



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Official Report

# MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Thursday 24 May 2012

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## Scottish Parliament

Thursday 24 May 2012

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

### Business Motion

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** Good morning. The first item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-03013, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a timetable for stage 3 proceedings on the Alcohol (Minimum Pricing) (Scotland) Bill.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that, during Stage 3 of the Alcohol (Minimum Pricing) (Scotland) Bill, debate on groups of amendments shall, subject to Rule 9.8.4A, be brought to a conclusion by the time limit indicated, that time limit being calculated from when the stage begins and excluding any periods when other business is under consideration or when a meeting of the Parliament is suspended (other than a suspension following the first division in the stage being called) or otherwise not in progress:

Groups 1 to 3: 1 hour 20 minutes.—[*Bruce Crawford.*]

*Motion agreed to.*

## Languages (Improving Opportunities)

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-03004, in the name of Alasdair Allan, on why languages matter—improving young people's opportunities.

09:16

**The Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages (Dr Alasdair Allan):** Bonjour. Guten Tag. I am delighted to open the debate on why languages matter—improving young people's opportunities. This is a welcome opportunity to discuss where Scotland stands in terms of language learning and what aspirations we should have for our young people and society in engaging with an increasingly globalised world. The debate follows on from the publication last week of the languages working group report, which meets our commitment in the curriculum for excellence action plan that the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning announced on 21 September last year.

As someone with a passion for languages, I believe that the case for languages is pretty self-evident. It strikes me as intrinsically interesting that Norwegian puts the definite article on the end of a noun or that Gaelic has no words for yes and no. However, as last year's modern languages excellence group report set out, in Scotland and elsewhere in the United Kingdom, we are often confronted with negative or lukewarm attitudes towards learning other languages. Perhaps the most disappointing of all such attitudes was one that I heard in the media this week, when someone suggested that teaching languages might somehow be "wasted" on children from working-class backgrounds. I am happy to say that that was not the dominant reaction.

The excellence group report stated the positive case for language learning, framing it within the benefits that language learning offers the individual learner as well as the economy and society. The report also sought to debunk common myths about languages, such as the idea that everyone in the world speaks English and that therefore learning other languages is unnecessary. In fact, 75 per cent of people in the world do not speak English and, of those who do, most do so as a second language. In any case, that view ignores research that points to the competitive advantage that multilingual youngsters from other countries bring to the competition for jobs with their UK counterparts in global companies and organisations.

The Government is determined to be ambitious for the people of Scotland. In last year's election, our manifesto included a commitment to introduce, over the course of two sessions of Parliament, a norm for language learning in schools that is based on the European 1+2 model, to create the conditions in which every child will learn two languages in addition to their mother tongue.

We therefore set up the languages working group to consider how a 1+2 model might be delivered, taking account of Scotland's circumstances. In particular, the group was asked to consider how such a model could be delivered within the framework of curriculum for excellence. The working group report, which was published last week, and the accompanying report on the link between languages and employability further emphasise the economic benefits of improving the language learning experience of Scotland's young people. The reports also present a strong argument for giving our children and young people the opportunity to learn languages from an early age, thereby providing them with similar opportunities to those that are available to their counterparts in many other countries.

We need to recognise that multilingualism among children and young people is viewed as a norm in many parts of Europe in a way that is almost difficult to believe in Scotland. When I visited Luxembourg some years ago, I was astonished to see that almost every nursery school, it seems, advertises the fact that it is capable of operating in not two but five languages: Luxemburgish, French, German, English and the main immigrant language in that country, which is Portuguese. In Friesland, in the Netherlands, I know of at least one school where children are expected to be fluent in Frisian, Dutch and English by the age of eight. In France, they are rethinking their language teaching with a new plan that includes an increased focus on early years learning, on improving the language teaching skills of kindergarten teachers and on how primary school staff can learn language teaching skills from secondary school teachers.

By way of contrast, in Scotland we have seen a steady decline in the overall uptake of languages at secondary over a number of years. That is inconsistent with a modern globalised world in which people travel widely for jobs and leisure and speak several languages. I believe that it is now time for Scotland to create a cultural and educational environment that can help to attract children and young people to learning other languages; one that shows how languages can open doors to new cultures and literatures and that helps young people to see the world in different ways, as well as offering them many practical and economic advantages.

Many schools are already working hard to provide young people with opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of other cultures, both European and non-European, through the study of languages. In addition, over the past couple of decades we have developed in Scotland a successful example of bilingual education in the Gaelic-medium sector. We now have many excellent examples of Gaelic-medium education in schools throughout Scotland and our aim is to see that ideal promoted and expanded. We are also seeing young people using their Gaelic language skills in post-school education and in employment.

The introduction of Chinese into some of our schools and the contribution of the Confucius hub schools have helped many children and young people to develop a better understanding of a culture that is considerably different from our own, ranging from an introduction to tai chi, to an understanding of what it is like to be a pupil in China.

Confidence in languages can lead young people to form strong relationships with their peers in other countries, as pupils at John Ogilvie high school in South Lanarkshire have done with young people in Spain. Such examples show that it is possible to overcome the cultural, societal and attitudinal barriers to language learning that we often encounter in Scotland.

As a Government, we recognise the possibilities for young people's life chances that come from learning other languages. We want schools to work towards a new model of language learning and teaching that is based on the mother tongue plus two additional languages, as first set out in the European Union's Barcelona agreement of 2002. We acknowledge that this is a bold and ambitious objective—one to be delivered over several years.

The languages group has come forward with 35 recommendations. I am grateful for the work of Simon Macaulay, who chaired the group, and to all those who contributed to its deliberations. The group has sought to strike a balance between the level of ambition that a 1+2 model represents and an honest critique of where we are starting from.

I asked for a radical report, and the group did not disappoint me. I welcome the group's key messages: that Scotland can and must do more to provide our young people with a better language learning experience; that language learning is life enhancing and can enable our young people to participate more fully in a globalised society and economy; and that Scotland's increasing diversity of languages, including Scotland's own languages, should be celebrated. I also welcome the group's considered view that although introducing two additional languages is an ambitious goal, it is one that, over time and with the engagement of all

those with a broad mind or an interest in languages, can be delivered.

I do not intend to respond today to all 35 of the group's recommendations. Some of them will need some time for careful consideration and discussion with stakeholders. However, I am particularly pleased to see the group's recommendations in relation to language learning at primary school—in particular, its recommendation that Scotland needs to start language learning earlier, from primary 1, rather than from primary 6, which is currently the norm for most schools.

**Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab):** I welcome the key messages in the report. The report says that in most European countries children start to learn a second language between the ages of six and nine. What is the evidence for starting them at four or five rather than at seven or eight? I am aware of the evidence of the advantages for children of being brought up bilingually from birth, but I genuinely wonder what evidence there is of the advantage of starting them at four or five rather than seven or eight, which seems to be the norm in Europe.

