



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Official Report

# TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE

Tuesday 14 December 2010

Session 3

---

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body 2011

Applications for reproduction should be made in writing to the Information Policy Team, Office of the Queen's Printer for Scotland, Admail ADM4058, Edinburgh, EH1 1NG, or by email to:  
[licensing@ogps.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@ogps.gov.uk).

OQPS administers the copyright on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body.

Printed and published in Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body by  
RR Donnelley.

---

**Tuesday 14 December 2010**

**CONTENTS**

|   | <b>Col.</b> |
|---|-------------|
| <b>DECISION ON TAKING BUSINESS IN PRIVATE .....</b> | 3529        |
| <b>SEVERE WEATHER.....</b>                          | 3530        |
| <b>“LOW CARBON SCOTLAND” .....</b>                  | 3556        |

---

**TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE**  
**26<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2010, Session 3**

**CONVENER**

\*Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)

**DEPUTY CONVENER**

\*Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

\*Jackson Carlaw (West of Scotland) (Con)  
\*Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
\*Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD)  
Shirley-Anne Somerville (Lothians) (SNP)

**COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES**

\*Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP)  
Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD)

\*attended

**THE FOLLOWING GAVE EVIDENCE:**

Jim Barton (Transport Scotland)  
Chief Constable Kevin Smith (Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland)  
John Swinney (Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth)

**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Steve Farrell

**LOCATION**

Committee Room 5



## Scottish Parliament

### Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee

*Tuesday 14 December 2010*

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 12:33*]

#### Decision on Taking Business in Private

**The Convener (Patrick Harvie):** Good afternoon. I welcome everyone to the 26<sup>th</sup> meeting this year of the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee and remind you all to switch off mobile devices. I have received apologies from Marlyn Glen and Alison McInnes, for whom we are expecting Jim Tolson to substitute, and I once again welcome to the committee Alasdair Allan, who is appearing as a substitute for Shirley-Anne Somerville.

The first of today's four items is a proposal to take in private item 4, which is consideration of the evidence that we will hear on the draft report on proposals and policies under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. I also seek the committee's agreement to take in private future discussions on our draft reports on the RPP and the Scottish Government's draft budget for 2011-12 and our approach to the scrutiny of road safety issues. Do members agree?

**Members** *indicated agreement.*

## Severe Weather

12:34

**The Convener:** Under the second item, we have an opportunity to take evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth, John Swinney, on issues arising from the severe weather that Scotland has been experiencing.

I point out that in a change from the papers that were circulated to members, the cabinet secretary is now joined by Jim Barton, chief road engineer and director of trunk road and bus operations, and Chief Constable Kevin Smith, who appears not as a Government official but on behalf of the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland. I welcome everyone to the committee and invite the cabinet secretary to make some opening remarks, if he would so wish.

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney):** I would, convener.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee. I do so subsequent to the resignation of the transport minister, Stewart Stevenson, and in light of the fact that the new transport minister was not in office during many of the challenging periods that we faced on 5 and 6 December. I am appearing to assist the committee by providing detail about events on the 5 and 6 December; to share with the committee my observations, having taken a very close look at what happened and why; and to highlight the plans for future action that the Government is taking and which the transport minister has set out today. I am very grateful to the committee for being flexible in rearranging times to enable me to appear before the Finance Committee this afternoon.

We had a unique and unusual weather event on Monday 6 December, in which we experienced heavy, sustained and wet snow falling on already freezing surfaces following a period of sustained snowfall in the preceding week. Further snowfall was predicted during the night of Sunday 5 December, but the detailed predictions were for fairly small depths of snow of between 2 and 5cm across the central belt with the possibility of up to 10cm on higher ground.

We knew that this snow would be likely to fall during the morning rush hour, when many families who had previously been off work or school would be returning, and we knew that there would be a risk of ice. It was not expected to cause unmanageable problems across Scotland's road network, and the trunk road operating companies had pre-treated the network overnight in line with

forecast conditions and in accordance with their winter service plans.

The eventual volume of snow that fell and the rate at which it fell were way beyond what was predicted. That was confirmed in the words of the Met Office itself at 10.37 on Monday morning when it said that the band of snow

“has given more significant snow accumulations than were expected yesterday across eastern parts of the Central Belt.”

The heavier snowfall during the morning peak resulted in severe congestion across the network as a result of multiple incidents that restricted the ability of the operating companies to continue with appropriate treatment cycles of ploughing and gritting.

By mid-morning and lunch time on Monday, schools began to close and people began to leave work—clearly earlier than would have been anticipated—which added to the pressure on the as-yet uncleared morning peak. That presented further challenges for the operating companies and the police. To give the committee an idea of the scale of the challenge, I point out that according to the contract an operating company treatment cycle must be completed within two hours; on Monday, treatment cycles were taking up to 11.5 hours.

Of course, at that point there was full recognition that there were disruptions to traffic and both the operating companies and the police were fully engaged in responding to incidents, many of which they were able to deal with. It is clear, however, that by mid-afternoon the cumulative effects of five key traffic incidents on our relatively compact central motorway network were leading to significant numbers of people becoming stranded for significant periods.

There were five key incidents that occurred across Scotland's road network last Monday. At 9.21 am, the A80 northbound at Castlecary was affected by a broken-down heavy goods vehicle causing considerable congestion. At 11.49 am, the Forth road bridge closure resulted in considerable congestion on approach roads; at 12 pm, the M77 southbound at Malletsheugh was blocked by HGVs struggling to climb a steep hill; at around 1.30 pm, the M8 at junction 5 was affected by the breakdown of two HGVs causing considerable congestion; and, finally, the A725 Raith interchange experienced problems throughout the day. These events, which took place during the day, intensified the problems, which were then further compounded on Monday night when temperatures plummeted, at times to below -10°C, which is the point at which salt ceases to be an effective tool for clearing ice and snow from the roads.

For example, in the early hours of 7 December, surface temperatures on the M8 at Shotts reached -9.6°C. Similarly, at Gogarburn in Edinburgh, the temperature fell to -12°C at 4 am on the morning of the 7 December. That resulted in compacted ice forming on the carriageway and, with continued low temperatures, salting remained ineffective. Ploughing was the only option, once the carriageways had been cleared of traffic. In some cases, the ice was so thick it resulted in snowplough blades breaking.

In the period since 24 November, when the Scottish Government's resilience operation became active in relation to specific winter weather incidents, Transport Scotland, the affected police forces and the Government's resilience team, including ministers, have been closely involved in preparations for what was clearly a very challenging prolonged period of weather.

In the aftermath of the significant incidents on the afternoon of Monday 6 December, a helpline for motorists was established and communications to the public were increased, although, as we have acknowledged, communications were deficient in the information that was supplied to members of the public at the time.

The continued efforts of the police, Transport Scotland and the trunk road operating companies throughout Monday night and into the next morning helped to resolve and unblock many of the key incidents that had occurred in the course of the previous day, although it was not possible to safely reopen the whole of the M8 until 13:15 on Wednesday 8 December.

In the process, many members of the public were inconvenienced by the disruption to the road network. The Government has made clear its regret at the inconvenience and distress that were caused to members of the public, and it has acknowledged and apologised for the failures of communication that took place.

Although there is no doubt that lessons can be and have been learned from these events, I stress to the committee that we were dealing with an extraordinary set of circumstances. Our efforts to fully mitigate the effects of the extreme weather events on 6 December were an enormous challenge.

In light of the events, the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure has this morning set out a number of particular points to be taken forward to assist in the management and communication of future events. We expect there to be deteriorating weather conditions later this week. Those steps are: storing additional salt and grit at key locations on the national trunk road network for quicker access; using traffic management resources to

enable diversions where necessary; further enhancing the operating companies' resources by adapting vehicles, such as landscaping vehicles, for clearing snow; using the option of removing trunk road and motorway central barriers to allow easy access to blocked or broken-down vehicles; working with the police to consider how Transport Scotland could stack HGVs, if conditions deteriorate, so as to keep traffic moving—and that was utilised on Monday last week; and providing the emergency response vehicles of central Scotland's trunk road incident support service with welfare kits, so as to speed up their response.

In addition to those measures, Mr Brown will also be considering the key question of whether all first-line responders should have invoked major incident procedures during Monday 6 December, and that is something about which he will be convening discussions over the coming days.

Many challenges exist in relation to the whole question of winter maintenance, and the Government will remain focused on all those efforts. In the process of that, we should acknowledge that, in the course of Monday and Tuesday last week, many members of the public, volunteers, representatives of the emergency services and of trunk road operating companies and members of the police services worked extraordinarily hard to manage a very difficult set of circumstances and to avoid the severest of effects on individuals.

I am joined by Jim Barton, the chief roads engineer, who can assist me on some of the detail of the trunk road operating companies' activities, and by Chief Constable Kevin Smith from Central Scotland Police, who speaks for ACPOS on transport and roads issues, in order that we can provide the committee with as much detail as it desires.

**The Convener:** Members have a number of questions relating to different transport modes. Before that, however, I have a couple of general questions about the Government's approach and capacity.

You spoke about the resilience operation coming into effect in late November. What is its practical capacity, for example to make late-night decisions about whether a change has to be made, whether part of the transport network will function or whether other public services will be affected—if weather patterns are changing and are not, by the early hours of the morning, what they had been expected to be in the late-night forecast the night before? What practical capacity does the Government or its agencies have to make those on-going decisions in changing conditions?

12:45

**John Swinney:** Essentially, the resilience operation operates in two modes. The first is an ordinary, non-incident mode of operation, which has a resilience representative on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year in case something happens that requires a resilience response. An example of that is the terrorist incident that took place at Glasgow airport. If a completely unexpected incident happens, the resilience representative who is on call can spark the gathering of resources and capacity to deal with that incident.

The second mode is the one that was activated on 24 November, whereby the Government decides that it faces a set of circumstances in which the resilience operation needs to be activated. Once that happens, a strategic co-ordinator will be in place at civil service level within the organisation to ensure that appropriate preparations are made and that the steps that need to be taken to invoke resources and dialogue with different parties are taken—

**The Convener:** Would that include a 24-hour information-gathering operation, so that a decision could be made in the middle of the night if weather patterns changed from what was expected?

**John Swinney:** That is correct.

**The Convener:** Okay.

What is the Government's general attitude to the balance between keeping everything going and trying to avoid people getting caught in a system—whether the transport system or a system in any other part of the public sector—that cannot keep going and will not operate?

**John Swinney:** That gets to the nub of the issue. If we go back a week, to the week before 6 December, there was widespread disruption to schools, many of which were closed, and many people could not get to their work. By the weekend, the milder weather meant that the transport networks, the trunk roads and many of the local roads were in a much better position than they had been in for most of the previous week. All of us will have heard feedback from members of the public, which made it clear that they wanted to get back to school, work and so on. It is understandable that that was their position.

The Government clearly wants to ensure that the country can function normally and effectively in periods of difficult weather, but we must also exercise our judgment about when that is possible and when it is not possible. A point that I have been keen to stress is that we must accept that in winter weather there will be times when it is just not possible for us to function normally. We must do all that we can to avoid such situations, but we must sometimes accept that it might not be

possible for services to function. Interestingly, despite all the winter disruption that we have experienced, many services, including care and hospital services, have been able to operate extremely effectively. People have gone to tremendous trouble to get to their place of employment to provide care and support to some of the vulnerable in our society.

