

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 11 November 2009

Session 3

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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 11 November 2009

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

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):

Good afternoon. It is perhaps particularly apt that, on this remembrance day, our time for reflection leader is the Rev Air Vice-Marshall Peter Mills of the Royal Air Force.

The Rev Air Vice-Marshall Peter W Mills (Royal Air Force): The 11th day of the 11th month: it is obviously remembrance.

Twenty years ago, while serving unaccompanied in the Falkland Islands, I was ready for the “We miss you, dad” and “When are you coming home?” letters from my children. Nothing, however, could have prepared me for the impact of my six-year-old daughter’s letter, saying, “Remember me, dad?” I get the same kind of feeling every time I hear the Kohima epitaph:

“When you go home
Tell them of us and say
For your tomorrow
We gave our today.”

That is probably because both are personal.

To Stalin is attributed the saying, “One death is a tragedy, a million deaths a statistic.” The one death that touches our own family brings far more grief than the thousands who die all around the world on any given day. The shared personal tragedy of two world wars has diminished over the years and a more detached national remembrance has evolved. The majority today do not remember faces and conversations, a physical presence or memories shared. However, a national remembrance is so important. For one thing, it has heightened awareness of the cost of military interventions in such places as Afghanistan, resulting in public support for military personnel even if there is not always a corresponding support for the political decision to be there.

It was Jesus who said that no king sets out to give battle without first counting the cost. Is it worth it—and can we afford it? Having been a part of very high meetings within the RAF, I can bear witness to the fact that the second of those two questions is very high on the agenda. Not that those who run the RAF have much choice; as you can imagine, there is no money in the pot and the order of the day is “efficiencies”, “leaning processes” and the constant pressure for top-level managers to absorb more risk.

Defence, of course, has not been devolved to this Parliament, but there are many other areas where we have to count the cost. The “Can we afford it?” question is perhaps the easier one to answer and is one that we feel we can do something measurable about. The “Is it worth it?” question is far harder because it involves human cost and seeks to measure the impact that our decisions have on individual people. It is, however, the question that most people are interested in and one that we always need to keep firmly in mind. On this day of remembrance, it is certainly the most frequently asked question by the bereaved who visit Royal Air Force Lyneham and it will be the question by which all our actions and decisions will be measured in future: “Is it worth it?”

Thank you for listening.

Scotland's Historic Environment

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is a debate on motion S3M-5160, in the name of Michael Russell, on Scotland's historic environment, a unique resource for our economy and our people. We have a little time in hand this afternoon. I call Mike Russell to speak to and move the motion, for which he has roughly 13 minutes.

14:35

The Minister for Culture, External Affairs and the Constitution (Michael Russell): Today's debate, as we have just been so powerfully reminded, takes place exactly 90 years after the first time that we stopped together to remember those who sacrificed their lives for us in war.

However, there was not just a desire to remember; there was a desire to connect that remembrance to physical places. Every city, town and village throughout Scotland has a memorial dedicated to the war dead, so I open the debate by talking about the work of the War Memorials Trust, which perhaps signifies better than anything else how we attach significance to place and thing, as well as to ideas.

The trust supports the protection and conservation of war memorials, the relevance of which does not diminish with time. The Scottish Government works in partnership with the trust to ensure that those memorials remind future generations of the sacrifice that has gone before. Scottish Government funding to the trust of £30,000 a year, which is provided through Historic Scotland, has in the past year meant that vital restorative work has been carried out at locations throughout Scotland as far apart as Orkney, Fort William, Penicuik, Glasgow, Ayr and Campbeltown. However, the relationship is also about sharing expertise. It is now about partnership—that is the modern relationship within the heritage sector. In the past year, the War Memorials Trust has made full use of Historic Scotland's conservation expertise in conserving those monuments.

That is the tone that I want to set today. There are collaborations aplenty to be had. People are working together in the historic environment sector and working across sectors, in Historic Scotland, the National Trust for Scotland and the third sector, and with private owners and resources. That is why, without further ado, I am happy to accept both the amendments, so that we can concentrate our debate on what unites us, rather than on what might divide us.

The motion refers to the summit that I had the great privilege of hosting last Tuesday in the

splendid setting of the University of Glasgow's Bute hall. That was where the potential of what we could achieve, given energy and ambition, became absolutely clear and began to be realised.

The summit brought together experts and enthusiasts from a wide range of backgrounds—archaeology, building preservation and conservation, skills and materials, planning, tourism, architecture and design, property management, museums and of course the Heritage Lottery Fund, which has played such a significant role in Scotland for more than a decade. The public, private and third sectors were all represented. There is enormous potential to make creative coalitions in Scotland across every boundary to realise the full value of our historic environment to our people and our economy.

I will start with the economy. The Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland published a fascinating report earlier this year in response to a request from the previous Administration. The report stated that the historic environment sector contributes in excess of £2.3 billion to Scotland's national gross value added, mainly through tourism, construction and regeneration. It directly supports 41,000 full-time equivalent jobs, which rises to 60,000 once indirect and induced effects are included. Its contribution is equivalent to 2.6 per cent of total Scottish GVA, and compares strongly to a number of other distinctive Scottish sectors. For example, the whisky, gin and vodka sectors produce 43,300 jobs and sport produces 45,500 jobs. The historic environment is a big economic contributor and a big contributor to employment.

To break that down further, in a study by Biggar Economics Ltd, Edinburgh castle's quantifiable economic impact just on the city is estimated at £86 million GVA—just under 3,000 full-time equivalent jobs. On a Scottish level, Edinburgh castle—just one part of our historic environment—contributed £130 million GVA and more than 6,000 full-time jobs.

The historic environment contributes strongly to Scotland economically and socially. However, there are difficulties and problems. Part of the process in which we are engaged is about trying to solve those problems. The difficulties that the National Trust has experienced have been clearly and publicly indicated—I am sure that members will raise those issues in the debate. However, George Reid's review of the National Trust, which was announced last week, will move the trust towards solutions.

Historic Scotland has not been without its critics in Scotland, perhaps even in the chamber, perhaps even in the person of Mr Brocklebank—[*Interruption*]*—*and perhaps even in the person of Ms Gillon, who indicates that she wishes to be

included in that number. However, Historic Scotland involves people with tremendous ability and tremendous enthusiasm. We need to make that organisation and those in it more flexible and more open; we need to make the organisation more easily accessed; and we need to make its culture more outward looking. That is happening.

I will give examples of that. Through Historic Scotland, I want the Government to work with the National Trust and the private sector—not in competition, but in collaboration—as they are vital to protecting and celebrating the historic environment. I want them to capitalise on the homecoming effect. The homecoming has been a spur to the creative collaboration that we need—it prompted the largest-ever joint ticketing arrangement between Historic Scotland, the National Trust and the Historic Houses Association, which has provided access to 135 admission-charging historic properties. Early indications are that the homecoming pass has been popular among visitors—thousands of redemptions have been made at Edinburgh castle alone. I record the contribution to homecoming that Historic Scotland and all the other bodies made.

Historic Scotland was spun out from parts of the then Scottish Office as a next-steps agency in 1991. It employs more than 1,000 staff. Most are based in the field—some are literally in the field—and take care of the 345 sites that are in state ownership or guardianship. Such work is done in collaboration and partnership. For example, at Dundonald castle, which Robert II built in the 1370s to mark his succession to the throne, the local community runs the site on Historic Scotland's behalf.

The agency has formidable and world-recognised expertise in technical and conservation matters. Its expertise is applied not just to the jewels of the historic environment—the listed buildings and scheduled monuments—but to the much wider historic environment. In that regard, I mention again the War Memorials Trust.

The agency also produces practical advice that is relevant to anyone who lives in one of Scotland's 450,000-plus traditionally constructed buildings—those that were built before 1919. I commend to members the interactive "INFORM House", which will be launched in a few weeks, and the newly issued "INFORM Church", which was created in partnership with the major ecclesiastical bodies in Scotland. They are examples of how information can be provided to those who are responsible for such buildings.

On the Scottish ministers' behalf, Historic Scotland undertakes vital work with local authorities and property owners to help them manage the impact of change. Historically, it has

done that through its role in the consent process, but now it must change—its regulation must become problem-solving regulation. Historic Scotland must have earlier and more positive involvement and must ensure that its task is releasing the full value from historic assets, rather than getting involved in the business of allowing such assets to be seen as an obstacle to progress.

Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): Hear, hear.

Michael Russell: I am glad that Mr Brocklebank agrees with me.

I draw attention to the groundbreaking and important castles initiative, which represents a whole new way of working for Historic Scotland. Scotland has a long tradition of successful castle and tower-house restoration, which is not as expensive as one might think. Restoration must be undertaken with the involvement of and not in opposition to Historic Scotland. That is precisely what is happening through the castles initiative, which provides information about available properties and about how Historic Scotland can help the restoration process.

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): Perhaps I speak for my colleague John Farquhar Munro when I ask the minister whether, given what he just said, he would care to comment on Castle Tioram.

Michael Russell: It is important to recognise that when decisions are made, they are decisions for that time and within the policy. The opportunity to make new applications always exists. I am certainly happy to say that if Castle Tioram's owner wishes to make a new application, Historic Scotland will work with that owner to consider what is possible. Not everything is possible and not every individual owner's requirements can be met, but I am determined that, while I am responsible for my post, Historic Scotland will be much more positive and helpful. Indeed, it is already being so.

The challenge that Historic Scotland and we as a nation face is a large one. In 1882, when the first list of places that deserved the special protection of the state was drawn up, a mere six places in Scotland featured on it out of a United Kingdom total of 21. We now have about 8,000 scheduled monuments and some 47,000 listed buildings, of which about 3,500 are A-listed. We also have designated wreck sites, historic gardens and landscapes and more than 600 conservation areas, and I announced earlier this year that we would proceed to establish a new register of battlefields.

Much has changed in the past century and a quarter. Above all, in contrast to 1882, the vast

majority of those places are not in the care of the state or even the public sector. The old contract—that the state would provide the funds and sometimes have the ownership, and that it would look after everything that was identified as having historic value—no longer applies. We need a new contract that shows the value of the buildings and sites and enthuses the public about their protection and the responsibility for looking after them. We are taking steps in that regard.

I commend Historic Scotland for its work with other statutory bodies, including local authorities. A recent scheme involving Glasgow City Council, the City of Edinburgh Council and Perth and Kinross Council has explored how unnecessary duplication can be removed. A three-month pilot with those authorities, which focused on minor works to B-listed buildings, removed a massive eight years of delay from the system. We can do much more like that by working in partnership and with strong principles, but we cannot save everything. I note that Irene Oldfather is in the chamber. Sometimes, we cannot save things that we would like to protect, such as—

Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD): Poor Irene.

Michael Russell: Mr Smith is making an ungallant remark from the front bench, from which I would like to disassociate myself if it was picked up.

The Carrick/City of Adelaide is a valuable ship, but not everything can be preserved. Imaginative thinking early on would help.

Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab): I have said many things about the minister in the past, most of which could not be repeated in the chamber, but I believe that he has a genuine interest in preserving items of national importance and I know that he supported the taking forward of an initiative on the Carrick. In my speech, I will raise a genuine, possible solution, which I hope he will consider.

Michael Russell: I will be happy to listen to genuine solutions. If it is possible to make progress, we will do so. Given the number of years that have passed, I think that that will be difficult, but I am always open to suasion, even from Mrs Oldfather. *[Laughter.]* I say that in a very constructive way, as this will be a constructive debate.

Presiding Officer, I am conscious of the time and I do not want to overrun my limit by too much, but allow me to make one or two further points. We have to preserve not only things that are well known as being historic but some things that are in the process of becoming historic—I make no reference to anybody in the chamber. For example, I look forward to opening a conference later this month on Scotland's post-war

architecture, following the recent publication by Historic Scotland of "Scotland: Building for the Future", which is a series of essays on post-war architecture in Scotland. During the summer, I was delighted, as members can imagine, to launch a publication called "Raising the Bar", which is a celebration of Scotland's historic and listed public houses. I would have been happy to have other members with me at that event.

We are also making strong connections between the historic environment and the natural environment, such as the work that we are doing with the Forestry Commission. There are also some important world nature projects.

I am delighted that Historic Scotland has today signed an agreement with Glasgow School of Art to launch a joint venture that formally brings together the expertise of both public bodies in the digital documentation of the historic environment. The project uses laser technology that was adapted from the US star wars programme and world-leading digital visualisation skills. We are investing in the Scottish 10 project to record the five Scottish world heritage sites, and we are looking for five international projects to match them. The first of those, as members will know, is a project at Mount Rushmore. I signed the agreement for that in July and it will commence in the spring next year.

We are also working with the National Trust for Scotland on the Bannockburn project, to ensure that we adequately celebrate the anniversary in 2014. We are looking for ways in which we can do that in partnership, recognising the ownership of the site but also Historic Scotland's particular skills. *[Interruption.]*

I will make one final point—despite the member to my right, who is muttering about Bannockburn for some remarkable reason. I cannot imagine that there is a member in the chamber who would be ashamed of the opportunity to celebrate Bannockburn. If there is, I look forward with incredulity to their contribution to the debate.

The care of the historic environment is a matter with which all of us should be concerned. Those who discover that they have the custody of a listed building sometimes treat that as an imposition and are afraid of the bureaucracy of the process. If we can persuade the people of Scotland to celebrate and be proud of what is special and unique in Scotland's heritage, and those who have responsibility for listed buildings or areas that are designated as sites of special scientific interest—I notice that my friend the Minister for Environment is now in the chamber—to celebrate that fact, we will go a long way towards engaging the whole population in the task not just of looking after their special past and what makes Scotland unique, but of conserving and investing in their future.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the enthusiasm, passion and co-operation shown by all of the participants at the first Summit for the Built and Historic Environment held at the Bute Hall in Glasgow on Tuesday 3 November 2009 and recognises the valuable resource for the Scottish people and economy represented by Scotland's rich and varied heritage.

The Presiding Officer: I call Ted Brocklebank, who has a loose nine minutes.

14:51

Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): In the spirit of consensus to which the minister referred, we will support not only the Government motion but the Liberal Democrat amendment.

Scotland is fortunate in its built and historic heritage. We rightly boast of our soaring mountains, leaping rivers, seascapes and islands, but we often forget the distinctive buildings that are so much part of our topography, from the spires and crow-stepped gables of the capital to wonderfully conserved villages out of time such as Culross and Cromarty.

Today I will concentrate on our built heritage. Scottish buildings have always fascinated me and continue to do so. I hope that I can make them seem as fascinating to others in the loose timeframe that the Presiding Officer has afforded me. Scotland has individual buildings that take the breath away. I am talking not just about icons such as Eilean Donan and Glamis but about the fisher rows in places such as Pittenweem, Crail, Pennan and Crovie—buildings that seem almost to grow out of the cliff faces. We have a wealth of outstanding domestic architecture.

