

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 23 April 2009

Session 3

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 23 April 2009

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

Newspaper Industry

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):

Good morning. The first item of business is a debate on motion S3M-3947, in the name of David Whitton, on the Scottish newspaper industry. I inform members that we are very tight for time in both this morning's debates.

09:15

David Whitton (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab): I declare an interest. I have been a member of the National Union of Journalists for more than 30 years, and I am a former employee of Johnston Press, Trinity Mirror and Scottish Television.

Labour will not support either amendment to my motion, as we are totally opposed to the compulsory redundancies that are being imposed at the *Daily Record* and the *Sunday Mail*.

In Scotland, we have enjoyed for many years the benefits of our distinctive media outlets, our strong regional daily and weekly newspapers and our distinctive broadcasting voice on radio and television. Collectively, the media have an important role to play in the Scottish economy. Around 27,000 people are currently employed in the creative industries in Scotland, which is roughly 6 per cent of the United Kingdom total. We should include animation, computer games and film in the creative industries as well as newspapers, radio and television.

These are difficult days for the Scottish economy. All sectors, including the media, must consider how they can make savings to remain competitive. My colleague Ken Macintosh will cover the effects on the broadcasting sector; I will confine my remarks to what is happening in Scotland's newspaper industry.

Unfortunately, three of the major players in Scotland are engaged in redundancy programmes as they restructure their editorial capacity in the face of falling sales and advertising revenues. Earlier this year, we debated what was happening at *The Herald*, the *Evening Times* and the *Sunday Herald* as 37 volunteers for redundancy were sought. New contracts have now been introduced, journalists now work longer hours and their holiday entitlement has been cut. The Health and Safety Executive has been asked to intervene.

That was just the prelude for management action elsewhere. Johnston Press, which owns *The Scotsman*, *Scotland on Sunday* and the *Edinburgh Evening News*, wants to shed around a dozen jobs in addition to the five that have already gone at smaller titles in Glasgow and Ayrshire, but at least it was willing to negotiate with the unions. That has not been the case with the management at Trinity Mirror, which owns the *Daily Record* and the *Sunday Mail*. It is merging the workforces of the two profit-making titles, it wants to cut the workforce by 60, and it has already declared 19 compulsory redundancies. All of those people have been told to go by the end of this month. That has triggered industrial action, which will mean a three-day stoppage beginning at midnight tonight.

The situation is made worse by the fact that Trinity Mirror is trying to get redundancies on the cheap. It has withdrawn enhanced pension provision for those with long service, which was always paid in previous redundancy situations, and it seems to have selected candidates for redundancy on the basis of who is cheapest to get rid of. A young photographer constituent of mine is included in that number. He will lose his job next week despite having been nominated for three national awards. Another candidate is a man with 30 years of service who would have qualified for an enhanced pension. He will see his lump sum cut by around 30 per cent and his pension entitlement cut by around 40 per cent. As a former industrial editor of the *Daily Record*, I confess that I am appalled by the current management's attitude to its workforce.

Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): Does the member agree that employment law regarding the redundancy situation must also be looked at?

David Whitton: I accept what Sandra White says, but it is really a case of management and union sitting down together.

Altogether, around 200 jobs are being taken out of the media industry in Scotland. Those are good, well-paid jobs that contribute to the Scottish economy, not only in Glasgow, which is regarded as the media centre, but in Aberdeen, Dundee and Edinburgh. Other jobs are under threat.

We might have expected to hear from Jim Mather, who is the minister responsible for the media, while all that has been happening, but what has his reaction been? Silence. I am concerned by his lack of action. I hope that he will tell us that he has written to or spoken with the management of all the media companies about their prospects and their plans for their workers. If he has not done so, there is still time for him to pick up the phone. At the very least, the offer of partnership action for continuing employment teams should have been made, as the workers in question have skills that

could be used elsewhere. I know that the Secretary of State for Scotland, Jim Murphy, has expressed his strong views to the Scottish management of the *Daily Record* and the *Sunday Mail*, as I and other elected representatives have done with constituents who are employed at those newspapers.

The Trinity Mirror titles, like the owner of *The Herald* titles, Newsquest, and the owner of *The Scotsman* titles, Johnston Press, are still in profit, despite their current difficulties. In 2007, Trinity Mirror made an operating profit of £196 million—the profit margin was more than 20 per cent. The Scottish titles were responsible for around £28 million of that. I understand that the profits for 2008 are around £145 million and that the contribution from the *Daily Record* and the *Sunday Mail* is around £20 million. All of the 60 journalists who are now facing redundancy made their contribution to those profits, but their reward is to be shown the door on the most minimum terms that the company can get away with. I would have thought that the minister for the media should take an interest if one of the largest companies in the sector is seeking to shed a quarter of its editorial staff. It is still not too late for him to do so.

The NUJ is not opposed to change at *The Herald*, *The Scotsman* or the *Daily Record*. It was and is willing to engage with management to bring the changes that are needed to compete through negotiation, not confrontation. I have corresponded with the chief executive of Trinity Mirror, Sly Bailey, to complain about how the company is treating its staff. In her reply, Ms Bailey, whose remuneration in 2007 was more than £1.7 million, said that the company was facing the worst trading conditions that it had ever seen and that it could not afford to continue the enhanced discretionary payments. I confess to thinking that it is perhaps Ms Bailey's enhanced payments that need to be trimmed, not someone's pension payment after 30 years of service to what was Scotland's newspaper of the year last year. If quality journalism is cut at *The Herald*, *The Scotsman* and the *Daily Record*, the product will be damaged. That will damage sales, and there will also be the risk of damaging democracy.

As a politician who is a former journalist, I firmly believe that the activities of the Government and the Opposition should be kept under scrutiny by a lively media, as should other areas of public life. As I stated earlier, the media industry makes a valuable contribution to Scotland's economy. It will change and adapt, as it always has done, but that must happen through negotiation and—dare I say—some Government help.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises the threat to the Scottish economy from the current crisis facing Scotland's

newspaper and media industries; notes that local newspapers are facing particular difficulties in the current economic climate; opposes any moves towards compulsory redundancies such as those imposed by Trinity Mirror at the *Daily Record* and *Sunday Mail*; calls for all newspaper and media organisations considering restructuring, reorganisation or redundancy to engage in meaningful negotiations with the relevant workforce representatives in order to minimise the economic impact of any job cuts, and calls on the Scottish Government to hold urgent talks with Trinity Mirror management in order to prevent compulsory job cuts.

09:22

Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife)
(Con): I, too, declare an interest as a shareholder in Scottish Television.

For once, I find myself speaking in a parliamentary debate about a topic that I know something about. David Whitton and I are possibly the only MSPs who began our careers as print journalists. It is a sad day to find myself standing in the chamber trying to find words that might help to save the jobs of friends and former colleagues.

In a recent members' business debate on a motion that was lodged by Sandra White, I referred to the tsunami that was about to overwhelm Scotland's newspaper industry. I described the media version of the perfect storm, with circulation and advertising revenue in freefall, increased competition from the web and the credit crunch set to get worse. It did not take a genius to see that jobs were going and that famous newspaper titles were under threat. So things have turned out.

Jim Mather responded to that debate by holding a stakeholders seminar at Glasgow Caledonian University, which Sandra White and I attended. I am glad that Labour has also recognised the gravity of the situation by proposing this debate, albeit in a sadly truncated timespan. I am sure that Ken Gibson accepts that it is pure coincidence that Labour has in effect trumped his members' business debate this evening on the Trinity Mirror situation.

At the outset, I say that it is not the job of Parliament or politicians to tell people in the newspaper business how to run their business. Therefore, we will not be able to support the motion. However, the Government has a role in working with all newspaper and media groups to safeguard as many of the Scottish jobs that are at risk as possible and to do all that it can to help media owners to buy time in adjusting to new communication technology.

David Whitton: Does Mr Brocklebank agree that it is Parliament's job to take an interest if a major company is sacking a quarter of its workforce and is pushing people out of the door by

making compulsory redundancies rather than negotiating with their unions?

Ted Brocklebank: Compulsory redundancies are certainly always to be regretted, but we are living in extremely difficult times. The Conservatives are no luddites. We recognise that massive technological changes are under way and that local and national newspapers must embrace them. What we seek is managed change in fraught economic circumstances—and that is where we believe that the Government can help. We accept that, increasingly, governmental recruitment will be done via the net. For many employers, computer literacy is vital. It would be absurd not to use the net for recruitment purposes. However, we suggest that public notices fall into a different category. In a recent letter, the Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism told me that the proposed removal of public notices from newspapers to online portals could make huge savings in the estimated £10 million per annum that is currently spent on such notices. The minister claimed that he was seeking a more useful format for the intended audience. With respect, I suggest that many people among that intended audience are not quite as computer literate as Mr Mather demonstrated that he was during the event at Glasgow Caledonian University.

I am of a generation that, to be frank, has no interest in blogging. Nor do I twitter—at least, not when I am bored at dinner parties. However, I do read newspapers—avidly—and so do a great many of us who would no more think of hunting down local planning applications, road closures and the like on a personal computer than we would think of phoning up the local library, as John Swinney has suggested, if we wanted to know which Government decisions might be about to affect our communities.

The Government's Scottish household survey found that nine out of 10 pensioners, and nearly half of single parents and single adults, as well as 77 per cent of couples of non-pensionable age, have no access to the internet, in or outside the house. In my view, a vital aspect of freedom of information is the freedom to have information available for those who have no interest in the net.

It seems that Ed Balls, Gordon Brown's Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, agrees. He has rejected Labour's own Killian Pretty review, which said that councils should not have to publish planning statutory notices. At a recent newspaper conference, Mr Balls said:

"Local newspapers provide a vital service."

He went on to add that removing the obligation to place public notices in local newspapers would be

"a retrograde thing to do."

It will be interesting to hear whether Andy Burnham agrees with him as Labour launches its local media summit in the next few days.

I believe that the loss of every newspaper and every newspaper job is a loss to the democratic process, and I look forward to hearing from other speakers in the debate how our democratic rights will be upheld and how these newspaper jobs might be saved.

Because I have so little time for this initial presentation, I will leave it until my summing up—when members will hear me again—to flesh out Conservative plans to encourage new industry models to emerge, including media investment in local online services and new local television companies.

I move amendment S3M-3947.2, to leave out from "opposes" to end and insert:

"calls for all newspaper and media organisations considering restructuring, reorganisation or redundancy to engage in meaningful negotiations with the relevant workforce representatives in order to minimise the economic impact of any job cuts, and calls on the Scottish Government to hold urgent talks with Trinity Mirror and to work with all media groups to allow new industry models to emerge that will encourage investment not just in local newspapers but in local online services and new local TV companies."

09:27

Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD): I am pleased to be able to speak in this morning's debate. I do not think that anyone in the chamber will disagree on the need for a vibrant, free and varied press in Scotland. It is a key democratic factor. We need newspapers and other media sources of good quality in order to inform the public about what is happening in society, to encourage debate on the key issues, to inquire into what has been happening and give out the information, and to hold politicians to account. All of those are key roles for our newspaper industry, and I believe that they are under threat from the many changes that are taking place in the industry.

Of course, there is a symbiotic relationship between politicians and journalists. I do not think that we can live with them, but we certainly could not live without them. I think that that is true the other way round as well. We also have one thing in common: the level of affection for us among the general public is shared. I am not sure what that says about politicians and journalists in general, but those among us who were journalists before becoming politicians are in a particularly interesting situation. However, at least we can all thank the bankers for their contribution to such discussions.

Scotland has been blessed with a strong national, regional and local newspaper industry. Titles such as *The Scotsman*, *The Herald* and the *Daily Record* have long and distinguished histories. They have served Scotland well and helped to promote debate in Scotland. That has helped to create the place in which we are speaking today; without the support and help of the newspaper industry, with titles such as *The Scotsman* and *The Herald* fighting alongside us, we would not have a Scottish Parliament today.

Regional titles such as *The Press and Journal* and *The Courier* still have deep penetration into the communities that they serve. They provide an excellent service to their communities. For me, personally, *The Courier* is a particularly important title.

Also providing valuable information and different services to communities are local newspapers, whether they are daily evening newspapers or, more usually, weekly journals.

Dave Whitton was right to highlight the potential loss of jobs in the newspaper industry and other media industries. Job losses have been threatened at *The Scotsman*, *Scotland on Sunday*, *The Herald* and the *Sunday Herald*. The BBC has already shed some jobs, and the loss of circulation and advertising revenue will have serious financial implications for local newspapers. The job losses among journalists have a cumulative effect. The loss of years' worth of the experience, knowledge and judgment of many senior journalists cannot easily be replaced. I am afraid that it will devalue the quality of newspapers and the quality of debate and democratic scrutiny that newspapers help to provide.

Ted Brocklebank was right to highlight public notice advertising. It is all very well to put information on the internet, but not everyone has access to it and not everyone will be flicking through the internet to come across a public notice. One of the points of having public notices in local newspapers is that people do flick through them and can spot things that might affect them and of which they might otherwise have been unaware. It is important that the public are kept informed of things such as planning applications. Also, people who are looking for jobs can be made aware of them through job advertisements in newspapers.

Advertising income is essential to our local newspapers. I therefore hope that the Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities will look carefully at their current policies on those issues.

I will end by talking briefly about the Liberal Democrat amendment. It is worded as it is partly to cover broader issues that affect the newspaper

industry in Scotland and partly because we share Ted Brocklebank's view that it is not for the Scottish Parliament to say no to compulsory redundancies. We can certainly express our concerns, but we are not here to manage the newspaper industry.

I move amendment S3M-3947.1, to leave out from "opposes" to end and insert:

"expresses concern at moves towards compulsory redundancies such as those imposed by Trinity Mirror at the *Daily Record* and *Sunday Mail*; notes the importance of a viable and diverse national, regional and local newspaper industry to Scotland's culture; recognises the need to retain talent in Scotland's creative media industries, and calls for all newspaper and media organisations considering restructuring, reorganisation or redundancy to engage in meaningful negotiations with the relevant workforce representatives in order to minimise the economic impact of any job cuts and the need for compulsory redundancies."

09:32

The Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism (Jim Mather): The debate follows on from the members' business debate that was secured by Sandra White back in January, which was preceded by Government engagement with the industry and unions, which gave us a clear understanding of the issues, the implications and the views that were held. Further meetings followed, and there was a major workshop at Glasgow Caledonian University, which triggered further follow-up meetings and the involvement of the First Minister. Today, there will be a further members' business debate, secured by Kenneth Gibson, on this very issue. As we are seeing again today, there has been clear evidence that the Parliament and the Government deeply regret the developments that are unfolding in the print media sector in Scotland.

In changing circumstances, there is a clear need to transform the print industry and its fortunes. Other industries and companies have made such transformations in the past. We acknowledge that attempts have been made in the newspaper industry. However, the challenge is immense and complex, and it has yet to be comprehensively answered, although there are signs of new models emerging in Finland and the United States of America.

It is clear from the motion and amendments that most of us regret the spectre of compulsory redundancy and regret the polarisation of positions. However, we can all understand how the situation has arisen, because we appreciate both the concerns about jobs, job security and employment conditions, and the concerns about the very survival of the titles and businesses involved. That is why the Parliament and the Government are giving so much time to the issue.

Government ministers cannot intervene directly in industrial disputes, but we can try to broker a climate of maximum engagement, to help to produce an imaginative transformation. We have done that and we will continue to do that. I accept the motion and will be engaging with all the parties involved, as the motion suggests that we should. However, we will also point out the benefits of internal co-operation and cohesion, and will highlight examples of companies that have pioneered such approaches and benefited from them. Benefits accrue from there being a unifying, worthy and sound altruistic purpose behind newspapers and what they are trying to achieve as well as ambitious goals for their commercial success. Such an approach repeatedly triggers ingenuity, good will and engagement from staff, unions, suppliers, readers and other allies.

David Whitton: Will the minister take an intervention?

Jim Mather: I will come on to discuss Mr Whitton's earlier attempts to apportion blame. I have only four minutes, and will need all that time.

This is the stuff of positive transformation and it is the stuff of allowing us to endure and grow. As David Whitton says, in the long term the industry will change and adapt. However, Mr Whitton pointed blame in my direction and the Government's direction. That, to say the least, was unfortunate. I prefer an approach in which all parties see themselves as part of the solution. That may include parties that have yet to come to the table, such as generation Y, who may indeed have the solution as we attempt to create media for them and their children. They, too, will need news and quality analysis.

The blame culture is worrying because there are dangers within it. People are liable to defend their position, stick to and gold plate their original strategy, disengage and avoid risk. All of that adds no value and reduces the chances of any of the existing players being part of the successful transformation solution that will occur. Others will fill the vacated positions as, in Mr Whitton's words, the change and adaptation come through.

We stand ready to engage and assist in the knowledge that there are opportunities. The internet and newspapers are not mutually exclusive—they can come together. Modern Scots need a positive, modern service, and the business model will adapt to provide that. By learning from elsewhere and evolving new ideas here, this cohesive, tightly measured Scotland can come together to achieve that end.

I look forward to further debate on the subject this evening, in Kenneth Gibson's members' business debate.

09:35

Hugh Henry (Paisley South) (Lab): One of the issues underpinning the debate, which should not focus only on the *Daily Record* and the *Sunday Mail*, is the need for quality journalism in our society. For generations, events have shown that journalists who ferret out the truth and information play a significant role for the public in holding those in power to account. In political circles, that means those in power at both national and local levels. They also hold businesses to account, focus on damage that is caused to the environment and local communities and expose criminality in communities up and down the country. To enhance and develop that quality journalism, our society needs investment in that type of service.

I am profoundly worried about what is happening at the *Daily Record* and the *Sunday Mail* because it is a harbinger of what might well happen throughout the rest of the industry and the rest of the country, which will leave us so much poorer in the future. The only people who will sit comfortably with newspapers being destroyed and their quality being eroded are those in power and those who have something to hide.

The *Daily Record* and the *Sunday Mail* have made a significant contribution to Scottish civic life over many years. They have exposed criminality and scams affecting old people, and they have fought for children who have been the victims of abuse. Notwithstanding the fact that they are part of the same stable, they have competed with each other for stories and neither has been constrained in what it has said because the other has reported a story first. I fear that what is being proposed will eliminate much of the internal competition in that newspaper group. We will also see not just the erosion but the elimination of years of the experience that is necessary to develop good-quality stories.

Other newspapers in the Trinity Mirror group will be watching what is happening anxiously. I suspect that the group is trying it on in Scotland knowing that, if it succeeds here, it will find it much easier to impose similar cuts elsewhere. I also suspect that many other newspapers are watching what is happening because they intend to follow suit. Our society stands to lose significantly if this ill-judged management proposal goes ahead.

I have been struck by the willingness of the trade unions and the workforce to co-operate. They are not seeking confrontation; they are willing to engage with the management. As David Whitton has said, an extremely profitable company that is led by a well-paid chief executive is refusing to talk to the people who deliver the profits for that organisation. It needs to think again.

I urge the Government, ministers and local councils such as Renfrewshire Council to reconsider their willingness to move away from the placing of public notices in newspapers. The internet may well be used in addition, but it should not be a substitute, as many people rely on newspapers for such information. Not only is the approach that is proposed socially damaging; it will be economically damaging for newspapers as well.

09:40

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):

I am surprised that the motion focuses so heavily on the *Daily Record* and the *Sunday Mail*, given that I have secured a members' business debate on the crisis at those newspapers for later today. However, I am pleased that the Opposition has chosen the subject for debate, given the lack of enthusiasm among Labour members of the Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee for my suggested review of the newspaper industry. The Scottish National Party stands fully behind the workers of both Newsquest and Trinity Mirror. Nevertheless, as I have only four minutes in which to speak now and given that my members' business debate will take place later today, I will focus on the wider issues relating to print media.

We are all aware that the newspaper industry must adapt in order to reflect the changing social environment. However, newspapers can survive in the long term only by investing in quality and in staff, not by slashing costs and laying off workers. The circulation of many local and national newspapers is falling year on year yet, paradoxically, newspapers have never been so popular, especially among young people. The problem is that fewer news consumers are paying anything for the information that they obtain, as much of it comes from the web.

Newspapers traditionally earn their revenue from three sources: news-stand sales, subscriptions and advertising. However, by putting all their eggs in the one basket of advertising, focusing particularly on web-based advertising that is unlikely to be profitable in the short to medium term, many publications have cut their own throats, especially in the current recession. In addition, traditional ads have tailed off due to the property and vehicle sectors being hit hardest by the credit crunch. A few newspapers currently charge for their online content, but it is possible to do so only if a publication has content of sufficient quality and interest to attract online subscribers who are willing to pay for what they read, whether through micro-payments—say, 5p for an article and 20p for a full day's edition—or by paying £4 for a month's web access. Such a system can be

used for every medium, from magazines to cookbooks, and offers increased revenue for traditional newspapers.

The key to all of this is, obviously, good-quality journalism. The short-sighted, short-term approach of Newsquest and the Trinity Mirror group is ultimately self-defeating. The industry cannot be turned around by relentless cost cutting, by increasing the stress under which journalists work and by giving them an uncertain future. Where does the solution that I am suggesting work? Everywhere from Europe to Japan. The number of daily newspaper sales is higher in Japan than in the United States, which has almost three times Japan's population, despite similar levels of internet penetration. Innovation and journalistic quality and creativity are fundamental to the success in Japan.

By March 2006, Rotterdam-based newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*, an old-fashioned afternoon daily, faced rapidly declining year-on-year sales. Rather than go under, it launched *nrc.next*—a flashy, vibrant morning edition of the afternoon newspaper's best content along with analysis and features written by young journalists and aimed at prosperous young readers. At €1 it is not cheap, but it looks and feels cool. Despite competing against four free dailies, it now sells 90,000 copies a day in Rotterdam—exceeding by 10,000 its launch target—and makes €3.3 million in profit on sales of €25 million.

Last year, 60 of the United Kingdom's 1,300 local and regional newspapers went bust. What is the answer there? Ensuring that a newspaper that purports to represent a locality does just that. Such newspapers should be based in the communities, should not cover too wide an area and should keep their stories interesting and a must for local news. In my constituency, Arran, with a population of 5,000, has two weekly newspapers. *The Arran Banner* has an astonishing circulation of 3,500 copies on the island—the highest circulation per capita of any newspaper in the world—and *The Arran Voice* has a circulation of just under half that figure. Both newspapers are lively and completely different, addressing different sectors of the island's population. *The Arran Voice*, which was launched less than two years ago, stimulated *The Arran Banner* to improve its content dramatically. *The Arran Banner* subsequently invested in new technology and took on an extra journalist.

Local newspapers are a vital community resource, and they allow many journalists and others in the industry their start. Print media journalism has a bright future in this country if it is allowed to be innovative and creative—and trusted to be so—by the newspaper proprietors.

09:44

Liam McArthur (Orkney) (LD): As my party's rural affairs spokesman, I am pleased, if a little surprised, to close the debate this morning. Unlike Ted Brocklebank, who modestly admitted that he does not twitter, I must say that this is not my specialist subject. However, that is not to say that I do not have a genuine interest in it. In fact, I declare an interest as the son of somebody who still earns the occasional crust from scribbling political cartoons for *The Herald*. Members can imagine my father's joy on hearing that his son was standing for election—a satirist's equivalent of ordering a home delivery.

Of course, there is a wider context to the debate. In a week that confirmed the worst-kept secret of all—that Scotland is officially in recession—we have also had confirmation that the jobless total in Scotland has risen by 15,000 over the past year—15,000 more people who are facing the harsh reality of the economic downturn.

Although there are sectors of the economy that are faring worse than the newspaper industry, at least in terms of total job losses, there has been a certain brutality about what is happening in the world of print media. It has been suggested that this process is in effect Scotland's Wapping and, as Hugh Henry suggested, it seems to have a whiff of the final reckoning about it.

No one would dispute that these are difficult times for newspaper and media organisations. Advertising revenues have taken a brutal hit, which comes on the back of the longer-term trend of increasing competition from online and other sources of news content. Those factors demanded a response from traditional print media organisations and some element of restructuring and reorganisation was unavoidable—a fact not disputed, and even embraced, by the workforce. However, it is how that appears to be being carried out that raises concerns.

David Whitton was right to point out the lack of consultation and the seeking of redundancies on the cheap. That said, we need to take care in how we express our concern. It is absolutely right that we send out a clear message that a greater commitment to meaningful negotiation with workforce representatives is not only desirable but required. An active and engaged Government is essential in these circumstances, but it is another thing entirely for the Scottish Parliament to suggest that Scottish ministers should in effect prevent compulsory redundancies.

Like others, notably the public, I am growing tired of hearing Scottish ministers blame their inaction or incompetence on a lack of power or resources. However, I certainly see little to be gained in investing these—or any other—Scottish

ministers with the power to veto private companies' decisions about the direction of their businesses. It is one thing to be opposed to compulsory redundancies, but it is quite another to suggest, as David Whitton seemed to do, that Government can prevent or veto them. As employment law is reserved to Westminster, as Sandra White said, it would seem that such a power should be wielded, if at all, by UK ministers.

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): Will the member give way?

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

What is not in dispute is the effect that this process and how it is being handled will have on the viability and diversity of our national, regional and local media. Members have rightly pointed out the danger of undermining the quality of our newspapers, as that can only launch us ever faster down a spiral that threatens the vitality of our public life and the quality of our political debate.

Iain Smith highlighted the challenge function of our national and local newspapers and the loyalty to and penetration of papers such as *The Press and Journal* and *The Courier* in certain parts of the country. In my constituency of Orkney, the number of local papers has doubled, with *Orkney Today* joining *The Orcadian* in recent years, albeit now under a single management structure. However, the short-term cost-cutting approach that is being adopted by some newspaper owners puts all of that at risk. The Parliament and the Government must get engaged and be persuasive, but we must not falsely raise expectations about the powers that are at our disposal.

I support the amendment in the name of Iain Smith.

09:48

Ted Brocklebank: There have been some sound contributions to this debate. Although there has been more wringing of hands than provision of actual solutions, perhaps that is not surprising—media groups worldwide have found it difficult to cope with the sheer speed with which the net has usurped the role of traditional newspapers, and few could have predicted the scale of the collapse in circulation and advertising revenue.

David Whitton spent some time detailing the problems at Trinity Mirror, but we remain unconvinced that the Government should get into the nuts and bolts of individual cases. Iain Smith was right to say that journalists and politicians ought to be grateful for the current unpopularity of bankers. I was interested in the minister's claim that there are examples in the USA of newspapers

finding ways of engaging profitably with the web. Hugh Henry was absolutely right that investment needs to be made in quality journalism and reportage, not only in financial terms but in terms of support from politicians of all parties.

In my opening speech, I suggested ways in which the Scottish Government might be able to help prop up advertising revenues in the short to medium term, but there is no doubt that the Westminster Government's support will also be required. In that regard, I welcome Labour's forthcoming summit, announced by Andy Burnham, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, into the future of the industry.

I was one of those who wrote to the BBC trust arguing strongly against the BBC competing with local press on news websites. It seemed totally wrong that a publicly funded body should be competing with an ailing private media sector in that potentially profitable business, and I believe that the BBC trust was right to abandon its plans.

I welcome Andy Burnham's ideas about the BBC providing sound and images for local newspaper websites, but Jeremy Hunt, the Conservative shadow culture secretary, and David Cameron have gone much further. Conservatives propose that bureaucratic regulations around the ownership of local newspapers should be swept away entirely to allow newspapers to consolidate both with one another and across platforms, into the internet, television and radio. The removal of those regulations would allow local newspapers in particular to adapt to the digital age.

Scottish Conservatives were among the first to propose a new Scottish digital network. We believe that its introduction could provide an invaluable vehicle for reinvigorating our beleaguered local newspaper sector through the development of local or city TV.

It has been estimated that Scotland could support up to 16 local TV channels covering major cities and regions. Local TV works in the USA, Canada, South Africa, Australia and all over Europe. Why has the UK alone failed so miserably to develop it? Detroit, a city the size of Glasgow, has eight local TV stations, and Bangor, Maine, which is smaller than Perth, has three. Of course, however, Glasgow and Perth have no local TV stations.

Margo MacDonald: Will the member give way?

Ted Brocklebank: I am afraid that I do not have time.

Local TV channels in Scotland could be part of the proposed digital network, opting out of its core schedule to provide coverage of local news, current affairs and politics. There is no reason why local newspaper groups should not be the major

investors in local TV, selling local advertising across media sectors.

To those who ask where the advertising revenue would come from to support those new stations, my response is that it would come from the same carriers that are currently pillaging local newspaper advertising: the web and other online portals. There is also the fact that we will not always be in economic crisis. It is no secret that Scottish Television, which would be among those fighting for advertising revenue, would welcome the opportunity to invest in genuinely local TV, possibly in partnership with newspaper investors. That is how it works elsewhere in the world. Why would it not work here?

Although there are genuine fears about the future of local newspapers, there are also real opportunities if our media groups have the courage to grasp them. We on this side of the chamber are committed to working with the Government, newspaper owners, the NUJ and all political parties to chart a more secure way ahead for a vital Scottish industry.

Much as we talk about economics, the bottom line, of course, is that any reduction in a free and responsible press could bring losses to the democratic process that would be truly incalculable.

09:52

The Minister for Culture, External Affairs and the Constitution (Michael Russell): I declare an interest, in that I am a former member of the NUJ, a contributor over many years to many papers and broadcasting outlets—I think that Ted Brocklebank has on one occasion commissioned work from me, although Mr Whitton has never done so—and a former director of a media company. Perhaps my most relevant interest is that, after having been a *Herald* columnist for more than six years, I was fired by second-class mail by an editor whom I had never met. That says something about the culture of newspapers today. That was bad practice, which is what we are talking about today. Good practice requires consultation and discussion with employees and involves respect for their skills and abilities. Bad practice dispenses with all of that in the interests of the profitability—and, perhaps, more—of a single company.

The examples that David Whitton gave are important, and I am aware of similar cases, such as that of a photographer with 29 years' service to a newspaper who has just been made redundant in order to diminish his pension. That is a shameful thing for a company to do to an individual who has given long and distinguished service. We should condemn such practices unreservedly, which is why the Government will be

supporting the Labour motion and abstaining on the amendments. It is right to say that what is going on is bad practice. Of course, it is not our place to tell companies how to run themselves, but we can say that they should run themselves to the highest standards, and we should say when they are not doing so.

I hope that that message will be reported by the newspapers. I take strongly Hugh Henry's point that the purpose of newspapers is to hold people to account. However, newspaper owners have to be held to account as well. The purpose of this debate is to perform what Kelvin MacKenzie used to call a reverse ferret, as we are holding to account the owners of those newspapers. I hope that they will report that and reflect on their actions.

Liam McArthur: Will the member give way?

Michael Russell: I am sorry, but I do not have time.

In the past, my party and I have been critical of the ownership structure of Scottish newspapers. The criticism that too much of the ownership is based outwith Scotland and focuses too much on areas other than Scottish economic and newspaper interests has turned out to be true.

We must also reflect on the rapidly changing paradigm of the newspaper. That is an important context for this debate. I have to disagree strongly with Ted Brocklebank, as I think that the reality of the situation is that technology is part of the solution. It is not the enemy of change, but something that can produce change. The failures in the newspaper industry—particularly in Scotland, but also more widely in these islands—are due to the fact that the embracing of technology by newspapers has been haphazard and often plain wrong. Some of them have given away their most valuable product, while others have not known how to maximise income from their product using new technology. My colleague Jim Mather gave some good examples of that, as did Kenny Gibson.

Three things need to be said in this debate. First, bad practice in management, wherever it exists—in newspapers or elsewhere—should be condemned. We need to send the message that short-sighted management that diminishes the quality of the product and constantly goes on cutting the costs will be completely self-defeating in the end.

Secondly, although newspapers have traditionally been read more intently in Scotland than almost anywhere else in Europe, that is no longer the case. That is partly due to a drop in the quality of newspapers, as the experienced people who work on them have been thrown out of the door—a practice that needs to stop.

Thirdly, the workforce, by working together and collaborating with management, can invent the new paradigms that can take forward a distinctive Scottish media with an ownership structure that is based in Scotland. Although I understand Ted Brocklebank's fondness for a solution that involves local television, that could bleed out more advertising and run the risk of damaging Scotland's local newspaper sector in particular, so we must be careful about that.

I believe that Scotland, as a centre of excellence for newspapers and the media, should celebrate what has taken place in the past—it has been a distinctive part of our national culture—but should regret what is taking place, which is largely driven by companies that have very little focus on Scotland. We should try to find a structure that will take us forward and ensure that modernised, renewed and refreshed Scottish media that take advantage of new technology can once again become among the best in the world. More important, we as a nation would be better served by our media than we are now.

09:57

Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): Twice in the past month I have been interviewed by young student journalists who are putting together stories for their degree paper—a scenario with which I am sure many members will be familiar. It is usually encouraging to see the bright, enthusiastic and enquiring minds with which journalists—like politicians—begin what could be a very fulfilling career. However, over the past month, I have been filled with anxiety. Journalism has always been a difficult profession to enter, but I am anxious about the prospects of those young students.

Over the past few weeks, I have—like David Whitton and other members—spoken to constituents who have 10, 20 or even 30 years' experience in journalism and who have been thrown out of their jobs and had their pensions threatened or cut by the same employers with whom those young students are seeking to work. These are difficult times and different forces are at work, affecting the newspaper and media industries. However, it is the employers' response to those difficulties that I find most depressing, and it clearly angers most members in the chamber today.

Turning to print media first, there are certainly few in the industry and beyond who are not acutely aware of falling circulation across the board. The apparent decline in readership has been accompanied by an equally worrying fall in advertising revenue. The impact of the credit crunch on the motor and property markets, and hence on the revenue of the motor and property

pages, has merely added to a pretty dismal economic backdrop.

It is difficult to imagine that there will not be a reduction in the number of Scottish titles, although I do not believe that it is inevitable. It was pretty grim news when the Herald group recently cut and merged its production teams, but the way in which that process was handled verged on the scandalous. There seems to have been a return to old-style macho management by newspaper owners, who are using the wider economic uncertainty and the lack of job security to flex their management muscles. That is the “bad practice” that the minister mentioned, and I welcome his condemnation of such behaviour.

