scotland and can also make a major contribution towards helping Scotland meet its climate change targets; welcomes the decision of the Scottish Government to amend the Climate Change Bill to remove the relevant clauses; calls on the Scottish Government to bring forward its review of the operation of the Scotland Rural Development Programme urgently, including reviewing the level awarded for grants, and to pursue proposals for joint ventures to deliver renewables projects in the Forestry Commission estate; considers that all forestry proposals in future must be part of an integrated land-use strategy, and further calls on the Scottish Government to introduce a comprehensive sustainable land-use strategy, taking into account the strategic economic, social and environmental impacts and benefits of forestry, agriculture, recreation and other land uses and setting out, where appropriate, the contribution each can make in dealing with the consequences of climate change.

The Presiding Officer: The fifth question is, that amendment S3M-3726.1.1, in the name of Bill Aitken, which seeks to amend amendment S3M-3726.1, in the name of Kenny MacAskill, on police numbers, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (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, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)

Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, 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)
 Whittton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 16, Against 61, Abstentions 46.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The sixth question is, that amendment S3M-3726.1, in the name of Kenny MacAskill, which seeks to amend motion S3M-3726, in the name of Richard Baker, on police numbers, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)

Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (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)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)

Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 47, Against 60, Abstentions 16.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The seventh question is, that amendment S3M-3726.2, in the name of Robert Brown, which also seeks to amend motion S3M-3726, in the name of Richard Baker, on police numbers, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (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)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, 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)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)

Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 58, Against 65, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The eighth question is, that motion S3M-3726, in the name of Richard Baker, on police numbers, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament believes that the Scottish Government must ensure that there are 17,265 full-time equivalent police officers by March 2011, calculated on the basis currently used by the Chief Statistician in the

reporting of the official Police Officer Quarterly Strength Statistics, for the SNP's stated manifesto pledge for 1,000 more police officers to be met.

The Presiding Officer: The ninth question is, that amendment S3M-3728.1, in the name of Rhona Brankin, which seeks to amend motion S3M-3728, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on science in Scotland, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)
McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 58, Against 64, Abstentions 1.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The 10th question is, that amendment S3M-3728.3, in the name of Elizabeth Smith, which also seeks to amend motion S3M-3728, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)

Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)

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 77, Against 46, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The 11th question is, that amendment S3M-3728.2, in the name of Alison McInnes, which also seeks to amend motion S3M-3728, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The 12th question is, that motion S3M-3728, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, on science in Scotland, as amended, be agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

That the Parliament welcomes the publication of the Scottish Government's strategic framework for science, *Science for Scotland*, on 27 November 2008; agrees with its vision for Scotland as a nation of world-class scientific achievement, a magnet for talent and for investment and a powerhouse of technology, innovation, enterprise and increasing sustainable economic growth; supports the strong message that *Science for Scotland* sends out to Scotland and the world about this vision; agrees that maintaining a strong science base in Scotland is vital because it will underpin economic growth, help improve public services, enhance quality of life and help solve the world's most pressing problems; notes the detailed ambitions and commitments made around the five themes of *Science for Scotland* about developing individuals, scientific research, economic and business demand, international profile and connections in Scotland and government; further notes that *Science for Scotland* calls to action many bodies and sectors of the economy and asks them to work with the Scottish Government to help progress the aspirations of *Science for Scotland*, further notes the concern that some secondary schools in Scotland are reducing the availability of SQA Highers and Advanced Higher courses in science subjects; regrets that, although half a million women in the United Kingdom are qualified in either science, engineering or technology, less than a third work in those sectors, noting in particular the high fall-off rate at postdoctoral research level; calls on the Scottish Government to include within its strategy for science specific action to improve the participation and employment of women in the science sector and asks the Scottish Government to monitor and report to the Parliament on the progress being made.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that legislative consent motion S3M-3652, in the name of Kenny MacAskill, on the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Bill, which is United Kingdom legislation, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)

Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 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)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 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

Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)

ABSTENTIONS

MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 118, Against 2, Abstentions 1.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the relevant provisions of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Bill, introduced in the House of Lords on 14 January 2009, relating to the power of detention for individuals subject to an outstanding arrest warrant and their enforcement, so far as these matters fall within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament, should be considered by the UK Parliament.

