



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 27 May 2010

Session 3

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Scottish Parliament

Thursday 27 May 2010

[The Presiding Officer *opened the meeting at 09:15*]

Her Majesty's Government (Relations)

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):

Good morning. The first item of business this morning is a debate on motion S3M-6409, in the name of Annabel Goldie, on relationships between Her Majesty's Government and the Scottish Parliament and Government. I advise members that we are pretty tight for time and ask them to stick to the guidance that is given.

09:15

Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con):

I commence by intimating that I may have to withdraw from the debate before the conclusion of proceedings. I apologise for that, Presiding Officer. No discourtesy is intended to you or to members in the chamber, but I require to prepare for First Minister's questions. I hope that the chamber will understand that there is an irreconcilable conflict of interest.

This is the first Conservative business debate since the general election. I have waited 11 years to say this, but it is also the first Conservative business debate in the Parliament to take place with a Conservative Prime Minister at Westminster, leading a Liberal-Conservative Government. We have in David Cameron a Prime Minister who came to the Scottish Parliament before he even went to Westminster. We also have a new Government that is committed not just to respecting devolution but to strengthening it. In short, we have a new politics.

We have turned the page in Scottish politics. When the nationalist First Minister of Scotland is able to have a constructive dialogue with a Conservative and Unionist Prime Minister and a Liberal Democrat Secretary of State for Scotland, we see three parties looking to the future. Although Labour, ousted from Government, must adjust to the humbling experience of being in opposition, I hope that it will recognise the opportunities that are being created for Scotland in the United Kingdom and contribute positively to that process. Of course, that task is made more challenging by Labour's appalling legacy of debt, but no one can doubt the coalition Government's resolve to take the tough decisions that are needed to sort out Labour's mess.

However, enough about Labour, and enough about the past. Scotland can look forward to the future with confidence. Our new Government will do what the Labour Government failed to do—it will work together with the Scottish Government for the good of the people of Scotland. We will scrap Labour's jobs tax, because we want to keep Scots in work, not tax them out of work. We will scrap Labour's identity cards, because we believe that the state should protect our liberty, not erode our freedoms. We will strengthen the Parliament, because we believe in devolution and are determined to make it work better. We will build an agenda of mutual respect between Scotland's two Parliaments and Governments, because Scotland needs co-operation, not confrontation.

Of course, it takes two to tango. Everyone knows that the First Minister wants Scotland to separate from the rest of the United Kingdom. Alex Salmond knows full well that he and I will never agree on our ultimate constitutional destination. I will fight him every step of the way if he tries to separate Scotland from the rest of the UK. I take heart from the fact that, once again, the overwhelming majority of Scots chose parties that support the union over parties that support separation. Despite our differences on the constitution, nationalists and unionists can work together in Scotland's interest. Indeed, our differences on the constitution need not preclude us from working together on the constitution, where we can find common ground.

I was disappointed that the Scottish National Party did not participate in the work of the Calman commission, but that is in the past. I take at face value the Scottish Government's desire to work with the UK Government to take forward the Calman proposals for financial responsibility and hope that that constructive engagement will happen. Conservatives always argued that the Calman proposals were the platform for change. I appreciate that the new Government's proposal to raise substantially the income tax threshold will have an effect on the Calman proposals; that issue, and others, should be discussed. I am pleased that we have from the Scottish Government a degree of engagement that did not exist under the previous Labour Government.

Yesterday's announcement that the Calman steering group is to be reconvened, under the chairmanship of the new Secretary of State for Scotland, Danny Alexander, is more welcome evidence of the coalition Government's resolve to take Calman forward. The steering group was originally set up to look at the implementation of the Calman commission's recommendations and included representatives of the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat parties at both Westminster and Holyrood. As a member of the group, I know that Labour and Liberal Democrat

representatives found it an effective and positive forum. However, I shall not support the Labour amendment in the name of Pauline McNeill, which suggests that we should just rush ahead, without proper scrutiny of the proposals, and omits all reference to the fossil fuel levy. That is indicative of a slight lack of grasp of the issues and of the new agenda of mutual respect.

The new dimension is that, following the constructive talks in Edinburgh between the Prime Minister and the First Minister, the Scotland Office will now have a dialogue with the Scottish Government on the Calman recommendations. As my colleague David Mundell, minister at the Scotland Office, said yesterday:

"The implementation of Calman recommendations is very important to Scotland. We have shown a commitment to talking to the Scottish Government on how best to take this forward and it makes sense at this time for the Steering Group to continue to meet ensuring dialogue across and between all the main parties."

He added:

"At this exciting time for Scotland it is important that everyone works together in the national interest and I look forward to discussions with politicians from all parties in Scotland in the coming weeks."

Once again, we have hard evidence of the new politics and the new coalition Government attitude to Scotland and the Scottish Government.

I have been heartened by the marked change in tone from the First Minister. From the bombast of the election campaign, we have seen Mr Salmond not only mellow but almost wax lyrical. He has talked with such warmth of the new Government that it must have been a matter of regret to him that he was not there in person on Tuesday to cheer the Queen's speech. When phrases such as "impressive", "extremely positive" and "substantive" trip off the first ministerial tongue, it is usually a sign that the First Minister is back to his favourite topic—himself. However, on this occasion, that is not the case—those words were his assessment of his meeting with the new Prime Minister. I welcome that change in tone. *[Interruption.]* It is not often that Lord Foulkes is lost for words, but there is always a first time.

George Foulkes (Lothians) (Lab): The honourable lady's hearing is deficient. I said, "It won't last, it won't last." I am willing to take a bet with the honourable lady. Will it be 18 months, two years or three years?

Annabel Goldie: All relationships need a beginning. The intentions of the two parties are clear and positive. I welcome the different political climate in Scotland.

As I have said before, the First Minister may also be the leader of the Scottish National Party, but his first duty is as head of the devolved

Government. His prime responsibility is to work in the national interest, not the Scottish National Party interest. The election of our new Westminster Government gives Scotland the chance of a new start in the relationship between our two Governments.

We all understand why the Labour Government saw the role of the Scotland Office as being the Opposition to the Scottish Government—I have as little faith in the ability of Scottish Labour in opposition as Jim Murphy clearly had. However, we are clear about the fact that the Scotland Office's job is to argue Scotland's corner at Westminster, to work with the Scottish Government—whichever party forms that Government—and to do so in the national interest. Instead of conflict, we now have co-operation. Instead of silence, we now have dialogue. Instead of stand-off, we now have engagement.

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): On engagement, I ask Annabel Goldie to ask the new UK Government to deal with members of the Scottish Parliament, via the UK Border Agency, on asylum seeker cases. It is deeply disturbing when asylum seekers pour out their hearts to me about their specific issues. However, under the previous Labour Government, I received no correspondence from the UK Border Agency. Will that change under the Conservative Government?

Annabel Goldie: I am sure that serious regard will be had to the issue that Mr Doris raises. He will accept that the new coalition Government has been in office for only a short time, but I am certain that he will pursue issues directly with the appropriate UK minister or via the conduit of the Secretary of State for Scotland. Both Mr Scott and I would like to know whether there is any difficulty in facilitating such communication.

With a new approach of mutual respect, when disagreements arise, rather than rush to the nearest television studio to lambast the other side, we will have the opportunity to try to find common ground and, if that cannot be found, at least to understand why that is the case. There will be respect for the right of the Scottish Government and the UK Government to pursue their different agendas within the areas for which they are responsible.

A good example of the new politics is the fossil fuel levy, which has been raised as an issue by the Scottish Government on many occasions. Almost £200 million from the proceeds of the levy in Scotland is held by the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets, yet currently if Scottish ministers ordered that the money be paid into the Scottish consolidated fund, the Treasury would reduce the block grant by the same amount. In those circumstances, it is difficult to see how it would ever be in the interests of any Scottish

Government of any political persuasion to seek the release of that money. It is right and proper that the Treasury look at the issue again, so I am delighted that George Osborne has ordered that that happen. Complex issues are involved, but the new UK Government has already taken a substantial step to listen to the legitimate concerns of the Scottish Government and to see what can be done to address them.

That is the respect agenda in practice, and it has taken a Liberal-Conservative Government to deliver it. Shamefully, Labour did not even try to build any relationship between our two Governments and our two Parliaments. Since leaving office, Labour has made it abundantly clear that it has a similar lack of respect for the intelligence of the public. Iain Gray has been happy to rant on in this chamber about “cuts, cuts, cuts” as if the spending squeeze had nothing to do with the out-going Labour Government, which was racking up debt at the rate of £3 billion a week.

Thus, although there is much that is new in the new politics, there are clearly some things that do not change. For example, those who take over from a Labour Government always have to clean up the mess. Liam Byrne was not joking when he said there was no money left. The Treasury cupboard is indeed bare. Labour's recession was the longest and deepest since the second world war. Britain's deficit is the largest in the European Union. The Labour Government was spending one third more than it raised. It was addicted to out-of-control spending and to mortgaging our nation's future in an attempt to save its own political skin. Labour's waste and Labour's financial mess mean that tough times lie ahead, but our Liberal-Conservative Government will always ensure that we look after the most vulnerable in society and that the spending decisions that are taken, although tough, are fair.

Let us be honest: there will be difficult days ahead. Yes, there will be disagreements between the Scottish Government and the UK Government. Indeed, there may be disagreements between the two coalition partners. However, this new age of mutual respect and of constructive engagement lays the foundations for a new era of devolution and genuinely offers a fresh start and an exciting and different future for Scotland.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the commitment of HM Government to establish a positive and constructive working relationship with the Scottish Government and Parliament to tackle the problems facing the country and, in particular, welcomes the commitment in the Queen's Speech to introduce legislation to implement recommendations from the final report of the Commission on Scottish Devolution and the willingness to consider matters in relation to the Fossil Fuel Levy.

09:28

The Minister for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): We agree that it is important to have a positive and constructive relationship between the UK Government and the Scottish Government to advance Scotland's interests. In addition, we note the early contact by the new UK Government with the Scottish Parliament.

We think that the relationship between the UK and Scottish Governments should be based on mutual respect and parity of esteem. The Prime Minister has met the First Minister. I understand that that was a productive meeting, and I look forward to the development of a constructive intergovernmental relationship with the UK Government. That is how it should be, but the fact that some progress is now being made probably says more about the previous Labour UK Government than anything else. What we have called for is straightforward normal intergovernment practice. Although some might see progress as concessions, those shifts are just the realisation of reasonable requests and of normalising a Government-to-Government approach.

However, we have been clear that the test of this respect relationship will be deeds, not words. If the UK Government makes progress on the issues that we have raised—including capital acceleration, borrowing powers for the Scottish Parliament, releasing the £180 million fossil fuel levy rather than just reviewing it, and a fair approach to Olympics regeneration Barnett consequentials—that would indicate respect in action.

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): Will the minister outline the Scottish Government's side of the respect agenda?

Fiona Hyslop: I was about to come on to that point, on which we have indeed made progress.

In addressing the content of the Conservative motion, I confirm, as we did in our response at the time, that we can support a significant number of the Calman recommendations, particularly in the areas of relationships and legislation. There are 29 recommendations that we accept and a further 20 that either need more clarification or relate to the Parliament. I have already indicated to the Secretary of State for Scotland that we can work with him on the issues. We note that the Conservative motion does not commit to the implementation of all the Calman recommendations.

However, I do not think that any party accepted all of Calman. Indeed, the Labour Government's white paper did not accept them all. In the debate in December, Derek Brownlee pointed out:

"The UK Government's position is not the same as Calman's or that of the independent expert group. There is scope in the white paper for anyone with an interest to put forward their views on how the proposals could be improved."—[*Official Report*, 9 December 2009; c 21971.]

The Labour amendment looks backward, whereas everyone else is looking forward. Time has moved on and circumstances have changed.

Since the publication of the Calman report, the financial aspects in particular have come under more scrutiny, with serious concerns raised by a number of economists. The recommendations have been overtaken by events—indeed, the personal tax allowance changes in the coalition agreement would have an impact on reducing Scotland's income—so there clearly must be a reappraisal of Calman's financial proposals. True financial responsibility cannot be based on such a narrow range of tax powers. For example, under Calman's financial proposals, the coalition's proposed change in income tax thresholds would mean Scotland losing out on £250 million a year while British Government revenues would remain unaffected.

A recent Fraser of Allander publication from Jim and Margaret Cuthbert showed that the then UK Government's Calman proposals would impose an economic straitjacket on Scotland while filling the coffers of the UK Treasury. Our revenues would be dependent on forecasts over which we would have no control, they would be subject to fluctuations in the economy over which we would have no control and they would be based on tax allowances and bands over which we would have no control. The benefits of growth would be returned not to the Scottish Government but to the UK Treasury, over which we would have no control.

Those who argue that fiscal responsibility would introduce better accountability and more responsibility for spending need to explain where the incentive for that is in Calman's limited finance proposals. Earlier this month, Tom Farmer said:

"Fiscal autonomy is actually straight-forward. Scotland would raise the money that it spends. Members of the Scottish Parliament would have to spend as much time thinking about the revenue side of the balance sheet as the expenditure side"—

that point has been raised by the Conservatives on many occasions—

"which would focus minds and, I believe, lead to more responsible behaviour on all sides."

George Foulkes: Will the minister give way?

Fiona Hyslop: No, I will not.

The Scottish Government clearly wants the full powers of independence for our country, but even those who do not want independence for Scotland surely see that transfer of fiscal responsibility to

Scotland would improve our capacity at least to try to stimulate growth in the economy to deal with a fragile recovery. There is a very serious debate to be had—it is happening as we speak—in which it is argued that, to deal with the recession, we need a growth agenda, which improved fiscal responsibility would enable. However, Calman's financial proposals do not offer that. Without greater financial responsibility, Scotland would be locked into decisions taken by the UK Government, whatever the state of growth in Scotland. We would not share the proceeds of any growth; we would get only what we were given. The serious point is that perpetual dependency is hardly an inspiring state for economic recovery. An agreement to welcome the UK Government's willingness to consider fiscal responsibility would be a step in the right direction.

Given that need for a debate on alternatives to the Calman proposals that would allow this Parliament the fiscal responsibility that it needs and which we all support, my concern with the Labour amendment is that it rejects the previous Labour Government's white paper and goes backwards to the full Calman recommendations. As I have already pointed out, not one party—not even the Labour Party at that time—agreed with all the recommendations.

I come back to the consideration of the debate as it now stands. Economics professors Andrew Hughes-Hallett and Drew Scott conclude:

"the Calman proposals ... are unworkable because, to function, they require information that the policy makers cannot possibly have; and because, without borrowing for current activities, they contain no mechanism to reconcile contractual spending (most of the budget) with variable revenue flows—which is to invite an eventual breakdown."

Therefore, I welcome today's debate as it will provide material for the Scottish Government and the UK Government in considering what powers Scotland needs to succeed, including in relation to fiscal responsibility.

We are also conscious of other relationships. We have discussed our approach to the new UK Government with the other devolved Administrations. When the First Minister and I met the First Ministers and Deputy First Ministers of Wales and Northern Ireland in Belfast on Monday, we identified—this picks up Robert Brown's point—a number of issues on which respect from, and positive relationships with, the UK Government could quickly be established.

We identified a need for co-operation, fairness and transparency in UK Government finances, including the Olympic Barnett consequentials. I point out that, in terms of the proposals that it put out only this week, the UK Government is prepared to count the cuts in the Olympic budget as a negative consequential for Scotland but not to

consider regeneration consequentials as a positive. That is an area that would benefit from openness and transparency in calculations.

We are also concerned to ensure that the devolved Administrations are assured of proper representation at European Union meetings, including the ability to speak for the UK at such meetings. We look to engage with the new UK Government on that proposal.

We agreed on the need for, and importance of, the Prime Minister's role in relation to the joint ministerial committee meetings and the British-Irish Council. That role must be established. Indeed, since 2007, the Scottish Government has worked with the other devolved Administrations to use existing intergovernmental machinery such as the joint ministerial committee to help in building stronger relationships between the Governments of the United Kingdom. That machinery is vital to fostering a co-operative and open relationship and to demonstrating respect between our Governments.

The SNP Government led the way in making the case for improvement. I do not think that the memorandum had been reconsidered since it was agreed in 2001 but, after many long years without progress, we achieved agreement on how the process would work. I point out, before Annabel Goldie gets overenthusiastic about the warmth in the relationships, that that agreement was achieved under the previous UK Government. The devolved Administrations also concluded a protocol on dispute avoidance and resolution. We look forward to that mechanism working in practice, both to the letter and in spirit.

There is another key challenge that we probably have not focused on to such an extent—I know that it was a difficulty for the previous Labour-Liberal Democrat Administration. It arises when a dispute is about not what is reserved or devolved, but reserved areas that have an impact on devolved areas. I am talking about how we ensure proper and early understanding of the impact of proposed changes in Scotland, not only by politicians but by the Whitehall civil service. One example is the reform of social care and welfare to work, which will impact directly on devolved interests.

The Scottish Government will always seek to advance Scotland's interests and will work constructively and positively with the UK Government to do so, but we need actions, not just words. As a country, we need to move forward. The Scottish Government will argue our case and our corner, but we will do so in a mature relationship of engagement between Governments. The Scottish public deserve and expect no less.

I move amendment S3M-6409.1, to insert at end:

“and fiscal responsibility issues.”

09:37

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): The general election result in Scotland was evidence, if it was ever needed, that Scotland did not want a Conservative Government or David Cameron as Prime Minister. Despite the overtures and the claims about how much the Tories have changed, the Scottish people were not in the least convinced. In 13 years of Labour, the Tories made almost no progress in Scotland. People in Scotland came out in their droves to vote against the prospect of a Tory Government and for the party most likely to achieve that outcome: Labour.

I am proud of the Labour Government and what it achieved with the working families tax credit for the poorest families. Do the Conservatives agree with that measure? Previous Conservative Governments never provided working families tax credit for the poorest families, the minimum wage, enhanced trade union rights at work, improved maternity rights, pension credits or civil partnerships, which represented a radical reform of social legislation. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Pauline McNeill: Scots trusted the Labour Party to deliver for them.

In order to get respect for our country, our Government and our Parliament, there has to be, as the motion says,

“a positive and constructive ... relationship”

with the Westminster Government

“to tackle the problems facing the country”.

That is a reasonable start. We expect no less, because David Cameron, the Prime Minister, knows that he has a steep uphill struggle in Scotland. Then again, he also has Nick Clegg, and now we hear that he has the Scottish Government and the nationalists, to help him with that uphill struggle.

We have heard so much about the new politics, but I have a sense of déjà vu from 2007. Did the Scottish National Party not also talk about the new politics? I am sorry, but that did not last—the jury is out on that.

Scotland has not easily forgotten the Tory years. There can be no doubt that those were the catalyst for home rule in Scotland and the establishment of this Parliament, ensuring that Scotland could reflect its distinct values and policies and protect itself against a right-wing Administration. However, this is a new world, with

the Tories now embracing constitutional change—or, more accurately, being forced into doing so by their coalition partners. UK ministers are to engage more with our Parliament—there will be a visit at least once a year to call on our committees—and with the Scottish Government. That is all good stuff, and it is in tune with the Calman commission's report.

Before the Prime Minister's visit to Scotland earlier this month, David Cameron said of the First Minister that he lived in

"a perpetual episode of Braveheart".

I guess that he wanted to see that drama for himself.

During his visit, the Prime Minister reiterated that he wanted to "win Scotland's respect". That will be tested. Indeed, it is already being tested: recent reports of the prospect of a clash of dates with the Holyrood elections do not imply respect where it is needed. Such announcements at least need to be consulted upon.

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

Pauline McNeill: I am sorry, but I am really short of time.

It goes without saying that Scotland will judge the coalition Government and its new promise of mutual respect by its values, its actions and its policies. To that degree, I agree with Fiona Hyslop. However, the true test of public opinion will come with the drastic budget cuts as the new Tory-Liberal coalition implements its speedy plans to reduce the deficit. Jim Murphy, the former Secretary of State for Scotland, was clear that if Labour had returned to government we would have implemented the Calman commission's recommendations.

The Minister for Parliamentary Business (Bruce Crawford): Will the member give way?

Pauline McNeill: You have five seconds, on that point.

Bruce Crawford: You said in your amendment that you want to implement the full Calman proposals—

George Foulkes: The Presiding Officer said nothing.

Bruce Crawford: Sorry, Presiding Officer.

In the circumstances, given that Labour rejected nine of the proposals in areas such as intergovernment arrangements, finance and electoral arrangements, are you still seriously saying that you want to implement the full Calman proposals?

The Presiding Officer: I remind members that they should always speak through the chair and not directly to each other.

Pauline McNeill: Labour was clear during the election, and Jim Murphy is on record as saying, that we would take the Calman recommendations forward to legislation.

The motion welcomes the commitment to introduce legislation to give more powers to the Scottish Parliament, but the Queen's speech did not refer to "the recommendations"; it referred only to "recommendations". We await the detail, but that has given rise to rumours that the pace of change will be slow and that not all the recommendations will be adopted.

Labour, of course, also welcomes the commitment to legislate, but we would like an unequivocal assurance that that will happen before the Scottish Parliament elections in 2011. We sense a dragging of feet on the matter. I hope that that is not the case, because I believe that the parties in this chamber that brought about the proposals to strengthen devolution should be able to work together to finish what we started. However, there is, even today, speculation that the tax proposals will not be fully enacted.

The Secretary of State for Scotland, Danny Alexander, has so far refused to say what tax powers will be in the bill. He admitted on Tuesday that the reason for that was consideration of the objections that were raised by the First Minister. Perhaps he was impressed by the First Minister's call to the electorate to vote Liberal Democrat to get a balanced Government—who knows? Of course, Alex Salmond and Fiona Hyslop have objections, because they do not believe in the Calman recommendations. I say to Danny Alexander, in the most respectful and constructive way, that he should wake up and smell the tactics, because the SNP has been the least constructive party when it comes to constitutional change. A journalist said this week:

"the SNP has boycotted all three of devolution's landmark reports, while also being the beneficiary of their intellectual groundwork. The Nationalists will also, I suspect, ensure that the Calman proposals aren't introduced, at least in the form set out last week."

We cannot lose sight of the constructive work that was done when this Parliament voted for the Calman commission's recommendations. The men and women who were on the finance group are serious and highly respected people, and we, as MSPs, must make serious progress to make this Parliament more financially accountable.

The Labour amendment calls for implementation of Calman to proceed "without delay".

Bruce Crawford: In full?

Pauline McNeill: In full.

We are seeking assurances that the approach will be constructive and that the coalition will guarantee and clearly demonstrate that, in government, it will legislate to bring about stronger devolution and is prepared to put that to the test in the elections in 2011.

I move amendment S3M-6409.3, to leave out from “, in particular,” to end and insert:

“calls on the UK Government to implement the recommendations of the Commission on Scottish Devolution in full and without delay.”

The Presiding Officer: I call Mike Rumbles to speak to and move amendment S3M-6409.2.

George Foulkes: Oh!

09:45

Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): Thank you very much, Presiding Officer, and Lord Foulkes.

The new coalition Government at Westminster is certainly good news for Scotland and for devolution. Within three days of taking office, the new Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Scotland came to the Scottish Parliament, which is in sharp contrast to the actions of the previous Prime Minister, who never found the time to make a formal visit in his three years in office. Their willingness to come here so soon is a practical example of their commitment to establish a positive and constructive working relationship with our minority Scottish Government in its last year of office, and with us in the Scottish Parliament.

The new UK coalition Government has outlined many positive commitments in the Queen's speech, which is great news for Scotland. As Danny Alexander, our new Secretary of State for Scotland, said, the Queen's speech

“will deliver real benefit for Scotland.”

Sixteen of the 20 new bills will contain provisions that apply to Scotland, either in full or in part. The new coalition's priority is to reduce the budget deficit, which is why the legislative programme focuses on restoring economic growth throughout the UK. Measures to safeguard jobs, cut taxes and restore the earnings link for the basic state pension are at the forefront of the programme.

Margaret Curran (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab): Will Mike Rumbles outline what measures the coalition Government is taking this year to protect and safeguard jobs in Scotland?

Mike Rumbles: Considering that the Government has been in office for less than three weeks, that is a little bit previous of the Labour Party. The new coalition Government's

commitment to work towards establishing a pre-tax threshold of £10,000 a year, which would take almost half a million people in Scotland directly out of the tax bracket, answers that direct question from the Labour benches. That measure is particularly welcomed by the Liberal Democrats in the Parliament.

Our new Liberal Democrat Secretary of State for Scotland has made it clear that we will benefit from measures that the coalition is taking to reform the political system. Not only will there be a referendum on establishing the alternative vote to replace the discredited 19th century voting system of first past the post for UK elections, but there will be a Scotland bill, which will implement recommendations from the Calman commission and will be aimed at building on and improving the current devolution settlement. The Liberal Democrats in Scotland want a strong version of the Calman proposals to be implemented in the new legislation. Just yesterday, Danny Alexander said:

“There's a serious intention to get on with this. We're moving faster than was previously envisaged but we are having engagement along the way to make sure we get a better package.”

That is surely heartening news to all of us who want greater measures on what we as Liberal Democrats, and Liberals before us, have always called home rule for Scotland.

As far as the Liberal Democrats are concerned, it is refreshing to see the new Government establishing itself so quickly at Westminster and the parties there working well together for the good of the country. Their new programme of freedom, fairness and responsibility builds on the policies on which both parties can agree. A coalition Government can work only when the parties in it can put aside their differences and focus on the issues on which they can agree, for the good of the people whom they are elected to serve.

The Scottish Parliament has experienced coalition Government. I see that Lord Foulkes is shaking his head—he has not experienced it, but we have experienced it. In the first two sessions of Parliament, two parties agreed on a radical and reforming programme of land reform, voting reform for local government and public service reform.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): The member was doing so well.

Mike Rumbles: Now, come on.

That coalition was replaced by a minority Administration, which as I said is in its last year of government. Without a majority in Parliament, it has been unable to do very much. It is much better for the people we serve if, after an election, politicians agree on a programme of government

that commands the support of Parliament. That has been done in recent days in Westminster. I am sure that the new coalition Government will be a success for the whole of the UK and for Scotland in particular. I look forward to the next test of public opinion in Scotland—the elections to the Scottish Parliament that are due in less than 12 months. In those elections, the Scottish people will give their verdict not only on the minority Administration at Holyrood, but on the new UK Government's radical and reforming proposals for Scotland.

I move amendment S3M-6409.2, to insert at end:

“, and believes that the UK Government's programme, including plans to raise the income tax threshold to £10,000, build a new, sustainable economy and reform the political system, will put fairness at the heart of government and deliver real benefits to the people of Scotland.”

09:50

Derek Brownlee (South of Scotland) (Con):

As someone who has not always been able to forge a consensus with our new Liberal Democrat friends, despite my best efforts, I am genuinely impressed that the coalition agreement has provided a coherent programme for government that takes the best from both parties and agrees a workable consensus for both sides. That just goes to show what can happen when the old parties work together.

I accept that, as Fiona Hyslop said, the respect agenda that we have heard about is about action as much as words. As Annabel Goldie said, the SNP decided not to work with the Commission on Scottish Devolution because it was predicated on the continuation of the UK. I believe that the SNP was wrong to stand aside from it and that, arguably, the Calman commission proposals would have been different if all political parties had engaged in it. The issue is less that one party stands aside from the process, and more that—as the Conservatives and the SNP found to our cost in the 1990s with the Scottish Constitutional Convention—being on the sidelines allows others to set the parameters of the eventual outcome. When the constitutional arrangements of the country are being discussed, that is a great risk. I say that not to make a party-political point against the SNP, but to make the case for why, even at this stage, well after the final report of the Calman commission, we should welcome genuine engagement by the Scottish Government.

The Labour Party argument appears to be that, by not proceeding straight to implementation of the Calman recommendations, the new Government is kicking the issue into the long grass. However, as we have already heard, the Labour Government's white paper on the issue did not

propose implementation of Calman. In any case, the long-grass argument is based on a profound misreading of the new Government's position. I do not doubt that the Liberal Democrats wish to implement fiscal devolution as quickly as possible—just as I do—but, as long-time supporters of fiscal devolution, surely they will want to ensure that the scheme works as intended. It serves no one's interests, whether unionist or nationalist, to introduce a scheme of fiscal devolution that does not improve financial responsibility or that has administration problems.

Fiscal devolution—or fiscal responsibility, as it is increasingly being known—is an essential part of bringing stability to devolution as a whole.

George Foulkes: I wanted to ask this question of Fiona Hyslop, but she would not let me intervene. However, Derek Brownlee is probably more able to answer it. What kind of tax-raising powers does he want to give the Scottish Government? If he could give an indication of the kind of tax-raising powers that he is thinking about—over corporation tax, sales tax or whatever—that would be helpful to the debate.

Derek Brownlee: As Fiona Hyslop said, the point is that some of the proposals in the Calman report to an extent have been superseded by issues in the coalition agreement. We must consider those issues. There is no point in pretending that they do not exist.

The point of fiscal responsibility is to reduce on an institutional basis—regardless of who is in government at Westminster and here—the squabbling between the UK and Scottish Governments over financial issues. That is why I see financial responsibility as a Conservative principle, although I would wish all parties to share it. A stable devolved settlement, which financial responsibility would give us, is a key unionist principle. So to long grass fiscal devolution is not a sensible position for a Conservative or a unionist, nor is it a sensible position for a party that aspires to be in government in Scotland.

Listening to concerns from the Scottish Government or anyone else on the detail of the Calman proposals is sensible, however. When the Calman commission met, there was little, if any, debate on the likelihood of a substantial raising of the personal allowance, as the Liberal-Conservative Government is proposing. A £10,000 personal allowance would reduce the projected Scottish share of tax take under Calman by up to £875 million, and the Calman proposals contain no equivalent to the provision for the existing Scottish variable rate that requires the Treasury to come up with alternative proposals where changes to the tax regime alter the yield.

Every party went into the UK elections promising greater powers for the Scottish Parliament and greater financial powers, and we can either try to build a consensus on their form or not. That is not an abstract point. We all agree that one area in which Scotland has been lagging behind significantly—not just in recent years, but over a longer period, including when the Conservatives were in government in the 1990s—is its business growth rate. We need a significant expansion in the private sector economy to provide the jobs of the future.

The coalition has adopted from the Conservative manifesto a proposal to review the case for flexibility on corporation tax for Northern Ireland. There is nothing that requires all parts of the union to have the same powers or fiscal arrangements, but it seems to me that if such flexibility can be provided for Northern Ireland, it could, at least technically, be provided for Scotland. If such flexibility could allow us to increase the growth rate in Scotland, create jobs and provide the opportunity for new businesses to thrive, should we reject it simply because it was not in the Calman proposals? Should we reject out of hand other ideas that might improve financial responsibility in Scotland or help to grow the economy just because they did not feature in the final Calman report? Of course we should not. We should be open to new ideas, as we get on with the process of implementing Calman.

Margaret Curran: Will the member give way?

Derek Brownlee: I do not think that I have time, I am sorry.

The test of the new politics and the respect agenda is not so much whether the UK Government does what the Scottish Government demands, or whether the Scottish Government does what the UK Government wants it to do; it is whether both sides are able to work together to find common ground for shared goals. I do not doubt that that is a challenge for the UK Government, but it is also a challenge to the Scottish Government. I hope that both our Governments rise to that challenge. It is early days but, so far, the signs are positive.

09:56

Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP): The motions and amendments that are before us today are a mark of how the political landscape of the United Kingdom has altered and the change that has taken place within the UK and its constituent nations. It is worth discussing the relationships between the UK Government and the Scottish Government, so the debate is welcome.

The political landscape here at home certainly changed in May 2007, when the Scottish National

Party formed the Government. However, it should be noted that change also took place in Wales, where a governing coalition was formed between Plaid Cymru and the Labour Party, and in Northern Ireland, where the Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Féin share power. Those arrangements were a big shift in democratic political representation because, for the first time, not all parts of the UK were ruled by the same political party. Since 1999, it was often said that the true mark of devolution in Scotland would be when a different party from the London party was in control, and no doubt the same was said about the Welsh Assembly. I believe that the shift in UK politics started then, and that that change continues, with the coalition Government in Westminster and the proposed changes in the electoral system. After all, to paraphrase, this is a process, not an event.

I welcome the respect agenda that is being talked about in relation to relationships between our Government and the UK Government, and I trust that the joint ministerial committee system will now work with an ethos of mutual respect for ministers of all Administrations. Unfortunately, the concordat agreements for JMCs had been allowed to collect dust in the first years of devolution, with only the Europe JMC being active—and I use that term loosely—when the SNP formed the Government in 2007. I was pleased to see that, after much work by this and the other devolved Administrations, a revised memorandum of understanding was agreed in March 2010, with dispute resolution aspects extending to financial issues. That is extremely important, particularly now, when we are considering the implementation of recommendations from the Commission on Scottish Devolution.

Margo MacDonald: Does the member agree that heightened awareness of the joint meetings, which should have been part of the statutory requirements, has come about because of the political situation and not because of a great shift in emphasis between the two layers of government? If there had been such a shift, we would not have been forgotten when it came to fixing the date of the five-yearly Westminster elections.

Linda Fabiani: That is a good point. I hope that the new Administration will take on board the views of practically everyone in this chamber and discuss the matter with respect and dignity, in the spirit of co-operation that I have been discussing.

On the financial aspects of the Calman plan, I have serious concerns about the taxation proposals, which many people have also expressed in this chamber and elsewhere.

I note that Wendy Alexander commented on television on Tuesday evening that the taxation proposal in the Calman report was made by

“the most eminent economists in Scotland”.

That intrigued me because nowhere in either of the reports that were made to Calman by the independent expert group can I find the proposal to devolve income tax and adjust the block grant along the lines that Calman finally came up with.