I accept your point that, at times, we must accept that we may be disrupted and will just have to be patient until we can get on top of the situation.

**The Convener:** At those times, it is extremely important that a single, clear message is sent out. If people hear mixed messages, with the police, Transport Scotland or ministers telling them that it is not safe to travel, or bus operators withdrawing services so that it is not possible for them to travel, but they are told on the phone by their employer that they will lose a day's pay if they do not turn up to work, that is completely unacceptable, is it not?

**John Swinney:** You raise a number of different points. I accept unreservedly that there must be consistent messaging. There is just no point in one element of the public sector saying one thing and another element of it saying another. I am certainly satisfied that dialogue takes place between the police and the Government, through agencies such as Transport Scotland and other bodies, with a view to coming to agreement on what messages should be sent out to the public. We must be absolutely as one in what we tell them.

**The Convener:** Does the Government's role extend to giving leadership including to private sector employers? Will you threaten people with consequences if it is not safe or possible to travel?

**John Swinney:** I was just coming on to that, convener. There is an issue with that, which I will put into a live context if I may. Last Wednesday morning, the agreed advice from the police and Government was that only essential travel was to be undertaken. We had had a couple of days of disruption after which people clearly wanted to get back to work. Despite the advice to make essential journeys only, the volume of traffic on the road network that day was business as usual. People have to make their own judgments based on the advice that they get. There are two key points in that regard. First, there must be absolutely consistent messaging from the public authorities to members of the public. I accept that Government must get that right, in consultation with the police at all times—or I accept that we have to get it consistent; it might not be right because weather conditions might turn out differently.

Secondly, employers should respect the advice. They should be sensitive and careful with their staff about the implications. We get into difficult

territory here. Let us take the example of our desire to try to keep hospital services operational to provide care for the vulnerable in our society. We need people to staff those hospital services. On occasions over the past fortnight, some hospital staff did not go home; they stayed in hospital having made the sensible judgment that saw them say, "I may as well be here and able to help rather than stuck somewhere else." I would encourage a process of sensitive management by employers. People should not be put in a position where they are fearful for their employment because they cannot get to work. We have all seen conditions that are pretty difficult.

**Jackson Carlaw (West of Scotland) (Con):** Is there any evidence that employees were being threatened with disciplinary action or dismissal? I have heard this claim being made about the private sector acting in almost an Ebenezer Scrooge, Dickensian manner. It is being said that employees across the whole of Scotland were in fear of their lives if they did not turn up for work. Can we name and shame businesses that did that or is this being promoted—and quite aggressively—as a reaction from business to the emergency that took place last week? My impression is that many businesses were very sensitive to the issues that their employees faced in the circumstances.

**John Swinney:** That is my point, Mr Carlaw. I have no evidence to bring to bear. I was simply responding to the convener's question on what the relationship between an employer to an employee should be in these weather conditions. I said two things: first, that the consistent advice of the Government and police should be followed; and, secondly, that there should be sensitivity as part of that. I have absolutely no examples to bring to committee. I was simply answering the convener's question in as helpful a way as I could.

**Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP):** How did this year's preparations differ from last year's? What lessons have been learned?

**John Swinney:** The principal issue in relation to last winter was the preparedness of salt supplies. I think that the committee will know that in about late December or early January, salt stocks were at a very low level in Scotland. It is important to remember that, over the past two to three years, the winter has been more acute in Scotland than was the case for a number of years before that. Therefore, in the early part of 2010, salt stocks were not at a particularly strong level. At the end of the year we were sitting with, I think, about 40,000 tonnes of salt. I ask Mr Barton to confirm that.

**Jim Barton (Transport Scotland):** Certainly, in the worst part, we got down as low as 30,000 tonnes and then, as we came out of winter, we got



to 40,000 tonnes. By the time we got to the end of the winter, which is actually May, and we were out of all of the bad weather, we had got to around 100,000 tonnes.

**John Swinney:** We were in a pretty weak position at the turn of last year, but the Government managed that situation. We never ran out of salt and careful actions were undertaken. However, we learned the lesson that we had to have more effective salt stocks.

A great deal of the focus has gone into ensuring that that is the case. The Scottish salt group's report, which was published in August, made 11 recommendations for short-term action. All those actions are completed or waiting for legal advice or procurement solutions to be put in place.

The report also made a number of medium-term and longer-term recommendations, which required further work. Some of them required capital investment. The Government is considering those recommendations, but they could not already have been implemented in the aftermath of a report that was received in August.

The importance of effective dialogue between all the key agencies was clear. In essence, there was a triumvirate of agencies. Transport Scotland was the Government's representative on traffic management throughout the country. Secondly, there was representation from the providers, if I can call them that—the trunk road operating companies and the operators of rail, ferry and other public transport services—to ensure that we had a clear concept of the position on public transport. The final element of the triumvirate was the police. That ensured that Transport Scotland, the police, the trunk road operating companies and the transport providers worked together to ensure that we had an effective operation in place.

We acknowledge that, at certain times, we have to bring in the resilience operation when the conditions become more acute, which is what we did on 24 November. The reason for that is that we can then address a range of other issues, such as those with which we have been dealing in the past seven days. The necessity to secure fuel supplies around the country has become a particular issue and the resilience operation has given that significant focus. Again, the triumvirate of Transport Scotland, the police and the trunk road operating companies and transport providers has been working closely with the resilience operation to resolve the questions. At the heart of all that lies clear and effective communication.

**Alasdair Allan:** Where do the divisions lie between governmental decisions and operational ones? That is a matter as much for Chief Constable Smith as for the cabinet secretary. Will you explain more about where the lines lie

between central and operational decisions, particularly when the resilience operation is invoked?

**John Swinney:** I will say a few words first of all and then Chief Constable Smith will want to add some more remarks, I suspect.

The dividing line is, essentially, between preparation and incident management. That is perhaps the best way to differentiate it. It is clearly the responsibility of Government to lead on preparations, along with other providers. Private companies will, of course, be involved, such as First ScotRail, which provides most of the train network in Scotland, and the trunk road operating companies, which will cover what they have to do under their contracts. Other players are involved, but the preparation—the formulation of the plan—lies with Government.

On Monday and Tuesday, a succession of incidents was dealt with locally. Such incidents would predominantly be an issue for the chief constable and his colleagues.

**Chief Constable Kevin Smith (Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland):** The cabinet secretary outlines the situation. When it gets into incident management, as was clearly the case throughout Monday and into Tuesday, the responsibility lies with us and other responders. Clearly, the trunk road operator and Transport Scotland would be part of that, as would local authorities, in terms of the wider road surface. Others, such as the national health service, are involved, too; in fact, anybody involved in the management of incidents and resilience would be keen to get messages out. So, I would see the divide lying clearly as the cabinet secretary outlined it. Obviously, we are part of the headline preparation work, so it is maybe not an absolute cut along the line in that regard. However, I suppose that there is clarity at some point about where we both sit and, obviously, we have regular dialogue and liaison. As the magnitude of the circumstances of Monday evening became clear, the Government had a part to play as well.

13:00

**John Swinney:** Just to add to what the chief constable said, we have strategic co-ordinating groups that operate at a local level. There are eight of those groups, mirroring Scotland's police forces, which have lead responsibility for dealing with wider incident management at the local level. The groups are part of the general work of preparing for a period of winter weather, for example. The dialogue that will exist between the Government's resilience operation and the strategic co-ordinating groups is crucial to ensuring preparedness in all parts of the country.

**Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab):** I want to ask a wee bit more about the handling of the incidents on the morning of Monday, 6 December. I have an incident management question for Mr Barton. The cabinet secretary has told us that the contracted companies gritted in the early hours of Monday 6 December in light of the weather forecast. Were they preparing to plough too, given that snow was forecast?

**Jim Barton:** The trunk road operating companies are all required to prepare winter maintenance plans, which are scrutinised by us and by the independent performance audit group. All those plans are in place, and we are satisfied that the companies have adequate equipment and resources in terms of people and supplies.

**Charlie Gordon:** The snow was forecast for Monday morning, at about the time of the rush hour. How were the companies planning to use snowploughs in the rush hour?

**Jim Barton:** Over the whole of Sunday, they were gritting, then into the early hours of Monday morning they carried out a pre-grit treatment, laying material before the snow fell. Their equipment has snowploughs on it, but when the snow is not falling the snowploughs are obviously not down. When it snows, they put the snowploughs down and start to plough. They need a certain amount of snow before they can plough effectively.

**Charlie Gordon:** How much snow?

**Jim Barton:** About two inches, or 50cm.

**Charlie Gordon:** I quote from the winter maintenance plan for the south-west division for the contractor Amey:

“Snow and Ice Clearance ... Ploughing of snow will normally commence at a snow depth of 30mm—”

which is 3cm—

“and will be accompanied by salt applications.”

My point is this: it is very difficult to plough or, indeed, grit a motorway during the morning rush hour. Was consideration given to asking the police to hold the traffic off the motorway to allow the snow to be ploughed? The snow of course cannot be ploughed until after it starts falling, and it was predicted to fall during the rush hour.

**Jim Barton:** Just to clarify, it was a slip of the tongue to say 50cm, because I meant to say 5cm. Anyway, it is 5cm or 3cm. The—

**Charlie Gordon:** I am sorry, but you said 5cm, Mr Barton—

**The Convener:** Order.

**Charlie Gordon:** But the winter maintenance plan says 30mm, which is 3cm.

**Jim Barton:** Yes, but it converts—*[Interruption.]*

**The Convener:** Order. Excuse me, but we are not in a discussion about whether it is 50 or 30mm. I think that we understand that there was a slip of the tongue there. The question was about keeping the road open.

**Charlie Gordon:** No. Mr Barton corrected himself and said 5cm, which is also incorrect. I am quoting from the winter maintenance plan, which refers to 3cm.

**The Convener:** Okay. A final opportunity—

**Charlie Gordon:** That is a very important distinction, convener.

**The Convener:** Okay, thank you. I give Mr Barton a final opportunity to answer the question; then we will go back to Alasdair Allan.

**Jim Barton:** You asked me about a general point. We cannot plough when there is no snow—you made that point. The snow must be of a certain depth before it can be ploughed.

You asked whether we made provision to clear the roads of traffic before we ploughed.

**Charlie Gordon:** Yes. Doing that would perhaps involve not letting people on to the motorway initially, for which the police would be needed.

**John Swinney:** Convener, I think—

**The Convener:** I think that we have had—

**Charlie Gordon:** Wait a minute—the cabinet secretary said that managing the incident was the officials’ responsibility. I agree with him. Mr Barton is presented here as a witness and I wish to ask him questions about how the incident was managed.

**The Convener:** You have done that. We will offer Mr Barton a final opportunity to answer the question, after which we will return to Alasdair Allan.

**Jim Barton:** For the snow that was forecast, we would not expect to clear the motorway for ploughing. That would not be the normal measure that we would take. As late as 8 o’clock on Monday morning, the Met Office still forecast a fairly short bout of snow. I will quote exactly what it told us at 8.01 on Monday morning:

“Generally amounts of fresh snow will be in the region of 2 to 5 cm although higher areas may see a further 10 cm. Behind this band of snow it will be generally dry and clear.”