Vion Food Group (Job Losses)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan): The final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S3M-3268, in the name of James Kelly, on the loss of jobs at Vion, Cambuslang. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes with concern the announcement by the Vion Food Group that 150 people are to be made redundant at the Grampian Country Foods factory in Cambuslang; recognises that this announcement has resulted from a reduction in orders from Marks and Spencer, and hopes that every assistance will be offered to the company, trade unions and the workforce at this difficult time.

17:08

James Kelly (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to open the members' business debate on the proposed loss of jobs at Vion in Cambuslang. I thank all the MSPs from different political parties who signed the motion and the MSPs who wrote in support of the workforce.

The redundancies, 150 of them in Cambuslang, were proposed in January as part of a loss of 820 jobs in the Vion Food Group. The main reason for the redundancies was the withdrawal of contracts by Marks and Spencer. There are 450 jobs in the factory and it is proposed that 150 of them be cut. If the job losses go ahead, the effect on Cambuslang will be devastating. Vion is one of the largest employers in the area, and it has a history that goes back more than 25 years—initially, the company was called Chunky Chicken, then it was called Grampian Foods.

As the constituency MSP for the area, I am concerned about the human cost of the potential loss of jobs and the stress that individuals and families will be under as people try to chase alternative employment. Earlier in the week we heard that 10 people are chasing every vacancy. I do not want that to happen in Cambuslang; it would have an adverse effect on the local economy and a knock-on effect in areas such as the neighbouring town of Rutherglen.

Unite has fought a strong campaign against the proposed job losses, which has been headed up by Scott Walker and Tom McAndrew, the local shop stewards, who I am delighted to say are in the public gallery this evening, and they have been well supported by local politicians, including Tommy McAvoy MP and Walter Brogan and Richard Tullet—two of the local councillors in the Cambuslang East ward. I am also delighted to say that we have had support from other MSPs and

that the stewards were recently visited by Margaret Curran MSP and Catherine Stihler MEP.

Situations such as the one that we are discussing should make us glad that there are trade unions. Decisions to cut jobs have a bad effect on the community and the workforce, and there is a requirement on trade unions to organise in workplaces and take a stand against decisions that will adversely affect working people.

I understand that commercial organisations will make decisions based on viability, but Marks and Spencer, like other retail organisations, is pushing an ethical trading policy and talking up social responsibility. I would argue that one of the reasons why it is doing that is to try to attract customers to its stores and, therefore, to boost its income—but it cannot have it both ways; it cannot talk up ethical trading and claim to be socially responsible while it is taking a decision that will rip the heart out of Cambuslang. I challenge Marks and Spencer to reverse its decision.

I welcome the responses that I and other MSPs have received about partnership action for continuing employment—PACE—and alternative markets, but I think that the Scottish Government could have done more. In October, Richard Lochhead announced investment in the food industry of £75 million over five years, but none of that money has come to Cambuslang. In the latest tranche of grants, £230,000 has gone to factories in John Swinney's constituency and more than £360,000 has gone to a factory in Alex Salmond's constituency.

I would also be interested to know what pressure ministers have exerted on Marks and Spencer. I ask the minister to say in his summing-up speech whether there have been any meetings between Government officials or ministers and representatives of Marks and Spencer in the past fortnight and whether the concerns of the workforce in Cambuslang have been raised with Marks and Spencer.

I welcome the fact that, this morning, John Swinney agreed to meet the local trade unions, although I note that the request for that meeting was submitted a month ago. I think that progress has been a bit slow in that regard. It seems to me that other areas have taken priority over Cambuslang. I note the closure of NCR in Dundee and I wish the Dundee community well and hope that their jobs are safeguarded. The Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism was quick to get to Dundee, but it has taken me a month to get that meeting with local unions at Cambuslang.

The motion provides a platform from which to support the workforce at Cambuslang and challenge Marks and Spencer to reverse its decision. I demand that the Government make

money available to support the workers at Cambuslang, who have helped to build an industry that is worth £7.5 billion to the Scottish economy.

17:15

Anne McLaughlin (Glasgow) (SNP): I congratulate James Kelly on securing the debate and I thank him for doing so. We would all prefer to talk about good news, but by debating the issue we are saying to the workers at Vion that we will unite and work together to do what we can to stand up for people who are threatened with unemployment.

