

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 6 May 2009

Session 3

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CONTENTS

Wednesday 6 May 2009

Debates

	Col.
TIME FOR REFLECTION	17067
BUSINESS MOTION	17069
<i>Motion moved—[Michael McMahon]—and agreed to.</i>	
INFLUENZA A(H1N1)	17070
<i>Statement—[Nicola Sturgeon].</i>	
The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Nicola Sturgeon)	17070
CLIMATE CHANGE (SCOTLAND) BILL: STAGE 1	17081
<i>Motion moved—[John Swinney].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Sarah Boyack].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Alison McInnes].</i>	
The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney)	17081
Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)	17088
Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD).....	17094
Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)	17099
Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con)	17103
Maureen Watt (North East Scotland) (SNP).....	17105
Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)	17108
Shirley-Anne Somerville (Lothians) (SNP)	17110
Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)	17112
Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con).....	17114
Liam McArthur (Orkney) (LD)	17117
Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab).....	17120
The Minister for Environment (Roseanna Cunningham)	17121
BUSINESS MOTIONS	17125
<i>Motions moved—[Bruce Crawford]—and agreed to.</i>	
DECISION TIME	17127
MIDWIVES	17128
<i>Motion debated—[Mary Scanlon].</i>	
Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con).....	17128
Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab).....	17131
Angela Constance (Livingston) (SNP).....	17132
Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)	17133
Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con).....	17135
Jack McConnell (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)	17137
Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP).....	17138
Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab)	17140
Shirley-Anne Somerville (Lothians) (SNP)	17141
The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Shona Robison)	17143

Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 6 May 2009

[THE PRESIDING OFFICER *opened the meeting at 14:30*]

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):

Good afternoon. The first item of business, as always, is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader today is Haroon Ahmed from the Scottish Inter Faith Council.

Haroon Ahmed (Scottish Inter Faith Council):

In this day and age, there are too many things—or too few; I forget which—worth talking about, so you will understand why it took me a while to decide what I would talk about. I finally decided to be a wee bit clichéd and to talk to you about something that you all hear a great deal about every day—charity. I do not want to talk about volunteering or writing cheques, because everyone else does that, nor do I want to talk about ending world hunger or fighting the poverty that exists in certain areas of Glasgow and Edinburgh, and in pretty much every city in the world. I want to talk about what charity means to me as a Muslim.

There is a Hadith, which is a saying of the Prophet of Islam, Prophet Muhammad—peace be upon him—that goes:

“Each person’s every joint must perform a charity every day the sun comes up”.

Let us think about that, but just for a second. There are 206 bones in the human body, so there are a lot of joints between them. That makes a lot of charities that I, for one, feel obligated to perform on a daily basis. It sounds like an extremely difficult, if not impossible, task, but it is not, because Prophet Muhammad was not talking just about the big things. He was talking about anything that makes life a little bit easier for someone else.

He went on to give a few examples of what he classified as “a charity”. He said:

“to act justly between two people is a charity; to help a man with his mount, lifting him onto it or hoisting up his belongings onto it, is a charity; a good word is a charity; every step you take towards prayer is a charity; and removing a harmful thing from the road is a charity.”

He was talking about little things—tiny actions that take no more than a few seconds or minutes of our time and which really do make life better for other people.

There is one other act of charity that I want to mention. On a separate occasion, the Prophet

classified smiling as an act of charity. The Hadith in which he talked about that has been analysed by many people over the years. In the analysis of Justice Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, one of our contemporary scholars of Islam, the Prophet meant more than just giving a smile. He was saying that if you stop and talk to someone, even just for a minute, and they feel a little bit better when they come out of that conversation and feel as if their load has been lightened, you will have conducted a truly great charity.

Business Motion

14:33

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S3M-4060, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a revised business programme for this afternoon.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees (a) the following revision to the programme of business for Wednesday 6 May 2009—

After

2.30 pm Time for Reflection – Haroon Ahmed, Scottish Inter Faith Council

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

insert

followed by Ministerial Statement: Influenza A(H1N1)

and (b) the following revision to the programme of business for Thursday 7 May 2009—

after

2.55 pm Continuation of Stage 1 Debate: Climate Change (Scotland) Bill

insert

followed by Financial Resolution: Climate Change (Scotland) Bill—[Michael McMahon.]

Motion agreed to.

Influenza A(H1N1)

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is a statement by Nicola Sturgeon on the influenza A(H1N1) virus. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of her statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions. It will be a 10-minute statement.

14:33

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Nicola Sturgeon): I am grateful to have a further opportunity to update Parliament on the current situation on the A(H1N1) flu virus.

Members will be aware that on 29 April—last Wednesday—the World Health Organization raised its pandemic flu alert to phase 5, following confirmation of person-to-person transmission in the United States as well as in Mexico. I remind members that that does not mean that we are in a pandemic situation, nor does it mean that a pandemic is inevitable. However, the risk remains high, so we must be ready for instant activation of pandemic responses when that is required.

As of this morning, the WHO reports that 1,516 cases of A(H1N1) have been officially reported across 22 countries. As members will know, Mexico and the United States have the greatest number of cases, but cases have been confirmed across Europe as well as in Canada, South America and the far east. In the United Kingdom as a whole, 32 cases have been confirmed.

In Scotland, we have four confirmed cases, including one case of person-to-person transmission. As I indicated yesterday, a further case in the Grampian area is considered probable—that means that the person has tested positive for influenza A—although we await further test results to confirm the strain.

In addition, there are 27 possible cases currently undergoing testing in nine national health service board areas. I would like to stress that they are all travel-related cases and are all being treated and investigated on a precautionary basis. They are not confirmed as having tested positive for influenza A, let alone for the specific H1N1 strain.

I should also confirm that the two Flybe passengers who were being tested as possible cases and whom I mentioned yesterday, have since been confirmed as having tested negative. It is likely that cases will continue to emerge, so we will continue to monitor the situation very closely. However, although numbers remain low, our focus continues to be on containing the virus and minimising further spread.

A total of 77 close contacts of the four confirmed cases have been identified and given appropriate advice and treatment. The fact that only one of those contacts has gone on to develop the virus is evidence of the success, so far, of the containment strategy.

I want at this stage to pay tribute to the efforts of staff across the NHS who have worked so hard and, to date, so successfully to stop the virus spreading. We should not underestimate the scale of the challenges that the NHS in Scotland has faced in the past ten days. It has coped with the first confirmed UK cases, the first documented person-to-person transmission in the UK, and the first exercise involving notification of all passengers and crew on an internal flight.

The NHS has responded swiftly and effectively to all those challenges. The response has involved many people working long hours, and considerable redeployment of staff. Our health protection response, which is usually invisible to the public, has been absolutely excellent. I am sure that all members would join me in commending and thanking Health Protection Scotland, the public health teams across Scotland and the virus labs for working so hard and so effectively.

Our containment strategy is so far proving to be successful. The continuation of the strategy at this stage is justified by the available evidence. Of course, that may change in the future—I will touch on that eventuality again in a moment—but a precautionary approach is currently entirely appropriate.

While we continue with our efforts to contain the virus, we must also continue to prepare for the worst. Emerging science suggests that, outside of Mexico, the virus may be less serious than was initially feared, but it is still too early to make—we have too few cases on which to base them—confident predictions.

What we have just now is nothing more reliable than the scientists' best guess, so a number of strong caveats require to be inserted. The virus might yet mutate and develop greater virulence, and it may return in the autumn and winter months as a more serious strain. Those are real dangers, so we must continue to plan ahead. I therefore now want to outline the wider action that we are taking to ensure that we are well prepared.

First, we have been working very closely with the other UK countries to ensure that we are in a position to secure supplies of a vaccine under our sleeping contracts at the appropriate time. I will keep Parliament updated on any developments in that regard.

Secondly, although we already have sufficient antiviral drugs to treat half the population, we have

taken steps to increase stocks significantly beyond that. Our stocks are already being used to treat the small number of confirmed cases, as well as being used on a prophylaxis basis for the close contacts of probable and confirmed cases, as part of our containment strategy.

It is, however, important to point out that we may at some stage over the coming weeks require to move from a containment strategy to a mitigation strategy. That will be most likely when there is sustained community transmission—that is, when the virus is circulating freely within the community and among people who have had no direct or indirect connection to Mexico or other affected areas, or to other known confirmed cases. At that stage, although it is likely that antivirals will still be used for treatment, the use of antivirals for prophylaxis may require review.

In the event that the current outbreak becomes more widespread, it will be important that arrangements are in place for distribution of antivirals to large numbers of patients. In recent days, considerable progress has been made on that, which has involved significant preparation by NHS boards in identifying suitable collection points from where antivirals could be collected on behalf of patients with flu, and by NHS 24 in supporting the development of a telephone and web-based UK service that symptomatic patients would use to be assessed and issued with authorisation for antivirals to be collected on their behalf.

I will keep members updated as the detail of those arrangements develops. Of course, such arrangements would not be activated unless and until a pandemic was declared, but doing the work now means that we will be ready if that should happen.

With regard to wider preparations, I confirmed on Monday that Scotland would make available 1.45 million surgical face-masks from our stockpile of over 9 million to address a temporary shortfall of masks in England and Wales. That reflects the on-going close working throughout the UK in response to the situation. Deliveries of masks from Scotland are already being arranged, and additional face-masks are currently being procured for the whole of the UK, which will replenish our stocks.

As we know, a virus knows no boundaries, and we are clear that the issue demands that we work closely with stakeholders in Scotland, throughout the UK and internationally. As members will know, I recently met a range of Scottish stakeholders, including the main Opposition parties, to discuss our broader response to the current situation. That meeting was productive, and we have agreed to meet weekly, at this stage. We are continuing to work closely with our colleagues throughout the UK, using the daily Cabinet Office briefing room A

arrangements to co-ordinate with other UK Administrations and to ensure that our response to the situation is consistent and well managed.

In addition, we are maintaining contact with the World Health Organization and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control to ensure that our unique Scottish experience can be fed in to international developments and understanding of the virus. We have also sought to maintain clear and effective channels of communication with Parliament, the media and the public.

A communications campaign started throughout the UK on 30 April. It focuses on respiratory and hand-hygiene messages, and aims to reach 98 per cent of the population within a two-week period. As members will know, an information leaflet is being delivered to every household in the UK as part of that campaign. The leaflet is also available on the Scottish Government website or via the NHS 24 website in a range of alternative formats, including large print and a variety of different languages.

In conclusion, the considerable planning that has been undertaken in Scotland over a number of years has so far paid off. At this point, I am very encouraged that we have been able to effectively contain the virus, although of course we are not able to predict with any certainty how things will develop, and we must and will remain vigilant. The NHS is working hard to disrupt the spread of the virus, and we in Government, with our partners across Scottish society, are working hard to support the NHS and to prepare for any future scenarios. I will continue to keep Parliament fully updated as the situation develops.

The Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary will now take questions on matters that were raised in her statement. We have around 20 minutes for such questions, after which I must move to the next item of business, which is already oversubscribed.

Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab): I thank the cabinet secretary for her statement and for the updates that she has given to MSPs so far. I join her in thanking the NHS and all other staff who have been involved in the containment, and in the preparatory work for what might be required in the future.

The cabinet secretary rightly stressed the need for containment to be the priority. Will contact tracing continue to focus only on confirmed cases, or does the cabinet secretary intend to widen it to include probable and possible cases? Will the cabinet secretary say a bit about her current working definition of “close contact”, and whether that definition has changed in any way in the light of experience so far?

Is the cabinet secretary content that the information that is available from passenger travel records, for example, is being made available early enough to allow close contacts to be traced within the necessary timescales?

Nicola Sturgeon: I thank Cathy Jamieson for her questions and I acknowledge her thanks to NHS staff and those more widely in Scotland who have been involved. I will run through the questions in order.

First, Cathy Jamieson is right to say that the containment strategy should continue for the foreseeable future. Indeed, that is what is going to happen. As I said in my statement, we will reach a point at which such action is neither practical nor effective and we will be guided in that by expert advice.

As far as contact tracing is concerned, I make it very clear that we are contact tracing not just for confirmed cases but for probable cases. As I said last week—this remains the case—probable cases are, in effect, treated as positive until we know otherwise. Such an approach is appropriate and in line with the precautionary principle and we will continue to operate on that basis, again for the foreseeable future.

As guided by Health Protection Scotland—which, I point out, guides me in all issues of expert concern—the definition of close contact that has been set out is, in short, face-to-face contact for around an hour. That definition is guiding our approach, and any people who fall within that definition have been, and will continue to be, traced and treated appropriately.

On information from passenger travel, I imagine that Cathy Jamieson is referring in particular to air travel. At this stage, we have been required to trace passengers on only one flight, and that was because of particular circumstances. However, flight manifests are now being routinely retained for longer, again as a precautionary measure. We will not always be required to make use of it, but the information is being retained, nonetheless. That said, I should point out that, as has been highlighted by the case of the Flybe flight that we had to trace at the weekend, we have found that that information is not always sufficient to trace people. Indeed, that is why, in that case, we put out a public alert.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for her statement and join her in commending all the staff who have been involved. I also thank her on behalf of Parliament for working so closely with her Westminster partners and, indeed, for the very competent approach that she has taken to dealing with swine flu.

First, on the distribution system for antiviral drugs, should they be required, will the cabinet secretary assure people who live in Scotland's remotest islands that they will not be disadvantaged with regard to delivery times?

Secondly, is the cabinet secretary able to assure the many people in Scotland who received the flu vaccine last winter about their immunity to type A flu, at least, and to swine flu? Finally, has she begun to consider this winter's flu vaccine programme? Is it possible or likely that it will include a swine flu vaccine?

Nicola Sturgeon: As I said in my statement, we continue to work closely not just with our Westminster colleagues but with our colleagues in the other devolved Administrations. Over the past 10 days, I have been in very close contact with Alan Johnson, Edwina Hart in Wales and Michael McGimpsey, the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety in Northern Ireland. Those contacts are extremely important, because our response has to be consistent.

On Mary Scanlon's question about distribution of antivirals, I should point out that we are still dealing with a small number of cases and that those drugs are being distributed in line with our containment strategy. If the virus becomes more widespread and we need to get antivirals to more people, we will need to put in place alternative arrangements. Although our existing systems will cope with that up to a point, they will not necessarily be able to deal with the full sweep of a pandemic. As a result, we are working across the UK to establish a system.

The system has a number of different elements. First, our own NHS boards will have to identify collection points. After all, we do not want people who have the virus collecting antivirals themselves. Of course, that is important with regard to the rurality issue that Mary Scanlon raised, as we will have to ensure that the collection points are accessible to everyone, regardless of where they live.

Work is also being carried out on a UK web and telephone-based system that would allow for assessment of, and authorisation for, antivirals and we are seeking to supplement that with a resource that, for patients in Scotland, would be provided by NHS 24. Members will appreciate that that is very much work in progress. I will keep Parliament updated as much as possible on its details.

Finally, I turn to Mary Scanlon's questions about vaccines. The honest answer to the question whether the seasonal vaccine provides any protection against influenza A or the particular strain in question is that we do not know. It might do. I have not spoken to any expert over the past

few days who would rule that out completely nor have I spoken to anyone who would categorically say that it provides such protection. At this stage, the question is open.

The coming winter's seasonal flu campaign remains on track. Obviously, decisions about a vaccine for the influenza strain in question will be taken in due course, and any impact—I stress the words "any impact", because we do not know whether there will be an impact—on the seasonal campaign will be explained in full at that time.

Ross Finnie (West of Scotland) (LD): I, too, thank the cabinet secretary for the advance copy of her statement. I also thank her for the way in which she is maintaining contact not only with health spokespersons in all parties, but with other stakeholders. That has been extraordinarily helpful. Obviously, I associate myself with the remarks that other members have made in thanking NHS workers and other workers who have worked hard to implement a containment strategy that has been successful to date.

I make clear the Liberal Democrats' total support for the way in which the cabinet secretary and the Government are embarking on the containment strategy. We are not at all concerned by people remarking that simply because some cases so far have not proved to be fatal, one can somehow take one's foot off the accelerator. We regard that suggestion as unhelpful. Even if the health issue does not become more serious—I hope that it will not—with any such disease that spreads so quickly, a few hundred cases can be extremely dislocating to other services.

At the end of her statement, the cabinet secretary mentioned reaching 98 per cent of the population within a two-week period through the information campaign. Does she have any means, or is any method in place, whereby she will be able to assure herself or the medical profession that those who might be regarded as being most vulnerable will have been reached? People may not read information delivered by post. Given the prevailing suggestion that, with the country's climatic conditions, there might be recurrence of the virus in the autumn, does the Government simply intend to refresh the campaign in the autumn, or should the population retain information? Is that being made clear?

Nicola Sturgeon: I thank Ross Finnie for his support for the strategy that we are pursuing. He has voiced wise words of caution about assuming that we are out of the woods and can take our eye off the ball because there have been mild cases so far. I assure him that that will not happen.

Ross Finnie is right to stress that we need to ensure that the information campaign gets to everybody; of course, vulnerable people in

particular need to get information. One of the best assurances that that will happen is that we are not simply relying on one mode of communication. There is the leaflet to all households and over and above that, there are the television and radio adverts and there is the online campaign. Of course, we should not forget the normal routes of communication in the NHS, such as general practitioners and NHS 24, which are perhaps particularly relevant to vulnerable people. We will remain vigilant to ensure that the right messages get to the right groups of people.