I pay tribute to the National Trust for Scotland, which, as the minister outlined, has not had its problems to seek in recent times. The trust's place in history may yet be judged less on its role in safeguarding Scotland's great stately homes—outstanding though that work has been—than on its work to preserve the distinctive small houses in places such as Dunkeld and St Monans, the Glasgow tenement and the black houses on Lewis and Uist.

I am aware that more than 80 per cent of visitors to Scotland come to visit historic sites and that the built heritage sector accounts for a substantial share of the economic impact of the whole sector, supporting some 20,000 full-time employees and generating approximately £1 billion per annum. I understand that less than 20 per cent of Scotland's historic buildings charge admission. This year, although its overall budget has dropped, Historic Scotland has seen a dramatic increase in

income from the buildings in its care that charge. I commend it on that.

Much of the overall impact of the historic built sector is rooted in grants and expenditure from Historic Scotland, the National Trust and the Heritage Lottery Fund. This month sees the 15th birthday of the national lottery. Since its establishment, the Heritage Lottery Fund has invested more than £500 million in Scotland's heritage and supported nearly 3,000 projects across Scotland. I pay tribute to it for that. However, private owners have also played a distinguished part. For me, perhaps the most beautiful home in Scotland is the immaculately preserved Dundonnell house in Wester Ross, a small 17th century mansion that has always been in private hands. Currently it is owned by the lyricist Tim Rice, but its previous owners, a family of tea importers, did remarkable work on both the house and the stunning gardens, which lie in the lee of that great and iconic mountain, An Teallach.

Perhaps the richest decades in Scottish architectural history were the years on either side of the union of the crowns. That was the period in which castellated architecture began to give way to buildings that were more concerned with comfort than defence. For me, the castles that were built towards the end of the 16th century represent the high-water mark of that golden age. I am talking about wonderful iconic buildings such as Craigievar, Crathes, Cawdor and Fyvie—members may take their pick.

One of the most encouraging developments over the past three or four decades is the number of enlightened individuals who have provided the necessary enthusiasm and hard work—often with help from various Government bodies—to rescue dozens of previously ruined castles. I pay tribute to the Minister for Culture, External Affairs and the Constitution for his personal interest, and I welcome the recent summit for the built and historic environment, which I understand produced considerable consensus and a wealth of new ideas.

I further commend that initiative as it produced a new list of castles and tower houses that might be suitable for restoration and reuse. Historic Scotland has led in that area, and I am more than delighted that support from the organisation now appears more conspicuous than it seemed to be hitherto, when dedicated individuals were sinking their own savings into castle restorations at places such as Kinkell and Kilcoy in Easter Ross; Udny, Towie Barclay, Midmar and Harthill in Aberdeenshire; and Pitcullo, Dairsie and Wormiston in my native north-east Fife.

Christopher Harvie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): It strikes me that we are omitting what is possibly the most impressive Scottish building of

the lot, which was deroofed in an act of straightforward vandalism at the time of the 1745 rising. I refer to the palace of Linlithgow, which is one of the greatest renaissance buildings in Europe. It is a building that is not dignified by being without a roof, although it could be considered on the same level as the ducal palace in Urbino in Italy and was the centre of Scottish history for two or three centuries.

In the longer term, we ought to—

The Presiding Officer: Is this an intervention or a speech, Mr Harvie?

Christopher Harvie: It could be termed a speech, but as I was not placed to speak in the debate I will relish just a few seconds longer.

The Presiding Officer: Could you hurry up, please?

Christopher Harvie: I commend to Mr Brocklebank, at least for the longer term, the idea of putting a roof back on Linlithgow palace and in that way restoring one of Scotland's finest buildings.

The Presiding Officer: We have extra time available, but it does not all need to be taken up in one intervention.

Ted Brocklebank: I thank Christopher Harvie for his intervention. It seems a bold and praiseworthy plan—in line with the thought of putting the roof back on St Andrews cathedral, which I think Richard Demarco once suggested. That is a separate point, however.

I was discussing the buildings that have been restored by various individuals. I sometimes wish that Historic Scotland had always been as sound in its judgment or as brave and sympathetic in its restorations as those private individuals have been.

Jamie Stone raised the saga of Castle Tioram. Notwithstanding the claims of Eilean Donan, Tioram, on the Ardnamurchan peninsula, is arguably the most beautifully situated castle in Scotland. Those who have been in any way interested in our historic built environment will know about the owner's 12-year battle to be allowed to restore that ancient seat of the Clanranald Macdonalds. Lex Brown wants to renovate the castle—which is in danger of collapsing—roof it and turn it into a home and clan museum.

Having followed the story for years, I remain bemused by Historic Scotland's recalcitrance in relation to the proposed redevelopment. The castle was last lived in immediately before it was torched by Clanranald to prevent it from falling into enemy hands during the Jacobite rebellion of 1715. As I understand it, Mr Brown wants to

restore the castle in a manner sympathetic to that period, being the era when it was last occupied. Historic Scotland's position has been that it will grant approval only if the castle is restored to how it was at its approximate building date in the 13th century. The irony is that all Scotland's ancient castles have grown organically, adapting and changing with the needs of the times—so why the fixation with dates over Castle Tioram?

We have a potential saviour who is willing to use his own money—about £10 million at the most recent estimate—to provide much-needed construction jobs in an area that needs them to save a national treasure. Yet it seems that, rather than budging from its stance, Historic Scotland would prefer the castle to be stabilised as a sculpted ruin. Presiding Officer, have you ever heard of anything quite so daft? The Minister for Culture, External Affairs and the Constitution should add Tioram to his list of castles worth saving, and he should tell Historic Scotland to get down from its—

Michael Russell: I have a feeling that a number of members will mention Castle Tioram. I heard Mr Rumbles rebuke me for not intervening earlier, but rather than intervene during individual speeches I will address the issue when I sum up.

Ted Brocklebank: I am happy to leave it at that.

I make no apology for returning to another example of Historic Scotland's apparent lack of judgment. Interested members might recall that HMS Jackdaw, near Crail, was a world war two airfield that never saw a shot fired in anger. The war was over before it became operational. For 60 years the airfield has lain abandoned, with ruined accommodation units, a crumbling control tower and runways that lead to nowhere. However, Historic Scotland scheduled the airfield an A-listed site. The runways, which are currently used as a drag race car track, have been designated as a scheduled ancient monument. For the past decade, the farmer on whose ground the airfield is situated has been unable to develop his land.

However, there is better news on HMS Jackdaw than there is on Castle Tioram. Following lobbying by national and local politicians, including Mr Smith, and following speeches in this Parliament, I understand that there is a possibility that the farmer might be given permission to develop at least part of his land, as a result of the removal of what Historic Scotland regards as the least important buildings. One is thankful for such small mercies.

There is renewed hope for another listed building whose fortunes I have raised in the Parliament. Later this month we should know the identity of the new owners of Hamilton hall in St Andrews, which, it is claimed, is the most iconic

building in world golf. The building was formerly the Grand Hotel, which in its day was the premier hotel in St Andrews. It featured in the movie "Chariots of Fire" and has unbroken views of the Old course's 18th fairway and the famous west sands. The building has lain abandoned for the past six years and was repossessed by the bank after its American owners failed to develop it or even keep it wind and watertight. There were fears that it would still be dilapidated when the open championship returns to the Old course next year.

I raised the matter in the Parliament and the then Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture, Linda Fabiani, was responsible for bringing in the inspectors. Shortly afterwards, the bank put the building on the market. We will soon know its new role. Let us hope that it is something fitting for a building that has such an illustrious past.

It might not always seem that members of the Parliament can help to shape our historic and built environment. The wheels of progress grind exceedingly slowly. However, in recent years I have made at least three speeches that were similar to this one and I can provide some evidence of a change of approach. If the Government's proposed historic environment (amendment) (Scotland) bill provides more teeth, members on the Conservative benches will look to give it fair passage.

I move amendment S3M-5160.1, to insert at end:

"; particularly commends recent initiatives to save the nation's buildings at risk, involving bodies such as Historic Scotland, the National Trust for Scotland and the Heritage Lottery Fund, and welcomes the continuing and vital involvement in this restoration work of private individuals and the voluntary sector."

The Presiding Officer: I call Iain Smith. You may have a similarly loose nine minutes.

15:02

Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD): Thank you, Presiding Officer. I am delighted.

I have had terrible visions of what I might see when I look out at Salisbury Crags from the chamber, given Mr Russell's wish to twin Scotland with Mount Rushmore—

Michael Russell: Tavish Scott. [*Laughter.*]

Iain Smith: This is one of the strangest motions that Parliament has been asked to debate in my 10 and more years as a member. We are asked to welcome

"the enthusiasm, passion and co-operation"

that was shown by participants at a meeting at which we were not present and of which we have

yet to see a full report. The motion reads more like one of those motions, which we are all prone to lodging, congratulating local organisations than like a Government motion for a substantive debate in the Parliament.

Although I am sure that the participants at the by-invitation-only summit were a worthy bunch—as the minister suggested they were—and that their discussions were equally worthy, it would have been helpful if members had had a chance to consider a report on the summit's conclusions and the Government's response, so that we could debate those matters rather than a vacuous motion that congratulates the participants on their enthusiasm and tells us nothing about what the Government intends to do to protect, develop and promote the unique resource that is the historic environment in Scotland.

Scotland has a rich and deep historic environment. From prehistoric sites, such as Skara Brae on Orkney, to ultramodern sites, including our Scottish Parliament building, our built environment reflects nearly 10,000 years of history. We have castles, cathedrals, historic burghs, ancient and modern universities, museums and galleries. In Edinburgh's new town, we have one of the finest examples of early town planning, although it has to be said that we also have some of the worst examples of modern town planning.

Our built environment reflects a history that has often been turbulent, but during which our small nation has been in the vanguard of progress, from the industrial revolution and the enlightenment to today's cutting-edge research, for example in life sciences and computer gaming. In short, our historic environment reflects not only where we have been, but where we are going, and its contribution to tourism plays perhaps the most important role.

Representing North East Fife as I do, I am acutely aware of our historic environment's importance. For example, during the summer recess, I had the pleasure of walking part of the Fife coastal path in my constituency from Lundin Links to Crail. Passing through Lower Largo, Elie, St Monans, Pittenweem, Anstruther and Cellardyke, I was able to enjoy not only the picturesque harbours for which the east neuk is renowned—it is not possible to buy a calendar of Scotland without at least one of them on it—but some of the more hidden parts of our local history, such as the world war two fortifications on the hills outside Elie that helped to protect the Forth from attack by land, sea or air, and the windmill and salt pans at St Monans. Those are not just part of the built environment—they also reflect the societies and people who went before us and what they did. They can inspire people to investigate their local

history and find out more about events that happened in their areas and about which they knew nothing.

Further inland, North East Fife has its share of ancient burghs, such as Ceres and Falkland. It also has St Andrews with its ruined cathedral and castle—which tell their own tales of the dark days of the reformation—the ancient university, the harbour and, of course, the golf courses, which are also part of the historic environment. All those add to the tapestry that attracts many visitors from around the globe to the area and to Scotland.

The report of the Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland, which was published in February this year, estimates that the built environment contributes some £1.3 billion and 37,000 full-time equivalent employees to Scottish tourism alone. Therefore, the importance of preserving our historic environment should not be underestimated. People come to Scotland because of it, whether to visit our historic buildings, such as Edinburgh castle, or simply to enjoy the ambience and beauty of our historic towns.

However, that environment is under constant threat. Old buildings are, by their nature, expensive to maintain, and we know from the buildings-at-risk register that many of our listed buildings are in a poor state of repair. In some cases, the burdens of meeting Historic Scotland's requirements are such that the repair, restoration or redevelopment of a property is uneconomic and the building is therefore left to deteriorate further. It sometimes seems that Historic Scotland would prefer that a building become a ruin than allow sensitive renovation for modern use, even if that means compromise on materials and finishing. I am pleased to hear from the minister that Historic Scotland will change its role and will try to work with people on how best to restore, renovate and make use of historic buildings, rather than allowing them to fall into disrepair.

I share Ted Brocklebank's concerns about cases such as Crail airfield, which is a scheduled monument that serves no purpose whatever because nobody goes to see it as a scheduled monument.

Michael Russell: Crail is an interesting case. It illustrates two points, one of which is that blanket conservation and scheduling do not work. Fortunately, several parts of the site have been descheduled and work is going on with the local authority, Historic Scotland and other bodies to ensure that development proposals are made for it. Only key buildings at the site are now scheduled, which is the right way ahead.

Iain Smith: That is the point that I was about to make. We have at least moved forward and are

preserving only what needs to be preserved of the key buildings and the site layout without putting a blight on the area for all time.

We may ask questions about other decisions that Historic Scotland has made. Why on earth has it decided to list the Madras college site at Kilrymont Road? No one considers that building worthy of being maintained, and the decision may cause some difficulty for the development of the new schools that Ted Brocklebank and I want in North East Fife—although we might want different schools. Moreover, in the 21st century, we surely must be able to come up with a form of double glazing that can be installed sensitively in buildings in conservation areas so that residents are no longer prevented from making a contribution to dealing with climate change simply because they live in a conservation area.

I return to tourism and the historic environment. We are all aware of the financial difficulties that the National Trust for Scotland faces this year—the minister referred to them in his opening remarks. They have led to a number of redundancies and the closure to the public of a number of properties, including the Hill of Tarvit mansion house in my constituency. No one should underestimate the importance of the National Trust properties throughout Scotland to local and national tourism, or the vital role that the trust plays in conserving our historic environment. It is therefore vital that the National Trust for Scotland has a secure and long-term financial base. I welcome the appointment of George Reid, the Presiding Officer's distinguished predecessor, to undertake a robust and independent review of the NTS. I have no doubt that the National Trust will have to take difficult and painful decisions if it is to secure its long-term viability. I am sure that George Reid will not shirk from taking such decisions.

It is regrettable, however, that the trust seems to have been panicked by a short-term crisis this year into making decisions with long-term implications. Evidence to the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee in September 2009 suggested that the decisions to close to the public Hill of Tarvit mansion house and Leith hall were premature. It remains unclear what the marginal saving was from closing those properties ahead of the summer season. The justification for the closures appears to have taken insufficient account of the on-going costs of maintenance and conservation, which must be met even if the properties are not open to the public, and the contributions that the properties make to the organisation's central costs. I am delighted that the chief executive of the NTS, Kate Mavor, confirmed in a letter to my committee yesterday that the trust is trading ahead of budget this year and that plans are progressing to restore public

access to Leith hall and the Hill of Tarvit mansion house. That is indeed welcome news.

A key recommendation in the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee's 2008 report on tourism was that Historic Scotland should play a more active role alongside heritage groups—including the NTS and the Historic Houses Association—in shared marketing of their unique properties for tourism. The Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland report on the economic impact of Scotland's historic environment suggested that that is crucial, but the recommendation received a bit of a lukewarm response from the Scottish Government. I hope that the minister will in his summing up give a more positive response, and tell us how the Government and Historic Scotland will work more closely with the NTS and others to protect and promote this precious resource.