As a roads authority, we would not expect to ask the police to close our major artery in such conditions.

**The Convener:** I call Alasdair Allan.

**Charlie Gordon:** So you think that it is a good idea to use snowploughs in rush-hour traffic.

**The Convener:** Charlie. I call Alasdair Allan, please.

**Alasdair Allan:** Thank you, convener. As—

**John Swinney:** Convener—

**The Convener:** I have called Alasdair Allan.

**John Swinney:** Convener, we need to explore the accusation that Mr Gordon makes.

**Charlie Gordon:** I am making no accusations; I am asking a question.

**John Swinney:** I am interested to understand the point that Mr Gordon makes about what should have been done in the circumstances.

**Charlie Gordon:** The winter maintenance plan says:

“Ploughing of snow will normally commence at a ... depth of”

3cm. You worked on a forecast of between 2 and 5cm of snow, but you took the view that you should not hold traffic off the motorway in order to operate snowploughs. It is difficult to operate snowploughs in the rush hour.

**John Swinney:** I would like to make a remark about that.

**The Convener:** Very briefly, please.

**John Swinney:** I will be. I would like—

**Charlie Gordon:** It is an operational matter, cabinet secretary.

**The Convener:** Charlie, you have asked your question several times. I am afraid that if you cannot come to order, we will not be able to have the meeting.

**Charlie Gordon:** Convener, the cabinet secretary said—

**The Convener:** Excuse me.

**Charlie Gordon:** —that the preparations were his shout—

**The Convener:** Order.

**Charlie Gordon:** —and that the management of the incident was the officials’ shout.

**The Convener:** I have called the cabinet secretary to answer the question and I do not expect—

**Charlie Gordon:** As long as you are clear on what he said on the record.

**The Convener:** Charlie, I do not expect you to ask a question four or five times in a row and not listen to the answer.

**John Swinney:** An important point to clarify is that, when the snow fell during the rush hour, ploughing activity was undertaken. I make that clear on the record—ploughing activity was undertaken during the rush hour. Mr Gordon asks how on earth we can plough in such circumstances.

**Charlie Gordon:** You told us that it took you 11 hours, because of the traffic.

**John Swinney:** I said that some gritting cycles took 11 hours, but that was because of the gridlock that developed.

On 3 January 2008 and on 4 and 5 February 2010, 2 to 5cm of snow fell on the central Scotland road network. We ploughed in those circumstances, but that did not cause the gridlock that happened on Monday 6 December. Why? Because the snow accumulations on 6 December were much greater and the snow fell at a time when several incidents had already occurred on the roads, which led to further congestion. However, let it be made absolutely clear that ploughing activity was being undertaken while the snow fell.

The key question, which I would like the chief constable to answer, is whether it would have been advisable to close motorways on the basis of a predicted snowfall of 2 to 5cm.

**Chief Constable Smith:** If Transport Scotland had asked me at 7, 8 or 9 o’clock in the morning to close the motorways, my response would have been to ask which motorways.

We are talking about the M8 from Edinburgh to Glasgow airport and beyond, the M77 from Ayrshire to Glasgow, the A80, M80 and M876, and the M9. We should never say that something is impossible, but it was near to impossible to close those roads at that time with the resources that were available. Every time a junction is closed, a diversion route has to be put in place, so all that would have happened is that the chaos would have transferred to the surface roads. The motorway could not have been blocked using police resources at that point in time. To have done that effectively would have required significant forward planning for days. It would have required not just police resources but significant resources from Transport Scotland—

**Charlie Gordon:** Convener, can the chief constable tell us what his response would have been if a similar request had been made the night before, when the weather forecast was received?

**The Convener:** It has been clearly indicated that that request was not made, so that is not a question for the chief constable.

**Charlie Gordon:** You have just let the chief constable answer one hypothetical question from

Mr Swinney. How about letting him answer my hypothetical question about what would have happened if exactly the same request had been made the night before, when the weather forecast was received?

**The Convener:** You may make a final comment, chief constable, and then Charlie Gordon is finished.

**Chief Constable Smith:** The response would have been similar. The snowfall that transpired was not what was in the warnings that we got. It would have been impossible to close the motorway network. The impact on surface roads more widely and on communities would have been significant.

**Alasdair Allan:** I see that the new Minister for Transport and Infrastructure has published a six-point plan for winter resilience. I notice that there is a focus in that, as there was in your opening remarks, cabinet secretary, on the role of HGVs in some of the problems that Scotland experienced recently. What would you like to be done differently in the future about HGVs? I noticed, for instance, that the Government's plan refers to:

"Working with the Police to consider how we can stack HGVs if conditions deteriorate in order to keep traffic moving".

My second point about HGVs is that there has been much discussion in the media about the potential for adopting the practices used in some European countries of requiring HGVs to have winter tyres. *[Interruption.]*

I am sorry; have I pinched a question from someone?

**Jackson Carlaw:** I did not see that question advertised. This is ridiculous.

**The Convener:** Alasdair, continue please.

**Alasdair Allan:** I am not aware that the committee has advertised or pre-set questions. Committee members ask such questions as they think are necessary and that is the question that I want to ask.

**Jackson Carlaw:** Is that opportunity open to us all, convener?

**The Convener:** In order, when you are called to speak.

**Alasdair Allan:** That is my question. I was using my imagination, convener.

**John Swinney:** On Dr Allan's first point, the Government recognises that, in certain circumstances, we might need to hold HGVs back. That was done on the M74 last Monday night, when around 200 HGVs were held where we could still get traffic through. It would not have been safe to release those HGVs on to the trunk

road network at different stages during the evening.

The Government has made it clear that the fitting of winter tyres needs to be explored for the future. We have said that we will undertake, with the industry, a cost benefit analysis of all those questions because fitting winter tyres to HGVs will cost money. We have to explore the benefits and the costs of doing that because HGVs were at the heart of many of the problems that we had to deal with.

The issue falls into the category of wider winter preparations; it is about how we can take steps to make a real difference in future.

**Jackson Carlaw:** Can I ask a supplementary question on HGVs?

**The Convener:** I will take it in a moment. I appeal to all members to keep good order. The committee has done that very well throughout this parliamentary session; it would be a great shame if members were unable to keep order when we are discussing an issue that many people want to take seriously.

Jackson Carlaw has a brief supplementary question.

13:15

**Jackson Carlaw:** I have a question about HGVs. There has been a bit of loose talk, which has caused some concern, about HGVs jack-knifing on every road in Scotland, and it has been suggested that they were largely responsible for the problems that arose. It would be helpful, cabinet secretary, if you could clarify the substance of the problems that HGVs caused.

In your opening remarks, you referred to a breakdown on the A80 at 9.21. Was that a weather-related breakdown or a normal, routine breakdown of a lorry? The M77 problem at 11 o'clock was obviously weather related. Did it involve the jack-knifing of a vehicle or was it caused simply by the fact that HGVs were finding it difficult to ascend a steep slope? Did the two breakdowns of HGVs on the M8 at 1.30 involve jack-knifing? What was the nature of those breakdowns? I know that the road haulage industry is concerned that a false impression of irresponsibility on the part of the drivers involved is being given.

**John Swinney:** The total number of recorded incidents involving HGVs between 28 November and 12 December is 140, 74 of which involved jack-knifed lorries. Twenty-seven of the incidents resulted in carriage and road closures. I am willing to give Mr Carlaw further detail on the specific examples that I cited. However, I cited those examples not to apportion blame to anyone but to

explain why the motorway network became gridlocked. I am here not to apportion blame to anyone about anything but to answer on behalf of the Government. If a road becomes impassable because vehicles are blocking the carriageway, whether it be because of mechanical breakdown or because a vehicle has been in a collision or has jack-knifed, the road is blocked and there is a back-up of traffic.

**Jackson Carlaw:** Whatever the weather.

**John Swinney:** Yes, but the challenge that we faced was that the incidents that I have recounted affected the M80, the M90, the M77, the M8 and the A725. Given Mr Carlaw's knowledge of our transport networks, he will appreciate that if those routes are affected within a short period, at a time when we have not managed to move the morning rush-hour traffic off the road and the evening rush hour has descended on us hours earlier than would have been anticipated, it is a recipe for a very difficult situation on the roads. That is the only point that I am trying to make.

**Jackson Carlaw:** I did not mean to make a confrontational point. I was simply trying to establish that the delays would have occurred if the vehicles concerned had broken down, whatever the weather.

**The Convener:** I understand that.

**John Swinney:** I do not want to stretch the convener's patience, but I would like to add one brief remark. Mr Carlaw made the point that the delays would have happened regardless of the weather. That is not strictly the case, because the vehicles could have been moved much more quickly. The challenge with some of the incidents was that it was taking not the usual 40 minutes but hours to remove a vehicle from the road, because vehicles could not get traction and temperatures were plummeting. As I said, in some places, the temperature was -12°C, at which grit does not work. Trying to recover vehicles in those circumstances is an acute challenge, but I assure the committee that plenty of people and personnel in the police and trunk road operating companies were trying to do exactly that for prolonged periods.

**The Convener:** I remind members that we are tight for time and that all questions and answers should be as succinct as possible.

**Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** Good afternoon, gentlemen. Today, the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure has said that he is

"Working with the Police to consider how we can stack HGVs if conditions deteriorate in order to keep traffic moving".

I invite you to comment on that statement. Are there sufficient places in which HGVs can be

stacked? I have a supplementary, once you have answered that question.

**John Swinney:** The salt group report makes the long-term recommendation that we should consider

"Requiring lorries to park in lay-bys when snow arrives to reduce the risk of either losing traction or 'jack-knifing'".

There are ad hoc approaches that we can take. We took one last Monday night on the M74. Basically, it involved closing two lanes of the M74 and stacking 200 HGVs to keep them off the network and to give us time to get things cleared and moving. In the early hours of Tuesday morning, when I was involved in discussions with the relevant police forces, lorries were being let out to move into the network as it was beginning to open up. So there are ad hoc solutions that can be applied.

We do not need to construct specific lorry parks to do that. If we did so, we would have to be awfully sure where the incident was going to happen, so that the lorry park was in the right place. The ad hoc solution of using lanes on multiple-lane carriageways is a pragmatic approach. However, that involves a great deal of police operational management. Of course, in the events that we are discussing, the police were dealing with numerous other incidents into the bargain. A pragmatic approach was taken on the M74 that undoubtedly relieved pressure on other areas of the network.

**Rob Gibson:** It is important to know whether HGVs were impeded by drivers of other vehicles driving in a fashion that led to jams. I do not suppose that you know the answer to that now, but it would be useful to get information on that in writing.

**John Swinney:** I would be staggered if HGV problems were not exacerbated by other vehicle movements and by people driving too fast or carelessly. I do not need to put that in writing; I am happy to put it on the record that, undoubtedly, HGVs would have been affected in that way.

**Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab):** Briefly on HGVs, I am sure that you are aware that there are several hauliers in the Grangemouth area in my constituency. Their main concern is about the lack of early information. I have been told that people lost thousands of pounds because lorries could not move. You mentioned the importance of providing early information where possible. I hope that you will take that on board, because it is vital for any future incidents.