**Dr Allan:** I thank the member for that considered point. The situation varies very much not just from country to country, but from school to school. We would be realistic about what kind of language learning a four or five-year-old would be asked to undertake—we would not expect fluency or anything resembling it from a four or five-year-old. Nevertheless, I think that we should introduce four and five-year-olds to the concept that there are other languages out there. In the past, that concept has not been introduced to such young people in our schools.

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** Will the minister take an intervention?

**Dr Allan:** I have just taken one. Give me a moment.

**Liam McArthur:** It is on that point.

**Dr Allan:** Well, why not?

**Liam McArthur:** I thank the minister for relenting. My comment relates to Malcolm's Chisholm's point. A lot of the evidence suggests that, by the time that children reach the age of seven or eight, they are far more self-aware and inhibited about their learning. Therefore, if the process of learning a language starts a bit earlier, by the time that they reach seven or eight, they will have a fluency that will give them the confidence to go on.

**Dr Allan:** I readily agree with that. The younger that we introduce language learning, the more receptive children are likely to be to it. Implementation of the recommendations around that will set a bold new direction for language

learning in Scotland's schools. The policy will help to reinforce the ambition for modern languages as expressed in the curriculum for excellence, which is about raising the bar, with all young people expected to reach at least the second level by the end of primary.

However, the group was aware that current experience has shown that modern languages, when left to primaries 6 and 7, can be vulnerable and are sometimes reduced to an add-on with limited input, which makes it very difficult to reach the desired level. Therefore, the group took the view that a new approach was needed, with language learning beginning in primary 1 and being embedded in the fabric of the primary curriculum. By the end of primary 7, having started vibrant language learning in primary 1, young people will have a deeper understanding of how language works, a deeper understanding of their first additional language, in particular, and better skills in talking, listening, reading and writing in the modern language than was possible previously.

We recognise that the proposals will set significant challenges for our schools. However, some schools are already providing earlier access to language learning and are offering more than one additional language. Only last week, I visited Sacred Heart primary school in Bridgeton, Glasgow, where I saw a deeply committed staff teaching not one but four modern languages, with all pupils learning at least one additional language from primary 1.

The group also recommends that young people should be introduced to a second language by primary 5. It proposes that that be done through a planned interdisciplinary approach to second language learning in primaries 5 to 7 and in the broad general education at secondary school. Initially, a second modern language need not be learned to the same depth as the first one but could be built on later, in the senior phase.

We recognise that an earlier start to language learning also raises challenges for schools' capacity to deliver. Some teachers may not have undergone language training and others may wish to update their language skills. However, we know that there is untapped potential in the system, with many teachers who are trained in languages not having the opportunity to make use of their current language training.

The Government has proposed a budget for developing the Scottish schools curriculum. Within that, and subject to parliamentary agreement of the next budget bill in 2013-14, we intend to provide initial funding of £4 million on top of the £4 million that is already provided to local authorities for languages to pursue our ambitious aims and to enable young people in primary 1 to start learning a second language. We will discuss that and other

questions with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and local authorities in due course.

**Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab):** Will the minister give way?

**Dr Allan:** I am in my last minute.

In the meantime, we will provide £120,000 to fund pilot projects to be run in the 2012-13 school year by Education Scotland and Scotland's national centre for languages, which will demonstrate ways in which we can move towards a 1+2 model. The projects will raise the profile of modern languages in schools and demonstrate ways of introducing more languages in a way that will motivate and enthuse learners. The messages from the projects will be shared to inform the future development of language learning from 2013-14 onwards.

In conclusion, our commitment to a new direction in language learning sends a strong signal that Scotland is open to business and to the world and that we are determined to ensure that our young people have every advantage that their multilingual peers have elsewhere. I hope that that ambition will excite and encourage everyone with an interest in language learning and that it will command wide support.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that, in today's globalised world, learning other languages is more important than ever and that it is in Scotland's economic and cultural interests that young Scots are able to speak other languages; notes the report of the Languages Working Group and its recommendation that children should learn another language from primary 1; supports the Scottish Government's far-sighted and ambitious aim to enable all young people to learn two languages in addition to their mother tongue during their time at school, and welcomes the Scottish Government's plans for a pilot project programme for 2012-13 to demonstrate how the aims of the 1+2 Barcelona model of language learning can be turned into a reality in Scotland over the course of two parliamentary sessions.

**The Presiding Officer:** Before I call Neil Findlay, I ask members who speak in a second language during the debate—I do not mean just saying “Bonjour” or “Guten Tag”—to provide a translation to the official report.

I call on Neil Findlay to speak to and move amendment S4M-03004.1.

09:30

**Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):** Merci, Presiding Officer. I can provide that to the official report if you require, but I do not think that I will worry the interpreters much more in my speech.

Even though I, like tens of thousands of Scots, am able, when the occasion demands it, to drag up from the darkest depths of my memory some

limited, pidgin French that I can use when on holiday in France to find the nearest bistro, brasserie, vineyard or football match—take your choice—languages largely passed me by. That is a situation that affects all too many of us. I am afraid that my only language skills are in industrial language. I am not certified, but I reckon that I could be at PhD level in it.

Scottish Labour supports the sentiments of what the Government is proposing. However, far be it from me to indulge in a sterile debate or a round of ministerial back slapping. We support the principles of extending language provision, but we see a number of areas that require further scrutiny. We will, of course, offer constructive advice where we see fit. As the minister and his team know, the Labour education team is always willing to offer help to the Government.

I thank and commend the Scottish languages working group for a laudable and potentially important contribution to what is a vital debate about languages and language teaching in Scotland's schools. On page six of the report, the group states:

“Language learning is life enhancing. It opens the doors to possibilities and experiences which are not available to those who are restricted to the knowledge of one language ... Through learning new languages young people can become successful learners with opportunities relating to working and travelling abroad”.

I think that we would all agree with those sentiments.

How many times have many of us, while abroad on holiday, on business or for whatever reason, suffered in embarrassed silence due to our inability to communicate in the language of the country that we are visiting? That individual deficiency is bad enough, but the working group also estimates that our failure to teach languages in a comprehensive and universal fashion amounts to what one commentator said last week is a language tax that costs the Scottish economy £500 million. For economic, educational and cultural reasons, it is abundantly clear that we have to become more multilingual.

The working group has made some positive recommendations. The 1+2 suggestion of having primary school children learn a language other than English from P1 and another by P5 is one that we support. As the minister said, it fits the model that exists across Europe. If implemented effectively, it has the potential to transform our ability to communicate, with the obvious knock-on benefits that that will have.

However, we have some concerns and, to be fair, we are not the only ones. The working group itself stated that, in relation to current language teaching in primary schools,



“there are concerns that some primary children do not have access to an additional language due to staffing, training or funding issues, or other perceived curricular priorities.”