Certainly, the general principle of assigned taxes was discussed and reported on by the group, but the proposition of the 10p variable rate and the block grant adjustment was not dealt with. I hope that the Labour group can clear that matter up for us today and point us to the publication in which

“the most eminent economists in Scotland”

made that particular proposal, or where we might find it in the public record. Indeed, in his paper, which was jointly produced with Professor Scott, Professor Hughes-Hallett, who actually sat on the expert panel for Calman, stated that the then UK Government’s proposals were “defective in economic terms” and were likely to create

“key instabilities in the budgetary arrangements of Scotland’s government with significant ramifications for the delivery of public goods and services”.

Surely there is no one here today who wishes to implement proposals, in a carte-blanche manner, that are likely to create “key instabilities” at this time and which could adversely affect the delivery of public services, beyond the cuts in budgets that we are all facing. Scotland’s Government is committed to the protection of the vulnerable and to creating a fairer society. A more buoyant economy is crucial to all of that, and the deficiencies within the current Calman proposals would hamstring the Scottish Government’s ability to advance economic growth and truly address the needs of our citizens.

Fiscal independence, fiscal autonomy, fiscal responsibility, additional financial powers—whatever the terminology, the actuality requires much deeper discussion. There is no time to go into all of the examples of matters that should be discussed further, but among them are the potential effect of raising the income tax threshold, as mentioned in the Liberal Democrat amendment, and the inability to use short-term borrowing to fund unanticipated shortfalls in income tax—I point out that those income tax revenues would, after all, be subject to prediction.

There are many more potential pitfalls and concerns. That is why the amendment in Fiona Hyslop’s name should be supported and the amendment in Pauline McNeill’s name should be rejected. That is why mutual respect between the

Westminster and the Scottish Parliaments and Governments is crucial. If in this Parliament we start to work together for Scotland’s benefit and have mutual respect among ourselves, today’s debate will surely have been worthwhile indeed.

10:03

Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab): It is interesting to be back in this place after spending a few days elsewhere, although I suspect that some of my new colleagues are already weary of hearing me tell them how well the Scottish Parliament does certain things and deals with various issues. I hope that members will forgive me if I follow the lead of Lord Foulkes and mistakenly slip into language that is better suited to the green benches.

I note that, in the Scottish Parliament, I am at least guaranteed a seat and do not have to ask colleagues to move along and let me sit in the small space available. Further, here, I can see that the Tories and the Liberal Democrats are still just about separate entities, whereas, in the other place, they all now look and sound the same. I see that, this morning, the Liberal Democrats did not quite cheer Annabel Goldie’s welcome of David Cameron as the new Prime Minister, and a couple of them managed to look away when Mike Rumbles was extolling the virtues of the new coalition. Speaking of which, I thought that that was an astonishing turnaround for Mr Rumbles, whom I well remember having to deal with in coalition in this place. I have to say that I do not recall him always being quite so sympathetic to the principles of co-operation.

Mike Rumbles: I was very keen that our coalition kept to the coalition agreement and did not deviate from it.

Cathy Jamieson: I hesitate to say that the member is rewriting history; I say merely that I remember some fairly robust exchanges.

Anyway, that is enough of the pleasantries. The debate is important, if for no other reason than to highlight, as people have referred to already, that warm words, co-operation and respect will not be enough for the relationship between the Governments, and that it will be action that counts—a point that even the minister, Fiona Hyslop, recognised.

One of the tests of the so-called respect agenda will be the way in which the UK Government takes forward the recommendations and principles of the Calman report. I was pleased to hear a commitment to that in the Queen’s speech, but I am concerned at the continued uncertainty, and the rumour that certain measures may not be taken forward if the Scottish Government does not

agree, as if the SNP has a veto in the process. That does not reflect the will of the Scottish people. Judging by the opinion polls and comments during the election, there is a general feeling among the Scottish people that although the Scottish Parliament has done a good job in many areas, the majority want the Parliament to be given additional powers. People want the relationship between the tax-raising powers and spending to be clarified differently. However, they do not want what the SNP would put forward as independence.

Fiona Hyslop: Does the member support the proposals in the previous UK Labour Government's white paper or does she support the full Calman proposals? Which of the nine proposals that she previously rejected does she now accept?

Cathy Jamieson: I want to take things forward—this is not about looking back. We are in a new political situation, so I would ask the Scottish Government, and indeed all parties here and at Westminster, to look positively at reconvening the working group on Calman and to engage in that process. My question for the minister is how she and her party will engage in that process. We have to consider the Calman recommendations in the light of the present constitutional circumstances—[*Interruption.*] I am having difficulty hearing what the Minister for Parliamentary Business is saying but I am prepared to take an intervention from him.

Bruce Crawford: I am sorry for making a sedentary intervention but it was interesting to hear the member say that she wanted to revisit some of the Calman recommendations, given that the Labour amendment talks about fully supporting all of the Calman proposals.

Cathy Jamieson: If the minister had not been making sedentary interventions and had been listening to what I was saying, he would have heard me say that it is important to look again at all the recommendations to see how they can be acted on in light of the new circumstances in which we find ourselves politically and of the constitutional settlement.

I hope that the SNP will give a commitment to move on from its previous approach of cherry-picking two or three things that suit its agenda and that it is prepared to consider all of the Calman recommendations and to work positively to see how they can be taken forward.

Of course, Calman is not the only area in which co-operation and respect are needed. I ask the Conservatives where the respect agenda is in relation to the future jobs fund, for example. In my local area, young people are already benefiting from the fund, local organisations think that it is a

success and Jobcentre Plus staff think that it is working. It was not long ago that the now Prime Minister, David Cameron, thought that it was a good scheme, yet the Tories and the Liberal Democrats are now lining up to tell us that it is wasteful and is to be cut. Sadly, that is all too reminiscent of the decision taken by the SNP Government when it slashed funding for ProjectScotland.

We have an opportunity to look again at the working relationship between the UK Government and the Scottish Government. We must not rewrite history: it is not the case that previously there was no co-operation between Scottish ministers and UK ministers. That is my experience of going to European meetings. On occasion I spoke for the UK Government on a range of matters and I was fully involved in the discussions on those matters. For the SNP Government and the Tories to suggest otherwise is just not good enough.

I hope that the ministers and the Conservatives will take account of my points and answer my questions.

10:09

Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP): The debate will serve little purpose if it merely revisits the past—we have heard a little of that—or restates each of our well-known positions in the debate on Scotland's constitution. Those positions may well be heartfelt, vocal and even, in some cases, right, but their mere rehearsal will not suffice. It will be of much more interest to the people of Scotland if we each show some willingness to listen to a debate on which there is, surprisingly, at least some common ground. If members will allow me a Hebridean analogy, our common ground is perhaps like the apocryphal disputed peat bank: it has been the subject of a tense stand-off for decades; it is the object of deeply entrenched positions; and it is narrow. However, it is in everyone's interests that the Scottish and UK Governments speak to each other constructively now that proposals for constitutional change in Scotland are on the table once more. The challenge is to come up with legislative measures that will work.

The Queen's speech talks about implementing the Calman commission recommendations, and there is evidently willingness on the part of both Governments to continue a dialogue about what that might mean in practical terms. There is no doubt that for those of us who see Scotland's destination as independence, the Calman proposals do not take the political temperature in Scotland anywhere close to the flash-point of heather. However, although, as I and other nationalists have said before in Parliament, we recognise that there are elements of the Calman

proposals that are good and worthy of implementation, the proposals are neither indivisible nor sacrosanct. I suspect that mine is not the only party in Scotland that takes that practical point of view.

The fact that the UK Government is prepared to repatriate to Scotland legislative competence in areas such as drink-driving, speed limits and air-guns is to be welcomed. In as far as those issues go, those are highly reasonable proposals. My colleague Dave Thompson has been active among members of all parties in his support for the Scottish Parliament to have control over drink-driving law. Likewise, many have campaigned hard for Holyrood to legislate on air-guns. Further, it seems strange for a country with its own legal and criminal justice systems not to be able to legislate on something as everyday as speed limits. However, Calman is more problematic when he talks about fiscal powers. If I thought that Calman was proposing fiscal autonomy or anything resembling it, I would have no such reservations, but I am afraid that in his fiscal proposals, Calman has simply not presented a coherent picture. It is for all parties in Scotland to engage rationally on how to provide genuine fiscal responsibility for Parliament.

Robert Brown: On that issue, I would appreciate some clarity on the direction of travel. Is the principle that it is less about block grants or full fiscal autonomy and more about the Parliament having appropriate tax-raising powers to fulfil its responsibilities, whatever they may be at any point in future, one to which the member would adhere?

Alasdair Allan: The member uses the word “appropriate” in relation to fiscal responsibilities. When Calman talks about fiscal responsibilities, he is not coherent. For instance, Calman’s proposal to reduce UK income tax to 10p in Scotland, leaving Scotland to levy the rest herself, sounds radical only until we consider that income tax is but one tax. Under those proposals, 80 per cent of tax revenue generated in Scotland would continue to go to the UK Treasury. The Scottish Parliament would have roughly the same scope for fiscal manoeuvre as Clackmannanshire Council has—less, probably, as we would have no borrowing powers.

Valuable as much in Calman is, scepticism about his fiscal proposals is far from confined to the SNP benches. The existing fiscal proposals are undermined, even from out of the mouths of members of Calman’s advisory panel. Professor Andrew Hughes-Hallett—who has already been referred to—has described the fiscal proposals as

“seriously flawed—if not illiterate”.

Others have pointed to the fact that Calman’s system, which assigns revenues to Scotland based on UK Treasury forecasts, ensures that when growth is forecast the UK Treasury gains, and when decline is forecast Scotland loses.

Margo MacDonald: I wonder whether it helps if I suggest that the full fiscal autonomy that we talk about is no such thing unless it encompasses the collection of money to pay pensions and benefits. They are two sides of the one coin.

Alasdair Allan: The member will not be surprised to hear that I would like Scotland to do all those things. However, there is a wider debate to be had. When other studies in this area, ranging from the Scottish Government’s national conversation to the Lib Dem Steel commission, have all identified far more fiscally autonomous solutions for our country, I find it surprising that some cannot get beyond our previous debate on Calman and still view it as indivisible. If Scotland is to be economically competitive in future, there has to be some relationship between what Scottish Governments plough into the country’s economic development and what they are able to reap from that activity through a stronger tax base.

Despite the manifold differences between them, there is a clear willingness among the UK and Scottish Governments to talk sensibly about these issues together. I contend that talking sensibly can lead us only to the conclusion that not all in the Calman report can go through without further debate. By all means, let us implement the report’s uncontentious measures. However, if there is a respect agenda, we should acknowledge the demand from all political quarters in Scotland that we take more responsibility for raising the money that Scotland spends.

10:16

Des McNulty (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab): Oscar Wilde famously described fox hunting as

“the unspeakable in ... pursuit of the uneatable”.

I wonder what he would have made of the courtship between the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives. We can see on the seats opposite that, although our Liberals and our Conservatives are not necessarily happy about the process, they are acting a bit like relatives at a wedding: so far they are not protesting too loudly about their respective parties’ new partner. Indeed, Mike Rumbles gave a good impression of a best man giving an uncomfortable speech at a wedding. One wonders whether we are simply waiting for enough time to pass and sufficient drink to be consumed before the inevitable fight breaks out.

Is this truly a coming together of equals or will the old lady of British politics, the Tory party, turn out to be a black widow spider and eat her partner shortly after consummating the deal? I presume that she will do so with relish, but she might have to suffer a little bit of indigestion. Of course, we do not need Oscar Wilde to describe the First Minister's preening and posturing when David Cameron came to visit, or the empty mouthings about the respect agenda.

We on this side of the chamber are absolutely clear what the Government of David Cameron and Nick Clegg means for Scottish jobs and public services and our aspirations for social justice. When David Cameron talks about fairness, people in Scotland look at who his cabinet of millionaires really represents; when he talks about our constitution, we focus on his efforts to impose a five-year fixed term for his Government by seeking to perpetuate its life beyond a no-confidence vote; and when he talks about benefits and pensions, people look to the cuts that his Government intends to make to their incomes. Whenever we think about the Conservatives, we should look to our back pockets.

Fiona Hyslop: Does Des McNulty regret that the Labour Party at Westminster did not seek to form a Government with other parties?

Des McNulty: The biggest regret is that the SNP advocated that people in England should vote Liberal Democrat. Look how that turned out.

For the Liberal Democrats, this is the price of power. The whiff of a red box was sufficient for them to abandon all principles and credibility, and it is a harsh reminder that the Liberal Democrats are the least principled and most delusional of all parties. Their claim that they have won Conservative support for a predominantly Liberal Democrat agenda shows that they have no understanding whatever of the embrace in which they are now caught.

Annabel Goldie mentioned how Alex Salmond described his discussions with the Prime Minister as highly "positive", "substantive" and "productive". I am more interested in Mr Salmond's actions—and, of course, the actions of Mr Swinney. As we know, the UK Government has brought in the first tranche of cuts for the UK and that that £6 billion translates into a £330 million reduction in funding for Scotland.

Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con): Will the member give way?

Des McNulty: I am sorry, but I really do not have the time.

We also know that more severe cuts are in the pipeline. The forthcoming spending review will slice back public services throughout the UK and

inevitably cause very serious difficulties for Scotland in the next financial year and subsequent years. Next year, the cuts will directly affect front-line services. The scale of the savings will not only damage key health, education and local government services, but will have a very serious impact on infrastructure plans, our police, our criminal justice system and everything else. Given the likely impact of these decisions—Mr Osborne has certainly made his intentions perfectly clear—why is the SNP saying that it will defer to next year this year's £300 million reduction? Surely that will leave Scotland facing not just Tory cuts but an SNP top-up. The Scottish Government's objective should be to protect public services. If the SNP's intention is to dodge the implications of what Westminster is doing now, just to carry on exchanging warm words and so on, we are simply going to face double the cuts next year. That approach is completely at variance with the approach that has been adopted in Wales and Northern Ireland.

We know that wrong choices are this Government's hallmark. Its flawed concordat has already delivered year-on-year cuts in education at a time when the block grant has been increasing and the amount of money at the Government's disposal has reached its highest-ever level. What we have experienced thus far in education—and, I suspect, in other public services—will be as nothing compared with what we face next year with the Tory-Lib Dem cuts and the SNP top-up. Looking to the sustainability of public services, minimising the shock and impact of the cuts to come and dealing properly with the public finances are the right things to do, but I regret to say that the SNP will, as always, put party before country. That is its hallmark as a political party.

Three weeks ago, the people of Scotland delivered their verdict on the Conservatives by voting overwhelmingly against them in favour of the Labour Party, in the main, but also for the Lib Dems and the SNP. Those two parties are now in different forms of partnership with the Conservatives. They might be sending each other billets doux and exchanging bons mots, but they are all letting the country down.

10:22

Liam McArthur (Orkney) (LD): Last week we had Norwegian constitution day, which is celebrated in my constituency in a manner befitting Orkney's status as a cherished former outpost of the Norwegian patria. At a reception last Monday, I was discussing the general election's outcome with some of our Norwegian guests, all of whom were amazed at the response in many quarters to the fact that no single party had won an overall majority. What is a routine feature of the

political process in most western democracies prompted even some of our more level-headed journalists and commentators to dissolve into babbling hyperbole. We were reliably informed that our political system is such a delicate flower, and that the so-called mother of all Parliaments is so neurotic that an election result requiring two or more parties to work together is a recipe for political stasis, not to mention a trigger for a run on the pound and a meltdown of the financial markets.

What utter nonsense. Not only does such a view ignore the experience of many, if not most, of our European neighbours, it inexplicably turns a Nelsonian eye to what has been happening north of the border since the Scottish Parliament was established. As for the markets, they were and are quite rightly more concerned with goings-on in the birthplace of democracy and the issue of sovereign debt. Nevertheless, they—and, indeed, the governor of the Bank of England—have responded to the signal that the new UK Government is prepared to take early and decisive action to tackle our serious debt problem.

The unpalatable consequences of the situation in which we find ourselves also seem to have been accepted across the political spectrum. It is not just Liam Byrne who has twigged that

“There’s no money left.”

Alex Salmond has conceded that no matter whether the cuts are implemented this year or next, they will be implemented. Elsewhere, Plaid Cymru’s Rhodri Glyn Thomas has said that he does not think that

“we should put off cuts until next year”

while his Labour counterpart and Des McNulty’s colleague Jane Hutt has insisted that

“we need to reduce the deficit and reduce the national debt”.

It is in that spirit and in these most challenging of circumstances that the coalition Government’s commitment to forging a new constructive working relationship with the Scottish Government and this Parliament is most welcome. The dysfunctional relationship between the former UK Labour Government and the minority SNP Administration in Scotland served no useful or productive purpose. Fault can perhaps be laid on both sides, and doubtless the situation stemmed from Gordon Brown and Alex Salmond’s mutual distrust. However, that it was allowed to shape and distort relations between both Governments to such an extent is tragic.

A fresh start is needed, and Danny Alexander among others has very much set the tone. I echo the comments of Derek Brownlee and, to an

extent, those of Alasdair Allan on the two-way nature of the working relationship.

I hope that Mr Salmond and his colleagues will embrace the opportunity that exists. They will no doubt take encouragement from some of the early actions that the new Government has proposed, which will have a significant and positive impact in Scotland. Priority has rightly been placed on action to tackle our debt crisis and the mess that the outgoing Labour Government left the country’s finances in, but measures were also contained in the Queen’s speech that demonstrate determination to take a new approach to delivering fairness. That reflects the Liberal Democrat influence on the new UK Government, which would have been very different if David Cameron had secured an outright majority.

Margo MacDonald: Will the member give way?

Liam McArthur: I am afraid that I do not have time to do so.

Our amendment refers to the plan to raise the income tax threshold to £10,000, which will help to take many low-income households out of paying tax altogether and will put £700 on average back into the pockets of low and middle-income earners. That shows a commitment to delivering fairness in our taxation system.

The radical and wide-ranging reforms of our political system that Nick Clegg set out earlier this month are widely welcomed and again have fairness at their core. I am not entirely clear why the SNP seems to be unwilling to back those plans or the Lib Dem amendment.

Similarly, I am not clear why Labour’s amendment seeks to remove the reference in Ms Goldie’s motion to the action that is being taken on the fossil fuel levy. If any issue symbolises the destructive impasse that was reached between former Labour ministers and their SNP counterparts, that is surely it. I hope that swift progress can now be made on the issue, and that investment can be delivered that will make a real difference in helping to build a new sustainable economy, with jobs and wealth that could be created by harnessing Scotland’s world-class renewables potential.

Fuel duty is another issue on which we have seen more progress in the past two weeks than there was over the entire terms of office of the previous two Labour and Conservative Governments at Westminster. I acknowledge that, in last month’s debate on fuel duty, my amendment, which called for reduced fuel duty in remote rural areas, secured cross-party support. There was recognition of the higher costs that are faced by rural motorists, for whom a car is not a luxury but a necessity, and that increased fuel prices have more serious and wide-ranging effects

in rural areas. The decision to take forward a pilot project on how such a system might work—as it does in other European Union member states—has been warmly welcomed in my constituency. I look forward to the islands being included in that pilot initiative, if they are not the focus of it.

The new Government also recognises the broadband needs of those who live and work in rural communities. From the many debates on the matter, I know that members of all parties share concerns about the widening digital divide that is opening up between our urban and rural areas. Therefore, I hope that they, too, will welcome the new coalition Government's commitment to ensuring that the roll-out of high-speed broadband, which is an increasingly essential tool for businesses and households, involves rural communities and does not simply leave them at the end of the queue.

Neither party can claim to have got everything that it wanted in the coalition agreement. As we know, that is the nature of coalitions and Parliaments in which no single party commands a majority. Indeed, even single-party Governments are coalitions. The SNP can count on Annabel Goldie and her colleagues to provide confidence and supply support on key votes, although I dare say that Bruce Crawford has his work cut out persuading Sandra White and Fergus Ewing, for example, to see the world in quite the same way.

As the American historian Bernice Johnson Reagon observed:

"If you're in a coalition and you're comfortable, you know it's not a broad enough coalition".

The next five years will not always be comfortable, but I am pleased that we have a new Government that has set a new tone and has shown a commitment to putting fairness at the heart of government and to delivering real benefits to the people of Scotland.

10:28

Michael Matheson (Falkirk West) (SNP):

Although my political instincts may wish me to say otherwise, it would be churlish not to welcome the fact that the new London Government has taken a new approach in seeking to establish more constructive relationships with the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament, as we seek to tackle the problems that our nations face. However, the so-called respect agenda, which has been referred to a number of times, is anything but special. In fact, that agenda should be the norm for how two Governments and two Parliaments interact with each other in a mature and responsible way. If anything, the new respect agenda only serves to highlight the sheer lack of respect that the previous Labour Government had

for the Scottish Parliament, and for the SNP Government in particular. Sadly, the new Labour approach to that relationship seemed to be shaped more by Labour MPs' petty jealousies about the Scottish Parliament and a hatred of the SNP's being in government. Despite our considerable political differences with the new London Government, if there is an opportunity to take Scotland's interests forward with it, we should work to do so to try to achieve that.

The late Donald Dewar often pointed out that devolution is not an end in itself, but is very much a process. It appears that the new London Government, in trying to take forward the Calman proposals, recognises that. It will be no surprise to members to hear that I, as a nationalist, believe that the best option for my country is that it should be a normal independent country. However, I also welcome a number of proposals in the Calman report, which the London Government is now considering taking forward.

My colleagues have referred to a number of measures that SNP members are happy to support. That does not prevent us from highlighting the fact that there are serious concerns about the financial elements of the proposals in the Calman report. Even in what Scotland Office ministers have said over the past couple of weeks, I have detected hesitancy in their comments on the financial package that came with the Calman report. I suspect that that is a reflection of their realisation of the limitations of the proposals. The Calman tax proposals are more reflective of a desire to find common ground for the unionist parties than of a desire to provide a financial package that effectively delivers more fiscal responsibility. In creating that compromise, a financial package has been produced that many leading economists and businessmen have viewed as being potentially damaging to Scotland's interests. The proposals would do no more than take Scotland from a position of getting its pocket money from the London Government to its having a Saturday job. If the objective is to create greater financial responsibility and transparency, I do not see how the Calman proposals can achieve that.

That is where Labour's problem lies in signing up entirely to the Calman report. Calman's proposals have been largely overtaken by events. The comments and concerns of a number of leading economists must be taken seriously. Professor Andrew Hughes-Hallett, who was a member of the advisory panel to the Calman commission, has been quoted a number of times. He said of the tax proposals:

"However attractive the Calman proposals might be in the political context, they are seriously flawed ... for simple economic reasons".

We have a responsibility to listen to such concerns. In doing so, we should be prepared to move beyond the political context of the proposals and ensure that the measures that the London Government takes forward create greater financial responsibility in Scotland and are based on sound economic grounds.

The tax elements of Calman's proposals are far from radical, and they certainly could not be considered to be a significant step towards full fiscal responsibility. As my colleague Alasdair Allan highlighted, they would not give us control over tax revenues, rates or offshore revenues. That would place our financial responsibility largely on a par with that of local authorities.

I am prepared to take the new London Government's respect agenda at face value, but its actions will demonstrate the true extent of its commitment. In economic terms, respect for Scotland involves our having fiscal responsibility that allows the Scottish Parliament to take greater control over Scotland's financial affairs. The Steel commission report summed up the best way of achieving greater financial responsibility when it spoke about allowing the Scottish Government to

"raise as much as practical of its own spending."

One option may be to have all taxes raised and held in Scotland and a portion paid to the London Treasury. Another option may be the assigned-revenue route. I am more supportive of the first option, although both are simply much clearer and focused than the Calman proposals. If the London Government is serious about respect, it must recognise such weaknesses and take measures that will deliver more financial responsibility.

10:34

Margaret Curran (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab):

I am disappointed that Annabel Goldie is not in the chamber to hear this because I wanted to begin with a surprise and thank her for giving us so many quotations today that we can use ad nauseam in debates. I am very grateful for her recognition of Alex Salmond's admiration for David Cameron and the idea of liberal conservatism to which we will return in debates. Perhaps I will refer to that more later on.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Will the member give way?

Margaret Curran: I ask Mary Scanlon to bear with me for a bit.

I also thank the Conservatives for the timing of today's debate. We have just gone through significant shifts in our political circumstances in Scotland and the United Kingdom, so it is an apposite debate. It gives me the opportunity to reflect on my change in circumstances as I have

joined Cathy Jamieson on those green benches. I, too, have made myself particularly popular by recommending many of the Scottish Parliament practices for that place's deliberations.

It has been a tumultuous three weeks with serious implications for Scotland. We have heard much about the new politics, but we see the same old Tories. I cannot believe that here we are talking about Tory cuts and a threat to jobs so quickly. We were promised easy efficiencies in the weeks leading up to the election but, here we are, starting with the slashing of the child trust funds.

However, I must be honest and say that the past weeks have been tumultuous for all parties in Scotland and we have all faced opportunities and difficulties. I acknowledge that Labour lost the election across the United Kingdom and I am deeply disappointed by that. It has serious implications for my party, but I have always argued that denial of defeat is a serious political mistake and I will argue within my party that we undergo the necessary reflection and changes that defeat requires.

Mary Scanlon: Now that Margaret Curran also belongs to another Parliament and given the new respect agenda, does she regret on behalf of the Labour Party that in 11 years we had one visit from a Labour Prime Minister in which he gave a lecture to this Parliament? Does she welcome the respect agenda?

Margaret Curran: I will come to some of those points later, but it will be no surprise to Mary Scanlon, who knows me well, to hear that I am a bit too long in the tooth to fall for the idea that one visit from a Prime Minister somehow translates into respect.

It is incumbent on all of us in Scotland to take serious note of the Scottish electorate's views as expressed in the recent general election: their voice was clear and we ignore it at our peril. It was my experience, shared by many throughout Scotland and borne out in the Tories' comments, that there is recognition among the Scottish electorate that the Conservative Party has not changed. Recall of the Thatcher years was profound and visceral throughout the Scottish general election campaign, and the risk to jobs in public services being at the top of the Tories' agenda is deeply worrying for Scots.

So—the Tories are back and they have some new friends. As Mike Rumbles said, 16 out of the 20 proposed new bills have implications for Scotland and we have a big job to do as we face testing times. Some of the political comment has said, "Actually, what we are witnessing across the United Kingdom is a restructuring of the right" and that explains why David Cameron has been so joyous in his accommodation of the Liberal

Democrats; he sees an opportunity to undergo that restructuring. Liam McArthur, who is also no longer in the chamber, would have been uncomfortable if he had seen what Cathy Jamieson and I witnessed during the week—the seamless integration of the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties as they presented themselves. David Laws's performance was striking in that he could not be distinguished from a Tory minister. The developing situation will be interesting to witness.

Mike Rumbles: I would be interested to hear Margaret Curran's reflections on the Labour-Liberal Democrat coalition and the way in which the ministers worked together. Was it not seamless, too?

Margaret Curran: My most striking reflection on that coalition—I had many discussions on the subject—is how the two parties remained distinct from one another. We sat separately and were very distinct. What is most striking about the coalition down south has been its automatic integration. I am sure that we will debate that point many times in the future.

I will mention briefly the respect agenda. It is vital that we challenge instances of respect being offered at press conferences but not in Scottish communities. The future jobs fund is being cancelled at a cost of 15,400 jobs in Scotland—that is what we worries me about the lack of respect. Forgive me when I say that I do not think that we are at the dawn of a new politics. In fact, I argue that the creation of the Calman commission was the new politics. It was a cross-party commission and—I take heart from this—it was promoted by parties in opposition, which demonstrates what can be done in opposition. It was a good example of evidence-led and informed change. I very much welcome the reconvening of that group.

I make two points in conclusion. Derek Brownlee made an interesting contribution: I am not sure whether he was implying that Calman's remit should be extended much further. I do not want to get into a silly debate about whether we support every single recommendation or whether there is one with which we disagree. We need to establish today that the core of the Calman report should be respected. That is what respect means—that it has the support of the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish people and that it is informed and evidence led. I hope that we do not get ourselves into a position where the SNP Government in Scotland ignores that substantial evidence and the Tories at Westminster try to change it. We have an agenda with Calman and we should stick to it. That is how to show respect in Scotland.

10:41

Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con): It was interesting to hear Margaret Curran say at the end of her speech that she does not want to get into a "silly debate" about whether we should implement Calman in full. I am intrigued to know whether, at 5 o'clock, the member will vote for Pauline McNeill's amendment, which talks about Calman being implemented

"in full and without delay."

I am desperate to know the answer, so for that reason alone I will take her intervention.

Margaret Curran: I always like to make Gavin Brown happy; he knows that.

Of course I will vote for Pauline McNeill's amendment, but let us not be diverted by a minor part of the Calman report. We all know that it has the substantial support of the Parliament and its core must be protected. I hope that the member will promise me in his response that he will protect the core of the Calman report.

Gavin Brown: I am grateful for that response—at least the Scottish Labour Party coalition is holding together.

I will pick up on two of the debate's substantive issues before coming back to the extremely important respect agenda. The fossil fuel levy was mentioned in the Queen's speech. The coalition agreement says:

"We will review the control and use of the accumulated and future revenues from the Fossil Fuel Levy in Scotland."

The sum is pretty substantial. At the last estimate, it was the best part of £180 million, which is currently held in a pot by Ofgem. What was disappointing about the previous Government is that there was a dogmatic refusal to examine that issue. I do not pretend that there is a simple and straightforward resolution, but the fact that there was a refusal to even examine the issue is unacceptable. That money could be used to promote green causes the length and breadth of Scotland.

It will not be easy to unpick Treasury rules, but we must ask ourselves whether the position in which we find ourselves is an unintended consequence. As Annabel Goldie said, no Scottish Government would want to extract that money if the same amount were to be taken out of the Scottish consolidated fund. Surely when the fossil fuel levy was originally set up, it was not the intention of the Government of the day that the money would simply sit there in a pot and grow to the tune of £40 million a year with no incentive for it ever to be used. It is disappointing that the Labour amendment kicks out of the motion the welcome for the decision to review the fossil fuel levy. I cannot understand why any representative

of any party in Scotland would not welcome such a review. I cannot prejudge the results of that review, but I hope that it is inherently positive and that the entire sum comes to Scotland as quickly as possible. I cannot understand why any party does not accept that considering the issue is a good idea.

Margo MacDonald: Will Gavin Brown take it from me that, had the levy been on anything other than fossil fuels, we would have received it? However, there is far too much of a political connection between fossil fuels, oil and money that flows right past us.

Gavin Brown: I am not sure whether I follow the full consequences of what Margo MacDonald said. Until now, using the fossil fuel levy would have taken money out of, and had a direct impact on, the consolidated fund. As I said, that is being reviewed and needs to be unpicked. I am not sure how the two aspects go together.

The Commission on Scottish Devolution has—rightly—been the subject of much debate today. The coalition agreement says clearly:

“We will implement the proposals of the Calman Commission”.

We have heard of positive movement already—the Calman steering group has been reconvened and dialogue has taken place between the Scottish Government and the Scotland Office.

I return to Labour’s amendment, with which I struggle. It refers to implementing recommendations

“in full and without delay.”

The question was asked—initially by Fiona Hyslop—whether the Scottish Labour Party wants the Calman report or the previous UK Government’s white paper to be implemented in full. The two documents differ. As Jim Murphy, the former Secretary of State for Scotland, said, the white paper that he introduced proposed that any borrowing powers—a fundamental reform—had to go hand in hand with an automatic tax increase at the same time. The right to borrow would be given, but the second that any Scottish Government wanted to borrow—whether that was £10 or £10 million—that would go hand in hand with an automatic tax increase.

Fiona Hyslop: Will the member give way?

Gavin Brown: I have only 15 seconds left, so I hope that the minister will forgive me for not giving way.

The Calman report and the white paper differ fundamentally and the Labour Party does not seem to know whether it prefers Calman or its own white paper.

The debate had the straightforward aim of uniting all the parties around a simple concept. I hope that the Labour Party can see sense and that the Parliament can unite at 5 o’clock.

10:47

Angela Constance (Livingston) (SNP): I declare an interest: I am what people would call a paint-your-face-blue nationalist. I have believed in independence since I was eight years old—the 1979 referendum campaign had an impact that has been long lasting. As an adult, I can articulate my political, economic and cultural reasons for believing in independence, but the bottom line is that I believe in independence just because I do. In essence, I consider it my birthright to live in a self-determining country.

The current devolution settlement is not my final destination, but I voted yes-yes with great pride in the 1997 referendum. Scotland changed and changed for ever and for the better. In day-to-day life, I am a pragmatist—we must do the best with what we have and with what is on offer.

There is much talk about respect and positive relationships, which all sounds a bit like marriage guidance counselling to me. Words are important—perhaps more so to women than to men—but words without actions are meaningless. The devil is always in the detail.

The Calman report contains much that is positive and consensus exists about a range of discrete and worthy issues, such as powers over drink-driving, speed limits and air-guns, on which I have campaigned in my constituency. Of course, we could have made much progress on those issues, but for the previous Labour United Kingdom Government’s intransigence.

It is a great irony that those who—unlike me—believe in UK plc are at the vanguard of Calman’s tax proposals, which would only exacerbate the prospect of conflict. Even if the Scottish Government and the UK Government were of the same political colour, assessing Scotland’s tax yield and by how much the Scottish block grant should be reduced would be complex, divisive and unworkable.

Many of my colleagues have quoted eminent economists. I will add a quote from Professor Drew Scott, Ronald MacDonald, Neil Kay and Rod Cross, who say:

“the fiscal reforms proposed by the Calman Commission are at best an opportunity missed and at worst a recipe for economic instability in the future.”