On the possibility of a recurrence of the virus, one of the real dangers that we are all conscious of is the pattern that was followed in previous pandemics. We are conscious of the danger of seeing the virus petering out as the weather gets warmer and perhaps coming back in a more serious form in the autumn and winter months. We must be aware of that danger in all of our planning, and not least in our communications strategy. Future stages of the communications strategy are already being planned. When those stages are activated will depend on what happens in the next few weeks and months, but there will potentially be leaflets and adverts in the future. We will keep all such matters under review so that we respond to what is happening.

The Presiding Officer: We come to open questions. There are less than 10 minutes for seven members to ask questions, so members should ask no more than one question each, please.

Ian McKee (Lothians) (SNP): I thank the cabinet secretary for her comprehensive statement. Does she have any advice for employers on precautions that they should take for their staff?

Nicola Sturgeon: Advice is available for employers from NHS 24 and Health Protection Scotland. At present, the strong advice to anybody who has flu symptoms and who has been to Mexico or other affected areas, or who has had close contact with anyone who has been to those places, is to stay at home. I know and expect that employers will be sympathetic to that message. That point underlines the importance of good communication with all our stakeholders, so that we are all singing from the same hymn sheet.

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I am sure that the cabinet secretary will join me in criticising Richard North for his comments that the issue has been hyped. We all agree that the preparations have been appropriate.

The potential new swine flu vaccine will take six months to produce. What was the start date for that work and which companies are involved? At what point will the production of a new vaccine

affect the production of the normal winter flu vaccine?

Nicola Sturgeon: Richard Simpson raises several issues, so if I do not capture all the details in my answer, I will be happy to provide him with further information. It is wrong for people to say that the issue has been hyped. If they want to say that, they can do so, but I would rather be accused of overreacting than of underreacting to such a threat. I make no apology for the action that we have taken.

In relation to a vaccine, we have sleeping contracts in place and decisions must be made about when those contracts should be activated. At present, we are in a pre-pandemic phase and, in an ideal world, we would want to procure a pandemic vaccine, not a pre-pandemic one. The World Health Organization has been working to isolate the virus to allow vaccine manufacturers to start working on that. That work is under way. However, Richard Simpson will understand that I cannot at present answer fully the question about when that work is likely to get to a point at which we have a vaccine. However, suffice it to say that the topic is under active consideration by all the UK Governments.

Michael Matheson (Falkirk West) (SNP): I associate myself with the cabinet secretary's comments about the efforts of NHS staff. I mention particularly the staff of Forth Valley NHS Board, who have to a degree been at the forefront of dealing with the issue. The cabinet secretary referred to the fact that the virus could return in the autumn or winter when, traditionally, our NHS is under greater pressure because of the seasonal increase in influenza. Are any specific measures being taken to plan for the possibility of the virus's return in the autumn and the consequent resource impact on local health services?

Nicola Sturgeon: I thank NHS Forth Valley staff in particular. I visited the Forth Valley control room yesterday and I know that the staff have been at the epicentre of the issue. If it had not been for the presence of mind of a general practitioner during that weekend, for the speed at which the board's system swung into action, and for the fantastic work of its public health team, we might not have been able to contain the virus as effectively as we have done. I cannot praise those staff enough.

On Michael Matheson's substantive point, we are preparing for a possible return of the virus, although we cannot yet say that it has gone away. Perhaps the biggest preparation for that is the work on a vaccine. If we face such a return, NHS boards must be prepared to deal with higher demand at a time when they might have staff shortages. The boards' work on their pandemic flu plans and the wider preparations are certainly well advanced.

Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab): It was recently announced that additional capacity had been provided at NHS 24 to provide information and advice through a helpline, and the cabinet secretary outlined in her statement the organisation's developing role. Given that NHS 24 has those responsibilities, which are in addition to its work of dealing with a significant number of daily calls, what steps has the civil contingencies committee taken to ensure that an overflow capacity can be created if the situation escalates? I point out that, in my constituency of Greenock, we have a telecommunications centre that has the appropriate skills and technology and that could be up and running at very short notice if required.

Nicola Sturgeon: I thank Duncan McNeil for taking the opportunity to represent his constituents' interests. He is absolutely right to point out the crucial role of NHS 24. To cope with additional demand over the past 10 days, extra call handlers have been taken on. Last week demand for NHS 24 services was 15 to 20 per cent, and on some days, 25 per cent above forecast demand. Demand has scaled back considerably this week, but throughout the period, NHS 24 has continued to perform up to its required standards. It has been an absolutely fantastic effort.

Obviously, the potentially expanded role for NHS 24 in the distribution of antivirals on a wider scale that I spoke about today will require even further staffing commitments and resources for NHS 24. I assure Duncan McNeil that I will pass on his comments and the details of the particular company that he mentioned in his constituency.

Jackson Carlaw (West of Scotland) (Con): In view of the probability that there might be further outbreaks later in the year, what advice will be offered to families who are planning to travel to international holiday destinations this summer, in the event of a local outbreak there?

Nicola Sturgeon: As Jackson Carlaw knows, travel advice is a matter for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and is kept under review. The advice at the moment is to avoid all but essential travel to Mexico and certain other affected areas. Should there be outbreaks elsewhere, I am absolutely sure that that advice will be updated appropriately. However, our message to the public just now should be: be vigilant, be cautious and help us to take all the right cautionary measures but, other than that, go about your everyday business as you would do otherwise. That is the message that we should all put across at the moment.

Stewart Maxwell (West of Scotland) (SNP): We have seen in England school closures as a precautionary measure. Are there any plans to

close schools in Scotland as a precautionary measure?

Nicola Sturgeon: Unlike in England, we have had no cases in schools. If that were to change, we would take appropriate action. There are no plans to close schools at the moment, but should there be cases in schools, plans would be reviewed. Obviously, we have contingency arrangements in place should, for example, the exam diet need to be disrupted, but we will deploy such arrangements as and when necessary.

Helen Eadie (Dunfermline East) (Lab): On behalf of my constituents in Dunfermline East, I offer my thanks to the cabinet secretary, her team and everyone else who has been involved in the very hard work that is on-going in the health service. I note what the cabinet secretary said in her statement that

"The virus might yet mutate and develop greater virulence"

and that

"it may return in the autumn and winter".

Given that that presents us with an additional and even more serious challenge, has the cabinet secretary given thought to how Parliament will be kept informed of the developing situation—as there are barely six weeks left until the summer recess—and might that involve a recall of Parliament?

Nicola Sturgeon: As I am sure the Presiding Officer will be quick to tell me, the question of recalling Parliament is not for me, but for him and his colleagues.

As I have done throughout the current outbreak, I will endeavour to keep Parliament updated as regularly as possible. I will make statements as regularly as I think appropriate and beyond that, I will continue to keep in contact with Opposition spokespeople to ensure that they have the information to pass on to their MSPs.

Climate Change (Scotland) Bill: Stage 1

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is a debate on motion S3M-3963, in the name of Stewart Stevenson, on the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill. I am using my discretion under rule 11.3.3 of standing orders to allow the question on the motion, together with the questions on the two amendments, to be put at decision time tomorrow night. Accordingly, members are reminded that the debate will be concluded tomorrow afternoon.

15:04

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney): It seems entirely fitting that, 10 years to the day since the first elections to this Parliament, we are meeting to consider ground-breaking legislation and to set out our approach to tackling climate change. Surely that coincidence highlights the necessity of this Parliament fulfilling its role in realising the potential of our country and addressing the challenges that face it in the 21st century.

The bill could not be of greater importance. Climate change is the greatest environmental threat facing humankind. If global action is not taken to reduce emissions significantly, the world faces an uncertain future. Even during the short time that we have been considering the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill, the outlook on climate change has worsened.

About 2,000 international scientists met in Copenhagen in March and confirmed the overwhelming evidence that humans are causing global warming and that climate change is happening faster than was previously predicted. The Climate Change (Scotland) Bill is a call to action—a motivation for all of us to make a difference. That aspiration lies at the heart of the energy and commitment behind the establishment of this Parliament and enabling it to make a contribution not only to the lives of people in this country, but to the lives of those who live in other countries. Many people in developing countries are likely to be the worst affected by the impact of climate change. Those of us who live in the developed world will also see changes in our weather patterns, with Scotland predicted to experience wetter winters and warmer temperatures throughout the year, which has implications for all of us. That puts the onus and responsibility on us all to act.

Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab): Given that poor communities and poor countries will, as the cabinet secretary rightly identifies, suffer most from climate change, and given that

the average carbon footprint in the west is about 9.4 tonnes of emissions, compared with less than 0.1 tonnes in Malawi, does the cabinet secretary agree that we should be assisting the developing world with mitigation and adaptation measures, and that we should not need to dip into the international development budget, for example, in order to do so?

John Swinney: Patricia Ferguson makes an entirely valid point about the impact of climate change on people who live in developing countries. She also highlights an aspiration, with which I entirely agree, that there is an obligation on all of us in the developed world to make a contribution to assisting with and encouraging the steps that can be taken in those countries to adapt to the new climatic conditions. There is also a responsibility on us to act to ensure that we in no way extend or exacerbate the difficulties that those countries face. The matter of international aid budgets is reserved to the United Kingdom Government, but we would certainly encourage a focus in policy making on making progress on the questions that she raises.

Through the leadership that is being displayed by the Scottish Government, with Parliament's support, Scotland can make a difference on this vital issue, and 2009 is a particularly appropriate year in which action should commence. Against a background of worldwide economic problems, the countries of the world will meet in Copenhagen in December, under the auspices of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to negotiate a post-Kyoto protocol climate change agreement. The discussions will be significant for setting the pace of action to tackle climate change through a new global agreement to accelerate emissions reductions. Such an agreement will trigger the European Union's commitment to review its present target for 2020 of a 20 per cent reduction in emissions to a much more ambitious 30 per cent reduction, and we will play an active part in working to secure a more ambitious agreement.

In the face of such a huge and complicated challenge, we might ask ourselves how Scotland can hope to play any meaningful role in global action. We are a country with just 5 million people, emitting just 0.15 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions. However, as Patricia Ferguson said, the important point is that our emissions per head of population are far above our fair share, and they need to be reduced.

The Government has a clear and consistent vision of Scotland as a country that is leading the way among nations, and we are delivering our ambitions for Scotland. The Climate Change (Scotland) Bill is an opportunity for Scotland to act

as a model of international best practice by setting a world-leading level of ambition.

Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP): Will the cabinet secretary give way?

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Will the cabinet secretary give way?

John Swinney: I give way first to Mr Harvie; then I will come to Mr Adam.

Patrick Harvie: I am grateful to the cabinet secretary, and to Brian Adam for his patience.

The cabinet secretary talks about Scotland giving leadership to the world, and the existence of the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill is one marker of that. However, the adoption of the UK's approach to targets, with exactly the same interim and long-term targets as have already been adopted by the UK, does not mark the bill out as distinctive in any way. What is the rationale for an interim target that is based on an assumption that there will not be international agreement? Should we not assume that there will be such international agreement and step up to the plate with ambitious long-term and short-term targets?

John Swinney: Mr Harvie is in danger of talking down the level of ambition in the bill. To be fair to the Government—which I always want to be, of course—we have set out a range of radical and ambitious measures to set the pace of the agenda. I will talk in more detail about targets later, but in no way can the Government be described as lacking ambition on this fundamental issue for our society to address.

Brian Adam: It is of course important that Governments take action but, as the cabinet secretary said, it is also important for all of us to take action. I am sure that he is aware of representations on community engagement from eco-congregations such as those at Bucksburn Stoneywood church, Dyce church and Sheddocksley Baptist church in my constituency. What is the Government's view on community engagement? Would it welcome an amendment to ensure that that is part and parcel of the bill?

John Swinney: The Government would certainly consider sympathetically any amendments on community engagement. Mr Adam kindly provides me with the opportunity to pay tribute to eco-congregations, which have contributed significantly. Some months ago, Mr McNulty led a debate in Parliament on eco-congregations. In my constituency, the Auchtergaven and Moneydie parish church was rebuilt in an immensely eco-friendly fashion. That is a tremendous example of a development in the religious community to deliver an environmentally friendly and enhancing facility in the community. At

stage 2, the Government would look sympathetically on the point that Mr Adam makes.

Before I address the bill in detail, I will highlight several activities that are fundamental to the Government's approach to tackling climate change. We have committed ourselves to introducing a new system of carbon assessment for the whole Scottish Government budget, which will begin to operate with our 2010-11 budget. We have an ambitious low-carbon energy plan that is based on 10 energy pledges. We are on track to exceed our target of generating 31 per cent of Scotland's electricity from renewable sources by 2011. We are investing £2.6 billion over three years in greener transport to give people alternatives to cars. Once the carbon reduction commitment commences next spring, about 50 per cent of Scotland's emissions will be covered by carbon trading schemes.

To complete the picture of existing initiatives, the £27 million climate challenge fund—a product of discussion between the Government and Mr Harvie and the Scottish Green Party in 2008-09—is proving to be a great success and is funding community carbon reduction projects throughout the country, which might relate to some of the aspirations that Mr Adam just mentioned.

A crucial point is that the Government is also preparing Scotland for the impacts of climate change. Our climate change adaptation framework will help decision makers to plan and prepare for change now. That will enable Scotland to be better placed to take advantage of opportunities and to build resilience.

I am proud that the bill will put Scotland at the forefront of international action to tackle climate change. It sets a target to reduce Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions by 80 per cent by 2050. That target is challenging, but it is the minimum for which we should aim if Scotland is to contribute to the global efforts to tackle climate change.

However, 2050 is a long way into the future, and we need to be certain that we are taking effective action now. That is why Scottish ministers have put in place a system of annual targets, which is essential to provide the challenge and the imperative for action for ministers and our successors. That is the right thing to do, as it will require the Scottish Government and future Administrations to take action.

Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): Is not the whole point of producing legislation on an issue such as climate change to set not only targets, but penalties for people who do not achieve the targets? Has the cabinet secretary considered including penalties so that the bill means something?

John Swinney: A legitimate argument for adding penalties to the bill can be made, but the Government has not chosen to take that route. We would rather approach the bill from the perspective of motivating and encouraging action to tackle climate change than have a relatively false debate about how the Government would pay a penalty to itself for failures that might occur. I would prefer to ensure that ministers are subjected to rigorous scrutiny by the Parliament to make delivering the aspirations in the bill obligatory for ministers.

The Government proposes to make the bill tougher and stronger. Having listened to the stage 1 evidence, ministers agree that an earlier interim target than the 2030 target is appropriate to ensure early action. At stage 2, the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change will therefore lodge an amendment on introducing a new 2020 interim target. That will set the pace for emissions reductions during the next decade and ensure that ministers need to match the Scottish Government's aspirations with action. I am pleased to confirm that Scottish ministers will introduce an interim target for 2020 that requires emissions reductions of at least 34 per cent.

The Government is committed to going further. That is why we are insisting that an obligation is put on ministers to increase the 2020 34 per cent target to at least 42 per cent, once the EU adopts at least 30 per cent as its target for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions over the period 1990 to 2020. I am absolutely committed to increasing the interim target as soon as possible, which is why I intend to add that commitment to the bill at stage 2.

We know that the expert advice of the UK Committee on Climate Change is that the UK should deliver emissions reductions of 34 per cent by 2020, given the current circumstances, with the target increasing to 42 per cent if a new international agreement is reached in Copenhagen. Scottish ministers agree that that is the minimum that we should aim to deliver.

Patrick Harvie: If the new interim target represents a steeper trajectory and earlier achievement of the cuts than was the case under the previous interim target, does it not follow by mathematical necessity that the annual targets in the period between now and 2020 must themselves be tougher? How can we take seriously a tougher interim target if the same annual targets are set to 2020?

John Swinney: Ministers will be required by regulation to bring forward annual targets. By clear necessity, those targets must create the capacity to deliver the 2020 target that we will set in the bill. The arrangements to lock in the requirement for action appear to me to be absolute.

We considered the 2020 target carefully. Scotland does not operate in a vacuum—many of the levers for reducing our emissions are controlled by the European Union and the United Kingdom Government. A prime example is energy generation, which is covered by reservations in the Scotland Act 1998, and emissions from energy generation fall within the EU emission trading scheme.

At this stage, going further than 34 per cent is just not an option. I will explain to Parliament why I believe that that is the case. Even if we deliver all the abatement measures that are set out in the UK Committee on Climate Change's 500-page report, we could not deliver a 42 per cent reduction in emissions by 2020 without proportionate action being taken at the UK and EU levels. Our ambition is clear and our approach is realistic.

Long-term targets are important. As I said to Patrick Harvie, at the heart of the bill is a duty on Scottish ministers to set annual targets to define each step of Scotland's emissions reduction journey. Those targets will be set in batches from 2010, thereby providing certainty about our emissions reduction trajectory.

Scotland's share of international aviation and shipping emissions will be included in all the targets in the bill. I am proud that that is a world-leading step. I confirm our intention to amend the bill to remove any unintended ambiguity in that respect. That will ensure that Scotland's share of those emissions will be covered from the setting of the first annual target onwards.

The bill requires that Scottish ministers obtain expert advice before they set annual targets. The Scottish Government will use the expert and independent UK Committee on Climate Change for advice in the first instance. On the basis of the ambition that the committee showed in its first report, "Building a low-carbon economy—the UK's contribution to tackling climate change", I am confident that it will recommend challenging targets for Scotland.