There have been cuts in production staff to the point at which I am amazed that some papers make it off the presses every week. If it has been tough for staff at *The Herald* and the *Evening Times*, the Trinity Mirror group’s attitude to journalists and workers at the *Daily Record* and the *Sunday Mail* has set a new low. Those are not failing newspapers; they are high-circulation, highly profitable titles that almost certainly subsidise other papers in the Trinity Mirror group and thereby help to post large profits for the parent group—yet compulsory redundancies are now being introduced. If that was happening in another industry, it would be headline news in those very papers. It is shameful for the owners and managers of long-established Scottish titles to trade on the loyalty of readers and journalists but show no such loyalty in return.

Margo MacDonald: Will the member give way?

Ken Macintosh: Sorry, but I do not have enough time in this limited debate.

What is happening in the broadcast industries is also of deep concern. In a recent parliamentary debate, many of us expressed our fears over the future of STV. I do not wish to repeat what I said then, other than to note that while independent networks share journalists and cut back on news services, ITV made £311 million in profit in 2007, spending £3.8 million on executive pay.

The recent job losses in the BBC could not have come at a worse time. It is entirely counterproductive for the BBC to be shedding so many staff in Scotland at the very time when the corporation is trying to boost production here.

Most of us in Parliament have been encouraged by the BBC’s public commitment to Scotland, and recently we have seen an obvious difference in national news coverage of Scottish affairs. I am sure that I am not alone in being concerned about how the BBC in Scotland will take advantage of that policy commitment as it cuts its production teams.

Despite a few misplaced remarks, I broadly welcome the speeches from all sides of the chamber. It is clear that what happens to the Scottish newspaper and broadcast industries matters to all of us. Tony Blair once famously described the Scottish press pack as “unreconstructed”—I forget the whole of his pithy quote. That was probably the high point of my party’s relationship with the press. However, none of us in any party—none of us in the chamber—has any doubt about the importance of a robust press, a well-read public and a reliable, objective broadcast media.

I am disappointed that some of the other parties have tried to water down Labour’s motion. However, I am encouraged by the otherwise shared concern and common agenda to resist any threat to a healthy and strong newspaper and media industry in Scotland.

In recent days, what has been of most concern is the attitude and approach of the owners and managers of media companies. As Hugh Henry put it, they are “trying it on”. The Parliament needs to unite around one strong, clear message: we need to say no to compulsory redundancies. The companies should rethink their confrontational approach and get around the table with the NUJ and others. I urge members to support Labour’s motion.

Transport Infrastructure (West of Scotland)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The next item of business is a debate on motion S3M-3938, in the name of Des McNulty, on west of Scotland transport infrastructure. I call Des McNulty to speak to and move the motion. He has 11 minutes—less the time he took to walk across in front of me.

10:03

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): For generations, Glasgow and the west of Scotland were the industrial heartland of the Scottish economy. Glasgow is a proud, dynamic city, the core of a conurbation in which more than 40 per cent of the Scottish population lives and works. Glasgow and its adjoining towns have wrestled with the economic legacy that they were left by manufacturing industries and have risen to new challenges.

However, much of the infrastructure in the conurbation is outdated. Major new infrastructure investment is needed. In part, that has been recognised—the replacement of much of the waste water system in the east of the city has been listed as one of the projects in the national planning framework. The Scottish Government has also taken forward the M74 link, which is regarded by business and local government leaders as vital in unlocking traffic congestion in and around Glasgow, especially at its worst choke point, the Kingston bridge.

However, major investment requirements do not figure in either the strategic transport projects review or the national planning framework. Glasgow has two rail systems—lines that go south and west from the city, and lines that go east and north. Glasgow's subway has not been extended since it was built in the 1890s, and its last refurbishment was in 1990. Top-quality new facilities at hospitals in Clydebank and Govan are not easily accessible for many patients and relatives.

The projects that feature in the STPR have no starting dates. The A82, the main road between Glasgow and Fort William, has never been brought up to standard along its full length, and two particular sections are extremely hazardous. The A77 between Ayr and Stranraer is similarly unsafe. The stretch of the A8 between Baillieston and Newhouse, which has the highest benefit to cost ratio of any project assessed using Scottish transport appraisal guidance methodology, seems to have stalled, despite the urgent need to connect key development projects such as Mossend and

Ravenscraig to the motorway network in order to attract business.

The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): Would the member approve of any suggestion to bypass the planning system with regard to certain projects?

Des McNulty: The first step is to incorporate these projects in the national planning framework.

I regret that the Conservative amendment places partisanship before the needs of the people who live in the area that I represent. My constituents are not really interested in Punch and Judy politics, especially at a time when their jobs or those of their friends and neighbours might be at risk. The attention of elected west of Scotland representatives is—or, at least, ought to be—focused on the impact of the current downturn on Glasgow and the former shipbuilding and heavy engineering towns that surround it. Figures that were released last week showed that the increases in the numbers of those claiming benefits are significantly higher in local authority areas such as North Ayrshire, West Dunbartonshire, Inverclyde and Renfrewshire than elsewhere in Scotland, and that, of the core cities in the United Kingdom, Glasgow was the third worst affected after Birmingham and Leeds.

After yesterday's budget, certain matters over which the United Kingdom Government has jurisdiction—the tax and benefit systems, for example, and macroeconomic management—are being actively discussed at Westminster. Those in this chamber who speak on behalf of the people of the west of Scotland should ask themselves how we as Scottish parliamentarians can contribute to laying the foundations for longer-term prosperity.

Investment in transport and infrastructure projects plays an important part in economic success. Research has shown that transport improvements are key ingredients in increasing the efficiency of regional labour markets, enhancing the competitiveness of local firms, stimulating inward investment and triggering growth. Sir Rod Eddington's transport study, which is the most systematic appraisal of the contribution made by transport investment to economic performance, concluded that, for maximum economic benefit, transport investment should focus on supporting economically vital locations—for example, congested urban areas, interurban corridors, ports and airports—where it is most likely to stimulate further growth.

The Government's investment plans, as set out in the STPR and even the national planning framework, have been influenced by Eddington's thinking; for example, ports and airports feature prominently. However, too many projects in the

most urbanised region in Scotland—an area that is vital to Scotland's economic wellbeing—either have been omitted or have been given no place in the spending programme, which amounts to the same thing. I have not read all 3,000 pages of the STPR, but the apparent exclusion of Glasgow crossrail and Clyde fastlink, the latter supposedly on the basis that it is a regional project, is unjustifiable.

Stewart Stevenson *rose*—

Des McNulty: The minister will have the chance to respond in his own speech.

Both projects score far higher in the assessment process than other projects that have been included in the list. I am sure that the minister will tell us that he does not have the money to do all that he would like to do. I accept that; indeed, I am deeply conscious of the financial overhang of the Forth replacement crossing. However, many people in the west, in local authorities and in the business community, feel short-changed by the STPR. They are angry at this Government's reluctance to abide by its own criteria in determining the projects for inclusion in the list of 29, and they feel let down by the lack of firm dates for or firm commitments to construction of the projects that have been included.

By the way, I do not think the current Government is necessarily better or worse than previous coalition Administrations in that regard. I was openly critical of certain decisions made by previous Administrations on transport priorities when I felt that decision making appeared to have been driven by political rather than hard economic criteria. However, we should do things in the right way, and I hope that members of other parties will join Labour members in speaking up louder for the west of Scotland and putting a strong case for the key infrastructure projects that are vital to the region's economic and social wellbeing.

My colleague Jackie Baillie will make the case for the A82, and Michael McMahon will focus on transport issues in Lanarkshire. I want to talk about a project that is number 24 in the list that is set out in the STPR: west of Scotland strategic rail enhancements. I am pleased that discussions are going on between Strathclyde partnership for transport, Glasgow City Council and Transport Scotland and that studies are being carried out on public transport in the conurbation. However, neither fastlink nor crossrail can progress much further without firm commitments from the Scottish Government. It is not just the transport infrastructure to link developments along the Clyde corridor, access to key sites including major hospitals through fastlink and the linkage of 220 stations across Scotland via the cross-Glasgow movements that crossrail would permit that are at stake but access to key Commonwealth games

sites via segregated busways, light rail and heavy rail.

Time and time again we speak in the chamber about modal shift, reducing congestion and climate change emissions and improving public transport. These public transport projects have some of the most favourable social, economic and patronage returns. The business case for them is very strong and I hope that, when he responds, the minister will be much clearer than he has been in the past and will make a commitment to delivering fastlink, Glasgow crossrail and the station improvements at Dalmarnock and Bridgeton that, as Robert Brown's amendment makes clear, are needed to improve access to the main Commonwealth games stadium.

We know that the outline business case for modernising the Glasgow subway is due in the summer. Although SPT has funds available for some limited improvements, the costs of a full refurbishment are well beyond its means and the Scottish Government will need to make a sizeable contribution towards a major upgrade of signalling, tunnels and rolling stock. The need for such an upgrade may not be as urgent as some other projects—notably fastlink, which is needed both for the Commonwealth games and to improve hospital access—but the subway has a high level of patronage and attracts many of its customers out of their cars.

I welcome this Government's strong commitment to tackling climate change, and tomorrow the minister will receive the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee's recommendations for strengthening that commitment even more. If car use in the west of Scotland rises to the levels that have been seen in other regions of the country, it will blow a huge hole in emissions reduction targets and put us in a position from which it will be almost impossible to claw our way back. As a result, it is vital that the Scottish Government reprioritises key improvements to public transport in the west of Scotland and support for walking and cycling—in that respect, I regret that the Presiding Officer did not accept Patrick Harvie's amendment—and gives them the financial support that they merit.

I finish with a final message to the minister. My postbag is full of letters and e-mails about the state of the roads and pavements in the west of Scotland. According to the Accounts Commission, only Argyll and Bute has worse roads than East Dunbartonshire, but I feel sure that colleagues from West Dunbartonshire, Glasgow, North Lanarkshire, South Lanarkshire and many other local authorities get the same complaints. Single outcome agreements seem to be making things worse, not better. Repairs are not being carried out; the backlog is ever increasing; and more and

more claims are being met out of exhausted budgets. The Scottish Government blames local authorities for the situation, and councils blame it right back. The only losers are walkers, cyclists and motorists, whose complaints are becoming more and more vociferous. Surely to goodness the different tiers of government in Scotland can and should sort the problem out.

I look forward to the minister's response not only on that matter but on the issue of the west of Scotland's transport infrastructure needs and the focus that the Scottish Government intends to give to delivering the transport projects that are needed to improve the region's economic performance at a time when its economy is under such pressure.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the need for investment in transport infrastructure in the west of Scotland, particularly in the Greater Glasgow travel-to-work area, to ensure the continued competitiveness of the area, especially given that Glasgow and surrounding areas linked with traditional manufacturing and heavy industry, which suffered badly in previous recessions, are experiencing disproportionate increases in unemployment compared with the Scottish average, as illustrated by claimant count statistics.

10:13

Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con): Most of the time, we in the Scottish Conservatives do our best to be as constructive and as consensual as possible. I agreed with plenty of things in Mr McNulty's speech and thought that he made many perfectly sensible, straight and honest points. However, the Labour Party should be very wary of the credibility gap when it comes to transport infrastructure projects. After all, in its eight years in power, Labour was synonymous with delay after delay in transport projects; indeed, I find a small irony in the fact that this Labour debate on transport had to be delayed as Mr McNulty got his card from the clerks.

I was also interested to hear Mr McNulty say that the Glasgow subway has not been upgraded since 1990—when, of course, the Conservatives were in power. In the eight years that his Government was in power, nothing happened with the subway. However, since Labour lost power, its upgrading seems to have become an extremely urgent matter.

The other point about credibility is that even since becoming a party of opposition, Labour has been a little inconsistent on transport. On 29 January—just as today—Labour had a Thursday morning debate on transport. Labour had had a month and a half to reflect on the strategic transport projects review and to decide what it thought that the priorities were and which projects the document lacked. None of the projects to which Des McNulty referred today was mentioned

in the Labour Party debate a few months ago. In the previous Labour transport debate, in which Labour set out its priorities and where it thought that the gaps were in the STPR, no Labour member mentioned the Clyde fastlink, transport infrastructure in Lanarkshire or west of Scotland rail enhancements. The projects that are Labour's priorities today did not seem to be its priorities when it was in government, or even when we debated the issue a few months ago.

I turn to where the Scottish Conservatives stand and how we want to move the debate on. The first issue on which we want to make progress is prioritisation, which is relevant not only to west of Scotland transport projects but to all transport projects throughout Scotland. A number of months have passed since the STPR was announced. The next step has to be to determine in which order the projects will happen and, once the projects are ordered, what the target timescales and budgets will be. Of course, this debate has a specific focus on the west of Scotland. Therefore, in the context of the STPR, we are particularly interested to know about timescales and priorities in relation to Glasgow to Edinburgh rail improvements, west of Scotland rail enhancements, improved road journey times on the M8, M80, M74 and M77 and improvements to links between Glasgow and Oban and the west Highlands, including the A82.

The projects in the STPR are numbered, but not ordered. We need clear prioritisation now, and I hope that the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change will comment on that in his speech. We need prioritisation for two reasons. The first is that by prioritising, we make actions happen. If everything is a priority, the problem is that nothing becomes a priority. Secondly, it is important that we manage the expectations of communities and commuters. A project starting in 2012, at the beginning of the STPR, will be very different from a project starting in 2022, two and a half parliamentary sessions later. Prioritisation has to happen in early course. I hope that we can get some steer on that from the minister today, because, as he said in the debate on the STPR last year,

"vision and ambition are not enough."—[*Official Report*, 10 December 2008; c 13201.]

On the areas where we want action to be taken sooner rather than later, I turn first to the Glasgow to Edinburgh rail improvement programme, which we have advocated for some time—we have made commitments on it in several manifestos. Twenty-four individual improvements are suggested, and we want them all to happen so that the flagship Glasgow to Edinburgh route can truly encompass greater modal shift and help the economies of both the west and the east of Scotland. Of course, that includes the electrification of the flagship route

between Glasgow Queen Street and Edinburgh Waverley; the possibility of six trains an hour from Queen Street to Waverley; and journey times for some trains as short as 37 minutes—there is a big economic benefit for both sides of the country from every single minute of time saved on that journey—coupled with the possibility of express services between Glasgow Central and Edinburgh Waverley.

We will push hard for the upgrading of the M8, too. That vital project needs to be progressed, because, 10 years after devolution, Scotland's flagship motorway is still not of motorway standard throughout. The M8 was named as the worst commuter route in Britain for congestion in a survey by the traffic information service KeepMoving in spring 2007. It was named as Scotland's least popular road and the second poorest road in the United Kingdom in a survey by the insurers Cornhill Direct in February 2007. I am sure that members will have heard anecdotally that many of the junctions and slip roads are of great concern to our constituents.

Des McNulty: I appreciate that Mr Brown is an Edinburgh member, but we are supposed to be discussing west of Scotland transport infrastructure. So far, he seems to have concentrated entirely on the route between Edinburgh and Glasgow. There are bits of the west of Scotland that lie beyond Glasgow.

Gavin Brown: Of course there are. I am talking about the projects that have the biggest economic benefit, but members sitting beside me, who represent Glasgow and the West of Scotland, will elaborate further on issues such as Glasgow crossrail and other specific transport projects. Mr McNulty might wish to reflect on his contribution in the previous Labour transport debate, to which I referred earlier, in which he did not mention a single transport project in the west of Scotland. It is a bit rich for him to criticise me in that regard.

We are disappointed that action was not taken sooner in relation to the M8, because the budget has risen from an estimate of between £123 million and £125 million to an estimate of between £170 million and £210 million. Of course, the estimated completion date has moved back from 2010 to 2012-13.

Ultimately, any Administration has to be judged on what it delivers. That is why I have focused so heavily on prioritisation. Previously, the primary problem was a straightforward lack of prioritisation, which was encapsulated in a question from David Davidson to Tavish Scott, the then Minister for Transport, in March 2007. The question was:

"To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will publish a list, in priority order, of its announced transport infrastructure schemes."

The response from the then Minister for Transport was:

"The planned programme of transport infrastructure schemes may be found on the Scottish Executive and the Transport Scotland websites ... All these projects are considered as a priority, which is why they have been included in the programme of committed projects."—[*Official Report, Written Answers*, 23 March 2007; S2W-32430.]

The settled position of the Administration after eight years in government was that all the projects were a priority.

That is probably one of the reasons for the results of a recent Audit Scotland report on infrastructure projects. The report looked at 43 projects between 2002 and 2007—not just transport projects, but all infrastructure projects—and found that only two fifths of the projects were completed on budget and only one third were completed on time. That is why we have pushed for prioritisation and why we want to see progress made on the projects in the west of Scotland as quickly as possible.

I move amendment S3M-3938.2, to leave out from "especially" to end and insert:

"... therefore regrets the previous Labour-led administration's disappointing record on delivering improvements to key road links connecting the west of Scotland, notably the substantial delays and cost overruns in upgrading the M8 and M74; welcomes the fact that the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link project pioneered by the previous Labour-led administration has been cancelled, thereby freeing up investment for the crucial Edinburgh to Glasgow Rail Improvement Programme, and calls on the Scottish Government to ensure the clear prioritisation of transport projects both in the west of Scotland and elsewhere."

10:22

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): The Labour motion is on an important policy area. As we have heard in the limited time so far, transport is one of those issues that gets us all going. However, the underlying point about the employment advantages of transport infrastructure for people who are employed on transport projects and people who benefit from them, on which Des McNulty majored in his speech, is valid.

Although I do not like the terms of the Conservative amendment, which is not surprising, Gavin Brown's point about prioritisation is important, because there is an element of uncertainty about what is and is not likely to proceed under the Government's programme and about what is and is not achievable.

Stewart Stevenson: Everything in our programme will be done.

Robert Brown: Perhaps there is a question about the definition of the programme, to which we might return.

Ross Finnie (West of Scotland) (LD): And about when things will be done.

Robert Brown: That is absolutely right.

To get away from the talking that is happening beside me, I will focus on the specific and vital issue of the huge driver that the Glasgow Commonwealth games present, which we will debate from another perspective this afternoon. In 2006, SPT identified Dalmarnock station as a key transport infrastructure asset, given its proximity to the new national indoor sports arena. After that, the decision was taken to locate the athletes village and the velodrome in the same area, which, incidentally, is also close to Parkhead stadium.

The line through Dalmarnock to the east connects through Rutherglen and Cambuslang to Lanarkshire destinations, and to the west it connects through Argyle Street and Glasgow Central at low level to Partick and destinations in Dunbartonshire. However, the line badly needs modernisation, including the installation of disabled access facilities, modern signage and frontage on to Dalmarnock Road, and associated walkway and cycleway connections to local facilities, which are being looked at by Clyde Gateway. A redeveloped Dalmarnock station would give superb regular and speedy access to the key Commonwealth games locations and to Celtic Park, with good hub links to a variety of bus services on Dalmarnock Road.

The Commonwealth games will be Glasgow's window on the world, and it is vital that the transport infrastructure that supports the games is in A1 condition. Dalmarnock railway station urgently needs a dramatic transformation if it is to serve as a key gateway for the games and to be part of the legacy of the games.

Clyde Gateway has made a commitment to the project, which is costed at £8 million to £10 million. The organisation's business plan includes the project and it is ready to contribute funding. The project has support from SPT and it could attract support from Glasgow City Council, Network Rail and First ScotRail. Above all, it now needs solid support and commitment from the Scottish Government.

For the minister, a gold-plated opportunity is available. The project will lever in money from other partners, has a modest and definable scope, and will require the sort of money that any Government can find, given the political will. It also levers in development funding for local shops at the station and for paths for pedestrians and cyclists in the wider area. Above all, it will provide

the 21st century transport window to the Commonwealth games that Scotland needs and a visible and effective transport legacy. It could very much be Glasgow with style.

Christina McKelvie (Central Scotland) (SNP): Do Robert Brown and Des McNulty agree that spending £500 million on a tramline is a complete waste of money that could have been used for projects in the west of Scotland, such as Dalmarnock station?

Robert Brown: I disagree. That point is for a previous debate. My point is that the Dalmarnock station project involves modest money and is deliverable. I hope that the SNP Government will recognise the opportunity and provide its part of the funding, which is modest in Government terms.

The Government has done well at seizing the credit for projects in the west of Scotland that were—incidentally—all developed under the previous Administration, such as the M74 extension, the Glasgow airport rail link and the Airdrie to Bathgate line. The Government has not yet come up with the goods on Glasgow crossrail. Dalmarnock station offers the Government a modest opportunity to make a difference—a one-off chance to help to get the transport infrastructure for the games right and to leave a permanent legacy. I hope that the minister will say today that the Government will commit to, or at least discuss committing to, the project.

Last year, the minister said:

"If it is about anything, transport is about a long-term commitment to take things forward."—[*Official Report*, 17 April 2008; c 7783.]

I agree. By their nature, transport projects take time to develop, plan, procure, finance and deliver. I have described a key project that has proven potential and leverage that can be delivered. However, on closer examination, the minister's fairly typical statement, which he made in a debate on Glasgow crossrail, contains some ambiguity and the suggestion that what is long term is reaching the commitment rather than sticking with a commitment that has long-term benefits.

That brings me briefly to Glasgow crossrail. The famous gap between Central station and Queen Street station, across which many of us trudge daily, is possibly one of the most significant drawbacks in what is otherwise a good suburban rail system in greater Glasgow. To his credit, the minister has listened to the representations of the cross-party group on Glasgow crossrail, but we remain without a solid commitment. The Government seems to favour the city centre station project, which would be attractive in times of unlimited capital—if ever such times came—but is almost certainly unaffordable this side of the

second coming. The funding for crossrail is still substantial, but it is in the realm of the affordable. Crossrail would provide more options for improved and interconnecting services and relieve the growing pressure on capacity at the two main stations.

Finally, I return to where I began, with the Argyle line through Dalmarnock, which is, as I said, a main commuter route from Lanarkshire, Rutherglen and Cambuslang into the city centre. I occasionally use the line and it is clear that, like other routes, it has become a victim of its own success. The trains at Rutherglen are hugely compressed and overcrowded.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You should finish now, Mr Brown.

Robert Brown: I am on my final point, Presiding Officer. Will the minister examine the potential for agreeing with the train operator more frequent services or longer trains, although I know that they can create problems on shorter platforms? Revenue from the line must be increasing and there must be practical scope on which to build.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You should be finished now, Mr Brown.

Robert Brown: I move amendment S3M-3938.3, to insert at end:

"welcomes the significant opportunity presented by the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games for the creation of legacy transport infrastructure projects in the west of Scotland, including the proposed redevelopment of Dalmarnock station as a key public transport hub for the Games and the area, offering speedy direct rail links to the main Games venues and to Celtic Park from Lanarkshire, the city centre and the west in particular, as well as a high standard of pedestrian and cyclist pathways through the area; supports the work of Clyde Gateway in developing the project, and urges the Scottish Government to give the Dalmarnock station project its full backing."

10:29

The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): I welcome the opportunity that the debate presents to highlight the importance that we in Government place on the promotion of sustainable economic growth in these difficult times. I welcome Des McNulty's broadly constructive speech, which made a fine opening to the debate. We will see where it takes us.

We have made it clear that an efficient transport system is essential for enhancing productivity and delivering faster and more sustainable economic growth across Scotland, in the west of Scotland and particularly in Glasgow. Against the backdrop of a global economic slow-down, the Government—through Transport Scotland—is driving forward the largest transport investment

programme that Scotland has ever seen, with a number of vital projects.

The programme will support tens of thousands of jobs, almost all of which will be in the private sector. Our continuing investment is helping the hard-pressed construction sector now and is creating hundreds of construction jobs. Last year, Transport Scotland projects represented approximately 25 per cent of the construction market in Scotland. About 95 per cent of Transport Scotland's budget goes to the private sector.

We will continue our focus on providing sustainable, integrated and cost-effective public transport alternatives to the car. Recent short-term and long-term investment in road and rail has supported nearly 13,000 jobs.

We will invest £2.5 billion in our strategic transport networks over the next three years, which will support the economy. The programme includes a new railway between Airdrie and Bathgate that links Edinburgh and Glasgow, the Borders railway, and reluctant but now entirely committed support for the Edinburgh tram project. We have also progressed—at last—the M74 project. People can plan for as long as they like, but what matters is making projects happen. The Glasgow airport rail link, the M8 between Newhouse and Baillieston, and the upgrading of the A80 to a motorway between Stepps and Haggs will all be completed in time for 2014.

Ross Finnie: I note that the minister continues to repeat that nothing happened with the M74 under the previous Administration. Will he clarify for the Parliament's benefit whether the M74 route that has only just begun to be built is being constructed on top of the many factories that were in its road? If not, were those factories relocated by accident or were they successfully relocated by the previous Executive?

Stewart Stevenson: The one thing that I did not say was that nothing had been done. It is clear that transport projects are long term and that they cross boundaries between Administrations. I acknowledge what was done. However, there had been no engagement to deliver the project, which is now happening.

Through Transport Scotland, the Scottish Government supports Network Rail's Scottish operations and ScotRail's passenger services, which involve about 7,000 jobs. Work on the new Clackmannanshire bridge—which was started under the previous Administration and delivered under the current Administration—and on the M74 involves 2,000 construction jobs. The M74 project will employ 900 people and the Stepps to Haggs project will employ 500 people. Lots of jobs are involved, such as the 3,000 that relate to the

Airdrie to Bathgate rail link and the Edinburgh trams.

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab): Like the minister and other members, I welcome the start on the A80 from Stepps to Haggs. A transport model considered the long-term plan of having a station at Abronhill in Cumbernauld, which would greatly assist commuters between Cumbernauld and Glasgow. Will the minister comment on the feasibility of that proposal?

Stewart Stevenson: Not at this stage.

Through a major infrastructure programme, we are delivering significant benefits to businesses throughout Scotland.

The strategic transport projects review, which has been mentioned, is a 20-year programme. The motion requires us to consider prioritisation. We have, of course, prioritised the projects in the review over the nearly 900 other projects that are outside it. As we go through comprehensive spending reviews, we will continue that prioritisation process.

Cross-city travel in Glasgow is important, which is why we are talking to SPT about a range of improvements. We are ensuring not only that we support short-term needs but that we consider the need for termini for high-speed rail and that we do not overload other parts of the network. Much is going on.

Labour's motion presents an opportunity for a subject debate and is therefore welcome. However, I will make a point that Labour politicians in Wales and England seem to have understood but which Iain Gray's team might not have. Rhodri Morgan, the Labour First Minister for Wales, said:

"The Archangel Gabriel could not find such proposed cuts in budgets without damaging public services",

and Harriet Harman told the Scottish Trades Union Congress that

"you cannot cut your way out of recession".

The efficiency savings that are being talked about for Scotland are, in effect, cuts. Removing resource only makes our job more difficult. I hope that we will have some unanimity in the campaign to ensure that we have the tools. Only then can we here do the job.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the debate. Members will have to stick to a tight six minutes. I have already had to tell a member that she will not be called.

10:35

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I will use the short time that is available to me this morning to

address two projects that are important to my constituency and which I believe are also of strategic importance to the west of Scotland. They are, of course, the upgrade of the A82 and the Airdrie to Bathgate rail line. I dare to correct the minister on the latter: it will enable direct travel from Helensburgh and Dumbarton in the west right through to Edinburgh Waverley in the east.

Stewart Stevenson: I acknowledge that.

Jackie Baillie: I turn first to the A82. I welcome the inclusion of the A82 in the strategic transport projects review. I praise the A82 campaigners for their persistence and imagination in putting the issue centre stage. However, my question to the minister is this: when will the funding, which is estimated at £100 million to £250 million, be committed to enable the necessary work to start? Transport Scotland has committed £16 million, which is welcome, but the phasing of the remainder of the investment is of interest to the local community.

As I travel around my constituency, I spend much of my time on the A82 between Bowling, Dumbarton, Balloch, Luss and Tarbet. I am very familiar with the traffic gridlock that results from but a few minor accidents. I am equally familiar with the 30-year-old temporary traffic lights just past Tarbet at Pulpit Rock. There is no doubt that it is a challenging stretch of road. There is a sheer rock face on one side and Loch Lomond on the other, with very little space for manoeuvre. However, any engineering solution should not be so difficult as to make improvement impossible. After all, it is more than four decades since we put a man on the moon. Surely we can tackle those temporary traffic lights and widen that stretch of road to make it fit for purpose.

The A82 is undoubtedly a lifeline for communities from Glasgow to those throughout my constituency and those north to Fort William. The road is essential for tourism in the west of Scotland. Each year, it carries hundreds of thousands of visitors from home and abroad to the very many delights of our country. It is equally essential for our haulage industry and local businesses. There is no doubt that the A82 has a value to the everyday life of many Scots and our local and national economy.

There is equally genuine and long-standing concern about the A82's safety record. Previous route accident reduction plans resulted in a lowering of the number of accidents and fatalities, but the figures that I have seen for 2007-08 indicate that the numbers are rising again. Indeed, there are more accidents and fatalities on the A82 than even on the A9. It is perhaps not surprising that the majority of accidents happen on the single carriageway stretches. If someone arrives in Scotland from abroad at Glasgow airport, picks up

their hire car and heads north, they are on a dual carriageway from the moment they leave the airport until they get to the Stoneymollan roundabout. With little warning, they then find themselves on a single carriageway with cars rushing past them at around 60 miles an hour. I am thinking in particular of the stretch of the A82 near Firkin Point, where the single overtaking lane along Loch Lomond is on an uphill gradient and near to a relatively sharp curve in the road. There have been a number of accidents on that stretch of road. I invite the minister to look into that and consider erecting central barriers to define clearly the roadway, if dualling proves too difficult.

Another issue is the stretch of the A82 at Dumbarton between the Dumbuck junction and the Dunglass roundabout and onwards to the Kilbirnie roundabout in my colleague Des McNulty's constituency. When, very happily, the previous Scottish Executive removed the tolls from the Erskine bridge—an issue in which the Presiding Officer has an interest—a commitment was given to consider the impact of the anticipated increased traffic volume on the surrounding roads. I would welcome a commitment from the minister to consider the congestion that is evident at the Kilbirnie roundabout and to work with West Dunbartonshire Council on a proposal for a new road at the pinchpoint on the A82 between the Dumbuck junction and the Dunglass roundabout. That would enhance substantially the local transport infrastructure.

I turn to rail, specifically the Airdrie to Bathgate rail line, which was approved by the previous Scottish Executive. The line is, of course, the missing link between Helensburgh and Dumbarton in the west and Edinburgh Waverley in the east. The rail link will bring enormous benefit to commuters in my constituency and our local economy. My concern relates to the implementation of the rail line and investment in rolling stock. I have bored the minister and his predecessor with successive parliamentary questions on the subject. In their answers, I have had promises that sufficient rolling stock will be procured in plenty of time and that it will more than cover the increase in patronage. I refer to the 3 per cent per annum passenger growth that was identified in the network utilisation strategy. It is anticipated that there will be 4.1 million extra boardings per annum on the Airdrie to Bathgate rail line alone.

I would welcome the minister's assurance that there will be sufficient rolling stock capacity to cope with projected demand. I also seek his assurance that the class 334 Juniper—I am becoming a trainspotter in my old age—is the preferred train and that there will be no delay in delivering the rolling stock to allow the rail link to commence in December 2010.

I associate myself with Des McNulty's comments on potholes. I fear that the potholes in Argyll and Bute are merging to form craters the size of the craters on the moon. I urge the minister to help hard-pressed local authorities.

I hope that we will see investment in transport in the west of Scotland, not least because we need to retain the region's competitiveness, attract jobs and retain skilled people in the area.

10:41

Stuart McMillan (West of Scotland) (SNP):

Having read the motion and amendments a number of times, I believe that six minutes is not enough time in which to focus on the many points and issues that I want to raise. I will touch on a few, leaving Glasgow city centre to other members who I am sure will raise it.

The potential for transport infrastructure in the west of Scotland is limitless. We have heard on a number of occasions about the issues and projects that could be taken forward. One suggestion that could be put into the mix is the greater use of the River Clyde. I am thinking of river taxis from Braehead to Glasgow city centre and a river boat from the tail of the bank to the city centre. Another suggestion is for more trains on the Wemyss Bay to Glasgow line. At the moment, one train runs per hour, despite a massive westward shift in population in the Inverclyde area. I have raised the issue with the minister. Also, the Gourock to Dunoon Caledonian MacBrayne ferry saga must be finalised, one way or another.

The road infrastructure could be improved, with Transport Scotland adopting some roads in the East Dunbartonshire area where there are no trunk roads at the moment. If Transport Scotland adopted some roads in the area, it would aid investment and relieve pressure on the local authority. Also, consideration could be given to a bypass around Inverkip and Wemyss Bay to address the traffic chaos in the area. There is also the saga that is the Gourock interchange project, about which the minister knows a great deal.

Those are only some of the issues that have been a problem for many years and which the present Scottish Government inherited on coming into office in 2007. If Government ministers solved all of the issues in four years, they would be miracle workers. That is even more the case following the Chancellor of the Exchequer's budget yesterday and the cuts that are coming Scotland's way in the near future.

Some time ago, numerous constituents contacted me about the Inverkip situation. I conducted a survey in the Inverkip and Wemyss Bay villages on the danger of trying to cross the A78 at Inverkip. Delay in crossing the road is bad

enough, but at peak times—particularly in the morning and evening—the manoeuvre can be akin to taking a chance with one's life. I mailed out 2,150 survey forms, and the response rate was a massive 41 per cent. With 41 per cent of the population having taken the time to voice their concerns, the issue cannot be ignored.

After a disappointing initial response, I persisted in contacting Transport Scotland. As of this week, Transport Scotland has agreed to undertake a three-month survey and to let me know its results at the end of the summer. Two junctions lead from the A78—one to Inverkip village and one to Kip marina. The amount of traffic that zooms up from North Ayrshire in the morning and from the villages to Greenock is one important issue, but we must also consider the safety element. The local authority has built a new secondary school, with approximately 900 pupils, only 2 miles up the road. Because of the amount of traffic that uses the road, it is dangerous for pupils to go on to it. I am delighted by the action that Transport Scotland plans to take, which is a step forward. I look forward to seeing the results of the survey.

There are many reasons why investment in road infrastructure is vital. I have already mentioned safety. I highlight to the minister and to the chamber the tremendous shift in population to the western part of Inverclyde. Many more properties are being built in Inverkip and Wemyss Bay, and there now seems to be a shortage of people in the eastern part of the district, compared with the west. That is a really important issue. The minister and I have spoken about it before, and I am sure that we will speak about it again; no doubt it will be discussed later this morning.