In the context of the economic downturn that has gripped the nation and the world, the week started with slightly more positive news. Although there is no denying the job losses in this country, Scotland's strong public sector and rural and energy industries have somewhat cushioned the impact of big job losses in, for example, the finance sector. Scotland's unemployment rate is 5.1 per cent, compared with the United Kingdom average of 6.5 per cent. I know that that is small comfort to the 5.1 per cent, who are struggling to pay mortgages, take care of essential bills and keep their families afloat.

Just as one unemployed person is one too many, every job saved is extremely important to the person whose job it is. The job market's volatility was brought to our attention all too clearly in January, when Vion announced that it would cut 800 jobs in the UK, including 150 jobs at the factory in Cambuslang. The Grampian Country Foods factory, which was taken over by Vion only recently, is an institution in the town. It has been producing food for Marks and Spencer for more than 20 years and is known for its high-quality produce. I know about that because I stood twice as the Scottish National Party candidate in constituencies that cover Rutherglen and Cambuslang—once in a Westminster election and once in a Scottish Parliament election, when James Kelly was election agent for his predecessor, Janis Hughes. The debate must focus on how we can work collectively for the workers to prevent as many job losses as possible. I have written to the unions tonight to offer whatever personal support I can give them.

The threatened job losses are the result of M and S's failure to renew its contract, as James Kelly said, which demonstrates how local businesses suffer as a result of the failings of big corporations. Grampian Country Foods has had a relationship with M and S for more than 20 years. The failure to renew the contract does not seem to be the best way for a company whose pre-tax profits last year were £1 billion to treat workers who have contributed so significantly to its success.

I was genuinely pleased to read in this week's *Rutherglen Reformer*—a newspaper in which I have had many a public debate with the aforementioned Tommy McAvoy—that James Kelly has acknowledged the positive steps that the SNP Government is taking to try to stave off the worst effects of the recession in Rutherglen and Cambuslang. He did not do so again today. However, he told the newspaper:

"It is good news ... that ... there will be 7,800 additional apprentices."

It is unfortunate that those apprenticeships will not all be in Rutherglen and Cambuslang—that would be good—but it is clear that the area will benefit. In the same article, James Kelly mentioned the town centre regeneration fund, on which my colleague Bob Doris has been working with the Minister for Housing and Communities, Alex Neil. I am sure that Rutherglen and Cambuslang will have a chance to access that fund of £60 million, given what has happened in their main streets in recent months.

I do not want to get into a David Cameron and Jim Sheridan-style competition, but I will say that I know exactly how unemployment affects individuals, because I was unemployed for two years after I graduated in the 1980s. I was unemployed, claiming benefit, desperate for a job and unable to get one. Money is a major problem for a person who is signing on, but the psychological damage is equally a problem. Work is about more than wages: it is about having a reason to get up in the morning and a routine; it is about knowing who you are and what your place is in society. That is why we must fight the job losses. I will work with anyone to do that. We must also have support in place for people so that their unemployment is short term rather than long term. I will work closely with other members to do whatever I can to prevent jobs being lost at Vion.

17:19

John Park (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I welcome the debate and congratulate James Kelly on bringing it to the chamber. In these testing times, it is important that we debate issues that are significant, that resonate outside the chamber and that are relevant to people facing redundancy or risks to their employment. It is also important that MSPs and the Government act on such discussions.

I declare an interest as a member of Unite, which has supported local union representatives in the Cambuslang jobs campaign from day one. That sort of support is important, but Unite is probably stretched across Scotland and the UK just now in supporting individual shop stewards, conveners and members on significant job issues. I support James Kelly's comments on the work of

Scott Walker, whom I met during the campaign. I acknowledge the work that conveners and shop stewards do on the ground to ensure that their members' views are represented more widely and taken into consideration.

A key issue in this case is the role of Marks and Spencer, but the wider issue is where Government money goes and how we can use procurement to support employment and good employment practice in Scotland. Both public and private sectors can play a role in that, but we can ensure that money that goes into private sector activity supports employment and gives people the best training opportunities. We can also ensure through such money that employers conduct themselves appropriately.