In the longer term, the bill provides flexibility for ministers to establish a Scottish committee on climate change or to apply new powers to an existing Scottish public body. I am also determined that the Scottish Government will focus on delivering emissions reductions in Scotland through domestic effort. That is why ministers propose the introduction of a provision to require Scottish ministers to limit the use of international credits to offset Scottish emissions.

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): I welcome what the cabinet secretary has just said on international credits. Does he have a percentage figure that he will share with the chamber for what the limit would be?

John Swinney: The Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee recommended to the Government that we should take a broadly comparable position to that which has been taken by the United Kingdom Government, and that is the position that the Government is currently considering.

Much has been said during the stage 1 evidence sessions on the application of duties on public bodies. The bill contains enabling powers to allow Scottish ministers to place specific climate change duties on the Scottish public sector in the future. For the record, I reiterate my support for working in partnership with the public sector and recognise that there are many good examples of initiatives that are being taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I see no need to move away from that partnership approach and I am not willing to do anything that undermines it. I am encouraged by the fact that the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities shares the Government's view and I am disappointed that the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee does not share the Government's confidence in proceeding in a partnership way.

On the issue of reporting and scrutiny, I make it clear that the Government will design, in partnership with the Parliament, the strongest and most obvious level of scrutiny of ministers and their performance in relation to the implementation of the bill. We have made a suggestion in the bill that ministers should be publicly scrutinised by a committee of conveners. We would be happy to have that scrutiny in public, and the proposal recognises that climate change affects all policy areas—it is not just the preserve of the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee but affects justice, health, local government and the whole gamut of policy areas. That is why the Government has offered that particularly high level of scrutiny. I hope that the Parliament will consider that with the same generosity with which the Government made that suggestion to the Parliament.

The Government's desire is to create legislation that is world leading and enduring and which commands the support of every corner of the parliamentary chamber. We must recognise that, if we are to succeed in our aspiration of delivering on the climate change agenda, we must act with the support of every political party. That is the style that the Government will adopt in taking the bill through the Parliament.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill.

15:22

Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): I concur with John Swinney that what we are debating today is a significant bill, and it is highly appropriate that we do so as we hit 10 years of the Scottish Parliament's operation. It will be the most important bill that we pass. We can debate that among ourselves afterwards, but in terms of its long-term ambitions and the challenge that it attempts to address, I think that that is a fair argument.

Nevertheless, the bill will be successful only if we all buy into it. That does not mean that we all have to agree with one another at this stage. There is time for more detailed consideration of the bill at stage 2. We believe that the bill is not strong enough at the moment and that there are significant gaps that need to be addressed. In particular, we think that climate change needs to inform all Government decisions from now on and that our agenda must involve all of us as citizens, consumers and people who are involved in businesses, trade unions and church groups.

I will address three things: the need to act now and to set ourselves the right targets and benchmarks; the need to get our governance structures right; and the need to put in place a series of policy programmes that tackle at the same time both the recession that we are currently experiencing and climate change.

Our top line is that the bill does not go far enough. We welcome the announcement and the comments that have been made by the cabinet secretary today, but we still feel that the bill does not go far enough. It does not address the early years, and it would represent a massive missed opportunity if the bill were to be passed as it is currently drafted. The policy in the Scottish National Party's manifesto for annual statutory targets of 3 per cent reductions was not one that we considered took the right approach during the election campaign, and we argued our corner. Given that that policy was dumped as soon as it had done its job of harvesting green votes for the SNP, we believe that it was more a cynical election strategy than a genuine commitment to radical action. The alternative approach that is laid out in the bill is simply not good enough. It is a betrayal of the trust of the many thousands of people who voted for the SNP on the basis of that policy.

The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): Will the member take an intervention?

Sarah Boyack: No. I want to get started.

The critical time to act is now, and the action that we take must be meaningful and real. The driver for success must be tougher, quantified

interim targets. We have lodged our amendment to concentrate minds on that. We need to send businesses, Government departments and agencies and people in Scotland a clear message that the Parliament intends to act now. We believe that political accountability needs to be built into the system. We need to incentivise the sort of thinking that starts to turn things around now, not in 2018, on the eve of our having to meet a 2020 target. We believe that that 2020 target is too far off. Not only is it too far off to drive short-term action with a sense of urgency, but it is too far off to incentivise the medium-term policies that Governments will need to deliver on by 2020. It is three elections away. We need to bring the day of action closer to home—to the SNP today and to the next two Governments, which we hope will be Labour ones.

Stewart Stevenson: It might be helpful if the member understood that we are quite happy to support her amendment. Does she recognise that, by putting a 42 per cent figure on the face of the bill, as we intend to do in the context of European agreement on a 30 per cent figure, we are challenging our partners to step up to the plate so that, together, we can deliver—with annual targets every year to 2020—precisely what she is proposing?

Sarah Boyack: As we understand the position, the targets are not quantified. The targets in the bill will kick in from 2020 but, before then, the targets will be in regulations. We absolutely support a 34 per cent target. I understand that that is what John Swinney said will be in the bill, and that the 42 per cent target will be adopted if we get collective action at Copenhagen. I am not critical of the target that has been set for 2020. We understand why the Government has gone for that target. The challenge is to supplement it. We did not believe in annual targets, but we think that we need mid-points. We accept the point made by environmental campaigners that each Government should be accountable for what it does. We welcome the SNP's support for our amendment today.

John Swinney: I think that I answered the point that Sarah Boyack is making when I responded to Patrick Harvie's intervention. The setting of targets in regulations obliges ministers to act in a fashion that sets us on a trajectory that delivers the 2020 interim target, which we all now agree is exactly the right position.

Sarah Boyack: We think that we need quantifiable targets on the way, and our amendment is designed to ensure that the progress of each Government can be assessed.

Every time that respected scientists review the position on climate change, they tell us that, although they cannot be certain of how climate

change will work in the future—particularly in relation to feedback mechanisms—the situation is more urgent than it was the previous time that they reported. That is what the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the UK Committee on Climate Change report, and that is why we want tougher earlier action. We do not agree with the setting of arbitrary annual targets, because different things can happen each year. We need to judge each Government on its track record.

We know that we need to go beyond paying lip service to the challenges and actually change how we do things. We believe that it is the next 10 years that are crucial, not the debate about 2050. It is easy to get sucked into discussions about long-term targets and ignore the short-term challenges. That is why we want to go for unambiguous, quantified targets.

We need to start doing something now, and we need to set ourselves on a path of radical reductions in carbon emissions. We need to focus not only on how we are doing, with annual reporting to the Parliament, but on the consideration of cumulative targets. Everything that we do in the early years has an extra dividend. We are not just meeting a target; we are ensuring that those carbon emissions are not created in the atmosphere for generations to come. Surely we can all agree about that. However, we do not believe that that will happen without more serious pressure, and that is the purpose behind our amendment, which is designed not only to affect the current Government but to signal to the system as a whole that we are all serious.

We believe that the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee's report on the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill is excellent. It is the latest stage in a lengthy process of debate. Similarly excellent is the report from the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee, particularly its recommendations on waste and the position that it took against dumping 25 per cent of the Forestry Commission's estate. Further, the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee has given us an invaluable set of recommendations, all of which the Government should implement.

We argued for a whole week's debate on the bill not just because three committees have been involved in its consideration, but because of the range and depth of issues that the bill needs to address if we are to get it right. If we had only debated the issue this afternoon, we would not have covered the range of issues that need to be picked up before stage 3. Last month's lobbying was a graphic illustration of the support that there is in our communities for radical climate change legislation.

Our support for the bill's principles will be clear, but we want to flag up that many amendments will be needed to make the bill more radical and effective.

Mike Rumbles: Will the member give way?

Sarah Boyack: No. I need to get on.

Today we will focus on the overarching principles of the bill and amendments that are needed in that context; tomorrow we will focus on practical progress, provision for which needs to be slotted into the bill, to support economic activity and build a bridge from today's technology and expertise to future priorities. The recession makes such an approach all the more important.

There is a need to incentivise local authorities and businesses to rethink their day-to-day approaches. The briefings that we received from Scottish and Southern Energy and Scottish Renewables, and the business community's contributions to our stage 1 consideration, made it clear that companies are beginning to focus on serious action. Businesses need amendments to the bill at stage 2 that introduce practical measures on energy efficiency and small-scale renewables. Such amendments would strengthen the bill and the ability of the Government and future Governments to deliver on carbon reductions, which are needed in all sectors.

If we are to make the bill work, the business community, trade unions and communities must buy into it. That is why we are committed to developing green jobs, not just in the renewables industry, which is hugely important, but in other industries. There are opportunities to invest in public transport and support for electric cars and other vehicles. There are opportunities in energy efficiency in the building industry, in relation not just to new developments but to the need to build mass markets for the retrofitting of our existing, inefficient infrastructure. We must not just talk a good game but put legislation on the statute book and implement it.

Public duties need to be more effective. We need climate change action at every level of government. What will the concordat deliver on climate change? The issue needs to be addressed. What carbon emissions reductions will be achieved? There will be different challenges and opportunities for each local authority, but there are huge common areas in which a common approach and clear leadership will deliver results. We need concrete results, not vague aspirational language. More work is needed.

Stewart Stevenson: Will the member take an intervention?

Sarah Boyack: I have taken a couple of interventions and I want to move on.

Particular issues need to be explored. After the debate, I will consider John Swinney's comments about the nature of the advice that is given to ministers. The work of the UK Committee on Climate Change has been crucial in setting the UK Government framework, which the Scottish Government is adopting, and in translating IPCC findings into action. However, we need to consider particular challenges for Scotland that arise from the nature of our geography, land and communities. We also need a land use strategy, so that we can plan for the future and ensure that we do not ignore challenges until it is too late but address them head-on.

We particularly need to tackle our housing. A raft of practical actions are not in the bill. We welcome Government responses to the stage 1 report on minor issues, but we want more action. In particular, tax incentives are crucial, to ensure that people act. That view is shared by Scottish and Southern Energy and Scottish Gas. Such an approach could be linked with the energy efficiency action that was provided for in this year's budget, which members supported. We need to ensure that there is area-based action from which every citizen in Scotland can benefit. In England and Wales, 67 local authorities are doing such work, and Northern Ireland is putting a system in place. We do not need to be told that the Scottish Government has no legal power to act, as the Government said in the paper that we received last night; we can use the bill to give the Government that power. The bill presents us with an opportunity to plug a gap, which we will try to take by lodging amendments at stage 2. We need practical policies now if we are to deliver on energy efficiency. We cannot let political prejudice stand in the way of action that is being adopted throughout the UK. Council tax incentives would be a good fit with other work that the SNP Government is undertaking.

We support the early production of an energy efficiency action plan. The plan has been delayed for years—the SNP Government is not the first Government to delay it—and is needed soon. I am not making an excessively party-political point when I say that we need to ensure that energy efficiency reaches the top of the agenda not just in a single debate but for the future. We need to do that within six months.

I think that all members agree that one of the toughest issues that we must address is emissions from aviation and shipping. We cannot turn back the clock on social aspiration and economic progress but we must find ways to take account of aviation and shipping. That is a challenge. It is vital that we do not ignore other forms of transport. Day to day, people make fundamental choices, but they are not being given the necessary, high-

quality public transport choices, particularly in areas where those could be delivered.

We need to introduce tougher, cumulative emissions targets to drive early action on the issues on which it will be relatively straightforward for the Government to act. In the first eight years of the Parliament, there was major investment—championed by Labour—in public transport, but that needs to continue at the same level.

It is inevitable that we will focus on hitting targets, but we must involve people, businesses, communities, churches, trade unions and schools. We all should feel part of the process, because there is an appetite for change. The bill will be a framework for action. It cannot be a question of passing the bill, putting it on the statute book and the Government, or even the Parliament, patting itself on the back for being radical. We need an implementation plan, which must be discussed during the stage 2 consideration of the bill. We must do that both to concentrate minds and to deliver policies that will create a track to a low-carbon society.

I agree with the cabinet secretary that the next Scottish budget must be more ambitious. We will need not only dedicated energy efficiency schemes and individual community schemes—welcome though those measures are—but mainstream Government expenditure if we are engage with the climate change challenge and determine how to reduce carbon emissions. We are still waiting for some assessments to take place at a Scottish level to enable a public debate on that.

The power of the state, whether national or local, is crucial. The state has the potential to play a huge role in enabling us to make the transition to a low-carbon economy. Through public procurement of food, buildings, infrastructure or services, the Government can make practical greenhouse gas reductions in the early years, not the later years. The Government should use the hiatus caused by the lack of investment, while we wait for the Scottish Futures Trust or public-private partnerships, to reconfigure contracts so that the next generation of investment in public transport and buildings is greener and more energy efficient and reduces carbon emissions from day one, not from some future point.

The challenge is in front of us all. It is time for the SNP to implement some of its forgotten manifesto pledges that would help to reduce carbon emissions. When new schools are built, they must all be heated and powered by on-site renewable energy. The same should go for hospitals and other public sector buildings.

We need a bill, targets to drive action, governance structures and the accountability

mechanisms of the Parliament and wider public life. We also need to ensure that the bill is matched by the development of policy measures that will deliver carbon reductions. There has already been a robust debate on the bill in our communities. It is a landmark bill, but it needs significant amendment at stage 2.

I move amendment S3M-3963.2, to insert at end:

“and, in so doing, further agrees that unambiguous quantified targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions for the period between 2010 and 2019 are needed so that the current government and governments elected in 2011 and 2015 can be held to account for delivering early action on tackling climate change.”

15:38

Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD): I look forward to the bill progressing to stage 2 following this week's debate but, through my amendment, I want to highlight some of the key changes that are needed to make it fit for purpose. It needs tougher targets, a greater depth and a robust reporting mechanism so that successive Governments can be held accountable for the rate of progress in this most pressing matter.

Over the past year, the Government has regularly made claims about its bill being an example for the world to follow—it could never be accused of modesty. Is the bill world leading? Not yet. At the moment, it is so lacking on early action that there is no certainty that the end target can be achieved, but I welcome the cabinet secretary's comments on that and will reflect on what he said.

For two years, the Government has promised effective legislation on climate change. I do not want it to shirk its responsibility now because the task is difficult. In contrast to the SNP, the Liberal Democrats are determined that the bill should fulfil its potential and set a global example to other developed nations.

Scotland must not waste the chance to show the world the way in legislating on climate change. The bill does not do that, but it could and should. I hope that there is cross-party support for further strengthening of the bill and for my amendment. Change can happen if enough people will it, and we have seen an enormous upsurge of interest in tackling climate change. That support from across the country should galvanise us and strengthen our resolve. People are asking us to be bold and will not forgive us if we are timid about it.

This is not about political point scoring; it is about doing what is necessary. As a Parliament, we can unite to make the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill a strong and effective bill that will ensure early and sustained action. We can signal that we want to grasp the opportunity, kick-start

change and give Scotland a positive edge and renewed confidence in moving forward.

Yesterday, the Government published its response to the committee's recommendations. In some instances, what is proposed still falls short of expectations. I will address that issue alongside some of the main issues of the report and the bill.

The most disappointing aspect of the bill may be the lack of early action that is proposed. Yes, targets would be set from the outset, but there is no mention of the SNP's promised 3 per cent annual cuts until 2020 and no interim target until 2030, although the minister has admitted that he will move the interim target to 2020, in line with the UK bill. I am eternally hopeful that he will introduce measures for real, early action.

Simply requiring a reduction each year until 2019 shows a lack of ambition and, more worrying, a reluctance to take responsibility. It is all very well for the minister to say that that approach will "balance science and achievability", but he cannot duck the facts. The science is simple and it indicates that urgent action is needed now. The committee report recommends early and sustained action, which I believe should mean cuts of 3 per cent per annum from the outset. The Met Office puts it simply:

"Even if emissions start to decrease in the next two years and reach a rapid and sustained rate of decline of 3% per year, temperatures are likely to rise to 1.7 °C above pre-industrial levels by 2050 ... the risks of dangerous climate change will not increase slowly as greenhouse gases increase. Rather, the risks will multiply if we do not reduce emissions fast enough."

Turning to cumulative emissions, I think that science is probably driving the composition of this bill more than it has that of any other. Percentage reductions are a necessary measure of progress, but the science of climate change speaks not in percentages but in absolutes. The key to success lies in the total amount of greenhouse gases that we release into the atmosphere. We know that the current concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is about 387 parts per million. Climate change prediction models are constantly updated, but we know that to have even half a chance of limiting climate change to a global temperature rise of 2°, we would need to stabilise the concentration at no more than 450 parts per million of CO₂. If we reached 550 parts per million before stabilising, we would be more likely to have a 3° or 4° temperature rise, with all the damaging effects that would go with that.

What that means is that we have a real, scientifically measurable limit on how much CO₂ equivalent we, as a world, can emit over the next 10, 20, or 50 years. From that, we can work out what Scotland's fair share of those emissions will be. With that in hand, it would almost be

irresponsible not to measure our cumulative emissions, report on them and track whether we are staying within bounds.

Stewart Stevenson: Does the member accept that, by having annual targets, we in effect set a cumulative limit on the amount of CO₂ that it is possible for our country to emit? Has she noted the Government's commitment to do the arithmetic to support that and show the cumulative emissions?

Alison McInnes: I know that, when the Government consulted on the bill, it acknowledged that cumulative emissions measurements would be important but more difficult to do. I urge the Government to carry on with measuring both cumulative and annual emissions.