A further issue that exacerbates gridlock is the lack of investment by the proper authorities in flood prevention measures. As you know, Presiding Officer, when there are heavy rains in Inverclyde, floods can block off part of the district, especially at the Newark roundabout in Port Glasgow. As Inverclyde royal hospital no longer has consultant services, ambulances must take people to the Royal Alexandra hospital in Paisley or the Southern general. Sometimes every second counts, so it is important that the whole transport infrastructure and flood prevention measures are taken fully into account.

I could go on, but I am running out of time and must close. I agree that there should be more investment in west of Scotland transport infrastructure, but I wish that members of the previous Administration had thought the same, instead of burying their Executive heads in the sand and realising only in May 2007 that there were shortfalls in our infrastructure.

10:48

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Stuart McMillan's final point, that there is sometimes a mismatch between what Administrations say on transport and what they do, is fair. I will develop it in my speech, but I will not reserve it for the previous Administration—rightly and fairly, a significant amount of criticism will be levelled at the current Administration, too.

Des McNulty's motion asks us to note

"the need for investment in transport infrastructure".

No one could disagree with that statement, which contains an almost non-existent level of specificity. Perhaps if the motion had been specific about the kind of transport investment that the previous Administration pushed, against all the facts and even the conclusions of a public local inquiry, when it approved the M74 extension, there would be only two votes against it—not for the first time and, I am sure, not for the last. From the two Liberal Democrat speeches so far, it is clear that the Liberal Democrats' enthusiasm for the worst environmental decision taken by the previous Administration has not dimmed since they left the coalition.

My case is that we need not incremental improvements to the existing system but transformational change—a dramatic shift to walking, cycling and public transport, not as an addition, but to produce far lower levels of car traffic. I have made that point before and will do so again. Creating such transformational change would require substantial investment. Every political party and MSP who talks a good game on sustainable transport should ask themselves why schemes such as Glasgow crossrail have gathered dust on the shelf for so many years. Perhaps Christina McKelvie's intervention earlier in the debate gives us a clue as to the reason: some simply cannot help taking every opportunity to attack a public transport scheme for being expensive, while supporting consistently for years, at immense cost, schemes to increase the capacity of the road network. Des McNulty should not dismiss as a financial overhang—as though it can be forgiven on that basis—the absurdity of sinking hundreds of millions, even billions, of pounds into increasing the capacity of the road network, either in Glasgow or over the Forth. In fact, that is an appallingly damaging example of 1960s thinking and an utter waste of money.

Rightly, the Labour motion raises the issue of social justice in the context of transport, which is important. I ask Des McNulty and the colleague who will close for Labour to follow through on the logic of that by making bus users, rather than car users, the priority. The road or motor lobby is phenomenally powerful in political terms, but bus users barely have a voice. I ask Labour members

to think about the impact of pollution from schemes such as the M74 extension and other projects that increase road traffic levels. Clearly, pollution has a disproportionate impact on communities that already suffer from multiple forms of deprivation. Both pollution and the impact of transport are social justice issues.

I will use the second part of my speech to be a little more positive—it is not unrelenting criticism. The amendment that I lodged referred not only to walking, cycling and public transport as parts of a sustainable transport system but to the use of the River Clyde, which has been much ignored. The river has a substantial history of use as a commuter and transport route, and it is good that attempts are beginning to be made to return it to that use. It could again be a major transport route for the west of Scotland, serving some of the communities that Jackie Baillie mentioned in the context of roads, which could use the river as a more sustainable transport route.

The findings of a recent study by Glasgow City Council demonstrate that there is core demand for a water bus service. The council believes that that demand will increase once it has been provided for. A water bus service could encourage modal shift. We must think about what modal shift means. Often what we see is modal spread—more of everything—but what we need is modal shift. The council argues that a water bus service would support on-going economic development and regeneration along the waterfront and—in yet another use of my least favourite form of jargon—talks about improving connectivity between the north and south banks of the river. The point is fair, even if the jargon is a bit unwieldy for my taste. The council also argues that the service could be seen as part of a world-class public transport network in Glasgow. What a vision that could be. Oh for the day when it is made a reality, instead of our pouring ever more concrete into the transport system, with all the impact that that has.

I will support the Labour motion, but I cannot welcome the Conservative amendment. I express no disappointment at all at the fact that the M74 extension was delayed; I wish only that it could have been delayed by a few more decades.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan): Members must now stick to their time limits.

10:54

Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con): In a debate of this type, it is inevitable that we will hear a lot of localised complaints and special pleading—that is perfectly understandable. However, if we could apply our minds, there would be general agreement that a good transport system should

include speedy, efficient business connections and comfortable, convenient commuter links. I even support Patrick Harvie's view that, where at all possible—in most cases, it should be—such links should be provided on a sustainable basis.

Another key word should be integration. Mr Carlaw and I were speaking earlier about the city of Vienna, where there is a high level of integration. The transport system there works very well, with an underground system and a fast and accurate surface system, consisting largely of trams. It works. However, we are where we are and if we had started off with a blank sheet of paper, we would probably not be where we are at the moment. We have to live with the situation.

We need to consider the question of integration. There is a compelling argument for the crossrail project, which would affect not only Glasgow. As Robert Brown pointed out, it would have a significant effect on areas outwith Glasgow, including Ayrshire. It would benefit everyone who goes to Central station and requires to continue their journey from Queen Street station, as well as those who commute on a more localised basis within Glasgow city centre. There is a clear argument for crossrail.

We should give some thanks to our enlightened Victorian predecessors—to the city fathers of Glasgow—who introduced a subway system that was primitive although still years ahead of its time. The problem is that to institute a substantial extension to the subway system, which I think Des McNulty was suggesting, is likely to be technically very complicated. As such, it would inevitably be very expensive. Like every other argument and debate that we are likely to have in the years ahead, the argument about that extension must be predicated on the fact that the economic situation that we are confronted with is grim. We must remember that.

I take issue with Mr McNulty's criticism of Gavin Brown's remarks on the M8. It depends where we define the start and finish of the west of Scotland, but we cannot detach Glasgow—much as we might sometimes wish to, given its enlightened position—from the rest of Scotland. The fact is that those who commute into Glasgow contribute to Glasgow's economic infrastructure. Cathie Craigie's constituents, for example, need to make their way into the city. The new part of the M80 is certainly helpful, but there are bottlenecks elsewhere that require to be eradicated. We need to face up to that problem. The issue of the Edinburgh to Glasgow train link is vital—preferably for coming in the one direction, one might be tempted to say. Speedy links are absolutely vital from the business perspective.

I turn to the question of commuting. The vast majority of commuters going into Glasgow from

elsewhere in the west of Scotland do so by train, but not all of them do. Many travel by bus—I do so myself, and I know that others do likewise. We must ensure that bus services are safe and convenient, and are of a standard of comfort that attracts people to use them. In that respect, and taking into account the difficulties that have manifested themselves from time to time with regard to routing, it was a great pity that the previous Executive saw fit to emasculate SPT, and we should bear in mind the fact that it was a creature from the days when Labour—in the guise of Mr McNulty and Charlie Gordon—ran Strathclyde Region. I found it surprising that they attempted, in the words of Councillor Alistair Watson, to reinvent the wheel. There are arguments that we should be considering how a regulatory body might be made somewhat more specific to the west of Scotland, compared with the degree of uniformity that Labour always seems keen to impose.

The issue of the regulation of buses frequently raises its head. In all sorts of things, I am a great believer in learning from lessons elsewhere. For example, we might consider the undoubted success story that has been Lothian Buses, which has benefited from a very light level of regulation. Perhaps we in the west of Scotland should consider that too, to explore whether it might add some benefits to the existing system.

Transport will be a vexed issue in the years ahead. Given the financial situation, everything else will be a vexed issue, too. However, some of the ideas that are around could be used with advantage as we consider the transport infrastructure of the west of Scotland. I look forward to the argument continuing.

11:00

Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab): When the Vestas plant in Campbeltown, the Inverurie paper-mill and the NCR plant in Dundee announced either a closure or major job losses, ministers were falling over themselves to make it clear that the Scottish Government would do everything in its power to help, and quite rightly so.

What a pity, therefore, that, when Vion in Cambuslang, Freescale in East Kilbride, Corus in Mossend, in my constituency, and too many other Lanarkshire companies made similar announcements, that same rush to offer direct assistance was missing. Why should that be? I believe that it is because Lanarkshire does not attract the same interest from the Government as those parts of Scotland that favour the governing party. For more evidence of that bias we need look no further than the strategic transport projects review, which clearly favoured projects in other

areas of Scotland over those in the west of Scotland.

At a time when unemployment levels in Scotland's traditional heartlands are on the increase, it is nothing short of shameful that the Government's concerns for those areas are diminishing. Only yesterday the latest figures revealed an increase to 5.7 per cent unemployment in my constituency. It would be wrong to blame the Government for the demise of many of the companies that have failed as a result of the worldwide economic downturn, but we can ask the Government where the investment is that is urgently needed to alleviate that adverse economic impact.

For example, Terex, in my constituency, has made more than 100 people redundant in the past six months. I met representatives of the management there a few weeks ago. I used to work for that firm as an apprentice, and I have a vested interest in seeing the company continue. I asked managers what they needed to happen, in this economic climate, for the company to return to being the thriving business that it once was. They made it absolutely clear that they needed more infrastructure projects. The company makes earth-moving equipment to lay the groundwork for roads and houses, and other capital infrastructure projects. We need investment in that area to allow companies such as Terex to make a comeback.

In Lanarkshire, we know from our experience of previous recessions that the road network, which centres on my constituency, with the M8 and M74 just 2 miles apart, and with the M80 and major trunk roads in close proximity, forms the basis on which we can combat some of the economic problems that we face. The area has become synonymous with distribution and logistics, which, in the past, have helped to attract numerous major employers, corporate headquarters and inward investment to locate in the many excellent commercial locations across the county, such as Eurocentral. However, rather than the major works that are in the pipeline being advanced, there are signs that they are being subjected to delays. Those projects would benefit from the type of intervention that the Government pledges to its favoured areas.

The M74 link is now under construction, but the equally vital upgrade of the remaining section of the A8 to motorway status concerns many people in my area. One company in particular, which seeks to build a connecting road to the existing A8, has brought to my attention the fact that a decision on the road, which was expected in the autumn of 2008, is still no nearer.

The key junction upgrade at the Raith interchange needs to be completed as quickly as possible to secure the full economic benefits of

forthcoming schemes and to eliminate unnecessary congestion. Local knowledge is telling us that the timetable for the underpass work at the Raith is slipping. I urge the minister to tell us what he is doing to progress the matter. Delays will bring huge cost to the taxpayer and will mean that people will continue to get caught up in traffic jams at the Raith interchange every day, especially at peak times. The jams can stretch back dangerously far from the roundabout, on to the inside lane of the southbound M74.

In addition, there are delays to the Ravenscraig development, mostly due to the development's having been downgraded from a national project to a regional project. The biggest brownfield development in Europe is no longer regarded as a priority by the Administration, in yet another sign of anti-Lanarkshire bias. The subsequent shortfall in investment has delayed the dualling of the A723, which connects Ravenscraig to the A8 via Holytown.

Time does not permit me to go into detail about the many consequences of the Government's continuing failure to invest in transport infrastructure projects in the west of Scotland. I have been able only to scratch the surface of the problems that are being caused by this Government's applying of the brakes to our transport projects. I urge the minister to get investment into the fast lane and to start applying the accelerator.

11:05

Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): I am a resident of Glasgow and I frequently travel around the city and beyond, so I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate. I cannot possibly cover everything that I would like to mention—from potholes to trunk roads to the Clyde tunnel—but I will do my best in the short time that I have.

I welcome the Government's commitment to the building of the Glasgow airport rail link, which will bring huge benefits to business and tourism in the city and will enhance Glasgow's already enviable reputation as a world-class, dynamic and cosmopolitan city that embraces the 21st century.

Other dynamic projects are going on throughout Glasgow. I recently travelled through the long-awaited refurbished Partick railway station and was hugely impressed by its design and functionality. I put in a plea to SPT for public toilets at the station, because people constantly write to me about the facilities in the station, which I think amount to just one disabled toilet—I hope that SPT is listening. Scotland's fifth busiest station, which is a major hub and gateway to the west, offers a perfect opportunity to promote an integrated transport model. The newly reopened

Partick station is welcomed by people in Glasgow and beyond.

Robert Brown: Does Sandra White accept that someone who travels from Partick to Dalmarnock station for the Commonwealth games will have a slightly different experience? Does she support my call for the Government to give serious consideration to the need for investment in Dalmarnock?

Sandra White: I certainly support the member's call for investment in Dalmarnock. It is important that we have an integrated rail system.

Michael McMahon painted a picture of doom and gloom in his bitter speech. Des McNulty also painted a picture of doom and gloom in Glasgow and the west. They are right to point out that we are experiencing an economic recession. However, the recession was caused by the Labour Government at Westminster. Scotland has its own Parliament and Government and we must get on with doing our best for Scotland. Labour members should not shed crocodile tears when their Government is responsible for what is happening.

People still want to invest in Glasgow and Scotland. Last Friday, plans were announced for the creation of a £90 million office, retail and leisure complex in the burgeoning financial services district, which will create around 2,500 jobs. As we know, the district used to contain warehouses and was the departing point for the Clyde ferries and Irish steamers during the early 20th century. Jim Fitzsimons, the chief executive of Capella Group, which is behind the investment, said:

"We believe the city is far better placed than most other UK cities to quickly come out of the current downturn".

That is the opinion of a professional.

Another professional, Peter Wood, the boss of insurance giants Esure Insurance, recently announced the major expansion of the firm's Glasgow office and said that he wanted to bring the posts to his favourite city because of Glasgow's workers' can-do attitude. He claimed that he would "need his head examined" to do business in London, because of the city's high costs and transport problems. The two examples that I have given demonstrate that we are attracting major investors as a result of Glasgow's unique attractiveness and ability to embrace new technologies and opportunities.

However, more could be done. I welcome GARL, but consideration must also be given to high-speed rail and other rail connections and to road upgrades, for the benefit of Glasgow's wider community and Scotland as a whole. In that context, I agree with Des McNulty and other members that the Glasgow crossrail project has

been on the drawing board for far too long, gathering dust when it should have been gathering speed. Members might be interested to hear that I corresponded recently with the new chief executive of Transport Scotland, David Middleton. I was assured that the linking of rail services across Glasgow is a priority, that an initial meeting of the steering group has taken place to drive forward that aim and that the outcome will be known by June. Given the need for GARL and crossrail to be in place before the 2014 Commonwealth games, will the minister say whether minutes of steering group meetings will be published and whether the outcome of the group's deliberations will be available for the Parliament to debate before the summer recess? The 2014 games present a fantastic opportunity to create a lasting legacy and to showcase Glasgow's transport infrastructure to the world.

We all want the Commonwealth games to be as green as possible—I bow to Patrick Harvie on that. The games offer an opportunity to develop the city's green transport network. It is essential that when we consider the transport needs of Glasgow and the west, we include among the many priorities the need to encourage people to walk, cycle and travel by boat. It would be wonderful if we could open up the river and make it the dynamic asset that it should be, so that Glasgow's people and visitors could use it to get around and see what our beautiful city has to offer. Perhaps the minister will say whether such issues fit into his vision of the overall transport infrastructure in the future.

11:11

Ross Finnie (West of Scotland) (LD): By and large, members have acknowledged that the development of transport infrastructure is very much a long-term process, which spans the period from the conception of the general idea and working up of plans—as the minister graciously acknowledged in an intervention, we must have due regard to the planning process, even if it sometimes takes longer than we want it to take—to procurement and delivery. It is therefore inevitable that the development of projects spans several Governments.

At the heart of the motion lie the continuing structural economic problems in the west of Scotland. Many Governments have attempted to address those problems since the collapse of shipbuilding and heavy engineering. It is important that we recall that, under the previous Government, the location of urban regeneration companies was specifically directed to such areas. It is regrettable that the structural economic problems continue, despite Governments' efforts. I do not want to be pessimistic, but the fact that the

area's unemployment statistics have rocketed demonstrates that the structural problems remain, which must concern all members.

Consideration of what to do about transport infrastructure is always part of the response to structural economic problems. We all acknowledge that we are considering the long term and that priorities must be set. However, the focus of the debate has been not just the call for a pan-Scotland approach and the questioning of what the Government regards as its top priorities, but a probing of the Government to ensure that it does not neglect areas that have structural economic problems.

Bill Aitken—I am sorry that he has left the chamber—referred to SPT's proposals. I do not think that SPT has been as emasculated as he would have us believe, but its proposals for the west of Scotland must be encouraged. The fastlink scheme is important and deserves more attention, as does crossrail. Crossrail raises an issue to do with links to Ayrshire, which have not been mentioned much. In the west of Scotland we make the mistake of not understanding the north-south dimension and the great difficulty of ensuring that there are economic links from Ayrshire—an integral part of the west of Scotland—to Renfrewshire and areas north of the river. There are important projects in that regard.

Stuart McMillan and other members talked about using the river, which is important. Much structural development has made the river banks more attractive and accessible, thereby making the use of the river itself more possible and likely.

Of course, there are also road projects. The Liberal Democrats are much more concerned about infrastructure projects that deal with the public transport aspect of rail, particularly in the west of Scotland, but the road projects that have been mentioned are important. Jackie Baillie referred to the A82, and I well remember an uncomfortable journey in which the bus I was on had to reverse for more than a mile and a half along the side of Loch Lomond. I pay tribute to the skill of the bus driver, but I was still a nervous wreck when I concluded the journey. I will not tell the minister the speed at which the bus driver seemed to go backwards. It was a most unsettling experience, but it highlighted the enormous difficulty of the A82 being a major road link. The same is true for the A77, particularly its southern end, which takes me back to the links with Ayrshire.

The Government ought to keep continually at the top of its agenda the structural effect of all those issues on the difficulties of economic regeneration within the west of Scotland as a whole. The Liberal Democrat amendment specifically relates to the station at Dalmarnock.

My colleague Robert Brown eloquently made the case for the redevelopment of the station being part of the developments that will be discussed this afternoon in relation to the Glasgow Commonwealth games, and I was glad to have Sandra White's support for the proposition. However, the project seems to slip down behind several pages and, given the timing of the games, it is important that we have a more encouraging response from the Government about giving some priority to ensuring that people who arrive at our Commonwealth games arrive at a station that is worthy of Scotland and the games.

We commend the motion and the amendment in Robert Brown's name, which call on the Government to take seriously the real economic structural difficulties that continue to obtain in the west of Scotland and to give due and careful attention to the transport infrastructure that will support a sustainable economic recovery.

11:17

Jackson Carlaw (West of Scotland) (Con): Some of us were somewhat astonished at the Labour Party's chosen subject for debate. In the 24 months that I have been in the Parliament, barely a Labour motion has gone by without a ritual demand that we prostrate ourselves in tribute to its grand assessment of its record in office in one respect or another but, today, the Labour Party has extended us a rare opportunity to examine in its own time its lamentable transport record, as the previous Scottish Executive was a model of dither and delay.

I am reminded of an observation by one of my favourite actors, the late David Niven—a man who was proud of his Scottish heritage. Interrupted, when presenting an Oscar, by a streaker who sought to dazzle the audience with his talent, Niven observed without missing a beat that it was unfortunate that, for the rest of his life, the man would be remembered chiefly for his shortcomings. As far as transport infrastructure in the west of Scotland is concerned, there can be small doubt that the previous Labour-led Executive will be remembered chiefly for its manifest shortcomings.

I waited in vain this morning for a heartfelt proposal from the Labour Party to raise by public subscription the funds to erect a statue to my good friend Lord Selkirk—Lord James Douglas-Hamilton—who, as transport minister in the Scottish Office, was a positive transport visionary and genius in comparison with those who followed after 1997. Many a time, Labour members berate the Government's school building programme as merely a completion of their previously planned projects. In transport terms, that is a case of the pot calling the kettle black.

How can those of us who were in business in Glasgow in 1997 forget the orchestra that accompanied Labour into office? There were bags of wind led by John Prescott, who had talked relentlessly in opposition of integrated transport policies, which transpired in office to mean no more than that he should have two Jags. Depressingly, his integrated policy was fuelled by nothing more than an anti-car prejudice, which delayed all developments in its wake, including in Scotland. The M77, a road that is now completed and regarded as vital by all who use it throughout the west of Scotland, was delayed by Labour, while its obfuscation and dithering in relation to the completion of the M74—a project that, under Lord James, would by now have been a reality—must stand as a monument to the Labour Party's colossal failure.

Patrick Harvie: I must object. Would Jackson Carlaw not be generous enough to note that the environmental campaigners who risked so much and put in so much of their own time and energies are due some of the credit for those delays?

Jackson Carlaw: I was not going to miss the opportunity to pay tribute to Mr Harvie. As someone with 25 years' involvement in the motor industry, I must say to him that the vast majority of Scots regard his views on the development of Scotland's roads as supreme bilge. To be frank, I regard the extension of car ownership in Scotland to be one of the most socially liberating changes of the past 50 years.

Even last year, in its budget submission, the Labour Party sought to cut the capital works budget for roads yet again, despite Mr McNulty's acknowledgement that business has long held the completion of the M74 link to be vital. Disconcertingly, Labour in government allowed fence-sitting on major transport decisions to become an art—and who was better experienced to sit on the fence than the Liberal Democrats to whom Labour regularly awarded the brief? Nicol Stephen and Tavish Scott, with generations of political fence-sitting in their genes, predictably played their part.

At last, the M74 extension is under way. We welcome too the Government's planned programme of improvements to the Glasgow to Edinburgh rail service and continuing improvements to the M8.

I noted in the strategic transport projects review the Government's willingness to consider the possible adaptation and use of hard shoulder on the M8. My sister-in-law now lives and works in the south of England and, when visiting her and using the M42, I have been impressed with the success of the scheme that has been piloted there to make use of the hard shoulder, particularly at peak times. It is not that the hard shoulder

becomes a generally accessible, additional lane of stalled traffic; rather, it becomes accessible in advance of exit junctions, which allows those who are leaving the motorway to move out of the on-going traffic, providing them with a speedier exit and everyone else with a more continued traffic flow. The M8—a road that we all acknowledge would be difficult to widen along its length—would be ideally suited to an M42-type scheme, and I encourage the Government to investigate fully the benefits of that.

I have some sympathy with Stuart McMillan regarding the Inverkip junction and hope that progress can be made on that local concern. I also enjoyed the case that Jackie Baillie made for the A82. As so often when I hear her passion in opposition, I wonder where she was in government, but she is right that the temporary lights past Tarbet cause any—

Jackie Baillie: Will the member give way?

Jackson Carlaw: When I finish the sentence. She is right that the temporary lights past Tarbet cause any traveller to shake their head in bewilderment.

Jackie Baillie: Perhaps Jackson Carlaw would care to reflect on the numerous parliamentary questions and motions on the A82 that have been lodged in my name and withdraw his comment.

Jackson Carlaw: I refer only to the fact that, in the eight years in which the Labour Party was in power, Ms Baillie was singularly unable to influence the Government and now seeks to influence the Scottish National Party Government instead.

Although I found little to commend in Labour's record in the Parliament, I happily acknowledge the positive contribution of Councillor Alistair Watson. He has not only a considerable command of his subject but a passion and evident enthusiasm for it. On crossrail, I hope that the Government will listen a little more carefully to him and others who seek to progress a practical development plan, such as the Conservatives have previously supported and encouraged. To be frank, the suggestion in the strategic transport projects review for some new complex to replace both Central and Queen Street stations is far fetched.

The Government has an opportunity to make success out of Labour's failure and will now be judged on what it achieves. Where it acts sensibly, it will have our support.

11:23

Stewart Stevenson: It has been a pretty good debate. A great deal of ground has been covered one way or another, and it is clear that, in my

remarks, I will not be able to address every detail that members have raised today. However, members should be assured that we will examine the *Official Report* afterwards and, if it is appropriate, write to them on matters that I do not manage to cover in my eight or so minutes.

Des McNulty said that the improvements to the Baillieston to Newhouse stretch of the A8 should be in the NPF. That, of course, would delay that project. We want to deal with the planning issues that are associated with it in a shorter timescale than the NPF would allow but, ultimately, communities that have issues with transport interventions of whatever nature have an absolute right under the planning system to make their views known and ensure that their issues are dealt with.

I warmly welcome Des McNulty's acceptance that the minister does not have the money to do everything—ministers of whatever political complexion will always find themselves in that position. That is a genuine issue with which ministers must always engage when deciding spending priorities, and the STPR is primarily about identifying key priorities.

Let me turn to the west of Scotland strategic rail enhancements. A number of people, including Sandra White, referred to the work that is going on between the Scottish Government and SPT, which I think is going well. We are looking to have a delivery plan for project 24 in the STPR by the summer. It is genuinely important that we understand the long-term implications because they involve not just the stations but the network capacity, particularly to the south of Glasgow Central. A range of projects, some initiated by us and others by previous Administrations, will load into the network capacity and reduce the number of paths that are available for further update. We could choose to have a short-term fix, but that would create long-term problems. It is important that the constructive dialogue continues.

Des McNulty: Does the minister accept that, while station improvements, the fastlink scheme and some parts of the crossrail scheme could be achieved in advance of the Commonwealth games, crossrail as a full scheme is unlikely to be in place before the games come to Glasgow?

Stewart Stevenson: The interventions that we are considering will happen over a long rather than a short time. As I said in my opening remarks, they will have to take account of high-speed rail as well, because we need somewhere effective for that to land when it arrives in the west of Scotland.

I think that Mr McNulty made the point that car use in the west of Scotland must not rise because it is a climate change issue. Glasgow has one of the lowest figures for the number of cars per

household—I am prepared to be corrected, but my recollection is that the figure is 47 per 100. Of course, in many socially deprived areas, one of the first aspirational things that people wish to do if their circumstances improve is acquire a car. I acknowledge that we must capture those people for public transport rather than have a rise in car ownership, but we should not underestimate the nature of that challenge. The different tiers—local authorities and central Government—must work together on it.

Gavin Brown and others highlighted the A82 as a key part of the west of Scotland's transport infrastructure and, indeed, of that of the north of Scotland. Of our major roads in Scotland, it has the highest rate of people who are killed and seriously injured. It comes in at number 1 in the top 20, as would be shown by a reworking of the numbers that I gave in an answer to John Scott some months ago. We are very much focused on that issue, although road engineering is only one way in which to reduce deaths on our roads, because about two thirds of deaths are down to drivers and one third could be attributable to the roads.

Gavin Brown referred to there being plans for six trains an hour between Edinburgh and Glasgow, but that is only for the route through Falkirk High station. When we take all the different routes into account, there will be 13 trains an hour between Edinburgh and Glasgow. I am not sure that prioritisation has anything to do with whether projects come in on time and on budget; I think that that is a different discipline, but we will look at it.

Robert Brown's speech focused on Dalmarnock station, and in his intervention later in the debate he asked us to look at financing its development. His amendment to the motion is a bit more prescriptive, so I say to him that, because we are still discussing the issue, we will abstain on his amendment but vote for the motion, whether amended or not, thus reflecting the fact that we are not yet in a position to commit but have sympathy with the point being made.

Longer trains were talked about in the context of a variety of options—I think that Jackie Baillie made that point. We are looking at having 23m coaches, which have greater capacity, and trains with up to eight coaches, so we are making the changes that will increase capacity. Incidentally, there is already a train between Helensburgh and Edinburgh, but it leaves Edinburgh at 4.45 in the morning and involves a seat on the sleeper. The Airdrie to Bathgate line will perhaps benefit those commuters who wish to travel during more normal hours.

Christina McKelvie: Will the minister take an intervention?

Stewart Stevenson: I am sorry, but I do not have time.

Incidentally, it is not quite four decades since men landed on the moon; that will not be the case until July 2009. I am a geek, Presiding Officer, and I just cannot help it.

Ross Finnie: Hear, hear!

Stewart Stevenson: The figure of 3 per cent growth in the rail network grossly understates the growth that we have seen in recent years, so we must be conscious of that.

On water taxis in the Clyde, we need to get the balance right because the CO₂ cost per passenger mile on water is the highest for all transport modes. In order to balance that higher CO₂ cost, we must ensure that putting people on the water reduces the overall length of the journey. Nonetheless, the principle of water taxis is sound.

I congratulate Stuart McMillan on his active engagement with local interests on the issue of the A78. Patrick Harvie made various points about transport. I hope that one thing that the regional transport partnerships will do over the next while is work hard to ensure that bus lanes are better enforced because that would deliver terrific benefits at relatively low cost.

On Bill Aitken's reference to regulation, we should use the options available in the powers for statutory bus partnerships. I say to Jackson Carlaw that we are looking at hard-shoulder running. There are significant safety problems—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am afraid that the minister's time is up.

Stewart Stevenson: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

11:31

Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab): I apologise for my late arrival to the debate. To be fair, it was not attributable to the west of Scotland's transport system but entirely my own fault.

The west of Scotland—the Clyde valley, if you will—is a spatial reality as a travel-to-work area. It used to be a political reality, although it is not any more, but political reality today does not change the spatial reality. Improvements in the connectivity—a word that annoys Patrick Harvie, so I will use it incessantly—of the region can bring local as well as regionwide benefits, depending on the projects prioritised. Strathclyde Regional Council proved that point in the 1980s and 1990s in developing the second-largest but best suburban rail network in the UK.

It can be the same with roads—for example, the M77. Incidentally, Jackson Carlaw was wrong to say that Labour delayed the M77. I was the Labour transport convener of Strathclyde Regional Council, which built the first phase of the M77. That road has helped to create well over 2,000 jobs in Pollok town centre, whose regeneration would not have happened without it. Similarly, the second, trunk-road phase of the M77 has led, among other things, to the development of new homes in the Kilmarnock area. In addition, the completion of the M74 will bring new jobs and homes to the east end of Glasgow and benefit the whole city region by relieving pressure on the M8. Any MSP who purports to represent Glasgow ought to support that rather than bemoan it.

Jackie Baillie has persistently made an eloquent case for treatment for the A82, especially that bizarre pinchpoint at Pulpit Rock. I usually buy into the notion that there are no bad roads, only bad drivers, but I think that the A82 at Pulpit Rock is the one exception that proves the rule, and getting it sorted out is long overdue. I congratulate Jackie Baillie on becoming a trainspotter in her—I was going to say her middle age rather than her old age.

Jackie Baillie mentioned potholes, something that I have looked into a lot in my work as an MSP as well as in my previous incarnation. Regarding the pothole epidemic in the city region, it is nonsense for grant support for local government to be based on road length rather than traffic volume. It is perfectly possible to count traffic volume, and a change in the formula would bring immediate relief to the city region, as would a rebate in the business rates. Such a sum would probably be spent first on fixing the potholes.

Patrick Harvie twittered on in a way that was against integration. There must be a role for roads—and, indeed, for the car—in an integrated transport strategy.

Patrick Harvie rose—

Charlie Gordon: We have heard enough from Patrick Harvie in this debate; we need to hear a wee bit more from me.

Patrick Harvie wants to be against the car but ends up being against the roads. He must understand that vans and lorries do not use public transport.

Bill Aitken also talked about integration. That was somewhat rich for a member of a party that abolished Strathclyde Regional Council and deregulated the buses.

Michael McMahon made a powerful case in listing the human cost of rising unemployment in his part of the west of Scotland. That underlines the point that the Clyde valley is Scotland's largest

single economic unit and that new and integrated transport infrastructure must be moved up the political agenda as part of our response to recession.

Sandra White asked us not to be gloomy about Glasgow. I, for one, never have been. She praised—correctly, in my view—the city's can-do attitude.

Ross Finnie pointed out the continuing and structural nature of some of the region's economic problems. He rightly reminded us that crossrail would bring enormous benefits to the Ayrshire ports and to Prestwick airport.

Jackson Carlaw came over like, well, Jackson Carlaw. Usually, that would be enough said, but he was also wrong about Labour's role in the M77.

The minister nodded in the direction of various local concerns, which is fair enough. However, in his opening speech, he wandered out of the region in the direction of the Clackmannanshire bridge and even the Edinburgh tram, so I started to lose a wee bit of interest. In no sense did he show that he has grasped the joined-up nature of the west of Scotland's strategic transport needs. I agreed with the minister on one point—when he described himself as a geek—but he gave no commitment to money or dates in speaking about the region's transport needs.

Labour will vote for the Liberal Democrat amendment. We will not vote for the Tory amendment because it comes over, well, too much like Jackson Carlaw.

This has been an opportune debate, which is probably a sign that transport infrastructure is moving up the political agenda in the Parliament. Some members—notably the Tories—made the point that there was perhaps a loss of momentum under the previous Scottish Government. I could be unfraternal by pointing out that most of the transport ministers in the previous Government were members of another party, but I make no bones about the fact that, although Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority and Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive were correctly retained even by a Tory Government when it abolished Strathclyde Regional Council in 1996, it was probably a retrograde step for the previous Scottish Government to allow SPT to be downgraded further into a voluntary partnership. However, there is plenty of evidence—this is certainly my experience—to suggest that less formal coalitions can come together in regions to deliver on transport. Institutional issues should not be a pretext for not continuing to focus on the west of Scotland's transport needs, which should be delivered.

Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

General Questions

11:39

Road Safety

1. **Stuart McMillan (West of Scotland) (SNP):**

To ask the Scottish Government what action it has taken to improve road safety. (S3O-6657)

The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): The Scottish Government will shortly publish a new road safety framework for Scotland for the period to 2020. We provide £1.3 billion for infrastructure funding to Transport Scotland to ensure a safe strategic road network and we fund significant educational initiatives through Road Safety Scotland.

Stuart McMillan: As I highlighted in this morning's debate, when I undertook my survey in Inverkip, which achieved a response rate of 41 per cent, some 81 per cent of respondents said that they want action to be taken on the A78 junction at Inverkip. I welcome the fact that Transport Scotland will now undertake a survey, but I ask the minister to accept my invitation to come to Inverkip to see for himself the dangerous and potentially life-threatening junction. Will he agree to meet members of the Inverkip and Wemyss Bay community council to hear their concerns and to discuss the matter further?

Stewart Stevenson: As I said in the previous debate, the member's engagement with local communities on the issue is impressive. I will certainly seek to make time available in my diary to visit Inverkip to see the junction for myself and to meet members of the community council.