The Calman proposals would give the Scottish Government influence over a maximum of 20 per cent of its finances—the same as Scottish local authorities have over their funding via council tax.

That situation would not advance transparency or political accountability. There is strength in simplicity, and fiscal responsibility involves spending what we raise. When talking about finances, the Government's responsibility is to advance our social contract between the people and the Government. People want to know what they pay, to which Government, and what they receive in return. They want financial responsibility that works.

Robert Brown: Does Angela Constance accept that her proposition about the Parliament raising what it spends differs slightly from Michael Matheson's proposition that the Parliament should raise all its revenues and remit to Westminster its bit? Which of the two scenarios does she support?

Angela Constance: That is a bit of a Hobson's choice for a nationalist and I have already nailed my colours to the mast and painted my face blue. The devil is always in the detail. Countries throughout the world use many forms of financial responsibility or fiscal autonomy, such as the Basque model. In dealing with the day-to-day business of practical politics, I just want something that moves Scotland forward simply, fairly and comprehensively. I note that the Steel commission went further than the Calman commission did.

Yesterday's *Scotsman* contained an interesting article by Gerry Hassan, who drew historical parallels between the Calman commission and the Scottish Constitutional Convention, which Derek Brownlee spoke about. Gerry Hassan said that the Constitutional Convention was comparatively tame and cautious and that the consequential Scotland Act 1998 was much bolder and much more radical. That is where we are at. We now need a bolder step—we need to move on from Calman and we need comprehensive and sound financial responsibility.

I will speak briefly about the Liberal party's amendment, which mentions political reform. I appeal to the Liberals: if they are going to the effort of having a referendum and primary legislation, please could they do so on something that is a bit more radical than the alternative vote? AV's benefits would be only marginal and it would be completely out of step with the more proportional systems for elections to local authorities and to the Parliament. If we have a referendum on the voting system for Westminster elections, perhaps the Liberal Democrats will reconsider their stance on a referendum on Scotland's constitutional future.

10:54

George Foulkes (Lothians) (Lab): I welcome the Pauline conversion of the Conservative party to enthusiasm for devolution and particularly that

of Annabel Goldie and Murdo Fraser, whom I remember as stalwarts of both no campaigns—in 1979 and 1997—[*Interruption.*] Perhaps not Murdo.

Murdo Fraser: I gently remind Lord Foulkes that I was 13 in 1979 and that, sadly, I was involved in no campaigning of any sort.

George Foulkes: That is absolutely true. I profoundly apologise. It was only the older ones—the dear, but departed-from-the-chamber Annabel Goldie and, of course, David McLetchie—

David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con): I'm quite young, too.

George Foulkes: I suppose that the Conservatives now realise that this is the only Parliament in which they can get more than one Scottish representative. They have come round to being enthusiastic about the Scottish Parliament.

I am not surprised by the ready co-operation between the Tories and the Tartan Tories—the SNP. We now see the latter coming out in their true light. I include in that remark the so-called blue-faced lady whom I have just followed and whom I greatly respect. The co-operation between the Tories and the Tartan Tories in the Scottish Parliament sees the Tories—the real Conservatives—propping up the Scottish Administration.

Angela Constance: Will the member give way?

George Foulkes: Not just now.

Year zero was not 6 May 2010 or even May 2007—

Margo MacDonald: 1314.

George Foulkes: Yes, indeed. Not even 1314. Good co-operation existed between Holyrood and Westminster from 1999 onwards. I will give an important example from my experience as Minister of State for Scotland. Helen Liddell, who was then Secretary of State for Scotland, asked me to take particular responsibility for co-operation between the two Parliaments—

Members: Oh, no!

George Foulkes: Members should wait a minute. I think even old Mike Rumbles will like this.

I had regular meetings with Cathy Jamieson, Margaret Curran and Malcolm Chisholm. They were not always co-operative, but I have an example of our co-operation: the Proceeds of Crime Bill. I was one of the ministers who was responsible for piloting the bill through the House of Commons, particularly during the committee stage. When the bill was first introduced, its provisions did not extend to Scotland. I took the initiative and suggested to the Scottish ministers

that the bill should extend to Scotland. I consulted the then Lord Advocate, Colin Boyd, and the Scottish ministers, including Cathy Jamieson, who I am sure will confirm that. As a result, we changed the bill substantially all the way through and all its provisions were extended to Scotland. As a result, Scottish drug baron money is being seized and invested in communities that are affected by drugs. Kenny MacAskill—yesterday's unlikely rebel—regularly commends the measures in what is now the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 and their effect on Scotland. That is one of many examples of the co-operation that took place.

That said, since 2007, one factor has changed the relationship between Holyrood and Westminster. I refer not to "The X-Factor" but to what my colleague Frank McAveety calls "The Eck-Factor". For the past three years, Alex Salmond has taken every opportunity to promote and further grievances between Edinburgh and London. Again and again, including at First Minister's question time, we hear him say, "the London Government". Indeed, we heard it from an SNP back bencher today. I say to the SNP that the London Government is run by a man called Boris Johnson and it governs London. The UK Government is based in Westminster and is a coalition, as we know.

It is only now that the SNP tartan Tories are coming out in their real light.

Angela Constance: Does Lord Foulkes not accept that what holds Scotland back is his attitude in harking back to the past—whatever his interpretation of the past is—and using politically sectarian language? Given the Labour party's political blindness to negotiating with others, should he not accept responsibility for the fact that it was you guys who gave Dave the keys to number 10?

George Foulkes: No. As I said in an intervention on Annabel Goldie, the coalition will not last. It is doomed to failure. We hear about fiscal powers and fiscal responsibility but, when I put the question to Derek Brownlee, he had no answer. No other member has put forward an alternative to the proposal for fiscal responsibility that is included in Calman; not one member, least of all the minister. The coalition parties will find that there is no easy answer to the question. The Liberal-Conservative alliance will discover the reality of the pressures of Government. When the Tories revert to type, as inevitably they will; when the mask drops and they are found to be looking after their millionaire friends, many of whom are in the Cabinet and most of whom are old Etonians, we will see that the coalition will not last.

As far as Scotland is concerned, and as far as the Labour party is concerned, the Scottish elections cannot come too soon.

11:00

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): From his speech, I suspect that Lord Foulkes may have opted out of the respect agenda.

We have heard much about the Calman commission, but no UK party gave a ringing endorsement to all its recommendations on fiscal powers. That is the case, no matter how much one party might wish to rewrite history. That said, every party—including the party of Scottish independence, the SNP—believes in greater fiscal powers for the Scottish Parliament.

I turn to mutual respect. Every party must be able to express their views on further fiscal powers in an open, considered and respectful manner. There is a responsibility on all parties to do so. Scotland is moving beyond Calman and it is important that we do that in an inclusive way. Calman's fiscal proposals revolve around personal income tax rates. As the proposals currently stand, the UK Government would reduce income tax rates at every level by 10 per cent and decrease the Scottish block grant by a corresponding level. If Scotland wanted to reverse the cuts to our block grant, the Scottish Government would have to disapply the 10 per cent UK cut in order to maintain current income levels.

I have serious issues in relation to those proposals. For instance, how would the UK Exchequer estimate the amount of money that would be raised in Scotland in the coming financial year through income tax? Of course, in order to calculate Scotland's block grant for any financial year, any cash reduction would need to be estimated in advance. What procedures would be put in place to adjust the cash that is given to the Scottish Government in subsequent financial years should the UK Government underestimate the tax that it would collect in Scotland? Would we see a corresponding cut in income to Scotland from London in the following financial year? If so, would that be fair to Scotland, given that the lower tax take may be due to a UK Government mishandling of the economy? That is a very real concern, given the current state of the UK economy and the UK's financial predicament.

Furthermore, given the expenditure limits that the UK Government places on the Scottish Parliament, which were exposed most infamously in the discovery of the £180 million fossil fuel levy that Scotland has had denied to it thus far, would any additional tax take through growth from UK Treasury forecasts actually be forthcoming to the Scottish Parliament and a Scottish Treasury? Would any increased national insurance contributions that result from growth in the economy be forthcoming to the Scottish Parliament? The great fear is that tinkering with fiscal powers, as Calman proposes, may be used

by English MPs as a Trojan horse to reduce funding to Scotland in forthcoming years, year after year. I am not saying that that will happen, but it is a very real fear.

Despite all those issues, Calman's fiscal powers are important in one vital aspect: they have created consensus between the UK parties and the SNP. The consensus is not the Calman report itself—after all, the proposals are not set in stone—but that we all want further empowerment in terms of fiscal powers for the Scottish Parliament. That is the consensus that we have in the chamber today. I want full fiscal powers within an independent Scotland. I passionately believe that that is best for us all. I want the Scottish people to vote on the proposal in an independence referendum. I also believe that it is for the Scottish Parliament to decide whether the Scottish people get a vote on the matter. That said, if the next step in Scotland's financial relationship with the UK falls short of independence but delivers further fiscal powers, let us ensure that those powers are as empowering as possible for this place and for Scotland.

Other members have referenced the Steel commission, about which many of my Liberal Democrat colleagues are supportive. The commission said:

"The Scottish Parliament should be given responsibility for all taxes except those reserved to the UK"

and that it

"should have the ability to vary the tax rate for each of the 'devolved' taxes."

In other words: purely devolved taxes for devolved services and purely reserved taxes for reserved services. The commission also suggested that devolved taxes could include income and corporation tax. The Steel commission envisaged that taxes for devolved services should be entirely designed and set by the Scottish Parliament—which is in direct contrast with Calman. The Steel commission allows for a progressive devolved taxation, with the ability to choose personal allowance levels for that system. The commission also believed that the Scottish Government should be given borrowing powers.

The Steel commission does not provide the solution that I advocate, and I will continue to push for independence, but its findings demonstrate that the fiscal elements of Calman have substantial inadequacies, not just as far as the party of independence is concerned, but for the other parties, which believe in the United Kingdom. We have all exposed those inadequacies—that has been done here this morning.

I want a financial framework that has been designed in Scotland and which allows all cash that has been raised in Scotland to go directly to

the Scottish Parliament. That means income tax, national insurance, corporation tax and criminal fines imposed in Scottish courts going not to the UK Exchequer, but to a Scottish Exchequer—and, of course, oil revenues. All those powers and more remain missing—and let us not forget that this Parliament cannot borrow one single penny.

Short of independence, the relationship that we should have is one where we sign a cheque to the UK Exchequer for reserved areas—a block grant to Westminster. Let the British parties decide whether they wish to sign a cheque for nuclear weapons, illegal wars or subsidising the London Olympic games. Short of independence, that would be a move in the correct direction, although that is merely my opinion. I prefer independence. We have heard several opinions today, but one thing is clear: all those opinions take us far beyond Calman in empowering the Parliament in terms of financial independence.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): I call Margo MacDonald. You can have five minutes.

11:06

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): Oh, thank you, Presiding Officer.

I was thinking that an alternative title for this morning's motion could have been "Half a loaf is better than no bread." Then, I came up with a better one: "Forget Calman—Uriah Heep got it right."

We will talk about the Calman proposals, as that is what the motion before us is about. It will not matter what else is going on—we will talk about Calman. What we will really be talking about, however, is the fault line that runs through Scottish politics, between those people, true Scots all of them, who, like Bob Doris, believe in independence, and the other folk—I will not embarrass them by saying their names—who believe in the union. I am not sure that they actually do believe in the union. I think there might be other forces at play.

This morning's real debate is about that fault line. The pro-union parties have to prove the superior wisdom of Scotland continuing to be part of a political and economic union that the United Kingdom's Prime Minister has described as all but "bankrupt", "broken" and "bust". What is the argument for remaining in this union, if that is how the Prime Minister describes it? Unionists are members whose first loyalty, or greater emotional attachment, is to their party, rather than to Scotland.

Mike Rumbles: That is not true. Will Margo MacDonald take an intervention?

Margo MacDonald: In a minute.

Those members must show that there is no alternative other than to remain as a region of the United Kingdom economy that cannot ever reasonably aspire to have a better rate of business start-ups, a better growth rate, better health statistics, better housing or better transport links than the best-performing regions of the United Kingdom. Why can we just get a wee bit better, but not aspire to be the best?

Mike Rumbles: I thank Margo for giving way. To say that members who believe in the union between Scotland and the other nations of the United Kingdom have a greater interest in their own party is completely wrong. I ask her to withdraw her remark.

Margo MacDonald: I am sorry if I have offended members who think that that is what I implied—I did not. I am trying to be as honest as I can about many people whose contributions to the Parliament I respect. Their greater, deeper loyalty—the one that they perhaps understand better—is their loyalty to their party, rather than to their country. That is because they have been able to indulge the one, rather than the other. We can talk about that another time, however.

We hear calls for the findings and recommendations of the Calman commission to be adopted. Why? Because it might be a little better for this Parliament to take more responsibility for our decisions on health, education and social policies. But why not full responsibility? Why not responsibility for pensions and benefits? Are we really so lacking in natural, manufactured and human resources that we cannot do as Denmark, Sweden, Iceland, Norway and Ireland do—to name only five countries that have experienced the same economic storms and financial tsunamis as Scotland? The Governments and people of those countries are making the most of what they have in terms of resources and capacity to reboot their economies to a pace and programme that suits their needs, as different communities. They will all perform differently. That is not to say that one will perform better than the others.

As is glaringly obvious, not only are there now two different economies on either side of the border; there are also two communities, or countries, which expressed their differences in their votes at the general election. That was not all about money. It is about the difference in the communal approach to social policies. If those policies are to be delivered differently, Scotland needs a different, customised delivery mechanism, and it cannot have that without sovereignty or independence.

We have heard much about respect. Michael Matheson, in his curate's egg of a speech, was correct on respect, but he was wrong about the motivation on the part of the Tory and Lib Dem people in London for giving Scots more responsibility. They are not doing that because they have suddenly decided that we are worthy of it. I am sure that lots of them have thought that for ages. They are playing us like fish on a hook. They are being a lot more fly at managing us.

Scotland's politicians, even good ones such as Gavin Brown, will have to face the fact that the retention of power over the entire United Kingdom is what motivates Westminster and what has motivated successive Governments. They have been going for 1,000 years, and they know how to operate power—and Westminster is operating us.

We should have a modernised, new co-operation or union, or a confederation, if that is what is needed—I have no objection to that—but let us not talk about respect without equality.

11:12

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): This has been a good debate, with a lot of interesting contributions, and it will bear rereading afterwards. It is a great pity, however, about the jarring note that we have heard from Margo MacDonald, who seemed to suggest that there is a difference of attitude, philosophy and commitment on the part of those who believe in independence compared to the rest of us, who want either the union in something like its present form or, as we Liberal Democrats wish, a more federal relationship between the countries of this island.

I will cast my eye back over the general election that we have just experienced. I confess to being an old hand at elections, and indeed partnership agreements—I have gone through quite a lot of them in my time in politics. However, this month's election and its aftermath were like no other. It was a series of events that kept the nation—young and old alike, but particularly the young—glued to their television sets for weeks, watching politics. It is not entirely fanciful to describe it as being like the world cup finals, with the final being decided on penalties. The coalition negotiations were just as enthralling as the election itself.

It was a cathartic experience, and it went a long way towards cleansing the body politic of the festering sores that were created by the Iraq war, by the MP expenses scandals and by the bankers' bonuses saga. In my view, the three party leaders were a credit to themselves, to their parties and to Britain. Gordon Brown was dignified in the manner of his going, and Nick Clegg and David Cameron struck exactly the right tone in the manner of their coming. Their mood music was and remains one

of inclusion, seriousness, fairness and, above all, a new type of politics. The electorate did not award the laurel crown to any one of the parties, but expected them to work together to deal with one of the most serious crises since the war. That applies across the UK, and it applies to the relations between the UK Government and the Scottish Government.

I was struck by the jarring tone of the opening speech from Labour. If the new politics is in its honeymoon period—how long that will last is questionable, I accept—the old politics is alive and well in the Labour Party. What emerged was a yawning chasm between the approach that Pauline McNeill took in her opening speech and that taken by Labour's two Westminster members on exactly what to do with Calman—and I congratulate Cathy Jamieson and Margaret Curran on their successes.

Members: Hear, hear.

Robert Brown: Labour cannot disguise that yawning chasm, and Margaret Curran and Cathy Jamieson's attempts to move the debate forward simply emphasised that.

I should mention the question of a veto for the Scottish Government. Although it is perfectly true that the coalition Government wants to engage proactively with the Scottish Government and to look at the implications and detail of the Calman recommendations, there is no question of a veto by the Scottish Government, and the Secretary of State for Scotland, Danny Alexander, made that very clear.

I want to say a couple of things about Calman. The Calman commission recommendations will, in essence, be implemented, and by a Liberal Democrat Secretary of State for Scotland at that. The reinvention of the Labour Party seems to encompass the issuing of dire threats if the new Government does not deliver on Calman, but the reality is that it was often the Labour Party that seemed least enthusiastic and most timid about further constitutional reform. Mike Rumbles has already commented on the speed of engagement on the issue to produce the best package, as promised by Danny Alexander.

My next point is about the basis for the approach. If I may say so to my SNP colleagues, there is a narrow line between criticising and taking up certain issues that arise out of Calman, which is entirely legitimate, and damning the whole enterprise altogether. One or two members went a little bit over the top on that. There is an issue around the principles that the Scottish Government will bring to that debate, and it cannot dodge that point. Is it about going for full fiscal independence, which is independence under another name and is not part of Calman's

proposals, or is it about engaging with what Calman ought to mean, which is greater responsibility for raising the Scottish Parliament's income lying with the Parliament?

I was interested to hear Bob Doris's close examination of the Steel commission report, in which I take an interest, because I was the vice-chair of the commission. I recommend to other members many of its conclusions and analysis.

The Prime Minister's visit to Scotland and the fair consideration that has been given to financial issues, such as the fossil fuel levy, have rather disconcerted the First Minister and blown away his game plan. No one expects anyone to abandon their beliefs or views on the constitutional issue, but it is not enough to gurn about cuts—that does not wash in the current financial climate. In fact, it has not washed since the UK Government had to step in to bail out Scotland's two largest banks. Nor does the idea of an independent Scotland as the salvation for all our problems stand up when an independent Ireland, formerly extolled as part of the Celtic arc of prosperity, has had to slash public sector pay and impose emergency taxation far beyond anything that has been suggested here, and it is still in difficulties.

The respect agenda goes both ways, and it involves the First Minister recognising the reality of the new UK Government and the need for him to play his part in getting the deficit under control. Fiona Hyslop did not give us any indication of the Scottish Government's part in that.

We live in tumultuous times, and the country could still be blown off course, as the stock markets have indicated during the past few days. This is not the time for constitutional brinkmanship on the part of the First Minister, or indeed on the part of the UK Government. Whatever our perspective, Calman is an opportunity. It is not perfect—no government arrangement is perfect—but it widens the options and possibilities for us all. It focuses on the financial and economic tools that we need to battle our way out of recession, and it makes demands on us all to work together in the national interest. That was the will of the people at the general election, and in a democratic society the people are often wiser than they are given credit for by the chattering classes.

11:18

Paul Martin (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab): Many of the contributions from Tory and Liberal members of the new coalition have lectured us about the importance of welcoming a positive and constructive relationship with the Westminster Government. Are those members suggesting that they have a monopoly on co-operating with devolved Governments? There is more to working

with devolved Governments than the Prime Minister's ministerial vehicle arriving outside the Scottish Parliament building.

I remind those members of the old saying that actions speak louder than words. As George Foulkes said, we are the party who, within a year of being in Government, introduced the legislation that formed the Scottish Parliament, and we provided the Parliament with record funding year after year, so I make no apologies for saying that we will not take lectures from any other parties on holding Governments and this Parliament to account where necessary.

I also remind the Conservative party that, in the past, it covertly and overtly opposed the Scottish Parliament and the Calman commission. I only have to quote a well-informed article written by the one and only Alan Cochrane of *The Daily Telegraph*, who reported last year that

"Official Tory backing for the extra powers provoked Lord (Michael) Forsyth of Drumlean, the former Scottish Secretary, to attack as 'appeasement' the actions of those Unionists who gave their support to Calman."

I am more than happy to give way to any Tory member who wants to correct Lord Forsyth and oppose that very well-developed argument on the split within the Tory party.

Derek Brownlee: I am delighted to take the opportunity to remind Mr Martin that we have supported devolution since the referendum result in 1997. Thankfully, Lord Forsyth now agrees with us.

Paul Martin: That was an easy opportunity to refute totally what Lord Forsyth said, and Derek Brownlee missed it.

The recent election results highlighted the public's support for the principles of devolution and its rejection of the SNP's separatist agenda.

Pauline McNeill was correct to mention the minimum wage, and the Scottish Labour Party and the Labour Party in the UK make no apologies for delivering it. I recall security guards in my constituency working for 60p an hour. We brought in the minimum wage to ensure that such abuse of people's employment conditions did not take place. We make no apologies for that.

In essence, our amendment to Annabel Goldie's motion call for the Calman commission's recommendations to be implemented. The Calman commission report is common sense in many areas and provides clarity. Members from the other parties have referred to the co-operative agenda on a number of occasions, and I refer them to recommendation 4.7, which refers to what would be expected of UK and Scottish ministers. They

"should commit to respond positively to requests to appear before committees of the others' Parliament."

It also refers to the First Minister appearing before the Westminster Parliament. So when we talk about the co-operative agenda, the template for that is already set out in the Calman commission report.

Linda Fabiani: Earlier, I talked about the tax proposals in the final Calman report, so could the Labour members point to where the independent group of experts and eminent economists that Wendy Alexander referred to on television actually recommended such a proposal? I cannot find it anywhere on public record.

Paul Martin: The Calman commission report is probably the most comprehensive report that has ever been brought before the Scottish Parliament, and it came from the Calman commission's interrogation at every opportunity of the evidence that was placed before it. Many of Calman's recommendations, including that to devolve the regulation of air-guns to the Scottish Parliament, have been the subject of MSP campaigns. I know that Margaret Curran campaigned for such regulation to be allowed for in the Scottish Parliament.

We agree that the Scottish Parliament elections should be administered by the Scottish Parliament. However, I hope that we can do that on a cross-party basis and not in the style that prevails in Westminster, where members have secured themselves a five-year term. That is the kind of co-operative and forward-thinking agenda that is being adopted by the new Westminster Government.

Margo MacDonald: Will the member give way?

Paul Martin: Presiding Officer, I do not have time. I am usually more than happy to give way to Margo MacDonald.

The task was to find out how the Scottish Parliament might better serve the people of Scotland and improve the quality of their lives, and to find out how Scotland might become more financially accountable. Our amendment makes clear our position on the way forward. I call on members to support Pauline McNeill's amendment.

11:24

The Minister for Parliamentary Business (Bruce Crawford): I am pleased to be able to offer some closing remarks for the Government on the motion and amendments that are before us today. There have been many thoughtful speeches from throughout the chamber, some of which I have agreed with and some of which I have disagreed with. I, too, congratulate Cathy

Jamieson and Margaret Curran on their election to the House of Commons. I hope that they spend as much time as possible on those green benches at Westminster and I hope that they are nice and warm for them.

As my colleague Fiona Hyslop has made clear, the Scottish Government is keen to establish an open and productive relationship with the UK Government. Indeed, since the formation of the UK coalition Government, the Scottish Government has been working to build just such a relationship, founded on the principles of mutual respect and parity of esteem. The Scottish ministers have demonstrated their intention to work together with the UK Government for the good of Scotland and to build a positive dialogue with UK ministers. In that regard, I welcome the words in the Conservative motion that recognise the importance of a positive and constructive Government-to-Government working relationship. Nevertheless, as Fiona Hyslop, Cathy Jamieson, Michael Matheson and others have said, deeds and actions, not words, will ultimately be the true test of any relationship.

The UK Government's legislative programme, which was set out on Tuesday in the Queen's speech, is an early chance for us to consider areas in which we might have opportunities to build a strong relationship. Of the 24 bills that were mentioned in the Queen's speech, five are likely to require the consent of the Scottish Parliament. I will constructively and positively liaise with the new UK Government on those bills, as I did with the previous Government. My relationship with David Cairns and Ann McKechin was well developed and very positive. Yes, we faced challenges and there were difficulties, but not all of our relationship with the previous UK Government was difficult—there were areas on which we agreed.

The Queen's speech also introduced the prospect of a new Scotland bill, which demonstrates the fact that the UK Government recognises the validity of the Scottish Parliament attaining more devolved responsibilities. The issue is also covered in the Conservative motion. However, I hope that the chamber will accept our argument that the position that is agreed by Parliament at decision time would be strengthened with the insertion of the words "and fiscal responsibility issues" from the Government's amendment. It is now almost universally recognised that the current financial settlement does not provide the Scottish Parliament with the responsibility or the necessary mechanisms to boost long-term competitiveness or to respond to economic shocks. In short, Scotland's lack of financial responsibility has real long-term consequences. For instance, the Scottish Government has no scope to borrow prudently to invest in vital infrastructure projects, and neither

does it have at its disposal the full levers that are necessary to spur growth

It goes without saying that the Scottish Government firmly believes that if Scotland is to achieve its full economic potential, it must have control of the economic levers of an independent country. However, we also believe that it would be better for our economy and our country if the maximum level of fiscal responsibility were devolved to this place. In contrast, Labour's position of absolute support for the Calman financial package does not recognise the reality of where we are now. The debate has moved on but, judging by their amendment, Labour members seem to be stuck in a time warp. They seem to be stuck in a time before the election campaign—indeed, in a time before their own former Government's response to the Calman report, which rejected many of its elements. My colleague Fiona Hyslop, in her opening speech, rightly highlighted and drew attention to the flaws and dangers that are inherent in the Calman financial proposals.

The Conservative motion rightly makes a point of highlighting the need for a positive and constructive relationship between the Scottish and UK Governments. The Calman financial proposals, as they stand, would put the potential for conflict and disagreement at the very heart of intergovernmental relationships. Derek Brownlee made that point well, as did Angela Constance. Angela Constance quoted Gerry Hassan, who wrote an insightful article in *The Guardian* yesterday. Referring to the Calman proposals, he wrote:

"Sadly, though, the tax powers are not as straightforward or inviting as they look. They could be deeply damaging to Scotland's public spending and tax take, and encourage a culture of conflict between the Scottish and UK governments. They do not even advance fiscal autonomy very far, would not have fairness or transparency in them, and would not encourage responsibility, instead aiding conflict and disagreement. In short, they would have the potential of becoming an unpopular, detested 'tartan tax'—both north and south of the border."

The weaknesses in the Calman proposals are well illustrated—as they have been by other members this morning—by the UK Government's plans for income tax allowances and national insurance. Cathy Jamieson and Margaret Curran referred to the Calman proposals. To both of them, I say that the devil is often in the detail. Of all the Calman proposals, only 23 were accepted by the UK Government in its white paper, whereas the Scottish Government accepted 29 of them, so it is not fair to say that we were not prepared to take on board good ideas.

I turn to the proposals that have been put forward by the Liberal Democrats. I give credit where it is due—it is a very valiant attempt by the

Liberal Democrats to pretend that everything in the coalition garden is rosy. They knew, when they lodged their amendment, that it had absolutely no prospect of being supported at decision time. It is simply incredible to think that the Parliament could support—with no reservations—the whole of the new UK Government's programme, which is what the Liberal Democrat amendment asks us to do. Frankly, it is incredible that all of the Liberals in the Scottish Parliament could support the entire package of the coalition proposals.

Mike Rumbles: If the minister has read the Liberal Democrat amendment, he will know as well as I do that it says no such thing. It does not commit the Scottish Parliament to supporting every element of the coalition agreement—it does not even refer to that. It talks about plans to

“put fairness at the heart of government and deliver real benefits to the people of Scotland.”

I would have thought that the whole chamber could unite around that.

Bruce Crawford: The first part of the amendment asks us to endorse the whole of “the UK Government's programme”.

I will give Mr Rumbles one glaring example of why the Liberals should not vote for their own amendment at decision time. On 16 June 2007, in an historic vote, the Scottish Parliament voted against the renewal of Trident by 71 votes to 16, with 39 abstentions. All of the Liberals voted against renewal, but they are now committed to supporting all of the proposals in their coalition's UK programme, including proposals for a new Trident weapons system. It is, of course, their prerogative to change their minds, but they should not expect the rest of us in the Scottish Parliament, who are fundamentally opposed to the basing of weapons of mass destruction on the Clyde, meekly to do the same.

11:32

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): I echo Robert Brown's and Bruce Crawford's remarks in welcoming Cathy Jamieson and Margaret Curran back to the chamber, and I join others in congratulating them on their election to another place. We shall be sorry to lose them both in due course, but our loss will be Westminster's gain.

The debate has provided a worthwhile opportunity for us to discuss the greatly improved relationship between Her Majesty's Government and the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament. Let us be clear: the relationship was broken. In his three years as Prime Minister, Gordon Brown did not once set foot in the Scottish Parliament. By contrast, as my good friend—or, I should say, having heard his speech, my excellent

friend—Mike Rumbles reminded us, within three days of becoming Prime Minister, David Cameron was here at Holyrood and then at St Andrew's house to meet the First Minister. There could be no clearer signal of the intention of the new UK Government to have a more fruitful relationship with Scotland than did its predecessor.

The coalition Government means a much-needed fresh start for our country. The programme for government is based on the principles of freedom, fairness and responsibility, and it includes action to tackle Labour's recession, to sort out the banks, to get business back on its feet, to restore our civil liberties, to devolve power to individuals and communities, to promote a green economy, to protect the national health service and to reform our political system. It is a radical and ambitious programme, which is exactly what our country needs at this difficult time.

Unaccustomed as I am to saying nice things about the Liberal Democrats, I must praise the constructive role that they have played and are playing in the new Government. We particularly welcome the constructive role that is being played by the excellent David Laws as chief secretary to the Treasury. We know that the Government has difficult decisions to make, and it is helpful to have our Liberal Democrat friends on board to share the responsibility. David Laws is the man who received the famous letter from Liam Byrne that has been referred to throughout the debate. As far as Mr Byrne's career is concerned, I suspect that it will go down as one of the shortest suicide notes in history.

It is a bit rich for Des McNulty and Margaret Curran to drone on about the spectre of cuts in the public sector, as if somehow the budget deficit emerged overnight on 6 May 2010. Let us not forget that the sole reason for any cuts that we now face is Labour's mismanagement of the British economy and its ruination of the public finances. Labour left us with the worst set of public finances in the G20. Any cuts that we now face are Labour's legacy. They are not Tory cuts or Tory-Liberal cuts or even SNP cuts; they are solely Labour cuts, and we will not let Des McNulty, Margaret Curran or anyone else forget that basic fact.

As Annabel Goldie set out, the coalition Government is determined to develop a positive relationship with the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament. That ambition was signalled at the outset by the willingness of David Cameron and Danny Alexander to engage with the First Minister and his ministerial team. I understand that that initial meeting has been followed up by a number of other contacts at ministerial level. As is mentioned in our motion, and as Gavin Brown

highlighted, the issue of Scotland's share of the climate change levy is actively being considered.

The most important part of the new Government's programme as it relates to Scotland is probably in connection with the proposals of the Calman commission on enhancing devolution. In that regard, the intent of the coalition Government is clear: we will introduce legislation to implement proposals from the Calman commission that will pass to Scotland and the Scottish Parliament responsibility in a wide range of additional areas, including, crucially, powers to vary taxes and take on a greater share of financial responsibility.

Over the years, many in my party have argued for this Parliament to have a greater degree of financial accountability. The Calman commission certainly did not go as far as to propose full fiscal autonomy, but its proposals are an important step in improving the accountability of this institution and of the ministers of the Scottish Government.

Margo MacDonald: The Calman commission's proposals are an important step towards more responsibility. Are they an important step towards proper, full fiscal responsibility?

Murdo Fraser: I disagree with Margo MacDonald. I do not believe that the full fiscal autonomy that she sets out is compatible with the maintenance of the United Kingdom, so I reject that approach.

There are sceptics, including members of the Labour Party, who suggest that moves are afoot to water down Calman's financial proposals—we heard such scaremongering from Pauline McNeill. They say that we are prepared to have further discussions around the financial powers, which they regard as some form of retreat. I gently remind Labour that it was in power at Westminster for 13 years. If it wanted to devolve more powers to the Scottish Parliament, it had ample opportunity to do so. We have been in power for three weeks, and we will look carefully at what has been proposed.

As Derek Brownlee set out, it is time to look again at the Calman tax proposals, not least because the Scottish Government has approached us in a constructive manner and asked us to do so. As Fiona Hyslop fairly said, some of the tax changes that the coalition Government has proposed, not least the increase in personal thresholds, will have an impact on the Calman tax proposals. We are prepared to listen, but far from retreating on tax-varying powers, it is more likely, as Derek Brownlee said, that the direction of travel will be towards enhancing and extending those powers.

I welcome the new engagement that the Scottish Government is having with the coalition Government. Alex Salmond has dropped his usual

negative rhetoric about Westminster and about the dreaded Tories, which is an important shift, because the respect agenda cuts both ways: it requires respect and co-operation on both sides. In that spirit, I welcome the tone of the speeches of Fiona Hyslop, Bruce Crawford and many SNP back benchers. We are keen to consider issues such as Scottish ministerial representation as part of UK delegations to Europe and elsewhere. We are happy to have constructive discussions on such matters, which the previous Labour Government never was. That is a stark contrast.

We are now seeing a new start for Scotland and a new era of co-operation between the Scottish and British Governments, which is a dramatic improvement on what went before, when Labour and the SNP were at daggers drawn. I believe that Scotland will be the winner from that new approach, which is why I am so pleased to support the motion in the name of Annabel Goldie.