Anecdotal evidence suggests that, at present, language provision in primary schools is often ad hoc and inconsistent due to those pressures and others. Such issues are raised repeatedly, not just in relation to language provision but in other areas of the school curriculum.

We need to look at the proposals against the background of the realities that schools today face. We have to remember that there are widespread and sustained cuts in the public sector, including in education. Since 2007, that has manifested itself in nearly 4,000 teaching posts being lost across Scotland. Many newly qualified teachers who perhaps have the necessary language skills cannot get work, and supply teaching is in crisis in some areas. The rector of a school in my area, for example, told me that their school had been down one modern language teacher for around six months, I think, and could not get supply cover.

The number of foreign language assistants is down from 300 in 2005-06 to just 59 in 2011-12. The languages working group said that foreign language assistants

“will have a key role to play in successful implementation of a 1+2 policy.”

The minister did not mention language assistants. In summing up, will he confirm how work with the British Council and others will ensure that more foreign language assistants will be introduced back into our schools?

What about the cost of and funding for the roll-out? The minister mentioned that, in 2008, £4 million was given to local authorities to support language provision. Funding has been rolled up into general local government settlements, but the working group stated:

“if delivery of the 1+2 language policy is to be successful, further dedicated resources will be required.”

How will those dedicated resources be provided? Funding of £4 million seems rather a small amount in light of our challenge. We need more information on that.

The working group acknowledged the need to upskill teachers and for a commitment to extensive continuing professional development. It stated:

“There will be significant organisational, resource and staffing issues from Primary 1 onwards ... There will need to be sufficient numbers of primary teachers, appropriately trained, confident and competent in language teaching.”

Information on how that matter will be addressed was largely absent from the minister's opening statement.

From our discussions with the teaching profession, we know that it understands fully the need for a major training initiative to implement such a programme, but there is, of course, a big resource issue. What commitment is there to provide the funding for the teachers and training that will be needed for the national roll-out to be successful, should the pilots be so? Since the announcement was made, I have spoken to many teachers and a number of young people about their experiences of learning a language in primary and secondary school. The constant theme is exposure to languages too late and a lack of consistency from primary through to secondary school. I agree that we need to catch young people early in their education and that they need to be immersed in the language, not drip-fed.

Currently, many pupils in secondary school end their language experience in second year. That is especially true of boys, who largely opt out of taking languages. As we already know, the number of pupils who take highers in the main languages is decreasing, and for languages such as German the decline is significant. If the proposals are to work, consideration will have to be given to how schools offer subjects and how they will manage an already crowded curriculum, which will become even more crowded when Scottish studies comes on stream. In his summing up, perhaps the minister can say how those issues will be addressed.

We are concentrating on schools, but there are other missed opportunities for developing language skills in Scotland. Many people want to learn a language later in life, because of experiences in business or on holiday for example. My father-in-law is fluent in French and he began to learn it only 10 years ago. That was because of experiences that he had later in life. We should consider enabling people to learn throughout their lives through workplace learning, for example.

Finally, will the minister clarify what plans the Government has for the pilot schemes? How will they be monitored and evaluated? When does the minister plan to publish details of them? I urge that, when he establishes the pilot areas, he makes them broad and representative. By that, I mean that they should take in urban and rural schools—as there are particular issues, in respect of supply teaching for example, for rural schools—primary and secondary schools, and schools in areas with very different socioeconomic indicators, not least because, as the working group stated,

“the biggest educational challenge faced by legislators and educators alike is in raising educational attainment for children in areas of high social deprivation.”

To conclude, I reiterate our broad support for the objectives of the policy. The points that we

have raised have been raised in good faith, and we all want to see the policy succeed.

I move amendment S4M-03004.1, to leave out from “supports” to end and insert:

“acknowledges the decline in language course take-up in secondary schools; recognises that developing language skills from an early age is best supported by well-trained teachers and language assistants; notes that the numbers of both have reduced significantly since 2007, and calls on the Scottish Government to identify how any future roll-out of the proposed pilot projects would be funded to allow all young people to start learning a second language from primary 1.”

09:39

**Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** In recent weeks politicians, including many in this Parliament, have been on the receiving end of some very blunt advice from employers in Scotland, much of it relating to the employability—or, sadly, otherwise—of some of our graduates and young apprentices. Some of that advice, which in many respects is similar to the advice that Willy Roe provided when he produced his report a year ago, has not made for comfortable reading. Too many youngsters are being castigated for a poor grasp of basic numeracy and literacy, for a lack of effective communication skills, for a failure to recognise the need for teamwork, for not having appropriate expectations in the workplace and, sadly, for not showing too much commitment. There has also been criticism when it comes to science, technology, engineering and mathematics—the STEM subjects—and foreign language skills, particularly from companies that are heavily involved in the production of major Scottish exports.

As the minister has said, the statistics for language teaching also give slight cause for concern. There has been a significant decline in the number of young people in the United Kingdom studying some of the key modern languages, and that has been accompanied in Scotland by similar declines in the numbers studying for some Scottish Qualifications Authority higher exam subjects, particularly German and French. The education and employers task force concluded that the UK has the worst language skills of the 27 European Union countries.

There has been concern in some quarters about teacher training places in foreign languages. There is obviously a very sharp concern about the decline in the number of foreign language assistants and, in particular, the number of local authorities who are now taking them on.

Although it would be easy to exaggerate the extent of the problem, far too many people—including many key employers—are speaking about it for us to ignore the need for radical

improvement and for refocusing on the correct priorities.

I compliment the Scottish Government on its motion, but we must be thoroughly realistic—I am in some agreement with the Labour Party in this respect—about tackling the malaise that currently makes us bottom of the class. Apart from pursuing the laudable aims that are contained in the report, we must listen carefully to what language teachers are saying.

First, they are saying that when schools choose to start languages in primary school, it is essential that they ensure that the teachers have adequate subject knowledge and are fluent speakers themselves. Obviously, there must be a passion and enthusiasm not only for teaching the language but for its culture.

Secondly, they make the important point that there must be progression in the learning. It must not just be a varied selection of bits and pieces, or what many schools describe as taster lessons; there must be a methodical progression if we are to ensure that the subject can be properly developed in secondary school, otherwise I think that we lose some pupils and we certainly lose some teachers who might otherwise aspire to go on and develop other languages.

They also make the very strong point that we cannot expect there to be sufficient rigour in language teaching unless the pupils have a proficiency in English. Many language teachers will say that they find life increasingly difficult because too many of their pupils come to them without a good grasp of basic grammar in English and therefore, naturally, have little chance of picking up a second language, never mind a third.

**Dr Allan:** I appreciate many of the sentiments that the member has expressed. On her last point, does she also agree that, for pupils who are perhaps challenged by literacy, the experience of exposure to other languages and, indeed, to the whole concept of grammar and language learning may well improve their abilities in their own language?