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): It is understandable that blind and partially sighted people, as well as other disabled people, have concerns about the development of shared-surface schemes in some of our towns and cities. Will the Scottish Executive consider a moratorium on new shared-surface schemes until the completion of research, either by taking part in the Department for Transport's research or by conducting its own research on the issue?

Stewart Stevenson: The member makes a fair point. When I met representatives of blind and partially sighted people some time ago, I was given a clear exposition of the real difficulties that can arise when we share space. The history of such schemes, particularly in the Netherlands, is

generally good, but I think that we have cultural as well as engineering issues to consider. I will not make the commitment that the member asked for at this moment, but he can be assured that I am aware of, and we are engaging on, the issue.

Business Support (North-east Scotland)

2. Nigel Don (North East Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what steps have been taken to ensure that adequate business support and advice is available to companies in the north-east. (S3O-6643)

The Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism (Jim Mather): Business support and advice is available to companies in the north-east mainly through the business gateway, which provides advice and support to all businesses via its website, inquiry centre and advisers. Responsibility for business gateway delivery was transferred from Scottish Enterprise to local authorities on 1 April 2008 to provide a more local delivery of service and to reflect the fact that businesses already interact with local authorities on a range of local issues. Complementing that activity, Scottish Enterprise also provides support and advice in the north-east, with a focus on companies of high growth potential and key sectors. Scottish Enterprise's activity in the north-east is informed by its regional advisory board—Aberdeen city and shire economic future—which brings together the public and private sectors to shape delivery.

Nigel Don: As the minister will be aware, since the management of business gateway contracts was transferred from Scottish Enterprise to local authorities, concerns have been raised about the use of local contact details. Scottish Enterprise precludes the use of local phone numbers by contractors who wish to advertise services. As a result, the contractor that delivers the enterprise service in Grampian and Tayside has reported a 75 per cent drop in first inquiries, which makes it extremely difficult for them to hit targets. I have no objection to challenging targets, but will the minister address the issue of using local telephone numbers?

Jim Mather: We do not preclude the use of local telephone numbers once contact has been established and things are moving forward, but the ethos of business gateway is based on the assumption that inquiries should go to a central location to avoid confusion, to create better effectiveness and to maintain the brand. Officials from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and from the Scottish local authorities economic development—SLAED—group accept that position. It is interesting that while the target for total inquiries was 40,000, the actual figure was 39,543, which is 98.9 per cent. We hear what the

member is saying, but I think that local telephone numbers are used in on-going inquiries.

Lewis Macdonald (Aberdeen Central) (Lab): Does the minister recognise that, through no fault of their own, several well-run, enterprising small companies in the oil and gas sector in the north-east currently face difficulties with overdraft facilities? What action has Scottish Enterprise taken to ensure that companies in that position have ready access to advice and, if need be, to short-term funding?

Jim Mather: Scottish Enterprise is openly engaged with such companies. The Scottish Government has been pressing the banks to ensure that contacts are made and that funds flow through. The member will be aware that that has been the focus of activity of the United Kingdom Government as well as of the Scottish Government. We are now beginning to see signs that funds are flowing through, but we will maintain our focus and will continue to make the necessary contact. We will listen intently to concerns about particular situations in which good, viable companies struggle to get the funding that they need.

National Concessionary Travel Scheme

3. Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive whether consideration was given to the recognition of bus passes across the United Kingdom in its review of the national concessionary travel scheme. (S3O-6594)

The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): The review of the Scotland-wide free bus travel scheme for older and disabled people is almost complete and we expect the report of the review to be published early in May. It would not be appropriate to pre-empt the report and its wider considerations at this time.

Jim Tolson: I welcome the minister's statement that mutual recognition of bus passes throughout the UK has been considered by the Government's review of the concessionary travel scheme, which is due to report back imminently. Can he confirm that the stakeholders who were consulted during the consultation process included various user groups? Mutual recognition of bus passes throughout the UK would be of great benefit to people such as my constituent, Graham Chandler, whose parents, who reside in England, plan frequent trips to Scotland to assist their son with child care.

Stewart Stevenson: It is clear that an extension of the free bus travel scheme and the reciprocity that would have to be part of that could deliver benefits. Indeed, I have been in correspondence with members of the Northern Ireland Assembly

on the subject, in which they have a shared interest.

However, the schemes in the different jurisdictions are very different. The one in England is essentially a local, off-peak scheme. It is relatively new and some difficulties are still being experienced. The member will need to wait just a little bit longer for our final determination on the subject.

Ian McKee (Lothians) (SNP): Does the Government have plans to follow the Labour Government at Westminster by withdrawing many travel concessions from those who are entitled to them?

Stewart Stevenson: I think that I have said on a previous occasion that we intend to augment the free bus travel scheme by extending it to cover disabled ex-servicemen. It is certainly not our intention to impose restrictions or to reduce the concessions that have been made available in the past.

National Health Service Aroma Cafe

4. Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government how it intends to roll out the NHS Aroma cafe concept. (S3O-6625)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Nicola Sturgeon): A trial involving two Aroma sites, at Glasgow royal infirmary and the Southern general, is under way. The new Stobhill and Victoria hospitals are expected to join the trial, and a further two sites are planned for the NHS Highland area.

NHS Health Facilities Scotland will fully evaluate the trial in the autumn to ensure that it offers an improved service to staff, visitors and patients, and that any income generated is ploughed back into the NHS. If the outcome of the trial is positive, NHS Health Facilities Scotland plans to offer the concept to all health boards. It will be up to boards to decide whether to take it up. The concept will not be rolled out or offered for roll-out before then.

Duncan McNeil: I thank the cabinet secretary for her answer and I have noted her public comments. I accept that the Aroma cafe concept that she has endorsed has some merit, but I hope that she accepts that a one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate and that Aroma cafes should not displace hard-working charities and volunteers, such as the league of friends at Inverclyde royal hospital.

The cabinet secretary is aware that the chairman of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Andrew Robertson, is to visit the tea bar at Inverclyde royal hospital in the coming days, after

5,000 people signed a petition in support of the volunteers who run it. Will she ensure that Mr Robertson takes with him a message of gratitude for their efforts, an apology for the shabby way in which they have been treated over the past few weeks and, most important, an assurance that they will be allowed to continue their good work for the hospital and the wider community for a very long time to come?

Nicola Sturgeon: I echo Duncan McNeil's comments about the league of friends and similar organisations, which do a fantastic job on behalf of the national health service. I know that all NHS boards respect and value that work, and I would fully expect Andrew Robertson or any other health board chair to communicate those sentiments to volunteers who do such work.

As I have said, the trial of the Aroma cafe concept is under way. It is important to stress that the brand is owned by Health Facilities Scotland rather than by any particular health board. Health Facilities Scotland has made it clear that it will not agree to any further roll-out beyond the sites that I have mentioned until the trial has been fully evaluated. At this stage, it is premature for any board to commit to an Aroma cafe at any hospital that is not involved in the trial. The IRH is one such hospital. I understand that Health Facilities Scotland will meet NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde shortly to emphasise that no decision should be taken prior to the evaluation of the trial.

If the Aroma cafe concept is to be rolled out in the future—I am glad that Duncan McNeil accepts that it has merits—I believe that great scope exists for partnership working with existing voluntary organisations that already provide services. Health Facilities Scotland is to meet the WRVS to explore those opportunities, and I would be happy to ask it to meet the league of friends as well.

Wrongful Death (Damages)

5. Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what its view is on the recommendations in the report on damages for wrongful death published by the Scottish Law Commission. (S3O-6602)

The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill): Officials are currently considering the report on damages for wrongful death alongside the Scottish Law Commission's two other recent reports on damages. We will take a view about our response to the recommendations in those reports and the timing of any bill in due course.

Bill Butler: I thank the cabinet secretary for his extremely cautious response. He will be aware that reform of the Damages (Scotland) Act 1976 would, among other things, remove the need for some cases to go to court, thereby allowing

victims and their relatives to access the compensation to which they are entitled more swiftly and avoid a stressful and potentially intrusive court process. It would also guarantee a fair, standard level of compensation for loss of earnings.

I intend, in the next few days, to introduce a member's bill that will be based firmly on appendix A of part 4 of the Scottish Law Commission's report. Will the Government support that bill, perhaps by way of a handout bill-type process?

Kenny MacAskill: As I said to the member earlier, I appreciate his interest in the matter. Professor Thomson's report has been welcomed, but it must be considered and reviewed by all the stakeholders who have an interest in it. First, we must consider carefully the terms of the report and see whether they will fit precisely into a legislative framework.

Secondly, the report is the third in a series of recent reviews by the Scottish Law Commission of the law of damages. It is accepted universally that the law of damages in Scotland needs to be updated; after all, we are in the 21st century. Those who, like me, practised some 10 years ago are aware that the law in the area has not changed radically—the recent changes such as those on asbestos have been relatively limited. Whether it would be better to make such change piecemeal through a single action or a single piece of legislation that dealt with a specific aspect of the law of damages or whether it would be better to take time to adopt a more consolidated approach that sought to tackle all the aspects that have been raised rather than just one of the Law Commission's reports is a matter that we will consider and which I will be happy to discuss with the member in due course.

Road Safety

6. Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive when it will publish its 10-year road safety strategy. (S3O-6584)

The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): I will announce the date of publication within the next few weeks.

Alison McInnes: When the minister came to office he stated that road safety was a priority, but it seems to me that the Scottish National Party is in a different time zone from the rest of us—it has taken two years to produce the road safety strategy.

The tally of fatalities on rural roads is disproportionate—accidents on rural roads account for 62 per cent of fatalities, even though they carry only 42 per cent of the traffic. Does the minister support the Department for Transport's

view that speed limits on rural roads must be reviewed? If so, will he advise how and when that will be done?

Stewart Stevenson: The framework for speed limits is, of course, created by the DFT, not by us. A review of speed limits on roads that councils are responsible for is under way. We are working closely with DFT colleagues and have provided input to the consultation on driver licensing and on speed limits. We will continue with such work, because the member makes a perfectly good point—night time and rurality are particular vectors of risk that we need to understand and respond to.

Public Sector (Pay and Conditions)

7. John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government, in light of recent research by the Institute of Directors that suggested that Scottish workers may have to work until over the age of 70 to pay for public sector pensions, whether the Scottish Government intends to conduct a review of public sector pay and conditions. (S3O-6579)

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): I note the Institute of Directors report. Occupational pensions, including public service pensions, remain a matter reserved to the United Kingdom Government. However, public service pensions in Scotland have been reformed in recent years, including the introduction of new schemes for teachers, police, firefighters and NHS staff, and, as recently as 1 April this year, a new scheme for local government staff.

It is, of course, the case that public sector workers contribute to the cost of their pensions through employees' contributions and through income tax.

I pay tribute to the dedication of the thousands of teachers, nurses, police officers and firefighters who make up the bulk of the public sector workforce and contribute to services that are essential to Scottish life. Pensions are only part of an overall remuneration package that is designed to ensure that the public sector attracts and retains appropriately skilled workers.

John Wilson: Is it time to examine the financial viability of the existing local government and other public sector pension funds to alleviate the need in future for emergency cash injections from taxpayers to those pension schemes?

John Swinney: As I said in my original answer, we have very recently completed a process, which was started by the previous Administration, to review the local government staff pension scheme. I assure Mr Wilson that there is regular dialogue and interaction between the Scottish Government and the Treasury on the financial health and

sustainability of public sector pensions. The issues that Mr Wilson has raised today about the sustainability of pensions are material to honouring the commitments that have been made to public sector workers who have contributed to their pensions.

Scotland Rural Development Programme

8. Peter Peacock (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive when it expects its review of the Scotland rural development programme to be concluded. (S3O-6632)

The Minister for Environment (Roseanna Cunningham): Our external reviewer, Peter Cook, is in the process of finalising his advice and will be submitting it to the Scottish Government shortly. That will enable the Government to make any decisions about changes to the Scotland rural development programme, in the light of that advice, during May.

Peter Peacock: The minister will be aware of the dismay of NFU Scotland and crofters at the recent postponement of the next round of rural priorities applications. The NFUS described the decision as having left many of its members in limbo. Will the review of the SRDP consider that decision? Will the minister explain to Parliament the reasons for the decision that has disappointed so many crofters and farmers, who have spent a lot of time and money preparing applications?

Roseanna Cunningham: There have been four funding rounds in the past seven months, which even the member will agree is quite a considerable number. The funding round in February led to more than 1,000 approvals. In a sense, we were a little a victim of our success. We have extended the deadline for the next funding round and we will fix a date for that to be finalised as soon as we can. It is a matter that Peter Cook, who is an independent reviewer, may be considering—we will find out when he presents his report to us—but the success of the previous funding round flies in the face of all the people who were bemoaning how difficult it was to get money out of the SRDP and bodes very well for the future.

Liam McArthur (Orkney) (LD): As Peter Peacock suggested, Scottish farmers and crofters incur sizeable costs when preparing proposals for the SRDP. Does the minister accept that, given the seasonal nature of many activities supported under rural priorities, her decision to cancel the next round of regional project assessment committee meetings will, as well as cause confusion, at best require proposals to be recast and at worst require them to be dropped entirely for a year or more, with all the costs that that would entail?

Roseanna Cunningham: No. I do not think that that is necessarily the result. The existing applications will still be able to go forward. We have not cancelled anything. All we have done is extend the deadlines. We have had four in seven months, which by any standard beats previous records. I think that we intend to go on doing so.

Great Britain Football Team

9. Michael Matheson (Falkirk West) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with the Scottish Football Association about the proposal for a GB football team at the 2012 London Olympics. (S3O-6653)

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Shona Robison): The Scottish Government, at official and ministerial level, has been in regular contact with the Scottish Football Association about a range of issues. The SFA has categorically stated its opposition to the concept of a GB football team. The Scottish Government whole-heartedly backs that position and the Scottish ministers are on record expressing their concerns that a GB football team would jeopardise the future of Scotland as an independent footballing nation.

Michael Matheson: Will the minister assure me that she will continue to work with the SFA in opposing the idea of a GB football team, which could jeopardise the future independence of Scottish football, and that she will work with the SFA to ensure that the damaging proposal never sees the light of day?

Shona Robison: I very much agree with the member. The Scottish Government has always made it clear that it wants to increase the opportunities for Scottish teams to compete on the international stage. The existence of a GB football team could put that at risk, so we will continue to support the SFA's position strongly.

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-1623)

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

Today is 23 April, St George's day, so I think it appropriate to congratulate the people of England on their national day.

Iain Gray: The whole country wants to see all politicians, all parties and all sectors working together to help hard-working families through the global economic downturn. Yesterday's United Kingdom budget included £400 million for Scots seeking work, pensioners paying their fuel bills, and families bringing up children. It included new support for Scotland's oil and gas industry and for our renewable energy industry. It also showed that the Scottish budget will, in the teeth of a recession, grow by £2.2 billion over the next two years. Can the First Minister confirm that?

The First Minister: I am afraid that Iain Gray will have to come to terms with reality. If yesterday was a day of reckoning for Labour at Westminster, today is the day of reckoning for Labour in the Scottish Parliament.

Since November, Iain Gray has been saying of the cuts that are planned for next year that the amount might be less than £500 million. He has been appealing to his financial guru Andy Kerr for advice, who also says that it could not possibly be worked out. This morning on the radio, the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that it could still not be worked out. Well, we can work it out. The total cut by Labour on Scotland for next year is £496,682,000. That is the reality of what Labour in Westminster is forcing on the Scottish people.

Does Iain Gray understand that that level of reduction in funding for vital services in Scotland is not only bad for the economy and bad for public services, but threatens 9,000 jobs in Scotland?

Iain Gray: Last week, the First Minister was caught out by the old trick question: what do you get if you divide by zero? The correct answer is that the question is meaningless—and so is his budget arithmetic.

Since November, I have been saying that the First Minister's budget would in the next year increase, and that in the year after that it would increase. So—let us do a bit of reckoning, and let

us keep it simple. The First Minister's budget is £33.3 billion in 2008-09, £34.8 billion in 2009-10, and £35.5 billion in 2010-11. Is his budget going up, or is it going down?

The First Minister: Iain Gray will find the answer on page 241 of the red book that is published with the budget. This year, total managed expenditure for the Scottish budget is £29.1 billion. That is revenue and capital. Next year, it will be £29.3 billion. In real terms, that will be the first cut in the Scottish budget since the Tory years. In real terms, next year's figure will be £28.8 billion.

Now, I know that Iain Gray was a maths teacher, and I have to say that the BBC made one of its few apologies to me as far as the maths question was concerned. I know that he has been out of teaching for some time, but even Iain Gray must recognise that 28.8 is less than 29.1. Whatever way it is divided, that is the first real-terms cut in Scottish expenditure since the Tory years—something, of course, that the Labour Party said it would never do.

People in Scotland must find extraordinary the contrast in the rhetoric of the chancellor and the Prime Minister, who at Westminster berate the Tory party on cutting public services, when that is exactly what they propose to do next year in Scotland.

Iain Gray: The First Minister can play around with his annually managed expenditure, his total managed expenditure and his departmental expenditure limit until he gets the figure he wants. However, any honest appraisal of the figures shows that his budget is still going up year on year, increasing by more than £2 billion in two years. The real question is this: what choices will the First Minister make with that budget? Labour at Westminster has promised to safeguard front-line services and to maintain budget increases of 5 per cent for local health services and 4 per cent for schools. Will the First Minister make the same promise for Scotland?

The First Minister: I will tell Iain Gray the choices that we would make if we were in government at Westminster. We would not choose to spend £25 billion on Trident nuclear missiles. Labour at Westminster has also chosen to spend £5 billion on a national database for identity cards that will do nobody any good. That is an extraordinary position. Those are the real political choices. Hands up who in the Labour Party wants to spend £100 billion on Trident while cutting public expenditure in Scotland. Lord George Foulkes is the only Labour member to put his hand up.

Iain Gray will have to come to terms with the fact that this is not playing around with financial

aggregates. What Labour proposes is a cut of 9,000 jobs in Scotland—real jobs and real people are at risk of redundancy because of Labour.

Iain Gray: Were we to cancel Trident, we would cut 11,000 jobs in the west of Scotland. Is that really the First Minister's brilliant idea to save the Scottish economy? We know the choices that the First Minister makes because he has been making them for two years. There have been cuts in teacher numbers—his cuts—and cuts in school building programmes, which are his cuts. Twenty thousand construction jobs have gone already and there have been cuts in housing completions—his cuts. There have been cuts in apprenticeship programmes—his cuts—and pensioners have been cut out of the central heating programme by means testing. Those are his cuts. Those cuts have nothing to do with next year's budget, the year after's budget or the budgets in 2013 and 2014. They have got nothing to do with Westminster; the person who is responsible for them is right here. The First Minister's budget is going to grow by £2.2 billion. When will he grow up, take responsibility and get on with the job?

The First Minister: We have already demonstrated that the cuts that Labour has refused to acknowledge since November will come in the Scottish budget next year—the first cuts since the Tory years.

I am interested in Iain Gray's inability to understand the difference between reinvesting in public services and top-slicing from the Scottish budget. I was also interested in Andy Kerr's analysis on "Newsnight Scotland" last night, in which he attacked the Scottish National Party. He said:

"They've, you know, reduced expenditure in Scotland by £1.6 billion worth of cuts. They've spent to the hilt."

In one breath, Andy Kerr said that we have been both cutting and spending "to the hilt."

The difference is that the efficiency savings that are being made in Scotland are going back into local government and the health service, whereas the Darling-Gray cuts will be top-sliced from the Scottish budget and will cost 9,000 jobs in Scotland. It is not only the SNP that is arguing that: the Scottish Trades Union Congress and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities share our concerns. Every social partnership in Scotland knows the difference between investment by the SNP and cuts in public spending by the Labour Party.

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-1624)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): I may well bump into the Secretary of State for Scotland on Monday, when I will explain the damage to Scotland and the Scottish economy that will result from the Labour Party's budget.

Annabel Goldie: Labour's recession has landed the country in an appalling mess. No one is blaming the First Minister for the terrible state of the country's finances, but we are where we are. The Scottish budget is going to be squeezed by around £500 million, based on Labour's wildly optimistic estimates. Scotland needs a First Minister who does not just bawl and shout at Westminster but who confronts reality. What will the First Minister do to deal with Labour's £500 million budget squeeze?

The First Minister: The first thing every member of this Parliament should do is recognise that the Scottish economy will be driven into ruin and redundancy if we continue to be at the mercy of decisions that are made by London chancellors.

In Scotland, we have made real efficiency savings in the Scottish budget, which have been reinvested in our public spending programmes. That is the right policy in economic and political terms. However, there is a world of difference between efficiency savings that are reinvested in public services and top-sliced cuts from Westminster.

Annabel Goldie is correct: the chancellor in Westminster has managed to make an error of £60,000 million in the course of four months in estimating public borrowing. I point out that Mr Swinney, as the minister who is responsible for finance in Scotland, makes no error whatsoever, puts into the Scottish economy exactly what he has to spend, and has not borrowed a penny more than the budget allocation.

Annabel Goldie: There he goes again. I will draw the First Minister back from the land of fantasy to the real world of Scotland. He might choose to be long on bluster and short on detail, but in these testing times Scotland needs a First Minister with the courage to make difficult decisions. I cannot believe that this First Minister has not given thought to this, considered the options, worked out a plan and faced up to the unpalatable reality, so I will ask my question again. What are the options? How, exactly, is he going to deal with Labour's budget squeeze?

The First Minister: We will do it with the efficiency and competence with which we have approached the budget process in Scotland, as opposed to the inefficiency and total incompetence that we have seen from Westminster.

Annabel Goldie and everyone else in this chamber should recognise that we have, since November, been warning of the implications to

public services of a £500 million cut. She should equally understand that the political process requires people to put forward different points of view. Unfortunately, the only difference that I can see between the Tories at Westminster and Labour at Westminster is that the Tories want to introduce the cuts this year instead of next year. For the life of me, I cannot understand how introducing the cuts one year early is going to help Scotland out of recession.

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-1625)

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

Tavish Scott: After yesterday's budget, politics and government are, more than ever, about choices. Everyone faces 10 years of pain because of Labour, so Governments should account for the choices that they make.

The Scottish National Party queued up with Labour at Westminster to vote for the short-term VAT cut. That has not worked. Unemployment is soaring. Our Government could have used the same money to build for the long term, with investment in 95,000 green jobs and public transport. Does the First Minister regret making that short-term choice back in December?

The First Minister: Tavish Scott might remember that, back in December, I published information from the Scottish Government input-output model that showed precisely that we could have got twice as many jobs in Scotland through a capital investment programme as would be delivered through the VAT policy. What is more, as opposed to there being a cut in VAT, we would have been left with hospitals, schools and roads. There was a need for a fiscal stimulus, but there was also a need for it to be the right fiscal stimulus.

If Tavish Scott casts his mind back to last December, he might recall that, at that point, he was arguing for a cut in Scottish public spending not of £500 million, but of £700 million. The reason why he abandoned that during the budget process was that, in the months leading up to that point, he had not managed to identify anywhere that the cuts could be made.

Tavish Scott: That still begs the question why Alex Salmond voted for the VAT cut.

It is business as usual with the choices that the Scottish National Party Government makes. Money is to be spent on free school meals for rich kids, on reintroducing beavers to Argyll and on the

referendum campaign, but which can never be cut, no matter how bad Government finances get or how high our taxes have to go.

Let us consider the construction industry. The SNP has announced and re-announced its capital spending. Yesterday's growth figures show that the Scottish construction industry is down by 4.7 per cent—the worst hit of any sector in the economy. Even under disastrous Labour in London, it is only 1.1 per cent. Why is it worse here than in the rest of the United Kingdom? Will the First Minister tell us whether that is anything to do with the choices that his Government has made?

The First Minister: I have the gross value added figures for construction in front of me. Tavish Scott is absolutely right: 4.7 per cent is a serious decline in the construction industry, indicating the depth of the recession that is confronting the UK.

Tavish Scott: That is the Scottish figure.

The First Minister: Yes, that is the Scottish figure—and the UK figure is 5 per cent.

Tavish Scott: No, it is not.

The First Minister: Yes, it is. The quarterly figure is 5 per cent. I will go through the other quarterly figures. In quarter 2, there was an increase of 1.4 per cent in Scotland and a decrease of 0.5 per cent in the UK and in quarter 3, the figure was 0.5 per cent in Scotland and 1 per cent in the UK. If Tavish Scott wants to bandy figures, he should bring the figures along with him so that he can get them right.

There is a £3.5 billion investment programme in Scottish public capital expenditure, which is sustaining 50,000 jobs in Scotland. I do not know how much of that Tavish Scott thought he could cut in his attempt to reduce public spending by £700 million, but members can be sure that if he had managed to persuade the rest of the chamber, there would be fewer jobs in construction, and elsewhere in the economy in Scotland than at present.

Tavish Scott: Mr Salmond is right: the figures in the tables for Scotland are 4.7 per cent down and for the UK they are 1.1 per cent down. It is as simple as that. Those are the published figures. Would he like to explain or is it, as usual, someone else's fault?

The First Minister: As I remember things, every time Tavish Scott accuses me of misleading the chamber he ends up making an apology, of a sort. The figure is 4.7 per cent for Scotland and I am afraid that it is 5 per cent for the UK. It is the quarterly gross value added figure in the construction index.

What is important is that we put into the Scottish economy the capital spending that is required to sustain jobs through the recession—the 20,000 jobs that result from the Scottish Government programme over the past year. In contrast, the United Kingdom chancellor managed to cut or threaten 9,000 jobs in a single day. That is why people in Scotland will prefer the investment programme of the SNP to the cuts programme of the Labour Party.

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): I will take a constituency question from Michael Matheson.

Michael Matheson (Falkirk West) (SNP): The First Minister is aware that more than 500 jobs are at risk because of T-Mobile's decision to move work from a Scottish company to the Philippines. The decision impacts not only on Telecom Service Centres Ltd workers in my constituency, but on workers in Greenock.

A letter from T-Mobile states that it is

"working closely with TSC to minimise and mitigate the losses".

However, my constituents tell me that there is no evidence whatever of that.

The workforce are rightly angry that they have been dumped for a cheaper overseas option after years of dedication. They are highly skilled professionals offering an industry-recognised and proven high-quality service.

Will the First Minister assure me that he will use the full resources of the Scottish Government, first to try to dissuade T-Mobile from taking those jobs overseas or, if that fails, at least to ensure that T-Mobile lives up to its promise to minimise and mitigate the job losses?

The First Minister: I share the disappointment of the constituency member and all members in the chamber in hearing that TSC is faced with making those redundancies. It is clear that that is not a reflection on the highly-skilled and valued workforce.

Ministers have been closely involved in the issue. We welcome the assurance from TSC that it would not off-shore any of the jobs. Mr Mather is writing to the parent company, T-Mobile, to argue the case to retain that business in Scotland.

The Government is committed to assisting all companies in the current climate to safeguard existing jobs and look at opportunities for expansion.

Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab): First Minister, I was delighted to hear you say that the Government would get behind this company, but could you start by ensuring that your minister, Jim Mather—

The Presiding Officer: Through the chair please, Mr McNeil.

Duncan McNeil: Sorry. Could you make sure—
[*Laughter.*] Could you make sure, First Minister—

The Presiding Officer: “Could he make sure,” Mr McNeil.

Duncan McNeil: Could he make sure—
[*Applause.*] Thank you for that, Presiding Officer; I was not expecting to be called.

Could the First Minister ensure that his minister Jim Mather takes action for the TSC workers in Greenock and Falkirk? Mr Mather has known about the situation for a number of weeks—indeed, months—and I have been very disappointed by his complacent response. This important issue concerns not only TSC workers but the whole of Scotland’s call centre sector, so I hope that action will be taken.

The First Minister: Both Mr Mather and Mr Swinney are involved in this issue. The situation is serious and should be treated as such.

However, I point out to Duncan McNeil that not so long ago this Government’s direct and rapid intervention saved 900 jobs at a call centre in Cumbernauld. He can be absolutely certain that in confronting these serious challenges Scottish ministers will do their utmost to minimise the recession’s damage to the Scottish economy.

Drug and Alcohol Services

4. Stuart McMillan (West of Scotland) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what action the Scottish Government has taken in light of the Audit Scotland report, “Drug and alcohol services in Scotland”. (S3F-1632)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): I am pleased that on Monday we were able to hold an alcohol and drugs delivery summit—fulfilling a commitment that I gave last month to Annabel Goldie and indeed this Parliament—and that Annabel Goldie, Richard Simpson and Ian McKee were able to attend the event. I know that they found it valuable.

At the summit, we and our social partners in the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities launched a new framework for action on alcohol and drugs, which directly addresses the problems that the Auditor General for Scotland recently highlighted. Indeed, I was pleased to hear that the Auditor General, who also attended the summit, welcomed the new framework.

We have already ensured that the right strategies and the right investment are in place. Having the right delivery framework now in place gives us the best possible chance of success in

tackling together the significant problems that we face.

Stuart McMillan: Everyone in Parliament knows that alcohol abuse is a major problem in Scotland, and is aware of its £2.5 billion cost implications for the national health service. Does the First Minister agree with former Labour First Minister Henry McLeish, who has said that the Scottish Government must press ahead with its proposals for minimum alcohol pricing?

The First Minister: Yes, I do. The former First Minister’s analysis of the situation and support for the Scottish Government’s position were comprehensive. His is a powerful voice and we are delighted to have his support.

As far as the overall reach of our campaign and strategy for tackling alcohol and drugs abuse in Scotland is concerned, we recognise that not everyone will agree with every one of our proposals. However, we hope and believe that we will find areas of agreement in key parts of the programme. In that respect, I welcome the fact that Annabel Goldie described as a “milestone” Monday’s announcement of the delivery mechanisms to bring the strategy into practice as we deal with these social problems.

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I join the First Minister in welcoming Monday’s summit, which was indeed very useful. However, does he agree that there should, given the significant waiting times that are faced by too many addicts seeking treatment, and the stress of such situations on them, their families and—in some cases—their children, be a commitment to achieving in Scotland a similar waiting time for drug misusers to that in England, which is now less than four weeks?

The First Minister: We are catching up with some areas south of the border, where the scale of the problem was recognised quicker than it was in Scotland.

I remind Richard Simpson that we are investing £94 million in drugs services over three years, which is an increase of 13 per cent, and that we have increased hugely the budget for tackling the blight of alcohol. I welcome not only his attendance at Monday’s forum but his constructive support in a number of areas in the battle that we must, as a Parliament and as a society, fight together.

Ambulance Response Times

5. Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab): To ask the First Minister whether the Scottish Government considers that the inclusion of voluntary first responders in the statistics provides the public with an accurate

representation of ambulance response times. (S3F-1641)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): First, I take this opportunity to thank all the people throughout Scotland who participate in volunteer first responder schemes, which are fantastic schemes. They account for a very small proportion—only 0.5 per cent—of total responses and are always backed up by ambulances. Those volunteers play a valuable role as part of the overall Ambulance Service response and have done so since the scheme was introduced in 2002.

The contribution of first responders should be included in the statistics as they form part of the overall resource that is managed and monitored by the Scottish Ambulance Service. Since the service started recording performance across Scotland against its category A target, first responders have always been included.

Cathy Jamieson: I thank the First Minister for that answer, but I am not sure that the public will be entirely reassured, given that some concerns have been expressed, from the Scottish Ambulance Service unions in particular, that first responders have been used at incidents for which they have not been trained properly.

Is the First Minister aware of concerns that the current time-only target does not give a true picture of effectiveness? For example, arrival two minutes after the target response time, where there is a good outcome for the patient, is not deemed to be a success. Will the First Minister ask his Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing whether the time is right to review the targets for the ambulance response times in order to have a more sophisticated measurement?

The First Minister: The eight-minute target for category A incidents is widely recognised internationally as being absolutely crucial. The figures for the Scottish Ambulance Service are improving all the time. For the first time, the 75 per cent target has been met—I think, in March this year. For the first time since that valuable target was introduced, the Scottish Ambulance Service, through its efforts and the work that it does, is meeting the target of getting to 75 per cent of life-threatening emergency situations in category A within eight minutes. I point out to Cathy Jamieson that not only have we met the target for the first time, but the target would have been met regardless of whether the first responders were included in the figures. In looking at this issue, instead of doing anything other than welcome and support those who work in the public services—those working full-time in the Scottish Ambulance Service and the volunteers who are turning in these remarkable statistics for the first time—cannot we as a Parliament get behind them and

say collectively to our Ambulance Service, “Well done and keep on going”?

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): Does the First Minister agree that, notwithstanding the fact that the Government and the Scottish Ambulance Service have met, and indeed exceeded, their targets, even when first responders are removed from the figures—we have done that in any event—the rather spurious attack that has been launched by Labour denigrates the reputation of first responders, who play a crucial and additional role in urgent circumstances, particularly in rural areas?

The First Minister: It is important to say that even if the first responders had been excluded from the target, the Scottish Ambulance Service would in March have reached 76.6 per cent of category A incidents within eight minutes, thereby achieving the target for the first time.

I am totally bemused by the Labour Party’s attitude. Previously, Richard Simpson, for example, has been extremely supportive of the 75 per cent target as being entirely realistic. In welcoming the valuable work of first responders and recognising the wonderful performance of our Scottish Ambulance Service in meeting the demanding target for the first time, cannot we acknowledge that those who are charged with saving lives in Scotland are doing a first-class job?

National Trust for Scotland

6. John Scott (Ayr) (Con): To ask the First Minister what recent discussions the Scottish Government has had with the management, staff and unions of the National Trust for Scotland on its future. (S3F-1626)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): We are disappointed at the potential implications of the National Trust for Scotland’s announcement about its properties at risk and appreciate the impact that that is having on the affected staff and their families.

The Minister for Culture, External Affairs and the Constitution met the chair and chief executive of the National Trust for Scotland on 2 April 2009. Scottish Government officials have also met representatives of the trust several times since it announced in March plans for closures or changes to the operating arrangements at several of its properties.

John Scott: What are the First Minister’s views on the campaign by in trust for Scotland to force an extraordinary general meeting of the National Trust for Scotland? Will he do everything in his power to protect the future of National Trust for Scotland properties and jobs, particularly in the Ayrshire area, such as the Robert Burns birthplace

museum and Culzean castle, which are vital attractions in the year of homecoming?