**John Swinney:** I accept that. In response to the point that the convener raised at the beginning of the meeting, I will just say that, regrettably, when we have winter weather disturbance, we will never

be able to protect individual businesses from disruption and interruption. I know that businesses will have lost revenue and business opportunities as a consequence of the winter weather, and that is to be regretted, but I am afraid that, in such circumstances, there will be disruption. The critical thing is that we can perhaps give people information earlier, saying, "Look, don't bother taking your lorry out today—it's no worth a candle. Keep it in the yard and don't waste fuel or precious workers' hours. Go out the following day."

I will make one further point that is relevant to Mrs Peattie's constituency. An important part of the dialogue in the resilience operation, which flows from the work that we do with Chief Constable Smith's force, is about ensuring that the Grangemouth refinery and the fuel distribution depot are accessible to lorries. That point is not lost on me, given my previous involvement in other incidents involving the Grangemouth refinery. I know just how critical it is to ensure that access into and out of that depot for staff and delivery drivers is maintained. There was excellent co-operation between the trunk road operating companies, Falkirk Council, Central Scotland Police and the management of the Grangemouth refinery to ensure that that was the case.

**Cathy Peattie:** I am aware of that situation and welcome it.

We have heard that some drivers continued to be allowed to join the trunk road network when it was clear what might happen as a result. If there had been an opportunity to prevent that, it might have been helpful to take it. Chief Constable Smith has explored some of those issues, but people have raised the question.

**John Swinney:** I have two points to make in response to that. First, the trunk road network is obviously the focal point for many people's journeys across the country. Throughout the incidents that we were wrestling with on the M8, M77 and M80, almost all the subsidiary routes remained operational—such as the A80, the A803, which runs through Bishopbriggs, Kirkintilloch and Kilsyth, the A904, which runs through Grangemouth and adjacent to the M9, and the A71 and A89, which run adjacent to the M8. Through co-operation, the local authorities and the police maintained those routes as credible alternative routes. Our difficulty was that the trunk road network was afflicted with a succession of different incidents. In the feedback I have had from the police forces, I have seen that even when an incident was resolved and traffic got moving, the police had to return half an hour later because another incident happened. The trunk road network was afflicted by an intense series of difficulties, and the problem got worse because

the stationary traffic meant that none of the gritting treatment that had been undertaken was effective.

The chief constable will have a better sense of my second point than I do. Bearing in mind the fact that we were dealing with all those combined incidents and problems on the M8, M9, M876, M80 and M77, the signing and direction activity that would have had to be undertaken to help drivers to avoid that network would have been a massive operational challenge for the police. Perhaps the chief constable could reflect on that.

**Chief Constable Smith:** As the cabinet secretary said, we had an incredibly difficult task. The important thing is not closing the motorways and all the resource that that would take; although we have acknowledged the importance of improving communications, the important point is that there should be no doubt that throughout the early morning and into the afternoon, consistent and regular messages were going out from Strathclyde Police and Lothian and Borders Police that the driving conditions were extremely difficult, that gritters had been deployed and that there were long tailbacks.

That information was twittered—I am not entirely au fait with that new technology myself—and put on Facebook. Within an hour, the message was that there was heavy snow, that the roads were open but the traffic was moving slowly, and that lorries were stuck on the A876. That information was twittered to all agencies. By lunch time, the roads were at a standstill, the Castlecary area was badly affected, and we were urging motorists to stay at home and not make journeys.

We can look back with hindsight, and there is always a desire to improve communications, but we should not come away thinking that there was not a regular flow of information from my force and all forces. On Monday, no one could have been in a car, on the street, or even in their house and not been aware of what was going on. Unfortunately, and I am sure for good reasons, people were making the conscious decision that they needed to join the motorway. Closing the motorway and making it impossible for people to get on to it is hugely difficult. If we had done that, we would have had no resources to send to resolve the problems.

I hope that that helps.

**Cathy Peattie:** I will move on, although perhaps the answer to this will also involve Twitter.

When was it clear that a number of people were stranded in their vehicles? How soon was it possible to support those people?

13:30

**John Swinney:** At various stages during the day, people were stranded in their vehicles for prolonged periods. The police and the trunk road operating companies put a lot of effort into assessing what was going on and resolving the problems. The focus of the work was to ensure that we got the traffic moving, and it did move, but it slowed up again as a result of incidents.

There is no doubt that people were stationary or stranded for prolonged periods. However, a traffic management exercise was undertaken, for example to get people off the A80 and on to the subsidiary road network through towns such as Bishopbriggs, Kirkintilloch, Cumbernauld and Kilsyth and to get them moving. People were therefore able to get away from the scene of congestion.

As the evening wore on, it became clear that people would be stuck for prolonged periods. I have had discussions with the three relevant police forces, and I know that they were out delivering blankets and hot drinks to people in their vehicles around the routes. They were also identifying people with medical conditions who had to be got out quicker than others. Clearly, the operation included a welfare element during the course of the evening. It was certainly reported to me that, throughout the night, such an operation was undertaken to ensure that members of the public were supported. However, I completely accept that many members of the public were caused some considerable inconvenience and distress.

**Cathy Peattie:** Were the police alone in carrying out the role or were others involved?

**John Swinney:** It was primarily the police, but I think that they were working with the local authorities, whose resilience operations also kicked in. I know from my discussions that local authorities were putting in place the support mechanisms that might have been required had full rest centres been activated. During the night, we dealt with a changing situation. The carriageways were moving, albeit very slowly, and by that stage people were desperate to get to their destinations, albeit very late, so they preferred the idea of sticking it out on a motorway to going off to a rest centre that might have been established.

In the incident of the previous week, when the A9 was closed and it became clear that it was going to be closed overnight, Perth and Kinross Council was responsible for putting together—in collaboration with our local partners—a rest centre at the North Inch campus in Perth. I think that the centre accommodated more than 600 people and provided welcome respite. During the evening, a judgment was formulated on whether it was

necessary to put people into a rest centre or whether they would be able to persevere in the conditions until the traffic was moving.

**Cathy Peattie:** There are a lot of questions to ask, convener, but I am aware of the time. I want to ask briefly about Transport Scotland. The cabinet secretary spoke about the salt group report, which it seems that Transport Scotland produced with a few members from local authorities but no one from the police, who might have made some difference. The report makes a number of recommendations, but they do not seem to have been taken forward. Has Transport Scotland let down the Government and the Scottish people? Clearly, it had major responsibility. The First Minister himself said that the issue was about Transport Scotland and the police. The police have done a good job, and I am proud of the work that they have done, but I am not as happy about Transport Scotland. Does the cabinet secretary share my concern?

**John Swinney:** The report was not produced by Transport Scotland alone; it was produced by the Scottish salt group, which is a combination of Transport Scotland, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers, and SCOTS. I will not be able to tell you what the acronym means, but SCOTS comprises the directors of roads in all Scotland's local authorities.

The report makes 11 short-term recommendations, all of which either are complete or are awaiting minor details to make them complete. I therefore do not accept that the report has not been acted on. The report was delivered in August, and the short-term recommendations have all been implemented or have only minor details left to be handled. The medium-term recommendations are partly complete and the application of the longer-term recommendations is under consideration.

Cathy Peattie asked me about the performance of Transport Scotland. The point that I made to Dr Allan was about the lessons of last winter, when we had an acute problem in relation to salt supplies. We have addressed that. In the past few weeks, we have used a tremendous amount of salt stock, and we are working to replenish it. That illustrates the steps that are being taken to respond to difficult circumstances. I have no doubt that all public servants, including those in Transport Scotland, are determined to ensure that we strengthen the areas that need to be strengthened, which includes the area of communication, in relation to which, as the Government and I have conceded, work needs to be undertaken.

**Cathy Peattie:** Surely Transport Scotland had a key role in that communication. Five of the nine

people on the salt group were from Transport Scotland. It strikes me that that communication role is for Transport Scotland.

**John Swinney:** I do not imagine that there were any votes in the Scottish salt group about what was going on, which I suspect was a result of the fact that we brought together people with some expertise in addressing the issues in question. Frankly, if Transport Scotland had not worked with SCOTS so assiduously last winter and we had an inadequate salt supply, there is no way in which we would have been able to manage the difficult situation.

I hear what is being said, but a tremendous amount of work goes on to try to ensure that the traffic network can function effectively, and Transport Scotland has undertaken that work in drawing together the activities of the trunk road operating companies, the local authorities and the police, and it will continue to do so.

**Cathy Peattie:** It is important that this committee keeps an eye on things to ensure that the lessons have been learned and that Transport Scotland applies those lessons in future years.

**Rob Gibson:** We have heard news about the local roads, side roads and pavements outwith the motorway networks. For those of us in the country and towns, there is a question of access for pedestrians and for motorists. Is the cabinet secretary satisfied that sufficient resources were made available by local authorities to clear local and side roads and to make pavements safe for pedestrians?

**John Swinney:** Inevitably, the answer to that question will vary from one part of the country to another. Local authorities are responsible for their winter maintenance arrangements. In that context, they have to formulate plans that are appropriate for their own circumstances. In the communities that I represent in Perth and Kinross and Angus, I have seen the local authorities implementing road and pavement clearing operations using small tractors with plough attachments at the front and gritting attachments at the back. I have also seen that elsewhere in the country in the past couple of weeks.

I acknowledge that not all surfaces are passable for members of the public. In relation to last weekend and the weekend before the major incident on 6 December, SCOTS reported to the Government that the principal local roads were in a good position by 4 December, and local authorities felt that they had an opportunity to make a substantial impact on minor roads, suburban roads and pathways. That was to be the focus of their activity, ideally, in the week beginning 6 December. Of course, that was somewhat stymied by the significant additional

snowfall on 6 December. Problems will undoubtedly still exist and recur in individual local authority areas.

**Rob Gibson:** It is obvious that some areas were hit much harder than they have been hit for a long while by the extremely heavy snow. Would one recommendation be to look at more resilience for councils in terms of their ability to sweep paths and so forth? The problem was obvious in Edinburgh, the streets of which members have to walk to get to the Parliament. We did so over the past weeks with trepidation. Do we need to look at the levels of equipment, salt and grit that are available for pathways, so that people can at least walk to the shops, surgeries, work and schools?

**John Swinney:** Mr Gibson raises a fair point. Some local authorities are more accustomed than others are to such conditions and therefore have more extensive winter maintenance operations. The area that Mr Gibson represents is pretty accustomed to such conditions, as is the area that I represent. However, other parts of the country that are less accustomed to them will have made different judgments on what was the right level of equipment to put in place. We all have to look at the experience of periods of winter weather and judge what is sustainable in the medium term. The Government will, of course, do that in relation to the areas that are our responsibility. I am sure that local authorities will do that in relation to theirs.

**The Convener:** We turn to questions on rail. I ask members to keep questions short, if at all possible.

**Charlie Gordon:** The rail network seemed to struggle a bit in last week's severe weather. The flagship Glasgow to Edinburgh via Falkirk High service was reduced to a timetable that notionally represented 25 per cent of capacity. Other delays occurred. Yours truly was stranded in Edinburgh for two nights with just the clothes that I stood up in—a cruel and unusual fate for a dyed-in-the-wool Glaswegian, I am sure you will agree. Other lines, such as that between Glasgow and Edinburgh via Shotts, were closed completely. Indeed, north of the central belt not much was moving on the rails.