Like others, I am a bit concerned about Marks and Spencer's conduct, which we need to look at closely. James Kelly raised a relevant point about dialogue between the Scottish Government and Marks and Spencer. I would be interested to hear the minister's response on that. I would hope that, when there are job losses on the scale of those in Cambuslang, there are discussions between the Government and private sector employers such as Marks and Spencer. If the minister cannot do so tonight, I hope that he can share with us in future the nature of any discussions and their outcomes.

We face job losses not only at Vion but at NCR and Freescale, and we face potential job losses in the banking sector. As James Kelly said, the minister was in Dundee this week. It is right that he should speak to NCR, the community and the business community there, but we must ensure that the Scottish Government response is consistent because more and more job losses will be announced. The minister will be very busy over the next few months ensuring that the Scottish Government's response is consistent and robust enough to support local workers and build confidence in any actions that are taken.

Anne McLaughlin touched on apprenticeships. They are an important issue, which is why we focused on them in the budget process. The issue is not just apprenticeships for school leavers but adult apprenticeships and the provision of opportunities for adults. Undoubtedly over the next few months, and probably over the next year or so, people will lose employment in sectors that are in decline. We will need to support those sectors and help people to find new opportunities. That is why adult apprenticeships are very important.

Taking the opportunity to talk more widely about employment, I wonder whether the minister can say anything about the summit on manufacturing, on which I have had dialogue with him inside and outside the chamber. That is an important initiative for the Scottish Government to take forward. A summit on manufacturing would complement the

work that we are trying to do through the summit on apprenticeships, get a very good response from industry and, I hope, help in future situations of job losses.

17:24

Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con): I, too, congratulate James Kelly on obtaining the debate and bringing this significant matter before members. I have already intimated to Mr Kelly and the minister that, because of another engagement, I will have to leave early—I apologise for that.

James Kelly is right to bring the matter before the Parliament. Although 150 jobs might not be a massive number in the great scheme of things, the impact on Cambuslang and its community will be significant, as he quite correctly said. The impact will be especially significant in the current climate, when jobs are scarce. Given that there are 10 people chasing any vacancy, it is highly probable that some of the workers at Vion who are made redundant will be unemployed for quite some time. I very much hope that that is not the case.

A variety of matters are dealt with in the 5 o'clock members' business slot. I just hope that Mr Kelly will not be the first in a line of MSPs who secure such debates as a result of more job losses in the months ahead because, as I am sure we would all agree, unemployment is a terrible thing. It can affect people's health, their financial security and their behaviour. In the difficult times in which we live, there is a clear duty on every one of us to ensure that everything possible is done to preserve and to create jobs.

How we do that is a wider issue, which is perhaps a matter for a more focused debate on another day, but there are certainly some things that we can do. First, we must listen to all suggestions that are made about how to save companies that are in difficulty. Secondly, we must utilise the Scottish Government's budget effectively. The scope to do that exists, as some of the initiatives that have been agreed in the budget, such as the apprenticeships scheme, show. Cambuslang town centre needs some work doing to it, and the money for that is now available. That might take up some of the slack in employment in the area. There are other schemes that we must consider. I have no doubt that over the months and even the years ahead, suggestions will be made by members of all parties, and I urge the Scottish Government to examine them as carefully and as thoroughly as possible.

From what James Kelly, who is close to the situation, says, it seems unlikely that anything can be done to save the jobs of those workers who are likely to be made redundant within weeks. That is a great pity. We must react constructively and

positively to such situations. Although we might accept that jobs will go, we should apply our minds to how new jobs and viable, visible new businesses can be created to replace them. We must ensure that the people who are made unemployed are unemployed only in the short term and are not left to face the difficulties that a long period of idleness inevitably creates.

17:28

Margaret Curran (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab):

I, too, thank James Kelly for securing the debate and put on record my thanks to Scott Walker and the other members of Unite who have worked so hard to tackle the job losses at Vion. I should declare an interest, as I, too, am a member of Unite.

It is no surprise that James Kelly has instigated a debate on the issue, given its seriousness and the role that he plays in dealing with such significant matters as a representative of the community of Cambuslang. It is a serious matter in serious times.

The effects of the proposed job losses will spread beyond Cambuslang. The proximity of the plant to my constituency makes it inevitable that there will be significant consequences for people in the east end of Glasgow, a number of whom are employed at the plant.