The minister can perhaps also outline in a bit more detail how he envisages the sector developing, given the disbandment of HEACS. Who will now independently assess the effectiveness of Historic Scotland's work and, indeed, that of the Scottish Government in this matter? In particular, what assistance will the Government give to developing the proposal from HEACS to establish a new intermediary body, probably led by the Built Environment Forum Scotland? What discussions has he had with the forum on that idea?

Working together is very much the theme of this debate. It is in that spirit that I move the amendment in my name.

I move amendment S3M-5160.2, to insert at end:

“; looks forward to hearing a comprehensive account of the discussions that took place at the summit, and encourages the Scottish Government to work constructively with Historic Scotland and the National Trust for Scotland and to develop relationships with the non-governmental sector to ensure the sustainability of Scotland's built environment and to maintain and improve public access to it.”

15:12

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): “Scotland's Historic Environment—A Unique Resource for Our Economy”. Like Iain Smith, I looked for the punch line in that happy motion. On further investigation, however, I genuinely came to the view that it has the potential to be a crucial policy in the culture brief, so I am happy to welcome the enthusiasm and passion that participants in the summit meeting showed. We were not present at that meeting, but we all accept the minister's account of it. We will support the Tory amendment this evening but—more important—we will also support the Liberal

Democrat amendment, because it rightly calls for a comprehensive account of what took place at the summit meeting.

I want to explore how the collaboration that was shown at the summit can become relevant to the lives of ordinary people rather than simply being about the historic environment. The group of decision makers who Mike Russell said were present at the meeting should, of course, work together, so it is pleasing to hear that they do. They should be held to account for the crucial decisions that they influence. It is right that their importance as a group of people and professionals should be elevated because of the significance of the decisions that they influence, because such decisions affect us all. We call on the Government to back that up with resources and we hope that the minister can assure us that he is making that argument in the Cabinet.

Historic Scotland is a lead organisation in more ways than the name suggests. As other members have said, the NTS has a place and must survive. We must do all that we can to ensure that it remains an important institution, because it is certainly difficult to reinvent something as crucial as it. It is not a new concept that town planners and all the organisations and professions that Mike Russell talked about should work together. In some ways, they are the guardians of our historic places, so it is right that they should work together.

The starting point should be to recognise that the built environment and our surroundings are, by their very existence, not only a representation of our past, but things that shape what happens in the future. Therefore, collaboration must go wider than those who are involved in the historic environment, given the connection between, for example, designing healthy houses and providing a safe environment. All the relevant professions can make a contribution. Such collaboration may not only contribute to the economy, but improve the quality of life for ordinary people.

Michael Russell: I agree strongly with Pauline McNeill's comments and would go further. One of the strongest reactions at the summit—I know that Iain Smith is desperate for a blow-by-blow account of it—came during the discussion that took place about the holistic nature of the environment. In that, we heard how we live in a country in which the landscape and the built environment go together such that the benefits to people—health benefits and other benefits—come from engaging holistically rather than in separate parts.

Pauline McNeill: I am pleased to hear that.

One dimension of collaboration that might be addressed only in the context of the historic environment—I am sure that I do not need to amplify this point—is the need to learn from the

past so that, for example, we design and create damp-free houses that can improve people's health. We also know that better housing design can help to keep people safer from crime. It is a known fact that having a fence and gate can deter house-breakers. Practical design considerations are a factor in improving all our lives.

The amount of green space in our communities can be a point of constant tension between planners and communities. The conflict over the modernisation of infrastructure, which can benefit wider communities, can sometimes require hard trade-offs between planners and communities. Such tensions continue in today's decision making.

In Glasgow Kelvin—I am sure that I will be no different from other members in focusing on my constituency—two large communities that were divided when the M8 was built many years ago still suffer today, although the motorway provides wider benefits to society. In communities such as Townhead and Anderston, although people still have a connection with the area from the time before the motorway was built, they still think back to how the communities were different in those days.

It is said that, to appreciate the city of Glasgow, people should walk with their eyes raised up rather than focusing straight ahead. Many people have no idea of the historic environment in which they live and are oblivious to the beautiful Victorian architecture that exists above them. Glasgow's architecture is world renowned and is a major tourist attraction. As members will know, anyone who walks from Mitchell Lane to Buchanan Street will stumble across many important historic buildings by notable Scottish architects and designers. I actually think that more could be made of those walks in Glasgow, which present a tourist attraction.

Protecting and preserving such important buildings is a key challenge for any Government, particularly during a recession. One thing is for sure: if we miss the opportunity to save buildings such as those designed by Alexander "Greek" Thomson, there will be no going back. I am currently involved in helping to secure funding for the Egyptian halls in Union Street. The company involved has been trying to salvage a plan for more than 11 years and this is the last chance for the halls' survival. I am pleased to say that Historic Scotland, Scottish Enterprise and Glasgow City Council are very much involved in the project—a commercial proposal for a hotel—which will preserve that historic building. However, if the plan does not work, I am afraid that the building will fall into a state of disrepair.

My constituency is characterised by having many important buildings. As the minister will no

doubt be aware, the University of Glasgow where the summit was held has more listed buildings—it has 20 in category A—than any other such institution. The constituency also includes the King's theatre, which was designed by Frank Matcham. Whenever I walk to my office through Park Circus—which was designed by Charles Wilson—I take great pleasure in seeing Kelvingrove park's recently renovated fountain, which is a monument to Lord Provost Robert Stewart, who secured the city's water supply. As the minister said in his opening speech, such significant monuments highlight greater interests in society, so their importance cannot be overestimated.

However, our constantly changing environment should also reflect the progress that we make. That is why the 100 or so people who attended the summit are very important people, as Iain Smith crucially pointed out. I would like to know more about who they are, because they make decisions and influence things; they are not just the guardians of our historic environment. We hope that they have ideas and solutions that the Government will implement. I would like more information to be provided about them.

Regeneration cannot be separated from our historic environment. My city of Glasgow has been transformed through regeneration, which has revived its poorest areas and capitalised on its best assets. We know that people will buy the 3,500 luxury flats in Glasgow's harbour development. It is a question of getting the balance right.

In closing, I want to talk about some of the practical aspects of preserving our older and listed buildings. In the west end of Glasgow, many people who love living in large, ancient tenements have a problem when it comes to modernisation of their windows. It may seem like a trivial point, but at the same time as the conservation rules are flouted—which has happened time and again in Glasgow, with modern buildings being put up on historic sites, despite the conservation rules—we tell constituents that they cannot have modern windows in their tenement blocks. I know that it is a sensitive issue, but we need to find practical solutions.

I hope that the collaboration that has been discussed will allow us to strike the right balance and not only protect our history and preserve our wonderful buildings as tourist attractions, but make our historic environment real and live to the people whom we represent.

15:21

Nigel Don (North East Scotland) (SNP): When I looked at the motion, I wondered not what it

meant, but what environment I might have other than a historic one, given that today is the product of what came before. I cannot see how we can operate in anything other than a historic environment.

The rest of the motion left me thinking that I must use some imagination, so I did. I thought that there would be no better place to start than Aberdeen, which is where I start the week. I did some research on what we have in Aberdeen, apart from a lot of Aberdonians. I asked myself why people come to Aberdeen, other than to live there. What wonders are there in Aberdeen for visitors? There are many.

However, when I discovered the statistics, I found that the most visited part of Aberdeen is not the football ground but the David Welch winter gardens in Duthie park, which receive 300,000 or so visitors per year. That is well ahead of the number of visitors that Aberdeen's other attractions receive. Behind the David Welch gardens were Aberdeen art gallery, then the maritime museum and Provost Skene's house, which is in the lee of—and overlooked and almost overwhelmed by—St Nicholas house; I will return to that issue.

The fact that the four top attractions in Aberdeen, apart from the football ground, turn out to be a gardens, an art gallery, a museum and a house sums the issue up. We are talking not just about castles or mountains and streams, but about the wonderful environment in which we live. Although Aberdeen is spoilt, it is, by and large, still a staggeringly good place to live.

The minister's motion mentions community involvement, so I went to find out what we had been up to in that respect. I found a fascinating recent example. The Old Town House in the old city of Aberdeen—the University of Aberdeen—was restored in 2005, but the chime on the clock was not. Members' excitement on hearing a chime probably depends on how far away it is from where they sleep—I would not want a chiming clock under my window. The members of the local community decided that they wanted the clock's chime to be restored, so they formed the Old Aberdeen Heritage Society, sold cards, worked with the community council and raised a few thousand pounds. Earlier in the year, the chimes began working again. Although that was a small-scale project, it characterises what I think the minister was talking about and what I am quite sure we need to do. It is no good expecting the Government—or whatever body had the big pot of money that no longer exists—to come and solve our problems, because it is plain to all of us that that will not happen.

I then did a little more research and considered hotel occupancy in Aberdeen and Grampian,

which I discovered is roughly 60 per cent a year. Even bed and breakfasts and self-catering accommodation are only 65 per cent to 75 per cent occupied at the height of summer. I thought to myself, "This indicates that there is scope for getting more folk along—there certainly wouldn't be any problem in getting them somewhere to stay."

That leads me to the second thought, about the visitor approach, and VisitScotland and the other organisations that work around it. The challenge for the minister—I am afraid that there will be a few challenges for the minister, because that is what back benchers do—is to ask, "To what extent are we pulling all this together? To what extent could we just manage this better?" There is not the slightest doubt that the environment and the visitor attractions exist. Overall, the bed spaces are there, although of course they might not be in quite the right places. What is the Government doing to try to maximise the number of folk who come to the north-east and, by extension, elsewhere in the country?

I am grateful to the minister for telling me that together, the National Trust for Scotland and Historic Scotland will work better, because that was going to be one of my pleas. I note Iain Smith's comment about the marginal costings on Leith hall. I well remember the visit from the National Trust to the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee—I was there on that occasion—and I confess that I was concerned that the marginal costing decisions were not altogether what they might have been. However, I was also concerned that the National Trust was saying, quite sensibly, that it needed to rebuild its balance sheet. That is a pretty familiar tale throughout the business world. As I recall, the trust suggested that it needed to get from reserves of about £4 million to £17 million in three to five years. I thought to myself, "Historic Scotland has a £50 million budget. Surely the resources might be in there to help to protect the activities of the other organisation it's going to work with." That is another little challenge.

Returning to Aberdeen, I hope that that the partnership to preserve Marischal college for the new council buildings proceeds to a successful conclusion. It is costing an absolute fortune. I cannot help reflecting that the issue came to the boil when the old building, St Nicholas house, was no longer serviceable and possibly uninsurable. That perhaps proves the point that, sometimes, needs force people to come up with sensible answers.

I draw the attention of the minister and members to an issue that is bang in the middle of Aberdeen—the Broadford works, which is a major industrial estate in the centre of Aberdeen, of

which the minister may be aware. The works has planning permission and has been through a series of proposals. My understanding is that it is still waiting for listed building consent. I do not want to get into the detail of that, or to point fingers at anyone and assert that they are dragging their heels, but I do want to say that the faster we get something done, the better. I encourage the minister to consider that issue and whether we can do anything to push it along.

The suggestion that it would be good if we could celebrate our listed buildings is absolutely right, but to state the totally obvious, we cannot celebrate a listed building if doing so feels like an imposition. We will only celebrate it and not feel like it is an imposition if the system for developing it appears to be on our side.

15:28

Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): All members will have great examples of the historic built environment and how it has influenced the community, culture and landscape of the areas that we represent, and I am no exception. The buildings of Clydesdale bear witness to the agricultural, mining and weaving traditions of the area. They tell the story from centuries past: of Lanark, where William Wallace met his love, Marian Braidfute; of Covington Mains, where Robert Burns drew inspiration for his work; and of New Lanark, the pioneering and indeed revolutionary village created by Robert Owen, which recognised that providing health care, education and housing for one's workers is more likely to result in a thriving business and a healthy and happy workforce.

There are the miners' welfare halls in villages such as Coalburn, built by the miners themselves to provide access to culture, learning and entertainment; the Leadhills library, with its collection of materials that truly tell the area's history; and the old auction ring in Lanark where, for centuries, farmers from throughout the county and beyond came to buy and sell their wares. Its role is now taken by a new building that in decades to come will tell future generations today's story.

There are churches such as that of St Athanasius, in Carluke, which sits alongside the old Scott's jam works and Ramsay's butcher's—names that are synonymous with Scottish quality produce past and present.

The minister mentioned war memorials—at the weekend, we will all have been at remembrance services throughout Scotland. The renewal of the war memorial in Stonehouse is an excellent example of what has been achieved through

partnership. Similarly, I congratulate the Scottish Government on the role that it has played in supporting the Corn Exchange in Biggar.

Those are examples of our built heritage that challenge our understanding of the past and teach us lessons for the future. As the minister said, such buildings face genuine challenges, especially if they do not fall under the direct financial support of Historic Scotland or the National Trust for Scotland. The minister acknowledged that not all buildings can be saved and that some will need to go if others are to survive. That is a welcome and positive statement. The proposal to demolish St Mary's church hall in Lanark to secure the long-term future of the church itself and its attached buildings is a case in point. We must be more flexible in such cases, and we must also learn the lessons of the past. I welcome the minister's comments about the need to protect our current built environment for future generations at a much earlier stage so that we are not faced with derelict buildings that it is uneconomic to repair. We must make the necessary repairs much earlier.

We need to do more than just protect our historic built environment, though. We must celebrate and promote our built environment and our landscape environment much better than we do at the moment. New Lanark is more than just a local and national treasure; it is one of Scotland's five world heritage sites. New Lanark has that internationally recognised seal of approval for its combination of built, social, cultural and landscape environments. Anyone who visits the village cannot help but be struck by the dramatic realisation of Owen's vision. Walking up the Falls of Clyde, they see the beauty and power of our landscape not just harnessed for the mills of New Lanark but today driving the hydro power stations at Bonnington.

I very much welcome the Scottish 10 project. I understand that the images of New Lanark have been taken and I am sure that they will be stunning, dramatic and valuable for generations to come. It is important that we use those images to showcase the skills and talents that we have.

However, in Scotland, I do not think that we have quite got it right yet in the promotion of our world heritage sites. For example, the world heritage insignia are still not allowed to appear on road signage. Perhaps the minister will work with his colleagues in other departments to ensure that we make the most of those valuable insignia in promoting our assets. There are also other things that we need to do better, such as making the links. We still have not got it right in Clydesdale in making the link between New Lanark and Lanark, never mind the links between New Lanark and anywhere else.

If Lanarkshire is viewed in the context of its industrial heritage, with New Lanark at the core, links can be established with Summerlee in Coatbridge, the mining museum at Wanlockhead and other areas both significant and much smaller to give a great picture of our built environment. In south Wales, routes have been drawn up that take visitors around different parts of the built environment, with a world heritage site at the core that is linked to everything else that is part of that. We can do that in Scotland as well. Something similar can be done in the Borders, with its historic textile industry, and in the east neuk, with its historic fishing industry.