The First Minister: As John Scott well knows, we have confirmed grant funding of £5.5 million to the Burns birthplace museum project. When the minister met the National Trust for Scotland, he was assured that that project is on time and on budget.

Ministers are anxious to help in any way they can. The National Trust for Scotland is a private charity that must be allowed to organise its affairs without Government interference, but if Government support in several areas can be of even further help to the National Trust than is the extensive help that it is receiving for its new projects, we are of course willing to listen.

Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD): The First Minister knows that two properties that are under threat are in my constituency—the Hill of Tarvit mansion house and Kellie castle, which are important in their own right and as tourist attractions. Local people want the opportunity to develop new business models for those properties. Will the Scottish Government work with the National Trust to ensure that those properties stay open this year, to provide sufficient time for new business models to be developed?

The First Minister: There are also two properties under threat in my constituency. Iain Smith will recognise that, given that 11 of the 130 properties that the National Trust for Scotland controls are threatened with change to their operations or closure, many of us have much understandable constituency concern.

It is clear that the Government cannot and should not seek to direct the affairs of an independent charitable association. However, it is equally clear that the reason for having meetings with the National Trust for Scotland is to consider whether the Government can offer realistic assistance over and above the substantial assistance that is being offered with the exciting new projects that the National Trust plans.

12:31

Meeting suspended until 14:15.

14:15

On resuming—

Question Time

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Education and Lifelong Learning

Chinese Culture, History and Language

1. Andrew Welsh (Angus) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to extend the teaching of Chinese culture, history and language. (S3O-6662)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Fiona Hyslop): We have taken a number of steps to extend the teaching of Chinese culture, history and language over the past year, including launching eight Confucius classrooms in Scotland and several national qualifications in Chinese languages, increasing the number of teachers of Chinese, and funding 51 young people to undertake a study visit to China this summer.

Andrew Welsh: I thank the Government for the introduction of Chinese language teaching at school level and commend Angus Council's on-going pioneering work to promote direct cultural, educational and commercial contacts, which I originally instigated and which now leads the whole of Scotland. That work shows what can be done by positive co-operation and action at local government level.

Will the cabinet secretary further encourage the teaching of Chinese language, culture and history at school, college and university levels to promote mutual understanding and friendship between and economic benefits for Scotland and China? One of the world's oldest civilisations is now reaching out to the world. Through knowledge, we can break down any barriers to communication.

Fiona Hyslop: I congratulate the member and Angus Council on leading the way in many ways on relationships with China and particular areas of the country. I want language teaching to be encouraged in colleges and universities. Qualifications in languages for work purposes, which will include units on Cantonese and Mandarin, are among the interesting new qualifications that are coming on board. I think that those qualifications will readily lend themselves to a college or university situation.

I completely agree with Andrew Welsh. Having returned from my visit to China, I realise the importance of ensuring that we can communicate with one of the oldest cultures and societies in the world and one of the biggest growing markets in

the world. The economic and educational links certainly bode well for Scotland in the future.

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): When the cabinet secretary was in China, did the Chinese say whether they have maximum class sizes or whether they determine the number of pupils in classes by the subject that they are studying, the teacher's experience of teaching that subject and the socioeconomic range that the school caters for?

Fiona Hyslop: The classes that I saw in China—certainly in Shanghai—were slightly larger than those in Scotland. However, there is an important message for Scotland. When I was in Hong Kong, it was clear to me that people there had just embarked on educational reforms that are very similar to the curriculum for excellence reforms. They were concerned that the previous rote learning in large classes, which was done in a chalk-and-talk way, was no longer fit for purpose. We have agreed to collaborate closely with the Hong Kong Government in particular. They are several years ahead of us, but it is clear that there are lessons that we can learn from them. Individuals learning to learn is becoming increasingly important. It should be remembered that Hong Kong performs strongly in the international tables, particularly in science and maths. There is a lot to learn both ways about education and schools in China.

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): Question 2 has been withdrawn.

Teacher Training (Scots Language)

3. Bill Wilson (West of Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government how many higher education institutions ensure that their teacher training graduates are competent to teach Scots. (S3O-6664)

The Minister for Schools and Skills (Keith Brown): There is no teaching qualification in the Scots language. However, the higher education institutions that offer initial teacher education are committed to preparing all new teachers to deliver the curriculum for excellence, which contains a clear commitment to the promotion of Scottish history, culture and languages. Therefore, all teachers should be prepared to build on the diversity of language that is represented in the communities of Scotland and value the languages that children and young people bring to school.

Bill Wilson: In light of the compelling testimony from front-line teachers that increased provision of the Scots language can enhance literacy, social inclusion, English skills and the understanding of Scots culture, does the Scottish Government have plans to significantly increase investment in Scots

in schools? Does it have plans to commission research into the provision of Scots education?

Keith Brown: As Bill Wilson knows—or as he kens fine, as I should perhaps say—local authorities are responsible for allocating budgets to their schools to meet the demands and priorities in their local area. It is for schools, in the light of the curriculum framework within which they operate, to determine how best to organise the syllabus for all subjects, including Scots in schools. There is no extra funding for Scots and the Scottish Government has no plans to increase significantly investment in Scots in schools.

The member will be aware that, at the Equal Opportunities Committee's meeting on 24 February, it agreed to refer points relating to the Scots language audit report to the Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee. Those included the suggestion that the Government consider commissioning further research to explore attitudes to the Scots language in teaching and the finding that provision appears more frequent in primary than in secondary schools. I can confirm that Scottish Government officials met on 18 March to consider how further research could build on the findings of the recent Scots language audit to provide an understanding of the barriers to provision in secondary schools.

Additional Support Needs (Resources)

4. Ms Wendy Alexander (Paisley North) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what steps it is taking to ensure that sufficient resources are allocated for the education of children with additional support needs. (S3O-6597)

The Minister for Children and Early Years (Adam Ingram): The Scottish Government is investing record levels of funding in local government, with £23 billion for the period 2008 to 2010. It is for each local authority, in the light of local needs and priorities, to determine how much funding is allocated for the education of children with additional support needs.

Ms Alexander: The minister's answer closely follows the response of the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning to my question on 5 February, when she used the same figure of £23 billion and suggested that the level of support to local government this year, 2009-10, is a 9.9 per cent increase on the 2007-08 figure. Given that, is the minister willing to condemn any real-terms reduction in spending on additional support needs over that same period, in which the Government boasts of a 9.9 per cent increase in resources to local government?

Adam Ingram: Frankly, I do not recognise Ms Alexander's figures. We have talked about a 5.5 per cent increase in expenditure on education in

local authorities in the previous financial year. In the member's council area of Renfrewshire, there has been a significant uplift in spending. Frankly, I do not recognise the situation to which Ms Alexander refers.

In addition to the spending that we direct through the financial settlement to local government, the Scottish Government is investing more than £15 million in national initiatives that are designed to support the education of children with additional support needs. That includes a grant of £11.2 million to grant-aided special schools, £2.4 million for training initiatives and more than £1.4 million on special services, such as the Enquire helpline.

Universities (Graduate Career Prospects)

5. Maureen Watt (North East Scotland) (SNP):

To ask the Scottish Government what steps universities are taking to improve the career prospects of graduates. (S3O-6573)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Fiona Hyslop): Universities are taking a range of steps to improve their graduates' career prospects. In the letter of guidance that I issued to the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council last November, I asked the council to develop entrepreneurial capacity and employability among graduates. Through initiatives such as learning to work, the council is helping to support universities in their work to improve their graduates' employability.

Maureen Watt: As the cabinet secretary will be aware, the University of Aberdeen recently announced plans to reform its curriculum to bring about increased flexibility and a wider range of educational choices. Does she agree that the reforms will boost the employability of the university's graduates and help to make the north-east of Scotland a more attractive place for economic investment?

Fiona Hyslop: Yes. I visited the University of Aberdeen at the end of March to hear at first hand about the exciting work that it is doing in the reform of its curriculum to enhance the Aberdeen learning experience. The reforms will mean that the university's graduates are better informed, more rounded and more intellectually flexible. A key focus for the university is the employability of students, but the focus is also on developing graduate attributes such as academic excellence, critical thinking, effective communication, openness to learning and personal development and active citizenship, all of which reflect some of the capacities in the curriculum for excellence. The focus in the university's new curriculum reflects initiatives from around the world. Indeed, when I met the universities of Aberdeen and Hong Kong, I heard how some of the developments there reflect

some of the same types of curriculum reform. It is a very interesting development and can only help to improve the employability and economic circumstances of graduates contributing to the north-east of Scotland.

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): Is the cabinet secretary aware that 22 dietetic students at Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen are waiting for a placement in the national health service so that they can complete their degrees and that there are similar problems at Queen Margaret University and Glasgow Caledonian University? At a challenging time for graduate employment and employability, it is vital that that obstacle is removed so that those students can complete their courses. Will the cabinet secretary pledge to work with her health colleagues to ensure that every dietetic student gets a placement as soon as possible?

Fiona Hyslop: Clearly, dieticians and their placements are a matter for those students, Robert Gordon University, the other universities and the national health service. As cabinet secretary, I am frequently asked to intervene in individual university courses at the same time as being accused of interfering with academic freedom. I cannot do both of those things. By law, I am deliberately prevented from interfering in particular courses and particular universities. However, I recognise the frustration that many such students might feel. I know that North East Scotland MSPs such as Nigel Don have been proactive in contacting the NHS and the university to try to find a resolution that meets the students' needs. There is clear concern about the situation, but I hope that Claire Baker reflects on the limit of what I can do as cabinet secretary.

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

The cabinet secretary will be aware that one of the consequences of Labour's recession and rising unemployment is that more graduates will look to stay on to do postgraduate degrees and there will be a rise in the number of applications for postgraduate places. Will she look at university funding to ensure that institutions are being resourced properly to deal with that rise in applications?

Fiona Hyslop: Universities and higher education are receiving a bigger share of the total Scottish block than under the previous Administration. However, the member is right to identify graduates' desire to stay on and do a postgraduate course.

Only this week, I launched a change to individual learning account provision to allow students more flexibility when making applications to use the £500 ILA to help to fund postgraduate places that are not otherwise funded. That provision in Scotland is unique—we are the only

part of the United Kingdom that provides fee remission or fee payment for postgraduate students in particular areas. I am keen that recently graduated students or those in sectors such as finance or other areas who want to go back into learning can use the part-time ILA to help to fund their application. I launched those changes at the Open University only this week and they were well received by some of those who will graduate this year and want to continue their studies after graduation.

Primary Schools (Class Sizes)

6. Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive when it expects to meet its pledge of a maximum class size of 18 for primaries 1 to 3. (S3O-6624)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Fiona Hyslop): Under the terms of the concordat, local government has agreed to make year-on-year progress in reducing the number of pupils in P1 to P3 classes to a maximum of 18. The concordat recognises that the rate of progress will vary due to local circumstances.

Michael McMahon: Is the cabinet secretary aware of the public meeting that took place in Bellshill on Tuesday evening? The parents of students at Orbiston nursery school and Lawmuir and Sacred Heart primary schools came together to oppose North Lanarkshire Council's proposal to close Orbiston nursery school in order to relocate provision within the two neighbouring primary schools, thereby removing the opportunity to reduce class sizes as envisaged.

Is the cabinet secretary aware that the information technology room at Lawmuir primary is to be relocated to an open space, which she and I would probably call a corridor, in order to accommodate the provision of new nursery places at the primary school? Will she tell me who she thinks is responsible for such a ludicrous situation?

Fiona Hyslop: I urge the member to contact his local authority, North Lanarkshire Council, to address those issues. The fact that it is run by the Labour Party might make it easier for him to make those contacts. I would have thought that after eight years of being a member of the Parliament, all responsible MSPs would know who runs their local authority education department and it is important that Michael McMahon knows that too. His point is well made, however, and he has made a representation in the Parliament on behalf of his constituents.

It is essential that we recognise the value and importance of investing in our education system and ensuring that we have smaller class sizes to

help to progress better literacy and numeracy and drive up standards. I am pleased that, in North Lanarkshire, progress has been made towards reducing the size of classes in primary 1 to 3. In this session, 96 per cent of primary 1 classes contain 23 children or fewer, compared with 75 per cent in 2007.

If the member wants me to comment on IT equipment locations in particular corridors in particular schools, I must tell him that that is outwith my remit.

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): On the matter of making progress on class sizes, will the cabinet secretary make urgent representations to Glasgow City Council, as the closure of many primary schools in the city will lead to higher class sizes in schools outwith the local community? Will she specifically challenge the Labour education spokesperson, Jonathan Findlay, who bizarrely defends higher class sizes as providing

"larger and more flexible learning groups",

and suggest to him that he should listen to his Labour counterpart on the City of Edinburgh Council, Councillor Andrew Burns, who believes that it is common sense to take account of Government class size targets in relation to any proposed school closures?

Fiona Hyslop: Clearly, local authorities are responsible for the school estate and school closures and the role of ministers relates purely to process.

I think that the suggestion that higher class sizes provide larger and more flexible learning groups is a creative interpretation of the reality. The 80,000 people who petitioned the Parliament to urge that action be taken to deliver smaller class sizes—the second-highest number of signatories to any petition that the Parliament has received—might want to reflect on Councillor Findlay's comments. I think that he might be the same person who said that lower class sizes were irresponsible. He is entitled to his opinion, however.

I look forward to my upcoming meeting with Glasgow City Council. Along with my ministerial team, I will meet a number of councils to discuss this and other matters. Although I cannot interfere with the individual decisions on school closures that are being made today, I can certainly advance the case for better-quality education and better investment in education. Perhaps that is something that Glasgow City Council might want to reflect on.

South Ayrshire Council (Meetings)

7. Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether ministers plan to meet the

education convener of South Ayrshire Council. (S3O-6614)

The Minister for Children and Early Years (Adam Ingram): I met South Ayrshire Council's chief executive and executive director for children and communities on 20 April 2009. I would be happy to meet the education convener at a mutually convenient date.

Cathy Jamieson: When the minister meets the education convener, will he press the Tory-Scottish National Party council to explain why teacher numbers in South Ayrshire have dropped from a peak of 515 in 2006, which was the result of sustained investment by the previous Labour-led Executive, to 487 in 2008?

Having heard what the cabinet secretary said to Michael McMahon on progress on reducing class sizes, will the minister also press South Ayrshire Council to explain why, in 2008, 13.5 per cent of children in primary 1 to 3 in South Ayrshire were in classes of 18 children or fewer when, in 2006, that figure was 13.8 per cent? Is that progress? Are ministers simply washing their hands of education matters due to the concordat?

Adam Ingram: I was encouraged by my meeting with the senior management of South Ayrshire Council. It has a strong focus on concordat commitments. It will make significant progress this year on cutting class sizes. It is taking on extra pre-school teachers. It is well on track for the implementation of the curriculum for excellence. It will be one of the first local authorities to implement the early years framework. In addition, it has introduced a kinship care allowance at Fostering Network rates.

From my perspective, I am seeing a breath of fresh air in the approach of the senior management team and of councillors of all political parties who are working together—that is, apart from councillors from the Labour Party, which left the council in a state of near bankruptcy.

The Presiding Officer: I was going to call question 8, but John Farquhar Munro is not in the chamber. We will move to question 9.

Teacher Numbers (Aberdeen)

9. Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what discussions it has had with Aberdeen City Council regarding teacher numbers. (S3O-6599)

The Minister for Schools and Skills (Keith Brown): Scottish ministers have not yet had discussions with Aberdeen City Council on teacher numbers. However, my education and lifelong learning ministerial colleagues and I will soon meet each local authority in Scotland to discuss,

among other things, teacher numbers and class sizes.

Richard Baker: In March, the First Minister said that the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning will pursue with individual councils the question why not all councils in Scotland have managed to achieve the teacher numbers that we would all wish them to. In the light of that statement, and given that teacher numbers in Aberdeen have fallen by 153, why has dialogue on the issue not yet taken place between ministers and Aberdeen City Council? How will ministers help the council to restore teacher numbers to previous levels, given its plans for further cuts of £5.9 million in its education budget next year?

Keith Brown: We will discuss those issues when we meet the council. There is a date for the meeting next month that I hope the council will confirm. As I said in my previous answer, if the council's finances had not been left in such a parlous state through the Labour Party's offices, it would have been much easier to deal with the issues.

The Labour front-bench spokesperson, Rhona Brankin, said when the teacher numbers were released that she would have ensured that there were 53,000 teachers. That would involve a cut of 600 across Scotland—I am not sure how Richard Baker thinks that that would help Aberdeen to maintain teacher numbers. This is a serious issue, which we are addressing through additional investment—not least in providing 100 new teachers to undertake work in relation to the curriculum for excellence. We will address those issues when we meet Aberdeen City Council.

Elizabeth Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Aberdeen City Council is one of the councils that could not reply with accurate data on how many teaching vacancies have been filled by supply and probationer teachers. What plans does the minister have to improve the collection of data on that issue?

Keith Brown: The issue is being addressed—the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning is examining the issues, not least the fact that some of the figures that we have received on teacher numbers have proved to be less than accurate when compared with those held by the Office of National Statistics. We will raise the issue when we meet Aberdeen City Council.

Europe, External Affairs and Culture

Creative Scotland (Funding)

1. James Kelly (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what progress it has

made on developing the detailed funding requirements of creative Scotland. (S3O-6615)

The Minister for Culture, External Affairs and the Constitution (Michael Russell): Creative Scotland will inherit the budgets of the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen, as well as having access to an additional £5 million for an innovation fund in 2009-10 and 2010-11. Detailed decisions on the use of those budgets will be for creative Scotland to take when it is vested. At present, the existing bodies remain in operation and are spending their resources.

James Kelly: In his statement to Parliament on 2 April, the minister indicated that £1.1 million had been set aside for voluntary severance settlements. Will he indicate how many employees have been identified for redundancy and what discussions have taken place with the trade unions on the matter?

Michael Russell: The member is right to stress the importance of working constructively, professionally, properly and inclusively with the trade unions and the staff members on those issues. I met the trade unions on 2 April in connection with my statement, briefed them fully on the issues that we were discussing and made it clear—as I did in my statement and in responding to questions afterwards—that the identification of exact numbers and the debate on that should properly take place between the transition body, the trade unions and the staff members. I will keep a close eye on that to ensure that it is done in the best possible way.

Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Given the minister's claim during this morning's media debate that the issuing of compulsory redundancy notices by the Trinity Mirror group was wholly unacceptable, will he categorically assure members that there will be no compulsory job cuts in the merging of the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen? With major cuts in funding ahead, are we to assume that that will be the same for other public bodies?

Michael Russell: There will be no compulsory redundancies as a result of the creation of creative Scotland—that has been said many times. It is the Government's policy that there will be no compulsory redundancies in relation to the work that we are doing, and I am happy to confirm that again.

First Minister (Visit to China)

2. Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): To ask the Scottish Executive what issues were raised during the First Minister's recent visit to China. (S3O-6578)

The Minister for Culture, External Affairs and the Constitution (Michael Russell): The First

Minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning—who is sitting beside me and I am sure will confirm as much—visited China to pursue the objectives of the Scottish Government's China plan. The main themes of the visit were energy, financial services, tourism, business, the creative industries and education.

I have provided further details on the visit in response to written parliamentary question S3W-23141 from Gil Paterson, which was answered earlier today.

Patrick Harvie: I regret that I have not had a chance to look at the written answer, but I look forward with enthusiasm to doing so.

Back home, some eyebrows were raised at reports that, on his visit to a wholly undemocratic country with an abysmal human rights record, the First Minister apparently called it the greatest country in the world. Was the issue of human rights raised?

Moreover, was the issue of the green fiscal stimulus discussed? In that respect, China, which has dedicated 34 per cent of its fiscal stimulus to green stimulus, compares very favourably with the United Kingdom, which has dedicated only 7 per cent. Did the First Minister also take the opportunity to have a lesson in green technologies from the Chinese?

Michael Russell: The member's attitude towards China is curiously equivocal, but I shall be positive about both parts of his question.

Ahead of his visit, the First Minister met Amnesty International and the Scottish Human Rights Commission and raised the issue of human rights in his meeting with the vice minister of foreign affairs. Indeed, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning did the same when she met the vice-minister of education in April 2008. We should remember that, last year, when calls for the visit to be cancelled were made in terms not dissimilar to those that we have just heard, John Watson of Amnesty International said, in support of the visit:

"Amnesty believes that engagement can provide the opportunity to push for change".

On the second part of the member's question, there were detailed discussions on a whole range of green—and green energy—issues, and the enthusiasm shown on both sides was much remarked on. Such contact will have positive benefits for Scottish companies and, indeed, for both countries.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): The minister will know that, this summer, the Ayrshire Fiddle Orchestra will hold a series of concerts in China at the invitation of the Chinese Ministry of Culture. Indeed, it will be the first Scottish fiddle orchestra

to perform in the country. Will the minister offer the orchestra the best wishes of the Government and the whole Parliament for a successful tour and take steps to ensure that opportunities for cultural exchanges between Scotland and China, especially those involving young people, are maximised?

Michael Russell: Members would be surprised if I said no. My answer is “of course”. Indeed, I have already been in touch with the Ayrshire Fiddle Orchestra through an intermediary and have offered to meet its members to give them good wishes for their visit. If meeting them helps in any way, I am happy to do so.

United Kingdom Permanent Representation to the European Union

3. Ross Finnie (West of Scotland) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive whether the scope for Scottish civil servants to hold positions in the UK permanent representation to the European Union has been addressed in any of its discussions with the UK Government on a devolved civil service. (S3O-6581)

The Minister for Culture, External Affairs and the Constitution (Michael Russell): I am happy to assure the member that the concordat with the United Kingdom Government on European Union issues makes no distinction between the staff of the three devolved Administrations in relation to eligibility to hold posts in the UK permanent representation to the EU. Members of the Northern Ireland civil service, which is a fully devolved civil service, have held such posts on the same basis as members of the home civil service who have worked for the Welsh Assembly Government or the Scottish Government.

Ross Finnie: I am, of course, aware of the current arrangements. However, although I—and, I think, other members—understand why the Scottish National Party might wish to press the civil service into a more independent position, I hope that the minister will accept that under the current constitutional arrangements it is very important for Scotland’s civil servants to hold positions in the UK permanent representation not only for the experience that they will gain but to allow them to be part of and influence the process. I hope that neither the minister nor his Government has any intention of pushing for an independent civil service that would compromise that position.

Michael Russell: I suggest that the member should have more confidence in and be more open to these matters. Of course we expect members of the civil service in Scotland to play a full part in every aspect of the UK civil service in the wider world in order to learn and contribute. Indeed, that is what they do. However, we feel that

we have a strong opportunity to move towards a civil service that is focused on Scotland and works in the wider world. That remains the Government’s ambition, and I hope that we will achieve it.

Ian McKee (Lothians) (SNP): Notwithstanding Ross Finnie’s reservations, does the minister agree that Scotland’s interests in Europe would be better represented if it were an independent member state and its civil servants formed an independent body and did not need to sit within the UK permanent representation to the EU?

The Presiding Officer: Rather like in your answer to the supplementary to the previous question, a simple “yes” would suffice, minister.

Michael Russell: I concur. [*Laughter.*]

Buildings of Historical Interest

4. Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what steps it is taking to preserve buildings of historical interest. (S3O-6604)

The Minister for Culture, External Affairs and the Constitution (Michael Russell): I was so taken aback that I have lost my place.

The Government has set out in our statement of Scottish historic environment policy how local authorities, Historic Scotland and others should work together to preserve historic buildings. We are also investing significantly in the built heritage. Last year, for example, we provided £13 million of support through the building repair grant scheme, conservation area regeneration schemes and city heritage trusts across Scotland. The member might like to note that the conservation area regeneration schemes in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth will provide support of £700,000 to the local community over five years.

Cathie Craigie: The minister is aware of Cumbernauld house in my constituency, which is a fine example of Adam’s architecture and is treasured by local people. I thank him for his interest in and correspondence on the matter, but I advise him that, as time passes, the fabric of the building is deteriorating. The building is important to the people of Cumbernauld and Kilsyth. Does he have any powers of intervention with local authorities or Historic Scotland to secure the future of Cumbernauld house for the people of Cumbernauld and Scotland as a whole?

Michael Russell: I was glad to meet Jamie Hepburn and Councillor Tom Johnston yesterday to discuss the issue. I could reflect slightly unkindly that if North Lanarkshire Council had not sold Cumbernauld house in 1996, we might not be in the position that we are in now. However, that being the case, Historic Scotland would be involved only if there was an application for help

because of the condition of the building. I understand that the problems with the condition of the building relate to the illicit removal of lead from the roof, which I think is a matter for insurers, rather than anything else, at present.

I have been willing to encourage communities in every part of Scotland to take advantage of significant buildings, but no opportunity exists, particularly in these straitened times—let alone with £500 million of Labour cuts coming—for the Government to step in and get involved in taking the building on. However, I encourage the community and others to get involved. It is not impossible that Historic Scotland would give that encouragement, too.

Jamie Hepburn (Central Scotland) (SNP): I thank the minister for meeting Councillor Johnston and me yesterday to discuss the matter. Is he willing to accompany Councillor Johnston and me on a visit to Cumbernauld house to learn about some of the potential uses for the site?

Michael Russell: I would be delighted to do so. I am always happy to see a William Adam house and I am always happy to visit Cumbernauld, so I look forward to such a visit.

David Whitton (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab): While the minister is in the Cumbernauld area, he might like to take a few steps down the road to Kirkintilloch, where we have a fine 101-year-old town hall, which is in need of preservation. However, an application for Heritage Lottery funding has been refused. Will he agree to meet me and representatives of the Kirkintilloch Town Hall Preservation Trust to discuss the application?

The Presiding Officer: It is going to be a busy day, minister.

Michael Russell: It is always a pleasure to visit Kirkintilloch and I would be delighted to do so. However, my visit would—alas—be in the context of cuts in lottery funding, because of the requirement to pay for the Olympic games, which I think is regrettable. I support the Olympics, but I do not support their being paid for in that way. I am happy to go to Kirkintilloch, Cumbernauld and all other reachable points during that day.

Creative Scotland (Set-up Costs)

5. Karen Whitefield (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what the costs will be of establishing creative Scotland. (S3O-6636)

The Minister for Culture, External Affairs and the Constitution (Michael Russell): As I said in my statement to Parliament on 2 April, my expectation is that the total cost of the transformation will be just over £3.3 million. That

figure represents our rigorous current best estimate of the full costs that will arise from transition.

Karen Whitefield: The minister will be aware that there are some concerns in the arts world that the new direction of creative Scotland could focus too heavily on the economic and business benefits of arts in Scotland, which could curtail a more experimental and risk-taking approach to the arts. Does he agree that, although the economic benefits of a thriving arts culture in Scotland are to be welcomed and supported, art in Scotland must be about more than just wealth creation and must always be focused primarily on enriching the lives of those who view, listen to or participate in it?

Michael Russell: I have no difficulty in agreeing whole-heartedly with the member. We must have a modern vision of the arts in Scotland. We must put the artist—the creator—at the centre and we must emphasise access and participation. We must eschew the supposed dichotomy between the economic imperative and the cultural imperative, which is, as I am sure the member agrees, an old-fashioned way of looking at culture. We must be rigorous in our inclusion, bring all the sectors together and value creativity. If people attempt to divide, we must resist that as strongly as possible.

Broadcasting and Print Media

6. Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): To ask the Scottish Government what its approach is to preventing further contraction in Scottish broadcasting and print media. (S3O-6575)

The Minister for Culture, External Affairs and the Constitution (Michael Russell): The member was present this morning when we debated a motion from Mr Whitton on the Scottish media and particularly the print media. The Parliament recognised the importance of a strong media sector and its contribution to democracy and the economy. As the Government outlined in its response to the Scottish Broadcasting Commission's report, we are pursuing diversity and the establishment of a Scottish network and we seek increased network programme output from the BBC and Channel 4, neither of which has lived up to Scotland's expectations of it for output.

We appreciate the pressures that the newspaper industry has faced for many months. That is why my colleague Jim Mather facilitated a discussion at a Scottish Government seminar on 4 February to encourage the industry to identify issues and discuss ways in which it might overcome the challenges that it faces. As Margo MacDonald knows, my strong opinion is that that can be achieved only through an inclusive and proper approach to employment practices, which we have not seen in the print sector in recent weeks.

Margo MacDonald: I welcome the minister's first remarks. I press on him the urgency of the situation at the *Daily Record* and the *Sunday Mail*, so I ask him to ask his colleague Jim Mather to arrange a meeting please with the management, before too much happens.

I was glad to hear that Michael Russell is supporting Ayrshire Fiddle Orchestra, because my grandson is going to China with that orchestra.

Michael Russell: I am not surprised that Margo MacDonald's family is involved in all activities of fiddling and the arts.

The member is entirely right about the *Record* and the *Mail*. I sympathise very much with her position. She is a distinguished former writer for a range of Scottish newspapers and she continues to contribute a punchy column to the *Evening News*.

I am keen for my colleague Mr Mather and me to meet whoever we need to meet to discuss such matters. I said today to another member that I am happy to meet the trade unions, the chapel and others to discuss the situation, if that would help. We are open to participating in discussions but, in the end, the decision and the resolution can come only from active and constructive negotiation between employers and employees. That must and will happen and should not be delayed.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): I am sure that the minister agrees that the compulsory redundancies that the Trinity Mirror group has imposed on *Daily Record* and *Sunday Mail* journalists are totally unacceptable. Will he and other ministers continue to press Trinity Mirror to negotiate with the National Union of Journalists to ensure an early resolution to the dispute?

Michael Russell: I continue to make it clear that only negotiation will produce a resolution, so negotiation must take place. Even if the management refuses to negotiate now, it will eventually have to accept that it should negotiate, so the answer is yes—of course.

Commission on Scottish Devolution

7. George Foulkes (Lothians) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it considers that the Calman Commission on Scottish Devolution is making a positive contribution to the debate on Scotland's constitutional options. (S3O-6608)

The Minister for Culture, External Affairs and the Constitution (Michael Russell): The Scottish Government has consistently said that the commission might make a useful contribution to the national conversation. However, by refusing to consider independence, the commission limits debate and denies the people of Scotland the opportunity to consider all the options.

George Foulkes: Is the minister aware that, at the Plaid Cymru spring conference, his colleague Aileen Campbell described the Calman commission as anti-democratic? Since the commission was established following a large majority vote in the Parliament from three parties representing nearly two thirds of the electorate at the previous Scottish Parliament elections, will he dissociate himself and the Scottish Executive from those ill-judged and contemptuous remarks?

Michael Russell: It will not surprise the member to learn that I will not do that and that I endorse Aileen Campbell's remarks, because her point is entirely clear. Any commission that rejects any of the available options is anti-democratic. If all the options are genuinely included, a process is by definition democratic.

I look forward to the opportunity to have that discussion with Sir Kenneth Calman. I have agreed that we should have that conversation, in which, I am quite sure, he will argue otherwise. That said, the weight of truth is on my side. In the end, only an examination of all the options will lead to a clear choice by the people of Scotland.

I hope, Presiding Officer—I am sorry, Deputy Presiding Officer—I have just realised that there has been a change—

Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab): Not from here there has not.

Michael Russell: Alas, given that sedentary intervention from Mr McAveety, I cannot say that things have changed for the better beside me.

I hope that Lord Foulkes will take part in the national conversation, lend his undoubted weight to the issue and ensure that we understand his considered position, after which he should vote for the people of Scotland to make the final choice. That is democratic.

Glasgow 2014 Legacy Plan

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The next item of business is a debate on motion S3M-3948, in the name of Shona Robison, on the Glasgow 2014 legacy plan.

14:56

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Shona Robison): I am pleased to be able to call the debate. I am happy to accept Frank McAveety's amendment, which reflects our ambitions for increasing sports participation and physical activity to be a hallmark of our legacy aspirations.

The motion sends out a strong message that our legacy programmes are for all of Scotland. To that end, we have been working in tandem with a wide range of partners including the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and Glasgow City Council, which will rightly have its own legacy plan. That co-operation with our partners has been key to our progress to date. Of course, we will continue to work closely with them as we go forward in implementing our legacy ambitions for Scotland. A unique set of opportunities will come to Scotland through 2014, the children's games in 2011 and our work with London 2012. All of them will make a positive difference to our people and communities.

I turn to our engagement with United Kingdom colleagues. I was pleased to be able to attend the sports legacy board meeting in London last month and I look forward to further discussions in that regard. We will continue our engagement, but that should not detract from our case that £150 million of lottery money should return to Scotland. In September last year, with all members coming together in Margo MacDonald's debate on lottery funding, we saw this Parliament at its best. The Parliament unanimously agreed to her motion, which called for the return of the £150 million that has been diverted to help fund the London Olympics.

Recently, in a meeting with Andy Burnham, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, I again pressed our case for the return of lottery funding. I am pleased to say that he has agreed to a further meeting in Glasgow, at which he will also meet the leader of Glasgow City Council, Councillor Purcell, and the Secretary of State for Scotland, Jim Murphy, to discuss the matter. Proposed dates have been pencilled in. We are pursuing the issue as a matter of urgency. On 29 May, my officials will meet to explore all the possible options in our attempts to retrieve Scotland's money.

In December 2008, we published the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth games interim plan, in which we set out our thinking to date and commitment to publish a fuller plan this summer. Much has been achieved since the last debate in September. Sportscotland now sits proudly in its new home at the epicentre of the games project. That is one of the first signposts of the legacy, but by no means the last. It builds on our support to deliver top-quality facilities that will benefit Scotland: £5 million towards a 50m pool in Aberdeen and a further £5 million towards redeveloping the Edinburgh diving pool. That funding reflects our commitment to spread the legacy across Scotland. Only yesterday, during a visit to the Gorbals leisure centre, I announced a record investment of £1.2 million in swimming. I am aware that that good centre is in Frank McAveety's constituency, and it is a facility that he should certainly be proud of.

The investment is evidence that we are committed to doing all we can to ensure that Scotland is investing in a strong and lasting legacy. However, we need to work together as a Parliament and to build on cross-party support to capitalise on the hard work that has been done to date to fulfil our ambition of hosting the best-ever Commonwealth games and to leave a lasting legacy of which Scotland can rightly be proud. We owe it to the people of Scotland, who have backed the games overwhelmingly, to ensure that the benefits of hosting such a high-profile event are felt in communities throughout Scotland.