A range of issues have been highlighted, one or two of which I will select. As many members have said, in the present situation context is everything. In a downturn of such significance, it is vital that all of us in the Parliament do everything that we can to protect jobs. I genuinely do not think that I need to persuade any member of the consequences of unemployment and the human effects that it can have on families, communities and broader society. We must tackle unemployment not just for reasons of sympathy or empathy; there are good, solid economic reasons for intervening to protect jobs, as I hope the minister will reiterate.

I remind members of the experience of the east end of Glasgow during the 1980s, when the scale of unemployment meant that that part of Scotland paid far too heavy a price, which left it feeling virtually abandoned. We must never allow that to happen again.

I will address some of the issues to which other members have alluded in relation to tackling the serious situation at Vion. As others have said, Marks and Spencer promotes itself as an ethical trader. I am sure that that is what attracts many of us to shop there. I do my fair share of shopping generally, but particularly at Marks and Spencer. However, that image is somewhat undermined if, in the store's search for cost cutting and efficiencies, it moves its work from a site where

workers have negotiated relatively good terms and conditions to another site where workers are perhaps not so well organised and protected. Many Labour members believe that it is possible to achieve a balance between commercial interests and a policy that protects workers. I hope that Marks and Spencer listens to what the trade union and we, as representatives, are saying. I hope that the minister will address that.

As James Kelly said, Richard Lochhead announced £75 million of funding to help food producers to access new markets and boost profitability. I welcome that action on the part of the Scottish Government, which we recognise was taken to protect the food industry at this time. However, is the minister prepared to use that £75 million to assist directly the workers in Cambuslang and the east end of Glasgow? In his discussions with the union, will he meet the workers, and come to Cambuslang to meet my constituents and hear about their experience? We need to mobilise all the resources of the Parliament to ensure that we support people there. We must do everything that we can to avoid repeating the experience of mass unemployment and to use all possible levers to protect the workers at Vion and the important communities in Cambuslang and the east end of Glasgow.

17:32

Hugh O'Donnell (Central Scotland) (LD):

I congratulate James Kelly on securing the debate, and I apologise on behalf of my Liberal Democrat colleague for Glasgow, Robert Brown, who has a long-standing engagement that prevents him from being here this evening.

Job losses on any scale in Scotland are a matter of deep concern. The 150 job losses at the Vion factory are, in themselves, serious and concerning and James Kelly and the unions have been working hard to try to mitigate the impact of those job losses. However, when the minister sums up, I would be interested to hear what assessment has been made of the impact on contractors, subcontractors and other companies that provide services to the facility, but which are below the radar of 20 notifiable redundancies, and what steps the Government is taking to identify people who are not within the partnership action for continuing employment criteria.

Members have made legitimate observations about Marks and Spencer and other major retailers. I worked in the supermarket business for nearly 20 years, so I am well aware of how they do things—Margaret Curran's points about ethics were entirely legitimate. However, I have a word of caution about the management of smaller companies and even some bigger companies that—no pun intended—put too many eggs in one

basket. With the possible exception of the arms industry, the ruthlessness of international retailers in their search for the dollar is unequalled. I do not believe for a minute that Marks and Spencer will sell any less food as a result of what has happened: what it will do is to widen its margins.

I also sound a note of caution for anyone who deals with the big retailers. We saw what happened in the milk industry when the producers were squeezed by the big retailers' bulk-buying power. Before getting into bed with the devils—metaphorically speaking—you should consider the consequences of those major companies pulling out the rug from under you in relation to their contracts. We see that happening all over the place. John Park referred to several major job losses, including at Freescale Semiconductor UK in my constituency. We need to be aware of that.

We must find a mechanism whereby we can respond quickly. I hope that the minister will be able to clarify the current position. We have the PACE team, but the smaller contractors do not necessarily have access to the necessary retraining because of the rules and regulations about access to training—for example, the 13-week or even 26-week limitation on access. There is no better time to provide such facilities and opportunities than when people are fresh from employment. Six months down the road, when people have been made brain dead as a result of watching too much Jeremy Kyle, their enthusiasm can have been undermined by the time delay.

I congratulate James Kelly on using the members' business debate facility effectively. It is at its most useful in such circumstances. I look forward to hearing what the minister has to say about some of the points that I have made.