**Liz Smith:** Yes. I do not deny that for a minute. However, the point that the language teachers are making is that it enhances pupils' ability to learn the structures of another language if they have the competence in English in the first place. We must be very careful about that, because it is a point that they all make. It is an important issue.

As Neil Findlay pointed out, there has been a very substantial decline in the number of foreign language assistants. I do not think that we can sit back and simply accept that. I understand that there are huge financial pressures on local authorities and that it is very difficult for them to ensure that they can provide employment for

those people, but let me suggest two things that we might consider doing.

First, there is a huge wealth of talent among our retired teachers of languages in schools. I do not believe that we cannot use their expertise and services by asking them to help in classrooms as assistants, especially when many of them are willing to do that. We should also at least pursue the opportunity presented by the fact that some people in business—particularly those who are key in the export industries—might be prepared to put a little money into helping to provide language assistants in our classrooms. The Government would do well to look at that.

The curriculum must have a firm and renewed focus, so that sufficient time is made available for teaching languages. We should be under no illusion about the logistics involved in that. How often have we heard teachers complain that their subject has been diluted in recent years because they have had to share a timetable space or to miss out on pupil contact time in specific year groups—for example, by providing one social science in secondary 1 and another social science in S2? As has been mentioned, we must not forget that coming into the equation is the Scottish Government's policy on Scottish studies, for example, for which additional space must be found. There are plenty of practical things to think about. We must ensure that enough curriculum space is available and that course content has sufficient rigour.

A not unrelated issue is the role that languages can play in university entrance and ensuring that appropriate credit is given to languages in the group of qualifications with which a student seeks a place at university. Some of the decline in the number of pupils who sit SQA exams in languages began at the same time as fewer universities required pupils to have an additional language in their S4 and S5 exam diet. When we are debating the merits of a baccalaureate system, there is an opportunity to look at how that might play out in relation to university entrance.

I have no difficulty with the broad aims of the Scottish Government's proposals. Addressing the languages problem is long overdue, but the policy needs to be carefully thought through so that we do not just pay lip service to a worthy ambition. There must be consistency, a methodical and rigorous approach and the necessary practical adjustments to the timetable to make the aim happen.

I have pleasure in moving amendment S4M-03004.2, to insert at end:

“, but recognises that this ambitious programme cannot be achieved without renewed focus on the training of qualified foreign language teachers and without substantially increasing the number of foreign language

assistants in Scotland's schools.”

**The Presiding Officer:** We have a bit of time in hand for the open debate, so members will have a generous six minutes for speeches. If members take interventions, I am sure that we can compensate for that.

09:47

**Marco Biagi (Edinburgh Central) (SNP):** Members will be delighted to hear that I will attempt no linguistic feats—it took me long enough to rehearse my affirmation last year. I have enough difficulty with the English language some of the time.

My starting point is what the languages working group took as its starting point:

“the confident belief that learning another language has positive educational benefits”.

It is perhaps worth taking a moment to examine that belief, which is based on the “Study on the Contribution of Multilingualism to Creativity”, which was written for the European Commission in 1999. That study has been quoted by, among others, the languages working group and the modern languages excellence group, and the minister alluded to it.

The study set out a wide range of benefits of language learning, which apply not just to the ability to master languages but across the curriculum. It was led by a Finland-based—although Anglophone—academic and it summarised 30 years of research in about as many pages. It also included primary attitudinal research about attitudes to language learning. It will come as no surprise to anyone here that people in English-speaking Europe—which I presume means the UK and Ireland—were the least convinced of the benefits of multilingualism. That is a cultural problem that is recognised widely—by the languages working group's report, by the modern languages excellence group and by everybody in civic society who has commented since the working group's report was published. Unless we are united in challenging such beliefs head on, we might as well not even bother being here.

However, there is one thing that we must accept. Skirting round it or pretending that it is not the case will not help. Much of Europe has one automatic first foreign language to learn—English. All the research on success in language learning schools that I have come across—whether it is from the Carleton board of education in Canada in 1996, from SCILT, Scotland's national centre for languages, in 2001 or the 2008 study on Walker Road primary in Aberdeen, which undertook an early immersion project—links effectiveness in language learning to exposure.

The playground and classroom-immersion school has better results than the language-medium school, which in turn has better results than the traditional subject-teaching approach. When we consider that, it becomes clear that, although being endlessly bombarded with Hollywood films or Anglophone pop music might be one person's cultural imperialism, it is another person's head start in multilingualism.

The reverse is simply not the case. We do not turn on the television and trip over Deutsche Welle, and the average exposure in pop music is an occasional line in French or German in a Lady Gaga song. That is not the stuff on which fluency is built or maintained.

**Neil Findlay:** As the member will know, we are about to have the Eurovision song contest, so maybe his horizons will be expanded.

**Marco Biagi:** As a passionate Eurovision fan—that might not come as a surprise—I can say that it is noticeable that since the language restrictions of the 1990s, whereby all songs were required to be submitted in the native language, were lifted, Ireland and the UK, which had the advantage of the English language, have stopped doing as well as they used to do. There is perhaps an interesting point in there somewhere.

In this country, the choice of second language is not automatic, so we have to make an active case for the language that we teach. French has been the default language for a long time, but German, demand for which has declined, and Spanish and other languages of Latin America and the far east, demand for which has grown, all compete for a limited slot, and a considerable case has to be made to win over the minds of adults. The Barcelona agreement contains an ambitious target, which will be especially ambitious for Scotland.

In preparation for the debate, I looked up last year's standard grade exam in German reading, to see how much I could remember from my schooldays. I think that, with a dictionary and a bit of luck, I might have made a decent stab at it, but I took German far beyond standard grade, and I do not think that the ability to muddle my way through the exam constitutes a basis for a claim to multilingualism. Our stats on people who take languages at standard grade show a consistent downward trend.

Turning the trend around will never be easy, but there is an obligation in that regard. If, as I said, multilingualism brings benefits and the rest of Europe has a head start, we must ensure that we do not allow permanent disadvantage to emerge relative to the rest of Europe. We have a duty to the Scottish society of tomorrow.

Professor Richard Johnstone, writing for SCILT in 2002, said that immersion is:

"In most cases ... not simply an educational initiative but has a powerful underlying socio-cultural rationale, which gives it its driving force and creates the commitment to it, without which it is unlikely to succeed."

He gave examples such as the approach in Canada, which has distinctive cultural relations, and the 50-50 Spanish-English schools in immigrant-heavy parts of the United States. We need something similar if we are to succeed. Pilots would be a great start, but in a decade's time we must have such nationwide recognition of the importance of languages.

It is important that those of us who can only stumble over a sentence of a foreign language that is half-remembered from school hold up our hands and admit that we have not set the best example. It is easy to load responsibility on to the next generation and say that education is the solution, but we must acknowledge that adult expectations and behaviour will matter a great deal if we want to reach the 1+2 Barcelona target.