Michael Russell: The member makes a valuable point about the linkage of sites and places, which is extremely important. Work is going on in the south-west of Scotland to provide a route that takes people from Dumfries via Dumfries house, in Cumnock, to the Ayrshire coast and Culzean. We should make use of that concept, and I am happy to explore with the member its application to Clydesdale.

Karen Gillon: Another thing that I would like to explore with Michael Russell, both in his role as culture minister and in his role as a member for the South of Scotland, is the building of public transport links to the world heritage site of New Lanark. In 2014, there will be a new rail service for the Commonwealth games between Glasgow and Edinburgh via Carstairs. I hope that he will join me in ensuring that trains can stop at Carlisle and Carstairs to make the most of the linkages between the world heritage site in Edinburgh, the historic built environment in Glasgow and our natural assets in Clydesdale. In doing that, we can shape the future positively, not only for our historic built environment but for our rural communities. Ensuring that access goes two ways will enable people from rural areas to get to the cities as well as enabling tourists and people from the cities to come to us. Public transport will be vital in that and I look forward to working with the minister in that regard.

We have lots to celebrate and share. I welcome the debate because it gives us an opportunity to put our historic built environment in sharp focus, to acknowledge that we have not got everything right in the past and to celebrate what we can do in the future. I look forward to working with the minister, the Government and parties across the chamber to ensure that we make the most of Scotland's built environment assets.

15:35

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I wish to talk about some of the bits of our built heritage that are in the greatest danger: abandoned villages and buildings. I saw that part

of our built heritage, which still has a huge part to play in Scotland's story, exemplified on a recent journey that I made to Durness. Questions have been raised about the listing of pre-clearances villages and about interpretation facilities there. Discussions about the diaspora that took place during the Highland homecoming festival focused people's minds on exactly what it is that Historic Scotland does to preserve and interpret such sites. A good example of interpretation work is that which has been done by the Mackay country group, which has established a township trail at Ceannabeinne, which is an abandoned village from the 1840s near Durness. The group has asked me to establish the status of such ruined villages in listings of ancient monuments by Historic Scotland. There are many that we have to ask about, and for various reasons.

I have written to the Minister for Culture, External Affairs and the Constitution on this matter before, but I raise it in today's debate because it gives us an example of a situation in which a local group is collaborating with various agencies to celebrate, promote and interpret something that is central to the history of a place and which can help to explain why there are so few people there today.

We must not forget the relationship between buildings and the people who made the societies that created them in the first place. That is a point that Historic Scotland, the National Trust for Scotland and so on could make a good deal more of. In every part of Scotland, particularly in the Highlands and Islands, there are dozens of such sites. Historic Scotland has done much good work to celebrate prehistoric sites such as the world heritage areas of Orkney. However, villages that were inhabited for centuries before the clearances forced their people to scatter need action. I have visited and written about many of those villages. Good examples include Lorgill, near Glendale in Skye; Rossal, in Strathnaver; Badbea, on the Ork of Caithness; and Crakaig, near Calgary in Mull.

We could find examples throughout the lowlands, the Borders and the Highlands of those sorts of villages, which have now just about sunk to the bottom layer of stones, but which represent a part of our built heritage whose integrity it is important that we maintain.

I look forward to renewed efforts by Historic Scotland to safeguard such sites from inappropriate development and to prepare appropriate interpretation of these key parts of our history. However, I have yet to see that happen. Indeed, issues to do with inappropriate developments close to such sites are faced by every country in every age. Think about the huge standing stone monuments at Carnac in Brittany. People there encountered such difficulties in

protecting them that they eventually had to fence them off, which removed a lot of the beauty of the ancient sites. Many places in Scotland suffer from the same sort of inappropriate development, which must be tackled.

The problem with the National Trust for Scotland and Historic Scotland is that they are obviously interested in developing the places to which they can charge admission. However, many of the places that tell the story of our history are the sort of ruins that I have been talking about rather than the substantial houses from which those bodies make their income.

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Does the member agree that the monuments and remains to which he refers should be better signposted?

Rob Gibson: The essence of interpretation is to ensure that people know where they are, as well as telling them what is there, so signposting is a good idea.

We should come up with examples of historic Scots who are associated with particular sites, and ensure that the built environment agencies link a trail around those figures. We have heard some previous examples from members, but I will offer another. Andrew de Moray was a successful general, along with Wallace, at the battle of Stirling bridge in 1297. There are sites that are associated with him in the north and east of Scotland, such as Ormond Hill in particular, and other castles in the Moray area, but there is currently no interpretation that allows people to see those sites in the round. That type of work needs to be done in order to make the most of many of the sites.

Some concession to the climate change age would be useful in Historic Scotland's assessment of listed buildings. At my constituency office near Argyle Square in Wick, there is a problem in relation to the double glazing of windows and the designs that are forced on people.

Michael Russell: I am conscious that that theme has recurred during the debate, and I will address it in my summing-up speech. However, I counsel the member to be cautious. There are good examples of window replacement that has taken place, and very good recent examples of the installation of solar panels in listed buildings. Work is being done on those things. I will address the matter further, but it is not all doom and gloom.

Rob Gibson: I am glad to hear that it is not all doom and gloom; perhaps the solar panels will eventually provide some light.

Not all heritage lasts for ever, but we must ensure that the gardens that are a part of our heritage are maintained. During the National Trust crisis, the gardens at Inverewe and elsewhere

have not been maintained. Gardens deteriorate far faster than buildings do, and I urge that we find ways to invest properly in them at an early stage because they are so attractive.

The celebration and promotion of our historic heritage is a wide-ranging subject, and it should be spread much more widely around the country, rather than focusing merely on the iconic properties that most people visit.

15:42

Irene Oldfather (Cunninghame South) (Lab): Today's debate has been interesting, informative and enlightening, and it has been opportune to hear about the environments in other members' constituencies that are significant for Scotland's economy, and about the associated problems. I cannot recall that such a consensus has ever existed before between Mr Russell and me, so that is an interesting and novel experience in itself. I am sure that it is not one that we will often repeat, so we should take advantage of it today.

As an Ayrshire MSP, I focus my remarks on the significance of the debate for Ayrshire and my constituency. Last year, tourism in Ayrshire was worth £176 million, and employed 11 per cent of the total workforce. The top visitor attractions were mainly connected with historic buildings, visitor parks or museums. I am sure that it comes as no surprise to members that some of the most visited places are connected with our great bard Robert Burns. Those include the Burns cottage in Alloway, the Burns national heritage centre and the Burns museum. In addition, we have Culzean, Brodick and Dean castles, as well as Dundonald castle, to which the minister referred, each of which has different attributes and a different place in our history.

I will also mention Eglinton country park, the ancient home of the Montgomerie and Eglinton families, and Vikingar, the museum that tells the story of the battle of Largs against the Vikings in 1263. The potential for such sites is evident, but the debate offers an important opportunity to consider how we ensure that the full potential of our historic environment is realised.

We know that 95 per cent of overseas tourists access Ayrshire by air, which is far greater than the 75 per cent average for Scotland as a whole, so it is clear that there is a link between Prestwick airport and tourism in Ayrshire. However, I was disappointed to note from recent published figures that, while passenger numbers for Edinburgh are increasing, the numbers at Prestwick are falling.

The minister, who has considerable knowledge of the south of Scotland economy, may be aware of the importance that the route development fund played in encouraging passenger activity at

Prestwick. Since 2007 the fund has ceased to operate. The Scottish Government website states:

"The Scottish Government has been exploring how route development could go forward. Options are being considered".

The minister does not have direct responsibility in that area, but I hope that he can raise the matter with colleagues in the context of this debate.

I will say a few words about one of the recent success stories in my constituency: the restoration and opening of the tournament bridge in Eglinton park. Eglinton park is steeped in history and is famous for a three-day medieval jousting re-enactment that was held in 1839 by Archibald Montgomerie, the 13th Earl of Eglinton. The tournament bridge is a wonderful piece of architecture, which was damaged in world war two. It was reopened in June after painstaking work to ensure that all the details matched those of the original bridge. The restoration would not have been possible without the partnership between Historic Scotland, North Ayrshire Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund. Not only is the bridge good for local tourism but it represents a piece of history that was once thought lost being made available again to local people.

That brings me, as the minister accurately predicted, to the Carrick/City of Adelaide, the oldest clipper ship in existence, which currently resides in Irvine. For members who do not share the minister's detailed knowledge of it, the ship was built in Sunderland in 1864 and, during its long service, carried passengers from the United Kingdom to their new destinies in Australia. I am pleased to tell the minister that I have been in touch with Sunderland councillor Peter Maddison, who is a long-standing campaigner for the ship to be returned to the place where it was built. I understand that there is a possibility for the ship to be taken to Sunderland by a Dutch freight company. I received an email from Councillor Maddison stating that less than two weeks ago he was on a survey boat on the River Irvine with Dr Robert Prescott from National Historic Ships and Andrew Gregory from a Dutch recovery shipping company that has calculated the cost of transferring the City of Adelaide to Sunderland in the current global economic situation at £400,000. Councillor Maddison has already raised half that money. In summary, the shortfall to return the ship to Sunderland is around £200,000. I would genuinely welcome any input that the minister could have to take discussions forward or perhaps to consider some small grant aid to assist in the preservation of the ship for future generations.

It would be remiss of me not to mention, in respect of our natural environment, our wonderful Ayrshire coastline. Maritime development and regeneration represent an important new area for

the Ayrshire economy. In particular, the Irvine Bay Regeneration Company is currently looking at huge opportunities at Irvine harbourside. Such work could easily complement some of the other initiatives of which I have spoken.

I leave the final word in the debate to *The Irvine Herald*. Its headline a few weeks ago grabbed the attention of all when it proclaimed:

"Kilwinning could rival Rosslyn Chapel as a major tourist attraction in the wake of claims it is the final resting place of the Holy Grail."

On top of the rich built environment in my constituency, which I have described, Kilwinning, which is written about so often by my good friend Tom Shields, not only is the home of the famous Kilwinning abbey but may even be the home of the holy grail.

I rest my case on the huge opportunities that the natural and historic environment of Ayrshire presents for the Scottish economy as a whole.

15:49

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): As a trustee of Tain Museum Trust and Tain Guildry Trust, I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests.

It is a difficult debate for me because, to be honest, a cousin of mine demolished an 18th century mansion of some importance in the county of Wigtownshire. The fact that at the same time he became an early member of the Scottish National Party might or might not be connected.

I have listened to the debate with great interest and compliment members of all parties on the quality of their speeches. We have enjoyed and indeed are still enjoying what has been a carefully researched and deeply informative debate.

Ted Brocklebank's reference to Cromarty will be well received, although I should make what might be seen as a small and nit-picking point that it is not a village but a royal burgh. The title means an enormous amount to the people there. I should also say that when I hear any mention of Hamilton hall at my alma mater, the University of St Andrews, I cannot help but remember that I was twice asked to leave the residence.

On Rob Gibson's point about the importance of gardens, which again will be well received, I put it to the minister that in considering the historic built heritage of Scotland's towns, cities, villages and royal burghs he should remember that, although the gardens of townhouses might not be of huge horticultural importance, they are part and parcel of the streetscape and built environment. All too often in our communities gardens are taken over and built on; that is a pity and I feel that the

planning laws governing the issue should be looked at in time.

With regard to Ted Brocklebank's reference to a Royal Air Force facility that is lying derelict and in bad condition, I point out that other former defence buildings that are part of our built history are also crumbling to nothing, and I believe that it would be an enormous mistake to lose them. Rob Gibson will be as familiar as I am with former airfields such as RAF Tain, RAF Fearn and RAF Alness; indeed, at RAF Tain, the original operations room is still standing. When we remember the role that such bases played in the battle of the Atlantic and in beating Nazi Germany, it would be an extraordinary pity if we allowed them all to crumble to dust.

Ted Brocklebank: I agree totally. Some wonderful first world war and second world war sites are in need of preservation, and I certainly know the bases, including RAF Fearn in Easter Ross, that Mr Stone has mentioned. However, the question is whether we need to preserve all these wartime airfields.

Jamie Stone: I entirely accept the point, but I believe that the best examples should still be preserved—and, indeed, should be preserved as speedily as possible while some of the people who participated in those momentous events are still alive and can record their oral history of them.

Rob Gibson: Surely with laser technology and other methods we must be able to put together a record of what these bases looked like, what they felt like to work in, their dimensions and so on. That would ensure that these buildings, which have not received the proper attention that they should have had years ago, do not simply litter the countryside.

Jamie Stone: Rob Gibson's point very much accords with Ted Brocklebank's views but, as I say, the best examples should still be preserved.

I also draw attention to the gun emplacements at North Sutor and South Sutor on the Cromarty Firth, which were put in place when Winston Churchill was First Lord of the Admiralty to guard the entrance of the firth, where Admiral David Beatty's battle cruisers were anchored. They are important installations; we do not need to preserve them all, but I believe that if we could preserve one of them, it would be of enormous interest. When Rob Gibson and I were councillors, we and many others talked and made encouraging noises about the matter, but we do not seem to have progressed any further towards the goal.

I and other members, including Alex Neil in a debate a number of days ago, have accorded due credit to the Prince of Wales and his attempts to preserve some of the smaller houses and other built heritage of the far north. Although those

moves should be applauded and might well—and, I hope, will—lead to the restoration of some of the derelict houses in the royal burgh of Wick that Rob Gibson mentioned, we still have an awful lot of work to do. We wish the Prince of Wales and his colleagues the best of luck and I hope that the minister supports his endeavours, but we must not underestimate the nature of the task that lies before us.

As for the National Trust for Scotland, which several members have mentioned, I have to say that I stand in the chamber as a paid-up member of the organisation. Indeed, my wife is also a member and in years gone by has served on the national council. We hear of the work that our former Presiding Officer George Reid is undertaking. We wish him and the National Trust good fortune. However, as the member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross and somebody who lives in the far north, I cannot help but note the disparity between the number of properties that are owned in Aberdeenshire, Banffshire and other parts of Scotland and the number that are owned in the far north of Scotland, of which there are not a lot. We have the Castle of Mey, which is run by the Queen Elizabeth Castle of Mey Trust; Dunrobin castle, which is run by Sutherland Estates; and one or two gardens that are open to the public. However, I venture to suggest that there is a yawning gap in respect of properties in the far north of Scotland that the National Trust owns and runs.

Although I do not advocate selling off Fyvie castle to pay for something in some other part of Scotland, I hope that our former colleague George Reid will look at that disparity. I expect to see something about it in his recommendations. When the proposal was made to mothball Hugh Miller's house in Cromarty, I thought that that sat very ill indeed with the situation that I have just described. The disparity has to be tackled because, given that the National Trust for Scotland is meant to be for everyone, it truly should be for everyone, regardless of where they live in Scotland.