I will touch on some key legacy areas. Last September's debate touched on the fact that the opportunities that come from 2014 do not cover just sport, important though that is. Those wider ambitions cover health, business, tourism, learning, volunteering and the environment, among other things.

First and foremost, the games are a sporting event. We want our athletes to build on their recent successes and to do well. Sportscotland and the governing bodies of sport have set bold performance targets for winning medals and for how they will work to develop the sporting infrastructure. We believe that building an excellent sporting infrastructure will deliver not only success at the games in 2014, but sustained success and opportunities for others to progress in sport throughout Scotland.

We are clear about the fact that hosting the games gives us a great chance to motivate people of all ages and abilities—perhaps even members of the Parliament—to become more active in the run-up to the event and beyond. Our ambitions are high, and we believe that the people of Scotland will be inspired to set themselves a personal challenge to improve their health and to feel better

about themselves by getting involved in physical activity. That will enable us to begin to tackle the obesity problem that affects so many Scots of all ages and to which the amendment refers. To help to make our ambitions a reality, work is under way to plan a series of events that will capture and use the excitement of the games to encourage people to get involved and to be more active.

We will develop an ambitious common health legacy programme to provide us with a real opportunity to use the games to encourage people who do not normally take part in sport and physical activities to get more involved. One size does not fit all—that is why we need to offer something for everyone and to allow people to set their own goals, which they can achieve at their own pace. By encouraging people to change their behaviour, we can achieve a legacy of which we can all be proud.

At the debate in September, we heard tales of the frustration that is involved in accessing facilities and resources. We want to improve the situation and to make better use of existing facilities, including outdoor spaces, through activities such as community sports hubs. Hubs are about more than improving access to facilities—they will provide a central focus for schools, local sports clubs, youth groups and others to come together under the umbrella of a single community sports organisation that is linked to opportunities for casual participation in the local community. We will continue our work with COSLA to identify and learn from best practice in developing the hub model.

With an estimated 15,000 volunteers required for the games, we have a real chance to engage with those who would not normally be involved and to show them the benefits that are to be gained from working in their communities. Volunteering has a great deal of potential to strengthen communities by bringing them together through activities and by building mutual understanding through intergenerational work.

Of course, there are monetary benefits from hosting the games. It is estimated that they could lead to 1,200 new jobs in Scotland, including 1,000 in Glasgow. That is welcome news indeed in the current hard economic times. The recently launched business club will help to prepare our businesses for the networking opportunities that will come as part of the games. The successful hosting and delivery of the games can only enhance Scotland's reputation. The games give us a great opportunity to showcase our unique heritage to the world by having people visit and share in the event.

Although we are clear about the fact that our legacy aspirations stretch Scotland-wide, Glasgow—especially the east end of Glasgow—

will feel at first hand the benefits that are being delivered. Let me be clear—without the opportunity that is afforded by the games, the regeneration of the east end of Glasgow would not happen on the same scale. The infrastructure that will be put in place to deliver the games will play a vital part in the creation of a sustainable, vibrant new neighbourhood at the heart of Glasgow's east end. That regeneration activity is being led by Clyde Gateway Urban Regeneration Company. With the momentum provided by the games, the company will deliver around £2 billion of new investment, 21,000 jobs, 400,000m² of business space, 10,000 homes and 20,000 new residents by 2028. That very much reflects our view that legacy is a long-term process.

Clyde Gateway URC is just one of a number of partners with which we have been working closely. A range of organisations from among local government, health, the third sector, sporting bodies, businesses and many other areas has been involved, united in a common purpose of developing a legacy that Scotland can truly be proud of. We will need to continue to work with all those organisations and others if we are to be successful and if we are serious in our ambition for the legacy of the games to reach the whole of Scotland and Scottish society. A key challenge is to ensure, along with our partners, that we transform the warm words into meaningful actions; that we engage with communities; and that those communities feel the benefits of having the games. That could be achieved through the most disadvantaged or excluded people improving their skills by using one of the volunteering programmes; through businesses competing for and winning games-related contracts; through our towns feeling the benefits increased numbers of tourists; and through young people developing a better understanding of the Commonwealth through the international programmes. The opportunities are endless.

The legacy that we are developing with our partners will provide opportunities for communities throughout Scotland to enjoy and participate in the cultural programmes that will be delivered and for people to become more physically active, with improved access to local facilities. Any one of those things would enrich and improve the lives of our communities, develop skills and promote our people and country to the outside world.

I am delighted to reflect today, around five years from the start of the games, that a lot of hard work has already been done, as is evidenced in the interim legacy plan. However, there is still a lot more to do. We are ambitious, but we are also realistic. Hosting the games and working to secure a lasting and positive legacy from them will not be a cure for all the ills of society; nor can achieving a lasting legacy be done by Government alone—it is

about the whole of Scotland coming together in a common purpose. To be successful, all of Scotland will need to work together, not least in the Parliament, and I encourage you all to consider how the games can help you, our communities and Scotland as a whole to realise our, your and their ambitions.

I am pleased to move,

That the Parliament welcomes the forthcoming meeting to take place in Glasgow between the Minister for Public Health and Sport, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport Andy Burnham, Secretary of State for Scotland Jim Murphy and Glasgow City Council leader Steven Purcell to discuss the release of a substantial sum of National Lottery funding towards supporting a legacy for the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow; supports the work of the Scottish Government and its partners, including the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, Glasgow City Council, local authorities across Scotland, NHS boards, public bodies and the third sector, in planning for a legacy for the people of Scotland from these Games; agrees that the Interim Games Legacy Plan, published on 18 December 2008, set the right context for that planning with its emphasis on health, physical activity and sport and its coverage of volunteering, education and learning, culture, sustainability, business, skills, tourism and Scotland's international profile; commends the real opportunity that the hosting of the Games offers for regenerating the east end of Glasgow, and further agrees that, following the launch of the full Games Legacy Plan in the summer, the Scottish Parliament can play a part by encouraging individuals, groups, communities and businesses to get involved so that Scotland's legacy from the 2014 Games can be lasting and positive.

15:07

Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab): Thank you, Presiding Officer, for the chance to respond to the minister. I welcome the commitment that she has made today to try to work in partnership and hopefully to maintain the new spirit of co-operation and partnership between the Scottish Government and the UK Government. The opportunity from the 2012 Olympics and the 2014 Commonwealth games, and from many of the activities that will surround them, is critical in ensuring that we have a much brighter sporting future, not just in elite development but in participation.

I welcome the minister's visit to my constituency yesterday, and I appreciate the apology for not notifying members of the visit. If she wishes to come along on Sunday night, she will see me engaging in much more active participation, as I dictate the play on the seven-a-side football pitch in the Gorbals leisure centre—although I will be doing that from a much more static position compared with previous occasions. I will take advice from my colleague Bill Aitken on how to maximise skill levels in terms of distribution of the ball.

The word "legacy" is really important. It has two definitions that are of interest to the Scottish Parliament. First, it is an ambassadorial word, relating to the idea of preaching or spreading to the world our achievements or intentions. The Commonwealth games is a clear example of a legacy that we wish to use, through the Commonwealth, to profile Scotland's success in putting on big events. More critically, the challenge is about how we can use the games as a tool for broader social improvement.

I also like "legacy" because it is a 15th century Scottish word, meaning some property that is left by will to future generations. I will touch on the remarks that the minister rightly made about the whole legacy for the east end of Glasgow, but I also have a national responsibility with my portfolio role. I am obviously passionate about this issue, as it impacts most dramatically on my constituents.

I draw attention to one important point in relation to our wider, perhaps more argumentative, debate about the allocation of resources from the UK to the Scottish Government, through the block grant. Budgets were also tight when decisions were being made by Glasgow City Council in the mid-1990s, but political decisions were made at that time to prioritise expenditure in order to maximise opportunities in the long run.

There has never been a golden age of public resources; there is always much greater demand than can be met by the resources that are available. The Gorbals leisure centre is part of the legacy in Glasgow because there was a vision to try to use sport as a tool for social improvement. The evidence can be seen in the facilities that were developed, but much more needs to be done, not just in Glasgow but throughout the country. I know from debates that we have had in the Parliament that members share my ambition to ensure that action is much more effective in future.

The 2014 commitment and the 2012 Olympics present a chance to develop elite athletes. I welcome the support of the previous Executive and the current Government for elite athlete development, particularly through the Scottish Institute of Sport and sports organisations. I welcome yesterday's announcement of resources for the development of swimming in Scotland. At that event, Doug Gillon talked about the aids to sport that are needed. First, we need an audit of current facilities. We know that the range and location of facilities—particularly swimming facilities—are inadequate. Secondly, we need to integrate the work of national governing bodies, local authorities, the voluntary sector and other partners. Thirdly, we need to consider delivery. Should there be a programme of investment in schools? It does not matter whether a school was

procured through public-private partnership or conventional procurement. A secondary school in my constituency, which was procured through PPP investment, is dramatically important in sports hub development in the east end of Glasgow. I do not want to hear people's ideological positions on procurement; what matters is how we draw up the specifications.

I have talked about the need for an audit of current facilities, an integrated approach and more effective delivery. The minister can play a role, by showing leadership. That is the key challenge for anyone who has been in her position; it is an issue that I and the people who followed me had to address. The minister has an important opportunity to make a difference.

A major survey of more than 1,500 Glaswegians was conducted recently, to consider legacy and local people's views. People would like better-quality facilities and they would like sports developments in the east end of Glasgow and elsewhere in Scotland to generate confidence and a positive image. I can testify to the views of people at the Dalmarnock centre, which is 150yd from the site of the new games village. They think that there is to be a more structured approach to regenerating their area than has been the case in a generation. That is not to invalidate previous, noble attempts to tackle economic and social disadvantage; I simply acknowledge that we have a new opportunity to do so. The opportunity is fortuitous. In the economic situation that the country is facing—this is where I get a bit selfish—if a project must be delivered, it should be the 2014 games, given the Government's commitments to the Commonwealth Games Federation.

I am sure that members agree that we need to do more to deliver high-quality physical education. I do not envy the minister her task and I will have a few pops at her and other ministers if the objective is not achieved. The issue needs to be driven from the top, so that we can overcome the bureaucracy that is hindering the delivery of the Government's reasonable commitment to PE in schools.

Eastbank academy in my constituency received investment through the PPP programme and, with the help of lottery funding, has created a partnership to develop community clubs. Last night, I learned that a primary school that feeds into the academy is involved in more exotic sports, in which we might not expect people in Glasgow to be participating. Last night's discussion was about an organisation that provides Irish sports—camogie, Gaelic football and hurling—to kids across the denominational and non-denominational divide, bringing together the kids and integrating them into the community clubs. Those are good things not only because they get

kids active, but because they tangentially help to address some of the social attitudes that bedevil Glasgow and other parts of Scotland.

We need to have good coaches, and we will not have those unless we have a much better-integrated system for clubs and the quality of the facilities that youngsters can use is high. We can get nostalgic about the informal street play that many of us may have had as young children, but I am not nostalgic for the charcoal, black ash or red blaes where some of those wonderful skills that Bill Aitken and I have displayed in recent years were honed to perfection. The reality is that they no longer provide our younger generation with an acceptable quality of play.

We need a major campaign in Scotland to ensure that schools are open much longer—particularly at weekends—and are much easier to access so that we can maximise the use of their facilities. The Government and the minister in particular can drive that, and I hope that they will take that from the debate. We face a major task: we want to have good games and we want regeneration but, more important, we want many young people and adults to be more inclined to participate in whatever form. We have received suggestions on that from organisations, and I might address those in my closing speech.

I hope that we will be able to address those issues over the forthcoming months and years to make the games something of which we can genuinely all be proud and of which we can speak as making a real difference for future generations.

I move amendment S3M-3948.1, to insert after "Games in Glasgow":

"welcomes this new spirit of cooperation and calls on the Scottish Government to work with the UK Government to maximise the benefit of sporting events in Scotland and the wider United Kingdom, especially the 2014 Commonwealth Games and 2012 Olympic Games, in terms of encouraging sporting participation and harnessing the talents of Scots; notes Glasgow City Council's own 2014 legacy plan and calls on the Scottish Government to work with other local authorities to produce their own legacy plans to meet shared aspirations on tackling obesity and low levels of participation".

15:16

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): The Scottish Conservatives welcome the opportunity to take part in today's important debate. We were 100 per cent behind the successful campaign to secure the 2014 games for Glasgow and Scotland and are now ready and willing to play a constructive part in ensuring that Scotland can reap benefits from their staging, which is truly a mega-event for our country.

We would all agree that, if we consider historical examples—which is a logical and appropriate

approach—we see that other cities and countries have gained varying degrees of legacy from hosting major sporting events. Barcelona, which hosted the 1992 Olympics, famously built an estimated 50 years' worth of infrastructure in only eight years. At the opposite end of the scale, the funding legacy of the 1976 Montreal Olympics gave the circular Olympic stadium the moniker of the Big Owe, after the debt owing from the financing of the games took 30 years to pay off.

On a cautionary note, it may be worth remembering the near disaster of the run-up to the previous Commonwealth games in Scotland, when the funding got into such disarray that Robert Maxwell—Captain Bob, the sometime employer of Helen Liddell, our ex-Secretary of State for Scotland—had to come to the rescue although, in retrospect, perhaps it would have been better if he had rescued the people in the Mirror group pension fund. Especially in the circumstances of the savage and disturbing cuts that were announced yesterday, it is vital that the Scottish Government and Glasgow City Council have all the finances watertight in the lead-up to the games.

Some academics would even say that no mega-event sporting competition has ever achieved the legacy that was hoped for. The much-respected Professor Fred Coalter of the University of Stirling's department of sports studies, who—as other members will no doubt mention—gave evidence to the Health and Sport Committee, has spoken of the substantial scepticism about the claims that are made for the direct and indirect economic impact of such events. Therefore, we should all be ambitious for what Scotland can gain while also being realistic. We need to be able to determine between and measure the tangible and intangible benefits. Examples of those are, on the one hand, the new physical sports infrastructure—I am sure that my friend Bill Aitken will talk about that—and, on the other, the boost in national confidence and spirit, particularly among Scottish youth. Both are important.

It would be fair to hope that Scotland could build on and exceed the successes that were achieved in the 2002 Manchester Commonwealth games. The evaluation report on the seven-year legacy of those games concluded that 220 people gained employment, 3,092 obtained a recognised qualification, 8,473 businesses benefited, 913 voluntary organisations were supported and 2,637 people became involved in voluntary work.

I welcome and support the strong recognition of the hugely important role of the voluntary sector that emerged from the consultation on our legacy plan, and I look forward to that being developed. Several national agencies and voluntary organisations suggested helpful ways in which

they could support the implementation of a volunteering programme. I look forward to the ministers responding to that point.

Regarding business, I am keen to hear from ministers what steps the Scottish Government can take to ensure that our small and medium-sized companies, which are the backbone of our economy, get a fair crack of the whip on contracts. I am positive about all the communities of Scotland—rather than just those in the direct vicinity of the Glasgow games—working on their own legacy plans, so I welcome the suggestion in Labour's amendment that the Government should work with local authority stakeholders to set local aims and aspirations. I know that Frank McAveety, for example, wants free swimming, which is a fine aspiration, especially since his party seems to be well and truly up the creek without a paddle.

Seriously, though, free swimming would be a fine legacy for children, especially in light of the wonderful toll of medals that our Scottish swimmers achieved during the Melbourne games. Of course, credit for that must go to the former Scottish Institute of Sport in Stirling, which the Administration has seen fit to merge, perhaps unwisely, with sportscotland.

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): With reference to the member's recall of the number of swimming medals won in Australia, the team was so shallow in its quality and quantity that it could not put a relay team in the pool. We should not be too complacent.

Jamie McGrigor: Complacency is something that I am never big on, as the member knows.

Ramblers Scotland sent me a useful briefing for today's debate. I agree with it that, as well as sport, walking and rambling should play a key role in delivering a lasting legacy throughout Scotland from 2014. In that respect, I declare an interest as honorary president of the Highland Disabled Ramblers Association. The excitement around the games must ultimately be a catalyst to get more people active and enjoy the health benefits that exercise brings. Encouraging walking is one of the most cost-effective ways of getting people of all ages involved in physical activity. The open and accessible, well-grazed hills of the Scottish countryside are a perfect stage for that activity, which can be undertaken by all age groups.

Before I conclude, I will touch on the aspect of lottery funding for the 2014 legacy. In the plenary debate on funding community sport last September, I said:

“Although the Conservatives are happy to be 100 per cent behind the London 2012 games and want everything to be done that will make them a British success story, it is legitimate to argue that some additional lottery funding should, as a consequence, be allocated to grass-roots

sports development in Scotland, especially as no lottery money is directly involved in funding the 2014 Commonwealth games in Glasgow, which should also be a British success story.”—[*Official Report*, 25 September 2008; c 11167.]

That remains our position and we would urge ministers to approach the forthcoming meeting in Glasgow in a positive way. We do not want the issue to become a sterile disagreement between London and Holyrood, with the fundamental point that we need to invest in community sport development and facilities possibly being lost. That is why we will support Labour’s amendment tonight, even though Labour itself is a culprit when it comes to purloining billions of pounds of lottery money that should have gone to the original five good causes, including grass-roots sport, rather than to the Labour Government’s pet projects. I remind members that it was the Conservative Government that started the lottery, which has helped many throughout our land.

The Scottish Conservatives recognise the once-in-a-generation opportunity that the Commonwealth games provide us with. We acknowledge the work that has been done in developing an achievable and ambitious legacy plan and pay tribute to all those who have worked so hard to create it. We look forward to the final plan, which will be published in the summer. In the interests of our economy and, crucially, the improved health and wellbeing of citizens of all ages across the country, we stand ready to do our bit in encouraging all sectors and all individuals to become involved in the people, the place and the passion of Glasgow 2014.

15:24

Ross Finnie (West of Scotland) (LD): I know that all members taking part in the debate are looking forward to coming back after the summer recess to debate the final plan after it has been published during the summer. I know that we are all anxious to receive it.

I do not always agree with Jamie McGrigor, but I wholly agreed with the opening passage of his speech, because as Liberal Democrats we believe that it is absolutely right that Scotland should have the highest possible ambition for the legacy that can be achieved from the Glasgow Commonwealth games. However, as the minister rightly acknowledged and as Jamie McGrigor pointed out, we must also be cautious about how we achieve that. Examples were cited of previous games in Barcelona and Canada and I still think that the Manchester games provide, for the most part, a cautionary rather than encouraging tale. Indeed, in the oral evidence to which Jamie McGrigor referred, Professor Coalter quantified his concerns with these words:

“If the event achieves one tenth of what is set out in the consultation document, it will be extraordinarily successful.”—[*Official Report, Health and Sport Committee*, 26 March 2008; c 731.]

Obviously, I think that we can do better than that, but I recognise that we ought to be cautious, given the real difficulties and the historical perspective, which Jamie McGrigor rightly said is challenging.

It is impossible not to agree with the underlying principles in the interim games legacy plan—as the minister enunciated, those include enhancing partnerships, enabling diversity, encouraging community engagement and embedding sustainability—but, as members have pointed out, ensuring that community engagement is encouraged not just in greater Glasgow but across Scotland probably presents the greatest challenge. For that reason, the Liberal Democrats will support the Labour amendment, which is clear about the need to engage with other councils. The question is how we do that. I will leave it to my colleague Nicol Stephen—who has a particular interest in the wider development issue—to develop the point further, but it is an issue. Given human nature, the fact that the games are described as the Glasgow games means that people’s focus instinctively tends to narrow. That is not necessarily the right response, but we need to acknowledge that, to some extent, that happens. Ensuring that councils around Scotland are stimulated and enthused about the wider dimension is a major challenge. I do not suggest that councils cannot rise to that challenge, but I am glad that the debate is taking place now, so that we can begin on that work.

On the key elements in which we want to embed sustainability, I want to dwell not on elite athletes—not that they are unimportant, because they are critical for success on the day—but on the wider legacy, which is clearly about the impact on health and increased physical activity. The Health and Sport Committee has not yet published its report on pathways into sport, which we await, but anyone who has followed the evidence to the committee cannot have been other than struck by the daunting task that we all face in increasing levels of physical activity among our young people. If we do not achieve that, we will have an ever smaller cohort of people who participate in sport and, consequently, an even smaller cohort of those who might become the medal winners of the future. That is a critical element on which we must begin work now and which must be part and parcel of the legacy.

In addition to attracting people who might have the capacity to go into sport, we must consider whether, if the games succeed in stimulating interest not just in Glasgow but in Scotland as a whole, our nation has the capacity to take on board increased levels of interest. That brings the

focus on to how we can increase the number and capacity of sports clubs and ensure that facilities are available where they do not naturally occur. Local facilities are critical.

The games will provide an enormous opportunity to promote Scottish culture and to extend our cultural ties by learning about the cultures of those from other nations who will participate in the games. Given that 85 nations are currently scheduled to participate in the 2010 Commonwealth games in New Delhi, the Glasgow games will provide an opportunity for young people throughout Scotland to engage actively with, take an interest in and gain a better understanding of the cultures of the guests from the around 85 nations—it will certainly not be fewer—who are expected to appear in Glasgow. Obviously, volunteering throughout Scotland should also receive a stimulus, given the need for 15,000 volunteers, as the minister described.

The business opportunities are potentially considerable, but as my colleagues at Westminster highlighted just yesterday, Scottish companies are experiencing difficulties with the tendering and contract process for the London Olympics. That is completely unacceptable, but it would be equally unacceptable if small businesses in Scotland in general and non-central belt companies in particular were to experience similar difficulties with the contract-awarding process for the Glasgow games.

As the minister said, the infrastructure possibilities relate largely to the sustainable redevelopment of Glasgow's east end, which is much to be welcomed. Broader issues such as how we develop infrastructure—transport links in particular—were discussed at length during this morning's debate on the transport infrastructure of the west of Scotland.

We must ensure not only that the people of Scotland can access and witness the games, but that our visitors are accommodated, too. As my colleague Robert Brown pointed out when he wound up this morning's debate for us—

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): I opened.

Ross Finnie: I am sorry—sometimes it is difficult to tell the difference. Robert Brown majored on the redevelopment of Dalmarnock station as an international hub. We were grateful that the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change appeared, in principle, to accept that possibility.

There are opportunities across the piece. In addition to the cultural, infrastructure and business opportunities, we have an enormous opportunity to encourage healthier lifestyles and to provide greater access to sport. The Liberal Democrats will continue to have ambitions that are as high as

those of any other party in the Parliament, but none of us should proceed without recognising that the historical perspective makes it clear that almost no one has succeeded in capturing a legacy from such sporting events in the past. That makes our ambitions even harder to achieve. I think that we can succeed, but we will not do so unless, as the minister said, we do a lot of work to translate warm words into meaningful actions.

15:32

Michael Matheson (Falkirk West) (SNP): I am pleased that the minister said that she was determined to continue to push the case for the proposed cut in lottery funding in Scotland to be reversed. It is easy to underestimate the value of lottery grants of £10,000, £15,000 or £20,000 to community organisations. Such funds will dry up if the cut in lottery funding proceeds, which will have an extremely damaging effect on local communities and could affect our ability to obtain legacy benefits from the 2014 Commonwealth games.

I am interested in the fact that Jamie McGrigor is anxious about the impact that the cut in lottery funding could have on organisations that are based in Scotland. I would be interested to hear from the Conservatives whether they have made representations to their colleagues in London with a view to ensuring that if a Conservative Government is elected at Westminster, it will take action to halt the cuts that are likely to take place. The Conservatives should demonstrate not only that they are prepared to say in the Scottish Parliament that they would like the cuts not to take place, but that they will do something about them if they are in a position to do so in the coming year.

A lot has been said about the legacy. I agree with Jamie McGrigor and, in particular, Ross Finnie about the evidence on providing a lasting legacy from countries that have hosted major sporting events such as the Commonwealth games and the Olympic games. For example, the fantastic bird's nest stadium that was used at the most recent Olympic games is no longer a sporting theatre; it is just another tourist attraction at which folk are dropped off. That demonstrates how difficult it can be to build on the interest that is generated during such major events. However, Glasgow is somewhat different, because many of the important facilities are already in place, and the new facilities will be sustainable, given the city's population.

Everyone is united on the need to maximise the legacy benefits from the games. The challenge for us, though, is to learn from those who have hosted previous events such as the Commonwealth games but been unable to achieve a lasting legacy, and to take the right course of action to

ensure that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past.

A lot has been said about one of the key aspects of the legacy, which is that the games will inspire many more young people, and possibly older people, to become active in sport. I have never subscribed to the idea that we would end up finding our gyms full and our sports centres crammed to the rafters with people because of the Commonwealth games. The games will stimulate much greater interest, but translating that interest into activity will probably be one of the greatest challenges that we face. If we are to capitalise on the interest that is generated by the games, it is extremely important that we put in place the right sporting infrastructure in order to harness it at the time. Frank McAveety raised a number of important points about sporting infrastructure in Scotland.

By getting the infrastructure right, we can have a big impact on the physical activities that are provided in our schools. It is clear from evidence that the Health and Sport Committee received in our pathways into sport inquiry that there is a need to ensure that physical activity and physical education are seen not as an add-on in the school education system but as an important core aspect at both primary and secondary level.

We should also consider what more we can do to increase the physical literacy of our children at pre-school level. Some local authorities are more proactive on that issue than others, but improving the provision of physical education and physical activity at pre-school, primary and secondary levels would be a significant legacy inspired by the Commonwealth games. I hope that the Government will do more to ensure that we achieve that.

One of the real strengths of the Glasgow 2014 bid was that it was seen as a Scottish bid—it was seen as the games coming to Scotland. It is important that we are not complacent, that we remain vigilant and that we do not allow the games to become a Glasgow festival or Glasgow-centric. I recognise that Glasgow will receive many great benefits as a result of hosting the games, but it is important that communities throughout Scotland feel as though they are part of the legacy and part of the games. We should work harder to ensure that we keep alive the spirit that was so evident at the time of the bid. I hope that the Government will continue to press for greater engagement throughout the country in programmes that are linked to the 2014 games.

15:38

Margaret Curran (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab): As I am sure that all members recognise, this

debate is welcome and is, as has been said, important for the whole of Scotland. The constructive approach that we have taken this afternoon—we do not always take such an approach—is vital if we are to fulfil our ambitions. I recognise the points that many members have made about the challenges along the way. The celebration of the decision that Glasgow would host the Commonwealth games in 2014 was real throughout Glasgow. It was decidedly real in the east end of the city.

I take Ross Finnie's point that we cannot allow the games to be only a central belt phenomenon, and Michael Matheson's request that the games should not be Glasgow-centric. I hope that the Government takes the point, too, and will ensure that the celebration is for all of Scotland. However, my remarks will unashamedly be about the interests of Glasgow, and particularly the east end of Glasgow.

Margo MacDonald: Now there is a surprise.

Margaret Curran: I never like to disappoint.

We might not achieve all that we want, but it is critical that we ensure that we achieve the benefits for the people of the east end of Glasgow. We must keep focused on their interests.

The promise of having the very best facilities in the east end is a significant achievement. On that, I pay tribute to the sustained efforts of Jack McConnell and Patricia Ferguson, with whom I sat around the Cabinet table, along with Nicol Stephen and Ross Finnie. We made determined efforts to ensure that the bid was won for Scotland. I also pay tribute to Frank McAveety, although please nobody tell him so. In his capacity as Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, he worked hard on the issue and showed what could be achieved with imagination and political will. That is a reflection of Frank McAveety's dogged belief in the east end of Glasgow and its potential.

Flagging up the interests of the east end so significantly does not undermine the wider points about the interests of Scotland. I hope that our championing of the interests of Glasgow and the east end is not thought to run counter to Scotland's broader interests.

Frank McAveety and I believe firmly that, with the right investment and support, we can demonstrate to the world Glasgow's strengths and capacities. However, as members have said, we face no mean task. We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity, and we must ensure that we extract as much of the potential as possible in the lead-up to the games, during the events themselves and from the legacy. In meeting the challenge of maximising the benefits, there will be difficulties along the way. However, several key

steps can be taken to ensure that we make a real difference.

There is the promise of spectacular events showcasing some of the world's greatest assets. However, we must ensure that the Commonwealth games are not simply an event that happens in the east end of Glasgow—they should benefit and be for the people there. We must ensure that the games are as accessible as possible. I do not think for one second that people's lives will be transformed by going to events during the Commonwealth games, but nor do I underestimate the possibility of stimulating interest and inspiring people. One way of ensuring that people get the benefit from the events would be to provide free entry for young people—particularly those from the east end, although I would accept a broader scheme—to at least one event. The games would then be seen not as happening beyond their communities but as being for them and benefiting them directly.

Furthermore, we must ensure that when the athletes and television cameras have moved on, the benefits and the legacy remain for the people of the east end of Glasgow. I argue strongly that young people should have preferential—either free or cheap—access to the facilities that are left behind. That would be a boost for the local communities, which traditionally do not have access to such facilities and see them as beyond their reach. It would also tackle the notion that big and spectacular events in the east end of Glasgow tend to benefit people from outwith the local communities, and it would defeat some of the cynicism that sometimes exists about such matters. As the minister said, that can link to messages about health, sport and physical activity.

A significant and brilliant project in my constituency is the Gladiator Programme in the Easterhouse end of the east end. The programme has already produced several Olympic and Commonwealth weightlifting champions. The leaders of that project have key messages about how that was achieved. The first is that Olympic and Commonwealth champions are not produced overnight. Instead, a sustained and integrated programme of activities and facilities provision is required throughout communities to assist people to reach the highest levels of their sport. The programme has been extremely successful and has a proven track record. The gladiators argue that there must now be a programme that links sports activities with facilities in communities.

Recently, Glasgow City Council announced an investment of £950,000 in one of its secondary schools to upgrade sports facilities. That offers a huge opportunity to link those facilities with the Commonwealth games. The time is now right for

Scotland to prioritise sports facilities to ensure that young people in particular benefit from the opportunities that the Commonwealth games can offer. Ensuring that the games are not just a spectacular public relations event but an event that lasts for a generation will be the true and honest legacy of the games.

15:45

Bill Aitken (Glasgow) (Con): Some might argue that it is early days, with five years to go until the games, and that is probably the case, but there has to be a plan. The consultation document provides the sound outline of a plan, and like everyone else I look forward to seeing the final report some time in the summer. There is genuine and general enthusiasm for the project, and we must exploit to the maximum the opportunities that are likely to arise.

The legacy priorities that have been highlighted are largely self-evident. Glasgow has changed tremendously over the past 20 years. We had to recognise that the old metal-bashing industries, which employed so many people, were dying on their feet. We had to recognise that tourism and attracting people to Glasgow as a good place to do business was the way forward. Considerable success has been achieved in that respect. Perhaps the greatest advantage from hosting the games will be our ability to exploit the increased international profile, which can only be to everyone's benefit.

It is clear that sport is an invaluable social tool, to paraphrase Frank McAveety. The benefits of involvement in sport are self-evident and can improve people's lives, although the minister was perhaps a tad optimistic in expecting many members to become involved. We shall see what comes of that. There will be opportunities, particularly for young people.

I do not quite take Michael Matheson's somewhat downbeat approach. He conceded that interest generated by the games might not be translated into activity. I think that there will be some activity, and we must make every effort to encourage it.

There will be genuine short and medium-term employment opportunities for companies not only in Glasgow but throughout Scotland. Members have been right to point out that the Commonwealth games are a Scottish event, and we would like the planning for them to be as coherent as possible. Ideally, I would like as much as possible of what is used in the games to be produced locally by businesses in west central Scotland. It is up to the organisers and businesses to ensure that they maximise the opportunities.

The games' sporting legacy will provide a tremendous opportunity for Glasgow youngsters. In that fitba-daft city, too many people are watching football rather than playing it. Unfortunately, football has sometimes not provided the most positive image or atmosphere. The games' legacy must ensure that as many of Glasgow's youngsters as possible, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, have the opportunity to increase their involvement in a wide variety of sports, with all the consequential health and social benefits that that will bring. We need to get away from the present situation in which football is largely a spectator sport. Let us get more people playing the game and, perhaps more important, let us diversify the city's sporting interests to embrace many other physical and athletic pursuits.

Frank McAveety made a valid point about facilities. The facilities that existed 40, 30 or 20 years ago would not satisfy present-day youth. Although scrubbing red blaes and soda ash from one's knees might be character forming, the quite understandable reaction of today's youngsters to having to do so might not be entirely positive.

The health benefits from taking up sport are considerable. The value of exercise to people of all ages is self-evident. I am convinced that, with all of the media activity that will surround the events, there will be an increase in activity.

Although the games last for a fairly brief time, there will be an opportunity for people actively to involve themselves not only in the physical aspects of the events but in volunteering, which will enable them to meet people from different cultures and countries. An internationalism will exist. The people of Glasgow are very international in outlook, as has been proved when the city has hosted major international events in the past. Twelve years ago, Glasgow hosted a worldwide Rotary International conference and around 120,000 people came to the city for it. The impact was tremendous, and created a great deal of interest in the home countries of all who visited.

We shall see how things develop over the summer. Once we get the final report, we will be in a position to move forward.

The encouraging aspect of this debate is the fact that everyone in this chamber and outside is fully committed to ensuring that the project is a success. The planning and financing should be in place, and everyone should be totally committed to ensuring that the games provide a lasting legacy not only for Glasgow but for the whole of Scotland.

15:52

Nicol Stephen (Aberdeen South) (LD): On Friday 9 November 2007, I was in the Old Fruitmarket in the merchant city in Glasgow, along with Nicola Sturgeon, Bill Aitken—he tells me—Wendy Alexander, Annabel Goldie and perhaps others in the chamber. More important than us MSPs were the hundreds of young people and athletes who were there, along with the sports officials and members of the nation's media, to witness the big announcement of the day.

Those who were there will always remember the explosion of excitement when, despite some serious technical problems with the satellite link, the live announcement of Glasgow's success came through from Sri Lanka. I said at the time that the news would capture the imagination of children and young people across Scotland and spur them on to go for gold in 2014, and nothing has shifted me from that view. All the parties in this chamber gave strong support to the bid and give strong support to the games.

I remember visiting young athletes and members of the bid team in the company of the then UK leader of the Liberal Democrats—and former Olympic sprinter—Menzies Campbell. We should remember that there is an important UK dimension to the games and an important link to the London Olympics in 2012.