**The Presiding Officer:** I remind members that I will give them a generous six minutes. I call Claudia Beamish.

09:54

**Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):** Thank you, Presiding Officer. If I translated my speech into French, I would need a lot longer than your generous six minutes.

**The Presiding Officer:** Feel free.

**Claudia Beamish:** I will stick to my own language. I rise today to speak in support of the Government's motion and our amendment, which concern the ambition to improve the opportunities that are available for young people to engage with modern languages, and I want to raise a number of issues to do with how we make that a reality.

At the launch of the report, the minister spoke of moving beyond a monolingual society. That is, of course, necessary in part for the economy and for tourism. Although it might be argued that English is the language of business, if someone is conducting foreign business, it is essential that they are able to speak reasonably in the language of the other country. As a member of the cross-party group on China, I highlight our commitment to developing Scotland's relations with China. That is in part for mutual trade benefits. It must surely seem arrogant and even postcolonial to think it appropriate to conduct a meeting about renewable energy systems in Tianjin in English rather than Mandarin. In that context, the Confucius Institute's pilot primary school Mandarin programme is most welcome.

The minister has stressed the issue of competitive advantage in the global job market. My daughter, Freya, lives in Hong Kong. When I spoke to her on Viber this morning, she acknowledged, without being prompted, that her getting a job as an economist in China had as much to do with her learning of Mandarin over five summers as it had to do with her—hopefully good—economic skills.

Working in a rural primary school as a French teacher with a multi-composite class, I was delighted to see the enthusiasm among pupils every year when they were able to choose something French to research, such as how la tour Eiffel was built, where the beret came from, and the essence of haute couture.

As other members have said, foreign language assistants are a crucial part of teaching languages. They bring not only a knowledge of the language but an authenticity to the teaching of it and they can encourage pupils to develop an understanding of the culture. I welcomed the news last month from the British Council that more language assistants are to be employed in Scotland, but there has been a huge decline, as highlighted by Neil Findlay. I will not go into the figures again, as they have already been quoted. However, the expected rise in the numbers of assistants will take them only to 70, of whom 24 will work outside the state system. I understand that the Scottish Government's funding of such programmes through the British Council has also fallen. There must be investment in order to achieve good results.

Foreign exchanges also bring different cultures alive. A group of primary 7 pupils from my daughter's school brought back a pack of frozen frogs' legs from Dieppe and started sawing it up to take home to parents. Délicieux!

In an article in *The Independent* entitled "Why learning languages matters", Dr Shirley Lawes made a plea for language to be learned for its own sake and stated:

"The study of a foreign language has a unique transformational capacity that differentiates it from other subject disciplines in the potential that knowledge of foreign languages has of opening individuals up to human culture."

That enables understanding of different ways of life and encourages tolerance. In the words of the veteran language teacher Eric Hawkins, foreign languages serve to

"emancipate the learner from parochialism."

New languages enrich our experience. Another culture can be brought alive by different words, such as "clapotis", which means the sound of little waves lapping on a quayside and has no equivalent in our language.

Gaining an understanding of the grammatical structure of a foreign language can also feed back into a deepening understanding of how to use our own to best effect. I would also advocate ensuring that children and young people understand the syntax of our own language. Indeed, although it is not very modern, the study of Latin can be invaluable in the understanding of language, and I personally believe that it is a great pity that Lanark grammar school, where my children happened to go, is now one of the few high schools in Scotland that still teach it.

I agree with the Scottish Government's languages working group that the earlier someone starts to learn a new language, the better. The pilot project in East Renfrewshire involving children learning French from their pre-school year is a good example. The pilot started in 2002 and uses songs, rhymes and games to encourage children to learn a foreign language in the same way as they learned their mother tongue.

It is only in the past year that those children will move on to a secondary school setting, so the analysis of what impact that method of teaching has had will only now begin. However, it is clear that, as other members have stressed, by starting at an early age, the children do not have the inhibitions of later life and they grow up understanding language and having increased confidence in their ability to learn new things.

When I was learning, many people in my generation lacked the confidence to take the risk of speaking a foreign language, even if they were in a campsite with kids in France, Germany or wherever. Often, that was due to how they were taught. These days in our primary schools, in the context of curriculum for excellence, the range of methods that are used—including games, role plays, visual materials and talking in groups and with partners—mean that saying, "Salut!" and opening a conversation is fun rather than traumatic.

I disagree with Liz Smith: there is a clear methodology underpinning language teaching at primary level. The working group emphasises that

"local authorities should provide regular opportunities for primary and secondary languages staff to work together ... to undertake shared CPD".

As a primary French teacher, I would argue that such work will aid the transition to secondary school and ensure that children are no longer turned off from the more rigid and perhaps less participatory ways of learning at secondary level.

Equity must be at the centre of the development of the new strategy for modern languages. As Neil Findlay stressed, rural schools and those in more deprived areas must not be disadvantaged by the challenge of finding and retaining modern

language teachers. If the working group's report and recommendations are actioned consistently, we will, in a generation, have teachers who are leaving teacher training ready and able to teach modern languages, and children who know that part of growing up as a global citizen involves speaking one or two other languages.

Enfin, if the first way to connect with another country is through its language, the second way is perhaps through its cuisine. I wish everyone today, "Buon appetito!" for the Italian lunch in the Scottish Parliament canteen.

10:01

**Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP):** I am delighted to take part in the debate. Many members in the chamber already know of my passion for language learning and how knowledge of languages certainly helped my career development. Strange as it may seem, I would not have been able to enter the oil and gas industry if I had not been able to speak German.

Members may expect me to concentrate on Scottish languages, as I have taken my oath three times in Doric and am a strong supporter of Gaelic-medium education. However, I do not intend to focus on those languages this morning, although they form a strong basis for learning other languages. The reading bus in Aberdeen does wonderful work in promoting the Doric language, and Gaelic-medium schools such as Gilcomstoun school in Aberdeen do sterling work in promoting multilingualism.

I do not know how we have come to be so dismissive in recent decades of the need to speak and understand other languages, but that is totally unacceptable in a globalised society, and I welcome the initiative from the minister. As an article that appeared in *The Observer* some time ago said,

"Entre nous, the idea we need only English is totally passé. Without a commitment to language teaching we condemn our children to a tongue-tied future."

The charity Children in Scotland reminds us that around 137 languages in addition to English are spoken in this country, and that we have around 10,000 bilingual or multilingual children. We must build on that. Research shows that learning a second language builds on the first language and consolidates it, and children do not become confused when they are exposed in their early years to two or more languages.

Marco Biagi mentioned the recent pilot project in my constituency at Walker Road primary school, which showed the benefits of total immersion learning in maths, geography, environmental studies and other subjects in French. That resulted in those children presenting early for standard

grade when they went to secondary school, and it increased their ability to learn a second language at secondary level.