15:55

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): In this consensual debate—is there a by-election tomorrow?—I, like other MSPs, will take the opportunity to produce a mini tourism guide to my part of Scotland. Nothing could be more pertinent to the built and historic environment than that war zone over the centuries—the Scottish Borders. Despite Scotland's boundaries having been almost firm since the 11th century, which is most unusual among nations, there is the exception of the town of Berwick, which has changed its national allegiance—not always with its consent—13 times. Currently, it is in England,

but I have plans, as perhaps have others, to change that, given that in a recent referendum the Berwick people decided that they wanted to come back into Scotland. Who can blame them? In Berwick, we see the buildings and layout of any Scottish market town. Today, it still has the headquarters of the King's Own Scottish Borderers and the regimental museum.

The wars between England and Scotland mean that the footprints of Wallace and Bruce are deeply imprinted in the Borders. In Selkirk, Wallace was pronounced guardian of Scotland at the kirk of the forest—as Michael Caine would say, not a lot of people know that. That goes back to the point that Rob Gibson made about information about places. Melrose abbey is thought to contain the burial casket of Bruce's heart.

Selkirk and Melrose both link us to the romantic novelist Sir Walter Scott—a man who I think is being rehabilitated. The museum in Selkirk was formerly the court house, and it still has facsimiles of documents from when Sir Walter Scott was sheriff. It is a good example of a simple, interactive museum, which Rob Gibson mentioned.

There is also Abbotsford house, the eclectic, mock-baronial home that Sir Walter Scott built, which must be seen to be believed and overlooks his much-loved River Tweed and the Eildon hills. I am pleased to say that, after some years in limbo following the death of the last family member—it was a family home until recently—it is now managed by a trust and has succeeded in being given £144,000 in development funding, which I hope will lead to a further £4.5 million to restore the building to its rightful state.

Those buildings are all important for their own sake, as they link us directly to our formidable past, but they also make a substantial contribution to the Borders economy and, no doubt, they will make more of a contribution when the railway runs again to Tweedbank. That refers to a point that Karen Gillon made about historical tourist trails and the need for public transport.

Karen Gillon: Will the member take an intervention?

Christine Grahame: I am coming to Jedburgh abbey—I should not worry about it.

Karen Gillon: I am sure that, as a member for the South of Scotland, Christine Grahame would like to join me in campaigning for the new Glasgow to Edinburgh service to stop at Carstairs and Carluke.

Christine Grahame: I will campaign for anything if Karen Gillon can help me to get the money, but at the moment my priority is the Waverley line. Let us get that built first, after nearly 50 years of it not running.

Currently, nearly 10 per cent of employment in the Scottish Borders is tourism related. At the top of the attractions are Melrose abbey, Abbotsford house and Jedburgh abbey—I know that Karen Gillon will not thank me if I do not mention that. In 2008, UK tourists brought £77 million and overseas tourists brought £29 million into the Borders economy. That is not to be sneezed at in an area that was in recession and where mills closed long before Gordon Brown's recession—that is a little party-political point just to see whether members are awake.

Not all our historic environment is suitable to be a tourist attraction and we should not wish it to be. The demise of the weaving and spinning mills and of the paper mills in Penicuik means that vast stone-built mills stand empty, sometimes for far too long. However, I am pleased to say that at the riverside at Selkirk, new enterprises are rising phoenix-like from the metaphoric ashes of Borders industries that are—regrettably—dying.

I would like the minister to examine the use of compulsory purchase orders. Some of the long-deserted derelict buildings that are in commercial property developers' hands are a huge blight on towns. At the entrance to Gala from the A7 from Edinburgh stands a big mill that has been derelict for 10 to 15 years and which only now has a sign that says it is available for development. That is another issue that Karen Gillon raised, but we are not in cahoots. The matter needs to be addressed.

I return to Penicuik and beyond. Newtongrange has a successful mining museum and will be linked with the Waverley line, which will stop there and link into a tourist trail. The line, which is still clear from the A7, is part of our built and historic environment, as is the viaduct at Newtongrange. We must not think that the historic environment is just buildings.

Many historic houses and lands are in not just commercial but private ownership. I am really pleased that Traquair house near Innerleithen is still in the Maxwell Stuart family's hands. It is utterly charming and is very much a family home, as visits show. The property is one of the oldest inhabited houses in Scotland.

I will raise another issue for the minister to consider, just to see whether he is listening. Sometimes, a community becomes aware too late of the value of an historic construction such as a building, a mill or a salt house for which a planning application has been lodged for demolition. I understand that, once a planning application has been lodged, the community and everybody else is barred from seeking to have the building listed, albeit retrospectively, and cannot even halt proceedings. If a building is not listed, people have had it. I have chased that issue before. Will the

minister advise me of the current position? Would his office consider examining the situation?

Windows provide a metaphorical example of what we sometimes allow to happen to our built and historic environment. As shorthand, I will talk about sash and casement windows versus C R Smith—I mean no offence to C R Smith, but I know that it does not fit sash and casement windows. We are being sloppy as a society when we allow what appear to be minor alterations to buildings—sometimes just to one building in a row—to spoil an area's built landscape. Some councils are tight about that—the matter tends to be local—but I would like the issue to be addressed nationally.

16:03

Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab): My constituency has very good examples of Scotland's historic environment that are unique resources for our economy and our people. The importance of the Antonine wall has been recognised internationally. It is a world heritage site that runs from Bo'ness to Old Kilpatrick. The Bo'ness end of the wall, at Kinneil, has the remains of a roman fort, as well as Kinneil house, a museum and a cottage where James Watt worked on his design for a steam engine. That is history on our doorstep.

Falkirk Council and other authorities are working closely with Historic Scotland, but they are working with no extra resources. They are doing their best to promote the wall—they have run special events, published new leaflets and installed boards and markers near the wall—but what can be done and how quickly are limited without additional funding.

The councils do not have the significant funds that are needed for new visitor centres and substantial pieces of new interpretation. They are formulating an action plan and have been told that, somewhere down the line, more funding might be available. However, as the minister said, that funding is

"likely to come from a variety of sources, not just the public purse".—[*Official Report, Written Answers*, 29 September 2009; S3W-27588.]

The action plan is welcome, but I would like some additional funding to be allocated to promote and enhance awareness of the Antonine wall. In England, work has been taken forward on Hadrian's wall by a management company that receives substantial funds from the UK Government, and that investment is bringing a real return. It is providing excellent new visitor and interpretation facilities, which attract tourists from throughout the north of England. In Scotland, we have been promised jam tomorrow, but I fear that

we are struggling to get even bread and butter today.

Also in my constituency, crossing the Antonine wall, is the Bo'ness and Kinneil railway, which is operated by the Scottish Railway Preservation Society. The railway museum at Bo'ness is a national treasure, and not just for Scotland, as some exhibits are unique in the UK and without parallel even in the collection in York. We need to give our industrial museums the recognition and support that they deserve. They bring the past to life and enable our people to experience their heritage.

Michael Russell: I warmly agree with that sentiment. I have several things to say to the member. First, the railway museum is working towards national recognition. Secondly, the museums summit that was held in June set up a museums task force—as I asked it to do—to consider national policy on museums, and that will look at industrial museums. Finally, I add that my visit to the museum allowed me to drive a steam engine, so I am eternally grateful to the member's constituency, because I achieved one of my ambitions.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan): You have made me very jealous, Mr Russell.

Cathy Peattie: I recognise the minister's interest and the positive response that he had from the people whom he met. He will be aware of my passion for steam trains.

Michael Russell: On a point of order, Presiding Officer, I should have noted that the member was on the footplate of the steam engine with me.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Perhaps we had better get back to the built environment.

Cathy Peattie: Mr Russell, people are going to start talking.

More can be done to give support. Such support is a win-win situation for people and the economy. The locomotives have been refurbished on site by volunteers who have lovingly given their time, labour and expertise to the task. From steam trains, such as my favourite the Caledonian, to diesel trains from Darlington, Derby and Crewe—I know that that sounds like a platform announcement—the magic of the railway is there for the young and the not-so-young, for local people and for visitors from throughout Scotland and beyond.

Tourists have travelled from around the world for a trip on the railway, which runs from Bo'ness to the Birkhill clay mine. There is also a connection with the main line at Manuel, which enables extensive tours. The SRPS would like to add a station at the Manuel junction. It is raring to go

with its many plans to extend its work and expand the scope of its activities for volunteers from a wide variety of backgrounds, but it can do those things only if funding can be found.

Christmas is a busy time, with Santa temporarily forsaking his reindeer in favour of a steam train. I am sure that the minister would enjoy the occasion, and I invite him to visit the railway—yes, again—to see for himself the Santa railway complete with mince pies and mulled wine.

Although the Bo'ness and Kinneil railway and museum are unique in what they do, they are not unique in the problems that they face. Other industrial museums are preserving other important aspects of our industrial heritage, but they are very much the poor cousins of the sector, despite the large numbers of visitors who go through their doors. We need critically to assess the needs of industrial museums and to give them the credit that they are due. Equally, we need properly to support the development of the Antonine wall.

I am glad that we are putting the spotlight on Scotland's historic environment. We have much of value, but we are not making the most of it. I hope that the Scottish Government agrees with me and that it will address the issues that I have raised. We should celebrate our heritage and realise that improving support and investment will pay dividends in many ways. As I said, I acknowledge and welcome the minister's interest and I look forward to the museums task force report. After all, we all benefit from building our national heritage. We would not want to be left on the platform after the train has departed.

16:09

Ian McKee (Lothians) (SNP): This has been an interesting debate. My only concern is about the future welfare of the people who write the travel guides to Scotland, because people will only need to read the debate on the web to find out all about the pleasures of the country free of charge.

When accepting the task of inquiring into the future role of the National Trust for Scotland, our former Presiding Officer, George Reid, said:

"Our built and natural heritage is what gives us a sense of place and identity."

Not only those of us who live in Scotland but millions in the Scottish diaspora throughout the world get a sense of place and identity from those assets. They may be hugely successful in their chosen fields and live in countries that vastly outstrip ours in size and gross domestic product, yet they yearn to identify and explore the roots that nourish them and that contributed to who they are and how they tick.

We all accept that this country has much to offer in its natural heritage. We are rightly proud of our beautiful countryside—our lochs and mountains—but they are not unique. Canada has mountainous grandeur, as do New Zealand and other countries. What we can offer that is unique is our fantastic built heritage. That heritage is of special interest to those whose ancestors came from Scotland, but it also interests people with no connection to Scotland, who simply enjoy looking at and exploring old buildings that are associated with so many deeds from Scotland's past. Sometimes we take the built heritage for granted—familiarity blunts our appreciation—but it is a different story for those who live in countries where it does not exist. We must cherish and, yes, exploit it.

When we survey the organisational landscape around our built heritage, we find that all has not been well. I welcome the summit to which the minister referred and the concept of partnership that he espouses. A citizen of this country, let alone someone coming from afar, would benefit from having a single, consistent way of gaining access to all that we have to offer, yet consider what happens. The properties that are open to the public are administered in a variety of ways. The National Trust for Scotland guards access to attractions such as Culloden, Brodick castle and Gladstone's Land, whereas Historic Scotland is responsible for Edinburgh castle, Skara Brae and Urquhart castle. If one wishes to visit Abbotsford or Blair, Glamis, Floors or Dunrobin castles, the Historic Houses Association is the co-ordinating body.

All the organisations that I have mentioned have different philosophies, membership fees and entrance charges. I am not suggesting that they all merge—their individuality must be respected—but surely they could do more to present a united and welcoming front to the visitor. The joint ticketing arrangements and publicity that the minister outlined as part of homecoming Scotland must be not only maintained but expanded. Let us hope that George Reid's report to the National Trust will encourage further co-operation.

Michael Russell: I will add another detail from the summit to keep Mr Smith absorbed. The issue of how the three bodies that Ian McKee mentioned—the Historic Houses Association, the National Trust and Historic Scotland—can work together constructively on marketing and ticketing was discussed at the summit. All three bodies will take action on it over the winter.

Ian McKee: That is welcome news.

There are also buildings and attractions that are currently outwith the normal round of visitor attractions. Some time ago, I had a chance to visit Newbattle Abbey College in Dalkeith. On that visit I saw, almost casually while being shown around,

the font from Linlithgow palace in which Mary Queen of Scots was probably baptised and a treasure chest from one of the ships of the Spanish armada that was wrecked off Fife. Who knows that they are there, among other items of interest?

Most American visitors to this city can look at the old quad of the University of Edinburgh without realising that it was the alma mater of two signatories to the declaration of independence, Benjamin Rush and John Witherspoon. Few Poles now know that from 1941 to 1949 the entire Polish school of medicine operated from Teviot Place. Those wishing to learn about that time are asked to ring a telephone number between 9.30 and 2.30 on Wednesdays. People who want to view other artefacts connected with the University of Edinburgh may not be so lucky, as the first university archivist was appointed only comparatively recently. Not that Edinburgh should be censured unduly—no other Scottish university has even got that far in cataloguing its treasures properly. We must find out about all that we have to offer visitors to Scotland and do our best to ensure that as much as possible is easily accessible.

I intended to talk about Castle Tioram, but enough was said about it in previous speeches; the minister will mention it when summing up the debate. I simply contrast the situation of Castle Tioram with that of Eilean Donan, which was fully restored about 100 years ago by Lieutenant-Colonel Jock MacRae-Gilstrap. Would he have received permission to do that today? Now, Eilean Donan is a magnet for tourists.

My other gripe about Historic Scotland concerns some of the decisions that it takes to preserve existing buildings. I have argued about how our built heritage must be preserved, but that surely does not mean that every building that is listed must be preserved, as if in aspic, for the rest of time. I cite the example of the Royal Commonwealth pool, which is just across Holyrood Park from the Parliament. The building has been judged by Historic Scotland to be of extreme architectural importance, and has been given a grade 1 listing. However, it is now unfit for purpose as a swimming pool for international events. More important, it cannot be made suitable. Today, international competition requires 10 swimming lanes, and it is physically impossible to widen the building to accommodate more than eight.

Now that an upgrade is required, the cost is much higher, and the time for which the pool must be closed is much longer, simply because of the criteria that must be met given Historic Scotland's listing. The building might be of some architectural interest, but I doubt very much that it is high on the

lists of things to see for visitors to our capital. Surely it would have been to the greater public good to raze the building to the ground and replace it, at less cost and in less time, with a pool that is fit for purpose for the inhabitants of Scotland in the 21st century.

Scotland has had many visitors in the past. Gnaeus Agricola came for the spoils of war. Pope Pius II—when he was just plain Mr Piccolomini, before he became Pope—was attracted by the beauty and friendliness of its women. Today, visitors are more and more attracted by our built heritage. I support the minister's motion and the other parties' amendments.

16:16

Aileen Campbell (South of Scotland) (SNP):

Our history and heritage are hugely important not only because of what they tell us about the past, but because we can learn lessons to help build a better future. That is why I start by welcoming the launch of the Scotland's history website by Learning and Teaching Scotland. It is a wonderful website that gives people from around the world the chance to explore 5,000 years of our country's heritage. It is a welcome demonstration of the Government's commitment to ensure that people in Scotland have the opportunity to learn about and learn from our history and to understand the importance of preserving our heritage for future generations.