The Government needs to heed the science in setting the interim target for 2020 and the annual targets for the next 10 years. A 34 per cent target for 2020 is not challenging enough. Simply hitting 3 per cent each year, which is what the Government committed to do, would lead to a 43 per cent reduction by 2020. Indeed, more recent projections have suggested that our ambition for the bill should be a 50 per cent reduction. We must have an interim target that encourages early action and annual targets that do the same. It is not just me who says so: the committee heard time and again that early action is needed. Not only the environmental lobby but businesses and public bodies said that.

An ambitious target for 2050 is not enough. There must be a road map for getting there. Without proper interim targets and with no steep trajectory, we are left with the impression that the Government is happy to wait for technical fixes to be developed that will solve all our problems. We will need technology to help us, but we can do things now in the short term, such as pushing building insulation measures and promoting better fuel efficiency and greater energy efficiency. We can do things that will set us well on our way to the reductions that we need to make and which will give us time to work on the bigger fixes. Moreover, far from costing billions, they could save us all money.

Turning to sectoral targets, I believe that everyone will need to take action if the bill is to succeed. I do not believe that the bill should set out detailed targets for every sector, but it should be clear from the outset that action is required from all quarters to make a difference. The bill should require the minister to set broad sectoral targets on energy efficiency, energy production, transport and land use—the major sources of emissions—and to identify what is expected from the different sectors.

Stewart Stevenson: Will the member take a brief intervention?

Alison McInnes: Sadly, no, I have a lot to say before closing.

I also believe that a general duty to take account of climate change should be imposed on public bodies, which can play a pivotal role in setting an example. Voluntary action from local authorities and the likes of Scottish Natural Heritage is to be commended, but other public agencies, such as health boards, are not so far forward. By enshrining a general duty in the bill, we would signal from the outset that every body must play its part.

Another key issue, which should rightly be separated from transport in general, relates to shipping and aviation. I am glad that the minister will amend the bill to ensure that emissions from those sectors are included from the outset.

My colleague Liam McArthur will address in detail the energy efficiency issue that is highlighted in my amendment.

On international credits, Scotland must meet its targets mainly through domestic means if we are to ensure the greatest impact from our efforts. That will require us to set a limit on the amount of carbon emission reductions that can be accounted for through international credits. I welcome the minister's comments on that today, as I believe that we should seek to maximise domestic effort. I suggest that the cap should be set at 20 per cent up to 2020 and that we should consider introducing a sliding scale thereafter.

On reporting mechanisms, the bill as introduced requires the minister to do nothing more than lay a progress report before Parliament. A 10-minute statement with 20 minutes of questions is worthless as a means of scrutinising an issue of such importance. If we are to hold successive Governments to account, the bill must provide a clear and robust reporting mechanism. A good example might be the national planning framework, on which Parliament is given a 90-day period for sustained analysis of results along with an iterative process that ensures that parliamentarians build up expertise in the matter. That allows scrutiny to become more robust as the years roll by.

I was slightly disappointed with the almost petulant comments in the ministerial response to the committee's recommendation on reporting mechanisms. The response simply notes:

"the Committee do not appear to have accepted these provisions in the spirit in which they were intended."

This is too serious and important an issue for that.

John Swinney: On that point, I agree that it is important that Parliament can exercise its own mind. That is why the Government has singled out a different mechanism for holding ministers to account on the targets: ministers would be required to appear in public before a group of committee conveners who represent all policy areas. That makes the point that climate change affects every aspect of legislative and policy activity within the Parliament—

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan): Quickly, please.

John Swinney: That is the point that I would like Parliament to consider in its deliberations.

Alison McInnes: I accept the spirit in which that offer is made, but I believe that the issue is of such importance that we must think hard about what the best mechanism is to tie in future ministers, who might not be so willing to come forward and talk voluntarily.

John Swinney: They will be obliged to do so.

Alison McInnes: We will need to come back to the issue. At the moment, I think that how we deal with the national planning framework provides one possibility. As I said, this is too serious an issue to rely on the spirit of the legislation. The reporting mechanism must be robust in providing proper scrutiny. Most important, the mechanism ought to be laid out in black and white to ensure that Parliament can effectively hold the Government of the day to account.

From the moment that it was published, the bill has received an unprecedented level of public response. Just a couple of weeks ago, 500 people gathered outside the Parliament building to demand that we deliver a strong climate change bill. We must show that Parliament is listening. Things can change, so we should stop saying that change is too difficult and start finding ways to make it happen. The current financial crisis has caused us many problems, but it also gives us an opportunity. Let us not rush blindly into getting back to business as usual. Let us grasp this opportunity and look to rebuild with a green agenda. We can refocus—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member really must conclude.

Alison McInnes: Presiding Officer, this is the first great bill of any substance that has come through my committee in the two years since I was elected. I feel truly privileged to have had the opportunity to work on the bill and to be part of the Parliament that will pass it—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member must conclude. I am sorry.

Alison McInnes:—but I want it to be something that I can be proud of.

I move amendment S3M-3963.1, to insert at end:

“and, in so doing, calls on the Scottish Government to publish an energy efficiency action plan within six months and to bring forward amendments at Stage 2 that set out substantive transparent measures to put Scotland on a steady path to achieving the Bill’s emissions reduction ambitions, including early action to meet a scientifically credible 2020 interim target, the measurement and reporting of cumulative emissions, broad sectoral targets, a duty on public bodies to take account of climate change in their activities, the inclusion of Scotland’s share of international aviation and shipping emissions in its emission targets, a limit on the use of international carbon credits and a robust reporting mechanism that allows for detailed parliamentary scrutiny of progress.”

15:49

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I thank the many witnesses who gave oral and written evidence to the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee. I also thank my fellow committee members, the committee’s clerking team and the other committees that have contributed to the parliamentary scrutiny process for the bill. On this occasion, I will also thank my mum. When she dragged me at the age of six to sit at the back of Green party meetings, she might not have guessed that I would be here today but, without her, I am sure that I would not.

The story goes back somewhat further than that. It is more than half a century since the first scientific papers appeared that said that we had put rather a lot of CO₂ into the atmosphere since the industrial revolution and that maybe that was an area for future research. It is more than 30 years since scientific consensus began to emerge on the issue and more than 20 years since the emergence of political consensus that something must be done. We have spent all the intervening time determining what action must be taken.

It is 10 years since the Scottish Parliament first sat and members such as Robin Harper and, notably, Sarah Boyack, as well as members of all the parties, began to think about what we could do to tackle climate change. Halfway through this Government’s term in office, we are having a debate that we have waited for with anticipation. We have yet to achieve political consensus on what must be done, as opposed to the fact that something must be done.

I will have time to address only some of the committee’s recommendations, but I am sure that those that we do not discuss during the debate will receive full scrutiny at stage 2. As I am opening the debate on behalf of my committee colleagues, it is important that I reflect the balance of views, including any differing opinions, rather than just

having my own wee rant—that is for later. Thankfully, on this occasion, that is an easy task, because the committee has agreed on some important changes that should be made to the bill. Although each of us might have written a slightly different list of recommendations, I am delighted that we managed to produce a report that was signed up to fully by the whole committee—there was no split on any of our strong recommendations.

The Government’s response to our report—which, incidentally, arrived with us after 4 pm yesterday; the minister might want to avoid that in the future—dealt positively with some of the recommendations. In particular, I welcome the fact that there will be a limit on the use of international credits. The world cannot pay someone else to solve the problem. Those of us who live in countries that have a high per capita CO₂ impact must take responsibility for our actions.

There was recognition that some aspects of the parliamentary reporting mechanism should be re-examined at stage 2—not because we spurned the cabinet secretary’s generosity in producing proposals. I hope that when members of the committee are generous with the additional suggestions that they make at stage 2, the cabinet secretary will welcome that process and engage constructively in it.

Mike Rumbles: Does the committee’s convener agree that the bill lacks teeth? If we are serious about reaching the annual targets, would he be sympathetic to amendments at stage 2 that required, let us say, the appropriate minister to resign automatically? [*Interruption.*] Mr Stevenson is laughing.

Patrick Harvie: The appropriate parliamentary mechanism would be a motion of no confidence. If the member wishes to discuss one, he has my number.

Time and again, the committee heard compelling evidence that early cuts in emissions—specifically, those that are made in the first 10 years—are of the greatest importance. Before it published its report, the committee already knew that the 2030 target would be moved forward to 2020. However, we went further than that, arguing that the targets for the period leading up to 2020 must be made more robust, either by bringing forward the point at which annual reductions of 3 per cent must begin to be achieved or by building towards the achievement of such reductions.

The Government’s response has been simply to restate the intention to produce a 2020 target. Indeed, leaving its announcement of what that target would be until less than 24 hours before the debate ensured that the committee had no opportunity to take evidence or seek views on the

Government's figure. Given that the Government has fallen in behind the UK Government's approach of adopting a target of reducing emissions by 34 per cent by 2020, which could rise to a target of 42 per cent, it has now become a follower, even though it still claims a leadership role on climate change.

Stewart Stevenson: Can the member tell us of any other jurisdiction in the world that has made a commitment to meeting a target of reducing emissions by 42 per cent, if European Union agreement is reached? Has any other Administration made such a commitment?

Patrick Harvie: From a global leadership point of view, the jurisdiction that I would cite is the tiny and vulnerable Maldives, which is not waiting for 2050 or 2030, or for global action. Its ambition is to be carbon neutral in 10 years. If any country in the world could be forgiven for saying that climate change is someone else's fault and someone else's responsibility to deal with, it would be the Maldives, the capital city of which is hunched behind a tiny, vulnerable sea wall. Plans are already being made for evacuation, because the people know that they are going to lose their islands. That is leadership. What is the point of waiting until the world or Europe catches up? What is the point of assuming that the world will fail to catch up? The call for early action that was made by so many witnesses, endorsed by the science and recommended by the committee appears so far not to be heard.

As the bill stands, the first annual target will not be specified until the final year of the current Government's term of office and not at the 3 per cent trajectory that is needed. The committee has argued for earlier specified annual targets. I think that that is the basis of the slight misunderstanding between the Government and Labour Party front benchers on the amendment. The issue of contention is whether the earlier targets are to be specified in the bill as opposed to specified by ministers after the bill has passed.

Future Governments will inherit the targets, but we should not give the Administrations that will be elected in 2011, 2015 and 2019 cause to resent a late start made in this session. The committee recommended two additional aspects to the reporting framework: to examine consumption-based emissions—the emissions in other countries for which Scotland is responsible—and the means of publishing data on cumulative emissions. Notwithstanding the minister's response to Alison McInnes a few moments ago, the Government's written response to the committee report has little to say on those and we will explore them further at stage 2.

The committee also recommended that the Government produce far more detail on key

sectors of the economy: land use, transport, energy generation and energy saving. How much weight can those sectors pull? The Government responded by pointing to its intention to produce a draft indicative delivery plan some time in summer, presumably after the bill is passed. Fifty months after coming to office, the Government will have its first draft indicative ideas about where the cuts will come from—that is early action.

The transport issues that the committee addressed were mostly to do with aviation and shipping. We heard from the Sustainable Development Commission more recently; in its view, transport remains in general the area with the greatest mismatch between rhetoric and reality. The inclusion of aviation and shipping emissions is welcome, but there remain significant unanswered questions, not least on radiative forcing—as the committee noted—and on the Government's intentions for aviation growth.

I must also note that since the publication of the committee's report there have been suggestions that some in the industry are lobbying for a return of the air route development fund. It would be instructive to know whether the cabinet secretary considers such a proposal compatible with the climate change objectives.

At paragraph 202 of our report, we make a very clear call for public engagement to be put at the heart of the agenda, not just on policy development or strategy documents but in relation to public acceptance, positive attitudes, a can-do spirit, a willingness to think about shared and personal responsibilities, community efforts and lifestyle changes. The Government response on that recommendation is also disappointing. References to stakeholder discussions over the summer suggest that it has the wrong end of the stick.

On the need for scientifically informed debate, the Government claims to have considered the best evidence available. However, repeatedly, the committee heard concerns that, for the most part, the primary source is the IPCC's fourth report. Even those who worked on that report now acknowledge that it is already out of date. The cabinet secretary referred to Copenhagen and the most recent scientific announcements.

We were surprised that the Government has not yet formally consulted the UK Committee on Climate Change. It states in its response that it believes that it would be premature to do so, yet we as members will be expected to address scientific evidence in support of amendments at stage 2. I hope that the Government will recognise that evidence needs to come from a broader base than simply the IPCC's fourth report.

The final thought that I will share is my pleasure that the bill has been introduced during a period of minority government. Any Government will want to take seriously political advice on a measure that might be brave. I am very pleased that the bill that we finally pass will be the Parliament's bill and not the bill as it was introduced.

15:59

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):

In the words of Kermit the Frog, "It's not easy being green". That comes with some sincerity from someone like me, who is from a background where green politics were not as important as they were in other areas. I have paid tribute before to members in the Parliament and those who have taken part in the broader political debate: they have done much to take green politics from the margins of political influence to the heart of policy making. The fact that we are in the chamber to debate the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill at stage 1 is evidence of their success.

We must now consider the nature of and the need for the legislation. Some members would not have been at all surprised if the Conservatives had in the past taken the position that there was no need to pursue such legislation. In truth, however, the mainstreaming of green policy and the understanding that the climate is changing has driven Conservative thinking as well as that of other political parties. It should therefore come as no surprise that the Conservatives wholeheartedly support the spirit of the bill.

Similarly, it might not have been a surprise to some if the Conservatives had decided that the right thing to do was to pursue the UK bill rather than separate Scottish legislation. Although we considered that possibility at the outset, two things became clear. First, Scotland is starting from a very different place in relation to climate change and how we deal with it and, secondly, it has a very different level of potential. Consequently, it is only right that Scotland should move ahead with its own legislation.

The proposal was first introduced in the form of an SNP manifesto commitment during the election campaign, which contained at its heart a target of an 80 per cent reduction in emissions by 2050. One of the first things that I had to do was to assess whether that was an appropriate commitment. At that time, the UK Government was moving towards a 60 per cent reduction by 2050. It was perhaps suspicion on my part that made me think that the Scottish National Party was simply trying to outbid the UK Government with a higher, more ambitious figure, but the fact that the UK Government quickly changed its position to pursue an 80 per cent target indicates that that figure was perhaps more appropriate.

One broad issue that arose during the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee's inquiry was the question of whether the target is ambitious. The Government is keen to say that 80 per cent is an ambitious target, but some organisations that appeared before the committee suggested that it is not. I suggest that it is an appropriate and ambitious target but only if we take into account genuine short-term measures with regard to how we will achieve it.

The second most important and significant issue is the decision to go for a 2020 rather than a 2030 target. That 2030 target was, I believe, simply too far in the future and, however ambitious we set it, would not have set the agenda for early progress. Consequently, the Government's decision to pursue a 2020 target is a significant departure.

It is nonetheless extremely important that we know how that target will be set. The details—which have been explained by the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change in committee and by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth today—suggest a 34 per cent target with the option of rising to a 42 per cent target, which is an acceptable path.

If we are to achieve that, we need short-term targets, and I will continue to seek further clarification from ministers on how those short-term targets will be set and—more important—what they are likely to be. If we do not make early progress on annual targets, we will not make the progress that is necessary in the first 10 years.

Stewart Stevenson: Does the member agree that it is vital that we have expert advice to help us set the annual and interim targets and that the UK Climate Change Committee that was established under the UK legislation is a good starting point for such advice?

Alex Johnstone: I accept that. Indeed, on the question whether there should be a separate Scottish committee or whether we should rely on the UK Committee on Climate Change, I believe that the UK committee provides an appropriate starting point. The establishment of a separate Scottish committee might be appropriate at some point, but I believe that that time is still some way off. Moreover, given that our targets are broadly similar to UK targets and, more important, feed directly into the achievement of UK targets, I think that we have a great deal to gain by having a common source of advice.

I am still concerned about one or two key areas. First, given that the bill is two years behind the UK legislation, one might question its relevance. However, that very fact gives us the opportunity to pass more advanced legislation that takes into account figures that were not available when the UK legislation was introduced—the Government

has moved some distance towards achieving that. We might also be able to ensure that our legislation contains certain practical measures that can enable greater progress to be made earlier.

For that reason, I intend to lodge amendments to chapter 3 of part 5, which deals with energy efficiency, to seek not only to allow local authorities to give council tax rebates to households that put in place energy efficiency measures, including cavity wall and loft insulation, but to empower ministers to draw up Scottish Government-funded schemes for council tax and business rate rebates for individuals and businesses who invest in energy-efficient homes, offices, shops and factories. I am aware that in its response to the committee's stage 1 report the Government seems to have dismissed that proposal on the grounds that the council tax should be replaced with something else, but I hope that it will take a more practical and direct route by amending the bill appropriately and ensuring that we deliver genuine financial incentives that allow Scottish householders and businesses to make the necessary changes at an early opportunity. Of course, I am sure that I am not the only member who intends to lodge amendments, and I assure members that any other amendments will receive due consideration and fair treatment from the Conservatives.