Are you satisfied with the performance of the railway industry last week, given First ScotRail's £315 million subsidy this year and Network Rail's £330 million this year for the development of the railway, with more proposed for next year? Did Network Rail switch on the points heaters? Did it use best endeavours to keep routes open? Are you happy with the resilience of the rail network last week?

**John Swinney:** Clearly, the rail network was subject to a significant amount of disruption. The problems on the trunk road network resulted in greater numbers of train passengers, which



intensified the pressure on the rail network into the bargain. Two major elements influenced the performance of the rail network. First, the rolling stock—I will call it the diesel stock—suffered significant damage. As units travelled along the rails to complete their journeys, significant volumes of ice and snow compacted underneath them. Given the sophistication of the braking systems and the depth of temperatures that were involved, brakes were frequently coming on literally every two minutes. As a consequence, the units became inoperable and had to be taken to depots to be de-iced. I did not witness it with my own eyes, but I imagine that removing the amounts of ice that we are talking about from underneath the rail units was no mean feat.

I do not have the numbers to hand—the numbers that I will cite are therefore not precise, convener—but I recollect from the resilience conference calls over the course of the acute period, which involved First ScotRail and Network Rail, that 60 to 70 of the 110 or so available diesel units were undermined by the circumstances. First ScotRail was unable to deploy as many units as it would have liked to.

13:45

The concept of ploughing the tracks was suggested, but that was impossible because of the sophistication of the rail monitoring equipment that sits within the tracks and the fact that it would have been dangerous for the long-term health of the rail network.

First ScotRail has now taken steps to try to defrost trains more quickly by acquiring covers that go round the perimeter of the trains when they are in the yard, so that the process of heating them to remove the ice and snow is quicker and units get back out of the door more frequently.

That was the principal operational issue that affected First ScotRail. The second issue that affected the rail network involved the points. Network Rail deployed a key route strategy to keep the principal routes open, to enable us to maximise the amount of travel around the country. Charlie Gordon asked specifically about the Shotts line. The reason why it was closed is that the Mid Calder junction is very isolated and exposed, and any efforts to keep it open could have had implications for the ability to keep open the west coast main line, which was judged to be a more significant route.

I acknowledge the disruption to members of the public, but those were the two principal issues that affected the rail network. The major challenge was that we were having to wrestle with significantly lower temperatures. We have to consider that with

regard to our current rolling stock and its ability to endure winter weather of that magnitude.

**Rob Gibson:** Long railways in the Highlands were closed without much explanation. Can we get an indication from someone—now or later—of the cost of keeping warm a set of points and whether it might be possible to do that? I recognise the problems with ploughing, but it is clear that the issue that affected most people on the railways was a problem with information.

Passenger Focus said that the railway companies had to recognise passengers' plight: those companies got the passengers into the situation, so they should get them out. What will the companies do to prevent similar delays from happening in future? Having a complete breakdown of that issue would be a great help to us.

**John Swinney:** ScotRail endeavoured to keep rail information as accessible as possible to members of the public, but two things affected its performance. First, units failed frequently: at the peak, 62 of the 110 units in the ScotRail diesel fleet were out of action as a consequence of the circumstances that I have described.

First ScotRail was, on a daily basis, having to design an emergency timetable and advertise it on its website. It was running a diminished timetable, and as the day wore on trains unfortunately were failing. An individual could have left their house in Linlithgow, for example, expecting to get a 9 o'clock train after checking the website and seeing that the train was running, only to find when they got to the station that the train had stopped functioning in the time that it had taken them to get from their house to the station. I appreciate that that causes enormous inconvenience and frustration to members of the public.

The daily average number of hits on the ScotRail website is 25,000. On 6 December, the website took 200,000 hits. From 1 to 9 December, the website had 1.3 million hits. That tells us what we need to know about the scale of desire for information. Obviously, people become greatly frustrated when they are on websites that are unable to keep up with the disruption on the network. I have tried to explain how some of that real-time difficulty might arise.

As a matter of interest, on 4 December the traffic Scotland website had 1.2 million hits, whereas on 6 December it had 21.6 million hits, which is four hits for every man, woman and child in Scotland. That website remained intact for the duration of 6 December. I cannot profess that the information that it conveyed was particularly welcome to members of the public, but nonetheless it was able to withstand an enormous battering from members of the public who were

pursuing information that I clearly acknowledge they wanted to pursue.

**The Convener:** I have no doubt that committee members could pursue that further. There are certainly issues that we have not had time to explore, but we need to move on. I am sure that the committee will want to continue to engage with the Government on the issues, either in writing or in meetings in the new year. To those of your colleagues who are preparing for whatever weather is to come, we wish them all success.

**John Swinney:** Because I have a public platform and we expect severe weather to return this week, I take the opportunity to say that the advice that I have—although a resilience call has taken place while I have been at the committee, so my information is several hours old—is that we expect a bout of very severe winter weather on Wednesday evening and into Thursday, and more than likely spilling over into Friday, with significant volumes of snow. Our preparations are designed to address that. I give the committee an assurance that information about the circumstances that we face will be made available as far in advance as possible, and it will be updated and reinforced as circumstances develop.

**The Convener:** Finally, when will the report that you said that the new transport minister has released today on the measures that are being taken be available to members?

**John Swinney:** It is in the form of a press announcement that went out this morning. It will certainly be available publicly.

**The Convener:** The point is that members were not able to see it in advance of the meeting. In future, it would be helpful if such information was provided to members.

I now suspend the meeting briefly to allow the changeover of witnesses.

13:52

*Meeting suspended.*

13:55

*On resuming—*

## “Low Carbon Scotland”

**The Convener:** Agenda item 3 is further evidence on “Low Carbon Scotland: The Draft Report on Proposals and Policies”, which is produced under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. This is the last evidence session on the report. We are again joined by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth, John Swinney, who is accompanied by Scottish Government officials Bob Irvine, deputy director for Scottish Water and climate change, and Rosie Telford, a policy officer on climate change acts implementation. I welcome the officials and ask Mr Swinney whether he wants to make any opening remarks.

**John Swinney:** I will make brief opening remarks. As the committee is aware, the Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Tourism, Jim Mather, last week attended the United Nations climate change conference of the parties in Cancún as part of the United Kingdom delegation. He set out a range of initiatives and participated in a number of discussions.

The outcome of the conference was perhaps short of what many of us had hoped for before the Copenhagen conference last year, and much work will be required if a long-term binding commitment can be signed at Durban next year. However, the Cancún result—an agreement that deeper cuts in emissions are needed, a green climate fund and a means of addressing deforestation—is a clear sign that the vast majority of the world’s developed and developing countries want the UN multilateral process to succeed.

The Scottish Government will continue to challenge the world to set tough targets for reducing emissions. Strong international agreements are vital in ensuring that every country makes a fair contribution towards a low-carbon world. However, taking action on climate change is not just about Government ministers agreeing targets. Government, businesses and individuals all can and should make practical changes, whether that is doing less of certain things or more of others.

The message of the draft report on proposals and policies is that a low-carbon society makes sense for Scotland. Aside from the economic opportunities that come from Scotland’s natural advantage in renewable energy sources, Scottish consumers can save money on household bills through simple energy efficiency measures, and society as a whole would experience health, welfare and environmental benefits.

The RPP shows that there is flexibility in deciding which proposals should be adopted and which options could be held in reserve. We need that flexibility to enable us to manage the action that we must take, given the significant reductions in public expenditure that we must face.

The report on proposals and policies is one of a set of documents that set out our comprehensive approach to building a low-carbon Scotland. We have also published our energy efficiency action plan, a low-carbon economic strategy and a draft electricity generation policy statement, and we will publish our public engagement strategy by the end of the year.

The Government will continue its focus on taking forward the legislation on climate change that the Parliament has supported. The report on proposals and policies is an essential part of that work.

**The Convener:** Before we begin questions, I remind members that we have fractionally more than an hour for the session, because of the overrun on the previous agenda item, so please keep questions brief.

The cabinet secretary talked about a number of documents, including the public engagement strategy, which is to be released shortly, the RPP and the budget. Those were all published in quick succession or, in some cases, at the same time. Is it a reasonable approach that enables input and scrutiny from civic Scotland and from Parliament to put so much on the table at one time?

14:00

**John Swinney:** There was a choice: we could do it that way, or we could spread out the publication of those documents over a longer period. The advantage in the way that the Government went about it is that we have put all the documents into the public domain in the same context. There is a need to examine carefully the crossover between the budget, the report on proposals and policies, the low-carbon economic strategy and the energy efficiency action plan. Those documents all have to be complementary if they are to deliver the sort of coherent policy environment in which we can make our judgments. I appreciate that there is a lot of material, but it comes in a context of taking decisions. I want to avoid taking decisions in a series of compartments that are not linked together effectively. We have published the documents so as to proceed in a coherent fashion.

**The Convener:** Some of the work that is being undertaken has a set timescale. In some cases that relates to parliamentary scrutiny periods; there is also the requirement to complete the public engagement strategy by the end of the

year. Are you confident that the change of minister with responsibility for climate change will not delay any of the elements of work that are required under a specific timescale?

**John Swinney:** I do not think that it will cause any delay. We took the decision over the weekend to reallocate responsibility for climate change, which will leave my portfolio and move into Richard Lochhead's portfolio; Roseanna Cunningham will take responsibility in that area. The preparatory work has been undertaken well by Stewart Stevenson, and I have supervised it. I think that all that has been agreed by the Cabinet, with the exception of the draft electricity generation policy. Therefore, there is ministerial awareness and understanding of the issues. I do not see the change of minister as being a factor in any way.

**The Convener:** Let us move to the contents of the RPP. Some witnesses from whom the committee has heard have argued that the RPP places too much reliance on the idea of a higher European target making it easier for us to reach the carbon emissions reduction target of 42 per cent in Scotland. They have commented that certain proposals that had been floated in earlier drafts, which would have made it easier to reach 42 per cent even without a higher European target, have not been included. Is that a fair criticism? Is there too much reliance on the 30 per cent target?

**John Swinney:** I do not think so. The direction of travel in the European Union is clear. We can take a robust position on the assumption that the target can be achieved. We should continue to argue for that, and we thought it important for Mr Mather to be in Cancún to assist in promoting some of our thinking. It was important for the First Minister and Stewart Stevenson to be in Copenhagen. We should continue to argue our point in support of our efforts.

**The Convener:** If there was no 30 per cent EU target, would the Scottish Government's response be to reduce the Scottish 42 per cent target, or would it be to reintroduce proposals that have not currently been committed to, which would allow us to reach 42 per cent on our own?

**John Swinney:** The Government has always been clear about the achievement of our targets, as statutory targets. Moreover, we do not simply view them as statutory targets. They are more than that: achieving those targets is an absolute obligation of ours. If there is no EU agreement, we must of course consider other options to ensure that we can fulfil our commitments to deliver a 42 per cent reduction.

**The Convener:** Other options would involve meeting that target within domestic effort, not by

use of credits, for example. It would be a matter of using new proposals to accelerate reductions in emissions. Is that correct?