Scottish Executive Question Time

General Questions

Driving Licences (Drug Misuse)

1. Margaret Smith (Edinburgh West) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive how many people had their driving licences suspended and how many licences were revoked in the last year as a result of drug misuse. (S3O-10701)

The Minister for Community Safety (Fergus Ewing): In 2008-09, there were 312 disqualifications for convictions for driving while unfit through drink or drugs, which resulted in an average disqualification of 22 months. In the same period, there were 51 disqualifications for convictions for being in charge of a motor vehicle while unfit through drink or drugs. The average disqualification was for 18 months. We do not hold data on how many of those convictions related to drugs.

Margaret Smith: The minister is aware that a fatal accident in my constituency inspired my question. I am concerned that the number of people who lose their licence and are convicted of drug-driving offences is the tip of the iceberg. What liaison has the Scottish Government had, and what liaison will it have, with the United Kingdom Government on the development of a breathalyser-style test for drugs? Is he content with the established processes that police officers currently use in trying to ascertain whether a drug-driving offence has taken place? My concern is that, in the absence of a test, those processes are underdeveloped.

Fergus Ewing: I am aware of the background case to which Margaret Smith refers. It is plainly an offence to drive while impaired by drugs. If the police believe a driver to be impaired, they can require him or her to submit to a preliminary impairment test. If a driver fails it, he or she will be arrested and taken back to a police station, where blood and urine will be taken for analysis.

Rightly, the police take such matters extremely seriously, but we do not have a device equivalent to the breathalyser that can detect the presence of drugs in the body of the driver of a car. The Home Office is leading work to develop roadside drug-testing devices that are the equivalent of breathalysers. It is a difficult process because of the plethora of drugs involved. We welcome the Home Office's work and are keen to see it progress. We will deal with the UK Government on the matter in the spirit to which Murdo Fraser referred at the end of the previous debate.

Council Tax Collection

2. Stuart McMillan (West of Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what assistance it can provide to local authorities in collecting council tax payments. (S3O-10725)

The Minister for Parliamentary Business (Bruce Crawford): Local authorities have a statutory duty under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to collect council tax, and they have a wide range of measures at their disposal to help them to do so. The Scottish Government encourages local authorities to use those measures in order to maximise their collection rates.

Stuart McMillan: The minister may not be aware that the *Greenock Telegraph* recently ran an article that claimed that some £600,000 of council tax was unpaid by council staff and another that claimed that some £22.5 million of council tax had been unpaid in Inverclyde since 1993. I fully accept that there will be many legitimate reasons for non-payment of council tax, and I would not expect anyone to keep council tax records that went back five, 10 or 15 years. However, is there a mechanism whereby best practice can be disseminated to local authorities, either by the Scottish Government or through the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, with a view to bringing in higher levels of payment of council tax, or whatever form of local authority tax will be in place in the future, on an annual basis?

Bruce Crawford: Whether we are talking about Inverclyde Council or any other council in Scotland, local authorities have a range of measures at their disposal to assist with the collection of outstanding arrears of council tax, including the ability to offer individual payment terms, to use summary warrants and sheriff officers or to make arrestment from wages, benefits and bank accounts. It is obviously not in the interest of any local authority to fail to collect council tax, as that would have a significant impact on its ability to finance local services.

Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP): Does the minister agree that many of those problems would be obviated if we could find a way of collecting such revenue directly from people's salaries? Perhaps we could call it a local income tax.

Bruce Crawford: I entirely agree with Alasdair Morgan. A local income tax would obviously be a much preferable system for Scotland to adopt.

Road Safety

3. Aileen Campbell (South of Scotland) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to encourage road safety behaviour among young people. (S3O-10707)

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

"Scotland's road safety framework to 2020", which was launched in June 2009, sets out our road safety commitments for all, including young people. They include continued funding for Road Safety Scotland to develop new innovative road safety education resources; a commitment to influence young people's attitudes to road safety and future driving behaviour before they get behind the wheel; and support for the implementation of the safe road user award qualification. We also intend shortly to undertake a national debate with young drivers, their parents and guardians and representative groups to explore young driver issues and concerns.

Aileen Campbell: Is the minister aware of the plans by South Lanarkshire Council to reduce the school crossing patrols in Lanark at St Mary's and Lanark primary schools? Does he agree that safe crossings near school are an important part of instilling good road safety practices among children and young people, and that such council decisions should be taken only after full consultation, ensuring that the safety of children is not put at risk?

Stewart Stevenson: I had not previously been aware of, but have had my attention drawn to, the campaign that the children at St Mary's primary school have initiated. I very much welcome the engagement of those most directly affected by the withdrawal of lollipop ladies and gentlemen. It is of course a matter for the local authority, but I take a close interest in the issue as the legislative framework is created by the Government. I wish the pupils at St Mary's primary school every success.

Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): Will the minister outline what exactly that legislative framework is, on what basis school crossing patrols should be in place and whether there are criteria for the development of such crossings?

Stewart Stevenson: This is an area in which there is a crossover between reserved and devolved powers, which creates some difficulties. I have made some minor changes to the environment. If there are specific proposals that people feel we should pursue, I will be happy to engage on the issue. At the moment, we are not actively considering any changes.

Asylum Seekers (Detention)

4. Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): To ask the Scottish Executive what progress is being made in working with the United Kingdom Border Agency to develop alternatives to the detention of asylum seekers. (S3O-10689)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Michael Russell):

Scotland has been leading the way on ending the detention of children and families, and we are working with the UK Border Agency and Glasgow City Council, in particular to develop the family returns project, which has been very promising.

Patrick Harvie: The end to detention of children at Dungavel will be very welcome, but I doubt that any member wants to see the people huddled off instead to Harmondsworth or Yarl's Wood, as has been the case in the past. Will the minister impress on the UK Border Agency and the UK Government the importance of providing alternative accommodation in the communities that people have been living in, so that they can have the emotional support of classmates, friends and neighbours and, crucially, the legal support of their own lawyers? If asylum seekers do not have access to their own lawyers, there can be no justice in the asylum system.

Michael Russell: I agree with the member that the detention of children is thoroughly wrong and should not have continued for as long as it did. The move by the coalition Government is welcome and long overdue. Other ministers of this Government and I regularly spoke to ministers of the previous Labour Government but, although there were often warm words, there was no action. It is action that counts.

We need to ensure that the policy of detention of children is eliminated wherever we can have influence, and I will continue to pursue that line. I am sure that members who have more influence with the present UK Government than I have will take that to heart—to be fair to them, they, too, have pursued the issue vigorously.

Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): When the minister speaks to the UK agencies, will he raise the subject of MSPs representing asylum seekers in Dungavel and outwith? When I phoned the Home Office about a case yesterday, the officials told me that they do not deal with MSPs and hung up the phone. The issue is causing great distress to the asylum seekers whom we are representing. Will he raise that subject?

Michael Russell: I raised the issue in my previous post, and I can confirm to the member the thoroughly up-to-date piece of news that Fiona Hyslop, who is now the relevant minister, will raise it with her Westminster counterpart this very afternoon, refreshed and invigorated, I am sure, by the member's urging on the matter.

English as an Additional Language (Glasgow)

5. Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what additional resources it provides to Glasgow City

Council to recognise the pressures placed on it by the number of children and young people with English as an additional language enrolled in Glasgow educational establishments. (S3O-10645)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Michael Russell): The Scottish Government provides local authorities with funding through its local government settlement. For the period 2008 to 2011, that funding will be £35 billion. The proportion of the funding that goes to Glasgow City Council is determined by a funding formula that has been agreed with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and takes into account a variety of factors. It is then for Glasgow City Council to determine how best to meet the needs of the children and young people with English as an additional language who are enrolled in its educational establishments.

Patricia Ferguson: The minister will be aware that deprivation is one category that COSLA and the Government have recognised as relevant to the formation of budgets for local authorities. However, many of the migrants from the European accession countries are unable to qualify for certain benefits and therefore do not show up in the deprivation statistics that apply to the city. Given that Glasgow City Council employs some 130 of the 203 teachers who are specially qualified in the subject, and given that the cost to Glasgow is of supporting not just those young people but their families by providing interpreters for school events and other meetings, will the minister consider the issue in light of the fact that Glasgow's settlement this year is not the one that most of us would wish it to be?

Michael Russell: Of course, the local authority settlement is considerably better than previous settlements under previous Administrations, so I am sorry that the member remains dissatisfied.

I can say in a positive tone that we keep the subject under close review. The subject of support for pupils with English as an additional language is discussed regularly with local authorities. Indeed, a further meeting between Scottish Government officials and Glasgow City Council, which will have the issue as one of the topics, is to be held shortly.

I recognise that there is a problem of identifying total numbers, but the work that has gone on for a number of years—I am happy to include the work of the previous Administration in that—has attempted to get more robust statistics and to point services where they are most needed. By and large, those services are providing the required results. I have had meetings with a number of organisations and language groups, including some Polish associations, about their particular needs, and I stand ready to do so again.

Library Services

6. Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what action it is taking to protect library services across Scotland. (S3O-10661)

The Minister for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop): The provision of library services is a matter for local authorities. The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 places a duty on all local authorities to make adequate provision for library services within their area.

The Scottish Government supports library provision through our funding of the Scottish Library and Information Council, which is an independent advisory body for Scottish libraries of all kinds. I understand that SLIC has written to all local authorities with guidance on how to consider changes to their library services infrastructure in the current financial climate. The Scottish Government is monitoring developments through SLIC.

Ken Macintosh: Is the minister aware of the threat to library services that is posed by the pressures on local government? For example, is she aware of the proposed closure of four public libraries in Angus, of a move to term-time employment of librarians in certain areas and of a sharing of school librarians in others? How will the minister know whether a library or local authority has failed to deliver an adequate service? At that stage, how will she intervene to ensure that authorities discharge their statutory responsibilities?

Fiona Hyslop: The Government will continue to monitor the position of libraries through SLIC. In Angus, I understand that a mobile library service has been extended and that the books from the part-time libraries in Letham, Friockheim and Newtyle are being gifted to local primary schools. There are challenges, but we will continue to support local libraries. During the recession, attendance and activity at libraries have increased, so it is important that local authorities support their local libraries.

Congestion (Inverness)

7. Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con): To ask the Scottish Executive what is being done to alleviate road traffic congestion in the Inverness area. (S3O-10678)

The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): We support Highland Council's ambitious plans for growth in Inverness and the surrounding area, and we are working in partnership with it to take forward the strategic transport projects review joint action plan for continued investment. In addition, Highland Council's current single outcome

agreement includes provisions relating to green travel planning and the need to increase both public transport provision and use, and active travel.

Mary Scanlon: The main reasons for congestion in Inverness are the need for a bypass and long queues on the Kessock bridge. Could the minister give an update on progress on the Inverness bypass? How can congestion on the Kessock bridge be alleviated, given that Highland Council's plans do not include provision for a park-and-ride facility at Tore and the council cannot guarantee that such provision will be included in future plans?

Stewart Stevenson: Quite properly, the member identifies that responsibilities in this area are shared between Transport Scotland and Highland Council. There have been a number of meetings. Highland Council has a stakeholder group involving the council, British Waterways, Historic Scotland and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency especially to consider the difficult issue of how to cross the Caledonian canal and complete the link between the A82 and the A9. The group's most recent meeting took place on 11 May. I will next speak to Highland Council's leader about the subject on 16 June.

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): From Mary Scanlon's question, the minister will be aware that there is acute traffic congestion in Inverness at peak times on the Kessock bridge. That will graduate to traffic gridlock in 2012, when the Kessock bridge is resurfaced, effectively losing half its capacity. Will the minister support a mitigation package, including permanent park and ride, expansion of the Kessock roundabout and a temporary ferry service between North and South Kessock, to boost business and tourism and to aid the local community?

Stewart Stevenson: One reason why we rescheduled the resurfacing of the Kessock bridge to 2012 was that we recognised the substantial difficulties that could be created when that essential work is done. We are considering a range of options, especially traffic signal control at the roundabout on the approach to the Kessock bridge from the south. We are giving consideration to all the member's suggestions and are alive to the issue.

Rail Services (Aberdeenshire)

8. Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive, further to the announcement that 64,000 passenger journeys have been made from the reopened Laurencekirk station, a 78 per cent increase on the original estimate of 36,000, when it will bring forward the necessary funding to reopen Kintore station. (S3O-10699)

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

Consideration of the business case for a station at Kintore will take place when the technical feasibility of a station has been established. That is currently being considered through the study of proposed improvements to the Aberdeen to Inverness line.

Mike Rumbles: The minister will recognise that there was widespread delight in Laurencekirk when a previous transport minister announced funding to reopen the station there in 2006. As he begins his final year in government, will Stewart Stevenson create a similar lasting legacy for Kintore from his time as transport minister?

Stewart Stevenson: I look forward to being around to see many of the projects that the Scottish National Party Government will initiate delivered in its second term. Railway stations are a complex subject. It is important that we understand the technical feasibility of proposals. At Kintore, we have a choice between having a station that serves the current single-track line and one that can serve a dualled line. It is important that we do the technical work before coming to the conclusions that, hopefully, will lead to a station at Kintore, as the member anticipates.

Maureen Watt (North East Scotland) (SNP): When does the minister expect the Department for Transport's new passenger numbers model for anticipating usage levels at proposed new stations to be completed? Does he believe that it will make the business case for a station at Kintore more robust?

Stewart Stevenson: The model that we use in Scotland, which we share with the Department for Transport, has consistently underestimated the patronage that has resulted from the opening of new stations. Work between us and the Department for Transport is continuing. I expect that later this year we will be in a position to explore whether that delivers the expected results.

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):

Before we come to the next item of business, I know that all members in the chamber will wish to join me in welcoming to the gallery the New Zealand high commissioner, His Excellency Derek Leask. [Applause.]

First Minister's Question Time

12:00

Engagements

1. Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what engagements he has planned for the rest of the day. (S3F-2423)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): I have a range of engagements to carry forward the Government's programme for Scotland.

Iain Gray: In these difficult financial times, what would the First Minister think of a Government organisation that planned a visual identity transition—a change of name, to you and me—on which it planned to spend more than £0.5 million?

The First Minister: I am sure that Iain Gray will inform a startled chamber in his second question, but I can be absolutely certain that, as demonstrated across the range of Government departments, this Government's efficiency programme stands comparison with any. The difference, of course, is that our efficiencies have been recycled into front-line services in Scotland.

Iain Gray: The First Minister is right that he is indeed, as usual, in the dark and I intend to enlighten him. I refer to Scotland the Works—he is probably still none the wiser—which we know as Skills Development Scotland. It was set up just two years ago, at a cost of £16 million, and has now come up with this daft scheme to spend £555,000 rebranding itself. Its real job is supposed to be getting our young people into work, which could not be more important. Why is it wasting our money on this?

The First Minister: The real job of Skills Development is to get our young people into work. That is why we should all welcome the fact that it has exceeded the target of 20,000 new modern apprenticeships in Scotland. Furthermore, given that we all agree across the chamber that there is a challenge with youth unemployment in the context of the severest recession since the 1930s, while acknowledging that youth unemployment in Scotland—at around 13 per cent—is far too high, we should welcome the fact that it is four percentage points lower than across the rest of the United Kingdom. I would have thought that even Iain Gray might have given Skills Development Scotland some credit for the action that it has taken through its job action plan to ensure that so many of our young people are gaining life opportunities.

Iain Gray: I am very happy to give Skills Development Scotland credit when it spends money on what it is supposed to spend money on,

which is creating the kind of opportunities that the First Minister has elaborated on. However, those targets are not the only things that Skills Development Scotland is exceeding. As well as its visual transition strategy, Skills Development Scotland has a marketing and brand migration plan that will cost not £0.5 million but £1.68 million. As the First Minister can—probably—tell, Skills Development Scotland does not have that money spare, so it will ask the First Minister for a £500,000 top-up.

Let us not forget that the same organisation booked Paul McKenna for unemployed youngsters. Perhaps it will bring Paul McKenna back to hypnotise the First Minister into handing over that cash. Why has the First Minister still not got a grip of that organisation?

The First Minister: The Paul McKenna joke was not very effective the first time that Iain Gray told it some months ago and it is less effective now that it has been recycled. The point was made then that people did not need Paul McKenna when they had Iain Gray to send an entire Parliament to sleep.

Skills Development Scotland is getting on with the job of securing life chances for young people in Scotland. When the target of 20,000 modern apprenticeships was set in the midst of the deepest recession for generations, many people were sceptical that it could be achieved. The fact that the target has been not only achieved but exceeded is a credit to the work of Skills Development Scotland. It does no good whatsoever, when people are engaged in that vital work of gaining life chances for our young people, for that work not to be supported across the chamber as it should be.

Skills Development Scotland, by its actions, is demonstrating its commitment to young people in Scotland. At some point, the leader of the Labour Party will demonstrate a similar commitment. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): Order, Mr McNeil.

Iain Gray: From the First Minister's answer, I take it that he approves of Skills Development Scotland spending £2 million on changing its name and marketing that name change.

I well remember the meeting that the First Minister and I had, when we forced him to include in his budget the apprenticeships target that he trumpets. I well remember him asking me, "How can we possibly deliver this many apprenticeships?" We made some suggestions, the First Minister, to his credit, followed them and we achieved 20,000 apprenticeships. Perhaps the First Minister will listen to me again when I tell him

that the £2 million should be spent on more apprenticeship places and skills training.

It is the First Minister who is not too effective if he cannot get a grip of Skills Development Scotland. However, the issue is not only that organisation. Last week, he did not know about nursing jobs going; this week, his Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning had to write to parents, apologising for the shambles in our schools; and now money for skills is being spent not only on hypnotists, but on marketing mumbo-jumbo. The Government is adrift. How long will it be before the First Minister's colleagues realise that they need a rebranding—starting at the top?

The First Minister: Iain Gray will have to decide whether he wants to claim the credit for the success of the 20,000 modern apprenticeships that have been started in Scotland; that is 85 per cent up on the previous year. If that happened only because of the Labour Party's intense pressure in the Scottish Parliament, why did Labour then vote against the budget?

Iain Gray questions public spending across a range of activities. If his concern is the deep pressure across the range of public services, why on earth are so many of his own front benchers and back benchers calling for the immediate implementation of cuts? *[Interruption.]* Andy Kerr says that they are not. When I raised the issue last week, I thought that only Andy Kerr was rebelling on that point, but now I find that the Labour Party's justice spokesman is also attacking the SNP. Richard Baker stated:

"The SNP administration is, for political reasons, deferring cuts until after next year's elections".

My belief was that the Labour Party wanted to resist cuts because it did not want to jeopardise recovery in Scotland, but now it is calling—as Des McNulty did a few minutes ago—for the immediate implementation of Tory cuts in Scotland. When Iain Gray decides whether he wants more cuts and immediate cuts, or fewer cuts, perhaps he will be able to come to this Parliament with a semblance of coherence.

The Presiding Officer: The question was about Skills Development Scotland. Iain Gray has another question.

Iain Gray: My question is a simple one. Skills Development Scotland has £2 million. Does the First Minister think that it should spend the money on changing its name, or on getting young people into work?

The First Minister: Skills Development Scotland is demonstrating its effectiveness in terms of achieving its targets. It is getting young people into work in Scotland in the most difficult

situation that has been faced for many generations. Skills Development Scotland is doing its job of supporting the Scottish community; perhaps the Labour Party should do its job and back Scotland.

Secretary of State for Scotland (Meetings)

2. Annabel Goldie (West of Scotland) (Con):

To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Secretary of State for Scotland. (S3F-2424)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): The Secretary of State for Scotland is on paternity leave at present. That gives the opportunity for us all to congratulate him on the birth of his daughter.

Annabel Goldie: I am sure that all members rejoice in that happy event.

The First Minister is having to grapple with the predicted but now inevitable consequence of Labour's economic mess. Although I accept that that dilemma is not of the First Minister's making, nonetheless it poses for him and his Government the critical questions of what he will cut and when he will cut it. We now know that the cost of Labour's mess this year is a penny in every pound that the Scottish Government spends. Doing nothing is not an option. The First Minister's colleague John Swinney told the Finance Committee last week:

"I have asked for contingency work to be prepared to deal with the possibility of in-year adjustments".—*[Official Report, Finance Committee, 18 May 2010; c 2305.]*

In other words, that is this year. Is the First Minister, out of self-interest for his party, planning to keep that information secret, or will he, in the national interest of our country, publish those proposals?

The First Minister: As Annabel Goldie well knows, an independent budget review process is working at present. All its proposals will certainly be published, because they will provide information for the Parliament and people of Scotland on the extent and severity of public spending cuts to come. On the issue of the current year, as I remember it, after discussion with the then shadow chancellor, the Scottish Conservative party announced that it considered it a concession that Scotland would be given the opportunity to defer public spending cuts in the present financial year. Although, obviously, we do not want public spending cuts of that severity in this or any other year, nonetheless, there are certain advantages in doing that.

I can see two advantages. The first is that we do not have to ask people, whether in local government or health services, to tear up this year's budget allocation, which the Parliament has already agreed. The second and important reason

is the view that to cut public spending this year, when the economic recovery is fragile, would jeopardise that recovery. I share that view—it is not shared by the Conservatives at Westminster, although it is shared by a majority in the Parliament. Therefore, for that reason, the Government has chosen to take advantage of the concession that has been offered. I believe that a similar policy will be pursued in Northern Ireland and Wales.

Annabel Goldie: It is indeed the case that the Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer has offered the First Minister a degree of flexibility over when he faces up to the problem, but that does not make the problem go away. The First Minister is like a man who refuses to fix a dripping tap and then wonders why the house has flooded. Dealing now with Labour's mess will not choke off the recovery; it is delay that could make things much worse. Alex Salmond needs either to make savings of one penny in the pound this year or to explain why he will not do so. Gordon Brown refused to make savings ahead of the UK election for political reasons. The First Minister cannot be drawn into that dangerous game, so rather than bind his successor with a unilateral minority Government decision, will he not only publish the options for savings this year, but bring those options to the Parliament for debate and allow the Parliament a vote?

The First Minister: If the Conservative party did not want the concession on deferment of public spending cuts to be used, why on earth did it offer it in the first place? The Scottish Government's efficiency programme is already engaged in securing key efficiencies in public services in Scotland. For example, in 2008-09, it delivered savings of £839 million, exceeding our target by more than £300 million. Many of the measures that the UK Government claimed on Monday will produce efficiency savings have been under way in the Scottish Government as sensible efficiencies for several years. Efficiency in Government is taking place. Annabel Goldie supported a budget this year in the Parliament that projected a 50 per cent fall in the marketing budget and a 5 per cent cut in the administration budget to add to the 25 per cent reduction in quangos in Scotland that is under way. Those are efficiencies in Government that are already being employed by the Administration.

The context is that the public spending cuts from London that are faced by the Scottish Parliament, Government and people are unlike anything that we have seen for a generation and more. Therefore, the very least that can be done is the most sensible and coherent planning to meet that situation. That would certainly not be helped by tearing up in-year budgets or by the chaos and confusion that that would inevitably cause.

Cabinet (Meetings)

3. Tavish Scott (Shetland) (LD): To ask the First Minister what issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Cabinet. (S3F-2425)

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

Tavish Scott: Today in Parliament, the Scottish National Party Government, backed by the Tories, is trying to limit the real change that Scotland needs in tackling climate change. Every other party—[*Laughter.*]

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Tavish Scott: Every other party—and Parliament's Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee—believes that this minority Government should aim higher, tackle climate change with more determination and make a real difference. Will the First Minister's Government accept that it needs to be on the side of real change in tackling environmental emissions? Will he change his Government's current position on that matter?

The First Minister: The Government's position is, of course, informed by the expert Committee on Climate Change, and we have exceeded its recommendations—that is what we are presenting. One of the great strengths of Scotland's position is that the 42 per cent target for 2020 was agreed by the whole Parliament. That has strengthened our ability to project Scotland's responsibility on these matters to the world.

As Tavish Scott knows, the equivalent target under the previous United Kingdom Government was 34 per cent by 2020. I am certain that Liberal Democrat members on the Opposition benches in Westminster said that that target was inadequate and that the Labour Government should match the ambition of the Scottish Parliament—that was in the context of the failure of the Labour Administration to meet that target.

Now that the Liberal Democrats are in a position of influence in government, we are all confident that the UK will soon be moving to the 42 per cent target that was established by the Scottish Parliament.

Tavish Scott: Mr Salmond is not responsible for the UK; he is responsible for policy in this Parliament. That is what I am asking about.

This morning, climate change groups said that there is much more that can be done, with regard to energy, to tackle climate change. In 2004, the SNP said that an energy efficiency plan was urgent. Six years later, however, there is no such plan. In opposition, the SNP promised 3 per cent

annual reductions in emissions, so the half of 1 per cent that it proposes now that it is in government is not good enough. When that figure was rejected by the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee, the Government's response was just another half of 1 per cent. Is it not time to follow up Scotland's cross-party legislation on climate change with cross-party action every year that will tackle climate change?

If the First Minister flies to the Maldives in October with 1 per cent, having promised 3 per cent, he will not be speaking for Scotland; he truly will be a minority. Does the First Minister acknowledge that his current measure is inadequate, and will he ensure that his ministers open the books and help all parties to build the approach that Scotland needs?

The First Minister: I am sure that, in the new atmosphere of respect and co-operation, Tavish Scott would not like to misrepresent what has been said by the campaign organisations that have commented on the Scottish Government's proposals. He will remember that Richard Dixon of the WWF, the chairman of Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, said that the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee should

"recommend approval of the annual targets order"

and that the targets should be

"the minimum that the Government should try to meet."—
[*Official Report, Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee*, 11 May 2010; c 2968.]

When the very organisation that Tavish Scott is now quoting actually recommended approval, is there not a question about why the Liberal Democrat members of the committee seemed to disagree with the advocacy of those organisations that they are now claiming in support of their position?

It is not just a question of the commitment of the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament to the proposals and the range of commitments that are being made in order to bring them about. The proposals, and the expert advice from the Committee on Climate Change, detail the reductions in carbon emissions that will take Scotland to the 42 per cent target by 2020. They are detailed year by year. For the first three years, the Scottish Government is exceeding the recommendations. That determination and commitment on our part is absolute. I stress, again, that one of the great strengths of the Scottish position, as articulated last year, is that it was subject not to politicking but to the determination to meet the climate change challenge. We should put the challenge first and the politicking second.

Boiler Scrappage Scheme

4. Nigel Don (North East Scotland) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what the anticipated average savings in terms of fuel bills and carbon output will be for applicants to the energy saving Scotland boiler scrappage scheme.(S3F-2437)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): We expect that boilers replaced under our energy saving Scotland boiler scrappage scheme will cut the annual heating bill of an average three-bedroom, semi-detached household by £235. Each installation will also save 1 tonne of carbon dioxide each year.

The scheme is just one tool in our wider strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve the world-leading targets that were just referred to.

Nigel Don: My understanding is that the £2 million or so available in vouchers has already been allocated. What more can the Government do to ensure that those who have missed out on the scheme can benefit from other schemes?

The First Minister: I am delighted to say that we continue to provide targeted support for this financial year through the £25 million area-based home insulation scheme and the fuel poverty-focused energy assistance package. Last year, 10,077 heating system measures were installed under the energy assistance package, including 8,871 complete systems and 1,206 boiler replacements. All households in Scotland can have access to energy efficiency advice through the energy saving Scotland advice network, which covers the whole of Scotland. In 2009-10, the network advised more than 260,000 householders, helping them to save money on their energy bills and reduce their emissions.

Liam McArthur (Orkney) (LD): As Nigel Don suggested, the Government scheme, on a first-come, first-served basis, opened and closed within 36 hours. Is the First Minister satisfied that the requirement for applicants to arrange a visit from a heating engineer, who would then need to quote before any application could be made, did not inevitably disadvantage those in remote rural areas? What safeguards were put in place to ensure that my constituents—and perhaps many of his constituents—were able to access the scheme on a level playing field with applicants from more urban areas?

The First Minister: As has just been said, the scrappage scheme vouchers were fully allocated, indicating a great interest in the scheme throughout Scotland. As Nigel Don indicated, the scheme is one of a range of measures being taken by this Government to ensure that energy efficiency is available throughout the country.

On the advice network, in 2009-10, 260,000 householders received advice. There is no shortage of enthusiasm among people for engaging in such schemes. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

The First Minister: However, there is a shortage of funds. Perhaps the member will prevail on the new coalition Government to prioritise the funds that could come to Scotland to help us to engage in our targets.

Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): Given the massive response from Scottish householders in such a small space of time, surely this is precisely the sort of scheme that the Scottish Government should support. Will the Government now commit to extending the scheme to benefit the thousands of our constituents who could not make the time horizon of 24 hours? The scheme would create jobs and reduce carbon emissions; surely we can all agree on that, and the First Minister can respond.

The First Minister: The contrast will be noted between Labour Party members demanding immediate cutbacks on public spending this year and the constant calls from the Labour Party to increase public spending. Indeed, this morning Andy Kerr again accused the Scottish Government of being profligate, while other Labour members accuse the Scottish Government—*[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

The First Minister: —of not funding schemes. It may have occurred to many members that one of the reasons for trying to get Scotland's money back in the fossil fuel levy is that that would allow us to pursue renewable energy and energy efficiency schemes throughout the country. I am sure that, even if her leader is not, Sarah Boyack is fully behind the attempt by Scotland to reclaim the £182 million fossil fuel levy denied to us by her party over the past six years.

Calman Commission

5. Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): To ask the First Minister whether discussions have taken place with the United Kingdom Government regarding the implementation of the proposals of the Calman Commission on Scottish Devolution. (S3F-2432)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): I discussed the UK Government's plans for implementing the recommendations with the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Scotland on 14 May 2010. There was agreement on many of the recommendations to transfer responsibilities to the Scottish Parliament, but there are very substantial issues to be worked through in terms of the financial recommendations.

Pauline McNeill: If the First Minister continues to reject the principle of devolving tax powers, as contained in the Calman commission proposals, does he not risk preventing progress in making the Scottish Parliament accountable for what it spends? As the First Minister continues to dither on whether he has the bottle to put his independence bill to the vote, will he at least let the will of the Scottish Parliament prevail by supporting better financial accountability and stronger devolution without delay?

The First Minister: I am surprised that Pauline McNeill has not picked up on some of the information that was mentioned in this morning's debate. For example, it was pointed out to her that on 25 November 2009 the UK Government—that is, the Labour Government—rejected nine of the 23 Calman commission recommendations, among which were key financial proposals such as assigning to Scotland 50 per cent of income tax revenues collected from dividends and savings, devolving the air passenger duty and consulting Scottish ministers on the appointment of Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs commissioners. Crucially, it also changed a very sensible proposal from the Calman commission with regard to borrowing to something so restrictive that it could never be used by any Parliament or Government. When Pauline McNeill persuades her colleagues to endorse the Calman commission's proposals "in full"—as the Labour amendment for this morning's debate said—she might have some credibility when she comes to this Parliament and asks other people to endorse them.

Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): Does the First Minister agree that recent election results clearly showed a tale of two countries, with only one Tory member of Parliament being left in Scotland? Does he also agree that, although any of the extra powers set out by the Calman commission would be welcome in this Parliament, the only way in which we can create a fairer society in Scotland and ensure that the people of Scotland prosper is through having an independent Scotland?

The First Minister: Yes, I certainly agree with that proposition. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

The First Minister: In terms of democracy, I think that it would be good—and that the people of Scotland should expect—to get the Government that they voted for instead of the Government that other people voted for. That was one of the reasons why two weeks ago I was so keen on the so-called progressive coalition; it would have enabled the people of Scotland to feel that their votes had counted in the general election campaign. Unfortunately, the Labour Party decided to walk away from that particular responsibility. Sandra White is absolutely correct

to make the point that, among the many other advantages that it would entail, independence for Scotland would ensure that Scottish democracy was respected at each and every election.

Teachers (Abuse)

6. Hugh O'Donnell (Central Scotland) (LD):

To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government is doing to support teachers who are subject to abuse in the classroom or school. (S3F-2427)

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): Teachers who have suffered abuse in the classroom are able to access a range of support services provided by the Scottish Government, councils and indeed schools. The focus is on reducing the level of indiscipline in the classroom and, in that respect, it is encouraging to read the most recent study on classroom behaviour, which found that teachers themselves believe that behaviour has improved since the comparable 2006 study and that a very large majority of teachers—89 per cent in primary and 85 per cent in secondary—are confident of their ability to deal with pupil indiscipline in the classroom. The latest national statistics, which were published in January, show that, as a result of the hard work of teachers and the initiatives that we have taken, there has been since we came to office a 24 per cent fall in exclusions, which is the lowest recorded level since the figures were first collected.

Hugh O'Donnell: I am sure that the First Minister will agree that even shouting can be a form of abuse in the workplace. [*Laughter.*] How will the Government ensure that therapeutic crisis intervention training, class management and behaviour management are at the heart of any changes that come about as a result of the review of teacher training?

The First Minister: Given the new respect agenda, I do not think that the member should attack the Labour benches for shouting through First Minister's questions.

I agree with the substance of the member's question. Although, as I have outlined, substantial progress has been made, I accept that there is substantial work to be done, and positive proposals from him and every other source will be properly considered.

Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): The First Minister is no doubt aware that incidents involving younger pupils are increasing. What steps is the Scottish Government taking to increase the support available to teachers at the younger end of the classroom spectrum, particularly in early years? Moreover, does he share my concerns that the increasing casualisation of teaching staff is doing nothing to boost their morale?

The First Minister: Karen Gillon will agree that the statistics that I quoted show a generally improving picture. If there are any other specific measures that she, Hugh O'Donnell or any other member would like to bring forward, they will be positively received.