We must move forward together on the bill. Earlier in my speech, I mentioned the apparent bidding war over long-term targets, and I am somewhat disappointed at the prospect of being dragged into another such war as we amend certain parts of the bill. The Conservatives want to make it clear that we are very much part of this process and that we will join other parties in ensuring that, when it is passed and becomes an act of the Parliament, Scotland's legislation will be ambitious, achieve not only the aims and objectives of the general framework but certain practical objectives that allow individuals to contribute to progress, and ensure that Scottish business and local authorities are not unduly burdened by regulation that will in itself do little to cut carbon emissions in Scotland.

Other Conservative members will address key proposals on forestry, muirburn and waste management. However, in closing, I again assure the Parliament that the Conservatives will consider other parties' amendments that, although broadly acceptable to us, might require more detailed scrutiny in the course of the debate. Whatever happens, we will support the bill's principles at decision time tomorrow.

16:10

Maureen Watt (North East Scotland) (SNP):
Patrick Harvie is convener of the lead committee

on the bill; I speak as convener of the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee, which considered parts of the bill. I stress that I joined the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee just as it was finishing its report, so I will highlight the committee's work on certain sections of the bill. I am sure that other members of the committee and the Minister for Environment will go into much more detail than I will.

The Rural Affairs and Environment Committee specifically requested that it be appointed as a secondary committee to scrutinise the provisions that fall within its remit—the forestry, waste reduction and recycling, and muirburn provisions. On behalf of the committee, I thank all those who provided oral and written evidence and the clerks for their hard work.

I will start with muirburn, which was the least contentious issue. Muirburn is important in regenerating hill and moorland habitats, but the issue did not evoke a great number of responses, except on the dates and lengths of periods allowed for burning. I welcome the cabinet secretary's undertaking to consult stakeholders fully on the issue, and we will keep a close eye on the amendments that the Government lodges on the matter at stage 2.

On waste, the committee is aware that the bill's provisions on waste reduction and recycling are enabling in nature because the Government does not propose to introduce secondary legislation to enforce them if the same ends can be achieved through voluntary measures. The committee appreciated the logic of that approach but, given the importance of the provisions, we think that any such secondary legislation should be subject to the super-affirmative procedure, which would allow additional time for scrutiny of its contents, including in draft form.

Other issues stemmed from the evidence that the committee heard and need to be addressed to progress the central aim of reducing, reusing and recycling waste. They include the urgent need to focus on reducing commercial and industrial waste that is sent to landfill; the need to address the lack of infrastructure that is currently available to implement the policy intentions in the bill; and the need to consider matters that the Environment and Rural Development Committee raised in session 2 to do with the impact, including the environmental impact, of sellers of goods charging for the supply of carrier bags.

The Rural Affairs and Environment Committee also considered the opportunities that the current international market conditions could present for Scotland to develop waste recycling industries; the need to ensure that measures are undertaken in accordance with both the Government's definition of recycling and the waste hierarchy that is set out

in the waste framework directive; and, in order to inform public decision making, the need for the Government to endorse one method of measuring carbon footprints and to establish criteria that are based on it that reflect which waste reuse and recycling practice is the most sustainable.

On the more contentious issue of forestry, we all know—the Minister for Environment in particular—that the submissions that were received on the proposal to lease a percentage of Forestry Commission land either opposed that proposal or raised substantial issues with it. On the basis of the weight of the opposition to the proposal and issues with the adequacy of the consultation process, the committee recommended that the Government should not progress the proposal. As members might appreciate, the committee therefore welcomes the Government's announcement that it will not progress the proposal. Assuming that this is still the Government's intention, the bill will be amended at stage 2 so that the provisions in section 47 are restricted to purely enabling joint ventures.

All the written submissions supported the idea of the Forestry Commission entering into joint ventures with private companies for the development of sustainable energy projects, such as wind farms and hydroelectric infrastructure projects. Evidence to the committee suggested that such joint ventures have the potential to generate considerable income, although members are aware that there are practical barriers to generating income quickly because of the time taken to receive planning permission and clearance from environmental regulators for proposals such as wind farm projects. Given the notable support for the joint venture proposal from stakeholders, the committee recommended that the Government should explore the full potential of joint ventures, including whether support should be provided for their establishment.

The committee's report notes that, in the response to the Government's consultation on the proposals, there was widespread support for the idea of community leasing. Although provisions on that would not sit easily in the bill, as community leasing would have social benefits that are unrelated to mitigating climate change, the committee recommended

"that the Scottish Government incorporates provisions to allow for community leasing in future legislation."

That would meet the call from members that we must encourage members of the public to buy into the climate change debate.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): You should finish now, Ms Watt.

Maureen Watt: Finally, as usual, many organisations have sent in briefings on the issue,

which have highlighted Scotland's position at the forefront of tackling climate change. However, caution should be—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must finish now, Ms Watt.

16:16

Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab): Climate change is everyone's responsibility, and people who accept the responsibility will want strong climate change legislation. Building on the UK Climate Change Act 2008, the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill will be world leading and we must get it right. Those who want to make a contribution to the future of our planet have nothing to fear from the bill, as it sets targets that we must meet to avert disaster, facilitates and encourages public participation and engagement in climate change policy and action, and ensures that all public authorities are on board and do what they can to work with central Government and the public to achieve the targets. What we are asking will not always be easy to achieve, but we would not ask it if we did not think that it was essential. If we act slowly, it will be harder to meet the challenges.

Those who constantly seek to innovate and reduce their impact on the climate should not find complying with the legislation any harder than complying with targets that they would set for themselves. Indeed, quite the reverse is true, as the bill should make that easier. On the other hand, those who are in denial—those who think that the bill does not affect them and that climate change is simply not a problem and nothing to do with them—might have a bit more difficulty. For those who want to be part of the solution, the bill is not part of a problem.

All of us have something to contribute—not only those who work on renewable energy, the more efficient use of resources, insulation programmes and carbon capture or in other jobs that immediately spring to mind as green jobs—and we must do all that we can to green our jobs. Central and local government and other public authorities have an important role in taking measures to limit climate change and adapt to the changing climate.

The issue is not only about flood defences and greener energy, reducing congestion and improving public transport, and reducing the number of flights that we take and being more thoughtful about using local produce, important though those actions are; it is about becoming more conscious of the impact of everything that we do. We need to take a joined-up approach and must always consider whether there is a better way in which to do things so that we reduce our carbon footprint. We must combine renewable energy and heat schemes with power schemes,

and we should combine climate change adaptations with improvements to schools and hospitals. We can get jobs done more effectively while allowing people more flexibility in order to reduce commuting. The issue is about developments in a sustainable and low-carbon economy.

A general duty on public bodies to ask about such issues must be written into the bill. We have to see that action is making a difference. I am talking about not just local authorities but all public authorities—organisations such as Scottish Enterprise, the health service, further and higher education bodies, Scottish Water, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish Natural Heritage and sportscotland. All public authorities have a role to play.

Stewart Stevenson: I wonder whether the member makes a distinction between the bodies that are part of the Scottish Government—on which duties placed on the Government will also apply—and local authorities, in which there should be independent decision making. The duties imposed on local authorities should be imposed in a different way and should be of a different character.

Cathy Peattie: Each public authority will consider what it needs to do, and I will come on to that very issue in a few moments.

Each public authority has a role to play through training, procurement, planning, environmental management, land use, public engagement, employment policies and the use of new technology and research—to name but a few issues. We need to know that bodies are doing everything that they can with regard to both their own activities and the impact of their planning and procurement policies. This is not about being prescriptive. Each organisation or public authority will have to define what it must do in order to meet the public duty. I believe that the duty must be embodied in this legislation.

The public duty relating to equal opportunities is a good example to consider. For years, it was expected that public bodies would have policies on equal opportunities, but many public authorities adhered to such policies only in relation to recruitment. Local authorities were much better but, even then, the reality was that only one person or a small team of people was responsible for equalities throughout the local authority.

The existence of a public duty on equalities now means that equal opportunities are mainstreamed throughout organisations—and that can now be audited. It took more than 20 years for that to happen, but we cannot allow that length of time for a duty on climate change. We do not have the time.

We need transparency and effective monitoring and reporting. Target setting should clearly be the role of the UK Committee on Climate Change, but I believe that complementary activity is also required at Scottish level. Scotland has devolved government, Scottish law, and Scottish bodies. There are distinctly Scottish dimensions, and we therefore need to address the issues at Scottish level—through either existing Scottish bodies such as SEPA or a newly set-up organisation.

I ask the minister to look again at the issues that I have raised this afternoon. We in the Scottish Parliament have a duty to ensure that this legislation is strong. I urge all members to consider their duty to future generations.

16:23

Shirley-Anne Somerville (Lothians) (SNP):

There is now no doubt that climate change is the biggest challenge that humanity has faced. Ironically, it is of our own making. Efforts so far to tackle climate change have not been encouraging. The first international climate change regime has been put in place, but it has had barely any effect on the global greenhouse gas trajectory. The bill is our opportunity, in our country, to change that.

The cabinet secretary has rightly detailed the positive work that the Government has undertaken to date. I believe that the bill is a world-leading piece of legislation, but we must always strive to better the original proposals. I shall concentrate on two issues—the measurement of consumption emissions, and the limits on international carbon credit.

New research by the Stockholm Environment Institute has found that, although production emissions from Scotland fell by 13 per cent between 1995 and 2004, Scotland's consumption emissions rose by 11 per cent. Further on in the briefing that members received, the example of Ravenscraig is used. Scotland did not stop using steel when Ravenscraig closed; we simply started importing it, and the resultant emissions, from elsewhere. Consumption-based reporting will allow us to see whether we are driving down our emissions, or whether we are responsible for exporting them to outside our own borders.

We have a global responsibility. I cannot be the only member who has spoken to people who are not quite convinced by the arguments on climate change—people who say, "Well, China's building a new power station every week, and they're exporting all these goods, so it's really their fault." A report from the Tyndall centre for climate change research has shown that, in 2004, net exports from China accounted for 23 per cent of its total CO₂ emissions. The responsibility is not China's; it is that of everyone who is importing and

using its products. There is a bigger picture that we need to take account of.

Passing the bill will be good for Scotland, on two levels. It is good for our policy makers, who will have a better understanding of the drivers behind the changes to Scotland's emissions. It is also good for Scotland's jobs, because it incentivises us towards maintaining green work at home, rather than outsourcing it abroad. The bill also has an important role in individual empowerment. It can be a powerful communication tool, engendering a big appreciation of the impact of individuals, organisations and Government on the global environment.

It has been found that, the more we earn, the more we pollute. Consumption reporting will focus the minds of those of us who consume more than the people who are directly affected by our emissions.

Carbon credits is an area in which the bill can be strengthened, and I welcome the minister's announcements on that so far. There can be no doubt that emissions reductions must be domestic if we are to play our part in reducing climate change. A tough limit on credits is necessary. We should ensure that we are reducing our emissions, not exporting them. We can buy our way out of trouble one year by buying some carbon credits, but that does nothing to achieve the long-term targets that we all claim to hold dear.

I believe that the bill will incentivise investment. We can invest in the technologies that will reduce our domestic emissions, while creating green jobs. Mitigating climate change might have its challenges, but it also has its opportunities. Scotland has the opportunity to become a green powerhouse of Europe. I do not want projects just to be in place here; I want them to be researched, designed and piloted here—and then taken round the world to build a low-carbon economy. Domestic effort is the best way to achieve that.

Alex Johnstone: Does the member agree that that is doubly critical given that many low-carbon technologies, particularly in renewable power generation, are very efficient in the production phase in terms of manning, and that, consequently, we must have the design and production jobs here? Otherwise, the green jobs revolution might simply not happen for us.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: I very much agree with the member's comments. Scotland has already lost out with onshore wind power; notwithstanding the recent good-news announcements concerning Campbeltown, we do not want the same problems to arise for wave or tidal energy.

Many members have discussed the significance of the 10-year anniversary of the first Scottish

parliamentary elections, and of the bill. I was listening to comments about that on the radio this morning. There have been some lows in the Parliament, but there have also been many highs. The Climate Change (Scotland) Bill has the potential to be this session's defining moment. I agree with Sarah Boyack: arguably, the legislation will be the most important that the Parliament has passed to date.

I am proud that the SNP Government has produced and introduced the bill. More important, by the end of the process, the Parliament must feel ownership of it. We will disagree on some points on the way. We all want improvements to be made so that the bill becomes the best that it can be. By the end of stage 3, the bill might not include everything that we want it to include; however, it must have become the Parliament's bill. We all have a responsibility to turn the framework into reality. We will fail unless we practise the new politics that people wanted from the Parliament. It is imperative that we take what is a framework document and use it to enthuse and energise the public. The framework will mean nothing if it does not lead to real change, not just for politicians but for the public sector, businesses and individuals.

We have an opportunity for world leadership in energising and enthusing not just the Scottish public, but those who will gather in Copenhagen. I ask everyone in the chamber to get behind the bill and to make it the best that it can be. We will see what we can do to show that world leadership.

16:29

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab): The Climate Change (Scotland) Bill is the most important bill of the parliamentary session and climate change is the most urgent issue of the age. Climate change not only threatens the future of our children and grandchildren, but is already affecting millions of people throughout the world. For example, the UN tells us that in the first five years of this century, 262 million people—of whom 98 per cent were in the developing world—were adversely affected by climate change.

So urgent, challenging and potentially unpopular is the issue that we must come together across the political divide to lead together in a new-politics approach, as advocated by Shirley-Anne Somerville. She and I are the co-conveners of the cross-party group on climate change, which is showing how we can act together on the issue across the political divide.

Equally crucial is community involvement and action. I am sure that all members have many groups in their constituencies that are acting on

climate change. When we debated eco-congregations on 17 December 2008, I mentioned churches in my constituency, so I will not repeat their names. However, perhaps I can be forgiven for mentioning groups that have won awards from the climate challenge fund—Greener Leith, the North Edinburgh Trust, the Out of the Blue Arts and Education Trust and the Pilmey Development Project. Those groups illustrate the importance of local people coming together to take action at the grass roots. In due course, the bill should be amended to promote public awareness and engagement in meeting the climate change targets.

Of course, the 80 per cent headline target is an excellent start. It is one of the main reasons why the bill was widely welcomed when it was published. However, I was given pause for thought when I read the Royal Society of Edinburgh's submission on the bill, which begins by saying:

"The endpoint target of an 80% reduction by 2050 is an irrelevance unless there are appropriate intervening milestones."

That encapsulates a main point that has been made by several members, including Sarah Boyack. The key issue for climate change is cumulative emissions. That is why emissions reductions must as far as possible be front-loaded rather than end-loaded, as the bill proposes.

In all the submissions that I read, two of the most interesting pages were the last two in the Royal Society of Edinburgh's submission, which incorporate a table—I know that the minister, as a mathematician, will have studied it—that indicates that even with 3 per cent annual reductions starting next year, we would not reach the 80 per cent reduction by 2050. When I read that, I concluded that we certainly need 3 per cent annual reductions without delay. The only good effect of a recession is that it allows an easy start through recession-linked emissions decline.

More fundamentally, we must get on urgently with the immediate action that is required on key issues if we are to have any chance of meeting the 2050 target. Many people have flagged up energy efficiency as a key issue on which to get started—we need the Government's energy efficiency action plan without delay. We also need other measures such as the green new deal and the excellent proposals in Sarah Boyack's member's bill. As we scrutinise the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill in the next few months, we must simultaneously develop the programmes and actions without which the bill will be empty rhetoric.

I welcome some of the commitments that the Government has made, such as that on the inclusion of aviation and shipping emissions in the national target. We must ensure that a proper

multiplier is placed on aviation emissions from the start, to recognise the greater climate change damage that emissions at altitude cause.

Stewart Stevenson: Like me, does the member wish to have appropriate expert advice that reflects the different aviation sectors, so that we encourage moves to the more sustainable forms of aviation that will increasingly be available?

Malcolm Chisholm: We certainly need expert advice, but we also need radical action on aviation and other forms of transport. Transport is a big concern. Those who read the editorial in *The Herald* this morning will have seen the quotation from Maf Smith of the Sustainable Development Commission, who said:

"Travel is the policy area where there is least alignment between current action and long-term sustainability".

At the beginning of my speech, I referred to unpopular action, which we need. Aviation issues will not be solved just by using the planes to which the minister referred. We also need action on car travel, as well as the promotion of public transport. We must quantify emissions reductions in the transport sector, as in other major sectors, such as energy generation and energy efficiency.

I welcome the limits on international credits. It is right that at least 80 per cent of emissions reductions should be achieved by domestic effort. I hope that that will be put in the bill.

Finally and crucially, part of the acting together that I emphasised at the outset must be action by other public bodies. An enforceable duty must be placed on such bodies to reduce emissions in line with national targets.

I hope that the minister will look seriously at Oxfam Scotland and Friends of the Earth Scotland's proposals for a public sector budgetary regime that involves incentives and disincentives.

16:35

Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): I am pleased to have been given the opportunity to speak in this stage 1 debate in support of the general principles of the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill.

If we believe that climate change is real—which we do—and that it poses a long-term threat to political stability and economic growth, we must all work together as nations, Governments, businesses and individuals to do our bit to combat climate change by doing our utmost to reduce our carbon footprint. If we are to achieve that, tough but meaningful targets need to be set and attained. That is why my party has given support to a climate change bill for Scotland that sets out the targets and policies by which such change will

be achieved and by which progress towards our goal will be carefully monitored.