My plea is that it is not only French that should be children's first encounter with another language. My own local authority, Aberdeenshire, went from offering a choice of French or German to offering just French. I am sure that that put a lot of children off learning a language, especially when there are so many affinities between Doric and German that could be built on.

We must use the skills of teachers and parents, and others in our communities, to introduce children to the diversity of languages, and we must use this opportunity to review the way in which we teach languages. Curriculum for excellence offers exciting opportunities in that field. It is not—as Liz Smith believes—about finding more time but about combining language learning with other subjects.

When I, as we all do, visit schools and speak to children, I always promote language learning as much as I can. The minister posed the question of its use to working-class kids; I always ask the boys who want to be footballers what they would do about languages if they were good enough to play in Spain or Italy—and I always see a light going on in their heads.

Teachers seem to face unnecessary barriers when they organise school exchange trips. A friend of mine who teaches languages at Alford academy told me that there had been a suggestion that German families be disclosure checked, which I think is going over the score somewhat. Although the Confucius hubs have been introduced, I am not sure whether they have been kept up across the whole of Scotland, and I ask the minister to ensure that they are all operating as intended.

Many companies are also interested in helping with language promotion. Every year, my old company, KCA Deutag, sponsors two secondary school children on a work experience trip to its headquarters in the German town of Bad Bentheim, and I know that rotary clubs used to help with student exchanges to various countries.

We must make it easier for language assistants to be used in our schools. Those assistants might already be living in our communities, but they might also be students in, for example, the Erasmus programme. Traditionally, there have tended to be more students coming to Scotland than Scottish students going in the other direction, but there has been much progress in that area in recent years. For example, the number of Robert Gordon University students going to other countries is now the same as the number who come here to go to that university.

Actually, the Scottish figures for the Erasmus programme make exciting reading. Scotland now accounts for 12.6 per cent of the total number of UK students in the programme, with 1,507 taking part in 2009-10 and 1,273 the year before. However, although that represents a total increase of 26.8 per cent in two years, the percentage of the Scottish student population in the Erasmus programme is still very low, at 0.7 per cent. That is still slightly higher than the English figure of 0.5 per cent but nowhere near the figure for France, which is 1.4 per cent, or for Spain, which is 2 per cent.

All, though, is not doom and gloom. I know one young lady who, as a young child, was exposed to "Salut Serge" CDs on car journeys; who took French in primary and secondary school and in one year—her sixth year—got her higher Spanish; and who at the University of Glasgow furthered her French and Spanish with business studies. She took French and German in her second year and next year is going to Toulouse University, where she will take all her classes in French and where she hopes to deepen her knowledge of Spanish and start Mandarin. She was one of more than 200 at the Erasmus induction meeting at the University of Glasgow the other week—and I have to say that I am disappointed that, as my friend Sandra White will point out, Glasgow is reducing the breadth of the languages available at the university while Toulouse offers 13 choices.

Cue one proud mum of this young lady—I practise what I preach.

10:08

**Stuart McMillan (West Scotland) (SNP):** When I was listening to Claudia Beamish's closing comments about Italian, I was taken back to the time when I studied in France and Germany. As a vegetarian at the time, I have to admit that I found living in those two countries—I also studied in Sweden—a bit of a challenge.

I am delighted to be taking part in the debate not as a member of the Education and Culture Committee but as someone who has studied and, indeed, struggled with languages. Although I have come close to tears of despair with them, I felt elated when a lecturer told me that I could now speak French.

I whole-heartedly support the motion in the name of the minister. My only sadness is that such a motion was not one of the first debated by the Parliament back in 1999, long before either the minister or I were elected. I warmly welcome the debate and the report published by the languages working group.

As we have heard, languages are vital to the economic wellbeing of the country and to the

wellbeing of individuals. Languages help to broaden horizons and we need more of that. Some people may think that learning languages is a middle or upper-class activity that is far removed from the skills that matter to people. I suggest that those who think that are far removed from reality and need a reality check. In fact, they are the proof of why we need more languages to be learned across the country.

It is no longer an option to continue in the same way. We, as parliamentarians, are failing Scotland's people if we do not consider our children's future and economic prospects. I know that the situation will not change overnight or over the course of a parliamentary session. Introducing the 1+2 model over two years is welcome, and I warmly support that measure. However, changing many of the cultural thoughts of people who are against languages will probably take a bit longer than two parliamentary sessions.

I could talk about this subject for hours, but in the generous six minutes that I have—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):** You have seven minutes.

**Stuart McMillan:** Thank you, Presiding Officer. In the time that I have, I have struggled to cut down some of my real-life experiences that show why languages matter but, towards the end of my speech, I will provide a couple of examples that show why they are relevant for people today.

I grew up in a working-class family in Port Glasgow. My mother worked in school health for over 30 years before she retired. My father worked in the shipyards and then, after they closed, was unemployed for three years. He got back into work and worked in marine engineering until he passed away. My parents were traditional, working-class parents who never spoke languages, although they always encouraged me to. In third year, I picked German for my O-grade because my father was working in Germany at the time and I thought that I could help him with the language when he came home, every few weeks.

As a result of learning German, I took part in a German exchange trip—Claudia Beamish also talked about exchange trips. I was 15 and 16 when I took part in that. One year the kids from West Germany came to Scotland, and the second year we went to West Germany. The whole experience had a profound effect on me, particularly when we went on a day trip to East Berlin. The effect that had on me was to prove that communism did not work—although that is a debate for another day.

To have the opportunity to spend two weeks in a new country and pick up even more of the language was wonderful. The experience of waking up one morning after having a dream in

German was one of those moments that helped to shape me as a person. I realised that I was good at the language, I understood a lot of it, and I appreciated, over that period, that the German people were just like me. There was no reason why we should not be able to work together to form a better future.

**Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP):** Folk have talked about exchange trips, but it strikes me, as I listen to the debate, that people do not take advantage of what we have here at this moment. We have folk who have come to Scotland from all over the world—a lot of Polish people, for example. Why are we not immersing our kids to learn Polish, alongside those kids? That would work extraordinarily well. Polish is one example, but there are many others.

**Stuart McMillan:** Absolutely—I could not agree more. I will make a point later in my speech that highlights why it is important for people in Scotland to learn more languages.

My journey through learning languages was never easy. When I got a 1 for my O-grade German, I thought that I had an aptitude for the language—indeed, I did. However, my two hours of higher German on Friday afternoons was tough going and I struggled with it. I did not apply myself as much as I should have, and I failed it. Undeterred, I went on to college and university and completed my honours degree in European business management with languages—I studied French and German. I went on to obtain an MBA European. On both courses I had the opportunity to study abroad: in Toulouse—I will speak to Maureen Watt about Toulouse later—and Dortmund during the undergraduate degree, and in Angoulême and Ronneby, in Sweden, during the MBA.