12:30

Meeting suspended until 14:15.

14:15

On resuming—

Scottish Executive Question Time

Health and Wellbeing

Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy

1. Christopher Harvie (Mid Scotland and Fife)

(SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive what progress has been made over the last year in the research, treatment and support of young people with Duchenne muscular dystrophy. (S3O-10716)

The Minister for Public Health and Sport

(Shona Robison): We welcome the priority that the Scottish muscle network has given during the past year to the development of care standards for the management of Duchenne, which are based on European standards.

The network has also developed a multidisciplinary care pathway for the management of Duchenne from the point of diagnosis onwards. That will incorporate the pathway that is being developed for the transition from child to adult services, which has an initial focus on Duchenne. A new transition clinic has been set up in Glasgow, along with young adult neuromuscular conditions clinics in Aberdeen and Dundee.

The network has also produced an information leaflet on Duchenne. One of the network's main aims is to promote families' participation in large-scale clinical trials in the United Kingdom and internationally.

Christopher Harvie: Are measures under consideration that would further improve the practical situation of Duchenne sufferers and their families, for example the removal of bureaucratic obstacles to wheelchair access or improved co-ordination and consultation between support services, parents and decision makers in relation to school attendance and in-school support?

Shona Robison: In addition to the information that I provided, I can tell Christopher Harvie that in children's services the getting it right for every child approach puts the child at the centre. The Scottish muscle network wants to explore the role of a key worker in managing the complex care needs of boys and young men who have Duchenne and will discuss the approach with the people who are responsible for the development of GIRFEC.

The wheelchair assessment process now includes school and other educational settings, which makes it easier to introduce powered

wheelchairs for the people who need them. We are revising our guidance to education authorities on accessibility, which will provide practical examples of how schools can improve provision for disabled children in all aspects of school life.

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston)

(Lab): I welcome the minister's response. It is important for people who have Duchenne to get as much exercise as possible, and an ideal and enjoyable way of getting exercise is through hydrotherapy. There does not seem to be provision for hydrotherapy in Lanarkshire. Are there plans to ensure that everyone in Scotland who has Duchenne can get access to hydrotherapy?

Shona Robison: I am very much aware of the benefits of hydrotherapy and I am aware that in many locations access to hydrotherapy services has been arranged. I want to consider the specifics of the situation in Lanarkshire and I will write to the member with more detail.

Medical Equipment Failure

2. David McLetchie (Edinburgh Pentlands)

(Con): To ask the Scottish Executive what action has been taken to reduce the failure rate of national health service medical equipment. (S3O-10685)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Nicola Sturgeon)

My officials work with NHS boards, through Health Facilities Scotland, to ensure that all adverse incidents that result from equipment failure are investigated appropriately, that the cause of the incident is identified, and that lessons that are learned are shared with the wider NHS.

We have given £90 million to boards since 2008, on top of their general allocations, for investment in new equipment.

David McLetchie: It will come as no surprise to the cabinet secretary that my question was prompted by an investigation that was undertaken by the *Sunday Post*, the results of which were published some 10 days ago. The *Sunday Post* found that there were 1,131 recorded cases of medical equipment failure in Scottish hospitals in 2008 and that the number had increased to 1,156 cases in 2009, despite additional funding being made available by the Scottish Government, as the cabinet secretary said.

Audit Scotland said in its 2009 report, "Asset management in the NHS in Scotland":

"Five NHS bodies did not know the condition of their medical equipment."

Is the Scottish Government satisfied that enough is being done to ensure that patient safety is not compromised by equipment failure?

Nicola Sturgeon: I am certainly grateful to David McLetchie for raising such an important issue, on which the *Sunday Post* is to be commended for its investigation. However, it is important to point out that, of the 1,000 or more cases of equipment failure that the *Sunday Post* identified, only 118 resulted in adverse incidents. That is 118 incidents too many, but it is important to give that context.

As David McLetchie said, Audit Scotland produced the report “Asset management in the NHS in Scotland”, which recommended that the Government should

“provide policies and guidance for all types of assets and update its current policies and guidance to reflect changes in the NHS”.

As a result of that, our asset management policy was revised to ensure that it specifically addresses the management of medical equipment.

NHS boards are also supported by Health Facilities Scotland’s incident reporting and investigation centre, which works closely with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency—the United Kingdom regulatory body—on the medical device alerts system. In addition, last year we issued to the NHS and local authorities guidance that, among other things, requires NHS boards and local authorities to appoint equipment co-ordinators, who are responsible for ensuring that all staff know about the process for reporting adverse incidents, monitoring adverse incidents within their own organisations, and distributing medical device alerts that are received from the IRIC and ensuring that they are acted on.

I take the issue of medical equipment failure very seriously indeed. I hope that David McLetchie is assured that we are taking action, but we will of course continue to monitor matters to ensure that we are doing everything possible.

Huntington’s Disease

3. Angela Constance (Livingston) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Executive how it is supporting people with Huntington’s disease. (S3O-10709)

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Shona Robison): Services for people with Huntington’s disease are primarily the responsibility of national health service boards. The clinical standards on neurological services produced by NHS Quality Improvement Scotland cover Huntington’s disease. The Scottish Government encourages and supports boards to use those standards to improve further the quality of services for everyone with Huntington’s disease.

We also welcome the valuable work of the Scottish Huntington’s Association for people living

with the condition and for their families and carers. In recognition of its role, we provide the organisation with funding to help to underpin its core work. We also assist specific projects, such as the current development of an application for mobile phones.

Angela Constance: I am glad that the minister recognises the good work that is undertaken by the Scottish Huntington’s Association. As she is probably aware, the organisation undertook an intensive consultation before publishing “Roon the Kitchen Table”—Outcome of the Consultation with Families Living with Huntington’s Disease in Scotland”. Indeed, I have a fantastic constituent who participated in the compilation of that report. How will the Scottish Government take forward the issues that the Scottish Huntington’s Association identified, namely the need for more specialist nurses and specialist respite and long-term care placements?

Shona Robison: I, too, commend the work that was undertaken in the consultation with families. As the member recognises, the consultation report raises a number of important issues, which we will take forward in discussion. I am happy to write to the member with some detail on that as we take those matters forward.

Hospital Consultant Bonus Scheme

4. Ian McKee (Lothians) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government, in view of the hospital consultant bonus scheme now costing over a quarter of a billion pounds of United Kingdom national health service expenditure per year and millions in pension consequential, whether it will consider a further approach to the Secretary of State for Health with the aim of securing co-ordinated action to curb this expenditure. (S3O-10723)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Nicola Sturgeon): I have made my position very clear on that issue. As members are aware, I have previously approached other UK health departments to seek their support on conducting a UK-wide review of current arrangements. Responses were mixed, but I intend to pursue the issue again with the new UK Government.

Ian McKee: I agree that it is preferable for the four countries of the United Kingdom to co-ordinate action on the matter. However, does the cabinet secretary agree that Scottish public opinion is that the present situation of extra payments to hospital consultants is completely unsatisfactory? Will she agree not only to maintain the cap on the amount of money set aside for such payments in future years but to consider altering the regulations so that in future such bonuses are not pensionable?

Nicola Sturgeon: I am happy to consider all suggestions on the issue. As Ian McKee knows, we took the decision this year to freeze both the level and the number of distinction awards. I will certainly consider whether similar action is appropriate next year in the light of the circumstances that prevail at the time.

However, I am also of the view—this is no secret to anybody—that much more fundamental reform of the system is needed. It is right that people in the NHS who work hard and contribute above and beyond their contractual obligations are rewarded for that, but we operate these days in a multidisciplinary national health service and, if that system is to apply, it should do so fairly and cost effectively.

As I said in my original answer, I asked other UK health departments to consider joining us in a review. Labour's former health minister at Westminster said that he was happy with the current system and Wales supported the idea of a review, but I intend to raise the matter again with Andrew Lansley, the new Secretary of State for Health. I have already mentioned it to him informally and I intend to follow that up formally. I hope that we can get UK-wide agreement to review the system, which would be in the interests not just of Scotland but of the operation of the health service throughout the UK.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): Although the cabinet secretary may indeed want to proceed on a UK basis, will she confirm that she can, in fact, do it alone? Will she also confirm that she recently signed off a review of the very scheme that we are discussing? She appears to be suggesting that we are going to have another one. Does she further agree that spending £30 million on consultant bonuses in a year is the wrong priority when we spend only £20 million on tackling hospital-acquired infections?

Nicola Sturgeon: The HAI budget is considerably higher under this Government than it was under the previous Government, which is perhaps one of the reasons why rates of infection are now coming down in our hospitals. The position is not good enough, but there has been progress.

I did indeed sign off the review that Jackie Baillie mentioned, but that review was instigated by my predecessor, Andy Kerr. One of the problems with that review is that the remit explicitly ruled out fundamental reform of the system. If she has an issue with that, I suggest that she takes it up with him.

I also suggest that Jackie Baillie listens more carefully to what I say. I have never denied that we have the power to do what we choose to do on the matter, but I believe that, if we are to maintain a

competitive position for our NHS within the UK and to be able to attract consultants, it is far preferable to have a system that operates throughout the UK.

I find it rather ironic, if not a touch hypocritical, that Jackie Baillie criticises me for our not having made more progress along the road of the review, given that it was a former Labour health minister in the Department of Health in England who blocked it. If Jackie Baillie now wants to join the consensus, I look forward to her arguing with her colleagues here and elsewhere that that is the right thing to do.

Diabetes Action Plan

5. David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive when it will publish the Scottish diabetes action plan. (S3O-10674) [*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): Can we have one question at a time, please? We leave a question behind when we move to the next one.

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Shona Robison): We expect that the revised action plan will be published in the next few weeks. It will set out actions that will help to fulfil our ambition to provide world-class diabetes services in Scotland. The process of revising the 2006 diabetes action plan took longer than expected because of the efforts that were made to gather the views of people with diabetes.

David Stewart: Can the minister confirm whether the Scottish diabetes action plan will contain specific targets for each national health service board to increase insulin pump availability over the next three years? In particular, will there be increased access for children and young people? What plans does the minister have to apply the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence criteria to ensure that those who are considered to be eligible for an insulin pump have access to one?

Finally, can the minister advise me what systems and checks are in place to ensure that NHS boards are trying to achieve their targets for increased access to insulin pumps and get above the poor rates that boards such as NHS Highland and NHS Ayrshire and Arran have at present?

Shona Robison: I am sure that the member will wait for the publication of the action plan and we will then be able to furnish him with the detail. As he knows, the availability of insulin pumps is a long-term problem.

We have taken action to address the situation. I wrote to NHS board chairs to remind them of their responsibility, through their diabetes managed clinical network, to develop a local insulin strategy, including for the use of pumps, in line with the

latest clinical guidance to which the member referred. That was followed up by a request that each board provide details of its planned expenditure over the next three to five years on intensive insulin therapy and the structured education associated with it. Boards have now done that. An agreed table containing the information will be published in the revised diabetes action plan.

I hope that that gives the member a sense that we are making progress, that what has been a long-term issue is being addressed and that boards are working very hard indeed to ensure that they increase access to and the availability of intensive insulin therapy.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

I ask the minister to ensure that optometrists throughout Scotland will all be given the opportunity to monitor regularly the eyesight of patients with diabetes, to reduce travel times to hospitals and enhance partnerships within the NHS.

Shona Robison: Mary Scanlon raises a very important point. We have come a long way with the work that optometrists and ophthalmologists do around not just diabetes but a range of other conditions. Any steps that both help to pick up and diagnose issues and move as much work as possible out of hospitals into the wider primary care community are of course to be welcomed. Discussions are continuing about how much more progress can be made to build on the already good progress that I am sure that Mary Scanlon and others in the chamber would recognise.

The Presiding Officer: Question 6 was not lodged.

Budget Reductions (Workforce)

7. Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what assurances it can give to workers in the national health service in the wake of projected reductions to the Scottish budget. (S3O-10711)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Nicola Sturgeon): Staff are at the heart of our national health service. Their contribution is crucial. I have made it clear to NHS boards that protecting the quality of front-line services and valuing those who work in the NHS are our priorities. I have given, and I am happy to repeat today, three important guarantees. First, the quality of care will be the guiding principle behind any service redesign. As I scrutinise NHS boards' plans, I will seek to ensure that they, and the service changes that underpin them, protect the quality of care. Secondly, no one in the NHS will lose their job. The NHS has a policy of no compulsory redundancies and that will

remain the case. Thirdly, there will be more people working in the NHS in Scotland at the end of this session of Parliament than there were at the start.

Bob Doris: I particularly welcome the principle and guarantee of no compulsory redundancies, which I believe does not exist south of the border. How many more redundancies, voluntary redundancies or cutbacks would there have to be if this Government accepted Scottish Labour's plans to cut a further £332 million from this year's budget? I am very worried about the damage that that could inflict on the NHS and other front-line services.

Nicola Sturgeon: Bob Doris will know that this Government has taken the decision not to impose the cuts announced by the chancellor earlier this week in this financial year. That was as a result of George Osborne's offer. The reason for our decision, as the First Minister said at First Minister's questions, is twofold. First, it is important in this financial year, when budgets have been set, not to force local authorities, NHS boards or any other organisation to rip up those budgets, because that would cause significant instability for those who work in and use those services. Secondly, it is really important that we support economic recovery at this time of fragile recovery. To take money out of public spending within this financial year would put that at risk. For those reasons, I think that we were right to take that decision. Unfortunately, from reading and hearing some of the conflicting comments made by those in the Labour Party, it seems that they cannot quite decide which side of that debate they are on.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): Is it not the case that not one penny would require to be taken from the NHS budget? Far be it from me to defend the Conservatives, but none of the £6 billion of cuts was taken from the NHS.

Nicola Sturgeon: I will say a bit about our commitment to the NHS. It is important that people hear this. We have ensured that there are real-terms increases in NHS budgets this year. We have given a very clear commitment to continue to protect NHS budgets as far as we can.

Let us also consider the reality, however. The economic mess that was created by the previous United Kingdom Labour Government means that budgets will be tight not just this year but for some time to come. Frankly, Labour's desperate attempts to dodge responsibility for that simply will not wash with anyone in Scotland.

It is important that NHS boards look to deliver services as efficiently as they possibly can, that they redesign services and that they ensure the greatest possible productivity so that they can continue to deliver quality and ensure that

Labour's economic and financial incompetence does not impact on patient care in Scotland.

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

Will the cabinet secretary join me in congratulating the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Government in Westminster on scrapping Labour's jobs tax and, therefore, saving the NHS in Scotland £20 million each year, which will help to protect jobs and front-line services?

Nicola Sturgeon: I will certainly congratulate Murdo Fraser on his promotion to the position of his party's health spokesman. I look forward to working with him in the same consensual and collegiate manner in which I work with all the other party health spokespeople in this chamber.

In the interests of consensus, I should say that it is important to recognise that the national insurance increase that was planned by Labour would have put an additional burden of £40 million on the NHS next year, at a time when budgets are already tight. I agree that it is good news that that burden has been removed, but I will wait a bit longer to see what the Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition has in store for Scotland before I go much further than that in my congratulations.

European Working Time Directive

8. Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what advice has been given to national health service boards regarding potential staffing problems caused by the European working time directive and the shortages of locum cover. (S3O-10704)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Nicola Sturgeon): NHS boards have had a considerable amount of guidance and support in implementing the working time regulations. On locum cover, a short life working group, comprising representatives of the Scottish Government, the British Medical Association and NHS Scotland employers, is working to identify solutions for managing the demand for temporary medical staff. The group is due to issue guidance to NHS boards setting out key issues and solutions in July 2010.

Jim Tolson: I am sure that the cabinet secretary is aware of the situation in Fife, which brought about the temporary overnight closure of the accident and emergency unit at the Victoria hospital in Kirkcaldy, with patients being transferred to the Queen Margaret hospital in Dunfermline.

According to a request earlier this year under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, there were, at that time, more than 140 junior doctor vacancies across Scotland, with 24.5 junior doctor vacancies in NHS Fife alone, six of those being in emergency medicine. Given that situation

and the impact of the impending financial savings that must be made by health boards and which will result in a reduction in their workforces, what action will the minister take to ensure that vital NHS services are protected?

Nicola Sturgeon: As the member will be aware, NHS Fife implemented its contingency plans in the interests of patient safety, and I am sure that no one in this chamber would argue that it should have done anything other than that. The situation in Kirkcaldy arose because of the unexpected absence of a number of junior doctors and the difficulty in securing locum cover. It was not a finance-driven move; in fact, the board incurred additional costs during that period. It is also not about cutting staff. The board has appointed two new A and E consultants in recent months.

I am pleased to say that the situation has reverted to normal and that the A and E unit in Kirkcaldy is operating as normal. Of course, it is right that NHS Fife should continue to hold those contingency plans, in case a similar situation arises in future.

On the broader issue, the final stages of implementing the working time regulations have come at a time when the NHS is experiencing some shortages of training-grade medical staff in some specialties. That situation has arisen for a variety of reasons, including changes to the immigration rules. Those shortages are not caused by the working time regulations, they are coincidental with them.

There has been an expansion in the medical workforce in recent years. That has meant that the overall demand has marginally outstripped the supply of doctors who are available to fill posts, which has resulted in a shortage in some areas. However, the supply of junior doctors is continuing to grow and current shortages of staff for locum posts are likely to reverse in the near future.

The Scottish Government, in partnership with boards, has been taking a number of short-term actions to support boards in mitigating the immediate impacts of medical staffing difficulties. However, as members are aware, the longer-term solutions lie in the expansion of the number of trained doctors to reduce the reliance on trainees for service delivery.

Oesophageal Cancer

9. Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what discussions it is having with medical professionals and patient groups to improve early detection rates of oesophageal cancer. (S3O-10640)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Nicola Sturgeon): Through the Scottish cancer task

force, the Scottish Government is working to improve awareness of possible symptoms of all cancers among the public and medical staff. That activity includes working with the voluntary sector to identify effective approaches to developing health promotion opportunities.

Awareness of oesophageal cancer is raised among medical professionals through a number of different routes at national, regional and local levels, including through the dissemination of relevant clinical guidelines. Work is under way to support wider sharing of general practitioner data and best practice on cancer diagnosis, as that will contribute to more effective and efficient primary care pathways, increasing the possibility for earlier detection and, ultimately, improving outcomes for people who have cancer.

Bill Butler: The cabinet secretary will be aware that we have both met representatives of Ochre, the oesophageal cancer charity. Ochre recently informed me that Professor Sir Mike Richards, the national cancer director for the Department of Health, has written to it and a number of other main stakeholders involved in upper gastrointestinal cancer symptom awareness with the aim of creating a forum to guide future work. That will result in patients in England being able to benefit from an increased awareness of symptoms among medics and clinicians.

Will the cabinet secretary inform members in the chamber whether her officials have given thought to establishing a similar forum in Scotland? That could offer similar benefits to Scottish patients alongside all the work that the Government is taking forward.

Nicola Sturgeon: I acknowledge Bill Butler's on-going interest in the issue. As he mentioned, I met Ochre last year, and I am grateful to him for facilitating that meeting. He makes a useful suggestion. I am not aware of any interaction between Sir Mike Richards and my officials, but I will certainly investigate whether there has been any. If there has not, I am happy to consider the possibility of encouraging the creation of a similar forum in Scotland.

We should do anything that we can to raise awareness of the causes and symptoms of cancer—whether upper GI cancers or any other cancers—and to encourage the earliest possible detection and diagnosis. I am happy to keep Bill Butler informed of any progress that we make in that regard.

Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): The cabinet secretary will be aware that although the incidence of stomach cancer is decreasing, the incidence of oesophageal cancer is on the increase, with the incidence of tumours at the

junction of the stomach and the oesophagus increasing particularly rapidly.

What action is the Scottish Government taking to develop new and emerging technologies and techniques such as intensity-modulated radiotherapy? I understand that that technique is not yet in clinical use anywhere in Scotland and that only a few places are implementing it in England. What plans does the Government have to develop such radiotherapy services for the future in Scotland?

Nicola Sturgeon: I thank Nanette Milne for her question and welcome her to her post. She is right to mention the increasing incidence of oesophageal cancer. The latest figures I have before me show that for men, the incidence is continuing to rise. Better news suggests that between 1997 and 2007, the incidence among women was falling, which is encouraging. While not underplaying the seriousness of the issue, I say that it is also encouraging that mortality rates for men and women are beginning to fall. We must ensure that that progress continues.

Nanette Milne will be aware that we invest heavily in the most up-to-date and state-of-the-art forms of radiotherapy equipment. I am happy to write to her to set out the details of our recent planned investment in that area. She may be interested to know that the chief scientist office is currently funding two projects in the area of oesophageal cancer. As in all such areas, the chief scientist office always welcomes further research proposals, because the more we know about how to prevent and treat diseases like this, the more progress we will make in cutting the numbers of people who get such diseases and die from them.

NHS Lothian (Meetings)

10. Rhona Brankin (Midlothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive when it last met senior management of NHS Lothian and what issues were discussed. (S3O-10639)

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Nicola Sturgeon): I met the chair of NHS Lothian on 24 May—Monday this week—at the most recent regular meeting of national health service board chairs. We discussed a wide range of matters that are affecting the delivery of patient services.

Officials from the Scottish Government health directorates meet representatives of NHS Lothian regularly to discuss matters of current interest that are affecting health services in the area.

Rhona Brankin: In her recent meetings with NHS Lothian, how did the cabinet secretary justify requiring the health board to make staff cuts of more than 700 this year and nearly double that

figure next year? Can she tell the chamber which hospitals and clinics the 333 nursing posts will disappear from? If she is so convinced that she can cut hundreds of nursing jobs in the NHS and the Lothians without affecting patient care, will she offer to resign if front-line services for my constituents get worse as a result of her cuts?

Nicola Sturgeon: Unlike members of the previous Government, I have never shirked from saying that, in all NHS matters, the buck stops with me. It is important that ministers face up to that responsibility. Right now, part of that responsibility involves dealing with the impact of the economic and financial mess that Labour has made of this country. Labour members might not like to be reminded of that, but I am afraid that it is a sad fact of reality.

It is incredibly important that, as we face up to the situation, NHS boards look at how they can deliver services efficiently and cost-effectively; how they can take advantage of service redesign, new technology and, for example, the increase in day-case rates; how they can ensure better productivity of staff and reduce sickness absence; and how they can take advantage of the lean technology that boards such as NHS Lothian are using to great effect. It is right for boards to carry out that work and, frankly, I think that it ill behoves any member to scaremonger in the way that Rhona Brankin has just done.

I have said and will continue to say that, as the NHS faces up to these extremely difficult times, quality of care is of the utmost importance and will be our guiding principle. I hope that all members accept that and will back us as we seek to steer the NHS through difficult times, but in a way that safeguards for patients the quality of front-line services.

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab): When I last raised the issue of NHS Lothian not getting the share of health money to which it is entitled, the cabinet secretary said that she recognised the problem and was taking action. However, how can such action be effective when each year the gap between what Lothian gets and what it is entitled to gets bigger rather than smaller? Surely, given the big challenges that the cabinet secretary rightly emphasised in her previous answer, it is more critical than ever that boards get their full entitlement as quickly as possible. Will the cabinet secretary start to narrow the gap for Lothian instead of seeing it increase year by year?

Nicola Sturgeon: Malcolm Chisholm knows that I have huge respect for him and it is right that as an MSP from Edinburgh he comes to the chamber and raises these very important issues. I have to say that I believe that I have been very

frank in recognising the position that NHS Lothian is in.

That said, I gently remind Mr Chisholm that the issue of some health boards in Scotland receiving less than their parity share has not just arisen under this Government; it was also an issue under the previous allocation formula and when he was Minister for Health and Community Care. Like him and my predecessor Andy Kerr, I am trying to close that gap and take boards that are below parity up to parity; I note, for example, that this year NHS Lothian received a higher increase than other boards to help it along the path. However, we have to do that gradually because any other approach would involve taking money away from other health boards. If members are asking me to do that, I really think that they should also tell me which health boards I should take the money from.

I think that that is the right way to go. In times of tight finances, it will take us longer to do it than it would have done when finances were not tight. Nevertheless, we will continue to make as much progress as possible and I will ensure that members who have an understandable and justifiable interest in the issue are kept fully informed of that progress.

Coeliac Disease

11. Shirley-Anne Somerville (Lothians) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will review policies and procedures to ensure that people with coeliac disease have appropriate and consistent access to gluten-free products on prescription. (S3O-10727)

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Shona Robison): The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that people living with long-term conditions such as coeliac disease receive the care and support that they need. A range of gluten-free food products is offered on prescription and our commitment to abolishing prescription charges in April 2011 will benefit everyone who pays for those prescriptions.

Shirley-Anne Somerville: First of all, I note a personal interest in this issue, as my daughter has coeliac disease. I stress, though, that my question concerns a very much unrelated constituent case.

The constituent in question has faced a number of challenges when she has tried to obtain her new gluten-free products on prescription due to the discrepancies in what general practitioners are willing or able to prescribe. That has led to some sufferers being able to access products that are denied to others. Will the minister ensure that all health professionals utilise the same guidelines when they supply gluten-free products in order to eradicate the health inequalities that exist in health board areas and across the country? Will she also

look into the introduction of pharmacy-led provision to free GPs' time and improve the efficiency of the national health service in general?

Shona Robison: The Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances, which is a United Kingdom-wide body that was set up to advise on the prescription of certain foodstuffs, including gluten-free foods, decides what can be prescribed. Its list is published in the British national formulary, to which we expect GPs to adhere.

Obviously, the member is concerned about discrepancies in prescribing and the products that are available. If she has not done so already, I advise her to write to me with details of the case. I will look into whether we can do more to ensure that there is consistency in adhering to the guidelines, and will write to the member once I have done that.

Disabled Young Adults

12. Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): To ask the Scottish Executive what action it is taking to support young adult disabled people in care homes. (S3O-10691)

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Shona Robison): Due to the success of care in the community, only a relatively small number of young adults with disabilities are in care homes. The national care standards require care providers to ensure that the support for young people in care homes is based on their individual care plan, taking into account their individual needs. It is the responsibility of the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care to ensure through regular inspections of care homes that the requirements of the national care standards are met.

Robert Brown: I think that there are 48 homes with 728 places and some places in more elderly homes as well.

Does the minister agree that younger adults in residential care require the company of people of their own age, things to stimulate their brains, activities to enhance the quality of their life, and opportunities to go outside the confines of the home? Does she agree that the standards are all very well, but there is sometimes a bit of a gap between the standards that have been set and the reality in a number of individual homes? Do things point to a situation that could be described as dire for some younger disabled adults, who are often left to hibernate without such support? Will she engage with the care commission and others on that? Will the Scottish Government commit to an action plan to guarantee that our citizens who are in that situation have proper standards of care in practice and the opportunities in life—so far as they can be provided—that the rest of us take for granted?

Shona Robison: I will put in context the total number of young adults who are resident in care homes. According to the last published statistics in the 2007 care home census, which included age breakdowns, of the total number of 36,428 long-stay care home residents, 230 were adults aged from 18 to 24. Some of those young adults were placed in care homes for people with physical disabilities and others were placed in care homes with a specialism for people with learning disabilities. The numbers are quite small, but Robert Brown has made the point that it is important for those individuals that the right standards and packages of care are provided.

I am happy to look into Robert Brown's suggestion. I meet the care commission regularly, and am happy to discuss such matters with it. However, I point out that we have an agenda on and an interest in pursuing self-directed support and making it easier for young adults with disabilities in particular to access the care packages that they want, whether they want to remain in their own home or build a care package with a range of services that is based in supported accommodation, and we want people to have more options. I hope that the member will support us in our endeavours to achieve that.

The Presiding Officer: We will move on to the next item. We are very tight for time for the rest of the afternoon's business.

Climate Change (Annual Targets) (Scotland) Order 2010 (Draft)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan): The next item of business is a debate on motion S3M-6416, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on the Climate Change (Annual Targets) (Scotland) Order 2010. I invite members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons. I point out to members that we have a negative amount of spare time this afternoon, if they get my drift, so I will stop members as soon as they reach their allocated time limit.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Climate Change (Annual Targets) (Scotland) Order 2010 be approved.—
[Bruce Crawford.]

14:55

The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): Members will be aware that last week the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee voted against the original annual targets order. I take very seriously the requirement in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 to set targets for 2010 to 2022 by 1 June, and for that reason I withdrew the original order on the next day and laid the new version that Parliament is considering today.

I understand that there is a view in some quarters that we are still not being ambitious enough and that we are not being clear about the emissions reductions that are possible in the early years. I will outline clearly where we are. This Parliament passed unanimously an act that requires that we take independent expert advice before we set targets. We took that advice from the United Kingdom Committee on Climate Change and we considered it seriously. That committee suggested that we set flat targets for 2010 to 2012, but we were keen to make early reductions in emissions. For that reason we set, in the original targets, more stretching targets for 2011 and 2012. So, the Committee on Climate Change recommended that for 2011 we set essentially the same target as for 2010—a zero per cent reduction. Instead we went further, requiring that emissions fall by 0.5 per cent.

For 2012, the Committee on Climate Change recommended that we set the same target as for the two preceding years. Again we went further, requiring a 0.5 per cent reduction on top of the 0.5 per cent in the previous year. We were clear in the statement that accompanied the order how challenging that is. We were clear that additional

actions would be needed to meet the 2012 target and that we would have to give full consideration to options that might allow that.

The act requires that we report on proposals and policies for achieving the annual targets after the targets are set. That is exactly what we intend to do. We have committed to publishing a draft report on proposals and policies for parliamentary consideration in September. The Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee voted to reject the order. We listened and went still further for 2012. So instead of the 0 per cent reduction that was recommended for 2011 and 2012 by the Committee on Climate Change, we have set targets requiring a 0.5 per cent reduction in 2011 and an additional 1 per cent reduction in 2012.

It is worth reminding members what the Stop Climate Chaos Coalition said about the annual targets order that we introduced originally. It did not give a whole-hearted welcome to the targets for the early years. It would have liked, bigger reductions, as we all would. It acknowledged that

“a step change in policy effort would be required if these and future targets are to be met”.

It emphasised that the targets should be seen as the minimum reduction. We agree. It recommended that the TCCCC recommend the order to Parliament, but the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee chose to recommend rejection of the order. It is disappointing that the committee chose to ignore the factors that work against us in the early years: the fact that traded-sector emissions that follow the emissions trading system cap, in line with international practice, are flat in that period; the fact that we are seeing a significant decline over three years of 3.5 per cent or so in forestry sequestration, which results from a decline in planting rates since the 1990s; and the fact that international aviation emissions that are included in our targets, but not in the UK Government's carbon budgets, are unlikely to fall significantly in the short term.

The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 has rightly been the subject of widespread praise in Scotland and internationally for the level of ambition that it sets out. It is worth reminding ourselves of that and comparing our ambition with that of the UK. Based on advice from the Committee on Climate Change, in 2011 both we and the UK have reduction targets of 0.5 per cent. In the order that is before us today for 2012, we will have 1 per cent, while the UK will have 0.5 per cent. In 2013, we will have 8.67 per cent and the UK will have 4.9 per cent. In 2014, we will have 2.78 per cent and the UK will have 1.4 per cent. In 2015, we will have 2.88 per cent and the UK will have 1.3 per cent. In 2016, we will have 2.9 per

cent and the UK will have 1.5 per cent. In 2017, we will have 2.97 per cent and the UK will have 1.5 per cent. In 2018, we will have 3.05 per cent and the UK will have 2.5 per cent. In 2019, we will have 3.16 per cent and the UK will have 1.7 per cent. In 2020, we will have 3.34 per cent and the UK will have 2 per cent.

Ambitious? Of course we are ambitious—as a Parliament and as a Government. It is important not to undermine the credibility of that ambition—which we shared, as a Parliament, when we passed the act in June 2009—by rejecting an order that is, as I have demonstrated by reading out the numbers, clearly ambitious to an extraordinary degree.

It would be irresponsible of Parliament to set targets that could not be shown to be deliverable for this Administration or any future Administration. That would send a disastrous message to our domestic stakeholders and to the international community.

I ask the Parliament to agree to approve the order.

15:01

Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): The Scottish National Party's manifesto promised annual targets of 3 per cent, but the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill as introduced included only a target of a 34 per cent reduction by 2020. The minister's comparison with the UK is interesting. The UK Government took the UK Committee on Climate Change's advice in setting its target at 34 per cent, but we felt that in Scotland we had more opportunities. Hours after Iain Gray challenged the First Minister to raise his target, the SNP jumped past our suggestion of 40 per cent and went to 42 per cent.

To blame scientific advice for the lack of action is unacceptable, because we all knew last year that 42 per cent exceeded the UK Committee on Climate Change's recommendation. That committee's report this year identifies more that the Scottish Government could do. The issue is about political priorities; that committee cannot make such decisions for us.

When the SNP Government finishes its fourth year in office, it will have put in place a reduction of only 0.05 per cent for this year, instead of 3 per cent annual targets. We all understand that the numbers will have to represent new effort by not just the Government but by all of us in society.

We acknowledge and welcome the fact that the minister has put peat on the agenda. We, too, want to act on peat. As carbon reductions through peat will count from 2012, we need Scottish Natural Heritage, the Forestry Commission

Scotland and Scottish Water to work together. Let us look at the minister's figures. We are not convinced that they add up. What will actually happen? He has changed the reduction only for 2012 and not for subsequent years. Surely the commitment on peat cannot be delivered in one year. It must follow through to 2015, so more figures should have been altered.