I did not have the opportunity that was afforded to the members of the three parliamentary committees that scrutinised the bill of hearing evidence from the many groups of people with an interest in the issue. However, although the bill focuses on long-term targets, it contains little practical detail on how those targets will be achieved. The detail has been left to subsequent policy and regulation. That is particularly the case in section 5, in which many enabling provisions—for example, in the area of waste management and recycling—are set out. Our concern is that the provisions could result in a raft of future subordinate legislation that could have significant financial implications for local authorities, businesses and consumers. That provoked much disquiet during the scrutiny of the bill at stage 1. I will elaborate on the issues later in my speech.

I will confine most of my brief remarks to section 5. Before I do so, I too align myself with the Church of Scotland eco-congregations, the Energy Saving Trust, the Confederation of British Industry and many other organisations on the need for public co-operation and involvement in fighting climate change. If people around Scotland are not aware of the bill or how it might affect them—indeed, it would appear that few of them are—they will press on with their lives regardless of climate change and what they can do to fight it.

If the bill is to achieve its intended results, individuals and communities must become involved in trying to meet its set targets. To that end, I am pleased to note the recommendation in the lead committee's stage 1 report that ministers should produce proposals for an engagement strategy as part of their implementation plan for the bill. I was pleased to hear the cabinet secretary's positive response to that recommendation in his opening speech.

Section 5 addresses a number of important issues, not least of which is the requirement for a programme of action on how Scotland will adapt to the impacts of climate change to be placed before Parliament. Given that agriculture produces a significant proportion of our greenhouse gas emissions, land management techniques have a key role to play in mitigating climate change. Habitat conservation and agricultural and forestry activities can help by way of reducing losses from soils and sequestering carbon in vegetation.

There is increasing competition for land use in rural areas. Much land has been—and continues to be—developed for housing and industry. In addition, biofuels are increasingly displacing food production and conflict can arise where woodland replaces heather moorland. Of course, there can also be complementarities, one example of which

can be seen when the restoration of peatlands improves water quality in addition to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving habitats. If we are to get the greatest benefit from the use of our rural land, we need to develop a sustainable land use strategy. The Parliament gave cross-party support to that in the forestry debate on 19 March.

RSPB Scotland pressed the Government to include a commitment in the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill to introduce a sustainable land use strategy. I have a deal of sympathy for that approach. We are pleased that the Government decided to drop its forestry leasing proposals following widespread opposition during the consultation process. That said, we are supportive of other roles that the forestry sector can play in reducing carbon emissions; joint ventures such as renewable energy projects are one example of that.

We welcome the Government's intention to review muirburn provisions. The minister's stated intention is to lodge an amendment to ensure that the power to vary muirburn dates will maintain the current number of days when burning is allowed, thus protecting carbon storage and reducing the risk of wildfire, as well as protecting our natural heritage.

We are supportive of measures to encourage energy efficiency, as explained by my colleague, Alex Johnstone. Nevertheless, as I said earlier, we remain to be convinced by many of the provisions that are included in section 5 and the level of subordinate legislation that it provides for regarding waste management, recycling and packaging, deposit-and-return schemes and charges for plastic carrier bags. The British Soft Drinks Association, for example, is concerned that the sections on waste, recycling and deposits contain some potentially far-reaching provisions that have not yet been fully analysed. It fears that those sections might impose additional cost burdens on both industry and consumers that will run into many millions of pounds and might weaken existing measures to ensure the recycling of packaging waste.

Patrick Harvie: Will the member give way?

Nanette Milne: I do not have time. I am just finishing.

We should listen carefully to such concerns and give consideration to the BSDA's suggestion that the proposals should be introduced as primary legislation, if and when necessary, to ensure full legislative scrutiny, rather than being bundled into the present bill.

We are dealing with a significant and complex piece of legislation, and I have no doubt that the bill will be amended significantly during the next

stages of its progress through Parliament. However, like my colleagues, I am content at this stage with the general principles of the bill and will be happy to support it when the vote is taken tomorrow afternoon.

16:41

Liam McArthur (Orkney) (LD): Limbering up for this afternoon's debate, I sat through last night's champions league semi-final between Arsenal and Manchester United. Admittedly, as a piece of research into climate change it proved next to useless. However, given all the pre-match hype, it was a bit of an anticlimax, in which sense I spotted certain similarities between ITV's coverage of the big match and some of the SNP's more outlandish claims about the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill. That is not to say that the bill's central objective of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Scotland by 80 per cent by 2050 is not bold or ambitious, because it is, and it commands broad support throughout the Parliament and beyond—all the more so given the cabinet secretary's welcome commitment today to ensuring that the bulk of the reduction is achieved in Scotland.

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): Can the member tell us what climate change targets the Liberals proposed in their manifesto for the most recent election?

Liam McArthur: I am happy to accept that the bill is bold, but, as I will discuss, it is rather lacking in detail, as many members have suggested.

Setting targets—particularly long-term targets—does not, of itself, achieve anything, as I am sure Rob Gibson accepts. It can provide a valuable steer to business, the public sector and individuals as to the direction of travel, and inform decisions about where to invest and how to act, but the targets will be met only if they are backed by a credible action plan—a road map to achieving the goals that have been set. Sadly, despite its many laudable features, the bill is still wanting in that respect. Fortunately, there is time for Parliament to rectify that, and perhaps this afternoon we are seeing evidence that ministers are waking up to our concerns.

Rightly, the bill covers a wide range of issues. I will concentrate on the contribution that energy can and must make in addressing the challenges that we face. In his excellent book "Sustainable Energy—without the hot air", David MacKay, professor of natural philosophy at the physics department of the University of Cambridge, points out that the energy debate is

"inundated with a flood of crazy innumerate codswallop."

It could be that, when Professor MacKay wrote that, he had just attended a mind-mapping session

with our very own Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism. However, to be fair to Mr Mather, I am fairly sure that that opinion was formed some time ago.

Like the climate change debate as a whole, Professor MacKay bemoans the fact that discussions about future energy policy involve the use of language and numbers that are intended to impress rather than inform. He concludes that, however we stack up the numbers, there is no getting around the fact that the

"climate problem is mostly an energy problem."

It is, therefore, entirely appropriate that both the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee and the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee have drawn attention to the fact that renewable energy and energy efficiency have a key role to play in delivering carbon emissions cuts.

In its briefing for the debate, the microgeneration and energy efficiency bill steering group makes it clear that

"significant commitments are still required in the Bill that promote micro generation and energy efficiency as a vehicle to achieve early and significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions."

I acknowledge and welcome Mr Swinney's clarification that he intends to introduce a new interim target for 2020. However, as Patrick Harvie and others have mentioned, that still does not address the point that has been made by the steering group, the Royal Society of Edinburgh, Friends of the Earth Scotland, Scottish Renewables, the Association for the Conservation of Energy and others that ministers' failure to commit to making immediate, meaningful and quantifiable cuts in emissions effectively risks chucking in the towel on achieving the interim and 2050 targets.

Stewart Stevenson: Will the member give way?

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

On quick wins, the obvious place to start is energy efficiency. Inexplicably, the Government continues to treat energy efficiency as the Cinderella of the energy debate. After the consultation that was carried out by the previous Executive, Jim Mather felt confident enough in May 2007 to promise that he would make publication of an energy efficiency action plan an "early priority". A year later, he had another stab at guessing the date of the publication, saying this time that it would be published by the end of 2008. Now we are told that the action plan cannot be published until 12 months after the provisions in the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill come into force. Two years after the SNP came into office, this continued delay is simply not acceptable. That

is why the Liberal Democrat amendment calls for an energy efficiency action plan to be published within six months. Unless the Government takes the issue more seriously, its credibility on climate change and, indeed, on fuel poverty will be compromised. On microgeneration, too, ministers must use the opportunity that the bill presents to make progress with the proposals that are set out in Sarah Boyack's proposed energy efficiency and microgeneration bill, which commands widespread support.

Having dumped local income tax, ministers now have no excuse for opposing local tax incentives to boost the uptake of microrenewables and energy efficiency measures. The Energy Saving Trust argues that council tax rebates are more visible than any other fiscal incentives, and I understand that Ian Marchant of Scottish and Southern Energy has told Mr Swinney that the bill is the obvious vehicle for delivering such an incentive. I hope that ministers will respond positively to that.

On permitted development rights, the Government must show more ambition, not least in extending those rights to the non-domestic sector. The steps that have been taken by ministers today, while helpful in relation to solar panels and ground-source heat pumps, still do not go far enough. As ACE points out, with regard to micro wind and air-source heat pumps, guidelines threaten to "stunt development". Action on that point could be part of a concerted attempt to enhance the contribution that is made by renewable heat. Scottish Renewables proposes a target of generating at least 14 per cent of heat from renewables by 2020. It would be useful to hear the minister's views on how that might be achieved.

It would also be useful to hear what specific steps are being taken to further empower local communities to address the climate challenge. As the debates in this chamber on Community Energy Scotland and eco-congregations have demonstrated, the necessary desire, capacity and innovation are present in many of our communities and congregations, but a more decentralised, bottom-up approach is required to allow them to flourish.

The Government is right to remind us of the potential of the bill to be world leading and a fitting tribute to this Parliament as it enters its second decade. However, that potential will be realised only if ministers are more specific about how they intend to achieve their objectives between now and 2020.

Like others, I look forward to Parliament helping to deliver legislation of which we can all rightly be proud, and I have pleasure in supporting the general principles of the bill and the amendments

in the names of Alison McInnes and Sarah Boyack.

16:48

Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab):

This is a major bill by any standard, and it has been scrutinised to varying degrees by five parliamentary committees, including the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee, of which I am a member. I do not know about the other committees, but I know that the evidence-taking sessions that my committee held were numerous, comprehensive and very, very long. It is fair to say that there is a significant level of support for the general principles of the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill in the chamber and among those who submitted evidence to the committees, despite—or perhaps because of—the fact that the bill is lacking in detail.

It is because of that lack of detail that the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee calls on the Scottish Government to put before the Parliament at the earliest possible date a comprehensive strategy document outlining how it intends to achieve the targets that are set out in the bill. It is all very well having targets but, having launched a few in my time, I know that there is always a wee wumman who comes up and says, "Aye, son, but what are you actually gonnae dae?"

The Government has said that it has a strategic overview project, which will spawn an indicative delivery plan this summer, and that a report on policies and proposals, which will set out measures to deliver annual targets, will be published next summer. All of that is fine—that is what the Scottish Government is saying it is actually gonnae dae.

The Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee said that particular sectors must be prioritised. It identified four key sectors: land use, energy generation, energy efficiency and transport. The Government indicated that its indicative delivery plan—the one that is intended for the summer—will touch on heat supply and demand, electricity supply and demand, transport, rural land use and waste. Although the Government's language is slightly different from the language in the committee's report, it appears that the Government intends to respond to our concerns.

The Finance Committee, which considered the bill's financial implications, opined:

"the Financial Memorandum would have been stronger if modelling work had been carried out on the potential financial impact of the measures on businesses and public bodies."

In its response to the Finance Committee's report, the Scottish Government said that it would publish a revised financial memorandum to the bill at stage 2.

The Finance Committee gave formal notice that it might

"track the subsequent statutory instruments and seek to scrutinise the financial implications."

That is an important point, not just for the committee but for the Parliament. The bill is quite general. It is not vague, but it lacks detail, and in the years to come many of its consequences will be manifested through secondary legislation. We must therefore continue our scrutiny role for a long time.

Stewart Stevenson: We agree that work will not be finished when the bill passes into law. Scrutiny must continue all the way to 2050.

Charlie Gordon: The minister makes a fair point, but that aspect of the bill makes it rather unusual.

The Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee recommended that

"the Scottish Government provides, as a matter of urgency, details on how it intends fully to assess and present the job implications of plans it brings forward under this Bill."

The committee meant not just new job opportunities but threats to existing jobs and how such threats might be avoided. It is fair to say that the Scottish Government responded in suitably emollient terms.

Those and many other concerns, in particular the concern about targets that members have expressed, will merit more scrutiny, not just during the next stages of the bill but in the context of future secondary legislation. We will consider the issues in future parliamentary debates.

Outside the Parliament, individuals and businesses are helping to address the climate change agenda through innovation, as Cathy Peattie said. Two innovations have caught my eye. The new class 380 trains from Siemens for the Scottish rail network are efficient in their own right and will help towards modal shift from car to public transport. In my final 10 seconds I will mention the new website that has been launched to enable everyone to track the ambitious and exciting carbon capture and storage project that is proposed for Longannet power station.

That is my six minutes.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: It is indeed.

16:54

The Minister for Environment (Roseanna Cunningham): I appear to be semi-closing the

debate, which is a rather unusual position to be in. I will not have time to address every point that will be addressed in the closing speech of tomorrow afternoon's debate. The allocation of two days to the debate is an indication of the bill's importance. Indeed, two days is still not enough time for every member who wants to speak to do so.

The Government acknowledges that all ministers are climate change ministers, so by tomorrow evening members will have heard from several members of the ministerial team. That signals the collective commitment to ambitious legislation, not just while the bill goes through Parliament but after it has been passed, in the years ahead.

The Government's approach is that Scotland should focus on its distinctive strengths and become world class in them. Scotland's rich rural resources are among its greatest strengths. We have an environment of European and, indeed, world importance. That is the portfolio in which I have most interest. Rural Scotland is making its contribution. Emissions from agriculture have fallen 18 per cent from the levels in the early 1990s and now account for around 13 per cent of Scotland's emissions, but we must maintain the downward trajectory.

This seems like an appropriate point at which to make a more general comment about some of the things that have been said about emissions and targets. I reiterate that the annual targets will be set following the receipt of expert advice. However, the first batch—the targets for 2010 to 2022—must be set by 1 June next year and must be approved by the Parliament. That means that we will have certainty about the emissions reduction trajectory in little more than a year's time. They will be statutory targets set in secondary legislation and there will be complete certainty about them. I hope that that makes the matter slightly clearer.

I will say a few more things about the rural affairs and environment portfolio. In response to the recommendations of our agriculture and climate change stakeholder group, we developed our farming for a better climate programme and we are developing our first ever framework to protect soils from pollution and climate change. That is an example of the work on climate change that is going on right across the Government. Forestry Commission Scotland is one of a group of environmental public bodies—including SEPA, SNH and Historic Scotland—that are committing to climate change action plans of their own.

Members know have commented on our intention to increase forest cover from 17 per cent to around 25 per cent of Scotland's land area as our contribution to expanding the carbon sink. Expanding our forests would play an important

role in action on climate change, which is why we consulted on leasing to help fund forest-related mitigation measures. However, we have listened to what the public consultation told us, have withdrawn the proposals and will now consider the wider suggestions that various consultees made.

I am glad that everybody is glad that we did that, but the fundamental requirement remains the same and has to be addressed. Forestry Commission Scotland will continue to develop arrangements for renewable energy projects using joint ventures, but the five-year gap before realistic income streams can come from joint ventures means that we have to take shorter-term measures. As indicated previously, that means an acceleration of the pre-existing sales programme in the interim. The income from renewables is expected to rise from its current level of £6 million per year to about £10 million per year by 2012 and £30 million per year by 2020.

I hope that that answers some of Maureen Watt's comments. I listened to her speech with a certain degree of poignancy. We have shared committee scrutiny of the bill, even though I was surprised mid-scrutiny to turn into the object of scrutiny instead of the person doing the scrutinising.

A couple of members mentioned waste management, which is a notable success. Emissions have been cut since the early 1990s as less waste has been sent to landfill, but we need to keep making progress. The bill's various enabling provisions on waste management provide back-up powers should the voluntary measures not succeed. I assume that the lack of major comment on them suggests that they have a degree of general support. I remind the Parliament that they would be introduced—if at all—by affirmative procedure, so there would be plenty opportunity for debate.

Maureen Watt and Nanette Milne mentioned muirburn. They should be aware that, although it is included in the bill, other aspects of muirburn are likely to be addressed in separate legislation later in the Government's term in office.

Adapting to climate change is a new and important area of work. Last week, Stewart Stevenson launched a consultation on a climate change adaptation framework, which addresses some of the points that Patricia Ferguson raised in her intervention. We want to share anything that we learn with others.

The bill strikes the right balance. There has been a lot of discussion about the detail that members say should be in it. However, if it was all in the bill, the bill would be unfeasibly large and, more to the point, the bill's passage through the Parliament would be delayed.

It is acknowledged that adaptation matters and that Parliament should see regular and rigorous progress reports on how the Government is dealing with it. The Government is up for that. There are also powers to allow ministers to impose adaptation duties on organisations at a later date, if that is required.

I commend the bill to members. There will be a full closing speech on it in tomorrow's debate. Points raised in this debate but not answered by me will be answered then. The bill is our chance, as legislators in 2009, to leave a huge legacy for not only the immediate but the long-term future of Scotland. I hope that we do not allow that legacy to be sunk by petty squabbling, which will not help anybody in the long run.

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): That concludes this afternoon's debate on the general principles of the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill. The debate will conclude tomorrow afternoon. I remind members who were not here earlier that I am using my discretion under rule 11.3.3 of the standing orders to allow the questions on motion S3M-3963, in the name of Stewart Stevenson, and on the two amendments to be put at decision time tomorrow night.