The MBA course was all in English, so members may ask why it is relevant to this debate. It demonstrates precisely the reason why we need to improve our language skills and capabilities. How many lecturers in Scotland would teach a class—other than a language class—in another language? Probably very few would, yet that is exactly what happened in Sweden and in France, which, as you all know, is fiercely proud of its language and promotes and protects it in equal measures. The thing about Sweden that really impressed me was the ease with which the lecturers would switch from Swedish into English and back again. The students would read business textbooks in English so that nothing would be lost in translation, and the discussions and debates would also take place in English.

Marco Biagi spoke about speakers of other languages having a head start. That is exactly what we are talking about. When it comes to languages, other countries such as Sweden are a

long way ahead of us. If we want to fully compete with other countries, we should look at models such as those in the Scandinavian countries.

I am conscious of time, but I want to give two real-life examples of why languages matter and are important to people. IBM in Greenock has an international customer call centre. Some years ago, I worked for IBM. Part of my job involved dealing with colleagues in that centre. People from all over the world worked there, including Scots, but when it came to languages, they were very much in a minority. There are language-related job opportunities in Scotland, not only with IBM but with many other companies.

My second example relates to football and it goes back to Kevin Stewart's point. The Hearts team that won the Scottish cup on Saturday has a Portuguese manager. Rudi Skácel, who scored two goals, is from the Czech Republic. In the old Czechoslovakia, Russian and German were taught rather than English. People come to this country to play football. For them, it is an opportunity to improve their language skills and to enhance their economic opportunities.

10:16

**Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab):** I refer to the issue that I raised in the debate on educational attainment on 11 January 2012. Recommendation 6 of a session 3 report by the European and External Relations Committee stated that the committee was concerned about the “poor linguistic performance” of the Scottish people. In that debate, I spoke of there being no provision for Punjabi speakers in our schools. I also noted SQA claims that there are not sufficient Punjabi speakers and that there is insufficient demand for the language—despite the fact that Punjabi is, after English, the most widely spoken language in Scotland. I asked the Minister for Children and Young People to explain how the SQA could reach such a conclusion. She said that Alasdair Allan would speak to me about what could be done, but no information has yet been forthcoming.

I again ask the minister and the Scottish Government to take serious note of the issue and to acknowledge that there needs to be a broad base of language skills in Scotland for international trade, and to support families and service users who speak languages such as Punjabi, Polish, Arabic, Urdu and Cantonese. Although it is possible to gain standard grade and higher qualifications in Urdu and Cantonese, no such qualifications or teaching are available for the Punjabi language, even though it is the second most commonly spoken language in Scotland and despite the fact that there are more than 2 million Punjabi speakers in the UK.



In Glasgow, very little Punjabi is taught in mainstream secondary schools. No SQA exams in Punjabi are available at school or national qualifications level. When students wish to sit exams in Punjabi, they must do so through an accredited centre for the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance, which is an English examining body. Although there is some provision for language learning outside school—for example, there is some community provision in mosques and gurdwaras in Glasgow—no non-native speakers undertake Urdu at secondary level, although there are some non-native speakers at primary level. Why is that not being continued into secondary education?

Our challenge is clear. We face staffing, recruitment and maintenance issues, and require the SQA to examine the issue in depth. We also need to look at and be more vocal on how speakers of any non-standard language in Scotland are treated.

**Dr Allan:** Hanzala Malik and I have spoken about the issue briefly in correspondence. I will be happy to arrange a more formal meeting, if that would be helpful. When we talk about 1+2 languages, we are not restricting ourselves to European languages because we also recognise the value of Asian languages. I will be very happy to have that conversation with Hanzala Malik.

**Hanzala Malik:** I thank the minister for that. It is very welcome and I will take him up on the offer.

We must acknowledge the increasing number of languages that are spoken in Scotland today. The use of Chinese has grown over the past five years, which seems to be a response to the interest in the booming Chinese economy and the relationship between our countries. At least some people feel that some knowledge of the language is a good opportunity for trade in any country. That, and the need to support students, families and communities in order to raise the level of language learning should be aided by the SQA and the Scottish Government.

I am also keen to find out what is being done by the British Council. What is its role in supporting the learning of languages in Scotland? I would appreciate the minister's investigating what other support we can get from the British Council for our endeavour to support language learning.

A Punjabi speaker would say that his Punjabi is just as loved and valuable as any other language. I will say that in Punjabi, if I may.

*The member spoke in Punjabi.*

That is from a Scotland-born lad, and it shows that I learned that language outwith the school curriculum. I was lucky; I had the opportunity. Opportunities are still available and, as has

already been pointed out, we have communities who have come from all around the world whom we could take full advantage of in order to help our pupils through twinning arrangements, or however we want to do it. That would be very helpful.

It is important for us to demonstrate our willingness to engage in learning other languages because it plays a vital role. During my travels overseas, I have learned that when a person speaks the language of the country that they are visiting, they receive a far more welcoming reception than they would if they did not know the language.

10:22

**Linda Fabiani (East Kilbride) (SNP):** I am pleased to be able to speak today on what I believe is an extremely important subject, and one that has not been given the level of attention that it warrants. Many initiatives have been announced during past decades, and successive generations have been party to numerous pilot projects in schools. Indeed, as a child, I was among a group of primary school children who were the first in the country to receive French lessons by television. It was a long time ago; if I say that the programmes were in black and white, I am sure that members will be amazed. Although that project did not last long, it instilled in me a curiosity about other languages and cultures that led to senior school studies.

As I have said, I do not believe that we, as a nation in modern times, have persevered seriously enough with learning of languages. We can call it complacency, arrogance or whatever, but it is a fact.

I looked back to 2006 when I last spoke on this issue. My research at that time showed that the number of school pupils who were taking a foreign language at standard grade had dropped by almost 9,000 since 1999. We have not properly addressed that decline during the intervening years. I am glad that we are now going to take a serious look at the issue because it is time we turned things around.

We should start by taking seriously the report of the languages working group. More important than that, we need to stick with it as a long-term strategy rather than use it in the short or medium terms. We are way behind and, for the future of Scotland, we will have to compete. It is a fact that English is no longer the international language of businesses and that the old imperiousness does us few favours. The 1.5 billion residents of China, 1 billion people in India and most of the 500 million people in the European Union would not disagree. In much of South America, Spanish is spoken and

in Brazil, one of the BRIC countries, Portuguese is spoken.

I understand that long ago, it was not possible to get a degree from a Scottish university unless one had spent a year working abroad. Moving to modern times, Maureen Watt talked about low take-up of the Erasmus programme. The number of students coming to Scotland to study for a year far outweighs the number of Scots going abroad. A monoglot is less likely to be enamoured by the prospect of a year abroad than is a student who is confident in his or her command of the native language of the host country. Stuart McMillan spoke very well about that. We should encourage Scotland's youth to get out and see the world while they are young.