As we said in Labour's climate change debate in March, the SNP Government can take practical measures now to bring about faster changes—it can do more on low-carbon vehicles, tree planting, Government buildings and schools. We have talked about the boiler scrappage scheme today, which was another missed opportunity to be ambitious. Every time I raise energy efficiency measures with the minister, he talks down what we can do.

We all agree that we could do more together. We need practical measures to drive our economy forward. Political support across the chamber is available for the minister to take action, so it would have been better to debate the policies with the targets, even if the final papers are not in front of us.

As ever, the SNP has talked a good game, but its manifesto commitments have gone the way of all its other promises—they have been dumped. We want statutory targets to be in place and we want ambitious targets to reduce our carbon emissions, but they must be backed by ambitious plans. We are being asked to put in place the targets without the programmes that we all need to talk about. The SNP has left the step change to following Governments.

We need more of a demonstration of serious action. We are not setting out to break a consensus on climate change; the Opposition parties are doing their job and reading the small print in statutory instruments.

In 2007, John Swinney said:

"A number of issues can be taken forward, and the Government will make early progress on specific action. I emphasise that we are not just putting the issue away for a couple of years until we get the legislation sorted out—there will be early action to tackle it."—[*Official Report*, 21 June 2007; c 1047.]

That sums up our problem, which is that the SNP Government talks an excellent game but has failed utterly to deliver on its ambition that not only was in its manifesto but has been in what it has said in the chamber. The detail matters and the order matters. They are not good enough.

15:05

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate today, particularly because it is probably the last

time I will speak as my party's climate change spokesman. I will be ably replaced by Jackson Carlaw in debates to come. The debate is a timely opportunity for me to summarise the process that allowed us to get to where we are today, and to express my concern about the process in which we are engaged, right here and now.

I am one of those people who believes that climate change is happening and that we need to address it. My experience as a representative of the Conservatives in Parliament is that some of my fellow Conservatives have had to be dragged kicking and screaming to the point at which they agreed to participate in the process of legislating to stop climate change—

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): Was that you, Alex?

Alex Johnstone: I have often joked about that. I hope that Jeremy Purvis's lighthearted reaction reflects that.

We should note that members reached consensus on the matter in order to pass the legislation. That consensus held together through the passage of the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill—indeed, it has held together until today.

We need in Scotland to achieve consistent and long-term reductions in climate change gas emissions. The order that is before the Parliament today sets out ambitious targets to achieve that in the period leading up to 2020. The figures in the order are appropriate if we are to achieve the 42 per cent target that was put in place when the bill was passed. When the ambitious target was introduced, it gave me grave cause for concern; the change from 34 per cent to 42 per cent caused me to question my support for the bill. In the end, after the debate, I accepted the target, as did my Conservative colleagues. It is therefore essential that we now look at how the target will be achieved. The order is a route map of how to achieve that objective. We always knew that the means by which to reduce climate change gas emissions would involve setting of lower targets initially, and that subsequent targets would be higher. That is simply how to make progress. The S-shaped graph was prominent in our evidence taking at stage 1.

If we accept that the order shows the course on which we have to set out, why are we disputing the appropriateness of the figures? I worry about the attempts that are being made—for largely political reasons—at the outset of the process to destabilise the consensus, the outcome of which could be the consensus that we have achieved thus far being questioned. The order that was placed before the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee a week past Tuesday should have been passed. Having failed to get his

order through the committee, the minister has brought to the chamber today an order that contains yet more ambitious targets. By doing so early in the process, the minister has taken the opportunity to show faith with those who questioned him two weeks ago.

If we fail to agree to the order at 5 o'clock this evening, the consensus that was built across party divides around the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 and the process that it underpins will have been shattered. I beg members not to do that. Let us approve the order at 5 o'clock.

15:09

Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD):

The fact that, not a year after passing our landmark legislation, the proposed set of annual targets that we are debating today does not come up to scratch is disappointing in the extreme.

From the outset, the Liberal Democrats argued that early action is absolutely vital in the fight to limit the worst effects of anthropogenic climate change. Early action sets the trend for years to come. That is why we want ambitious targets to be set from day one. We do not know what is going to happen two or three years down the line: we cannot possibly know whether we will be in the position to make a 9 per cent reduction in carbon emissions in a single year. That is why we need to cut emissions early, and to cut them consistently.

We stand by that position. The statutory instrument that is before us today does not demand early action and we cannot support it. The minister repeats that the Government is following the UK CCC's advice, and is bettering it, even. He believes that we can do better in 2011 and 2012 than the UK CCC suggests—not much better, but a little better. If we can do better in those two years, why are there no knock-on improvements over the trajectory that is set out for the years to follow? If the UK CCC has missed some policy measures in its advice, as the Government is suggesting, how can we know that it has not missed others?

The minister tells us that nothing more can be done, and that no extra cuts can be made, and he asks that we put into law binding annual targets solely on the basis of his word. We cannot do that. The minister should have engaged with Opposition parties on the targets long before we got to this stage. He should have consulted us on the targets and made available the figures that were produced by his Government for us to study, as well as suggesting areas for improvement. He should have realised that the best way to get the targets right—targets that will truly place Scotland as a world-leader in the fight against climate change—is through co-operation, discussion and openness.

The minister should have set up an open-book working group at an early stage, for all parties along with Government officials and experts, to examine the figures, to examine potential policy moves and initiatives and to work together to determine the best possible emissions reductions trajectory for Scotland. He should have done that months ago. The Liberal Democrats would have been delighted to play a full and active role in such an important matter. He should still do it now. The Liberal Democrats will be delighted to play a full and active role in such an important matter. Such a working group, with cross-party involvement and access to all the figures, could take the time that is needed to gather all the facts and then return to Parliament with a set of annual targets that everyone in Parliament could be confident in, and that we could all agree are the best possible targets that Scotland should be aiming for.

I strongly suggest to the minister that he seek to withdraw the order that is in front of us today, that he allow such an open-book group to be set up and that he report back to Parliament on its findings.

By not setting the annual targets today, we will miss the first deadline under the 2009 act, which is regrettable. Let me make one thing clear, however: we will have missed it not because of petty politicking, as the First Minister implied earlier today, but because the climate change minister failed to engage properly, failed to consult properly and failed to treat the task with the respect that it deserves. The minister must take responsibility for that.

The Liberal Democrats believe that it would be a disappointment for the first deadline for setting annual targets to be missed, but it would be a travesty if we were to agree to annual targets that we do not think represent the best possible targets for Scotland to aim for. We want to work in a cross-party, constructive atmosphere to get the necessary agreements. We believe that the minister should withdraw the SSI that is before us today. If he does not, we cannot support it.

15:12

Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab): The Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee voted down the SSI because we were disappointed by the lack of ambition and the corners that were being cut on the road to 2020. Each step on that road brings some cause for concern. This year's reduction target—0.05 per cent—is so low that it has been rounded down to zero. It is not like the one significant figure that is stated in the footnote to the annex; rather, it is a very insignificant figure, as it merely reiterates the projected reduction based on previous inaction.

For the next two years, we were first offered 0.5 per cent—hardly an ambitious figure. That has now been raised to 1 per cent for 2012, and I welcome the nature of the commitments involved in that, although the new figure still lacks ambition. The 2013 target looks good, but it is there only because of action at Europe level. Even that has now dropped to offset the increase of the previous year.

The reduction is shown as 3 per cent per year to 2020, but closer examination shows that that is another rounded figure. It is lower to start with—it does not actually reach 3 per cent until 2018. By the time it reaches an average of 3 per cent, in 2020, we will have allowed another million tonnes of emissions.

The commitment to address issues around peat is very welcome, and it should have been part of the proposals all along. However, it is notable that the revisions still show the same figures for 2013 and beyond. That means that anything that is offered is purely a temporary gain, with no long-term gains expected as a result of the earlier action. Surely if the peat provisions are significant and carry through, that should have been reflected in bigger CO₂ reductions from 2013. It is vital for statutory agencies to be directed to deliver peatland restoration. Key agencies need to work together to help deliver restoration on both state-controlled and private land.

The Forestry Commission should review deep peat and identify areas for restoration and planning authorities should enforce restoration conditions. Also, there should be targeted promotion of Scotland's rural development programme funds, including measures to cover 100 per cent of a site. Scottish Water should use its priority catchment management fund to deliver peatland restoration and the Scottish Government should use start-up funding to attract additional European funds.

I appreciate that the minister is concerned about missing deadlines, but it is more important to get this right and to send out the right message about our commitment and the commitment that we want others to make. Rejecting the SSI will not prevent the Government from pressing ahead with any plans it has to address climate change. Allowing it to pass will, however, make it look as if we are prepared to settle for what is in it, and that we are not stretching ourselves sufficiently.

We should reach 3 per cent long before 2018. As we have already missed opportunities to press ahead, we are not going to reach 3 per cent in the next few years, but surely if we shift up a gear now, we can do better than the order proposes.

I agree with Alison McInnes. I ask the minister to withdraw the order and to work together around

the table with the other parties to achieve the consensus about which Alex Johnstone spoke.

15:16

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Since we passed the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 almost a year ago, the First Minister and others have been very happy to strut the world's stage, casting themselves as the world leaders on climate change and talking about the consensus that was built up on the 42 per cent target. Alex Johnstone and others have talked about the value of that consensus, but frankly it is not enough for Government or for Parliament, a year on from the passage of that act and while those long-term aspirations remain mere aspirations, to keep patting ourselves on the back for achieving that consensus, which was only ever built up on the long-term targets but never managed to cover the steps along the way or how to get there.

We should remember that there are just 10 years in which to achieve that ambitious 42 per cent cut. We need to make urgent progress, and no fair assessment of the order could call it a demonstration of urgency—quite the reverse. It proposes a flat-line target of no emissions cuts at all for this year, after three years of the Scottish National Party's version of world leadership. It proposes barely any more cuts than that until halfway through the next parliamentary session—0 per cent, 0.5 per cent, and 1 per cent. Even the fractional addition in 2012, which was brought in after the committee's decision last week, does not feed through to subsequent years. That represents almost zero impact on cumulative emissions during those years.

The proposed percentages are a fraction of the SNP's manifesto commitment of 3 per cent, which it retained when it came to office, saying that it was a policy commitment. However, they are also actually lower than the cuts in emissions that we saw during the years before the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 was even written. For several years, we saw something in the ball park of 1 per cent per year cuts.

This year, progress has stalled. The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 was supposed to accelerate progress but, instead, we are being asked to accept non-existent cuts and a slackening-off of progress. The principle of having annual targets in the act was supposed to hold ministers to account for their actions during their terms of office. Under the order, it seems that we are not to see serious cuts until the next Government and climate change minister, of whichever political party, is in place. Even then, it seems that the majority of deep cuts will come from changes in the European emissions trading

scheme, not from changes in policy or action here in Scotland.

There is a danger of serious buck-passing, with each Government coming in and saying, "Well the last lot were a bit rubbish, weren't they? It's going to take us a few years to get started now, you know." We need a trajectory that sets its ambition from the word go.

I did not want to be here opposing an order setting the first batch of annual targets. I do not think that anyone wanted to be here doing that. No doubt there will be great disappointment out there among the tens of thousands of people who lobbied us hard for a strong climate change act. They had the desire to see urgent and radical action, and for Scotland to become the first place in the world to begin to do what the developed world must do to contribute to human survival, which is to live within our means. The order does not reflect that kind of ambition. I cannot vote for it, the Scottish Green Party cannot support it, and I urge its rejection at decision time.

15:20

Stewart Stevenson: I will briefly address some of the points that have arisen. It was suggested that the 42 per cent target did not come from the Committee on Climate Change, but it did. The committee produced two figures, 34 per cent and 42 per cent, and we incorporated both in our proposals at an early stage of the bill. When it was clear that there was support in the Parliament as a whole for the 42 per cent target, we reversed our decision and made the target 42 per cent—a figure that came from the Committee on Climate Change and was based on European targets going up to 30 per cent. Sarah Boyack now appears to want us to break the law that we have just passed. I am not clear on this, but she appears to be suggesting that we bring forward proposals and policies in advance of our setting the targets, although the act requires us to do that afterwards.

Let me talk about some of the interventions. Peatland restoration is an excellent idea, which is why we brought it in. We expect that it will be included in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change inventory in Cancún, in December. However, we must be aware that, like many interventions, it makes things worse for two years, not better, because as peatlands that have dried out are rehydrogenated, the CO₂ is released from the peat before we get the long-term benefit. It is for such reasons that many interventions will not necessarily deliver over the short term.

Cathy Peattie properly said that, whatever happens today, the Government can continue to

bring forward its policy initiatives on the subject. Of course, we will bring forward a wide range of initiatives. However, if Parliament rejects the order today, there is a real danger not that the Government will stop bringing forward initiatives, but that wider society and businesses will take that as a signal that the issue no longer matters to Parliament. Tens of thousands of people lobbied Parliament on the subject—that is absolutely clear—and the advice that the committee received was that, yes, Parliament should set the minimum standards and challenge the Government to meet them. We have made offers to various parties that would help us to do that. Curiously enough, in the immediate aftermath of the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee's rejection of the order in its original form, we tested the new order with the Labour Party and said that we would lay it only if Labour members would support it. We twice asked them and they twice said that they would support it. They have resiled from that position and have placed—

Sarah Boyack: Will the minister take an intervention?

Stewart Stevenson: I am in my last 20 seconds—I cannot do that.

Sarah Boyack: That is not true.

Stewart Stevenson: Presiding Officer, am I being accused of something?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Certainly, the time is coming to an end, Mr Stevenson, one way or another.

Stewart Stevenson: I commend the order to Parliament and I absolutely refute what is being suggested from the Labour benches.

Margo MacDonald (Lothians) (Ind): Presiding Officer, can I move that we suspend the standing orders?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I do not know whether that is meant to be a point of order. I do not know whether we can suspend the standing orders, but I am certainly not going to.

Waiting Times

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan): The next item of business is a debate on motion S3M-6393, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on progress towards the 18-week referral to treatment target. I reiterate what I said earlier: we have absolutely no spare time and I will need to stop members when they reach their time limit.

15:24

The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing (Nicola Sturgeon): I welcome Murdo Fraser to his first debate as the Tory health spokesperson. I am sure that colleagues on all sides of the chamber will agree that the parliamentary health community is a select and elite bunch of people to which it is not easy to gain access. Any body that has Ross Finnie as a member must be select and elite.

I welcome this opportunity to debate a topic that we all know is really important to all our constituents. Two weeks ago, we debated the new national health service quality strategy. I said then that patients want more from the NHS than speedy treatment; they want treatment of the highest quality in all its aspects, which is why the quality strategy is so important. I will say more about that later.

The focus on quality in its widest sense should not and will not reduce our commitment to ensuring the quickest possible access to treatment for patients. Waiting for a diagnosis when you are worried that you might be ill and waiting for treatment when you know that you are ill are undoubtedly among the most anxious and stressful experiences of people's lives, and it is right that we continue to do everything possible to reduce that stress and anxiety.

The good news is that, over the past few years, the NHS has made considerable progress in reducing waiting times. Some of us will remember, in the early days of this Parliament, getting letters from people who had been waiting a year or even 18 months for treatment. We can all be grateful that that is a thing of the past. As I said in the debate on the quality strategy, both the present and the previous Administrations can take credit for the progress that has been made. The fact that a sharp focus on reducing waiting times, backed by considerable resources, has been a priority for both Administrations is welcome.

However, when we took office three years ago, although progress had been made, waiting times were still too long—people faced a wait of six months for a first out-patient appointment and for in-patient treatment. That is not intended to be a

party-political point. The commitments that were made in the Scottish National Party and Labour manifestos in the 2007 election—they are referred to in the Labour amendment, which we are happy to support—suggest that we both recognised that. It is encouraging that we have seen a real acceleration of progress over the past three years. Under this Government, the maximum waiting time standard for out-patient consultations and in-patient and day-case treatment is now 12 weeks.

The waiting time figures that were published on Tuesday of this week show that, as of the end of March this year, the NHS is not just meeting but in some respects exceeding those targets. Patients are having their first out-patient consultation within 12 weeks of referral. That is all the more impressive when we consider that the guarantee now includes referrals from other sources, such as consultant-to-consultant referrals, not just referrals from a general practitioner or a dentist. As a result of that change, about 93,500 more patients are benefiting from quicker access. In addition, 99.8 per cent of patients are waiting four weeks or less for the eight key diagnostic tests—a level of performance that is two weeks better than the six-week standard—and 99.5 per cent of patients are waiting less than nine weeks for in-patient and day-case treatment, which is three weeks better than the current standard of 12 weeks. Those are the shortest waiting times that have ever been delivered by the NHS in Scotland.

Against that background, it is no exaggeration to say that the transformation that has been achieved in recent years has been remarkable. Not that long ago, the level of performance that is now being achieved would have been inconceivable, and I am sure that all members will want to pass on our thanks to all those front-line staff in the health service, and all those who support them behind the scenes, for their hard work in tackling the issue with such success.

The progress that I have described is all the more impressive when we consider that the so-called hidden waiting lists were abolished at the start of 2008. That was one of our early commitments and within a year, 30,000 patients were removed from those lists. We now have a situation in which patients who were previously excluded from waiting time standards now have the shortest waiting times that the country has ever experienced for access to health care. I hope that members from across the Parliament welcome that fact. Audit Scotland certainly acknowledged it in its “Managing NHS waiting lists” report, in which it stated that waiting times had

“come down considerably in recent years”

and that

“People who would previously have had an ASC are now waiting for a shorter period of time”.

That highlights the progress that has been made.

Another of our early commitments was to improve the performance of the NHS against the 62-day cancer treatment target. That target should have been met in 2005, but when we took office performance was still 10 per cent short of meeting it, so in 2007 we made a clear commitment that the target of a maximum wait of two months from urgent referral to treatment for all cancers would be delivered by this Administration. I am pleased to report that sustained delivery of that target has now been achieved for more than a year. The most recently published data reported 96.5 per cent compliance, which represents an increase of 12 per cent since the beginning of 2007.

That progress is welcomed but, as I am sure we all agree and we will hear in today’s debate, we can and should do more, particularly for the patients who face the trauma, uncertainty and life-changing experiences that cancer brings. That is why NHS boards are working to deliver the new 31-day treatment target for all cancer patients by the end of next year. That will provide a fairer and more equitable service for all cancer patients after they are diagnosed, whatever the route of referral to diagnosis.

There is no doubt in my mind that timely access to health care is an important aspect of its quality. The benefits of shorter waits for patients and their families are clear: earlier diagnosis and quicker decisions on treatment lead to better outcomes. There is less unnecessary worry for patients and less postcode variation, which is also important.

That is why we have set an even more ambitious target. From the end of next year, patients can expect to be seen and treated within 18 weeks from referral by their general practitioner. Based on the performance that we have seen so far and which I have narrated this afternoon, we can have a great deal of confidence that Scotland is well on track to deliver the challenging target.

Having said that, I do not underestimate for a second the enormous task that the NHS faces in delivering that ambitious vision. We have made a good start, but it will require innovation, modernisation and service redesign to meet the target by the end of next year. It will also require prudent management of resources in what are very tight budgetary situations. That is why we are working with the NHS to provide the support and resources to meet the challenge, and in that regard I am happy to accept the Tory amendment, making it clear that continued progress on waiting times must remain a priority notwithstanding pressure on resources.

Unfortunately, I am not able to accept the Liberal amendment, although I have every faith that genuine sentiments lie behind it. It is of course the case that decisions about treatment are, and always should be, taken by clinicians, and it is also hugely important to ensure timely access to follow-up appointments—I certainly agree with that part of the Liberal Democrat amendment. However, it is important that we have in place national maximum waiting time guarantees. Maximum waiting times are just that—maximums—and they should never fetter a clinician's discretion to decide that a patient needs earlier treatment. It is important that there is a clear framework of maximum waiting times to give patients certainty about the maximum period of time that they will expect to wait.

I am confident that the significant progress on tackling waiting times that we have already seen will continue thanks above all else to the dedication and determination of NHS staff to deliver the best possible service for patients.

As I said at the outset, although patients understandably want speedy treatment and quick access to care, they want much more than that from the NHS. They want a health service that is compassionate and which treats them with dignity; they want to see partnership between clinicians and patients; they want services to be provided in clean and safe care environments; they want hospital food to be good; they want continuity through their journey of care; and of course they want to have confidence in the quality and effectiveness of any treatment.

Achieving all that, for every patient, every time they use the NHS, is what the new quality strategy is all about, and I am happy that the Parliament had the opportunity to debate it just two weeks ago. As we move forward, we want access to care to be as swift as possible—and we will continue to ensure that—but we also want a health service that puts patients and the quality of patient care at its absolute heart. I am happy to move the motion in my name.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the progress that has been made in reducing waiting times for patients; applauds the commitment, dedication and hard work of all NHS staff who have contributed to delivering significant improvements for the people of Scotland, and acknowledges that NHSScotland is on track to deliver the Scottish Government's challenging whole-journey waiting time target of 18 weeks by the end 2011.

15:34

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I am sure that members will indulge me if I start by paying tribute to Mary Scanlon. I will not embarrass her with a long and glowing testimony, given that such

a testimony from the Labour benches would undoubtedly not go down too well among her colleagues. Suffice it to say that her contribution to health was always well informed and, although there were many occasions on which we did not necessarily agree, I always found that she cared passionately about the NHS. I am pleased that she will continue to contribute, as part of the Tories' health team, and I look forward to debating with her—robustly, of course—in the months to come.

I welcome Murdo Fraser to the health brief. He can be in no doubt that we face a challenging agenda, with tightening budgets and increasing numbers of people who require NHS treatment. I look forward to the insights that he will bring to our debates. Given his previous form, I am sure that those insights will be sharp, to the point and sometimes painful. I recommend that he continues to monitor my website, as he did in relation to minimum unit pricing, because he might then agree with me on a wider range of issues—who knows?

Today's debate is about the success that has been achieved by our hard-working staff in the NHS—doctors, nurses and administrators. It is right that we should recognise their efforts and applaud their commitment to driving down waiting times. Much has been said in recent times and during the election campaign about protecting front-line services and having fewer pen-pushers and administrators—we have all been guilty of making such comments, to varying degrees. Although we need to review and prioritise what we do, I praise the administrators and managers who have worked hard alongside clinicians to give effect to the policy of driving down waiting times. What they have achieved is phenomenal.

The scale of the task was enormous. In the years of the previous Conservative Administration, there was an 18-month waiting time target. I say that not to make a political point but in recognition of the distance that the NHS has travelled since then. The Labour-Liberal Democrat Scottish Executive set out a new approach to waiting times in "Fair to All, Personal to Each: The next steps for NHSScotland", in which waiting times were considered in terms of the overall patient journey. The approach was welcomed, as was the achievement a year ahead of schedule of the target to treat in-patients within 18 weeks.

I acknowledge and welcome the manifesto commitments from Labour and the Scottish National Party to move to an 18-week whole-journey treatment time and I welcome the progress that has been made. I support the cabinet secretary's approach, which is to bear down further on waiting times and set new and more challenging standards.

I have a little sympathy for Ross Finnie's argument. However, targets have been essential in driving down waiting times. We would not have made the genuine year-on-year progress on reducing waiting times that has been achieved if we had not set out our clear expectations of the NHS and if the cabinet secretary had not backed up those expectations with resources. It is about not political targets, but targets that are agreed in partnership with the NHS, so that they are realistic and achievable. I acknowledge the desire for flexibility, but it would not be right to take our foot off the pedal at this time.

I pay tribute to Malcolm Chisholm, who when he was Minister for Health and Community Care had the foresight to take the Golden Jubilee national hospital, formerly the HCI hospital, into NHS control. The hospital has worked successfully as a national waiting times centre, and the additional capacity that was created directly contributed to health boards' ability to manage their waiting lists and achieve the targets that were set.

We started with a waiting time guarantee of 18 weeks from GP appointment to being seen by a consultant. That was reduced to 15 weeks from 31 March last year and to 12 weeks from 31 March 2010. Of course, the overwhelming majority of patients are seen within nine weeks for in-patient and day-case treatment, and the gap is narrowing for out-patients. I have no hesitation in commending the cabinet secretary for that reduction in waiting time.

There is no doubt that someone who is ill, perhaps seriously, will be extremely worried while they wait for a diagnosis and treatment. There is an impact on the health and wellbeing of not just the individual but their family and friends. We are fearful of the unknown and we often imagine the worst, so it is critical that we get the best treatment as quickly as possible. We have all heard heartbreaking stories about people who waited months if not years for treatment and about the impact of that wait on their lives. It is right that such stories are consigned to the dustbin of history.

In that context, I ask the cabinet secretary to consider whether it is possible to go further. As members know, there are different waiting time guarantees for cancer, which the cabinet secretary set out. The national waiting time target for cancer treatment that Labour first set in 2005 was 62 days. The SNP then halved that in setting a target of 31 days, which is to be achieved by December 2011. Given that cancer continues to cast a dark shadow over Scotland, the Scottish Labour Party manifesto for the recent general election committed to a new target that would have reduced the waiting time from one month to two weeks for seeing a cancer specialist and getting

results. We all know—and experts confirm—that early detection and treatment of cancer means better rates of survival. Therefore, I urge the cabinet secretary to look again at the waiting time for cancer treatment. If she can reduce that time further, that would receive unanimous support from members not just on the Labour benches, but across the chamber.

Nicola Sturgeon: In the spirit of consensus, let me say that we will continue to look at how much further we can drive down cancer waiting times. I hope that Jackie Baillie will agree with me, which I invite her to do, that we must ensure that such targets are sustainable. The 62-day target was not set in 2005 but was meant to be met by that time, yet it took some time after that for that to be achieved. We have now set a target of 31 days as the next step in the journey. It is right that we should make that sustainable, but I am sure that we would all agree that we should seek to go further as and when we can.

Jackie Baillie: I am happy to agree that any target that we set should be sustainable, should be backed up by resources and should be capable of delivery.

I ask the cabinet secretary to consider waiting time targets in further areas, which I know other colleagues will expand on. In particular, I ask her to consider waiting time targets in the following three areas: in vitro fertilisation treatment; bariatric surgery; and adult mental health treatment.

With regard to the third of those, I particularly welcome the new waiting time guarantee on child and adolescent mental health services, which followed a Health and Sport Committee inquiry into the issue. I remember fondly my brief sojourn on the committee in the course of that inquiry. I know that considerable challenges arise in the provision of adult mental health services, but no one could fail to be moved by the recent plight of the young woman who lived in a car park outside a Lanarkshire hospital, desperate for help and struggling to cope with her mental health. Access to services when they are needed is of course desirable, but we all understand that ensuring that supply matches demand takes time. Therefore, access to services after a reasonable waiting time is widely understood. Will the cabinet secretary look again at including a waiting time target for adult mental health services?

Secondly, my colleague Richard Simpson has previously highlighted issues about the availability of bariatric services. The cabinet secretary's recent announcement on new provision at the Golden Jubilee hospital is particularly welcome. When that service has bedded in, will she consider whether it would be appropriate to provide a waiting time for that?

Nicola Sturgeon *rose—*

Jackie Baillie: If I was not about to run out of time, I would happily give way.

Thirdly, will the Minister for Public Health and Sport, who I think has responsibility for this, do more to tackle the postcode lottery for IVF treatment? I recognise, as I think does the ministerial team, that the picture across the country is inconsistent. In the west, one health board has a waiting time of six months for treatment while another health board that operates from the same treatment centre has a waiting time of two years. In the east, the waiting time is three years. There are also inconsistent criteria. I had a constituent who would have had to wait two years, but when she was invited by the consultant to be treated privately was suddenly treated in a matter of months. We need to look at doing things differently. Many of the couples who seek such provision cannot wait any longer. I know that work is being undertaken, but its pace is quite slow so I wonder whether it could be hurried up.

Our health debates are usually robust, but often we join together to praise the work of the NHS. On this occasion, I think that the Parliament is most definitely proud of what the staff have achieved and will congratulate the Government on progress.

I move amendment S3M-6393.3, to insert at end:

“; welcomes the progress made by the previous Labour/ Liberal Democrat administration in setting a new approach in *Fair to All Personal to Each* whereby waiting is considered in terms of the overall patient journey and further welcomes the commitment to treat inpatients within 18 weeks being achieved a year ahead of schedule, paving the way for Labour and SNP 2007 manifesto commitments of an 18-week referral to treatment target, and notes that this compares with a waiting time target of 18 months set by the last Conservative administration.”

15:43

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

This is my first speech in my new role as Conservative shadow cabinet secretary for health and wellbeing, so I thank Nicola Sturgeon and Jackie Baillie for their warm welcome. I am very conscious of the fact that I am breaking into what has until now been—with apologies to Mr Finnie—very much a woman's world. I am sure that Mr Finnie will welcome the fact that I bring some gender balance to the front benches for health debates.

At the outset, I pay tribute to my predecessor, Mary Scanlon, for all her excellent work on the health brief in the previous three years and, indeed, in previous parliamentary sessions. Of course, Mary Scanlon remains a very important member of the Conservative health team and will continue to sit on the Health and Sport Committee,

where I know her contributions are valued. I also pay tribute to Jackson Carlaw, who is moving on to pastures new from his work as shadow minister for public health and sport. I welcome back to the health brief Dr Nanette Milne, who brings a huge wealth of experience both in the field and, indeed, in the Parliament.

The Government's motion welcomes the progress that has been made in reducing waiting times for patients. It would be churlish to do other than join in that welcome. If we expected Jackie Baillie to be churlish this afternoon, we were disappointed.

However, I strike a note of caution. In the past, the Conservatives have voiced scepticism about an overemphasis on target setting within the NHS. Waiting times should not be considered the most important indicator of performance, because overall patient outcomes and a range of other measures are more important. For that reason, we have sympathy with the terms of the Liberal Democrat amendment in Mr Finnie's name and, in the spirit of the new Conservative and Liberal Democrat relationship, we will support the Liberal Democrat amendment. [*Interruption.*] I see that Mr Finnie is thrilled by the support that he has from the Conservative benches.

Nevertheless, we should accept that waiting times are important to individuals and we have undoubtedly seen real progress in recent years in bringing waiting times down. Like Nicola Sturgeon, I remember that waiting lists and waiting times were a regular feature of parliamentary debate and tussles at First Minister's question time in previous parliamentary sessions. The fact that we rarely hear those issues discussed in the Parliament and rarely hear individual cases being raised at question time speaks for itself about the welcome progress that has been made and the hard work and dedication of individuals in the NHS. In the past decade, substantial extra sums have gone into the NHS. Although we might question whether we have had value for money from all that additional investment, the reduction in waiting times is one area in which we can see that the money has had an impact.

It is to the vexed issue of funding that I must now turn, in referring to the amendment in my name. The Conservative party believes strongly in the NHS and we believe that NHS funding must be protected at a time of severe downward pressure on the public finances. I and my family use the NHS, like all other members of the Conservative team, and we want to ensure that we have a strong, well-funded public health system. That is why we are pleased to welcome the Westminster coalition Government's commitment to guarantee real-terms increases in health spending in each year of the Parliament. That does not mean that

there will be a standstill in front-line NHS funding, because it is complemented by a commitment to cut the cost of NHS administration by a third and transfer resources to support nurses and doctors on the front line.

I believe that the lead that Westminster has set should be followed by the Scottish Government. That is why my amendment asks that the Scottish Government makes a similar commitment to that of the UK Government to protect health spending.

Nicola Sturgeon: I am happy to say to Murdo Fraser what I said to Jackson Carlaw—who has joined us in the chamber—in our previous health debate. As the Government protected the health budget this year, we made it clear that we will continue to do that. If the coalition Government follows through on its welcome commitment to secure real-terms increases for the NHS, all the Barnett consequentials from that will be applied to the health service. That is a sign of the great commitment that we all have to the national health service.

Murdo Fraser: I welcome that response from the cabinet secretary. I did not think that my first run out as health spokesperson for the Conservatives would turn out to be such a love-in, but there we are.

Protecting the overall health budget does not mean that we will not still have challenges. Demographic changes, the fact that people are living longer and increases in the cost of treatment and drugs will mean that there is additional demand for money within the NHS. Demand is always likely to exceed supply, which means that there will be a need to reconfigure services from time to time.

As we heard earlier this afternoon at question time, we should not get hung up on protecting either individual establishments or levels of employment in the NHS, which seems to obsess the Labour Party. What matters is not inputs but outputs, and in particular the level of patient care. We have as much of a duty to drive through efficiency savings in the NHS—to free up more money for front-line services—as we have to find efficiency savings in other parts of the public sector. We should never forget that the pressure on the public finances comes as part of Labour's legacy or that, had Labour's job tax gone through, it would have removed £40 million from the Scottish NHS budget.

I welcome what has been done on waiting times for patients, I join others in applauding the hard-working NHS staff who have helped to achieve that, and I welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to protecting NHS spending.

I have pleasure in moving amendment S3M-6393.1, to insert at end:

“, and urges the Scottish Government to ensure that such progress is not compromised by either reductions in its budget or by efficiency savings within NHS boards.”

15:49

Ross Finnie (West of Scotland) (LD): I am in a rather different position from the cabinet secretary and the Labour health spokesperson in so far as they were prepared to lavish praise on the new Conservative spokesperson before they had heard his contribution, whereas I am in the position of deciding whether I should do so after having heard his remarks. I am pleased to advise Mr Fraser that, despite all that he has said, I am still pleased to welcome him in his new capacity.

I do, however, have concerns about his arithmetic. He was at pains to point out the apparent female domination of health spokespeople in the chamber. Perhaps I have lost my sense of arithmetic, but as far as I am aware, the cabinet secretary, the very able health minister, the spokesperson for the Labour Party and of course Mary Scanlon, who occupied the position of Conservative health spokesperson, comes to four. By my arithmetic, I am one and Jamie Stone, who I think is discussing crofting as we speak, makes two. Dr Richard Simpson, as I understand it, is a member of the male fraternity, as is Jackson Carlaw. That comes to four each. If that is female domination—we will not go there.

Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): I hate to embarrass Mr Finnie, but I am female, and I am part of the health team in the Conservative party. That makes it five-four.

Ross Finnie: I did not wish to insult Dr Nanette Milne; I was merely confining myself to two spokespeople per party. If she wishes to expand the numbers in each party, we could go on all afternoon; in the interests of time, we will not.

This is an important debate. Liberal Democrats are happy to welcome the significant progress that has been made in reducing waiting times throughout Scotland and, in some cases, in reducing the variations across boards. Not only did we have very long waiting times; we also had some serious postcode lotteries. Unfortunately, that persists in some areas—I will return to that in a moment. However, the general principle of what has been achieved should not in any way be understated and the Government deserves credit for it. As the cabinet secretary pointed out, all those who work in the health service and have delivered on this important improvement in patient care deserve every praise for what has been achieved.

The debate now has to move on. It is not about taking feet off accelerators or suggesting that the targets that have been set are not important in

themselves, but in recognising the improvement that has been made and the mindset that has been changed in the health service, it is also timely that we should look to see exactly where we are and what we are trying to achieve.

The initial target was enormous and therefore it was very much about simply bringing down numbers, but the health secretary recognises that it is not just a numbers game. There are qualitative aspects that cannot and must not be ignored.

Initially, it was easier to concentrate on certain elective procedures, as the British Medical Association has pointed out. That is fine and it set benchmarks that were able to be achieved, but some of them represent only a very small percentage of the total number of procedures for which patients seek improvements in waiting times. Bariatric surgery and IVF treatment were mentioned. There are other areas in which we must be clear that equality of access to treatment must be part of what we are seeking to do.

My amendment is about improving on where we are. It is not intended to suggest that we need to take our foot off the accelerator or change the line of progress; it is to suggest that, having made that improvement, we now have to reflect on whether we can improve the quality of delivery. We have to accept that, across the range of conditions that are subject to guarantees, and some that ought to be subject to guarantees, the clinical need of the patient should always take precedence over fulfilling any other dogmatic target that is set. As I said a moment ago, this is not just a numbers game. That is important.

As this policy and its delivery have been developed, we have come to a point at which we can introduce—as the cabinet secretary has done, in many areas—a degree of improvement in the standards that are to be applied. That is critical in this delivery process.

As the waiting time debate moves on, there are elements that can be added. Earlier, that would not have been possible, due to the size and quantum of the task. Now, however, having made this incredible achievement, we should not lose sight of the fact that we are not simply driving forward numbers, we are driving forward patient care. That, and the clinical excellence that is needed, should be part and parcel of what we do.

It is in that spirit that I move the amendment in my name. I am, of course, delighted to have the support of the Conservative party, but that is Conservative party support only—it goes no further than that.

I move amendment S3M-6393.2, to insert at end:

“, believes that the achievement of the 18-week Referral to Treatment standard must not be at the expense of patients waiting to access services not covered by the guarantee or patients waiting for follow-up appointments; recognises that clinical need and patient care should always take precedence over fulfilling political targets, and therefore considers that the achievement of maximum waiting times should ultimately be at the discretion of clinicians.”

15:56

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): I, too, welcome Murdo Fraser to his new position. There have been so many welcomes in this debate that I think that I shall go to the *Official Report* tomorrow and hit control-F to see how many there were in total.

I say to Murdo Fraser that the gender balance on the Health and Sport Committee is equal: we have four men and four women. He can rest assured that he is not a lone male soul wandering about in the health portfolio.

I do not want to reprise everything that has been said about waiting times. Of course, we all congratulate everyone—including administrative staff, cleaners and so on—who has increased the efficiency and the tender loving care in our NHS. I note what Jackie Baillie said about cancer treatment times improving—we are so consensual today; it is lovely, is it not? That has made a huge difference, because, when people hear the C word, they think that their life is ending, and that feeling can get worse as they make themselves ill waiting to be treated.

I turn my attention to the Patient Rights (Scotland) Bill. Ross Finnie is right to say that we must not get hung up on waiting times at the expense of care. I know that that is not the cabinet secretary's position. The issues belong together. I am interested in the fact that the Patient Rights (Scotland) Bill will introduce a further provision around the treatment time guarantee that will, in certain cases, guarantee a period of 12 weeks from referral to treatment, although that is not an absolute.

Ross Finnie expressed concern that certain patients might be parked somewhere, just so that the NHS can meet its time guarantees, but I take solace from section 8 of the bill, which says that if there is a breach of the treatment time guarantee,

“The Health Board must ... make such arrangements as are necessary to ensure that the agreed treatment starts at the next available opportunity”.

It also says that, in making those arrangements, the health board

“must not give priority to the start of any treatment where such prioritisation would, in the Health Board's opinion, be detrimental to another patient with a greater clinical need for treatment”.

There, in black and white, it is stated that, at the end of the day, clinical need must take priority. Further, section 8(3)(c) says that the health board “must have regard to other relevant factors”,

which is a catch-all provision that will deal with, for example, circumstances in which it would not be clinically appropriate for someone to be treated in that timescale, perhaps because of some other condition that they have.

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): The point that the member is making is excellent, but I want to point out that, quite correctly, under their duty of care, health professionals would be acting unethically if they did not treat someone who required that treatment, irrespective of whatever targets were set by us.

Christine Grahame: Indeed, but it is important to set national targets so that we have accountability and something that we can measure. We can at last stop the postcode lottery that I know exists in some areas. The work is incremental, but great progress is being made.

I am glad that we have acknowledged what the previous Administrations and my own Government have done, because we all want to achieve the same end, and it cannot all be fixed in a oner. This Parliament, through its very existence and its concentration on health issues, can move things forward. There is a fairly consensual view among members from all parties on many issues—although not on others, I say to Jackie Baillie.

To focus only on the issue of waiting times, as if that is somehow the antithesis of high standards of care, is the wrong way to view the issue. It involves a balance; waiting times can be measured, and they give people a sense of where they ought to be. They can be used as a benchmark, but they will never work against the clinical treatment of a person. If treatment is not required at a certain time or is not suitable to be carried out within the guarantee, it will not be done, and someone else will not be left to perish untreated elsewhere.

16:01

Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate, and I draw members' attention to my entry in the register of interests.

It is evident to all that the Parliament can rightly be proud of the waiting time reductions during the past 11 years. Under Labour there was a dramatic improvement, which Jackie Baillie outlined, and we welcome the progress that has continued under the current Administration.

Those improvements are achieved not by members in the chamber, but through the commitment and dedication of all NHS staff to the patients that they serve. In many situations they have exceeded the targets that we have set, and I join other members in thanking them.

I welcome the commitment in the Patient Rights (Scotland) Bill that was introduced in March to reduce the waiting time guarantee to 12 weeks. It is vital that good service provision and efficiency remain a high priority, and that such positive targets are not put under threat from recently emerging front-line staff cuts.

Progress has been made in many specialisms, and much of the focus has been on meeting the waiting time guarantees for those with a physical illness. Members will be aware of my long-standing interest in mental health. I represent a very rural constituency, and I am aware that the challenges that are faced by people with a mental illness can be compounded in rural settings. I am concerned that there is still a significant gap in waiting time guarantees for adults requiring mental health treatment: there is no timeframe for such treatment, or even a requirement for adults who need mental health treatment to be treated quickly. Mental health has historically been excluded from service provision targets, which undermines access to good patient referral, care and treatment. That is hugely detrimental to the one in four people in Scotland who will experience a mental health problem during their lives. We must counter it by ensuring that fair health service provision and targets are extended to meet the needs of all in our communities.

Health, as members are all too keenly aware, is a matter of not only physical fitness but mental wellbeing. Considering health needs in such a holistic manner is vital in order to meet the very real health concerns that Scotland faces. It seems to make little sense that the 18-week referral to treatment commitment provides exclusively for physical health and does not include mental health. The evaluation of NHS Scotland's performance against health improvement, efficiency, access and treatment—HEAT—targets includes a commitment that, by March 2013, children and adolescents will have to wait no more than 26 weeks from referral to treatment. I welcome that, but there is still no such commitment for adults. The commitment to a 26-week journey for children and young people with mental health issues, when compared with the 18-week target for physical health issues, suggests a disparity in prioritising physical health over the mental health of the young in our communities.

The HEAT targets state that new psychological therapies are to be agreed by November this year, but it is not clear what the maximum waiting time

for access to such treatments will be. The Patient Rights (Scotland) Bill—disappointingly for those who work and advocate in the mental health profession, and for those who are personally dealing with such complex illnesses—fails to include mental health treatment in its 12-week treatment guarantee. There is an opportunity to improve mental health service provision through targeted referral to treatment guarantees in that area.

According to the Public Audit Committee report on mental health services that was published last week, there is, across the board, a general lack of outcome measures for mental health treatment. What does that say about our concern for the high proportion of Scots—including our own family and friends—for whom mental health is a constant struggle? Are we offering the best support so that the national health service can respond well to the needs of the one in four Scots—children, adolescents and adults—who face mental ill health?

Our health service needs to be viewed much more holistically, with both physical and mental illnesses given the same commitment. That requires the input of not only primary health care providers but community groups in a multidisciplinary approach. One initial way of signalling a commitment to a broader notion of health care would be to equalise the time of referral for both physical and mental ill health, ensuring that provision is fair for all.

I am sure that the cabinet secretary and the minister understand and appreciate the concerns of those suffering from mental ill health, the impact of which can be just as traumatic and severe as that of many physical conditions. I therefore urge the cabinet secretary and her team to look again at the issue and to see in what ways people who require treatment for mental ill health can be given a timeframe within which they should reasonably receive treatment. Furthermore, I ask whether any workforce planning has been done to look at what can be achieved and where the gaps are in the field of mental health, because that is a key issue in being able to move matters forward. I also ask, finally, whether the cabinet secretary is confident that the provisions under the Patient Rights (Scotland) Bill are not discriminating against people suffering from mental ill health.

Nicola Sturgeon *rose—*

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Shona Robison) *rose—*

Karen Gillon: I am in my last 30 seconds; I have to finish.

This is an important issue. Across the parties, we can move forward on it. I understand the complexities that are involved, but for too long

people with mental ill health have been ignored or have been left on the sidelines. We have the opportunity to put them right up front and give them the service that they require.

16:07

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):

I thank Jackie Baillie and Murdo Fraser for their generous comments. Equally, I pay tribute to my colleague Jackson Carlaw for his commitment, passion and humour, which made it a pleasure to work with him on the health brief.

In supporting Murdo Fraser's amendment, I will highlight some consequences—unintended or not—that occur as a result of the tick-box culture to meet waiting time targets in the NHS. We can all agree on the drive for patients to receive the best-quality treatment, but that has to be at the time that they need it. That is the first problem with the target. As 99 per cent of doctors who took part in the BMA survey confirmed,

“Patient waiting times should be based on the individual patient's clinical needs—not political targets.”

I will give an example. A constituent in the Highlands was referred by his GP for a hip replacement some years ago, but that did not happen. He received cortisone injections, so he received treatment, although it may not have been the appropriate treatment, but a box was ticked and success was marked. Now, after three injections, he has only recently got on to the waiting list for surgery. He is in serious pain, he has had to give up work and he cannot walk. Would it not have been better to have given him the hip replacement when he needed it, based on his individual, unique clinical need? Instead, despite his immobility and his serious pain, he is likely to wait another 18 weeks to keep the NHS within its targets. How can that be in any way helpful to his recovery and, I hope, his return to work?

The second point, which has been raised by other members, including Christine Grahame, is that waiting times are not the only or indeed the best indicator of health performance. Could patient outcomes, which Murdo Fraser mentioned, readmission rates and the millions of pounds paid out in clinical negligence not all be considered?

That brings me to the many conditions that, as other members have mentioned, become subject to Cinderella services because they are not included in waiting time targets.

I am with Karen Gillon on the issue of mental health. For far too long—for months, years or decades—people have been parked on anti-depressants because of the long waits for psychological and psychiatric support. I know that many GPs do not bother referring patients with

stress, anxiety and mild depression in the knowledge that there are long waits. The lack of early diagnosis and early intervention results in a mild condition becoming a chronic and enduring mental health problem.

Jackie Baillie mentioned infertility. There is not only an age bar with respect to infertility; there are long waiting lists. That forces many people to find their own private treatment. Many people I know in the Highlands have remortgaged their homes to pay for treatment. Many people who can ill afford to do so are being forced to go private.

I will give another example. I am being extremely consensual. Yesterday, Andy Kerr and I, as, respectively, the convener and the vice convener of the cross-party group on ME and chronic fatigue syndrome, listened to patients and clinicians who are working towards a Scottish good patient practice statement on ME, which Professor Lewis Ritchie described as

“bringing the condition out of the shadows”.

The patients and clinicians talked about their aim of getting an accurate diagnosis, recognition of the condition by GPs, consistency of treatment and referral to specialists. That is taken for granted for pretty well all conditions in Scotland, but with ME, there are so few specialists that referrals do not even take place.

I welcome the additional bariatric surgery at the Golden Jubilee national hospital, but, if my figures are correct, I understand that there are more than 2,000 people on the waiting list. With the number of operations that it is intended will take place each year, I think that we will find that it will be many years before the existing waiting list is got through, let alone any additions to it.

Finally, the pursuit of targets means that health boards have little time for innovations, such as telehealth and other e-health opportunities, whose implementation can be much more in patients' interests. I am talking about modern, innovative, high-quality care. Like other members of the Health and Sport Committee, I have been shocked by the ease with which health boards can make efficiency savings. I think that it was asked in the previous debate why such savings have not been being made for years if making them is so easy. However, I hope that the greater emphasis on value for money, a quality strategy and better treatment will encourage much-needed innovation and help to put patients' needs back at the heart of the NHS.

16:12

Ian McKee (Lothians) (SNP): I will begin by telling members about someone I know who lives in the city of Edinburgh. Around 15 years ago, his

doctor referred him for a hospital out-patient appointment. My friend is an obsessional timekeeper at the best of times, so he was mortified when extra-heavy traffic delayed his journey to the hospital and made him a little late for his appointment. He apologised to the receptionist. He said, “I’m very sorry I’m late. Will the doctor still see me?” The receptionist studied her paperwork intently. “Don’t worry, Mr Williams,” she said brightly after a moment, “I’ve found your name now. In fact, you’re not at all late. You see, your appointment isn’t for another year.” He had made the not uncommon mistake of taking note of the time, day and month, but he simply assumed that he was to be seen in three months rather than in 15 months, which was the waiting time for that out-patient department in those days.

It is true that his condition was not life threatening, but even minor conditions can cause a great deal of stress if they are not attended to reasonably promptly. Minor-sounding, vague symptoms can be the early harbingers of more serious diseases, and early treatment of them can be imperative. At one stage, waiting times were such a concern to me as a doctor that I—a passionate believer in a national health service that is free at the point of need—in desperation sometimes advised those who could afford to pay for a private consultation to do so. The specialist opinion often reassured the patient that nothing was serious, and those who needed treatment, although they still had to wait in a queue to use the national health service, found that the total referral-to-treatment time was drastically reduced. I hated doing that, but decided after a great deal of thought that the welfare of the individual patient was more important than my rather abstract principles.

How things have changed. The figures that ISD Scotland published last Monday show that, as of 31 March, 99.9 per cent of patients were waiting for less than 12 weeks for new out-patient appointments, and 99.5 per cent of those referred for in-patient and day-case treatment were waiting for less than nine weeks. That is an all-time low. The national health service is well on the way to meeting our demanding target of a whole-journey waiting time of 18 weeks by the end of 2011.

As members know, I am essentially a consensual sort of person, so it gives me a little pain to have to point out that NHS waiting times lengthened enormously under the Conservatives' watch, although I know that that was so long ago that it is impossible to blame personally those who grace the Conservative benches today. Again in the spirit of consensus, and not wishing to cause offence to Jackie Baillie, I freely admit that some of the groundwork for the dramatic improvements that we salute today was laid down in those otherwise dark days when Labour held sway in

this land. However, I must report with some sadness that sometimes Labour resorted, in my area at least, to reducing waiting list times by the innovative expedient of closing lists altogether. I say to Jackie Baillie, how good it is that we can have a common cause from time to time and how much better it would be if we extended that co-operation in other fields, such as the minimum unit pricing of alcohol.

Jackie Baillie: In that spirit of consensus, will the member consider backing our proposed amendments at stage 2 of the Alcohol etc (Scotland) Bill on alcohol treatment and testing orders and caffeinated alcohol?

Ian McKee: I will happily discuss those issues with Jackie Baillie when this debate is over.

Above all, credit must go to that legion of doctors, nurses and other health workers—including, dare I say it, administrators and managers—who have worked their socks off to make the changes happen. I add my voice to those that have already been raised to praise them.

Where do we go from here? I suppose that we will aim for even shorter waiting times. However, I want to add some words of caution. I have sympathy with the tenor of the Lib Dem amendment, if not every point in it or its language. There is no doubt that setting a target such as the one that we are discussing sharpens minds and produces results that would have been difficult to achieve without such a focus. However, targets are not always guaranteed to be entirely beneficial. Like the medicines that are dispensed in the health service, they can sometimes have unpleasant side effects. I have known target regimes, admittedly south of the border, in which operations or other treatments for less important conditions have taken precedence over those for more serious conditions, because otherwise a target time would be breached. That is especially relevant in the field of cancer, a diagnosis of which strikes fear in the minds of most of us, but which can describe a range of conditions, from the relatively minor to the truly life threatening. On occasion, incentive-driven managers have been tempted into pushing clinicians into making decisions regarding treatment priorities that otherwise would have been made differently.

I have been reassured by the statements made by the cabinet secretary, Christine Grahame and Richard Simpson. I am also reassured by the comments that the Patient Rights (Scotland) Bill will allow clinical judgment to be exercised so that patients do not suffer from the sort of regimes that I have described. For that reason, I give my whole-hearted support to the motion and commend it to members.

16:18

Mr Frank McAveety (Glasgow Shettleston)

(Lab): Much of the language has been about these times of consensus and coalition. Ian McKee, in a previous speech in the Parliament on the same topic, gave fulsome praise, probably quite understandably, to the cabinet secretary. Today, wonderfully, he gave fulsome praise to Jackie Baillie and Murdo Fraser. I do not know whether either of them will have benefited from the experience, but I understand the spirit of co-operation and consensus.

Ian McKee began with a story of someone with personal experience of the previous situation, in which there were long waiting times for treatment. Stories are important. The story that we have heard this afternoon and that has united all members is one of progress. There has been progress from what many will remember of the experience in the 1980s. The young Murdo Fraser might have been a member of the Federation of Conservative Students, potentially an acolyte of Michael Forsyth and maybe part of that radical Thatcherite experience in the 1980s. Times have changed. I welcome Murdo Fraser to the front bench in his role as health spokesperson for the Conservatives.

The territory of the debate has changed. On waiting times, we are moving on. We are moving on even on investment in the health service. All the way through the general election campaign, excessive efforts to reassure the public were made by all parties, and especially by Mr Cameron, who gave an absolute commitment on funding the health service. I welcome that. A quiet victory of Labour in government is that it moved the Conservatives' position. I hope but remain to be convinced that the Conservatives' commitment to the health service will be proven in the next few years.

I welcome the fact that a Conservative spokesperson has said that he will use the national health service. I would hate to think that that is because—unlike UK Cabinet members—Murdo Fraser is not quite a millionaire yet, but we can always endeavour to arrive at that arrangement.

Remarkable progress has been made on waiting times. That has not been easy; we have had to challenge established interests in the health service. An interesting story is that, all the way through since 1999, all the documents that have been produced have been remarkably similar. When I taught English in secondary schools in Glasgow and the west of Scotland, I always said to young people that all stories were by and large similar, whether they were classical stories or modernist writing. The concept is that a story can be told only in certain ways.

Through “Our National Health” in 2000, “Fair to All, Personal to Each” in 2004, “Delivering for Health” in 2005 and “Better Health, Better Care”, we have had remarkable consistency. All those titles did not cost much to produce; whoever does them for the health service might help Skills Development Scotland with titles. What underpins each of those documents, with nuances on each side, is the idea of restructuring and redesigning the service and recognising the experience of the patient journey. I mention stories because the journey of a story is, in a sense, the same as the journey that a patient must take. What matters is how patients tell their stories.

We have dramatically shifted the health service debate in Scotland. All health ministers have contributed to that, and I hope that that will continue in the turbulent period that lies ahead for all of us in the spending pattern for public services. The challenges are pretty clear: we have heard them from all members this afternoon.

One challenge is how we drive down further people’s treatment times, particularly for conditions that are life threatening and are not easily sorted in the long run. I had the privilege of dealing with the petition to the Public Petitions Committee on access to cancer treatment drugs, and I commend the cabinet secretary for her commitment to that petition. The compelling message that was repeatedly put to the committee was that people did not have time. That is why I welcome the commitment to drive down further waiting times to see cancer specialists and I hope that we can achieve it.

I would like further amplification from the cabinet secretary on the challenge of keeping in line with the commitment to increase spending on the health service that has been made elsewhere in the United Kingdom. That is a testing issue for her because of what lies ahead for all of us in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK, but that commitment is welcome.

I will raise an important matter on which collaboration is required. I am concerned that, if we have the arbitrary policy that is emerging from behind-the-scenes negotiation in the coalition Government of a cap on non-European Union immigration, that will have an impact on the quality of potential recruits into our health service. I would like further deliberations on that. The cabinet secretary might not always deal with that issue, because it will depend on whatever emerges in the next few years from the UK Parliament, but we must be cognisant of it.

We have made progress, but the story is not concluded. We must use today’s debate to ensure that we deliver a health service to which all parties are committed. More important, the public must

feel that there is a story worth telling about the quality of their experience in the health service.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): We move to winding-up speeches.

16:24

Ross Finnie: Quite properly, the opening speakers in the debate, whose speeches were largely consensual, recognised the enormous progress that has been made and the contribution that those in the health service make. They also recognised that achieving the waiting times target has brought much-needed benefits for patients.

The debate has been interesting, and shortened though it has been, more attention has been paid to how we can build on this excellent progress. The opening speakers—indeed, the cabinet secretary herself—highlighted the need to extend the range of areas where attention is given to ensure that patients experience a more level playing field no matter their condition. Karen Gillon spoke, quite properly and at some length, on the real difficulties facing people with mental health problems. Mary Scanlon has developed the expertise on that subject in the chamber. One of the disappointments of her new role is that she will no longer speak ahead of Karen Gillon in health debates—even from where I am sitting, I sensed her disappointment at that. As she always does, Mary Scanlon added to the debate, and added ME to the issues.

The theme of my opening remarks was the range of conditions. We need to develop, build, improve and extend to ensure that the target is about more than waiting times; it must also be about the quality of care that is provided.

Ian McKee got close to supporting my amendment, but withdrew from doing so at the last, critical point in his speech. What a disappointment that was to me. I say to him that the issue is how we extend the target to include quality of care so that it does not become just a numbers game. That is where I differ from colleagues in my views on the Patient Rights (Scotland) Bill. As the convener of the Health and Sport Committee, who other than Christine Grahame would be familiar with sections 8(3)(a) to 8(3)(c) of the bill? Those of us who have the health portfolio are intimately knowledgeable about that. Indeed, even given the newness of his brief, Murdo Fraser nodded when Christine Grahame spoke; he knows exactly what sections 8(3)(a) to 8(3)(c) are all about.

My point is this: while the entitlements that are set out in the rubric of the bill are highly laudable and correct, I am not persuaded that simply transposing them into a legal undertaking is necessary or desirable. Apart from anything else,

the bill contains no back-up—patients have no right of enforcement, so I am not sure what the purpose is.

Christine Grahame: With reference to sections 8(3)(a) to 8(3)(c), and notwithstanding his reservations about provisions being put into statute, does the member accept that clinicians will have discretion? I am sympathetic to the Liberal Democrat amendment, but I cannot support it, because there is always discretion for clinicians.

Ross Finnie: That might be, and it certainly is within sections 8(3)(a) to 8(3)(c). My point is that that does not need to be put in a bill. Indeed, the waiting time improvements did not require legislation. The issue has been to create a framework. I accept that such frameworks can always be improved, and that some of the wording in sections 8(3)(a) to 8(3)(c) could be different, but the danger of including the provisions in a legal framework is that, instead of concentrating on the aspects of care that are more difficult to define, we concentrate on the numbers game, because that is easier and enables us to say, "That is the legal right that I want to prosecute." That would not be helpful in achieving agreement around the chamber on how to develop further our ability to deliver on patient care, particularly in the context of shorter and reducing waiting times. That is the main thrust of where we are trying to go.

Ian McKee was right: where are we going now? We should be looking forward. He was among many members who said that shorter waiting times are not the only objective. That is why the Liberal Democrats part company with the SNP on the issue. I do not believe that the Patient Rights (Scotland) Bill will add, qualitatively, to the aims and objectives of improving care. It will focus attention on the wrong aims and objectives, and it will narrow the field instead of broadening it, as everyone in the chamber hopes to do.

I stick to the amendment in my name, and I hope that those who teeter on the brink of giving me support might, in the final analysis, vote for it.

16:30

Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): This has been an enjoyable and interesting debate, with a degree of consensus that I was not quite expecting.

Like Murdo Fraser, I well remember the dominance of waiting lists and waiting times issues in debates on the NHS during the previous session, and the many times when, as Conservative health spokesman, I berated the Labour-Lib Dem Executive for its top-down, target-driven approach to running the health service. There is a certain irony that, as I pick up the health

brief again, just as the new Conservative-Lib Dem coalition takes the reins at Westminster, the first debate to come my way should be about the achievement of Government-set waiting times targets.

That is not to decry the very welcome progress that has been made on shortening the time that patients have to wait between referral and treatment, which is clearly of great importance for patients at a time when many of them will be fearful of what lies ahead. There is no denying that spectacular progress has been made towards the 18-week referral-to-treatment target. To have reduced waiting times to the unprecedented levels that the cabinet secretary quoted at the start of the debate is a tremendous achievement, which could not have been possible without the co-operation at every level of a committed, very hard-working and dedicated NHS workforce, which has rightly received plaudits from all sides of the chamber today.

I note the cabinet secretary's caveat in connection with cancer waiting times—that they must be sustainable. That is indeed important.

Waiting times are not the only indicator of performance in the NHS, nor are they the most important, as members have said. Improving patient outcomes must be the focus for the NHS, as well as the quality of care that patients receive. The cabinet secretary is well aware of that, but it is always worth reiterating it. As Mary Scanlon pointed out in her speech, in a target-driven system there is too often a temptation to make decisions that tick boxes and meet paper deadlines rather than clinical need. If that is pushed too far, it eventually frustrates professionals and demoralises the workforce to the detriment of patients' welfare, and it erodes trust in the ability of the NHS to deliver the outcomes that we all want to see. Ross Finnie's amendment makes some important points in that regard, and we are happy to support it.

There will always be competition for resource in the NHS, as demographics change, as biomedical science and technology advance and as pharmaceutical research makes available new drugs that can prolong life and improve its quality for patients who previously would have had no hope of survival. For example, there has been real progress in recent months on the availability of cancer drugs for terminally ill patients, following the determined campaign by the late Mike Gray and his wife Tina McGeever. The cabinet secretary is to be commended for her response to their petition to the Parliament.

It is so important to protect funding for the NHS at this time of severe pressure on public sector finance, as Murdo Fraser said. That is why our amendment looks to the SNP Government to

commit to protecting health service spending, just as the UK coalition Government has pledged to guarantee real-terms health spending increases year on year. We are delighted to have the cabinet secretary's reassurance about that commitment.

Much can be done in the NHS by the people who work within it looking critically at current practice and suggesting changes and innovations that will impact on its efficiency in achieving the best outcomes for patients. There have already been a number of successful innovations in the Scottish NHS as a result of staff input, and there must be many more possibilities.

The example that comes most readily to my mind is the dramatic reduction in waiting times for patients in Tayside who require physiotherapy, which was brought about after physiotherapists there took a long, hard look at why patients were waiting 18 weeks to be seen—18 weeks during which many readily treatable acute conditions could progress to a chronic state, resulting in easily preventable time off work and the inevitable impact of that on the benefits system and the local economy. Having considered the detail of the referral-to-treatment process, streamlined it and cut out the duplication, those physiotherapists were able to reduce the waiting time to four days—a dramatic reduction by any standards. Not only did that achieve the best outcome for patients, it resulted in staff ownership of the patient journey and a greatly increased level of professional satisfaction.

Such great ideas often come out of stressful situations, and I reckon that if clinicians and others working in the NHS were allowed to focus just a bit more on patient outcomes rather than centrally set targets, we would see some real efficiency improvements in the service, such as better use of available resources, better outcomes for patients and more satisfaction for staff, who are the bedrock of our NHS.

We all know that significant challenges lie ahead. The legacy of the recently defeated Labour Government's mismanagement of our public services will take some sorting, but with the Scottish Government's commitment to protect NHS funding, and the continuing dedication of our hard-working NHS staff, whom we rightly applaud today, we can look forward to improving outcomes for patients and an NHS that is fit to cope with the increased demands that will be placed upon it by an aging population and the availability of new treatments that are made possible as a result of scientific and technological innovation.

We are happy to acknowledge the progress that has been made so far in improving NHS access times for patients. We welcome the Government's commitment to ensuring that such progress is not compromised by the issues that Murdo Fraser

dealt with during his speech. I am very happy to support the amendment in his name.

16:36

Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I draw members' attention to my declaration in the register of members' interests, particularly with regard to psychiatry and membership of the Scottish Association for Mental Health.

The debate has probably been one of the most consensual that we have participated in during the current session of Parliament, and that is understandable because the progress that the health service has made since 1997, with the support of successive Governments, has been quite phenomenal. There has been a truly substantial change that has benefited all patients, and it has continued under successive Governments, including the SNP Government. I pay tribute to the SNP Government for the amount of funding that it has put into the NHS and for the direction that it has given.

Frank McAveety, Ross Finnie and Nanette Milne all indicated that the targets are not always comfortable, but that is as it should be. Targets need to be challenging and should not be tick box. If waiting time targets become tick box and managers begin to play administrative games to meet them, that is inappropriate. The targets should be and are set in partnership with the NHS staff.

The HEAT targets that were generated during the past decade have been excellent in driving us forward. We have achieved times of 12 weeks and nine weeks for in-patient and day surgery. Cancer waiting times are down to two months, and progress is being made towards a single month. Cardiac targets were met ahead of those in England. Ambulance targets, which have not been mentioned, have made a phenomenal achievement of 75 per cent of category A calls being answered in less than eight minutes.

Accident and emergency departments have met their four-hour target. Those of us who are old enough to remember the 1990s will remember people waiting on trolleys for hours and sometimes days to get in. That is an interesting area, because it has been one of the most uncomfortable targets. There has been the use of what are called various names, although clinical decision units is probably the most common one. If they are used simply to remove a patient so that a target is met, that is inappropriate. On the other hand, if they are used so that a patient can get all the results they need before they go home, rather than having to go home and come back, that is appropriate.

We have to be more sophisticated in how we do this, and that was the thrust of Ross Finnie's amendment and his quite persuasive arguments. Unfortunately, we, too, cannot teeter quite far enough to support it. A message should go out from here that targets have to remain.

Against the standard of patients waiting no more than six weeks for the eight key diagnostic tests, 90 per cent are now waiting less than four weeks, which is another superb achievement that I hope will be continued. However, as we wrap those into a single 18-week whole-journey waiting time target—with a shorter period for cancer—the issue is whether we obliterate the sub-targets within that. It is important that people wait only a very short time for tests so that they get their results quickly and do not mind then waiting a bit longer for treatment within the 18-week period. If the 18-week totality does not contain those sub-sections, it could be problematic. I hope that the cabinet secretary will indicate whether we are going to retain the sub-targets.

General practice has not been mentioned, although it is a great achievement that well over 90 per cent of patients are now being seen by a member of the primary care staff within the 48-hour target. That was a sensible target, unlike the target in England, which stipulated that they had to be seen by a general practitioner rather than any member of the primary care staff. However, less than 60 per cent of GPs are offering advance bookings, which is, frankly, unacceptable. The figure has improved, but it must be driven up. It is wrong that someone with a chronic condition cannot make an advance booking for a time that suits them. If self-management and partnership are what it is all about, we absolutely need to drive up that figure.

Several members, including Karen Gillon and Mary Scanlon, referred to exclusions from service provision targets. Mental health is the biggest of those and is the most important, in the sense that I think the Patient Rights (Scotland) Bill will make that exclusion discriminatory. I question whether, under equalities legislation, that would be practical or possible without clear mental health targets beyond the two existing HEAT targets.

Nicola Sturgeon: I do not deny that Karen Gillon made an important point. However, for clarity and information, I point out that the Patient Rights (Scotland) Bill does not exclude in-patient mental health treatment from its provisions.

Dr Simpson: I welcome that intervention. We have HEAT targets for psychologists and for the reduction of antidepressant prescribing. We also have a very welcome child and adolescent mental health services target, although it is still a waiting time of 26 weeks between referral and treatment—but that is more to do with workforce development

and so on. We need to look at some of the early measures that we talked about the other week, the nurse-family partnership being very important. Beyond that, I have been working hard to get the Place2Be into primary schools. It is a tier 2 service that is developing. I am glad to say that several health boards and local authorities are responding positively to that charity, which has a big effect.

Assisted conception is another area that needs to be developed.

We are going to get drugs targets shortly, and it is important that we also have an alcohol target.