**John Swinney:** You are familiar with the stance that ministers took throughout the process for the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill. Stewart Stevenson and I have clearly said that we favour domestic effort over trading.

**The Convener:** Do you have any sympathy with those who have suggested that there is a degree of uncertainty in the current document given that there will be a further RPP next year? Does having a list of existing policies, some possible proposals and a further document that will set policy in a further direction next year not leave too many of the ideas with a bit of a question mark over them?

**John Swinney:** My view of these things is that we just have to get on with it, convener. We know the direction of travel on which we will have to embark as a society. The Government is working to be as clear as it possibly can be about some of the steps that are required to ensure that we are able to make progress on that.

Nobody should look at the development of the RPP with any sense other than that the Government is taking a coherent, consistent approach. There will be no great change of direction. Next year's RPP will refine the direction, not make big changes. Therefore, the approach that we are taking is consistent and clear.

**Cathy Peattie:** Do you agree with Stop Climate Chaos Scotland that the draft RPP relies too heavily on a voluntary approach for other partners to deliver on housing and waste, for instance? Will that approach be successful? Will you share with us your thoughts on that?

**John Swinney:** It would be better and easier if voluntary activity was undertaken, as it would get buy-in from people and real oomph behind the approach that we are taking because people would be committed to the direction of travel. If we had to regulate, it would suggest a certain lack of empathy with members of the public about the question, which is undesirable.

I will probably bore the committee with my use of the same examples, but let us consider recycling services throughout the country. A few years ago, people thought that it was not possible to achieve higher levels of recycling, but authorities are now doing really well because members of the public are playing a really active part. It causes some controversy in some parts of the country but certainly not in my household, other than when something gets put in the wrong bin, but that is by the by—we rectify it immediately.

The more that we can get buy-in from people and take them with us, the better. Obviously, if

voluntary effort is not compelling, we will have to consider other measures. However, it would be much better and preferable if we had people with us on the agenda rather than agin us.

**Cathy Peattie:** I am depressed about that answer. It seems to me that people will possibly pay lip service, tick boxes and say that they are doing this and that. You are right on waste, but it has taken some time to get people to sign up and there is no evidence that it has happened across the board. How will you measure the success of a voluntary approach and will it achieve Scotland's targets under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009?

**John Swinney:** I hope that I have not created a sense of disappointment for Cathy Peattie on that question, because that was not my design. I was trying to say that it is preferable if we motivate people to participate voluntarily rather than by compulsion but, having said that, as I just confirmed to the convener, we have a statutory target of a 42 per cent reduction and we have to achieve it. I view that as not only a statutory target but an absolute commitment that we must deliver.

We have taken that approach in the clear sight of the wider community, so we must deliver against it. The achievement of that target would be better if it was based on members of the public coming with us, playing their part and changing their approach, rather than on the Government legislating for this, that and the next thing, which might create an atmosphere in which people participated less in the process than they otherwise might. That is my feeling about the best way to proceed.

That in no way means that we do not take the matter seriously; we take it very seriously. A crucial part of the public engagement strategy is getting people to buy into the process. There are good examples of how people have bought into the process.

**Cathy Peattie:** However, a lot of cynics out there think that the issue has nothing to do with them. I am pleased that the cabinet secretary mentioned the public engagement strategy, and perhaps we will have a timescale for that, but how do we win cynics' hearts and minds? Why should we leave the issue and hope that it will be all right? Does that not undermine the 2009 act?

**John Swinney:** We have an absolute commitment to deliver the terms of the 2009 act. I am in no way pouring cold water on that absolute commitment of the Government. I am keen for us to have in place the participation levels to make the necessary impact on the targets and to obtain buy-in from members of the public.

Of course there are cynics—there are cynics about everything in the world. Thank goodness I

am not one of them; I would hate to be a cynic. Every opportunity is available to use the public engagement strategy to mobilise input and participation in the effort.

The work that we are undertaking to develop the low-carbon monitoring and management framework for Scotland is designed to provide a mechanism for assessing whether we are making progress, what we are doing, what approaches are being taken and what is succeeding. That is designed to reassure us that the concerns that Cathy Peattie raises can be addressed and that we can secure wider participation.

**Cathy Peattie:** I asked how you can possibly monitor a voluntary approach. I am still not sure whether you have answered that question.

**John Swinney:** If we are not achieving our targets, that will become obvious through the work that is undertaken in the low-carbon monitoring and management framework. The framework will enable the measurement of and reporting on Scotland's progress towards reducing emissions before emissions data for each year are available. It will provide the basis for managing carbon effectively in the Scottish Government by helping us to understand better the activities and actions that contribute to reducing emissions. It will ensure that responsibility for reducing emissions and building a low-carbon economy is shared across the public and private sectors.

I would not like to suggest that anything other than a rigorous mechanism is being put in place to ensure that we make progress and that we can see whether we are making progress. If we do not make progress on the voluntary measures, we will have to take other action, but the Government would rather avoid that.

**Cathy Peattie:** I would like you to have said that you would take action sooner rather than later. The committee will want to return to that. The response worries me.

How does the cabinet secretary respond to the view of Scotland's 2020 climate group that proposals in the RPP should be developed quickly to become policies? Will the final RPP set out a menu of proposals for the Scottish Government to take forward?

**John Swinney:** A range of policy proposals is in the RPP, on which we must make decisions. We have made decisions on some proposals—for example, we have taken decisions on domestic energy standards, which help to advance the arguments. We have developed a range of other elements as part of our policy commitments. The Government has a clear desire to take decisions readily to create the policy framework that will enable us to deliver all that is expected of us under the 2009 act.

**Cathy Peattie:** There are a lot of good things in the RPP—there you are, cabinet secretary, I am being positive. How do we prioritise the RPP to ensure that the good things happen?

14:15

**John Swinney:** A combination of different approaches will be taken. Some proposals will be taken forward because, by a change of policy, we can effect an outcome relatively quickly. Some will be taken forward on the basis of their compatibility with areas of policy development in which the Government is confident about the basis on which we can act, while others will inevitably have to wait for resource issues to be addressed in the medium term. Our priority is to take forward a very sustained approach to the reduction in emissions; we will do that in a fashion that allows us to make commitments on the different policies and proposals that have come forward.

**Charlie Gordon:** My question is on funding streams for the development of low-carbon technology and the like. A phrase that the Scottish Government has used—to wit “innovative financial models”—was described by a witness from the world of private finance as

“a euphemism for something that we have not yet thought of”.—[*Official Report, Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee*, 23 November 2010; c 3400-3401.]

Perhaps the witness was being cynical or merely sceptical. What sort of innovative financial models does the Scottish Government have in mind for this agenda?

**John Swinney:** The witness to whom you refer may have consumed a little bit of the cynical juice.

The Government has taken a number of actions to try to ensure that the financial mechanisms are in place to boost the low-carbon economy. At the outset, I should say that the low-carbon economy cannot be delivered by public expenditure alone. There is absolutely no way that that can be the case; we have to leverage in private investment. In September, the Scottish Government and a range of partners hosted the first Scottish low-carbon investment conference. The conference, which had an international audience, brought together projects and investors with the aim of securing investment. It will now be held annually. That puts Scotland on the map for attracting funding to develop the low-carbon economy. I am chairing a finance forum in London, the aim of which is to take forward with our partners in that exercise some of the work that emerged from the conference. We have to put in place a range of projects that can attract investment.

An on-going priority of the Government is to ensure that, in the great competition for investment that exists around the globe, people

can evaluate specific propositions in the Scottish sector. We want them to be able to look at propositions and say, "Is this likely to materialise in one, two, five, 10 or 20 years?" In that way, judgments can be made on the return on investment and the policy framework for our decision making.

The work that Mr Mather has undertaken to speed up the process of energy consents in Scotland—it was a remarkable achievement—undoubtedly makes Scotland a more desirable investment destination. People know that the decision will be taken quickly, whether it is a yes or a no. They know that they do not have to lose the will to live waiting for a decision to be made. That is the type of atmosphere that we are trying to create to attract investment. We want to make it clear to the private sector that we view this area as a development opportunity that the public sector will help to develop but which it cannot exclusively develop.

**Charlie Gordon:** Given the weight that you have just given to investment leverage, what about the scenario whereby, despite best efforts, lack of finance causes a rate of progress that is not significant enough to keep you on track towards targets?

**John Swinney:** Clearly, that would be disappointing. We must ensure that our efforts are clearly focused on trying to identify investment opportunities and attracting sufficient investors to make that happen. I acknowledge and accept the risk that that may not be able to be delivered, but the focus of Government efforts is certainly to ensure that it can be brought about.

**Charlie Gordon:** I accept that, as you said, the Scottish budget is not only about the Scottish Government's finance. In some respects, the Scottish Government's draft budget for next year is the launch pad for the RPP. Given that it is a single-year budget, does that sound a clear enough call for what is of necessity quite a long-term agenda on the RPP?

**John Swinney:** Mr Gordon may have heard the implications of my statement to Parliament last week, which is that the Government will set out some—

**Charlie Gordon:** I missed it, unfortunately; I was away dealing with the severe weather.

**John Swinney:** That is interesting. Mr Gordon obviously missed my statement; I am sure that he is kicking himself about that. However, I have set out that we will make clear some longer-term finance plans to Parliament.

We must keep the one-year budget issue in proper perspective. In recent times, the former Labour Government delivered one-year budgets to

the then Scottish Executive and then to the Scottish Government in 2007-8 and 2010, respectively. It is therefore not unprecedented for one-year budgets to be bequeathed by the UK Government.

On whether a one-year budget causes inherent uncertainty for people, I return to my answer to Cathy Peattie. Nobody could look at what the Government is doing—at its policy and legislative agendas—and say that it will in any way change tack on the low-carbon economy, the pursuit of the climate change agenda and the wider question of sustainability, which are at the core of the Government's agenda. Whether we have financial information for one year, two years, 10 years or whatever, much of the activity is 20 or 30-year timescale material. The Government's policy agenda is designed to give confidence and focus to the planning of different organisations and individuals.

**Charlie Gordon:** I will leave it at that, convener. I will try to see more of Mr Swinney in the future.

**The Convener:** I am sure that he will appreciate that.

**Rob Gibson:** On energy supply, what proposals does the Scottish Government consider would have to be added to the RPP to incentivise particular forms of generation such as renewable and low-carbon thermal generation, as well as renewable heating and more sustainably fuelled motor vehicles?

**John Swinney:** First, I acknowledge that we have a number of policy recommendations around a renewable electricity target of 80 per cent of Scottish consumption by 2020; a renewable heat target of 11 per cent of Scotland's heat from renewable sources by 2020; a 12 per cent reduction in total energy consumption by 2020; and carbon capture and storage demonstrated in a Scottish coal power station by 2020. Those are very significant, landmark policy directions to make it clear to the sector how the Government sees matters developing and emerging.

Clearly, the issue of planning consents is very important to our approach, in terms of enabling decisions to be arrived at for both thermal and renewable electricity generation. We want to develop further guidance to progressively demonstrate and deploy carbon capture and storage. The work that has been undertaken to create the Scottish national renewables infrastructure fund is a tangible proposition that will be helpful. The Government's policy to promote the use of biomass plants for renewable heat is an important contributor to the process.