To deliver the success that we want the games to enjoy in 2014, there will need to be more than excitement and dreams; there will also need to be funding and investment, world-class facilities and a great deal of blood, sweat, tears and commitment from young people and their coaches across our country.

If we are to achieve the legacy that we all want to see from the games, we cannot wait until after the games are over before we act. We must start now. That legacy must reach out to all parts of Scotland, not only Glasgow. Our athletes and swimmers deserve not only to compete in world-class facilities during the games but to train in world-class facilities before them.

I well remember meeting our Olympic swimmer, Hannah Miley, outside the pool in Inverurie where she trains. That pool is neither modern nor impressive. She told me that she would be embarrassed to show her international competitors the facilities that she trains in with enormous dedication day in, day out in the north-east of Scotland.

For Hannah, it is already too late for the proposed 50m pool in Aberdeen to play a significant part in her preparations for the gold medal that I firmly believe that she can achieve in the 2012 Olympic games in London, but it is not too late for the Commonwealth games, provided

that it is started now. Two years after the new Scottish Government came into office with all its promises, however, and 18 months after the announcement of Glasgow's success, we still have no commitment to the 50m pool in Aberdeen. There have been warm words but no delivery. That is why, today, I lodged parliamentary questions asking the Scottish Government to confirm the planned opening date of the new pool in Aberdeen. We need to make it happen now.

So far, the council has promised £10 million in funding, the University of Aberdeen has promised £5 million and the Scottish Government has promised £5 million. We are also told the costs are likely to have fallen because of the economic recession from approximately £23 million to £20 million. Why is the 50m pool in Aberdeen still not happening? The project has been stuck on the starting block for too long, and it is now time to deliver. This is genuinely an urgent issue.

The Tollcross 50m pool in Glasgow will close for major upgrading to host the Commonwealth games, and it will not be available for a significant period of time. The 50m Royal Commonwealth pool in Edinburgh will close for major refurbishment, and it will not be available for a significant period of time. As an aside, it is sad that, despite the fact that tens of millions of pounds are being invested in the Royal Commonwealth pool, it will not be able to hold international events as it will continue to have eight lanes rather than the 10 lanes that are required for international meets.

Margo MacDonald There are different grades of international meets, and the Commie pool will be able to take some of them.

Nicol Stephen: The qualification there speaks volumes. I would like the Royal Commonwealth pool to be able to take the very best of international meets, and sadly that will not be possible. However, I agree with Margo MacDonald that something is better than nothing.

I want there to be a 50m pool not only in Aberdeen but in Inverness, which is a major centre for many of the outstanding athletes and swimmers in the Highlands and the north. I want excellent facilities for all sports by 2014.

My simple message to the Scottish Government is this: if it wants the legacy to be strong, it should support the athletes and the swimmers now and invest in the facilities and training they need to be the very best they can be. To make their dreams come true, the Government must help to make it happen. The legacy is not just about future generations; it is about those in this generation here and now. They will be the standard bearers for Scotland's sporting future, and with the right leadership that future will be bright.

15:58

Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): I welcome the commitment from the Minister for Public Health and Sport to work with the UK Government representatives and Glasgow City Council to ensure that national lottery funding is made available to make the games hugely successful, in terms of both the games themselves and the legacy they provide for Glasgow and Scotland as a whole. I look forward to learning the outcome of the meeting, as it is crucial that we get the money as early as possible to put in place the facilities. We cannot wait until it is too late and find the facilities are not there.

With regard to the legacy that the games will provide, much has been said regarding material benefits to Glasgow's east end—Margaret Curran, Frank McAveety and others also mentioned that—and the economic benefits that will come as a result of these games.

I am encouraged by the unifying theme of the interim games legacy plan, namely that of the promotion of health. The five underpinning principles of the plan—enhancing partnerships, enabling diversity, ensuring equality, encouraging community engagement and embedding sustainability—are equally encouraging and very worthy, but we will need to establish clearly how they will be achieved. I hope that the final legacy plan, which will be launched this summer, will address those issues in full detail.

When it plans the delivery of those aims, the legacy plan delivery group should perhaps consider how we will

“establish joint working, from grassroots upwards”,

as stated under the principle of enhancing partnerships. That will be fundamental in delivering a legacy that is not only long lasting but for the people. We must also be highly vigilant in ensuring that the people who are meant to benefit from the games are not bypassed in the development and delivery of the legacy and that their voices are heard.

The minister mentioned the intergenerational approach, which is set out under the principle of enabling diversity. Every member who has spoken has rightly mentioned the benefits of the games to young people, but, as the convener of the cross-party group on older people, age and ageing, I am particularly interested in ensuring that the games deliver for people of all ages. I am happy to discuss with the minister the various views and ideas that have been raised at group meetings on how that can best be achieved. I should point out that when I talk about older people I am talking about 50 to 55-year-olds and over. Given the heart attack and stroke figures for not only the east end but the whole of Glasgow, it is important that

everyone has a share in the health aspects of the legacy.

I believe that the principle of encouraging community engagement is entwined with that of enhancing partnerships and will be equally important in creating a successful legacy. In the interim paper, the aim is for community engagement to rekindle a sense of pride, to revitalise local communities and to

“promote community ownership of the activities”.

I agree with Margaret Curran’s point that younger people should be able to get in to watch the games either free or at a reduced price, although I think that that should apply to kids not just from the east end but from all over Glasgow.

If we are to deliver on the unifying theme of health, we must ask local communities what they need to improve their health and listen to what they say. Although I welcome the idea of sports hubs, which the minister elaborated on, and the proposal to encourage people to get involved in the competitive sports that will be featured in the games, I believe that we must not lose sight of this great chance to improve the general health of the people of Glasgow and, indeed, the whole of Scotland.

As the minister is aware, a number of respondents to the consultation wanted the legacy plan to refer specifically to support for the development of active play, adventure playgrounds and adventure activities. Moreover, in the young people’s consultation, the number 1 thing that was wanted was for the games to encourage

“young people to become fitter and healthier”.

I could not agree more.

I regularly receive correspondence about the lack of facilities for young people, and I urge the minister and the group to ensure that, in finalising the legacy plan, they use the opportunity presented by the games to address such concerns. As Mr Finnie made clear, there is no point in leaving these things as a legacy if people in the east end and the rest of Glasgow cannot enjoy them.

Finally, the principle of embedding sustainability and the commitment to making the 2014 games the green games give Scotland a great chance to showcase to the world our belief that Scotland can be at the forefront of a green and sustainable future. There will also be an opportunity to redesign the built environment to improve the quality of life of communities, which might act as a blueprint for other communities across Scotland.

The potential is enormous. The task is not easy, but the results will be invaluable. Let us ensure

that we get this right not just for the people of Glasgow but for the people of Scotland.

16:03

James Kelly (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab): I am delighted to take part in this debate. I certainly believe that the Commonwealth games present a tremendous opportunity for sportsmen and sportswomen throughout Scotland, will allow us to showcase the country, and will ensure that we develop a legacy not just for Glasgow but for the whole of Scotland.

As a sporting fan and member of the cross-party group on sport, I look forward to the games first and foremost as a spectator. I am sure that they will be a tremendously enjoyable experience. As a result, I hope that prices will be targeted at a level that allows more people from the various communities to become involved, to experience the occasion and to be encouraged to participate in sport after 2014.

The games are an inspiration to youngsters throughout Scotland who are looking to participate in 2014. Scotland has a proud sporting heritage going back to Lachie Stewart and Liz McColgan, and currently we have Chris Hoy. Looking to the past, there are those who will inspire our young athletes, and, looking to the future, the opportunity for our young people to compete for their country in a games hosted in their country is a tremendous benefit that will motivate them to train up.

I know that the Rutherglen and Cambuslang sports council, which is holding its annual dinner tonight, which I am attending, is greatly excited about the games because they will give it the opportunity to expand its sporting horizons.

I am starting to see some of the benefits in my constituency already, with the opening of the new sports development centre at Toryglen at a cost of £15.7 million. It has been selected as a training venue for football teams at the London Olympics and was praised recently by George Burley. Let us hope that the national team can use the facility and that it can give the team a platform to qualify for the world cup.

We all enjoy watching sport and cheering our country on, but it is important to tie the games into the political agenda in the Parliament, too. On the health front, the obesity plan has been published, and there has been a lot of discussion about how we tackle alcohol misuse. The games and the opportunity to increase participation in sports will help to tackle some such issues.

As Michael Matheson and others have said, there is a big task ahead. I run regularly throughout the streets of my constituency, and I have noticed that a lot more people go running

now than did 20 years ago. I will certainly be doing my bit to support participation by taking part in the Rutherglen and Cambuslang community health initiative 5k run on 17 May. I see Mr McAveety smiling; I am sure that he could race round the course in record time.

Mr McAveety: In a car.

James Kelly: He could be the pacemaker in the lead car.

We discussed transport this morning. There are opportunities to improve the transport network, which will help to get spectators around the various games venues. It will also help on another policy front: if we have an improved transport network in Glasgow and the west of Scotland, it will help reduce carbon emissions by getting more people out of their cars and on to trains and buses.

There are issues with social deprivation throughout Glasgow and the west of Scotland. If we can build a strong legacy by getting across the health message and creating employment opportunities in the transport network, we will improve the quality of life of everyone throughout the west of Scotland, which will feed through to Scotland as a whole.

There are important challenges for the Scottish National Party in delivering free swimming lessons for all and achieving the target to provide two hours of PE a week.

I agree with Frank McAveety's point about sporting facilities in schools. I know that a number of schools in South Lanarkshire whose facilities have been rebuilt as part of the modernisation programme have taken the opportunity to create community centres and sports pitches, which help draw people into the sporting arena. I regret that the slow progress on the Scottish Futures Trust has resulted in a bit of a hiatus in the schools development programme. There are issues to address in that regard.

It is clear that the games present an opportunity. Our role is to be not just cheerleaders for Scotland's athletes but strong political leaders in our communities to ensure that good infrastructure is in place to deliver a legacy post-2014. In that way, the games can be a platform not only for sporting success but for a better quality of life for all.

16:10

Ian McKee (Lothians) (SNP): I confess that deep foreboding comes over me when I hear the word "legacy" mentioned in connection with the 2014 Commonwealth games. A legacy usually comes after an event—Frank McAveety generously defined it as a present to future

generations—but it is not earned in the conventional sense. Indeed, it is often unexpected. As the motion recognises, relying on such a legacy is a strategy that is doomed to failure. We have heard that no recent sporting event has produced significant sporting rewards on such terms and, in fact, evidence is growing that the Olympic games in Sydney produced a negative sporting legacy.

The situation is not new. With his deep knowledge of Latin, my colleague on the Health and Sport Committee Ross Finnie will know the tag "Postquam ludos, omnes majores tristes sunt". Loosely translated, that means that after the games, everyone is unhappy. After particularly unsuccessful games, the Emperor Caligula was assassinated by those close to him on 21 January 41AD. [*Laughter.*] In no way do I imply that our great and much-loved leader can be compared to the tyrant Caligula—far from it—but it is nice to hear the laughter, chortling and good humour from Opposition members, which means that they perfectly accept that Alex Salmond will still be the leader of the Scottish Government in 2014.

I make the point that hosting a mammoth sporting event is not enough in itself to produce a legacy of which we can be proud. Of course, the games will have a built legacy of stadia and extra housing in the east end of Glasgow, but even that risks turning into wind-blown dereliction unless careful plans are laid well in advance. "Advance" is the applicable word. What we do now and in the intervening years will determine the benefit that the Glasgow games bring to Glasgow and Scotland, so we should put aside talk of a legacy and consider how we can use the 2014 games as a focus or—as Glasgow 2014's chief executive, John Scott, has said—as a hook on which other relevant programmes and projects can be attached.

What are the necessary ingredients to obtain the maximum value from this prestigious event? The first is leadership to motivate and enthuse all Scotland and to ensure that sporting, leisure, housing and cultural bodies work together so that the strength of the sum is greater than that of the individual parts. The Government has made great progress on that latter aim by encouraging partnership planning, but the time has come to consider appointing a champion who commands the respect of sporting bodies, Government agencies, local authorities and the public.

In London, Boris Johnson has taken full responsibility for the Olympic games legacy, separately from the organising committee, and has appointed Kate Hoey—a former minister and international athlete—to be his commissioner for sport. I am not certain whether Jim Murphy or Councillor Steven Purcell has the public respect

and affection to fulfil such a role, but I have no doubt that a suitable candidate—perhaps Frank McAveety, the dynamic Bill Aitken or even Margo MacDonald, given her interest in sport, her skill in media relations and the public's deep affection for her—can be found.

Next is vision. What do we want and what is achievable? To an extent, vision is tied in with my next ingredient—resources. My opinion, which might be contentious, is that the elite pathway to sporting success in Scotland is not the main patient for a financial transfusion. Yes, we could always do with more facilities, which have experienced immense underinvestment in the past 20 years or so, but I come from a health and wellbeing background and give more priority to improving the general population's fitness and health than to achieving one or two more medals, although that is heresy.

Measures to encourage more young people to become physically active will increase the size of the pool from which our elite athletes will be drawn in 15 or 20 years' time. We should therefore take advantage of the coming games to increase the importance of physical education in schools and smooth the transition from school to sporting clubs, dance, rambling and other forms of physical exercise. Given that wellbeing involves the mind, too, we must not neglect music and other cultural activities.

Some of that work will involve money, so I welcome the Government's efforts to recover the £150 million of lottery money that is owed to Scotland and which the Treasury is currently retaining. However, much can be done with minimal financial resources. Although we all would like to see AstroTurf pitches and the like, there is plenty of scope for rehabilitating redundant facilities and parks. For example, there is scope regularly to remove glass and dog excrement from sports fields and then encourage folk to get out there and use those spaces. Again, imagination, drive and leadership are the key ingredients.

Another focus is the contribution that people can make to the games. Participation as a steward in the London games is being made conditional on some form of community voluntary work between now and 2012. Should we follow that route or should we—as the minister suggested—actively seek to select those who lack self-esteem or who have otherwise been buffeted by life? Surely they would benefit from selection for this desirable job. If the community is to truly benefit from the games, it is vital that we involve not only the usual sporting types but the entire community.

Let us learn from the experience of others. Where did Sydney go wrong? Is the London approach beginning to work, or is it merely draining valuable resources from Scotland and

giving little back in return? How is Vancouver planning to capitalise on the 2010 winter games? There is no need to reinvent the wheel, and I volunteer to go to Vancouver on the minister's behalf to find out how things are being done over there.

I congratulate the Government on the start that it has made. I will watch future progress with great interest.

16:16

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): I associate myself with most of what Ian McKee said. Among sportspeople and those who are interested in sport, it is not heresy to say that the important thing is not for more people to win gold medals but for more people to play sport. Over the years, I have made that point in this chamber and said that, if we do not have a big pool to draw from, we will not get the elite athletes.

I agree with Frank McAveety's conclusion, which was—and I paraphrase—that the legacy of the Glasgow games should be about people living better. Whether that is defined in the cerebral sense or in people living more healthily or in better houses, the legacy should be about an improvement for everyone who is associated with the games.

We must not do what I think Bill Aitken suggested and place too many expectations on the games. They will never deliver everything for Scotland that we want them to deliver. For example, our football clubs are already tackling the challenge of getting young people into sport and a healthier lifestyle. A recent meeting of the cross-party group on sport heard from Rangers Football Club's community development team. Some wonderful work is being done by Hibernian Football Club by way of its youth programme. Last Sunday, I had the delight of watching some of the youngsters who had come through the programme, but that is another story. That work is being done, and we should not downplay it.

We should not expect the games to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. If it was possible to do that, the current interest that many kids in Scotland have in the progress of English football teams in the European cup would mean that many more people got out there and played football. That is not happening and, instead, the phenomenon is ensuring that more people stay in to watch football games on television.

As Frank McAveety rightly said, for the legacy that we hope to inherit from the games, we have to turn to physical education and activity. It will come from people who understand the relevance and importance of sport. Physical education starts in schools or pre-schools, and I am glad that Frank

McAveety now says that it has to be at the centre of the school timetable. In the past, among other Scottish classroom teachers, he was guilty at times of an intellectual snobbery towards PE. He thought that it was a frill; it is not a frill. I will not quote any Latin tags, but I remind the chamber of the “healthy mind, healthy body” philosophy. That has always been true—indeed, it has never been truer than it is today.

Reference has been made to the joining together of sportscotland and the former Scottish Institute of Sport. The cross-party group on sport recently visited the Stirling centre of excellence, and I was very impressed by its focus. I reassure the minister that, although I disagreed with—and still do not really agree with—the fusion of the two bodies, it seems to be working well. Sportscotland seems to have worked how to keep both the elite and the community strand of its activities going.

When we were in Stirling, we were assured that a good range of programmes was in place to prepare elite athletes for the Commonwealth games. We will certainly do well, although performance will be patchy across different sports. That will be down not to the Commonwealth games organisation but to whether sports and sports governing bodies are organised well enough to promote their best athletes through the ranks. I wish that the Gladiator Programme to which Margaret Curran referred was available in all sports and all parts of Scotland, but it is not. We should seek to develop that template throughout sport in Scotland.

No automatic benefit for our national health and wellbeing will come from the Commonwealth games. I was glad to hear the minister say that everyone must examine what part they will play in the process of improving health standards, participation and activity in Scotland. As Frank McAveety and others have said, PE is the key. If the minister has anything to do with the education department, she had better see it about getting PE teachers into schools. They are being trained and are waiting to be employed; if we mean what we say about the legacy from the games, they should be employed.

On funding, I appreciate that there is some argument between those members who are interested in whether we are owed money from London. Let us forget that for the moment and accept that there will be cuts in public expenditure. The games are not directly funded by Government, but local authorities, which are essential for doing the things that I have described, such as employing the teachers who are needed to engender much greater sporting activity, will suffer more cuts. No one should bother denying that; instead, we should try to work out how we will offset such cuts. If the Glasgow

games are to have wider economic benefits, they must look good, classy, professional and big; if we do not have the money to spend on them, they will not. We had better admit now that the local authorities, voluntary organisations and clubs that will feed into the process will experience difficulties.

Jamie McGrigor referred to the lottery funding that has been taken from Glasgow, and we should certainly pursue that issue. The member's nose was tweaked a bit by Michael Matheson when he spoke about funding, but I know that, across the chamber, members who are interested in sport have a common approach—this debate has shown that. The minister must take what has been said not as criticism but as constructive comment and ideas. I wish her all the best.

16:23

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): Glasgow 2014 is a tremendous opportunity both for the city that I represent and for the whole of Scotland. I have heard it said that the games are a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Given that they will happen only once, that is true by definition. They are certainly a wonderful opportunity. However, the aspirations that we have for Scotland's largest city—Glasgow—and for our nation go far beyond winning and successfully running the 2014 Glasgow games.

Today we are here to talk about the legacy. One clear legacy not just for Glasgow but for Scotland will be that we will have put on a wonderful sporting event, on budget and with lasting social and economic benefits. I say yes to all those things. However, by achieving them we will open the door to another lasting legacy for Scotland: when our nation shows itself to be capable of achieving such success, we will raise our profile and enhance our reputation on the international stage, which could lead to other major international events being hosted in Scotland.

I have in the past spoken at length about the need for a strong social legacy for Glasgow. As I have said, although a clutch of—I hope—gold medals, fond memories on the part of visitors to our city and a host of new and upgraded facilities will be welcome, those alone would be a poor show, given the opportunities that lie before us, so I am delighted that the Scottish Government's draft legacy plan goes far beyond that.

The idea of introducing, in conjunction with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and councils, a range of community sports hubs across Scotland is positive. I support that, but I stress that providing people who already exercise and who are already active in sport with better facilities is not the best way forward. I hope that community

sports hubs will be sited where participation in activities is lowest. The aim will be to bring together people from different ethnicities, income groups, ages and—this of particular importance in Glasgow—different territorial areas.

Positive health outcomes and the promotion of social inclusion must go hand in hand. It is fundamental that we inspire the youngsters who are most likely to find themselves alienated by society. That inspiration might be to be more physically active, to volunteer, to learn more about other cultures or to enhance their skills by gaining from the apprenticeships in Glasgow that will flow from the games. Whatever people are inspired to do, the key thing must be that they are inspired. That will not just happen, however—we all have a responsibility to plan and work for it. In that regard, our education establishments and the voluntary sector are key players.

I will give members a flavour of some of the projects in Glasgow that I believe could be key partners in inspiring Glaswegians and in building on the legacy. There is in Maryhill an organisation called realise community care project, which provides a supportive community education setting to help former addicts to build pre-employability skills and to support them in other ways. Phoenix Futures has in the north of the city a residential drug rehabilitation unit, which strives daily to turn lives around. Operation reclaim is a partnership between communities, Strathclyde Police and Sidekix. It uses Scottish Government money, via cashback for communities, and helps to break down territorial barriers by getting vulnerable youngsters involved in sport. We must find a way for the Commonwealth games legacy to help the people who benefit from such services to thrive. That is essential. I want those projects to develop and expand, and to be directly linked with Glasgow 2014. If the 2014 games pass people by, we will have let all Scotland down.

I am positive, however, and I commend the efforts that have been made to ensure that Scotland gets its fair share of lottery funding to finance legacy initiatives. I praise the Big Lottery Fund, whose communities 2014 fund is already awarding small community grants of up to £1,000 to promote not just sport but, importantly, a variety of other physical activities for groups of people who are less likely to be involved in physical activity. That is entirely the right approach. It cannot be achieved without funding, but the Big Lottery Fund's approach is to maximise the benefit from whatever funding is available. I commend it for the attitude that it has shown.

I am delighted by much of what is contained in the draft legacy document. In particular, I note that it discusses "Enhancing Partnerships" and "Encouraging Community Engagement".

I draw to Parliament's attention the fine work that Partick Thistle Football Club does—Margo MacDonald mentioned other football clubs. I joined Frank McAveety at Partick Thistle to promote the club letting under-16s into the ground for free, but the work that Partick Thistle does goes far beyond that. The club works with a variety of community groups, including the Glasgow Old People's Welfare Association and the mental health charity, the Scottish Association for Mental Health, to name just two. Partick Thistle does a lot of work with vulnerable groups of people who are not necessarily physically active, and does it on a shoestring budget. I ask the minister to join me and to come along to Partick Thistle to see the good work that it does. I believe that that sort of work could be replicated at football grounds across Scotland, and could be branded as being part of the Commonwealth games 2014 legacy. I urge the minister to consider that.

There is much to be welcomed in the draft document, and there are many opportunities. In the time that I have left, I will mention just one. The games present a Scotland-wide opportunity, as Michael Matheson said, but they are also Glasgow's games. I have in the past suggested that a festival of Glasgow should take place before the games. Edinburgh has its festival, but Glasgow is also a festival city. We should have a festival in 2013, to celebrate everything that is good about the Commonwealth and Glasgow. Perhaps a legacy of the games could be a four-yearly festival for Scotland, based in Glasgow.

I endorse the interim legacy plan paper and very much hope to support the final document when it is published.

16:30

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): We have had a good debate and members have made excellent speeches. I confess that I am feeling uneasy among all the sports luminaries in the chamber—Bill Aitken and Frank McAveety on football, Ross Finnie on rugby, James Kelly on jogging, and Margo MacDonald. The best that I can do is to say that I was second substitute for my university basketball team, and to admit that basketball was a displacement activity because I was no use at football. However, I prepared myself for the debate by watching "Chariots of Fire" again, to get a bit of inspiration by watching Scottish and British athletes win in the 1924 Olympics.

Frank McAveety talked about the outward and inward-looking aspects of legacy and he made a good point when he said that

"there has never been a golden age of ... resources."

Margo MacDonald talked about the difficulties that will be presented by the economic crisis. We need

to do the best we can do with the resources that are available.

Ross Finnie talked about the need to engage with councils throughout Scotland and to overcome difficulties that might arise from a perception that the games are Glasgow games and not Scottish games. He also mentioned the need to increase the capacity of existing clubs in various ways and he warned of potential difficulties in tendering for business contracts, given Scottish businesses' experience in relation to the London Olympics.

Michael Matheson made a solid point about the challenge of translating interest into activity, although I do not quite share his view. Experience demonstrates that interest will translate well into activity, provided that the resources and support exist to enable that to happen.

Margaret Curran was unapologetic about the need to focus on the east end of Glasgow. She is quite right; we can picture concentric circles that represent the east end, Glasgow, Scotland and British aspects of the games.

Nicol Stephen made an excellent speech, in which he talked about the need for world-class training facilities and the challenge for Government and us all to ensure that investment is made in time.

Ian McKee made a good point about medals not being the only issue, which echoed Margo MacDonald's interesting point about a legacy that means that people live better. I liked what she said about that.

The key issue is the building and development of greater capacity in our sports clubs and other bodies. No one can deny the importance of facilities, environmental considerations and employment opportunities, which are all mentioned in the interim legacy plan paper. However, the glue that holds everything together and which creates dynamism and sustainability is human capital. The interim legacy plan has not quite hit the nail on the head on the importance of growing capacity in local sports clubs.

The proposals in the plan for community sports hubs might have potential, but the hub sounds a little like a mini community planning partnership, which is not quite what we want. We need to build up existing clubs to their maximum, widen their scope, develop their youth policies and make fullest use of their facilities. There are three requirements in that regard. First, local organisations need know-how, expertise and mentoring. Last week, I met the Cranston Trust—an organisation that I had not known about—which provides exactly that, by offering free management consultancy to organisations whose primary interest is in tackling poverty, disability and social

disadvantage. Organisations that are like the Cranston Trust might operate in sports, but I am not aware of any such activity. Such activity is important, because lateral thinking on the input of expertise is often needed.

The second requirement is staff support. Most amateur sports clubs are run by voluntary office bearers who give enormous amounts of time and energy. However, their capacity is not unlimited: it is very much limited by the fact that they are not, and cannot be, full time or, indeed, trained professionals. One possibility is the use of interns such as are provided by Project Scotland. Another is to develop work-experience projects for sports and physical education trainees. However it is done, it will be difficult to realise the full potential without some staff support.

The third requirement is a local base. Many clubs have clubhouses that are underused or are limited to one sport, and there exists huge potential to widen their use. For example, a golf club might be able to provide a tennis facility and a bowling club might have an unused green. Links with professional football teams have also been talked about.

All those are important but, at the end of the day, it is all about people—particularly young people—living better, as Margo MacDonald said. I have said before that the experience of young people seeing and meeting in familiar locations the inspirational young athletes and sportsmen in the Commonwealth games is the biggest motivator in that regard. The opportunities to do that as volunteers or as spectators are extremely important. If we do not take advantage of those opportunities to build the potential and legacy of the Commonwealth games, we will have a lot to answer for to future generations.

Much good work has been done. I wish good luck to all the people who are engaged in the organisation of the games. They have the Parliament's good wishes for making the biggest ever success of the Commonwealth games in 2014.

16:36

Jackson Carlaw (West of Scotland) (Con):

The debate has been constructive. We have heard from around the chamber speeches that have all added to the sum total of our understanding of what we hope and intend the legacy of 2014 to be, and we associate the Conservatives with the opening speeches from the minister and Frank McAveety.

Wishing is one thing but achieving is another. No doubt the people of Athens enjoyed high expectations for the Olympic facilities that were built in their name and which they could ill afford,

but today those facilities stand disfigured, unused and even bordering on dilapidation, as a tribute to civic incompetence. I therefore echo the cautionary notes that Ian McKee and Jamie McGrigor sounded in respect of examining past experience.

Ian McKee conjured up for us the memory of the emperor Caligula, who he reminded us was assassinated after an unsuccessful games. He will recall, of course, that Caligula was succeeded by a much older man in Claudius, so he should not despair. From that example, there is clearly hope for his own leadership ambitions. Who knows—he may yet preside over the games.

It is no doubt true that benefits were secured in Manchester after the 2002 Commonwealth games, although we should note Ross Finnie's caution. However, I agree with Margo MacDonald that there is now an elephant in the room: the state of our economy as it is caught up in recession. The background to the 2002 games was an expanding economy, but the period between now and 2014 will be harder going. It will be tougher to encourage business to commit, and we should not be naive about that. Some of the future investment potential may be queried by companies that are concerned that legacy facilities and developments will exceed the post-recession demand at the point of availability. The challenge to the Governments here and at Westminster is all the greater as a result, so we should watch carefully the example of the Olympic games in London for any early signs that the expectations of private sector engagement fall short.

As many other members do, I know that Glaswegians are capable of making a success of anything, whatever the circumstances—it is in their grain and character—but however much any of us loves Glasgow, no one can ignore the fact that, at the heart, it accounts for the substance of Scotland's inequalities in health, education and opportunity.

Having had a business in the Commonwealth games end of the city, I know how much of the progress that Glasgow may be able to make in the next 25 years depends on successful planning not only of the games but their legacy. Shona Robison set out the bold range of headline legacy objectives. Not least of those is the potential benefit for health, which is of common concern to the minister, Ross Finnie and me. A particular aspect of that is the huge variety of sport and personal fitness options that the games will offer—which Margo MacDonald touched on—and the unique experience and opportunity that that will give not only to the emerging generation of young people, but to the rest of us, although with due caution and concern for our advancing years.

I think that I was grateful for Sandra White reassuring me that, although I turned 50 during the recess, I am not that old. Someone told me that 50 is the new 40. Less reassuringly, my wife told me that, in my case, 50 is the new 70. I support Frank McAveety's call that there be the widest possible availability of school facilities to young people and communities in the lead-up to the games.

When all the papers and pamphlets have been written and all the consultants have reported, it is vital that the people of Glasgow, particularly in the east end, are at the centre of the project's delivery and are not just spectators on the side. That was the lesson of Canary Wharf where, quite unnecessarily, local people felt excluded and were eventually driven out.

I agree with Margaret Curran that championing the opportunities for the east end of Glasgow is not in any way in competition with the success that the games represent for the rest of Scotland. The legacy of 2014 must not be another playground for developers and end with displacement of the existing population and Glasgow's problems into another deprived and excluded community. It would be a great tragedy if, by 2020, we had successfully rejuvenated the east end at the expense of, rather than to the benefit of, the people who currently live there.

It is doubtful whether Glasgow will have such a comprehensive opportunity again in my lifetime, so we welcome the spirit of co-operation between the Scottish Government, the Westminster Government and Glasgow City Council. The ambition to secure lottery funding is perfectly reasonable, but we should not begrudge the substantial lottery funding for the 2012 London Olympic games. Its success will aid Glasgow's determination to make our games two years later all the greater a success.

Nicol Stephen recalled vividly the palpable sense of excitement that was felt two years ago—and which still remains—when Glasgow secured the games. We can be impressed by all the organisations and politicians talking and working together then and since. However, the games will be, as will their legacy. While welcoming the progress in planning, we must be certain as we progress that, beneath the surface, the involvement of the business community and the engagement of the community more generally is tangible. There is no point in developing a culture whereby we spend millions saying what a wonderful legacy there will be, if there is none in practice.

Ensuring that the reality meets the expectation is a huge challenge and responsibility not only for others, but for us in Parliament. For Glasgow's and Scotland's sakes, failure to maximise the legacy benefits cannot be an option. We look

forward to the final report in the summer and we happily support the Government motion and the Labour amendment.

16:42

Mr McAveety: I echo other members' view that the debate is about maximising a genuine vision for 2014 so that it can provide the opportunity that we want for all the people in Scotland. I recognise that people place particular emphasis on the east end of Glasgow, on Glasgow as a whole or on other parts of the country with regard to the need for much better facilities.

I am worried about being praised in the same afternoon by both Margo MacDonald and my colleague Margaret Curran. I do not know whether I am behaving more acceptably now and whether that is why I have received such commendations. However, I welcome their contributions. I thank Margaret Curran in particular for putting across the words praising me for my past contribution, which I had kindly written for her earlier.

I need to mention a number of issues. The one that I try to emphasise is self-confidence, not just for the east end of Glasgow but for the whole of Scotland. I am reminded of the true story of a local councillor and me speaking at a community event in the east end. The councillor was waxing lyrical about the physical infrastructure developments there, saying "This is gonnae happen and we're gonnae have the national indoor arena here, and the new Tollcross leisure centre just up the road." An auld wumman at the back of the room said, "Look—Ah've heard it aw before, son." That was his mother. We can see the scepticism that can exist about debates on whether something will regenerate an area.

I want, however, to mention two things that I believe make this debate different. One is that we have the Clyde gateway project, to which the previous Government committed and with which the present Government has continued. I believe that that represents a vote of confidence in the area. Secondly, that ties in to the wider regeneration to which Jackson Carlaw referred in the context of acknowledging that statistics show that the worst inequalities in Scotland are concentrated in some districts of Glasgow. I echo what Margo MacDonald, Michael Matheson, Ian McKee and others said about participation in that regard. I have heard Ian McKee speak on the issue on a number of occasions. He is that other great athlete in Scottish society—the professional pessimist. I mean that he is at least honest about the issues and wants us to understand the complications behind some of the rhetoric that we all sometimes use in the chamber.

Participation is a key issue, and it must include both the young and—I am hurtling towards the age level that Sandra White identified—the old. I remember that, when I was in Glasgow City Council and we proposed to offer free swimming for youngsters and older people in Glasgow, we did so because we recognised that everyone should participate. Indeed, it is such a good idea that it was included in the SNP's 2007 manifesto, so I hope that members on the Government benches will pursue the issue. As a matter of principle, encouraging wider participation is a good policy that would meet many of the social objectives to which members have referred.

A second critical and important issue concerns the facilities. Again, a strategic response has been put in place to identify facilities to ensure that they are not left redundant, as has happened elsewhere after major games and events. I recognise the worries and concerns that members have expressed about that. There is a commitment to work not just with Glasgow City Council on developing its facilities, but with other local authorities that develop projects for sporting activities. For example, a commitment has already been given that Lanarkshire will host the children's games. We need to ensure that all those things are tied in.

We already have great resources in our communities in the form of the early years, primary and secondary schools estate that exists. With a little imagination—and not necessarily many resources—we can use those to make a real difference. I know that the Health and Sport Committee has interrogated people on that issue with great intensity in recent months, so I hope that the report that it makes to Parliament will make a difference.

Another part of the legacy whose importance I want to emphasise is the games village in the east end of Glasgow. That will provide a good model for how other developments in Scotland can involve the private sector and public sector in working together to create public spaces. A number of such suggestions have been submitted by organisations including the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations and Fields in Trust, which has suggested a very good idea—about improving 214 playing fields by 2014. That would make a genuine difference. When we receive the full legacy plan in the summer, I hope that we will see some proposals that will make a real difference.