The built and historic environment summit, to which the motion refers, was an historic first: it was the first event of its kind to be organised by a devolved Scottish Government, but it is not likely to be the last. I declare an interest, as I am one of the people for whom the minister said that Bute hall holds many memories. Some are good, and others—sitting my final exams—are not so good, but it is testament to the foresight of previous generations and of the university authorities that the building has been so well developed and maintained that it can still be used for such wide and varied purposes.

Each of us, representing our constituencies and regions, has done well in the debate to highlight historic landmarks and locations that demonstrate what the motion calls "the valuable resource" that our heritage provides to our country's people and our economy. In the South of Scotland, we are lucky enough to have one of this country's five world heritage sites, in Robert Owen's model village of New Lanark, as Karen Gillon mentioned—I agree with a lot of what she said. We pay tribute to those who have been involved in decades of painstaking restoration work to make the village a source of pride for the wider area and an important tourist attraction, as well as a thriving, working, living community in its own right.

As a world heritage site, the village sums up many different aspects of the role of heritage, which the motion touches on. The buildings of New Lanark are there not simply to be looked at; they are there to be lived in, worked in, visited and explored. Inside the public spaces it is possible to learn about the ideals of Robert Owen and the co-operative movement, the emphasis on education for the young and the fair treatment of workers. Those ideas are as much a part of the heritage that New Lanark helps to protect and preserve as the buildings or factory workings.

It is fitting, during the year of homecoming, that New Lanark and the country's other world heritage sites were chosen to appear on Clydesdale Bank notes, along with important figures and trail-blazers from Scotland's past.

Christopher Harvie: Mention of New Lanark takes me back to 1971, the bicentenary of Robert Owen, when a group of us visited the village in connection with a conference at the University of Strathclyde, to discover the buildings on the edge of collapse. We sent a report to the House of Lords, where Anthony Greenwood raised the matter in a debate about Robert Owen's bicentenary. I think that as a result, £250,000 was gained to stop the place falling down. If I have contributed nothing else to history, I pride myself on having jumped on that issue, because the village is not just an historical museum piece but a major attraction for that part of Scotland.

Aileen Campbell: I agree and I thank the member for saving it.

Our historic environment is not simply about buildings and places; there is also the concept of intangible cultural heritage. I was fascinated recently to hear about a new project that is being developed at Edinburgh Napier University in conjunction with local authorities, to seek out and record examples of aspects of our society's history that are difficult to preserve in a traditional museum setting. The aim is ultimately to tie the records into the efforts of the United Nations to record and preserve global examples of intangible cultural heritage. Throughout the south of Scotland there are many important traditions, such as the Lanimer procession through the county town of Lanark, the annual whuppity scoorie event and the galas and marchings that take place in towns and villages. I hope that the Edinburgh Napier University project is a success and can be rolled out throughout Scotland, and that communities throughout the country participate enthusiastically, to ensure that local traditions are recorded and preserved.

Sometimes, buildings and places are an important link with the past. For example, in Carluke stands the best-preserved historic windmill in Scotland. It is perhaps no coincidence

that from the site of the Carluke high mill visitors can see modern windmills harnessing the power of the natural environment to provide clean, green energy for our homes and businesses. The high mill, sadly, remains at risk, and I commend the work of South Lanarkshire Council and a range of local interest groups to secure a future for the building. There must be the potential to link the wonderful old mill with the modern wind power that is generating electricity and jobs in the area.

I recently visited the remains of the Wilsontown ironworks near Forth in South Lanarkshire. The site is a link with the area's past, and children from the local primary school have been helping with preservation work. At that site and at the Carluke high mill there are problems to do with private ownership. Landlords' lack of sympathy for the cultural significance of what they own can be a barrier to people who want to preserve the built heritage, as Christine Grahame said. How such interests can be reconciled is worthy of further investigation, so that buildings do not fall into such disrepair that there is little point in saving them and they are lost for ever.

Monument watch is an innovative scheme to protect historic buildings that has worked in a number of European countries. I have written to the minister about that scheme, which is aimed at owners not just of heritage buildings but of tenements and small houses such as Ted Brocklebank talked about. The aim of the scheme is to survey properties and provide guidance on how to maintain them appropriately and engage with reputable contractors. When I discussed the scheme with people who are involved in it, they told me that the lack of Scotland-sourced stone and slate, due to a decrease in the number of quarries, is a problem. I am not saying that we should open up quarries, but we should consider how we maintain and renovate our historic buildings by sympathetically using materials, so that new stonework and slates match existing materials and weather in the same way.

It is worth mentioning the campaign to reduce VAT on repairs and maintenance, especially for listed and historic buildings. Because new buildings are exempt from VAT, it can be cheaper to demolish an old building and build afresh than to preserve and protect historic architecture. The European Union recently allowed national Governments to reduce VAT on repairs and maintenance to 5 per cent, but it will be for the UK Government to implement such a change until the Scottish Parliament regains the power over the financial controls that it needs.

The debate has allowed us to focus on the importance of Scotland's historic environment to our economy and society. Whether we are talking about things that we can see and touch, such as

places, buildings and monuments, or about things that we cannot see, such as ideas, arguments and memories, our heritage is undoubtedly the foundation on which future generations will build.

16:24

Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD): I welcome the debate. As we all know, Scotland's rich and varied historic environment makes a valuable contribution to our economy, our culture and our shared heritage. It is estimated that the sector supports more than 60,000 full-time equivalent positions—that represents 2.5 per cent of all employment in Scotland—and contributes an incredible £2.3 billion in gross value to the Scottish economy.

The tourism expenditure that is attributable to the historic environment is estimated to support some 37,000 full-time equivalent employees in Scotland. I am acutely aware of how much the local businesses in my constituency depend on visitors to places such as Culross, a living historic village on the Fife coast with a lovely palace, abbey and other historic buildings that are open to the public all year round. Indeed, in my office in the Parliament, I have a painting of Culross's lovely mercat cross and library.

Dunfermline—which you know well, Presiding Officer—is the ancient capital of Scotland and the heart of the kingdom of Fife. Among its many claims to fame, it is the resting place of 11 kings and queens, including King Robert the Bruce, who lies below the altar at Dunfermline abbey. It is also the birthplace of Andrew Carnegie, the world-renowned philanthropist. He ensured that Pittencrieff park was gifted to the people of Dunfermline. It remains a major attraction to locals and visitors alike. Dunfermline and Culross are historically significant and well worth a visit.

We have discussed the maintenance of the built environment. A key resource for that lies in my constituency: the Scottish Lime Centre Trust in Charlestown provides training for individuals and companies that are involved in the proper restoration of our historic buildings. Having visited the centre, I have witnessed how historical methods, tools and materials are used to keep our historic environment in good condition in harmony with the buildings' histories.

The sector is dominated by Historic Scotland, which is directly responsible to the Scottish ministers, but non-governmental organisations still play an important role in it. The National Trust for Scotland is one such organisation. Unfortunately, it has been dogged by financial uncertainty that has led to the sale of its headquarters in Charlotte Square here in Edinburgh, more than 60 redundancies, and temporary closures, despite its

membership having this year reached its highest level yet since the trust was established in 1931.

The closure of monuments such as the Hill of Tarvit mansion house, which Iain Smith mentioned, is one of the National Trust for Scotland's great mistakes. The trust's chief executive spoke to MSPs on the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee in September and assured them that the finances are now sound. All the same, there are questions to be asked about the long-term funding of our heritage. We need assurances that it is, and will remain, secure and accessible to all.

The Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland has recommended increasing awareness of the importance of the historic environment to the economy and employment in Scotland as a whole. It should be noted that the council will be abolished having completed its work programme and that it has not met since May this year. One of its recommendations is the setting up of an intermediate body to champion the non-governmental sector's agenda. However, that appears to have received an unenthusiastic response so far.

The Government plans to introduce a bill with the overarching aim of improving the management of our historic environment. I urge it not to introduce new and significant burdens or duties on local government, businesses or the private sector in the bill.

Michael Russell: I make a clear commitment that the bill's purpose will not be to introduce new burdens. Indeed, I would not wish it to introduce new burdens. It will be a bill to tidy and make more efficient the activities that we undertake.

Jim Tolson: I welcome that assurance from the minister, because many people in Scotland had that legitimate concern.

The funding questions remain. Uncertainties in funding should encourage ministers to work with Historic Scotland, the National Trust for Scotland and all other concerned parties to ensure the continuing accessibility and sustainability of Scotland's rich and diverse historic environment. That affects us all.

Michael Russell raised some important points in his speech. He was one of the few to talk about the War Memorials Trust's important work. The project is to improve and maintain our historic war memorials, but it certainly does not include all war memorials, in my experience. Many are maintained by the fund-raising efforts of local volunteers. The National Trust is looking after the nation's assets and Historic Scotland plays an overarching role, but change is needed to ensure the protection of our buildings.

Ted Brocklebank made a number of important points. He said that our buildings were often forgotten because of our world-renowned scenery. That may be true, but the buildings play a key part, not least here in Edinburgh, in attracting visitors to Scotland. Ted Brocklebank also said what wonderful, iconic buildings our castles are. I could not agree more. The Royal Mile in Edinburgh has, at its top, probably the most iconic castle in the world. I suggest that there are also two iconic buildings at the bottom of the Royal Mile: Holyrood Palace and the Scottish Parliament. All those buildings attract visitors from around the world. I hope that that will continue to be the case.

Iain Smith felt that the Scottish National Party Government's motion was strange and rather self-congratulatory. It may be just a time-filler, but we will see what the Government decides to do when we get a response from the minister in the near future. Karen Gillon mentioned New Lanark. I agree with her that it provides a truly breathtaking vision of the industrial age in Scotland. It is a wonderful place to visit, as is the Wanlockhead Museum of Lead Mining, which she also mentioned and which many of us may have visited. Rob Gibson made the important point that the issue is not only our built environment but our gardens. I referred earlier to Pittencrieff park in Dunfermline, but many historic gardens throughout the country rightly attract visitors.

When my colleague Jamie Stone started his speech, I thought that he was beginning to sum up for the Lib Dems, because he was talking about everybody else's speech thus far. However, he made an important point about keeping some of the historic places from world war two that are found around Scotland. I have been fortunate enough to visit Jersey, which, as members will be well aware, has many world war two historic monuments, which are kept in good condition as a major part of the island's tourism industry.

I ask the minister to give us assurances in his summing up about the maintenance of the built environment in Scotland, whether gardens, buildings or any other part.

16:32

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I am pleased to be winding up for the Conservatives in what has largely been a positive and useful debate. I was interested in Nigel Don's remarks about Duthie park in Aberdeen. I declare an interest, in that the pink granite obelisk that overshadows that park is a monument to my ancestor James McGrigor, who founded the Royal Army Medical Corps. For me, that is an important part of the Scottish built environment.

They say that east never goes west, but my family did. My present region of the Highlands and Islands encapsulates so much of the very best of Scotland's historic built environment, from the globally important neolithic magic of Skara Brae and Maeshowe in Orkney, to the French-renaissance-meets-Scots-baronial splendour of Dunrobin castle in Sutherland. There is also the emotive romanticism of Eilean Donan castle, which is surely one of the most photographed castles in world; the unusual combination of baroque, Palladian and Gothic architecture in Inveraray castle in my native Argyll and Bute; the ruined Kilchurn castle on Loch Awe; Castle Tioram at Acharacle; and Urquhart castle on Loch Ness. There are, of course, many more. Above all that, however, Scotland also has a wonderfully high concentration of Adam houses, which I believe makes us internationally important.

Rob Gibson: The member mentioned in passing Dunrobin castle, which is well preserved by the family that owns it. Does the member think that the clearances villages that were created by the policies of such people's ancestors should be preserved?

Jamie McGrigor: My colleague Jamie Stone mentioned Tain museum, which I believe is a museum to the clearances. Of course, that was one of the Lib Dem's original social engineering experiments.

I was talking about Adam houses. We have many of them, despite the fact that, as one of my Argyll constituents says,

"nearly 50 per cent of Robert Adam's buildings in Scotland, the nation's greatest architect, have been destroyed in the last 100 years, including several of his masterpieces. Destroyed of course by the stupidity of politicians and local councillors. I hope this will make a few people sit up and realise how precious and how threatened our built heritage is!"

I know that the Minister for Culture, External Affairs and the Constitution will be aware of that, but what about his colleagues?

As an aside, let me say that I am delighted that interest in William and Robert Adam remains so great. Tonight sees the launch of Roderick Graham's new biography of Robert Adam, which is being published by the excellent Edinburgh publisher Birlinn. I wish the book well.

In preparing for today's debate, I was contacted by a lady constituent who has huge experience in the historic houses sector. She agreed with the debate title, that our historic environment is a "Unique Resource for Our Economy", but she pointed out that the historic environment can also be expensive to look after. As others have mentioned, we need only consider the recent funding woes of the National Trust for Scotland to see a powerful demonstration of that point.

Notwithstanding the mostly good work of the National Trust for Scotland and Historic Scotland, it remains the case that the private ownership of much of Scotland's heritage—two thirds is the figure that is usually quoted—is a cost-effective way of preserving the nation's heritage without ruining the public purse. Of course, private owners need to make things work. Many of them use their houses for all sorts of things, from venues for music and dancing events to much smaller-scale niche-marketing opportunities, such as weddings, concerts, up-market accommodation, sporting lets and educational activities. Sadly, the people who work at the coalface trying to make our historic houses function on a financially viable basis say that it is becoming increasingly difficult to operate due to burdensome regulations—such as licensing laws—that are simply not designed for smaller, part-time businesses. The expert on historic houses that I mentioned warns that, unless excessive and costly regulations and bureaucracy are checked, fewer privately owned houses will have a future involving public use so there will be more calls on public funding as a last resort.

On the issue of the National Trust for Scotland, I was pleased to be involved in the successful campaign to prevent the closure of Arduaine garden, which is a key part of Argyll's historic environment. I pay tribute to all those who fought so hard to preserve the garden, including the friends of Arduaine and the various generous benefactors who donated money to secure the garden's future. My constituents want to see that world-class garden being promoted as effectively as possible. Indeed, one constituent suggested to me yesterday that a specific heritage body should exist to promote Scotland's wonderful gardens. I would be interested to hear the minister's view on that. Horticultural tourism surely has the potential to be a real growth area.

While I am on the subject of Argyll and important tourist facilities, I have been asked to voice the concern of constituents about council plans to remove business signs on the A85 and A828 trunk roads. Many of those signs are for historic environment businesses. There are real worries that removing the signs could seriously harm some 30 local businesses in Argyll. That should not be happening, especially in the middle of a recession and under a Scottish Government that seeks a 50 per cent increase in tourism.