17: 36

David Whitton (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab): I, too, congratulate my colleague James Kelly on bringing the debate to the chamber, and I ally myself with support for Unite the Union and the workforce.

As others have said, the job losses affect not just Cambuslang and Rutherglen. One of my constituents who is involved is Mr Ian Young, who lives in Kirkintilloch. The loss of his job is just as much a tragedy for him as it would be for any other worker. As other members have done, I wrote to Marks and Spencer to ask for an explanation of what it was doing. I got what was probably the same reply about a review of the food supply chain and the staged transfer of products. By leaving the site with 50 per cent of the business, it believes that it has acted responsibly, but has it? As Mr O'Donnell said, Marks and Spencer has form in Scotland with this kind of

thing. This is not the first time it has walked away from one of its suppliers at a time of difficulty only to come creeping back when things get a bit better.

I could go on about the company's attitude. I find it very strange that a major international employer such as Vion should, until this very day, refuse to speak to the trade union. It is a matter of no passing coincidence that it finally agreed to those talks today, when it knew that James Kelly had secured this debate. It is also a matter of some regret to me—because I quite like Mr Mather—that the minister has not been busy putting pressure on the company to talk to the union. It is also a matter of regret that he has not visited the plant himself before now. After all, we are only two to three weeks away from when the job cuts will take place. As others have said, he was quick enough to go to Dundee, which coincidentally happens to be held by the SNP.

James Kelly mentioned the £75 million of aid that is being given to the food-processing industry in Scotland and the fact that the latest announcements just happen to have been made mostly in SNP constituencies. I say to the minister that it is not just SNP constituencies that have food-processing companies in them; other areas need that investment, too. If the Government is going to spend more of that money, perhaps it should talk to Vion to see whether, even at this late stage, some investment could be made to secure the jobs there.

I welcome the comments of Anne McLaughlin, who lives in the local area or nearby—she has contested it so many times, but never mind that. I hope that she and Mr Doris will continue to put pressure on the SNP ministers to help the workers at Vion. Let us see whether we can do something to save at least some of the jobs there.

17:39

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): I should perhaps apologise to Mr Kelly, as I e-mailed him before the debate to apologise for not being able to be here. However, I have stood up the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning to be here to show solidarity with Mr Kelly and the unions and to add my support. I commend James Kelly for bringing the debate to the chamber. It is important that he has done so. It shows why members' business debates exist and how they can bring everyone's attention—including that of the Scottish Government—to an issue. I thank him for that.

For me, the first issue that sticks out as clear as day is that such closures involve not just job losses—there is a community tragedy when those job losses occur. When I met the unions about the downsizing of the Glasgow passport office, they

highlighted the fact that not only are the individual employees affected, but the brothers, sisters, mothers, sons, daughters and cousins are affected, too. Without doubt, entire family networks will be wiped out as being economically inactive if the factory closes. That huge impact on communities needs to be borne in mind and that is why I am taking part in today's debate to show solidarity with James Kelly, the unions and the workers.

Unfortunately, as Bill Aitken pointed out, I doubt that this will be the last time we discuss such issues in the coming months or—dare I say it—in the coming years, given the current economic climate. Therefore, it is worth noting that the Local Government and Communities Committee's inquiry into child poverty is starting to give more consideration to not just how we get people off benefits and into work, but how we deal with maximising the income of those who have lost work and are now on benefits, which is clearly happening in the current economic times. In that respect, and without wishing away a single job at Vion, I believe that in the event that jobs go the Scottish Government and UK Government have a joint responsibility to ensure income maximisation for all the families who are affected. That positive action could be taken in both jurisdictions.

One point that struck me about Iain Gray's question at First Minister's question time today was that, although I disagreed for party-political reasons with many of its sentiments, his question singled out one individual as being the human face of people in troubled economic times. It is important both that we hear those individual stories of the recession and that we take collective action. If we take out the party politics from today's First Minister's question time, I think that we heard general agreement between the First Minister and the official Opposition on the type of collective action that is needed to deal with the job losses in Cambuslang.