Business Motions

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S3M-4062, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, which sets out an extension to the timetable for stage 1 of the Scottish Local Government (Elections) Bill.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Scottish Local Government (Elections) Bill at Stage 1 be extended to 15 May 2009.—[*Bruce Crawford.*]

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of business motion S3M-4061, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, which sets out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Wednesday 13 May 2009

2.30 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Bill

followed by Business Motion

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 14 May 2009

9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Stage 1 Debate: Scottish Local Government (Elections) Bill

followed by Financial Resolution: Scottish Local Government (Elections) Bill

11.40 am General Question Time

12 noon First Minister's Question Time

2.15 pm Themed Question Time
Finance and Sustainable Growth

2.55 pm Scottish Government Debate:
Scotland's Engagement in the
United States of America and
Canada

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 20 May 2009

2.30 pm Time for Reflection

followed by

followed by

followed by

followed by

5.00 pm

followed by

Thursday 21 May 2009

9.15 am

followed by

11.40 am

12 noon

2.15 pm

2.55 pm

followed by

5.00 pm

followed by
Crawford.]

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

Stage 3 Proceedings: Education
(Additional Support for Learning)
(Scotland) Bill

Business Motion

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

Decision Time

Members' Business

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

Scottish Government Business

General Question Time

First Minister's Question Time

Themed Question Time
Europe, External Affairs and Culture;
Education and Lifelong Learning

Scottish Government Business

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

Decision Time

Members' Business—[*Bruce*

Decision Time

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):
There are no decisions to be taken today.

Midwives

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S3M-3692, in the name of Mary Scanlon, on international midwives day, 5 May 2009. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes that 5 May is International Midwives' Day 2009; welcomes the contribution that midwives make to the health and wellbeing of women and their babies in Scotland and around the world; recognises that levels of maternal and infant mortality, especially in the developing world, are unacceptable; believes that achieving UN Millennium Development Goal 4 (Reduce child mortality) and Goal 5 (Improve maternal health) would amount to a giant leap for better maternal and infant health globally; acknowledges that more can always be done in Scotland to reduce our own levels of maternal and infant mortality, especially in remote and rural areas; supports greater international action to reduce maternal and infant deaths globally, and strives to provide ever-safer care for Scotland's own women and children.

17:02

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):
I am delighted to secure this debate in the week of international midwives day, and I welcome the midwives who are in the public gallery.

I think that this might be the first time the Parliament has debated midwifery, but it is nonetheless important, particularly as we have three expectant fathers here in the Tory ranks. *[Laughter.]* I just want to put the debate into context. I can see that members are all guessing now.

Women are continually told that giving birth is the most natural thing in the world and an experience to be cherished, but for a huge proportion of the world's expectant mothers childbirth is a daunting experience filled with worry and fear. For women throughout the world, access to medical care and the services of a midwife are critical.

In 2000, the eight millennium development goals were endorsed by 189 countries. Millennium development goal 5 aims to reduce the maternal mortality ratio by 75 per cent and to achieve universal access to reproductive health care by 2015. That goal is critical because, every year, more than 1 million children are left motherless and vulnerable because of maternal death and 20 million women experience potentially fatal complications during childbirth. In eastern Africa, only 34 per cent of births are attended by skilled health attendants.

The target of universal access to reproductive health care is far from being achieved. Although

the use of contraception has improved impressively during the past two decades in many regions, the unmet need for family planning is still unacceptably high in, for example, sub-Saharan Africa, where 24 per cent of women who want to delay or stop childbearing have no access to family planning.

Girls aged between 15 and 20 are twice as likely to die in childbirth as those in their 20s. Girls under the age of 15 are five times as likely to die in childbirth. Some 200 million women who would like to avoid childbearing are without access to safe and effective contraceptives. In the developing world, unsafe abortions result in 68,000 deaths each year. The facts are that, every year, more than 0.5 million women die from complications in pregnancy and childbirth and more than 300 million suffer from avoidable illness and disability. That means that one woman dies every minute of every day, including around 70,000 girls and young women aged between 15 and 19.

Maternal deaths are the greatest indicator of inequality between rich and poor women. In the poorest parts of the world, the risk of a woman dying as a result of pregnancy or childbirth is about one in six. In northern Europe, the risk is about one in 30,000. Some 99 per cent of all maternal deaths occur in the developing world. Children who lose their mother are 10 times more likely to die prematurely than those who do not.

Millennium development goal 5 will be achieved only through long-term investment in health services and health infrastructure. There is a need for skilled birth attendants who have supplies and equipment, improved access to family planning services and action to address unsafe abortion. Maternal mortality is currently decreasing by less than 1 per cent a year. That is far below the 5.5 per cent annual improvement that is needed to reach the millennium development goal target by 2015.

We also need to be aware of the campaign to end fistula—a rupture in the birth canal that occurs during prolonged, obstructed labour and that leaves women incontinent, isolated and ashamed. Given that nine out of 10 fistulas can be successfully repaired, that is an issue that needs to be addressed.

During 2008, significant steps were taken towards reducing maternal mortality and achieving the necessary improvements in health service provision in developing countries, but at the current rate of progress it is unlikely that the millennium development goal target will be achieved by 2015.

I take this opportunity to commend Jack McConnell for his achievements, working with

many people and organisations—including, I read, the girls of Mary Erskine school—to raise £25,000 for the wellness centre for nurses and health workers in Malawi, and delighted that he has joined us for this evening's debate.

In Scotland, we still have one of the lowest breastfeeding rates in Europe and we appear to have very serious issues of maternal obesity. Recent research by the World Health Organization found that 13 Scottish women die for every 100,000 live births. I do not know about other members, but I was shocked to realise that that is more than double the European average, which is six per 100,000. In fact, the number of women who die during childbirth in Scotland is similar to that of former Soviet countries such as Belarus and Latvia. Our teenage pregnancy rate is among the highest in Europe. Drugs and alcohol issues also present huge problems for pregnant women and children.

Although the maternal mortality rate in the UK as a whole has not fallen in the past few years, I understand that many of those who died had poor general health and were more likely to have smoked, that at least half were overweight and that some had chaotic lifestyles, so they did not always seek—and therefore were not given—the health care support they needed during pregnancy.

In Scotland, the plan for midwives to take over antenatal care from general practitioners has recently been implemented without public debate. As far as I am aware, no strong evidence base has been produced to show that the quality of care of mother and child will be best served by that change. It might be that the quality of care of mother and child will be best served by it, but it would be a courtesy to allow parliamentarians to endorse it. That approach is being replicated in the move to take health visitors out of GP practices and away from the family doctor, who is often best placed to offer advice and discuss the pregnancy in the context of the woman's life and family situation. I place it on record that rather than read in the newspapers that GPs are to be excluded from that part of the care of mothers and families, I would like to see the evidence base that demonstrates that the proposal will bring health benefits.

We should be proud of the fact that HIV testing is provided for all pregnant women in Scotland, which is undoubtedly enormously beneficial to mother and child. I am delighted to sponsor the debate and to acknowledge the excellent work of midwives in Scotland. I hope that their training and expertise can be used to assist in those African countries in which maternal death is devastating.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open debate. Speeches should be of four minutes.

17:11

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife (Lab)): I congratulate Mary Scanlon on securing such an interesting debate and on her tour de force of a speech, in which she covered so many areas so well.

I remember well my first experience of the difficulties that can occur during childbirth, which I gained in the 60s in Sudan when I saw the consequences of female circumcision. Even though female circumcision is a particularly unpleasant procedure that leads to great difficulties with birth, it is still practised widely—although it has been fully outlawed in this country.

Mary Scanlon dealt effectively with deaths during childbirth overseas, so I will not go into it again. Suffice it to say that meeting the millennium development goal by 2015 is a difficult challenge and if we do not all make considerable efforts it will not be achieved.

It is vital that we tackle the problems that exist. The number of mothers with AIDS who give birth in Africa, for example, is a massive problem. Even when societies reach a higher socioeconomic level they are confronted by tobacco companies that mercilessly exploit people by encouraging them to take up smoking. As we know, smoking during pregnancy, which leads to premature and low-weight babies, is still a problem in this country.

The problems that we face are to do with the fact that, until 2003, the birth rate in this country had been dropping steadily, but it has since gone up and it continues to increase—it has increased by roughly 10 per cent over the past five years. That is leading to greater pressures on midwives throughout Scotland. In some areas, midwives are carrying excessive case loads; I am sure that some of the midwives in the public gallery will tell MSPs of their experiences later.

The size of midwives' case loads is being exacerbated by the emergence of new problems and the growth over the past 20 years of existing ones, the first of which is drugs. We now know that roughly 50,000 children have parents who have drug problems. They must go through an antenatal process, in which the support of their midwives is crucial. Obstetricians such as Dr Mary Hepburn in Glasgow have done a lot of work in that field, along with midwife colleagues, to support patients, and the specialist team in Edinburgh that is led by a midwife is doing sterling work in that regard.

The other problem is alcohol. Foetal alcohol syndrome was first diagnosed by Dr Peter Whatmore, a colleague with whom I worked in Cornton Vale prison. We discovered that a number of the babies who were born to women in the prison had unusual features. Foetal alcohol syndrome is now well recognised. As I am sure

the minister will tell us, research is to be commissioned to determine the number of babies who are born with foetal alcohol syndrome, because we still do not know the numbers involved.

I have asked a number of parliamentary questions about midwifery over the past few months, because I have concerns about the fact that seven health boards are not meeting the standards on the number of supervisors of midwives. I understand that the issue is being addressed, but it is quite inappropriate that boards are not meeting standards, which are usually a minimum. The issue needs to be addressed and I hope that it will be.

At £500 per annum, the incentive for midwives to become supervisors is pretty meagre and does not reflect the excellent work that supervisors do to support their fellow midwives and ensure that practice is safe—so that we can address the 13 deaths per 100,000 live births that Mary Scanlon alluded to.

I will finish on the matter of general practice. I too think that the abandonment of the contract is inappropriate: it should have been adjusted. There is no doubt that the role of GPs has changed, but general practice is the one specialism that has an holistic role to play in the patient's life. The GP is the one person with whom all patients are registered. The abandonment of the contract is not appropriate and there should have been far wider debate, as Mary Scanlon said.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind members that time is limited and many members wish to speak.

17:16

Angela Constance (Livingston) (SNP): I congratulate Mary Scanlon and commend her for marking international midwives day with tonight's members' business debate; there is much to celebrate in the good work undertaken by midwives at home and abroad.

I have absolutely no doubt that we need to enhance the role of midwives and how they are perceived and valued as well as to increase the number of midwives here in Scotland and in the developing world. The value of a good midwife is never more evident than when the birth of a child is not progressing as planned: I recall my birth plan going well and truly out the window.

I would like to pay tribute to two midwives—Sandra Smith and Michelle Davidson—who work at St. John's hospital in Livingston. They recently won a top award from the Royal College of Midwives for promoting normal and natural childbirth. The judges selected that project

because it was innovative and reinvigorated a Cinderella service—antenatal care.

We have to remember that pregnancy and childbirth are normal and natural experiences but, as Mary Scanlon highlighted, for some women—depending on where they live, their access to health services and their own health—they can be perilous. Worldwide, a woman dies in pregnancy and childbirth every minute. Over half a million women die due to complications and 10 million women suffer debilitating illness and lifelong disabilities. Those are truly shocking statistics.

There is a huge disparity in maternal health between rich and poor countries and within rich and poor countries depending on whether one is in a rural or an urban area and whether one has had access to education. A woman's lifetime risk of dying in childbirth in the developing world is one in 76 and in countries such as Niger it is as high as one in seven, but in the industrialised world it is one in 7,000.

As we heard, mothers play a vital role in the economic health of their families and motherless children are trapped in a cycle of poverty. Worldwide, 2 million children are orphans due to their mothers dying in childbirth. Despite the progress, the number of deaths of children under five remains unacceptably high although it has dipped below 10 million—an annual death rate that is truly appalling, particularly when it is from preventable diseases such as pneumonia, diarrhoea, malaria and measles.

The situation in Scotland is very different. Nonetheless we are not without our challenges. While neonatal and postnatal deaths have decreased over the past 30 years, the rate of stillbirth remains static. Like Mary Scanlon, I was shocked that the number of women per 100,000 births who die in Scotland is 13 and how poorly that compares with rates in other European countries.

Low birth weight is a crucial issue that affects 6 per cent of births in Scotland but is related to 60 per cent of perinatal deaths. Smoking and the age and weight of the mother are factors in low birth weight. I cannot help but note that the latest figures, from 2005-06, show that 133 low birth-weight babies were born in West Lothian. It is obvious that maternal health relates greatly to Scotland's record as the sick man of Europe, and I look forward to hearing about how the Government will progress the agenda.

17:20

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab): I congratulate Mary Scanlon on bringing the first debate on midwives to the chamber. On this historic day, we should remember that members'

business debates are an important part of the parliamentary process. I recall my own members' business debate on breastfeeding in 2001, which later resulted in the Breastfeeding etc (Scotland) Act 2005.

I am grateful for the opportunity to commend the contribution that midwives make to the health and wellbeing of women and babies in Scotland and throughout the world. Midwifery is, of course, about more than just delivering babies. It is important in the postnatal period, particularly because help with breastfeeding is crucial for many new mums. A midwife's support can make the difference between a mum deciding to continue breastfeeding, and deciding to formula feed.

A project in my constituency, which is a unique curriculum-based breastfeeding programme that midwives are involved in delivering—if members will excuse the pun—has been very successful, and has been externally evaluated with positive outcomes. It is part of the healthy lifestyle project that is based at Coatbridge high school and managed by Mr Charles Fawcett, and it offers an holistic and integrated approach to health and wellbeing. The programme educates boys and girls about the benefits of breastfeeding, which is vital, because in some council wards in Coatbridge, breastfeeding rates are as low as 3 per cent. Many young people in my constituency have no experience or knowledge of the crucial role of breastfeeding in child health and development.

Although individuals make decisions about positive health behaviours such as breastfeeding, those take place in complex social circumstances that are influenced by attitudes, beliefs, motivations and community norms. The healthy lifestyle project is so important and so successful because it is rooted in the local community and takes account of the complete health context of the Monklands area. It is part of a wider strategy that has been complimented and acknowledged by many experts on the subject, including Phil Hanlon, who is a professor of public health at the University of Glasgow. In addition to the breastfeeding initiative, the project has extended its holistic approach to its aiming higher in Malawi programme. It has been supported by a Scottish Government international grant and it has, working in partnership in Malawi with the Forum for African Women Educationalists, formally evaluated a mother group training programme with the local community and schools in Luchenza market town, near Mulanje in Malawi.

I am told that that "mother group" is a deceptive term, because the group usually comprises village headmen, headteachers and influential women. That is because it is necessary to overcome

resistance and rivalries to create an environment that avoids harmful historical cultural practices towards females. The mother group training addresses issues that impede the development of women and girls in Malawi, such as female genital mutilation, forced early marriages, sexually transmitted diseases, miscarriages, stillbirths and poor nutrition, especially at the stage when girls reach puberty. Girls in Malawi also face many other issues.

Malawi has an unenviable record, with an infant mortality rate of 90 deaths for every 1,000 live births; and an under-five mortality rate of 130 deaths per 1,000. That compares badly with rates in the UK of five deaths per 1,000 and six deaths per 1,000 respectively. The external evaluation of that particular healthy lifestyle programme provided a strong evidence base with positive outcomes. The programme is important because educating women so that they have fewer children, healthier pregnancies and safe deliveries ensures that their babies are more likely to survive childbirth, the vulnerable first months of life and the critical first five years.

I wanted to mention the girls go for health initiative, but I realise that I do not have enough time. I will finish by saying that I fully support Mary Scanlon's call to reduce child mortality and to improve maternal health, as set out in the United Nations millennium development goals. I hope that today's debate will help to raise awareness of the invaluable job that is done by midwives, and I once again applaud the vital contribution that they make to the health and wellbeing of mothers and babies in Scotland and abroad.

17:24

Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): I am very pleased to speak in support of Mary Scanlon's motion, and to congratulate her on securing the debate.

When I was at Aberdeen medical school, I was privileged to be taught by the late Sir Dugald Baird, just before he retired in 1965. He was instrumental in developing the antenatal and perinatal care that we have come to take for granted in Scotland and, thanks to his research and practice, maternal mortality rates tumbled.

Although those excellent results stem partly from better health and nutrition, they are in no small measure due to the expertise and commitment of midwives, both in hospital settings and in the community. Sadly a few women here still die in childbirth; however, the vast majority of women can expect to come through the process unscathed, although, as Mary Scanlon made clear, there are areas in which care is still not ideal.

Women in Scotland value their local maternity services. Indeed, as many of us who have been involved in campaigns to save maternity hospitals know, whenever changes are proposed to the delivery of such services, the women make it clear that they do not want them to be tampered with. In a relatively successful campaign in which I was involved in Aboyne in Aberdeenshire, a birthing unit was retained within the cottage hospital. However, most of the antenatal and perinatal care was transferred to the community, with expert community midwives in charge of patient care.

With many women lacking the family support that previous generations of mothers could rely on, and with increasing numbers exhibiting the effects of drug and alcohol misuse, our midwives are playing an increasing role in educating mothers before the birth of their babies, giving them information on how to bring them up in a healthy lifestyle.

By and large, we like our maternity service, which is, on the whole, very successful and gives most mothers a choice about where their babies will be born. Improvements can always be made, and we must be ever watchful for complications that can affect mother and baby. However, we can generally consider ourselves to be fortunate.

Sadly, in many other parts of the world—for example sub-Saharan Africa and Indonesia—maternal mortality rates are still unacceptably high with, as we have heard, more than half a million women dying from pregnancy and childbirth complications every year. I find it shocking that in this day and age the developing world accounts for 99 per cent of all maternal deaths. It is indicative of the severe poverty that still exists in those parts of the world.