To re-emphasise the key concluding point in my opening speech, I say that the Government's responsibility is to try to find the right priorities among those that are listed. As I have mentioned on previous occasions, we cannot solve all the problems. It will not be easy to deal with the couch potato—that phenomenon of Scottish social life—

by the 2014 Commonwealth games, but we can create the space, both formal and informal, to make a real difference for the future. Those are the challenges that exist.

We are not far from achieving consensus in Parliament, either in terms of the manifesto commitments of the political parties or in terms of—if they are to be meaningful at all—the single outcome agreements and the concordat with local government. In future spending rounds, despite the tight spending levels that will exist for local government and central Government in Scotland—as elsewhere—choices can still be made. All I ask is that wisdom is exercised in those choices to make a genuine difference for the future.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan): I call Shona Robison to wind up the debate. The minister may speak until 5 o'clock if she wishes.

16:48

Shona Robison: I have enjoyed listening to the many speakers today and I am thankful for their thoughtful and valuable input. I am also delighted at the co-operation that is evident in the Parliament's desire to work together to create a legacy that we can all enjoy and play a part in. I am sure that that approach will continue as we look ahead to the challenges of 2014 as we move from the interim legacy plan, which sets out the direction of travel, to the programmes that will be part of the fuller legacy plan.

I reiterate what I said about the games being about the long term. We hope that the benefits from the games will be around for the next generation to enjoy and take pride in. The games will be as important for the people of Orkney and Dumfries as for the people of the east end of Glasgow. As many members have said, the games must provide a legacy for the whole of Scotland. Although much of the games infrastructure will be located in Glasgow, there is no doubt in my mind that all communities can benefit.

The Commonwealth games will be the biggest multisport event that Scotland has ever hosted. It will bring more than 6,500 athletes and officials from 71 countries to Glasgow to compete in 17 different sports over 11 days and will provide a unique set of opportunities for our country to raise its game. We have made it clear from the outset that the games are about more than two weeks of sport. Public investment will account for some £298 million out of an overall budget for delivery of the games of £373 million. I reassure members that that investment is absolutely secure. Legacy resourcing is a bigger challenge. That is why it is

so important that we pursue the £150 million of lottery money that we want to return to Scotland.

I will attempt to respond to some of the points that have been made in the debate; I apologise if I do not get round to everyone. Frank McAveety was absolutely right when he said that auditing, integration, delivery and leadership are key issues. They are the focus of our discussions; indeed, I discussed them with sportscotland when I attended its board meeting just this week.

It is extremely important that we make the most not just of the school estate, but of the community estate. As I am sure Frank McAveety is aware, we are in the process of developing a new school estate strategy. Schools must support the establishment of a legacy, and we will progress that over the next few months.

Ross Finnie mentioned the Health and Sport Committee's pathways into sport inquiry. I look forward to reading the committee's report, which will make a helpful contribution to our legacy considerations.

Ross Finnie and Jamie McGrigor mentioned the business opportunities that the games will create. I remind members that, in February, the First Minister launched the business club Scotland, which encourages collaboration between Scotland's business organisations and is supported and funded by the Scottish Government to ensure that firms across the country make the best of the opportunities that arise from major events in Scotland and internationally. Members will be aware of CompeteFor and the Scottish Government's public contracts Scotland portal, which will be extremely important for the 2014 games. Opportunities on Glasgow City Council's contracts site and the 2014 organising committee site will be advertised through those portals. It is important that we join all that up so that businesses large and small have the opportunity to benefit from the games.

Michael Matheson made a number of important points. He mentioned physical literacy, which I know will be a focus of the Health and Sport Committee's inquiry report. It was certainly an issue at the meeting at which I gave evidence. As I said, I look forward to reading the committee's report. It is important that communities across Scotland feel part of the legacy. We will do what we can to ensure that there is greater engagement.

I am sure that Nicol Stephen was in no way implying that any infrastructure gaps have arisen only in the past two years. The £5 million that has been put towards the 50m pool in Aberdeen is £5 million more than was on the table previously. The making available of money for that project was always dependent on the development of a robust

and deliverable business case. As I understand it, we have only recently received that. I am sure that Nicol Stephen would be able to get an update from Aberdeen City Council, which is taking the project forward, should he wish to do so.

Nicol Stephen also mentioned the provision of 50m pools in a number of other places. I subscribe more to the approach of Robert Brown, which is that we must do the best we can with the resources we have. We should not raise unrealistic expectations, but we should try to make a step change by addressing some of the issues that Frank McAveety raised. With a bit of imagination, we can pull together the community clubs and the school estate in the community sports hubs, thereby building capacity and providing the necessary pathways. I believe that we can make a difference and ensure that we get the best return for every pound we spend.

Mr McAveety: Given that we have had such a consensual discussion this afternoon and the comments from Michael Matheson and other members about the commitment to PE in schools and to infrastructure, will the minister, as part of the leadership that I know she wants to take on the issue, be willing to pull together a summit for all local authorities in Scotland to discuss how they can deliver on the legacy? I am sure that the spokespersons of all parties who have spoken this afternoon would give their support; perhaps they could participate in the summit as well.

Shona Robison: I am willing to consider that. It is important to recognise, though, that, as we speak, sportscotland is involved in a dialogue with each of the local authorities on what its priorities would be. Discussions are taking place. In fact, I will meet the COSLA spokesperson on sport, Harry McGuigan, in the near future to talk about some of those issues. A lot of good work is already going on. However, I will consider the member's suggestion.

I thank Ian McKee for the Caligula comparison—it is a first and, I hope, the last. He wondered whether we should have a sports champion. I am not dismissing that idea, but what we deliver is more important. We need to ensure that we have sports champions in all our communities, who lead by example.

Not for the first time, Margo MacDonald made a number of important points. She talked about the sports governing bodies. I agree with what she said. There is a lot that our sports governing bodies can do. One of the issues that was discussed yesterday with sportscotland was getting clearer outcomes in response to the funding governing bodies receive. We need to know what they will deliver for the funding we give them.

Margo MacDonald: Very often, the issue is a lack of experience on the part of officials at local level, not a lack of willingness. They need training—which can be provided from within the resources that we already have. [*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order. Sitting in the back row is not a licence for conversation.

Shona Robison: I agree with Margo MacDonald. The sports governing bodies operate at various levels, and some of them have more capacity than others. Sportscotland identifies that the governing bodies have a role in helping it to build capacity; in turn, the governing bodies will support the local community clubs that will be so important in ensuring that we have a real change in the level of participation in our communities.

I am happy to take up Bob Doris's offer of a visit to Partick Thistle to see the work that it does. I will add it to the invitations that are coming in thick and fast.

Robert Brown asked whether we are being ambitious enough in helping to build capacity in clubs and other areas to ensure that people participate in sport. That is the point that I was making to Margo MacDonald. When I met sportscotland yesterday, I heard that more than 13,000 volunteers are already working with the active schools programme. We intend to build on that excellent volunteering effort to support and encourage our children to take part in sport and physical activity. If we can harness the capacity of those volunteers and more, it will be a great asset in taking forward the legacy.

My main message to members is that we want all our communities to get involved in the legacy programme. We have the children's games in Lanarkshire in 2011, the Olympic games in 2012, the Ryder cup in 2014 and, of course, the Commonwealth games in 2014. Having all those major sporting events in a relatively short period is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. We must be ready to make the most of that opportunity.

I commend to Parliament the hard work that has been done to date, as is evidenced in the interim legacy plan, which was published in December, in developing the ambitions for a lasting and positive legacy. I ask all members to work with the Government to turn our ambitions into reality.

16:59

Meeting suspended.

17:00

On resuming—

Decision Time

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):

There are up to eight questions to be put as a result of today's business. Members should note that if amendment S3M-3947.2, in the name of Ted Brocklebank, on the Scottish newspaper industry, is agreed to, amendment S3M-3947.1, in the name of Iain Smith, will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S3M-3947.2, in the name of Ted Brocklebank, which seeks to amend motion S3M-3947, in the name of David Whitton, on the Scottish newspaper industry, 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)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (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)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 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)
 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)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, 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)
 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)
 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)
 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)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 13, Against 53, Abstentions 42.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S3M-3947.1, in the name of Iain Smith, which seeks to amend motion S3M-3947, in the name of David Whitton, on the Scottish newspaper industry, 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)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)

AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 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)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)

Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

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)
 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)
 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)
 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)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 26, Against 40, Abstentions 42.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-3947, in the name of David Whitton, on the Scottish newspaper industry, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)

Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)

Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

AGAINST

Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)

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)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 82, Against 13, Abstentions 13.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament recognises the threat to the Scottish economy from the current crisis facing Scotland's newspaper and media industries; notes that local newspapers are facing particular difficulties in the current economic climate; opposes any moves towards compulsory redundancies such as those imposed by Trinity Mirror at the *Daily Record* and *Sunday Mail*; calls for all newspaper and media organisations considering restructuring, reorganisation or redundancy to engage in meaningful negotiations with the relevant workforce representatives in order to minimise the economic impact of any job cuts, and calls on the Scottish Government to hold urgent talks with Trinity Mirror management in order to prevent compulsory job cuts.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S3M-3938.2, in the name of Gavin Brown, which seeks to amend motion S3M-3938, in the name of Des McNulty, on west of Scotland transport infrastructure, 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)
 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)
 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)
 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)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of 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)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (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)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 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)
 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)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 55, Against 53, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S3M-3938.3, in the name of Robert Brown, which seeks to amend motion S3M-3938, in the name of Des McNulty, on west of Scotland transport infrastructure, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (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)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 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)
 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)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

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)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 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)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 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)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of 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)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 54, Against 0, Abstentions 54.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-3938, in the name of Des McNulty, on west of Scotland transport infrastructure, as amended, 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)
 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)
 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)
 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)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 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)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of 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)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

AGAINST

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (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)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 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)
 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)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)

Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 56, Against 52, Abstentions 0.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament notes the need for investment in transport infrastructure in the west of Scotland, particularly in the Greater Glasgow travel-to-work area, to ensure the continued competitiveness of the area; therefore regrets the previous Labour-led administration's disappointing record on delivering improvements to key road links connecting the west of Scotland, notably the substantial delays and cost overruns in upgrading the M8 and M74; welcomes the fact that the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link project pioneered by the previous Labour-led administration has been cancelled, thereby freeing up investment for the crucial Edinburgh to Glasgow Rail Improvement Programme; calls on the Scottish Government to ensure the clear prioritisation of transport projects both in the west of Scotland and elsewhere; welcomes the significant opportunity presented by the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games for the creation of legacy transport infrastructure projects in the west of Scotland, including the proposed redevelopment of Dalmarnock station as a key public transport hub for the Games and the area, offering speedy direct rail links to the main Games venues and to Celtic Park from Lanarkshire, the city centre and the west in particular, as well as a high standard of pedestrian and cyclist pathways through the area; supports the work of Clyde Gateway in developing the project, and urges the Scottish Government to give the Dalmarnock station project its full backing.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S3M-3948.1, in the name of Frank McAveety, which seeks to amend motion S3M-3948, in the name of Shona Robison, on the Glasgow 2014 legacy plan, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S3M-3948, in the name of Shona Robison, on the Glasgow 2014 legacy plan, as amended, be agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament welcomes the forthcoming meeting to take place in Glasgow between the Minister for Public Health and Sport, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport Andy Burnham, Secretary of State for Scotland Jim Murphy and Glasgow City Council leader Steven Purcell to discuss the release of a substantial sum of National Lottery funding towards supporting a legacy for the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow; welcomes this new spirit of cooperation and calls on the Scottish Government to work with the UK Government to maximise the benefit of sporting events in Scotland and the wider United Kingdom, especially the 2014 Commonwealth Games and 2012 Olympic Games, in terms of encouraging sporting participation and harnessing the talents of Scots; notes Glasgow City Council's own 2014 legacy plan and calls on the Scottish Government to work with other local authorities to produce their own legacy plans to meet shared aspirations on tackling obesity and low levels of participation; supports the work of the Scottish Government and its partners, including the Convention of Scottish Local

Authorities, Glasgow City Council, local authorities across Scotland, NHS boards, public bodies and the third sector, in planning for a legacy for the people of Scotland from these Games; agrees that the Interim Games Legacy Plan, published on 18 December 2008, set the right context for that planning with its emphasis on health, physical activity and sport and its coverage of volunteering, education and learning, culture, sustainability, business, skills, tourism and Scotland's international profile; commends the real opportunity that the hosting of the Games offers for regenerating the east end of Glasgow, and further agrees that, following the launch of the full Games Legacy Plan in the summer, the Scottish Parliament can play a part by encouraging individuals, groups, communities and businesses to get involved so that Scotland's legacy from the 2014 Games can be lasting and positive.

Daily Record and Sunday Mail

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S3M-3559, in the name of Kenneth Gibson, on the future of the *Daily Record* and the *Sunday Mail*. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes with deep concern the decision of Trinity Mirror to merge the editorial content of the *Daily Record* and *Sunday Mail* with the loss of up to 30% of journalistic staff, based primarily in Glasgow and the west of Scotland; recognises that both newspapers are an integral part of Scottish culture and that to diminish their individual identities would be a serious blow to the diversity, vibrancy and quality of the Scottish media; believes that the loss of their separate identities would undoubtedly lead to the erosion of circulation at both titles, leading inevitably to further job losses; considers that Trinity Mirror is highly profitable and that there is no need to undertake such drastic restructuring, and therefore very much hopes that good sense may prevail over the future of two of Scotland's leading titles.

17:09

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): As members are aware, Trinity Mirror management in London is seeking, in effect, to merge the *Daily Record* and the *Sunday Mail*, with the loss of a quarter or more of their journalistic workforce in Scotland. On 24 February, Trinity Mirror announced a 30-day consultation on up to 70 redundancies among editorial positions at the *Daily Record* and *Sunday Mail* newspapers, with 60 people immediately affected. There are 276 editorial staff at the *Daily Record*, the *Sunday Mail* and their sister titles *The Glaswegian* and *Business7*. Thirty-six people applied for voluntary redundancy and a further 24 were at risk of compulsory redundancy on 8 April. Others who may have been interested—particularly older, longer-serving employees—have been told that their pensions will be cut by between 30 and 50 per cent. One person who has been with the company for 48 years, man and boy, is expected to accept a 52 per cent cut in his pension. Such action can surely be considered not only reprehensible, but a breach of contract.

The *Daily Record* and *Sunday Mail* are still highly profitable. Those iconic Scottish titles contributed greatly and disproportionately to the £145 million profits that Trinity Mirror enjoyed last year, being responsible for more than £23 million between them. There is, therefore, no pressing need for any redundancies, and one must conclude that the recession is being used as cover for far-reaching and unnecessary action by the company.

Such a drastic reduction in the number of journalists, with the loss of some of the newer members of staff who are the cheapest to sack—journalists who thought that they had a good career in front of them—can only be to the detriment of both titles, reducing their quality and circulation and, ultimately, their independence and sustainability, and diminishing their ability to cover important Scottish matters, including those that are debated here in the Scottish Parliament.

I grew up with the *Sunday Mail* and, indeed, the *Sunday Post*, both of which are fundamental to Scotland's identity and culture. When I was a boy, my father faithfully bought the *Daily Record* and my mother bought the *Sunday Mail*. When my father passed away, my mother continued to buy the *Sunday Mail* but never the *Record*. Why? Because, although they are superficially similar in style, both papers are quite different, have different features and writers and focus on different issues. Although considerable overlap undoubtedly exists in readership, any thoughts that Trinity Mirror might have of creating synergies by effectively merging the titles is misplaced and is likely to lead to fewer and fewer readers, which will, in the long run, undermine their viability.

Shoehorning the staff into one team, despite the different cultures, could also cause difficulties, at least in the short to medium-term. Management proposals include the introduction of a new editorial production system immediately following the redundancies. Of course, there has been only a minimum consultation period for the staff. The new software will require the greatly reduced number of staff members to undertake extensive training; that guarantees a major increase in stress levels, as we have seen following the introduction of similar models at *The Herald*, BBC Scotland and in regional and local newspapers.

The National Union of Journalists submitted alternative proposals to management, which included savings through a reduction of around 50 posts—all by voluntary means—and suggested that it would co-operate with the introduction of the new system and negotiate over new shift patterns to meet production needs. The proposal would allow the company to review the situation once the system is up and running and seek further genuine redundancies that might be created by the supposed efficiencies of the new software.

The NUJ chapel at the titles believe that this is a worthwhile and sensible compromise to avoid further industrial action and allow a partnership approach to the changes that are required by the business. However, nobody can possibly support the withdrawal of enhanced pension provision from some employees or the intransigent, bully-boy tactics of management.

The Scottish National Party stands fully behind the journalists of the *Sunday Mail* and *Daily Record*, and my colleague Sandra White and I addressed a public meeting of staff and journalists at the Broomielaw last Friday. On Saturday, the SNP's spring conference supported the journalists. In response, Jeremy Dear, the NUJ general secretary, said:

"I thank the SNP, other Scottish politicians, the Scottish TUC and trade unionists across Britain and Ireland for the magnificent support they have already given to this dispute."

The dispute, I should add, is unnecessary and has been brought about exclusively by management.

The expressions of support for the staff seem almost to have fallen on deaf ears, with the company taking a hard line against its staff. Originally, it opposed arbitration and, after meeting the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, it budged not one iota. That has forced an escalation of the dispute, with a 72-hour strike beginning at midnight.

We are all aware that the newspaper industry must adapt to reflect the changing environment, as I said in my speech this morning. However, newspapers can survive in the long term only by investing in quality and staff, not by slashing costs and laying off employees whose hard work brings in the readers, the advertising and the profits.

The Scottish Government has demonstrated its willingness to mediate. That was confirmed again this morning by Jim Mather—who held a newspaper summit in February at Glasgow Caledonian University, which brought together editors, owners, academics and trade unionists—and by Mike Russell in question time this afternoon.

Paul Holleran, the Scotland organiser for the NUJ, who is with us in the gallery, told Westminster's Scottish Affairs Committee on 31 March that 250 journalistic jobs were lost last year in Scotland, with a further 190 being lost so far this year. Should the journalists lose this dispute, Scotland will be the poorer, with other companies taking it as a green light to impose ever more stringent cuts in staff numbers and to create poorer working conditions that will result in increased stress on the remaining workers.

Journalism has a proud tradition in Scotland, providing desirable, well-paid jobs that make a significant contribution to the Scottish economy and a lively contribution to our culture and our politics. We in the SNP have never been big fans of the editorial policy of the *Daily Record* and the *Sunday Mail*, but we defend their right to have a view that digresses from ours. Government and Opposition should be kept under scrutiny by our

media, and influenced by them in taking up campaigns and raising important issues.

The erosion of employment and autonomy is a deeply regrettable loss to Scotland and to the democratic process. Politicians can be held to account only by newspapers that have experienced and knowledgeable staff, who have the time to work on stories and to get to know politicians and what we do. Devaluing the quality of newspapers that are as significant to Scottish life and as important to our national fabric as the *Daily Record* and *Sunday Mail* will only diminish Scotland and all of us. I urge Trinity Mirror group to think again.

17:15

Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I congratulate Kenny Gibson on securing tonight's debate and precipitating the groundhog effect whereby I find myself speaking three times in the same day on the same subject.

I believe that it was Voltaire who said:

"I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."

I am not sure why the *Daily Record* springs to mind when I consider that quotation. Indeed, many in the Parliament have reason to disapprove of the treatment that is meted out by sections of the popular press, but I hope that we all agree that in a democracy, it is entirely appropriate that politicians and others in the public gaze should be subject to robust press scrutiny.

There are many reasons why I view with dismay the crisis that faces the Scottish press. As I mentioned this morning, I began my career as a print journalist, and close family members of mine still work in journalism. Their jobs, along with many others in Scotland, could be on the line.

Perhaps even more important than the jobs issue is the democratic deficit that we all face when newspapers close and those whose job it is to hold Governments and politicians to account are thrown on to the dole. Newspaper advertising is collapsing, and jobs are being lost throughout the western world; Scotland is no exception. Earlier this month, as we have heard, journalists of the *Daily Record* and *Sunday Mail* went on strike after the company announced 70 job losses and a merging of the editorial content of the two titles.

Many will agree with the view expressed in Kenny Gibson's motion that the loss of the separate identities of the *Daily Record* and the *Sunday Mail* could lead to further erosion of circulation at both titles. However, I have seen a memo that was sent today by Mark Hollinshead, the managing director of Trinity Mirror group, to David Whitton, which strenuously denies claims

that Mr Whitton made about the group's actions in this morning's debate. I have no idea who is right, but the fact is that we as MSPs cannot have all the facts about the internal workings of individual newspapers.

It is not the job of politicians to micromanage businesses. Instead, we should find ways of helping them to retain as many employees as possible as they cope with unprecedented technological change, which I accept that many newspaper publishers could have moved far more quickly to embrace.

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): Does the member accept that some of us are unfortunately old enough to remember the time when Robert Maxwell watched the way in which Rupert Murdoch went about restructuring his company, and then used that as a template for the *Daily Record* and the *Sunday Mail* in Glasgow? He had razor wire round the place. That is what everyone is concerned about now.

Ted Brocklebank: I accept and understand the member's point, but I restate that we cannot possibly know of all the internal machinations that are going on in any business. It is not for us to judge based on what we have heard from one or other of the sides.

The Government should adopt two approaches. In the short term, it must think hard before it switches public notices to the web. Those are worth more than £10 million in advertising to Scottish newspapers, and I am not convinced that switching them from the local press is democratic or logical, given the huge numbers of Scots—particularly older Scots—who have no internet access.

In a recent letter, the Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism told me that the Government was trialling the use of the web for public notices in five Scottish areas in the hope that it would provide a more useful format for the intended audience. Certainly, those in my age group with whom I have discussed those matters are far from convinced that any electronic format will replace the reliability and ease of access of the local paper. There are also real concerns that if Government news sheets are used to supplement notices on the web, all that the public will be told is what the Government agencies want to tell them—that is clearly wrong.

As I said in this morning's debate, I think that in the longer term the Westminster Government will scrap the regulations relating to the ownership of local newspapers and allow them to consolidate with one another and across borders into television, radio and online entities. As members will recall, the Scottish Conservatives were among the first to recommend a digital network, which, of

course, was a central recommendation of the Scottish Broadcasting Commission. As I made clear this morning, that could be the perfect vehicle for reinvigorating our beleaguered regional press sector through participation in local or city TV, which itself could be adapted as an opt-out to the new network.

BBC Scotland should work with the local press to provide pictures and sound to the websites of the local papers in exchange for the detailed local news coverage that it could get in return. Change is inevitable in newspaper operations and the nature of the work that journalists do. For our part, we in the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party are committed to working with all parties, including the NUJ and others, to try to manage the current crisis, save jobs and maintain the profile of the Scottish press in its historical role of democratic scrutiny.

17:21

David Whitton (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab): I, too, congratulate Mr Gibson on securing this debate. I should explain that I initiated a debate on the same subject this morning only because, in the period between the lodging of his motion and now, the compulsory redundancies were announced and I felt that it was important for this side of the chamber to use its time to debate the issue. In any case, I do not think that it has done any harm to air the issues three times today; it shows that the Parliament takes the issue very seriously.

Mr Brocklebank talked about trying to micromanage companies—[*Interruption.*] I am sorry; that was my phone. I thought that I had switched it off.

We are not trying to micromanage company affairs. Indeed, the motion in this morning's debate, which has just been agreed to by 82 votes to 13, asks

"the Scottish Government to hold urgent talks with Trinity Mirror management in order to prevent compulsory job cuts."

We will hear from the Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism later, but I believe that his office has been trying to get in touch with Trinity Mirror management to hold those very talks. I congratulate Mr Mather on doing so.

Mr Brocklebank also mentioned Mr Hollinshead's e-mail. If nothing else, we have in the course of the day provoked a response from Mr Hollinshead and I guess that, in the interests of fairness, I should read a little bit of it. He says that he has read the transcript of my comments and wants to correct a point that he believes is "totally misleading". He then says:

"To say that management have 'selected candidates for redundancy on the basis of who is cheapest to get rid of' is wrong. It is clear from that comment that you have not been correctly briefed on how the selection process for those positions, at risk of compulsory redundancy, has been formulated."

He then invites me to talk to him about the matter if I want to. That is fine.

In my response to Mr Hollinshead, I said:

"I believe I am correct in stating that halfway through negotiations you withdrew the offer of enhanced pension provision"—

which Mr Gibson referred to. I then pointed out that this was the

"first time this has happened and it is my interpretation you are doing this to get redundancies on the cheap."

Mr Hollinshead knows as well as I do that if he paid the enhanced pension to the handful of remaining people who actually qualify for it there would be no need for compulsory redundancies; all those individuals would volunteer to go and younger journalists who are facing the loss of their jobs would be offered jobs to stay. That is why I think that Trinity Mirror management are trying to get redundancies on the cheap. I stand by what I said this morning and if Mr Hollinshead does not like it, that is just too bad.

I also pointed out to Mr Hollinshead:

"It is not clear to anyone what the selection criteria was for those selected for compulsory redundancy, least of all those affected by it".

This morning, I highlighted the case of a young constituent, a photographer who went through the process and faces losing his job next week. He was told, "We're getting rid of you because of your poor disciplinary record." He has no disciplinary record. He was then told, "We're getting rid of you because of your poor attendance." He has had six days off in six years; some of his more senior colleagues have had more time off in the past month. He was then told, "We're getting rid of you because of your lack of technical ability." This young man is the only person to have gone through the NUJ course as well as all the *Daily Record* courses and, being of a younger generation, he is probably more technically literate than some of his more—shall we say—senior colleagues. He was then told, "Ah well, it must be about your technical ability." As I pointed out this morning, that young man is currently up for three national awards for the photographs that he has taken on behalf of the newspaper.

I make no apology for outlining that case. As I said this morning, I am appalled at the actions of the Trinity Mirror management with regard to the workers at the *Daily Record* and the *Sunday Mail*. As Kenny Gibson rightly pointed out, those papers have been the cash cow for Trinity Mirror for many

years. They regularly make profits and the workers who are facing redundancy are the people who have contributed to those profits.

As Mr Gibson pointed out, the trade union is not against change. The NUJ is willing to sit down and negotiate with the Trinity Mirror management about the way forward, but not when it has a gun pointed at its head in relation to compulsory redundancies. I hope that when the minister and Mr Hollinshead get together they can work something out, so that the compulsory redundancies do not have to take place. The redundancies do not have to take place; if people are willing to negotiate, they can plot the way forward and the *Daily Record* and the *Sunday Mail* can continue to serve the Scottish public in the way that they have done for years.

17:25

Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): Like others, I have spoken at great length on this issue and on the issue of job cuts at *The Herald* and the *Evening Times*, on which I had a members' business debate. It is with great sorrow that we are back here talking about job losses and about people getting sacked. I am sure that the management of Trinity Mirror will correct me if I am wrong, but I agree with Kenny Gibson and David Whitton that the group has used the Glasgow part of the operation, which made a profit of £20 million to £23 million, as a cash cow—a similar thing is happening in many other parts of the newspaper industry. Trinity Mirror is now using the present economic crisis as a reason to say that it cannot keep going and that there will be compulsory redundancies for various journalists—24 in the case of the *Daily Record* and the *Sunday Mail*. I have a real fear about that, which is why I am back here talking about it with great sadness.

I congratulate Kenny Gibson on securing the debate, because it is important that the issue is debated, whether three times—as has happened today—or 30 times, to ensure that the message gets across to the management that all parties in the Scottish Parliament are absolutely sickened and disgusted by its actions. I hope that the minister can get around the table with the management of Trinity Mirror and do something, although I have my doubts about the management.

I want to look at some practical things that I hope the Scottish Parliament can do. I said this morning that we have to look at employment law but, unfortunately, that is not part of our remit. Perhaps the minister in this Parliament could talk to the relevant minister in the Westminster Parliament about that; I would like that to happen if it is at all possible. We really have to look at employment law, because what is happening here

would not happen in countries with decent employment laws.

We got the Health and Safety Executive involved in the situation at *The Herald* and the *Evening Times*—no conclusion was reached, but at least people spoke to each other—because of the practices at the titles and the stress that journalists were under. I wonder whether we could get the Health and Safety Executive involved in the situation at the *Daily Record* and the *Sunday Mail*, too.

I want to pick up Ted Brocklebank's point about advertising. Given the record—excuse the pun—of the management and the profits that it has made from the two titles, if we gave it advertising money, perhaps it would just take the money and run. It might still end up paying off workers. I think that that is what would happen, so we should be careful about giving it the money. That is a great worry to me.

I know a lot of the people involved. It is not a conflict of interest to say that I have worked in newspaper advertising. Over the years, every politician develops a rapport—whether good or bad—with journalists. We get to know journalists. When they phone us on a Friday night at 10 o'clock we are almost certain that they will want us to say something off the record, and when they phone at a decent time during the day we know that they are phoning for a decent story.

The investigative journalism at the *Sunday Mail* is second to none. As Hugh Henry said in this morning's debate, it has been paramount in bringing down some of the worst excesses of gangsterism, drug dealing and so on, particularly in Glasgow. Without those investigative journalists, such criminals would virtually get away with murder.

My big worry is that we are losing excellent journalists. The journalists must be worried sick because they are losing their jobs and, like all of us, they have mortgages to pay for and families to keep, but when Kenny Gibson and I have spoken to them—last Friday and at other times—their big worry has been that journalistic expertise will be lost from the country. Once that is lost, we will not get it back.

17:30

The Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism (Jim Mather): We all know that the debate follows Sandra White's members' business debate back in January and the Labour Party debate this morning. I commend Kenny Gibson for securing the debate and for championing the issues, and I commend all the members who spoke this morning and this evening, who made the issue clear and vivid in a Scottish context.

The Scottish Government has had material engagement with the industry and unions. Before the first debate, we took the time to understand the issues and the implications of developments by engaging with and listening to all strands of opinion. It is sad that Mr Whitton did not support that view this morning or in his press release, despite ample evidence, but I feel that he properly understood what we are about when he and I spoke on the margins of the debate. I hope that we can now focus more on common cause.

The Government had an important further meeting when we held a workshop at Glasgow Caledonian University. I commend Sandra White and Ted Brocklebank not only for attending that workshop but for contributing materially to the dialogue and encouraging more contributions from the floor. I also commend the university for widening the attendee list to students and academics, which created a constructive environment. Many challenges and opportunities were identified and we produced many ideas, which triggered follow-up meetings and the First Minister's involvement. I have also made a commitment today to have further direct contact with the NUJ and Trinity Mirror.

We have considerable evidence that the Parliament and the Government deeply regret the unfolding developments in the print media sector and that we have channelled that feeling into action and engagement, which will continue. We recognise that the industry is in a difficult position, that it must transform if its fortunes are to improve and that it must address changing circumstances. Other industries and countries have undertaken that evolutionary process. We appreciate the attempts that have been made here and we acknowledge that the challenge is immense and complex, but there are signs from the States, Finland, Rotterdam—which Kenneth Gibson mentioned—and even Arran that such a situation can be challenged. That applies particularly if everyone—the unions, staff, the readership and advertisers, as well as management and editorial staff—is involved.

It is clear from the motion, and from the motion and amendments from the earlier debate, that most of us regret the spectre of compulsory redundancy. When we have looked at the data, that regret has developed. We also regret the polarisation of positions when much constructive flexibility has been forthcoming from the unions and staff. The duality of positions that might drive people is understandable. On one side, people are worried about their jobs, job security and terms and conditions while, on the other, concerns are about the survival of the titles and the material share-price reduction, but that is no excuse for not coming together. The union and the staff are

willing to engage, and we applaud that: we want the sides to come together more constructively.

The Parliament giving much time to the issue is evidence of its importance and of the necessity of having a successful press in Scotland. That message emerged from what various members said. Concern is felt about the possibility of a democratic deficit, on which Hugh Henry was strong this morning. His point about the press making the Government and people in positions of authority more accountable is important. That raises the question of how we ensure that the press is vivid, viable, moving forward and taking on new technologies. Getting there involves talking to staff and unions to achieve more imaginative and acceptable solutions.

Kenny Gibson highlighted the impact of investment, competition and internal collaboration that has created vibrancy in the newspaper sector on Arran. He also spoke about new emulatable models in Rotterdam, which not only are profitable but allow people to use profit in an intelligent way. We are talking about oiling the wheels, fulfilling purpose, enduring and growing, and doing the right thing by readers, advertisers and the communities within which titles work. As we all know, no business can shrink its way to greatness. The loss of talented people and their good will is no basis for a robust recovery.

This morning, Ken Macintosh pinpointed the inappropriateness of macho management. That management style is inappropriate at any time but especially in the newspaper industry and at this time. I was very taken with his focus on the core benefits that accrue from a robust press and a well-informed population. Again, the point reinforces the risk of democratic deficit that we face. I commend David Whitton for augmenting Ken Macintosh's point in the earlier debate on the sheer scale of humanity that is involved. I refer to the impact on those who have long careers in the industry, including in terms of their pensions. There is also the human resources angle.

More in sadness than in anger, Michael Russell made the excellent point in this morning's debate that Trinity Mirror's approach is likely to be self-defeating. It risks closing down the potential of inventing new business models that could flourish and meet the needs of future generations. I share that sadness: for Trinity Mirror to deny itself the chance of playing a part in that evolution and its chemistry is indeed sad, as is its denial of proper engagement with internal stakeholders. I hope that Trinity Mirror will take advantage of the work that we have started to widen the stakeholder group, thereby bringing in yet more allies to get a better discussion of the issues.

I am a great fan of the biochemist Leslie Orgel, whose second rule is:

"Evolution is cleverer than you are".

If we are to maximise the evolutionary chances of our newspapers in future, we need to talk to one another in the first instance and learn from elsewhere. If we do both those things, we can face down the digital revolution.

Margo MacDonald: Will the minister make it clear whether Trinity Mirror has agreed to meet him to discuss the issues?

Jim Mather: That is a work in progress. I have been working on that today, and I think that Mr Whitton was a witness to the work that took place immediately after this morning's debate. We intend to ensure that we balance our books by talking both to Trinity Mirror and the unions, including the NUJ, and we will do that.

Meeting closed at 17:38.

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