Mr Gibson also asked about electric vehicle infrastructure. The UK Government has announced a successful bid by a Scottish

consortium, led by Transport Scotland, to secure an electric vehicle charging infrastructure in Scotland. That is a very good, welcome and innovative step that we are taking forward and which contributes well to the agenda that we wish to advance.

**Rob Gibson:** I notice that Shetland Islands Council has given the go-ahead to the Viking Energy wind farm scheme, although obviously the Government will take the final decision. Are we getting quick enough decisions on such projects to help incentivise renewables generation of the sort that I asked about in my previous question?

**John Swinney:** If the committee will forgive me, I will steer away from the specific consent issue related to the Viking project. That will be considered by Mr Mather in his capacity as the relevant minister for a section 36 consent.

I made the point earlier that, when we came to office, it was taking far too long for such questions to be decided. From the work that Mr Mather undertook, it was clear that it was taking too long for no obvious reason. That was wholly unacceptable and one of Jim Mather's great achievements has been to make decisions speedily. The timescale from receipt of application to decision is nine months, which has enabled a significantly larger number of applications to be considered.

I think that the development community would acknowledge that it has been a significant benefit to have decisions made in such a timescale—whether it is a yes or a no—because it allows people to make their own subsequent decisions. I assure the committee that the Scottish Government intends to maintain those effective timescales to enable development to take its course.

**Alasdair Allan:** You have already mentioned the balance in the draft RPP between voluntary and regulatory activity. When it comes to the measures on homes and communities, we have had some evidence that the balance is roughly 80 per cent voluntary to 20 per cent regulatory. Is that accurate and, if so, is that balance about right?

**John Swinney:** That is a fair assessment of where we are. Ministers will make a statement to outline their approach to regulation, particularly in the housing sector, in the early part of 2011 as the Government develops its thinking. It may be that we have to change that balance to encourage a faster pace of activity, but that is conditional on my answer to Cathy Peattie that I think that voluntary activity is more desirable than compulsion, particularly if we can motivate individuals to see the measures as a substantial point of intervention to make a difference to the climate.

**Alasdair Allan:** We have also had evidence that perhaps more needs to be done to ensure compliance with existing building standards. Does the Government share that view?

**John Swinney:** It is important that we deliver compliance with standards. The Government has taken steps to intensify the standards that are in place. Some research projects have identified a gap between design and construction, and we would want to look carefully at the evidence base to ensure that we had a strong foundation for any action that was taken in that respect. Clearly, there is little point in setting out new building standards if they are not complied with, so it is certainly an issue that the Government will keep under active review. As we develop a base of information that gives us more evidence, we will undoubtedly take action when it is required to remedy any issues.

**Alasdair Allan:** We have had other evidence about what is described as the need to signal an excellent, socially motivated energy-efficiency standard to deliver appropriate economies of scale and skills development in the housing sector.

Is there sometimes a tension between social needs and carbon reduction needs? How do you deal with that? I am thinking of the obvious example, which is the problem of energy-inefficient housing. The simplest way to deal with that might be to go for houses that are not necessarily in areas where people are in greatest fuel poverty. Is there a way of reconciling social and carbon needs?

14:30

**John Swinney:** Dr Allan puts his finger on a fundamental opportunity to tackle fuel poverty and emissions reduction in one go. Some excellent work has been done on the design of new-build properties, although I accept that there is a different issue with retrofit, which I will come on to. I visited a project at South Lanarkshire College in East Kilbride that was a tremendous example of partnership between the college and around 50 private companies, led by Dawn Homes.

The college enlisted the participation of those companies, all of which brought their technology to the party. They built a model house in the college grounds that was not discernibly different in price from houses of that type on the open market. Its carbon footprint was low, and its energy efficiency was decidedly high. The project involved the application of a host of innovative new technologies. That is the type of thinking that we have to roll out with regard to the development of social housing in Scotland, and the opportunity exists for us to do that.

A great deal more needs to be done to ensure that people are participating in retrofit. The voluntary activity is at the core of that.

The UK CERT—carbon emissions reduction target—programme prioritises low-income households in relation to energy efficiency and emissions reductions and is an important plank in the approaches that we can take.

**Alasdair Allan:** Can you comment on two specific programmes: the renewable heat incentive and the green deal? What role do those play in delivering the Government's targets on energy efficiency?

**John Swinney:** Both those projects contribute to encouraging householders to consider new areas of activity and involvement. They provide important aspects of the drive to improve energy efficiency and reduce the carbon footprint by encouraging members of the public to participate in attractive and beneficial points on the agenda for tackling the issue.

**The Convener:** In response to Alasdair Allan's question, you talked about identifying the fundamental opportunity to reduce emissions and fuel poverty through the same measures. The committee has received correspondence from a number of organisations that have been working on the issue for a long time. Energy Action Scotland, WWF Scotland, Consumer Focus Scotland, the Association for the Conservation of Energy, and Camco have written collectively to us to express their concern that the opportunity has been missed. They state:

"We believe the proposals and policies are simply inadequate to meet the challenges of emissions reduction and eradication of fuel poverty ... they will fail to realise the ... opportunity to create ... jobs ... and save ... money on ... fuel bills."

They go on to note:

"The RPP states that the Home Insulation Programme and the Energy Assistance Package will be 'maintained',

but they say that,

"Based on the numbers of houses to be engaged, we estimate that funding will be significantly cut for both programmes. To cut funding for energy efficiency at a time when fuel poverty numbers are rising ... simply beggars belief."

When you gave evidence to the committee on the budget, you were unable to tell us what was happening to the level of funding for those programmes, based on the significant reduction in the housing budget. Would you care to respond to that criticism?

**John Swinney:** I have made a series of committee appearances in the past couple of weeks, so forgive me if I ascribe what I am going to say to the wrong committee appearance. My

point is that, as I think I said to this committee—it may have been the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee—Mr Neil is undertaking commercial negotiation on some aspects of the energy efficiency budget. Details of that will become clear later on. I appreciate that that is not convenient for committees, but it explains why that dialogue is necessary.

We are dealing with an acute reduction in our budget. That means that there will be difficulties and challenges in a host of different areas and that things that we would ordinarily want to do and like to do may become more difficult to do. However, I assure the committee that the Government understands clearly the link between energy efficiency and tackling fuel poverty. We will do all that we can to try to encourage the development of that area of activity in the period ahead.

**The Convener:** It is hard to square your comments about the need to think about the draft RPP and the budget as coherent documents that support each other if commitments in the RPP do not appear to be supported by specific money allocated in the budget. The organisations that have been working on the matter say that that "beggars belief" or is "simply inadequate".

**John Swinney:** The question is whether enough money has been allocated, not whether any has been allocated.

**The Convener:** We do not know how much money has been allocated.

**John Swinney:** My point about that is that a commercial negotiation is being undertaken. I appreciate that people want absolute clarity and to know all the detail but, equally, there must be a bit of an acknowledgement that the Government must undertake some careful work to ensure that it maximises value for money for the public purse. There is no point in the Government paying for things that it might be able to motivate other organisations to pay for in a time of financial difficulty. That is the challenge that we will have to face as a society and the nature of the work in which Mr Neil is involved in this area of the budget.

I understand that people want more money to be spent on different areas and priorities. Invariably, people are not coming to me to tell me to spend less money on something. Not a lot of that goes on.

**The Convener:** I accept the general point that you make and do not doubt that, as finance secretary, you would like to be able to spend more money on a host of different priorities, but how is it possible for us to take seriously a specific commitment on the number of houses that are to be engaged with if you are not able to say what the commercial arrangements are for using



Government money or how much money the Government is allocating to the issue?

**John Swinney:** It is expected that the home insulation scheme in 2011-12 will offer help to 200,000 households. That is a substantial contribution in one year and that is a measure of the commitment that the Government is making to the initiative.

**The Convener:** It is a measure of the outcome that is expected once the Government makes a commitment of money.

**John Swinney:** Are the outcomes that we achieve not what matters, convener? The outcome is that we will offer help to a further 200,000 households.

**Jackson Carlaw:** I have a couple of questions on business and the public sector that, in the interests of time, I will roll together, if you are content with that, cabinet secretary.

In its evidence, the 2020 group said that, although some parts of the draft RPP were perfectly well understood, other bits were clearly still under development. That follows on from the point that you made a moment ago. Are you content that the RPP is sufficiently robust to give businesses confidence to make investment decisions in Scotland that they perhaps would not otherwise have made?

Will you elaborate on the brief comment in the RPP on the sustainable procurement action plan and how the plan, which is now a year old, is delivering low-carbon decisions?

**John Swinney:** I suppose that my answer to the question on business confidence is anchored in the approach that the Government took to the passage of the Climate Change (Scotland) Bill through the Parliament. We sought to achieve unanimity on that. It was one of the activities that Stewart Stevenson took on with tremendous zeal and I was delighted that he achieved the objective that I set for him, which was to secure parliamentary endorsement with unanimity.

The point of that was so that the business community, in particular, could look at the legislation and say, "Well, this ain't gonna change. This is it. This is part of the furniture." The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 allows the business community to make plans under the policy framework. As Mr Carlaw rightly emphasises, many business investments are not short term or here today, gone tomorrow. They are long-term commitments, and we owe it to the business community to give it that degree of confidence. The longest budget we will ever set will be a four-year budget, and many business decisions are for a longer term than four years. The question of giving business confidence is answered by our

setting up a coherent framework that comprises the 2009 act, the report on proposals and policies, the low-carbon economy strategy and the draft electricity generation statement. That framework gives clarity about how we are proceeding.

What was your second question?

**Jackson Carlaw:** It was on the procurement action plan.

**John Swinney:** We have consulted widely on how a procurement action plan could deliver a meaningful impact. We have shared that thinking with public bodies through the publication of the procurement action plan. It is designed to embed sustainability within procurement and, as a consequence, to assist us in dealing with some of the wider objectives that must be confronted.

We will have to revisit the plan to determine whether it is changing practice. The one key lesson that I have observed during all my involvement in procurement is to keep a close eye on whether it is changing practice. There are other examples of procurement where we have been able to put clauses about training needs and obligations into public sector contracts so that we can monitor whether there has been a tangible benefit to particular social groups as a consequence of the procurement decision. Exactly the same applies to sustainability. We will review the plan to determine its effectiveness, and we will be happy to share that information with the committee.

**Jackson Carlaw:** Thank you.

**Alasdair Allan:** Since 1990, carbon emissions from transport have increased by 7 per cent. Can you say more about the two milestones in the draft RPP? Why were only two selected for the RPP for between now and 2020?

**John Swinney:** I acknowledge that the largest challenge in the transport area is emissions reduction. The draft RPP contains a range of different interventions, some of which are now being assiduously implemented. The low-carbon vehicle procurement scheme, the Scottish green bus fund and the work on the intelligent transport system are all different practical measures to tackle emissions. Obviously, they are designed to encourage others to take similar steps.

The fact that there are only two milestones should not be seen as a lack of acknowledgement of the seriousness of the question, because I concede that there needs to be a substantial focus on transport activity. As I said earlier, the announcement that the UK Government made on electric vehicle infrastructure is another indication of our active involvement in making progress on some of these questions, and we will continue with that. Of course, we would be happy to consider

the committee's comments on any aspect of that activity.