I encourage James Kelly to keep pressing on the issue. He should know that he has my support and that I will work with him constructively. Things can be achieved by working constructively. For example, by doing so I was able to achieve an additional 1,000 apprenticeships for Glasgow City Council as part of a £6 million investment in Glasgow. I very much hope that those 1,000 additional apprenticeships will go not just to people who stay within the Glasgow city area but to people who live in the greater Glasgow area, including James Kelly's constituency. As a list member of the Scottish Parliament for Glasgow, I have a shared responsibility to ensure that the people of Cambuslang and Rutherglen prosper and do not suffer job losses, so I am happy to work with James Kelly on that. As Anne McLaughlin is, I am pushing to ensure that such

areas attract funding from the town centre regeneration fund. I hope to secure funding from that for Glasgow, but I give a commitment to work with James Kelly to see what we can do for Cambuslang.

I will finish by talking about the action that the Scottish Government can take when such job losses happen. The PACE scheme needs to be used in Cambuslang to the greatest possible effect, so I take on board Hugh O'Donnell's point about the ability of subcontractor companies to access it.

Let me also, in the light of the cross-party unity and solidarity that exists on the issue, make a genuine and serious point that I belong to a party that is a national party in Scotland—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member should wind up.

Bob Doris: I reject any notion that any part of Scotland receives preferential treatment, so I hope that Labour members will not turn the issue into a party-political football.

Presiding Officer, let me finish off with one sentence. These are not just M and S jobs—these are the jobs of the people of Cambuslang, whose community is at risk.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: At this stage, I am prepared to accept a motion without notice to extend the debate.

Motion moved,

That, under Rule 8.14.3, the debate be extended by up to five minutes.—[*James Kelly.*]

Motion agreed to.

17:44

Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab): I am grateful to James Kelly for securing tonight's debate, sad necessity though it is. As my constituency is adjacent to his, a number of my constituents who work at Vion's Cambuslang plant could, sadly, lose their jobs as a result of recent developments. As might be expected, I have signed the motion and I have written both to affected constituents and to trade union representatives.

A number of members, notably David Whitton, mentioned and quoted Marks and Spencer, or should that be Pontius and Pilate? It is worth while to quote from the briefing note that the company e-mailed to MSPs earlier this week, which states:

"it was necessary to move certain products to more specialist suppliers".

That does not tell us a lot, but what it boils down to is that, by the strike of the accountant's pen, the lives of dozens of families are blighted. That is the

human impact of the decision, which was taken privately, perhaps in secret, and without regard for the wider social impact. Commercial decisions are all very well, but what price Marks and Spencer's consistent claims to be a socially responsible company?

The proposed rundown at Vion in Cambuslang is not necessary. Even in these recessionary times, the underlying domestic markets for food are pretty strong. The Vion plant in Cambuslang is a competitive one that will soon be better placed, in some respects, to serve those markets. The completion of the nearby M74 motorway will improve the plant's access to every part of the country, whether transshipment is via rail at Eurocentral, via ship at the King George V dock on the River Clyde, via Glasgow airport, or via the UK motorway network. Did the people who made the decisions make them in isolation without seeing the bigger, developing picture of the future of Vion in Cambuslang?

Grampian Country Foods, which was purchased by Vion only nine months ago, was an outstanding Scottish company. On 6 April 2008, before the takeover by Vion—a Dutch multinational—an article in the *Daily Telegraph* stated:

"HBOS, which is Grampian's banker, is also understood to own a stake in the food producer of less than 20 per cent and is thought to have been pushing for a sale of the company for some time."

HBOS—whatever became of that? Again, decisions were taken in isolation, in secret, and with little regard for the future. At the point of takeover, Grampian said that a £5 million investment in the Cambuslang plant would remain a commitment.

Vion in Cambuslang is no lame duck. The rundown is unnecessary and avoidable. That is why the campaign must go on.

17:48

The Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism (Jim Mather): I congratulate James Kelly on bringing the matter to the chamber for debate and getting directly involved on behalf of his constituents. The debate has been excellent, and in their speeches members brought out all the issues on which we need to focus.

As somebody who was brought up in Greenock, I have seen the effects of contraction and job losses up close and at first hand. I know the human cost of such events, which members described eloquently tonight, and the effects, which include stress, strain, financial pressures and impacts on health. That drives me, along with everyone else in the chamber, to want to ensure that we maximise the chance of compelling, rewarding and sustainable employment in

Scotland. When we consider the 150 people who are affected at Vion, we must soldier on with them and support them to the hilt.