Led by Professor Wendy Graham, the University of Aberdeen is again playing a major role in combating maternal mortality, this time globally. Professor Graham, who is internationally renowned for her work in measuring maternal health outcomes and interventions, has undertaken collaborative research work in a large number of developing countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, and regularly provides technical support to a number of international agencies.

Professor Graham also runs the initiative for maternal mortality programme assessment—or impact—a well recognised global research programme. Its results should provide science-based information on maternal, perinatal and economic outcomes, with the objectives of improving knowledge of the health, social and economic consequences of pregnancy, abortion and delivery for women in developing countries, and of mobilising that knowledge in comprehensive efforts to evaluate interventions to

make pregnancy safer. Clearly, that research will inform progress towards achieving the millennium development goal of improving maternal health, which is targeted at reducing maternal deaths and providing universal access to reproductive health. Key to achieving that will be the availability of skilled midwives, with appropriate equipment and supplies, better access to family planning services and action to deal with unsafe abortion.

Much remains to be done. So far, little progress has been made in sub-Saharan Africa and, as the motion suggests, greater international action is needed to resolve the global problem of maternal and infant mortality. However, I hope that, in the fullness of time and with the help of the midwifery profession, the work that has been initiated by the Aberdeen team will bear fruit and be instrumental in improving global maternal health, in the same way that Sir Dugald Baird's pioneering work last century did so much for mothers and infants in this country.

17:28

Jack McConnell (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab): It has been said that, under their care, midwives do not just help with births, but change lives. More so than on any other occasion, that was brought home to me four years ago this month when I visited Bottom hospital in Lilongwe to meet a group of Scottish midwives. They had volunteered to work in the most horrendous circumstances; indeed, what I saw there was certainly the closest that I have ever been to hell on earth. In Bottom hospital, more than 1,000 people give birth every month, which is double the number of women who give birth in Edinburgh royal infirmary. At any given time, there are approximately 20 midwives to support the women, who queue outside in the dirt and who, when they get inside, regularly find that there is no running water—never mind hot water—and very little medication or other support.

At the time, those of us who visited Bottom hospital thought, as many others who have visited it since have, that there was a desperate need for something to be done. Of course, midwives in Scotland have led the campaign to ensure that we in Scotland help to build new maternity services in Lilongwe and elsewhere in Malawi. I understand that a new maternity wing for high-risk cases will be opened later this year and that construction of the new Bottom hospital is about halfway through. Those are great achievements, but they address a pressing need. The midwives certainly changed lives in inspiring us in Scotland to make a difference in Malawi, and particularly to make a difference for children there. More than 100 out of every 1,000 children there will die before the age

of five, and more than 800 out of every 100,000 mothers will die in childbirth.

One of those campaigning midwives, Linda McDonald, is in Malawi helping and volunteering her services. If members want to read about the combination of hope and despair that that work provides, they should read her blog on the Malawi Underprivileged Mothers recipes website. There are vivid descriptions of the life of a midwife and the life of a mother giving birth in Malawi.

We cannot turn our backs on conditions in Malawi, anywhere else in sub-Saharan Africa or elsewhere in the world. International midwives day gives us an opportunity not just to celebrate the work of midwives the world over, but to commit to the importance of that work and its importance in achieving millennium development goals 4, 5 and 6.

I praise the work of the Royal College of Midwives in Scotland, which has taken up the challenge in Malawi and elsewhere. It has brought Malawian midwives to Scotland to learn about the techniques and services that are provided here and it has supported work in Malawi financially and in other ways. I hope that its work will continue for many years to come and that it will inspire others to do the same.

I want to say something on the 10th anniversary of the first elections to the Scottish Parliament. I have said consistently that the partnership between the people of Scotland and the people of Malawi represents the best of Scotland. That partnership has been a way for us to ensure that our devolved Parliament looks outwards, not just inwards.

Today is also a day to celebrate the kind of Parliament the Scottish Parliament is. When members were elected 10 years ago, a greater proportion of women were elected than had been elected before to any institution in the United Kingdom. That has influenced our debates, their tone and the priorities that we have set and, 10 years on from those first elections, this debate is another opportunity to celebrate the fact that the women who have served in the Scottish Parliament have shaped the nature of our debates and the priorities that we have given certain issues. I hope that that will continue in the years to come, because it makes the Parliament a far more representative and caring place.

17:33

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): I congratulate my colleague Mary Scanlon on securing the debate. Generally speaking, I am not a devotee of international days, but international midwives day is an exception that I am happy to support.

As members have said, midwives are crucial to the unborn child and maternal health before and after delivery of the child, and through the very vulnerable early years of a young child's life. Members have said that they are particularly crucial to children and mothers who give birth in sub-Saharan Africa. I will not go back over the statistics, as they have been well rehearsed.

International agencies such as the WHO, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Bank have combined to provide increased support to countries with high child mortality rates. However, I have read that, worldwide, around 350,000 more midwives are needed to meet millennium development targets. The deaths of mothers, babies and young children are, of course, highly preventable. Midwives provide expertise through all stages of pregnancy to birth and beyond, vaccines, anti-malarial drugs and bed nets. They identify, counsel and treat pregnant women with HIV and AIDS, prevent mother and child transmission, and play a vital role where there is diarrhoea, measles, malaria—Angela Constance mentioned those—or malnutrition, which accounts for 70 per cent of deaths in developing countries.

As Jack McConnell eloquently said, some countries, such as Malawi, have cut child deprivation in half, and life expectancy has improved in them, but life expectancy is still bad for mothers, babies and children in countries in which there is conflict and bad governance, such as Zimbabwe and Somalia.

It was interesting that Jack McConnell talked about women in the Scottish Parliament and the status of women. Colleagues will recall that, during the G8 summit in 2005, we had an alternative summit—the W8, which involved eight women from Africa who were trying to enhance the role of women in society across the African continent. I believe that, deep at the core of neglectful or non-existent antenatal and postnatal care lies the status of women. In some countries, women are often ranked well below the men in the community and even young boys. We could even say that, sometimes, they are dispensable. Until women are seen as being as important as the men in those societies, there will be an issue. We must fight to change the culture in those areas.

All is not well in this country, of course. We have evidence that, in Scotland, in deprived areas where there are inequalities, child care is less likely to be good and women are less likely to have healthy babies or to have a decent pregnancy. Therefore, there are issues here, too.

Elaine Smith raised the issue of breastfeeding. A huge problem in some developing countries is that formula companies target women and encourage them away from breastfeeding and towards

formula, which can be mixed with water that is contaminated or dirty. As a result of mothers being put into a culture of using bottles, babies are taken away from breastfeeding and are dying because of contaminated water. We should address that issue. I am sure that, if there were more midwives out in the field, they would be able to stop that change that is taking place in some countries.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am minded to accept a motion without notice to extend the debate to allow us to complete it.

Motion moved,

That, under Rule 8.14.3, the debate be extended by up to 30 minutes.—[*Mary Scanlon.*]

Motion agreed to.

17:37

Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): I, too, congratulate Mary Scanlon on securing this important debate. Ten years ago today, I had the honour of being the first woman elected to a Scottish Parliament. That was a day full of hope and expectation. The Parliament was designed from its conception to be different and it aimed specifically to be family friendly and inclusive. As Jack McConnell said, it also aimed to have a different type of debate. Tonight's debate is part of that process.

Ten years on and three children later, I have certainly tested the Parliament's family-friendly nature. I have seen up close Lanarkshire's maternity and midwifery services. I have yet to manage a normal and natural delivery, but I think that I will give up before I try that any more. I have only the highest regard for the midwives who cared for me during each of my three pregnancies. In theory, the process has changed since I had James eight and a half years ago but, in practice, I saw little difference during my pregnancy last year, which led to Johann's birth. In all three pregnancies, the midwives were caring, supportive and encouraging and they provided information and reassurance. As Angela Constance said, they are there when the birth plan goes out the window, encouraging and supporting people through difficult times.

Midwives face many challenges, particularly that of an ever-increasing workload. Other challenges have come about as more and more women have become dependent on drugs or alcohol, which brings challenges during pregnancy and childbirth. In the past year or so, challenges have come about as a result of an increasing birth rate because of the increase in the number of migrant families. I would be interested to hear from the minister what analysis is being done of the impact that that is having on maternity services throughout Scotland. More and more families are

coming here and having children. They are very welcome, but what audit is being done to consider what further services are needed?

When women become pregnant, they expect that everything will go well and that things will run smoothly. However, unfortunately, even here in Scotland, that does not always happen. I welcome developments such as additional scans that provide further reassurance and support for women. I also welcome the changes that have meant that midwives are far more involved in the day-to-day planning of care.

Like others, I have seen midwifery in another country—in Malawi, in my case. It gave me something to think about. I visited Bottom hospital and was struck by what I saw. I also visited many rural areas and saw the challenges facing women who give birth in villages without electricity and running water, and without support staff and midwives. With the right level of intervention, 80 per cent of maternal deaths in Malawi are preventable. I therefore commend all those in Scotland who are supporting midwives and the health service in Malawi to ensure that women have access to appropriate health care there. I encourage the minister to ensure that support will be provided to allow that work to continue.

It will be a real mark of this Parliament if, in 20 years' time, we are able to consider the progress that has been made and say that the Parliament has played its part in preventing maternal deaths not only here in Scotland, but in parts of the developing world.

17:41

Shirley-Anne Somerville (Lothians) (SNP): I, too, congratulate Mary Scanlon on securing this evening's debate.

I recently experienced a first-class service at a midwife-led unit, and I cannot begin to imagine the experiences of women in countries such as Malawi. When I worked for the Royal College of Nursing, I had the honour of meeting representatives from the National Association of Nurses of Malawi. One of them was a feisty and formidable woman called Dorothy Ngomo. We toured Edinburgh royal infirmary with Linda McDonald, whom Jack McConnell has already mentioned. Dorothy and her colleague could not believe the facilities that we have in this country—which we take for granted—when compared with the facilities for women where they came from.

Dorothy told us many stories of women walking mile upon mile to get to the nearest hospital to seek support. I compare those stories with my only complaint, which was about my husband's rather erratic driving at some roundabouts on the way to our excellent midwife-led unit. I also compare my

worries about whether I would get access to a birthing pool with the worries of Malawian mums who do not even know whether there will be running water for them. I compare my worries about whether I would be able to plug in my relaxation tape on my iPod with the worries of pregnant Malawian women about whether there would be a midwife to look after them. Comparing my experience with the stories that Dorothy told me really brought it all home to me.

The role of the midwife is central to an expectant mother and her child. In my case, no question was too small or too daft—and I can assure members that I had plenty very small and very daft questions during my pregnancy. I had to get used to the fact that there were sometimes no right answers, but the midwives did all that they could to reassure me. Despite a scare at the start of my labour, which meant that a doctor was allowed into the room, it was midwives who saw me through the delivery of my daughter.

It was also midwives who saw me through the important first couple of days, which brings me on to what Elaine Smith said about breastfeeding. Had it not been for the excellent one-on-one support that I received from midwives and nursery nurses in the unit, there would have been no way that I would have carried on breastfeeding for more than a day. It may be natural and it may be normal, but that does not mean that it is easy. No one had told my daughter about it; she did not know that she had to take part in the process. Without the midwives, I would not have been able to continue successfully with it.

During my many hours of discussions with the midwives who were helping me, we discussed why other women give up on breastfeeding. Much of it seems to have to do with social attitudes—whether the attitudes of partners or, sometimes, of other mothers. We heard about a mother who complained about a woman who was breastfeeding in a four-bed unit. The complainer felt that it was disgusting to do that when visitors were in the unit. Midwives should not have to deal with such attitudes when encouraging women to breastfeed.

I commend midwives for what they do in hospitals and in the community, and I commend the Royal College of Midwives for its work to support women in the Lothians in particular, in our campaign with Lothian Buses, which had refused to let new mums or other parents and guardians on to buses with certain types of pram. There is no doubt that the expertise that the Royal College of Midwives brought to that process had a direct impact on the decisions that Lothian Buses has now taken to pilot a new design.

I commend the role of midwives not just here in Scotland but abroad, where midwives deal with

circumstances that are more difficult than we can possibly imagine. I thank Mary Scanlon again for allowing us the opportunity to debate the subject today.

17:45

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Shona Robison): On behalf of the Scottish Government, I very much welcome this debate on international midwives day, and I thank Mary Scanlon for bringing it to the Parliament. I was amused by the looks of shock on the Tory benches, however, when she mentioned the “three expectant fathers”—there were some worried-looking people when she said that.

On international midwives day it is good to remember that Scotland's 3,500 midwives are part of a huge global family of midwives of more than half a million men and women—we should remember that there are male midwives, too. Within that family, the role of midwives and the circumstances in which they work differ considerably. Indeed, many countries suffer particularly significant challenges, as has been outlined very well in some fantastic speeches. Irrespective of those differences, however, each midwife around the world shares a bond and a commitment to provide the best possible care for women and their infants during one of the most special phases of life.

I am pleased to say that Scotland is a leading light in midwifery practice, and we are determined to ensure that women receive the highest quality of maternity care. As our knowledge and understanding increase, we are constantly developing and improving that care. All women should have as natural a birth experience as possible, which is achieved by working with and listening to the women for whom the care is provided.

As members are probably aware, Scottish maternity policy, as set out in “A Framework for maternity services in Scotland”, recognises the importance of the midwife as primary carer in the delivery of maternity services. We are committed to ensuring that women and their babies are cared for using safe, clinically effective, evidence-based models of care before, during and after pregnancy. We believe that maternity services should be based on informed choice, promoting childbirth as a natural event, ensuring local accessibility and supporting the establishment of community maternity units where possible—there are currently 22 of them across Scotland. We recognise the vital and valuable role that midwives play in delivering services in community maternity units, and the Scottish programme for clinical effectiveness in reproductive health has

recognised the enormous contribution that community maternity units make to maternity care.

The keeping childbirth natural and dynamic programme—KCND—is a great example of our efforts to ensure that women have as natural a birth as possible. Midwives play a central role in that approach: under it, they play their part in implementing a multiprofessional programme of work, which will ensure that the midwife is the first point of contact, that evidence-based care is provided, that unnecessary interventions are reduced and that multiprofessional care pathways are provided. That will ensure an informed choice and provide the best possible support for vulnerable women and families, as has been mentioned by members in the debate. The work is aimed at making the experience of maternity services and childbirth the best possible.

To support KCND's implementation we have provided resources for consultant midwives in 12 NHS boards to co-ordinate the work and to implement the changes in practice. That is a significant investment in clinical midwifery leadership, and it raises the profile of midwifery practice. I am pleased that the programme is progressing so well and that all NHS boards are supportive of it.

I will turn now to some of the concerns that have been raised about that programme. I reassure members—specifically Mary Scanlon and Richard Simpson—that the programme has the support of all stakeholders, including the National Childbirth Trust. It plays well into risk assessment early in pregnancy, which enables early intervention for those who require additional medical or social support that is—crucially—tailored to their needs and delivered by the most appropriate professional. The evidence tells us that that is the way to proceed, whether we are dealing with foetal alcohol syndrome or the low birth-weight issues that Angela Constance identified. I reassure members that women who wish to continue to have their GP as first point of contact will be able to do so; there is no question about that. It is important to recognise that, and I hope that I have reassured members. The programme is positive, and it would be unfortunate to present it as anything other than that.

I am aware that time is limited, so I will turn to the millennium development goals. Mary Scanlon laid out well some of the sobering statistics on maternal deaths in the developing world and why the millennium development goals are important. Shirley-Anne Somerville made the point well that we sometimes take for granted what is on our doorstep, given what some women around the world must cope with in childbirth. What should be a wonderful life event can be terrifying for some

women. That point has come across well in the debate.

The Scottish Government's international development policy focuses on poverty reduction and achieving the millennium development goals. All Scottish Government-funded projects are required to show how their activities will contribute to that. Nowhere is that more evident than in our engagement with Malawi and the co-operation agreement that our two countries signed. I pay tribute to Jack McConnell for his work on that; his speech outlined well why all that work is important.

The co-operation agreement's health strand is well established and has been developed through strong links between organisations, institutions and people. As has been said, Malawi has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world, so it is not surprising that it has asked us to prioritise funding to address the problems of maternal health and child mortality. We have done that: through the Scottish Government's international development fund, we are supporting several projects that build on work that is under way and in which Scotland has specific skills and expertise to offer.

In the most recent funding rounds, we announced support for projects that will target the treatment of children with severe malnutrition and work to prevent malnutrition in the long term—members identified malnutrition as a key cause of infant mortality.

We will also support projects to strengthen and speed up the referral process for women who experience complications in childbirth, through the provision of training for traditional birth attendants in southern Malawi, and projects to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality by training health workers to implement maternal health and safe motherhood programmes. Reducing maternal mortality through training in emergency obstetric skills for health professionals, particularly in rural areas of Malawi, is important.

Like members, we recognise that a lot of work has still to be done. We look forward to working together in partnership with Malawi, and we will take the lead from Malawi on what it wants to assist and complement the work that is being undertaken to address the difficult problems that are faced there.

I thank members for their contributions to the debate, and I will write to any members whose questions I did not address in the short time that was available for my speech. The debate was wide ranging and good.

Meeting closed at 17:54.

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