**Alasdair Allan:** We have also had evidence that the policies that will have the most significant impact on emissions reduction lie with the EU and the UK. To what degree is that true? Do you see any solutions, constitutional or otherwise, to that situation?

14:45

**John Swinney:** With a wider range of powers in the Parliament, we would not have to rely on the UK Government to take decisions. The Scottish Government's position is to be supportive of EU membership, so we would have to continue our participative activity to try to ensure that the EU makes as much progress as we would like it to make.

There are a variety of areas in which we can take action on our domestic activities. The RPP shows that some of the EU activity is broadly comparable with the Scottish activity—the Scottish input is slightly lower than the anticipated EU activity. There are ways in which we can develop domestic activity even in transport.

**Alasdair Allan:** Will you comment on the evidence that we have heard that earlier draft versions of the RPP contained proposals on public and residential car parking? Why were those proposals not in the final draft RPP?

**John Swinney:** Any document goes through a process of iterative development. Choices will be made about which proposals are put in which documents. We consider the draft RPP to be a powerful example of a range of different initiatives that enable us to fulfil our commitments.

**The Convener:** The transport section of the draft report includes references to technology. In particular, the only two milestones on transport involve technology, in addition to modal shift—changing the way that we move about—and reducing the need to travel. It has been suggested to us, first, that those priorities are not fully reflected in existing transport policy and, secondly, that those three things are in the wrong order—that we should start with reducing the need to travel; then think about how we move about; and, thirdly, consider the role that techno-fixes could play.

**John Swinney:** It is chicken and egg. The issues around transport use are very similar to some of the issues around energy use. We have to consider whether or not all our journeys are absolutely required. Can we find a different way of going about our journeys or find alternatives to doing them at all? There is a judgment to be made.

That goes back to my point about voluntary activity. We have all become accustomed to feeling as if we can go anywhere, at any time we want, without any thought about the consequences to the environment. There will be an element of considering whether there are better ways of undertaking journeys, perhaps using public transport or other mechanisms. Undoubtedly we have to embark on an approach in all those areas, but whether there should be a strict hierarchy is open to debate.

**The Convener:** So you do not regard those three general approaches as being expressed in any kind of order of priority in the RPP.

**John Swinney:** I do not think that they need to be in a hierarchy. However, I am happy to consider the committee's thoughts on the matter.

**The Convener:** One would also expect demand management measures to be part of the list. Reducing the need to travel involves a voluntary approach; demand management would be a more proactive approach to reducing transport demand. Is that anywhere on the Government's agenda?

**John Swinney:** The approach that the Government has taken is to identify measures in the RPP that would result in our annual emissions reduction targets being met by 2022. The measures are contained in the documentation. That, essentially, is our agenda for the areas that we will consider.

**The Convener:** Is any work being done to review or revise the Scottish transport appraisal guidance in the light of the work that is being done on the RPP, to ensure that the two align and that we move away from considering more familiar factors and start to think about the impact on carbon emissions?

**John Swinney:** The STAG appraisal process must be appropriate for the policy framework of the time. Therefore, we will need to ensure that there is nothing inconsistent between the STAG process and the current terms of Government policy.

**The Convener:** What is the timescale for that work?

**John Swinney:** I cannot offer the committee a timescale. I am just making the observation that we have to ensure that all our policy frameworks are consistent with the approaches that are contained in the Government's direction of thinking.

**The Convener:** Work will have to be done to ensure that STAG is compliant with existing climate change policies. Has that begun yet?

**John Swinney:** I might not have expressed the point as clearly as I could have. I was making the

observation that we must ensure that all our processes are in line with the Government's policy frameworks. That is an observation on where we are. There is not a STAG review process under way. Within elements of our policy framework, such as the national transport strategy, emissions reduction is a key priority.

**The Convener:** When we took evidence on the budget, we discussed the cycling, walking and safer streets line. The RPP seems to imply an expectation that that work will continue. There is also the freight facilities grant. In evidence on the budget, we heard a significant amount about the work that both those budgets have supported that otherwise would not have happened. Where has your thinking reached in relation to both those matters, given the evidence that we heard and the questions that we asked in taking evidence on the budget? Will the RPP objectives be met if similar funding is not maintained or restored?

**John Swinney:** The Government's budget for sustainable and active travel increases from £21.2 million this year to £25.1 million in 2011-12. There are not many budget lines like that in the Government's draft budget.

**The Convener:** Most of that relates to techno-fixes such as low-carbon or electric vehicles and is not a continuation or replacement of the cycling, walking and safer streets funding.

**John Swinney:** Cycling investment has increased year on year for the past three years and it increased by nearly 50 per cent in the last year alone, so there are a lot of good things happening on that.

I have discussed the freight facilities grant with the committee already. I am happy to listen to further representation on the issue, but I made the point to the committee last week that, since April 2007, the "Support for Freight Industry" capital budget line for FFG projects has totalled more than £40 million, but the fund has consistently underspent. The provisions in the budget for 2011-12 are more akin to the pattern of expenditure.

I also made the point to the committee last week that, if the practice was suddenly to change and we were to receive a lot of suggestions about how to develop new freight facilities activities that would cost more money, I would be happy to try to find the money to support them. I think that I mentioned last week that I had seen a freight train going through Perth station. I was there again last Sunday afternoon and the train went through again with goodness knows how many wagons on it. That was a great sight. So I am sympathetic. What we have provided in the budget supports the general pattern of expenditure in the area, but if there is a demand for more, we will explore that.

**The Convener:** We must move on. We might have to explore in writing after the meeting some questions that we had hoped to ask today, but I hope that we can address rural land use and waste before we finish.

**Rob Gibson:** How will the land use strategy and the RPP work together to avoid or resolve conflicts?

**John Swinney:** The key consideration is that the RPP and the land use strategy must have clear compatibility. Richard Lochhead has been at the heart of developing the RPP and he is at the heart of developing the rural land use strategy, so that is well understood.

**Rob Gibson:** Perhaps we could have an answer in writing on how the tax system influences land use decisions, which relates to making the RPP more useful. Discussing those issues might take a while, unless you have a simple answer.

**John Swinney:** What the Government can do on tax questions is limited. That is a product of the limitations on the Parliament's financial responsibilities.

**Rob Gibson:** How will city regions be able to contribute to the RPP's delivery?

**John Swinney:** The RPP's key thrust is that it must relate to all the different players and scenarios around the country. The document is not just for some and not others; it is comprehensive. All organisations and areas of the country need to identify what they can contribute to the process.

**Rob Gibson:** The Stop Climate Chaos people have identified the restoration of 600,000 hectares of peatland as a key objective. Can we fund the process of rewetting and measuring carbon emissions from peatlands to meet the RPP's targets?

**John Swinney:** The Government is keen to support all such activity. Yesterday, we announced £200,000 of research funding to restore our peatlands landscape, which is a helpful step in that direction. Some of the research and what can be achieved are the subject of debate, but I hope that the research grant that the Minister for the Environment and Climate Change announced yesterday will provide confidence that the Government is exploring the issue seriously.

**Cathy Peattie:** Do you agree with the view of some witnesses that the RPP focuses on dealing more with waste than with wider resource consumption? What proposals could reflect such broader thinking?

**John Swinney:** Waste is a fundamental issue, because it is a product of our energy use and our consumption decisions. We ignore that activity at

our peril. I make no apology for waste considerations being central to the discussion and the thinking.

**Cathy Peattie:** What is your response to the evidence that much better co-ordination of waste collection and management systems is needed, especially in relation to food waste?

**John Swinney:** Joint activity by authorities is needed on waste disposal arrangements. Much good co-operation has taken place in several areas and I certainly want to encourage that. The Government has put in place the zero waste strategy to drive that process. A discernible improvement in activity levels has occurred in recent years, which we will consider.

The issue is about much more than how we dispose of our waste; it involves judgments that we make about consumption, how products are displayed to us and all that goes with that. Much more needs to be addressed.

**Cathy Peattie:** How will you be proactive on food waste?

**John Swinney:** The zero waste strategy drives the process. On food waste, I do not know whether I can say much more than I have said. Most local authorities have in place a means of addressing food waste. The maximum participation of the public in the process must be encouraged.

**The Convener:** I say sorry to members who have questions that they have been unable to ask. We will explore those questions in writing with the cabinet secretary.

We are all working to a tight timescale, but can you respond to questions in writing within 48 hours, cabinet secretary? I know that that time is short, but we have a timescale to meet in drafting our report. Can you agree to that?

**John Swinney:** There is not much else on, so I am sure that that will be no problem.

**The Convener:** I know that you are spending a lot of time with your feet on your desk at the moment.

**John Swinney:** I have some spare time on my hands and I will endeavour to deploy it on answering the questions.

I will try to answer the committee's questions as swiftly as possible. My officials have heard your timescale, so they will be seized of its importance.

**The Convener:** That is much appreciated.

I thank all the witnesses for their attendance.

15:01

*Meeting continued in private until 15:13.*

Members who would like a printed copy of the *Official Report* to be forwarded to them should give notice to SPICe.

Members who wish to suggest corrections for the revised e-format edition should mark them clearly in the report or send it to the Official Report, Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP.

#### PRICES AND SUBSCRIPTION RATES

##### OFFICIAL REPORT daily editions

*Single copies: £5.00*

*Meetings of the Parliament annual subscriptions: £350.00*

##### WRITTEN ANSWERS TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS weekly compilation

*Single copies: £3.75*

*Annual subscriptions: £150.00*

Available in e-format only. Printed Scottish Parliament documentation is published in Edinburgh by RR Donnelley and is available from:

#### Scottish Parliament

All documents are available on the Scottish Parliament website at:

[www.scottish.parliament.uk](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk)

For more information on the Parliament, or if you have an inquiry about information in languages other than English or in alternative formats (for example, Braille, large print or audio), please contact:

#### Public Information Service

The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh EH99 1SP

**Telephone: 0131 348 5000**

**Fòn: 0131 348 5395** (Gàidhlig)

**Textphone users** may contact us on **0800 092 7100**.

We also welcome calls using the Text Relay service.

**Fax: 0131 348 5601**

**E-mail: [sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk](mailto:sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk)**

We welcome written correspondence in any language.

#### Blackwell's Scottish Parliament Documentation

**Helpline** may be able to assist with additional information on publications of or about the Scottish Parliament, their availability and cost:

#### Telephone orders and inquiries

**0131 622 8283 or**

**0131 622 8258**

#### Fax orders

**0131 557 8149**

**E-mail orders, subscriptions and standing orders**  
**[business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk](mailto:business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk)**

#### Blackwell's Bookshop

**53 South Bridge  
Edinburgh EH1 1YS  
0131 622 8222**

#### Blackwell's Bookshops:

243-244 High Holborn  
London WC1 7DZ  
Tel 020 7831 9501

All trade orders for Scottish Parliament documents should be placed through Blackwell's Edinburgh.

#### Accredited Agents

(see Yellow Pages)

and through other good booksellers

e-format first available  
ISBN 978-0-85758-338-3

Revised e-format available  
ISBN 978-0-85758-353-6