Although this is outside my region, I was asked at a recent reception in Parliament by a lady from Kinross to highlight the appalling plight of that town. Kinross is a fine old county town whose 16th century heart features a clock steeple, a mercat cross, a fountain, an 18th century county building designed by Robert Adam as well as a fine early 19th century county building and high school. The town is a conservation area, but that has not

prevented it from being neglected by Perth and Kinross Council, which now owns all the buildings concerned. Quite rightly, the lady wants to know, "What is the overall strategy to preserve the historic stone buildings of Kinross?"

I am sure that the same question could be asked of so many of our smaller towns and villages. Recently, the enthusiasm and energy of the architect John McAslan have restored the historic burgh hall in Dunoon. That effort should be recognised and followed by our leaders in Scotland. Each place has its own gem. Look at Rennie Mackintosh's wonderful Hill house in Helensburgh. Look at Scotland's other Edwardian houses whose interiors were created by architects such as Lorimer.

I conclude by emphasising just how culturally and economically important our built and historic environment is to my region and to the whole country. It underpins to a massive extent the £1 billion that we take in from our tourism sector and all the associated jobs that go with that, which are often vital in some of our more remote and rural communities. I am pleased that the minister recognises the enthusiasm, passion and co-operation that exist in the sector; the Scottish Conservatives recognise it, too.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member should wind up.

Jamie McGrigor: I am just winding up now. I never knew that Mike Russell had driven a steam engine. I hope that his fat controller congratulated him on doing so and that he will be a really useful engine for the historic environment in the future.

16:41

Pauline McNeill: It is right that we have all had an opportunity to highlight some key historic attractions in our constituencies. It has been interesting to listen to accounts of trails through members' constituencies and I have learned a lot.

I genuinely believe that the summit for the built and historic environment is a good initiative, but I think that more could be made of it. I am pleased that the minister acknowledged that more needs to be made of the historical aspect and the lessons that can be learned. I hope that he will be able to assure us that the initiative is not his alone, but that the full Cabinet and the Government are behind it.

It was the minister who said that we must prioritise, as we cannot save all our historic buildings. That important but difficult message was endorsed by others. We need to do more work on how that prioritisation will be achieved. Jamie Stone and Rob Gibson talked about other ways of preserving historic sites. Rob Gibson said that

there were ways of showing people what some buildings looked like that would avoid their historic value being lost. People want to know facts—that is what interests them. They like to read about places that they go to see. We need to do more in that regard.

Ted Brocklebank and Jamie McGrigor spoke forcefully about the importance of having a mix of public and private funding, and Jamie McGrigor was right to mention the decisions of politicians. Earlier, I made the point that if there is a failure to take the initiative, it is not possible to go back—when a fantastic building receives no investment and is lost as a result, the moment has gone.

Karen Gillon made the most important point of the afternoon, and I do not say that just because she is my friend. In fairness, Christine Grahame made the same point about how we can connect historic sites. The collaboration that has been discussed should consider some of the best ideas on how to do that. I am pleased that the Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism is present, because his department has an important role to play in that regard. Karen Gillon and Christine Grahame spoke about the need to connect such sites, and the point was illustrated effectively by reference to the historic sites of the Borders. It strikes me that the links that exist have been underplayed, and I suppose that the purpose of the collaboration is to investigate how to exploit them more fully. We need to establish trails and links, whether geographical or otherwise, and get the transport links right, too.

We must also link the old and the new. Cathy Peattie mentioned the historical attractions in Falkirk, but there are other, new attractions there, such as the Falkirk wheel. It is important that we connect the old and the new, as new attractions are just as important to people as old ones.

I think that it was Jamie McGrigor who talked about signage. People want to see signs. I am told that there is very little signage for this attraction—the Parliament. I do not know why that is the case; perhaps we should look into it. Even though the Parliament has become one of the most visited sites in Scotland, the signage for it is extremely poor. People want to know where the place that they are visiting is, and that should be highlighted.

Ian McKee was full of ideas. He mentioned joint ticketing and marketing, without which we will not achieve much of what we want to achieve, because people want value for money. Again, that is where the collaboration is important, as it is the organisations that are involved in it that can bring that about.

Ian McKee also talked about restrictions in availability and the importance of making public institutions work. He pointed out that there are

some buildings that we need to make fit for purpose, even if that means knocking them down and rebuilding them. I emphasise that point.

Returning to the Liberal Democrat amendment, I hope that the collaboration remains a priority for the Government and that we hear more about the summit. I would like to know more about who attended it because, from what I have learned this afternoon, they are the key decision makers and the people who will influence our built environment. I would like to hear a proper report in Parliament at some point, and not just on a day on which we are looking for something to debate.

Christopher Harvie talked about buildings on the point of collapse. It struck me that perhaps there needs to be a wider audit of such buildings. I talked about the Egyptian halls in Glasgow's Union Street, which would certainly be in that category. I have considered the matter in great detail. If we do not save the building now, it will collapse, and we will not be able to do anything about it.

Irene Oldfather talked about the City of Adelaide, and she made a strong point that it takes only small amounts of cash to make a difference and save an attraction. I suppose that if we add up all the cash, it amounts to quite a lot, but £200,000 could make a difference in a case such as the Adelaide.

The minister rose to his feet on the issue of the conflict between conservation rules and practical concerns about people's homes. I talked about the issue of listed buildings, and decisions by the reporter to reject appeals by my constituents, who cannot afford to replace the windows that are required under the conservation rules. I know that there are solutions, which is what I think the minister was saying in response. It is not all doom and gloom, but more can be done to get the balance right between preserving listed buildings where people live, and ensuring that they can open their windows and clean them. I am looking for some practical solutions.

Christine Grahame: I understand that there is no VAT on improvements and so on to listed buildings. That is a great assistance to people who are looking to do remedial works.

Pauline McNeill: I agree—it is about getting the balance right by having robust conservation rules and, at the same time, making it practical for the people who actually live in those buildings.

We need to preserve our green space as part of our built environment. There is often a conflict of interest between people who make decisions—the town planners and so on—who want to protect the green space, and the desire to put something in that space that might benefit society.

I genuinely believe that the historic environment is at the heart of the culture portfolio. A bit of investment and resource could make a significant difference and ensure that we maximise Scotland's heritage, its historical buildings and its sites of importance. The lessons that we can learn from the past and from planning and design decisions can improve people's quality of life, which is why I want both approaches to go hand in hand. I look forward to hearing more.

16:48

Michael Russell: It has been a rich and varied debate, which has ranged widely throughout Scotland and across issues. I shall corral the general issues first, before considering the particular issues in each constituency.

It is a sign of the variety of the debate that, during it, I was asked by one contributor to occupy and repatriate Berwick; by another to raze the Commonwealth pool to the ground; by a third to put up a whole new system of signage; by a fourth to take down the whole new system of signage; by a fifth to give £200,000 to move a ship; and—incredibly—by Jamie McGrigor to revise all the knowledge that any of us has ever had of the clearances and to see them as a Lib Dem social engineering experiment. That is fairly remarkable.

However, the most incredible thing that I have been asked to believe—

Jamie McGrigor: Will the minister take an intervention?

Michael Russell: Not at this stage. I am sorry.

The most incredible thing that I have been asked to believe is that the holy grail is currently in Kilwinning. The journalist Tom Shields—whom Irene Oldfather mentioned—used to refer to Kilwinning as the Ayrshire burgh of culture, but even he would be astonished by that piece of information. My favourite story about Kilwinning is of the train going through Kilwinning to Ayr when it stops and the guard's van door opens. A greyhound jumps out and rushes along the platform. The porter leans out, points to it and shouts, "Stop that dog, it's a parcel!" However, this is not an opportunity for me to tell stories about Kilwinning—I could spend until 1 minute past 5 doing that.

A number of members have referred to the historic environment (amendment) (Scotland) bill that we hope to produce. I welcome the Tories' indication that they will support that bill virtually sight unseen.

Ted Brocklebank: I think I said that we hoped to give it fair passage once we had sight of it.

Michael Russell: I look forward to that opportunity. I assure Ted Brocklebank that nothing in it will frighten the horses—or even the greyhounds. It will be a constructive bill.

Christine Grahame raised the barring of the listing of a building when there is a live planning application related to it. This response might give an indication of the type of bill that I hope that it will be. The issue arises all over Scotland, and the draft historic environment (amendment) (Scotland) bill, on which we consulted over the summer, included proposals for an alternative way of dealing with the issue—by issuing certificates of immunity in certain circumstances. That is the type of constructive discussion that I hope we will have as we consider the bill next year.

The bill is being prepared and worked on by Historic Scotland. I pay tribute to Historic Scotland, which has come in for a great deal of criticism during the debate. I participated in such criticism in previous years, but nevertheless I believe that Historic Scotland is determined to be outward focused and to ensure that it represents itself and those with whom it works differently. It is determined to speak of its successes, as well, and there are many of them. For example—Mr Brocklebank referred to this—admission income is up 21 per cent from last year and visitor numbers are up 8 per cent. That is a considerable achievement, which Historic Scotland has followed up with vigorous activity to ensure that it is providing a quality product.

Historic Scotland is also being proactive in terms of buildings in Scotland. It has recently introduced a system for private clients specifically to encourage maintenance management plans so that buildings do not fall into disrepair, resulting in extra restoration costs. That issue was raised by several members.

Almost every member raised the issue of windows. I reassure members that, although there are difficulties with replacement windows, it is no part of Historic Scotland's duty to snoop on people to ensure that their windows are absolutely pristine. In circumstances in which replacement windows are an issue, Historic Scotland will work hard with people to find alternatives and ensure that those alternatives are viable. Indeed, I met some of the residents of a tower block in Anderston that is a listed building. I have committed myself to discussing with them a better system of working between the council and Historic Scotland so that no difficulties arise. Their problem is doors—it takes a long time to replace the front door of a flat when it should not.

There have been successes. Just outside Pauline McNeill's constituency, the former Royal Automobile Club building has been redeveloped and there has been agreement on the type of

windows. They will be energy efficient and provide better windows for the building, and although they will be modern windows they will look good in that setting.

The measure of our successes is in the figures. In 2008-09, Historic Scotland considered 2,137 applications for listed building consent. It responded to all but 29 cases in 28 days—only 1.4 per cent of cases went beyond 28 days. In that year, it did not ask ministers to call in any of those applications, so the idea that there was an endless dispute going on is simply not true—not a single application was called in in that year. The pilot study with local authorities, to which I referred in my opening speech, was intended to ensure that advice is targeted only at the most difficult cases, which is how it should be.

Climate change issues are important, and a lot of work is being done to ensure that buildings are fit for purpose. It is interesting to note, however, that old buildings can be recycled, which can make them more efficient in energy use than modern buildings. The investment that Historic Scotland can make with support from private individuals and others can make buildings better able to meet the challenges of climate change.

There has been a lot of discussion about the listing of post-war buildings. Members should remember—although they might not have been around then—that, in the 1880s, when the listing system started, people would not have considered for listing or conservation any building of the Victorian era. In contrast, just think of how we now consider those buildings.

The way in which buildings are listed and conserved has changed, but there are significant post-war buildings in Scotland. There will be a conference on them shortly, there is a new publication on them, and they are important. It is important that we recognise that and add them to our listing schedule. Not every building is important, but there are undoubtedly good modern buildings.

Tricia Marwick (Central Fife) (SNP): As the minister knows, I represent Glenrothes, which contains many examples of post-war building. In addition to the buildings, my constituency has a great deal of town art, which is precious to the people of Glenrothes. Is there any way of listing the town art that communities have so that it can also be protected for the future?

Michael Russell: I saw some of that art on Friday night, when I had the privilege of being in the Rothes halls in Glenrothes. It is fine art.

There is no system of listing art, but contents of buildings can be considered as part of the listing process. However, perhaps we need to think about how we list town and civic art. I would be

interested in hearing a proposal about how we can ensure that we know where it all is.

I will close by addressing some of the specific points that members made about their constituencies.

I was sorry that Christine Grahame did not mention Abbotsford, because a lot of work is being done on it by a lot of bodies, including the Heritage Lottery Fund. Colin McLean, from the Heritage Lottery Fund, was in the—

Christine Grahame: On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I direct the minister to the fact that I mentioned Abbotsford and Sir Walter Scott.

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): That is not a point of order, but it is a point of clarification.

Michael Russell: I apologise. I heard the reference to Sir Walter Scott, but perhaps I was not paying enough attention to catch the reference to Abbotsford—I was overwhelmed by Christine Grahame's request that I occupy Berwick, and I spent some time working on the logistics of the exercise.

Abbotsford is a good example of a building and a collection that have gone through difficult times. Now, however, we have an opportunity to do something about it. The Heritage Lottery Fund offered early support, and Scottish Borders Council has put together a package. A fund is being put together that, I am sure, will result in significant work being done to upgrade Abbotsford over the next few years. That is a considerable achievement.

It is not possible for me to deal with every building that members have mentioned, but I want to say something to Cathy Peattie about railways. The work of the Scottish Railway Preservation Society is important, as is the work in her constituency to develop the collection. Another part of the rail heritage of Scotland is the Forth rail bridge, which is on the tentative list for becoming a world heritage site. A review of world heritage sites is taking place at the moment, and I hope that the bridge will eventually be listed.

I thank every member who has taken part in this debate. It has been useful and productive. I know that members have raised specific issues that I have not addressed. I will write to them if there are issues that they would like to raise with me again in writing. I am keen that we keep this consensus on the historic environment.

The event that we had in the Bute hall was significant, and I will make sure that a report of the event is made available to all members. We invited members of the Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee to attend the event. When similar events are held in future, we

will also invite the parties' culture spokespeople, so that Iain Smith does not feel left out of it.

Business Motions

16:58

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S3M-5174, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, which sets out a revised business programme for Thursday 12 November.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees the following revision to the programme of business for Thursday 12 November 2009—

after

9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

insert

followed by Ministerial Statement: Clostridium difficile outbreak at Ninewells Hospital—[Bruce Crawford.]

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of business motion S3M-5163, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, which sets out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees—

(a) the following programme of business—

Wednesday 18 November 2009

2.30 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Ministerial Statement: Sectarianism Strategy

followed by Stage 3 Proceedings: Arbitration (Scotland) Bill

followed by Business Motion

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 19 November 2009

9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Scottish Labour Party Business

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 Stage 3 Proceedings: Schools Consultation (Scotland) Bill

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 25 November 2009

2.30 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motion

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 26 November 2009

9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Scottish Government Business

11.40 am General Question Time

12 noon First Minister's Question Time

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

2.55 pm Scottish Government Business

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

(b) that the deadline for lodging questions for First Minister's Question Time on 7 January 2010 shall be 2.00 pm on Tuesday 5 January 2010;

(c) that the period for members to submit their names for selection for Question Times on 7 January 2010 ends at 12 noon on 16 December 2009;

(d) that the deadline for lodging questions for Question Times on 7 January 2010 shall be 12 noon on 23 December 2009 and

(e) that the period for members to submit their names for selection for Question Times on 14 January 2010 ends at 12 noon on 23 December 2009.—[Bruce Crawford.]