That is why I share the desire for corporate social responsibility to become more real and more material and not some sort of latter-day window-dressing exercise. It must start at home, with direct and indirect employees. We are entitled to expect a new ethical beginning in these troubled times, especially when we listen to the audit trail that Charlie Gordon put in front of us a moment ago. At the national economic forum yesterday, recruitment agencies told us that companies and employees are working and flexing with one another to get through these difficult times. People are working different shifts at different times in order to ensure that businesses are viable and can continue.

The Norwegians are putting corporate social responsibility through their Parliament.

I pause at this point to address John Park's important point by confirming that the summit on manufacturing is going to happen. We had a meeting with Grahame Smith and John Quigley this week, and we are pressing ahead with the summit. I have offered to meet on a Saturday in order to ensure that we increase the possibility of making the summit happen.

A new awareness is coming to Scotland of the importance of businesses managing in a way that recognises the need to share burdens, threats and stresses with their employees and to dig in to reward their employees in the long term and make loyalty a two-way street. We now know that such things pay materially.

Meanwhile, we must face the current situation. PACE has been involved in it—it has visited the facility twice—and Scotland Food and Drink is heavily involved. I have run a couple of food and drink events in order to ensure that we get more alignment between industry suppliers and the public sector. We must help the situation, and our primary aims must be to consider alternatives to the contracts that have been lost and to work closely with Vion. There are offers on the table to help operational processes, assess the requirements for automation on process lines at Cambuslang and beef up the quality systems.

There are a number of other options. We are working with Vion to secure funding from its headquarters to invest back into the company. We share Charlie Gordon's excellent and eloquent vision of the potential that exists. Scotland Food and Drink is working with Vion closely to build up its supply chain, reputation and premium status, and to grow and restore sustainable jobs. The potential for premiumisation is huge because of the involvement of high-quality Scottish provenance.

We recognise that negotiations in which there is a fixed position—a plan for a dramatic reduction in headcount is a fixed position—are unlikely to give us the optimal outcomes that we want. We want optimal outcomes and things to be better. Therefore, we are keen to engage and to ensure that there are open negotiations on merits and that there is a proper debate about the potential that we all know exists for Scottish food and drink and food processing. We want to do all that we can to help Scottish Enterprise and PACE colleagues get the parties working side by side to attack the problem.

John Park: I want to pick up on my deliberations on the work that PACE is undertaking being based on intelligence and opportunities for retraining. Does the minister agree that if we are to get PACE in earlier, understand what is happening on the ground, get into business links and engage with companies, it will be useful to get guidance from the Scottish Government or Scottish Enterprise? We could then know what is happening on the ground much more quickly.

Jim Mather: I agree. I had a meeting with the chairman of Scottish Enterprise this morning during which I addressed that specific issue with him. The proof of my agreeing with John Park is that John Swinney sent a letter to James Kelly today that responds positively to the overture to meet him and union officials. I am prepared to follow that up. We must get all the parties around the table, as we did with NCR this week, and get a proper debate going. We want to see the parties getting together and generating a variety of additional possibilities.

We know that a great deal can be done with Scotland Food and Drink and the muscle power of a company such as Vion, whose tentacles can take supplies out to Europe and further afield. We always want to look for outcomes that mean that people will work to an objective standard of fairness, viability and partnership and with fair criteria, rather than the independent will of one side of the equation.

Margaret Curran: I accept that everybody should get around the table to try to create a solution, but will the minister clarify whether the Government will put on the table some of the £75 million to help Vion and the workers?

Jim Mather: I am a great believer in getting things on a really firm footing. We should help the company to achieve the vision that Charlie Gordon, Scotland Food and Drink and I have for it. Essentially, we should earn our way through on a proper basis that accepts the key components that exist—the quality food available through Scottish connections and the ability to start to really move towards achieving much better results.

I hear evidence of an appetite for a marked increase in investment. The company provides 3,500 jobs in Scotland and £400 million. There is great potential for us to bring the company much closer to its workforce and to its suppliers, to secure a better future. I am prepared to roll up sleeves and make that happen. That is my commitment.

Meeting closed at 17:55.

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