There are challenges beyond all the targets that we are setting, which are to do with new treatments that are being introduced. The treatment for heart attacks and the stroke thrombolysis treatment will require us to look carefully at what is happening there and at the standards that are being set by NHS Quality Improvement Scotland, which are another form of target. I know that the cabinet secretary and her department will work hard to ensure that the target of 80 per cent of those for whom it is appropriate receiving the one-hour door-to-needle service for stroke thrombolysis treatment is met.

Where for the future? We are moving steadily towards the 18-week total journey time target, and I welcome the fact that the cancer targets—which Labour announced in the general election campaign—have received support from the cabinet secretary with the proviso that whatever we do must be sustainable. It is crucial that people get the diagnosis, the tests and the initial contact with a specialist, and setting a sub-target by which that must be achieved within the month target might be a way forward.

Bariatric surgery has been mentioned, and I welcome the Golden Jubilee national hospital's announcement. However, Fife has no bariatric surgery at all; hopefully, people in Fife will be able to get to the Golden Jubilee national hospital. Furthermore, NHS Forth Valley does not have an osteoporosis service, and a lot of members mentioned postcode issues. That is another area on which we now need to concentrate.

I finish by referring to the new ways system of defining and measuring waiting times, on which Audit Scotland has reported, which has clearly been a success. It is a fairly bureaucratic system with a big electronic data warehousing section in the middle, but that is appropriate in the management of waiting times and it has definitely been an improvement. Nevertheless, I reiterate a concern that was not totally removed by the audit, which is about those who are illiterate, those who have learning difficulties, those who have early-onset dementia, those who are homeless, prisoners, travelling people, asylum seekers,

refugees and immigrants with language difficulties. I wonder whether we are monitoring closely enough whether those people are among the 100,000 patients who have been taken off the waiting lists for various reasons. I also raise the question of the 300 complex needs patients we now have, which needs further analysis.

We must continue to address the balance of quality and speed, but let us today celebrate the NHS's achievement and welcome the continued challenges that we are setting it to improve its services to patients.

16:45

The Minister for Public Health and Sport (Shona Robison): I am grateful to members for their speeches in what has been an interesting and, I believe, worthwhile and consensual debate. In addition, I recognise the contribution that Mary Scanlon and Jackson Carlaw have made to previous health debates.

As we have heard, patient waiting times are a topic that retains a high level of interest among members across the Parliament and one that demonstrates how vital health care services are to all of us in Scotland. I was interested to hear that there appears to be general cross-party support on a number of areas, such as building on the current waiting time standards by giving patients a clear indication of the maximum time that they will have to wait from referral to treatment.

I take on board some of the comments that have been made about clinical judgment and want to respond, in particular, to the Liberal Democrat amendment. It has emerged from the debate that it is extremely important that we work with our clinical colleagues to ensure that any system has the relevant tolerance to allow it to recognise and support the targets. As I have said on a number of occasions, patients who have to be treated more quickly because of their clinical need should receive that treatment as soon as possible. That is not only common sense; it is the very essence of a clinically driven system, and we will always support and defend that principle. Ross Finnie's point about quality being paramount was well made. I hope that he has been reassured during the debate that that remains the case.

I know from speaking to patients and their families across Scotland that access to swift and safe treatment remains a key issue for them, as it has been and will continue to be for the Government. The recently introduced Patient Rights (Scotland) Bill, which a number of members mentioned, will provide a waiting time guarantee that will be easily understood by patients and their families. It will remove any possibility of a return to long waiting times following diagnosis and will

provide a firm and guaranteed end point for treatment. I hope that all members will support that step change in the patient experience.

Christine Grahame and Ian McKee were among those who commented on the Patient Rights (Scotland) Bill. Christine Grahame pointed out that it includes the safeguard that clinical need will always take priority. The fact that that is in the bill is extremely important.

The issue of long waiting times for categories of patients who are currently not covered by waiting time standards has been raised. For the avoidance of doubt, let me make it clear that the Government is committed to ensuring that all patients have swift and safe access to the full range of services that they need from the NHS. As the cabinet secretary mentioned, expanding the range of patients who will be covered by the 18-week whole-journey target is an issue that is already being addressed. The cabinet secretary also indicated—and other members echoed the point—that cancer waiting times have undergone a remarkable transformation, but more can be done, which is why the new cancer targets that are to be delivered at the end of 2011 have been extended to include patients who are identified through screening programmes.

A number of issues have been raised around the treatment of mental health patients. We should remember that, for the first time, we have set a target that covers mental health services. As has been mentioned, by 2013 no one will wait longer than 26 weeks from referral to treatment for specialist child and adolescent mental health services. We want to go further than that but, as Richard Simpson rightly acknowledged, there are workforce challenges. It is not possible just to set a target, flick a switch and expect it to be met. Measures have to be put in place, not least of which is the need for specialist workforces to be developed and trained. The fact that we will develop a new psychological therapies target during 2010-11 is another important milestone.

In her intervention on Richard Simpson, Nicola Sturgeon made the important point that rights in relation to waiting times for in-patient mental health treatment will not be excluded from the provisions of the Patient Rights (Scotland) Bill. That is an important step forward. Karen Gillon made a number of important points about the subject. Of course we want to go further with adult mental health services, but we will be able to go only as fast as is possible and sustainable. That is an important point, which a number of members made.

Jackie Baillie raised the issue of waiting times for infertility treatment. They have been a problem for a significant number of years, with a wide variation in waiting times across the country.

There was a time when a waiting time of three years was commonplace in a number of health board areas. That was totally unacceptable, and progress has been made. We want to do more, which is why we have funded Infertility Network Scotland to work with boards to address the inadequacy of access to the service. That will ensure a consistent approach across the country and offer patients direct influence on the future direction of the service.

However, we want to go further. That is why we have set up an expert group on infertility, which last met on 28 April. A priority for the group is to consider an achievable, fair and acceptable waiting time target for infertility treatment. The group will report by the end of this year.

The debate has focused on waiting time performance, but sustained delivery of this level of performance also depends on having a workforce to deliver the highest level of care to the people of Scotland. We have invested more money in the NHS than ever before, with increased spending on health in Scotland at record levels. A couple of members spoke about what the future holds in that regard. The cabinet secretary made the commitment that the Scottish Government will continue to protect the NHS in these difficult times. She said to Murdo Fraser—and I can reassure Frank McAveety on this point—that any consequential from NHS funding south of the border will go to the NHS in Scotland. We have made that commitment and we will deliver on it.

An example of how boards have been working together to build capacity was the announcement last week on bariatric surgery, looking at innovative ways of making services more accessible to people. Next month, the Golden Jubilee national hospital will start—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: One moment, minister. If the Lib Dems' meeting needs to take place, will they take it outside, please?

Shona Robison: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

Next month, the Golden Jubilee national hospital will start treating patients from three NHS boards for gastric banding. If the service had not been created at the Golden Jubilee, those patients would have been sent to the independent health care sector. Jackie Baillie was right to praise Malcolm Chisholm's decision to bring the Golden Jubilee national hospital into the NHS because it has provided a range of innovative ways of ensuring that patients have swift access to good-quality treatment and it is a real resource for the NHS more generally.

It is fair to say, as others have done—we recognise and appreciate that—that we have seen a remarkable transformation in the delivery of health services in Scotland under this

Government. Our priority has been to get the best quality of care possible for patients. Although we have made significant steps forward, there is always more that remains to be done, and the Government is committed to achieving even greater success in the health sector. We want a service that puts patients at the heart of everything that it does. Great progress has been made towards that goal, but there is always more to be done, and the Government is committed to ensuring that it is indeed done.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The next item of business is consideration of a Parliamentary Bureau motion S3M-6417, on the approval of the Climate Change (International Aviation and Shipping) (Scotland) Order 2010.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Climate Change (International Aviation and Shipping) (Scotland) Order 2010 be approved.—[*Bruce Crawford.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Patrick Harvie has asked to speak against the motion. [*Interruption.*] The console is not recognising his card, so he should perhaps move to another one.

I call on Patrick Harvie to speak against the motion. He has up to three minutes.

16:54

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I apologise for that short delay. Members will be relieved to know that I will vote for at least two of the motions on Scottish statutory instruments on climate change that the Government will move tonight. There is no disagreement with the provisions on carbon accounting and on the use of international carbon units.

I do not expect my objection to the Climate Change (International Aviation and Shipping) (Scotland) Order 2010 to gain the kind of support that my objection to the Climate Change (Annual Targets) (Scotland) Order 2010 has received. However, I want to go over a little of the background. When we passed the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill, we recognised that international aviation and shipping must be included in our targets for Scotland and that, in the case of aviation emissions, a multiplier needs to be applied—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order, order. There is far too much noise in the chamber.

Patrick Harvie: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

The reality is that emissions from the aviation sector in Scotland have grown over the years since 1990, which is the baseline for all our targets. By 2007, emissions had grown by some 146 per cent, to 3.5 million tonnes. In 1990, emissions from the sector made up 2.6 per cent of all Scottish emissions but, by 2007, aviation accounted for 7.5 per cent of our emissions. The sector is growing and we need to take account of it.

Moreover, the international science is clear: emissions at altitude have a greater impact on the climate than do emissions on the ground from

electricity generation, transport and other sources. That is why a multiplier is applied. The United Kingdom Committee on Climate Change takes that approach, up to a point, and includes illustrative scenarios that apply a multiplier of 2—doubling the calculation of aviation emissions—in its target comparisons. The committee is not alone. The Department for Transport in the UK Government uses a multiplier of 1.9 and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Department of Energy and Climate Change recommend the same multiplier—[*Interruption.*]

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Order. There is still far too much talking going on.

Patrick Harvie: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

However, instead of acknowledging the consensus that is growing in the UK Government and other agencies, the Scottish Government is asking us to approve a multiplier of 1. Anyone who has as basic a grasp of arithmetic as I have knows that a multiplier of one is not a multiplier. A multiplier of 1 leaves the figure as it is in the initial target.

David Kennedy, the chief executive of the UK Committee on Climate Change, told the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee that, although there is some uncertainty,

“We are confident that the effects that we are concerned about exist and that they are warming effects on top of the CO₂ effects.”—[*Official Report, Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee, 27 April 2010; c 2851.*]

The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change agreed with me when I put it to him that

“the figure is not 1”.—[*Official Report, Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee, 18 May 2010; c 3060.*]

I am therefore not able to support a multiplier of 1 and the order that contains it.

Stewart Stevenson said in today's debate that he is concerned that aviation emissions are not expected to fall. If that is the case, perhaps instead of supporting the order he should ask his colleague Mr Mather to stop using taxpayers' money to advertise short-haul aviation.

16:58

The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): I start on a consensual note. I agree that there is an effect associated with aviation that is greater than the effect of emissions at the surface. I think that the whole Parliament is of that view, which is why in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 we made provision for the Government to set a figure. The question is whether we are in a position to do

so. The UK Committee on Climate Change has provided us with advice on the subject, which is that it is not yet able to identify the science that shows what the figure should be.

I want to talk about the need for multiple figures for different kinds of aviation. In setting a target, we should seek to incentivise aviation to move from more contaminating to less contaminating modes of flying. It is clear that a pure jet engine that flies at around 39,000ft to 41,000ft has much higher contamination than does a turboprop engine that flies at 20,000ft to 25,000ft. For the small planes that operate public services in the Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland, the effect is likely to be similar to the effect at the surface, given that they fly at between 500ft and 2,000ft. Therefore, we should properly have different figures for different classes of aviation. We have asked the Committee on Climate Change to provide those.

An important issue of which members should be aware is that there is no difficulty in waiting to set the figure. When the factor is set at a figure other than 1, it is backdated. Therefore, there is no cost in terms of accounting to waiting for a scientifically based figure that provides the opportunity to restructure the way in which flying operates. Many short-haul flights that currently operate within the UK—and, more fundamentally, to the Republic of Ireland and other parts of Europe—can increasingly be conducted using turboprops, which result in lower contamination. Setting a different figure for that category of aircraft would be more appropriate.

I seek members' support for the motion.

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The question on the motion will be put at decision time.

The next item of business is consideration of a further four Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Bruce Crawford to move motions S3M-6418, S3M-6419, S3M-6420 and S3M-6421, which are on the approval of SSIs on climate change, on the carbon accounting scheme, on the rehabilitation of offenders and on the protection of vulnerable groups.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Climate Change (Limit on Carbon Units) (Scotland) Order 2010 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Carbon Accounting Scheme (Scotland) Regulations 2010 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exclusions and Exceptions) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2010 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 (Removal of Barred Individuals from Regulated Work) Regulations 2010 be approved.—[Bruce Crawford.]

The Presiding Officer: The questions on the motions will be put at decision time, to which we now come.

Decision Time

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):

There are 11 questions to be put as a result of today's business.

The first question is, that amendment S3M-6409.1, in the name of Fiona Hyslop, which seeks to amend motion S3M-6409, in the name of Annabel Goldie, on relationships between Her Majesty's Government and the Scottish Parliament and Government, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)

Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

Against

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)

Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 81, Against 45, Abstentions 0.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S3M-6409.3, in the name of Pauline McNeill, which seeks to amend motion S3M-6409, in the name of Annabel Goldie, on relationships between HM Government and the Scottish Parliament and Government, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

Against

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)

Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

Abstentions

Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 44, Against 80, Abstentions 2.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S3M-6409.2, in the name of Mike Rumbles, which seeks to amend motion S3M-6409, in the name of Annabel Goldie, on relationships between HM Government and the Scottish Parliament and Government, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)

Against

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)

Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 32, Against 94, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-6409, in the name of Annabel Goldie, on relationships between HM Government and the Scottish Parliament and Government, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)

Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

Against

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)

Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

Abstentions

Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 79, Against 45, Abstentions 2.

Motion, as amended agreed to,

That the Parliament welcomes the commitment of HM Government to establish a positive and constructive working relationship with the Scottish Government and Parliament to tackle the problems facing the country and, in particular, welcomes the commitment in the Queen's Speech to introduce legislation to implement recommendations from the final report of the Commission on Scottish Devolution and the willingness to consider matters in relation to the Fossil Fuel Levy and fiscal responsibility issues.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-6416, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on approval of the Climate Change (Annual Targets) (Scotland) Order 2010, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)

Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

Against

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)

Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 62, Against 64, Abstentions 0.

Motion disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S3M-6393.3, in the name of Jackie Baillie, which seeks to amend motion S3M-6393, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on progress towards 18-week referral to treatment, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)

Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)

Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

Against

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

Abstentions

MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 109, Against 16, Abstentions 1.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S3M-6393.1, in the name of Murdo Fraser, which seeks to amend motion S3M-6393, as amended, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S3M-6393.2, in the name of Ross Finnie, which also seeks to amend motion S3M-6393, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)

Against

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)

Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

Abstentions

MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 34, Against 91, Abstentions 1.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is,

that motion S3M-6393, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on progress towards 18-week referral to treatment, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)

McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

Abstentions

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 109, Against 0, Abstentions 17.

Motion, as amended, agreed to,

That the Parliament welcomes the progress that has been made in reducing waiting times for patients; applauds the commitment, dedication and hard work of all NHS staff who have contributed to delivering significant improvements for the people of Scotland, and acknowledges that NHSScotland is on track to deliver the Scottish Government's challenging whole-journey waiting time target of 18 weeks by the end 2011; welcomes the progress made by the previous Labour/Liberal Democrat administration in setting a new approach in *Fair to All Personal to Each* whereby waiting is considered in terms of the overall patient journey and further welcomes the commitment to treat inpatients within 18 weeks being achieved a year ahead of schedule, paving the way for Labour and SNP 2007 manifesto commitments of an 18-week referral to treatment target and notes that this compares with a waiting time target of 18 months set by the last Conservative administration, and urges the Scottish Government to ensure that such progress is not compromised by either reductions in its budget or by efficiency savings within NHS boards.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-6417, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on approval of the Climate Change (International Aviation and Shipping) (Scotland) Order 2010, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Curran, Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)

Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lamont, John (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Salmond, Alex (Gordon) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)

Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

Against

Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)

Abstentions

MacDonald, Margo (Lothians) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 123, Against 2, Abstentions 1.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Climate Change (International Aviation and Shipping) (Scotland) Order 2010 be approved.

The Presiding Officer: I propose to put a single question on motions S3M-6418 to S3M-6421. As no member objects, the question is, that motions S3M-6418 to S3M-6421, on approval of Scottish statutory instruments, be agreed to.

Motions agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Climate Change (Limit on Carbon Units) (Scotland) Order 2010 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Carbon Accounting Scheme (Scotland) Regulations 2010 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exclusions and Exceptions) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2010 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 (Removal of Barred Individuals from Regulated Work) Regulations 2010 be approved.

The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. In the light of the vote on motion S3M-6416, on the setting of targets under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, you will wish to know that we intend now to act on the suggestion that the Liberal Democrats made during their contribution to the debate on this subject and to convene a short-life working group to look at the issues together, to bring forward in due course a new order and, of course, to place it in front of the Parliament's committee and, in due course, in front of Parliament.

The Presiding Officer: I think that Parliament is grateful for that information.

Employment and Support Allowance

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S3M-6299, in the name of Hugh O'Donnell, on employment and support allowance, unfit for purpose. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament is concerned about the workings of the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA); notes evidence from the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) Service in Scotland that uncovers serious hardship experienced by ESA claimants across Scotland; considers that sickness benefits should support people in finding employment if they are able to work, but must also provide help for those who are not; considers that ESA is failing to find this balance and is putting pressure on sick and disabled people in Scotland; notes in particular claims that the work capability assessment of ESA is making unsuitable decisions on claimants' fitness for work and that 70% of CAB appeals against these decisions are being upheld, and would welcome a review of ESA aimed at making it work in the interests of the genuinely sick and disabled people of Central Scotland and the rest of the country.

17:12

Hugh O'Donnell (Central Scotland) (LD): I thank the members who have supported the debate by signing up to the motion and those who are here to contribute to it. I must also thank Citizens Advice Scotland for its help in providing the information that I needed, and congratulate it on the report that it has published—"Unfit for Purpose"—which shows clearly the stark reality of why the employment and support allowance needs to be reviewed.

As the report and the motion say, the purpose of a sickness benefit system should be twofold: it should support people who are able to work and help them into work, and it should give those who are genuinely unable to work the reassurance and support that they need while they are ill. In those two circumstances, the ESA has clearly got the balance wrong. Citizens advice bureaux across my region and, indeed, across the country are finding case after case of people who are clearly too ill to work but who are being threatened with withdrawal of benefits unless they find a job. They are being let down by a system that was supposed to exist to help them.

We need to get one thing clear from the outset: these people are not scroungers or benefit cheats, but ordinary people like you and me who have suffered the tragedy of either short-term or long-term ill health, or who have chronic conditions. That can happen to any one of us. In many cases, they are people who have worked all their lives, in some cases for decades, and have paid into a

national insurance system and taxation system, which they legitimately thought would be there for them if they were ever unlucky enough to need it. Now, for far too many people, that day has come and they are bewildered to find that they are being denied the support that they thought was their due.

We are not talking about odd, isolated cases; the evidence from citizens advice bureaux shows that there is an endemic failure of a benefit system that is clearly fundamentally flawed. That must cause all of us some concern.

The ESA was introduced in October 2008 to replace incapacity benefit and income support based on the ground of disability. There are 11 citizens advice bureaux in the region that I represent. They are part of the network of 73 across Scotland, all of which offer an invaluable service to the communities that make up our nation. In the 18 months since the introduction of the ESA, each of those bureaux has reported growing numbers of cases of ESA claimants who have been put through horrendous and inadequate medical assessments, which have often taken no account at all of their actual condition, which have ignored evidence that has been submitted by the clients' general practitioners or those who have been working with the claimants for a long time, and which have resulted in completely arbitrary decisions that have denied claimants the support to which they are entitled.

Crucially, the decision on whether to award ESA is not taken by medical professionals who have knowledge of the client's history. As was shown on the BBC documentary on the subject last night, the process has been farmed out to an independent company that is there to get results. Fundamentally, those results seem to be based on the desire of the Labour Government at Westminster, which introduced the system, to reduce costs.

The system has proved not to be conducive to fair decision making. Repeatedly, we hear of severely disabled people—including cancer patients, people with long-term conditions, people in wheelchairs and people with severe mental health problems—being subjected to five-minute interviews by someone sitting behind a computer who, far from asking them about the detail of their condition, does not even make eye contact with them and is interested only in a box-ticking exercise on the screen in front of them, which allows them to decide that the person is to receive no payment or support.

Some 68 per cent of ESA claimants are found to be fit for work. Of course, many clients appeal those decisions. The Department for Work and Pensions originally predicted that there would be

21,000 appeals against ESA decisions but, in 18 months, there have been 50,000. Of those, 70 per cent have been successful. That is a clear indication that something is wrong with the system.

The time that is taken up by those appeals is enormous. Some CAB advisers have told me that up to 80 per cent of their time is now taken up dealing with ESA appeals. That is time that they cannot spend dealing with other clients. The other issue involves clients whose ESA claims are rejected and who are so distressed or upset that they do not appeal, perhaps because the stress has aggravated their condition. What happens to them? We have heard of awful cases, including more than one suicide attempt. However, that is not the entire issue.

The CAS report rightly asks that there be an immediate investigation into what happens to people whose appeals are rejected and who subsequently disappear from the system.

The current picture is bad, but it is likely to get a lot worse. By 2015, all of the people who are currently on incapacity benefit will be moved onto ESA, and the problems that have been identified by CAS and by MSPs in addressing the concerns of their constituents are only going to get worse unless the matter is addressed now.

We cannot allow that to happen. We must have an independent review of the ESA, and the DWP must implement the recommendations that have been made by Citizens Advice Scotland in its excellent report. If we do not stand up for the genuinely sick and disabled people of Scotland, what are we here for?

17:19

Bill Kidd (Glasgow) (SNP): I thank Hugh O'Donnell for bringing this important debate to the chamber. The employment and support allowance came into force from Westminster in October 2008 and replaced incapacity benefit. On the basis of a work-capability assessment, a person who is placed in the support group where there is no requirement to take part in work-related activity will receive £96.85 per week. In the work-related activity group, which is almost self-explanatory, the amount is £91.40. If someone is deemed to be fit for work by Atos Healthcare, the company that is hired to make the assessments on behalf of the DWP, they are transferred on to jobseekers allowance.

As Hugh O'Donnell mentioned, there is widespread concern from, among others, Citizens Advice Scotland, Macmillan Cancer Support and the Scottish Association for Mental Health about the high number of people—almost 70 per cent—

who are being refused outright any entitlement to ESA.

Benefits are for people who require support in order to meet the costs of everyday life when they are unable to do so from any other source of income. When people are disabled or ill to the point that they cannot work to support themselves, it is a duty that is incumbent on society to provide such benefits as will alleviate pressing financial need.

It is unacceptable in a civilised society to pressure people off benefits and towards work for which they are unfit, purely in order to cut the number of benefits recipients. However, that is what the Department for Work and Pensions is doing, in conjunction with its partner business, Atos Healthcare.

Citizens Advice Scotland has highlighted the 68 per cent of claimants who have been rejected for the employment and support allowance. It points out that two fifths of its ESA case load is made up purely of those rejections. Macmillan Cancer Support points to the cancer sufferers—including terminally ill patients—who have been told that they are fit for work.

SAMH points out that Atos has made recommendations of fitness for work for people with serious mental health problems without giving consideration to reports from their general practitioners, community psychiatric nurses or psychiatrists. We have heard of one case in which a man with serious mental health problems was passed as being fit for work by Atos, without any reference to his GP. He then took an overdose of pills, as his evidence had been denied and his benefits removed. That is not by any means an isolated incident, but it is utterly intolerable.

The *Daily Mail* today described all those who were rejected for ESA as “scroungers”. That is front-page news for the *Daily Mail*. It contained no analysis of the evidence, which is nothing new for that newspaper.

The ESA system was launched through Westminster by Labour. Today Iain Duncan Smith announced on BBC breakfast news that the new Conservative-Lib Dem coalition intends to press ahead with reassessing everyone who is on incapacity benefit, under the new ESA rules. We all agree that those who can work must be encouraged to do so. However, when people are genuinely unable to work through ill health or disability, we must ensure that support is available. It is the duty of the Westminster Administration to address the distressing inadequacies of the present ESA assessments and to ensure that the watchwords in applying the benefit procedures are consistency, accuracy and fairness. It is our duty in the Scottish Parliament to

ensure that the voices of our constituents who should qualify for the benefit are, in assessment, treated according to those words.

17:24

Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con): I congratulate Hugh O'Donnell on bringing this important debate to the chamber.

Introduced by the previous Labour Government in October 2008 for new claimants, the employment and support allowance replaced incapacity benefit and was intended to give everyone with an illness or disability the necessary help and support for them to engage in appropriate work, if they are fit to do so. That is an entirely laudable objective, which is why the ESA focuses on the patient's abilities: that is, on what they can do, rather than on what they cannot. However, now that the allowance has been in force for approximately 18 months, it is apparent, as the Citizens Advice Scotland report makes abundantly clear, that there are huge problems and failings, which the new coalition Government is now endeavouring to rectify, starting with a reassessment of all current claimants of the ESA, as well as of those who are currently claiming incapacity benefit and who will transfer across to ESA soon. The reassessment is intended to ensure that claimants who are genuinely in need can access support without encountering problems.

The CAS report has identified three main problem areas with the ESA system: the administration of ESA, the work-capability assessment and the experiences of claimants after the work-capability assessment is complete. In the time that is available to me, I will focus on the administration of ESA and the application process. The CAS report reveals that claimants have received inaccurate advice from some Jobcentre Plus staff and that that has resulted in the wrong benefit being claimed. The claim is then rejected, which adds to the problems that are experienced by the claimant and puts them in an even more vulnerable position financially. Difficulties have also been experienced with filling in the application forms and, worse still, documents have been lost by the DWP, which has caused further anxiety for claimants and has delayed their payments.

On top of all that, the processing of the claims has not been efficient, which has led to further claims having to be made from the social fund, or to claimants having to look to relatives or friends for financial support.

Furthermore, as a BBC freedom of information request revealed, under the Labour Government 8,000 ESA appeals were being heard every

month. To put that figure in context, it is double the number of appeals that are made in relation to disability living allowance, which is the second most appealed benefit and which has seven times more claimants than ESA. By any standards, it is a bureaucratic nightmare that is taking up valuable resources and adding to stress for all the vulnerable people who are affected.

All of that has prompted a statement from the DWP—barely two weeks into the new coalition Government's tenure—recognising that

"People need much more support to manage their conditions and get help to find work and moving them to ESA is the best way to do that."

In addition, the Queen's speech confirmed that the coalition Government will introduce a welfare reform bill, the purpose of which will be to remove the confusing complexity of the benefits system, which too often leaves people afraid to make changes to their circumstances and can be a barrier to moving from benefits to work. Its purpose will also be to make people see gain when they enter work, through simplifying the benefits system; to reduce the scope for fraud and error by making the benefits system simpler; and to reduce unnecessary administration of benefits.

In conclusion, now that Iain Duncan Smith is the new Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, vulnerable people can be assured that he will work tirelessly to sort out the problems that he has inherited that are associated with ESA, in an effort to improve the quality of life for the worst-off people in society, starting with a root-and-branch change to the welfare system, which will get tough with those who, by seeking to abuse the benefits system, put vital support for vulnerable people at risk.

17:28

Andy Kerr (East Kilbride) (Lab): I place on record my support of CAS for producing its report, which brought to light an issue that deserves light to be brought to it. However, I recognise that the solution to the problems rests elsewhere, and not in this Parliament. I also recognise—I hope that this view is shared across the Parliament—that the previous system of incapacity benefit did not work. It became a dumping ground for people whose opportunities were taken from them, and their lives were cast aside. They were told that they were incapacitated and unfit for work, and the support system that should have been around them was removed, thereby taking opportunities away from them and their families.

The current system clearly does not work as it should. We all agree that those who are fit to work should be at work and that those individuals need to be identified and supported back into

employment. I believe that work brings many benefits, and I am sure that many others share that view. It brings financial and mental wellbeing benefits, and it brings a sense of positivism and confidence to communities. An enduring measure of all Governments of whatever colour is whether they ensure that people are supported back into work.

I have, as convener of the cross-party group on ME, been concerned about the system for some time. People with ME have found the process to be extremely difficult, not just because of their incapacity and inability to work their way through the system, but because of the clear lack of understanding that people on the other side of the table have of their illness. There is a real issue to do with reformation of, and change to, the system. A system must be available to us that identifies people who should be at work and people who could, with support, get back to work and play a productive role in society and the community.

We are discussing reserved matters. As a local MSP, I forward such cases to my United Kingdom MP colleagues, because they are for them to deal with. The debate is not so much about aspects of our work in the Scottish Parliament, although I understand the concerns that have been expressed in the report and by constituents who have come to me. Those constituents were pointed in the direction of their local MP, so that they could raise the matter with them. Let us hope that as this relatively new system develops, people who have been unfairly treated by the process are understood. We must ensure that the right people are given the right decision at the first stage of engagement. It is reassuring that the appeals process works, but it is clear that too many people are being sent through that process to get another decision.

Finally, and most important, people in our communities who are able to work or who can get support from services that will allow them to work, should be at work: that should be the underpinning value of any system. The community that I represent and, I am sure, the communities that other members represent want to ensure that fairness is shown to those who cannot work, and that those who can work are back at work.

17:32

The Minister for Housing and Communities (Alex Neil): Like other members, I pay tribute to Hugh O'Donnell for bringing the debate to the Parliament, as it is valid to debate the employment and support allowance here. The issue impacts on a number of devolved and reserved matters.

I also pay tribute to Citizens Advice Scotland and the citizens advice bureaux, which operate

throughout Scotland. It is particularly helpful that their reports are informed by their day-to-day experience of dealing with many thousands of individual cases. Those cases are not only to do with the employment and support allowance; there are cases from across the benefits system.

I will make two general observations before I deal specifically with the employment and support allowance. First, from my experience as an MSP and from what people who have come to my surgeries have said, I think that the benefits system is almost at the stage of being totally shambolic. Recently, I had to help an individual who was not at all well off. He had no money, but he still had to make £60-worth of phone calls to try to get to the right benefits centre. He had to determine which benefits centre was the correct one to deal with his case. I ended up phoning for the guy, and spoke to the sixth benefits centre before we got to the right one. We ended up getting the wrong advice. At the end of the conversation, all that we got was a promise that a form would be sent out for my constituent to fill in the following week; it was then to be taken to the local job centre. There are many examples of such things happening. I hope that the new Government will quickly reorganise the whole benefits set-up and make it easier for people to deal with the benefits situation in which they find themselves. People are being left with literally nothing because of the discretionary and discriminatory way in which some benefits are withdrawn, for example.

Secondly, we all share the ambition of getting people off welfare and into work. That is absolutely the right thing to do for the reasons that Andy Kerr outlined and for other reasons. However—and I hope that the new UK Government bears this in mind—it is important that we all try to ensure that there are jobs for people to go into. One problem that we have had in the past, particularly in certain areas, is that, because of concentrated levels of unemployment and much higher levels of unemployment than vacancy, it is not always possible to get people who are fit, able and willing to work into work, because the jobs are not always there. Lanarkshire is a good example of such an area.

All the evidence points to increasing levels of confusion and discontent, particularly in relation to the application of the employment and support allowance, not just in Scotland but throughout the United Kingdom. The Scottish Government takes very seriously the impact that the welfare system has on individuals, families and communities, in relation not just to money but their physical and mental health, which in many respects are even more important.

Irrespective of the administration arrangements that govern tax and benefits, we believe that the

following five key principles must guide benefits and tax credits policy if we are to eradicate poverty and reduce income inequalities, not just in Scotland, but throughout the UK. The first principle is that individuals must have a strong degree of confidence about the security of their income. That means that the benefits system must be fair, transparent and sympathetic to the challenges that people who live in poverty face. I do not believe that the ESA meets that criterion.

The second principle is that the benefits, tax credits and employment support systems must work in harmony to support those who are capable of pulling themselves out of poverty through work. For those who can work, the financial benefits of working must be significant, sustained and clearly signposted. To that end, the issue is about not only the benefits system, but the interface between the benefits and tax systems. I welcome the new Government's commitment to increase the personal allowance through time to £10,000 a year, as that will help to reduce the poverty gap for people moving from welfare to work.

The third principle is that successful transitions into employment should never be undermined by financial uncertainty. That means that the system of transitional support must be transparent, responsive, quick and effective. I had a lot of sympathy with the proposal that the Labour Party made prior to the general election that there should be a guarantee that everybody who moves from welfare into work will be at least £40 a week better off as a result of doing so. Such a commitment would be a simple message and a major incentive.

The fourth key principle is that, for some, work is not possible. It is essential that the benefits system does not relegate such people to a life of disadvantage, financial uncertainty and poverty, particularly people who are severely disabled. There are examples—Bill Kidd mentioned some—of individuals who are disabled, in some cases quite severely disabled, being treated appallingly by the people who administer the ESA. Benefits must provide a standard of living that supports dignity, freedom and social unity. That must include female pensioners who are disadvantaged under the current system for time spent caring for dependents.

The final underlying principle is that the administration of benefits and tax credits should be as swift, streamlined and customer focused as possible to avoid administrative complexity that leads to confusion and uncertainty about entitlement and support, particularly when individuals are trying to make a successful transition back into work. I regret to say that my experience of the ESA is that it does not meet that criterion either.

I therefore look forward to what I hope will be a wholesale overhaul of the benefits system. We must tackle those who abuse the system, but we must ensure that, in doing so, we do not penalise those who genuinely want to move from welfare into work. To that end, I hope that the Parliament can unite in sending a loud and clear message to our colleagues in London that the time for change is here, but that the change, as well as being effective and efficient, must be fair and humanitarian.

Meeting closed at 17:40.

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