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is consideration of two Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Bruce Crawford to move motion S3M-5164, on committee membership, and motion S3M-5165, on the office of the clerk.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that Marlyn Glen be appointed to replace Des McNulty as a member of the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee.

That the Parliament agrees that the Office of the Clerk be closed on 29, 30 and 31 December 2009.—[Bruce Crawford.]

The Presiding Officer: The questions on the motions will be put at decision time.

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): There are five questions to be put as a result of today's business.

The first question is, that amendment S3M-5160.1, in the name of Ted Brocklebank, which seeks to amend motion S3M-5160, in the name of Michael Russell, on Scotland's historic environment, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The second question is, that amendment S3M-5160.2, in the name of Iain Smith, which seeks to amend motion S3M-5160, in the name of Michael Russell, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The third question is, that motion S3M-5160, in the name of Michael Russell, on Scotland's historic environment, as amended, be agreed to.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

That the Parliament welcomes the enthusiasm, passion and co-operation shown by all of the participants at the first Summit for the Built and Historic Environment held at the Bute Hall in Glasgow on Tuesday 3 November 2009 and recognises the valuable resource for the Scottish people and economy represented by Scotland's rich and varied heritage; particularly commends recent initiatives to save the nation's buildings at risk, involving bodies such as Historic Scotland, the National Trust for Scotland and the Heritage Lottery Fund; welcomes the continuing and vital involvement in this restoration work of private individuals and the voluntary sector; looks forward to hearing a comprehensive account of the discussions that took place at the summit, and encourages the Scottish Government to work constructively with Historic Scotland and the National Trust for Scotland and to develop relationships with the non-governmental sector to ensure the sustainability of Scotland's built environment and to maintain and improve public access to it.

The Presiding Officer: The fourth question is, that motion S3M-5164, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on committee membership, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that Marlyn Glen be appointed to replace Des McNulty as a member of the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee.

The Presiding Officer: The final question is, that motion S3M-5165, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on the office of the clerk, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the Office of the Clerk be closed on 29, 30 and 31 December 2009.

The Sconestone

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S3M-4788, in the name of Linda Fabiani, on the Sconestone. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament welcomes the initiation of the First Keeper of the Sconestone, the Reverend Neil Galbraith, and the historic associations that the Sconestone has with the ancient traditions and symbols of Scotland; congratulates Hunter Primary School in East Kilbride on entering into the spirit of the ethos of the stone by creating a kindness tree to mark the day, 4 September 2009, when the school hosted the Sconestone prior to its travels around the globe to promote kindness to others as a value that Scots seek to uphold, and congratulates sculptor Warren MacLeod on his design, inspired by ancient Scottish orbs first used by the Scots' earliest ancestors, and the concept of using Scottish symbolism and values to stimulate acts of kindness in people around the world.

17:02

Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP): I thank all members who have signed the motion, and those who are in the chamber.

At the end of August this year, the Rev Neil Galbraith—the parish minister in Cathcart and the founder of the Glasgow the Caring City initiative—called to tell me all about the Sconestone that was to be presented to him by the First Minister, and the honour that he felt at being chosen as the Sconestone's first keeper, prior to its being sent round the world on a never-ending journey of kindness. I was intrigued, and I became even more so when, along with Neil Galbraith as the first keeper, I went to Hunter primary school in East Kilbride. Along with all the pupils, I learned more about the stone and how its sculptor Warren MacLeod, from Nova Scotia, was inspired.

Warren MacLeod lived in the north-east of Scotland for some time, and was fascinated by the neolithic carved stone orbs—more than 380 of them—that have been found there over the years. When Warren was given the bronze cast of the stone that had been found on the Brahn estate, just north of Inverness, he was hooked. He combined the concept of our 17th century Brahn seer with the neolithic orbs, and created the Sconestone, which is, I understand, currently in Austria.

The stone is a six-sided orb with three carved portals, each of which represents a view into the past, the present and the future. It represents wisdom: the wisdom to learn from the past, understand the present and plan for the future.

Today—November 11—is armistice day, when we remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice. It is a day on which we remember the past and those who still serve in the present and, I hope, on which we consider a future that is free of war and conflict.

When Warren MacLeod spoke to Calum MacDonald of Runrig about the possibility of launching the stone at the band's homecoming Scotland 2009 concert in Scone, Calum suggested that it be called the Sconestone, which links it to the stone of destiny upon which the kings of the Picts and of Scotland were crowned. Warren liked that idea—he said:

"my stone is a new stone ... with a new destiny ... to go on a never-ending journey of kindness from hand to hand, keeper to keeper around the world."

That is simple, straightforward and inspiring, as many of the best ideas are.

The children at Hunter primary school were certainly inspired. They loved the story and the stone. Every one of them who was there that day touched, rubbed or held the stone and pledged to perform an act of kindness. They made a kindness tree to mark the day on which the stone visited their school. They endorsed entirely the ethos of the stone and they were delighted that such a beautiful object—essentially Scottish in form and symbolic values—was heading round the world. The stone is travelling round the world, to Nova Scotia, where the House of Assembly unanimously endorsed resolution No 683 in favour, to the United States, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Austria. It is only a little over two months since its launch.

The rules of the Sconestone are simple. Whoever is honoured to be the keeper must do at least one act of kindness; they must keep the stone for no more than seven days; they must encourage friends and strangers to touch the stone and pledge an act of kindness; and they must pass the stone to a person who can be trusted to honour its purpose.

I urge members to log on to the Sconestone.com website to track progress and see the marvellous initiatives that have been carried out by the keepers so far. I do not have time to detail them all, but I will mention a couple. In Hungary, the keeper, political correspondent Tamas Szalay, and the clown doctors took the stone to the Pen Heim children's hospital to spread magic and kindness. It went from there to a ceilidh at the Caledonia pub in Budapest, where I am sure that magic and kindness were further spread.

Franciscan brother Bojte Csaba, as keeper in Romania, spread the word about the needs of street children. So far, Brother Csaba's Saint

Francis Foundation in Transylvania has adopted and fostered almost 1,500 children. Sadly, that work still has a long way to go.

In New York, Barbara Mahon, the third keeper, took the stone to the 9/11 2009 gathering, where it was warmly received by the families, friends and colleagues of those who lost their lives eight years ago.

As I said, an inspiration to Warren MacLeod was that wisdom is to learn from the past, understand the present and plan for the future; the hope is that, all over the world, the Sconestone and its inherent ethos will further inspire. That is certainly the case here in Scotland, where the Rev Neil Galbraith is already working on a legacy plan. Many here will know the good work that Glasgow the Caring City has done in the provision of humanitarian assistance and care in more than 50 countries around the world—the charity provides care and support wherever there is a need.

The Rev Neil Galbraith's view—shared, I am sure, by all in the Parliament—is that here at home, in Scotland, there should be no such thing as child poverty. After all, Scotland's children deserve better. There is cross-party support for Glasgow the Caring City's cross out child poverty in Scotland initiative. I understand that the statement of intent, compiled by the Rev Neil Galbraith and Tom Harris MP, has been signed by the First Minister. Again, the aspirations are simple and straightforward. They include the statements that

"no society can be truly at ease with itself while significant numbers of children live in poverty"

and that

"the elimination of child poverty must be a priority for us all"

because

"poverty corrodes children's health, their happiness, their safety and their aspirations."

Furthermore,

"only through the elimination of child poverty can we expect the children of Scotland to live their lives to the full, and to be able to enjoy the opportunities that the rest of society take for granted."

Those are only a selection of the statements from the Cathcart declaration. I am sure that members will be further informed about the initiative before too long. I urge everyone to support it.

All too often, initiatives such as the Sconestone and aspirations such as spreading kindness can be considered naive and, some would say, over idealistic. However, if the children of Hunter primary school in East Kilbride can be inspired and understand the concept of spreading good, so can adults from all walks of life. If the life of any one person in this world is cheered by the Sconestone,

it is worth while. If the legacy of the first keeper is to help eradicate child poverty in Scotland, we should all embrace the concept of using Scottish symbolism and values to stimulate acts of kindness. I learned earlier today that this week is world kindness week and that Friday is world kindness day.

Again, I thank members who are present for the debate. I hope that they will pledge to perform an act of kindness on Friday, which is world kindness day, and to pass the word to all those who were, unfortunately, unable to be present this evening.

17:10

Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con): I congratulate Linda Fabiani on securing a debate that is particularly appropriate in world kindness week. One of the main advantages of members' business debates is the wide variety of subjects that they offer for discussion and tonight's debate is certainly no exception.

However, I have a confession to make at the outset: until I read Linda Fabiani's motion, I was not aware of the existence of the Sconestone. However, with a little research, I soon uncovered a couple of interesting facts. Warren MacLeod, the stone's sculptor, was inspired by two things. First, as the motion states, the stone's design and shape were inspired by strangely shaped ancient orbs with intricate carvings that were sculpted by neolithic people in the north-east of Scotland. The second inspiration was Mr MacLeod's desire to do something special for his wife, Kari. In that respect, he decided that the stone should embody her daily acts of kindness for her family.

The orb, which has now become known as the Sconestone from Scone palace and its associated history, was presented to Kari MacLeod. However, it was not meant to be kept; instead, it was to be passed to its first keeper, the Rev Neil Galbraith. The stone was then to continue its never-ending journey around the world with each new keeper pledging to do an act of kindness before passing it on to a new keeper.

The stone's spirit and ethos were enthusiastically embraced by the pupils of Hunter primary school in East Kilbride who, on 4 September 2009, created a kindness tree to commemorate the day that the stone came to their school before it began its epic journey and adventure around the world. If the school's innovative and thoughtful response to the Sconestone is replicated as it continues its journey from keeper to keeper, the orb's worldwide progress will indeed make fascinating reading.

17:12

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I congratulate Linda Fabiani on securing a debate on a subject that many members could do with thinking about. There is a very great lack of kindness in the world and the idea behind passing the stone from individual to individual is to make it clear that that situation must change. One is almost tempted to suggest that there should be many Sconestones to spread the message more quickly.

The stone itself embodies certain values, but it derives from objects in the past that we do not entirely understand the meaning of. The original stone carvers might have seen their stones as symbols of power, and the same idea might well lie behind the Sconestone. After all, the power to spread the message of kindness is certainly important when all too little time is given to thinking about such matters. For me, the enterprise brings to mind the work of the legendary Johnny Appleseed who, in sowing seed and growing trees, carried out another act of kindness in a world that needed more such deeds. In any case, the story of the stone's journey will be fascinating, because I am sure that people in the many different countries that it will pass through will highlight to us the need for particular acts of kindness that we have not yet thought of.

I very much support the motion. I will certainly be spreading the word in my part of Scotland and hope that the stone will eventually reach us.

17:14

Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): I congratulate Linda Fabiani on the motion, which I am glad that I signed. I apologise for not having had time to prepare a speech—I have been working on the Marine (Scotland) Bill—but I am very glad that I stayed for the debate.

The stone is a lovely idea. As Rob Gibson said, we should have many more; we should perhaps have thousands of Sconestones going around Scotland from school to school and institution to institution. We should perhaps even pass one around the Parliament, but we should give it to people for seven minutes, rather than seven days, so that it keeps moving.

Linda Fabiani said that a motion such as this could be seen to be simplistic, but it is not; it is very much from the heart. Consider the words that are written on the mace—"wisdom, justice, compassion, integrity". Wisdom and compassion are certainly part of the stone's intention—it reflects two of the most important things that are written into our guidance, as inscribed on the mace.

All too often, we commit a bit of our random act of kindness for the day, but there is not quite time to do it all. As we are half way down the street or up the stairs—whatever the occasion might have been—we say to ourselves that perhaps we should have done a little bit more. Perhaps part of the wisdom emanating from the stone might suggest to people that whenever they commit their daily random act of kindness, they should pay attention to what more they could do, rather than what immediately presents itself.

17:17

The Minister for Culture, External Affairs and the Constitution (Michael Russell): I congratulate Linda Fabiani on securing the debate and thank her for raising the issue.

As human beings, we have a tendency, which is quite understandable, to seek to make real and tangible ideas and concepts with which we sometimes struggle. We struggle more than most with the concept of kindness and how individual acts of kindness can change the world.

Warren MacLeod has come upon a perhaps obvious but inspirational thing, which is to make tangible and real the concept of kindness. He is building on an old tradition in Scotland—a tradition of taking small things and using them to remind us of other much larger things.

A good example might be the powers with which a particular type of bean—the Mary's kidney—is empowered in the Western Isles. The bean, which comes on the gulf stream from the Caribbean islands, is much prized. Those who find it on the shores of South Uist or Barra take it, keep it in their pocket and treasure it for the rest of their lives. Werner Kissling, the photographer and film maker who worked on Eriskay in the 1930s, found one on the shore on Eriskay and had it in his pocket for the rest of his life. Indeed, it was among his effects when he died.

Warren MacLeod has taken that old idea of converting concepts into something manageable and has used it to inspire the world with the idea of kindness.

Robin Harper is quite right to say that the only problem with the idea is its modesty. Perhaps we need many more Sconestones around us. It would be intriguing to see a Sconestone doing the rounds in the Parliament on a weekly basis. At least once every two or three years, each member would have to observe the rules by doing an act of kindness to a person, animal or thing for the good of the planet as a whole; by keeping the stone for no more than seven days; by encouraging friends and strangers to touch the stone and pledge to do an act of kindness; by passing the stone on to a person whom they trust, who will honour the

purpose of the stone; and by telling the story on the Sconestone website.

If we had our own Sconestone here, perhaps this would be a different place. The idea that a single act of kindness will inspire others to kindness is inspirational and will, in time, change the world.

Linda Fabiani has drawn attention to some of the keepers of the stone. For Scotland, Neil Galbraith could not have been a better first keeper, given that his whole life has been devoted to inspiring and caring for others.

One or two other keepers whom Linda Fabiani mentioned are inspirational figures, too. The present keeper, who has the stone this week, is Zsuzsanna Laszlo, a 17-year-old girl in the Czech Republic. When she was 11, she gave away all her money to help other children whom she regarded as less fortunate than her. Unfortunately, Zsuzsanna is now very ill and is at home under doctor's orders. As we think of her and wish her well, I am sure that we also think of the acts of kindness that she has inspired in other people. Next, the stone will go to Zsófia Boros in Vienna, who is a talented musician and who is thinking of the acts of kindness that she wants to do.

The debate has been unusual. I do not think that we have talked in such terms about kindness and the inspiration of kindness in the chamber before. We have not celebrated the work of individuals and the children at Hunter primary school for their involvement in such a project before. We have not had the time to step back and reflect on what kindness is and how it spreads around the world.

One might suggest that it is especially fitting this year, which is the 250th anniversary of Robert Burns's birth, to think of people who have strong affinity for their fellow men and women—individuals who recognise weaknesses and strengths but who want the world to be a better place. It is not an exaggeration to say that Warren MacLeod is of that nature. By his thought, his actions and his creativity, he is—bit by bit—changing the world. I am sure that the Parliament wishes to salute him and to wish the concept well.

Meeting closed at 17:21.

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