An increasing number of employment opportunities—not just the traditional ones such as export sales—require fluency in another language. The increasing mobility of the European population marks the need for further improvement of language skills. Not only will there be business opportunities throughout Europe, but many employment opportunities will require people to up sticks and shift themselves across Europe's borders.

The internet is an area in which Anglophones have had the security of knowing that their language reigns supreme, but that cannot be guaranteed any more, either. English dominance of the worldwide web is declining, as websites in other languages such as Spanish and Mandarin take off.

**Kezia Dugdale:** If Ms Fabiani were to walk by my office, she might hear French radio, because a number of my staff are learning French for their exams. Does she recognise that the internet provides opportunities to develop language skills?

**Linda Fabiani:** Absolutely, I do. For three years, I have had the German equivalent of that sitting unused on a computer, so perhaps Kezia Dugdale has spurred me into action. There are masses of information that could be denied people. It is a reversal of the current position, where English is only one of the main languages on the web. That said, Kezia Dugdale made a positive point.

There are many issues on which we can be positive. Let us, for example, be positive about our children, who are more than capable of meeting the standard. The on-going success of Gaelic education has shown that learning and ability in other studies can be improved by learning another language and culture. At Mossneuk primary school in East Kilbride, the children learn German. The teachers have told me that that has led to success in other subjects.

Willie Neill reminded us in his poem

"Scotia est Divisa in Voces Tres"

that Scotland has three old languages—Gaelic, Scots and English.

Maureen Watt and Hanzala Malik told us about all the international languages that are now here in our country. That is a good basis for learning modern languages. We must follow that path if we want future generations to make an impact on the world.

Historically, Scots had, among other things, the reputation of being among the world's best diplomats, at a time when the international language of diplomacy was court French. The influence of Scots has been felt around the world for centuries. We should remember that, we should be pleased about it and proud of it, and we should take advantage of it. However, in order to do that, we have to be able to communicate with our colleagues and friends around the world. We must get our language skills up there with the best in the world. If Poles can leave school with four or five languages, and increase their business skills and employment mobility in the process, there is no reason why Scots cannot do the same. If the French, with what some would say is a chauvinistic attitude to their language, can achieve a 65 per cent engagement with other languages, surely Scots can do the same. It is not a matter of achieving the impossible; it is a matter of having ambition for our nation. We must ask ourselves how much we can do rather than tell ourselves that we cannot do very much.

If Scots see themselves as part of world society as well as being part of Scotland, they will offer the nation a greater chance of stability and prosperity. That is crucial and it is more important for the young now and for future generations than it is for most of us sitting in the chamber. I hope that everyone in Parliament can get behind a serious long-term strategy of engaging with other parts of the world, in other languages.

10:30

**Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Lab):** My mum, who was a modern languages teacher for many years, is the first to say that I have no natural gift for languages. At school, I was quite academic, but I had to work a lot harder to be good at French. I got a good grade, but that was in part because there was a fluent French speaker in my house. I ditched French at the first opportunity. I wanted to go to university and get good grades, so I picked subjects that I liked and enjoyed and, to be frank, French did not fit into that. I now regret that, because of the obvious employability benefits that foreign languages bring.

As I got older, I developed a real love for Spain and all things Spanish, so I forced myself to try to

learn Spanish—I have done night classes at the University of Edinburgh and paid a private tutor. That has been torture, because I just do not have the natural ability. Even though I now want to learn Spanish, I find it difficult.

I read with great interest the report to which the Government's motion refers. I want to make a positive speech overall, so I will get the negativity out of the way first. From my perspective, the report has two flaws: first, it recognises the need for an audit of the skills base in the education system; I am disappointed that that has not yet taken place.

Secondly, the report says that it cannot estimate the amount of resources that are needed to deliver the pilot projects, but without that we cannot estimate the size of the challenge that is ahead. Like cute puppies and the aroma of fresh coffee, the aim of teaching modern languages to primary 1 kids is a great idea that makes us feel good and feel that we are doing good, but it is hard to keep the faith if we do not know who will deliver it and how much it will cost.

**Dr Allan:** I will be positive, but some of the things that Kezia Dugdale mentions were not part of the working group's remit. Does she accept that conversations between the Government and stakeholders are the way to answer some of the questions that she raises?

**Kezia Dugdale:** I absolutely accept that, but the issue should have been at the heart of the remit. How can the Government seek to tackle a problem if it does not start with what resources or tools it has at its disposal? Therefore, the audit of skills is urgent and I look forward to hearing the Government explain how it will make progress on it.

Teachers whom I have spoken to are positive about the initiative, but they are quick to highlight the training needs of teachers. If we want kids to soak up a new language, we need to immerse them in it from the beginning. Those points were well evidenced by Maureen Watt and Marco Biagi. It is ridiculous to ask a primary teacher with a higher in Spanish to take on that task, and it could be counterproductive. We need to empower kids to learn a language. It is not simply about teaching them the French or Spanish for "cat" or "dog"; we need to empower them to ask questions, such as "¿Cómo se dice ... ?", or "How do you say ... ?" Those are the sort of skills that we need to give young people.

I am pleased that the report recognises the role of mother languages that are not English in the 1+2 strategy. To give some statistics, 24,555 kids in Scotland have English as an additional language, which is 3.7 per cent of all Scottish pupils. Of them, 3,588 are in Edinburgh, which

represents 8 per cent of the school population in our capital city. That is a hugely significant amount, but when we get down to school level, it becomes even more significant. No fewer than 100 of the children at Leith primary school, just down the road, have English as an additional language. That is 36 per cent of the school roll. That is a huge amount that—of course—brings challenges, but the school relishes that and, in fact, celebrates it. Every time a new country is represented in the school, a new flag is hung. The headteacher told me that, just last week, they hung the Nepalese and Guatemalan flags for the first time. That is fantastic and wonderful and it shows the diversity in Scotland that we love, but additional resources are needed to support the school.

The City of Edinburgh Council has an English as an additional language service. That is great, too, but it is hugely underresourced. As I said, 100 kids at Leith primary school have English as an additional language, but they have access to one teacher for one and half days a week, and that is all. That is only enough time to train teachers. The English as an additional language specialists never get anywhere near the kids whom they seek to support in the classroom. With more resources, their time could be better spent. However, we are kidding ourselves if we think that the infrastructure is there even to support the kids with additional languages who are already in our schools. There are just 6.2 full-time equivalent bilingual support assistants for the whole of Edinburgh—that is six people to support 3,000 kids.

**Neil Findlay:** I acknowledge what Kezia Dugdale says. In my previous post, I had the great fortune to teach a Polish pupil who had just come into the country and who was a delight to teach. However, that boy was put into my class—an additional needs support class—along with a number of kids who had complex learning difficulties. He had no problem other than the language issue. That situation was due to a resourcing matter, which indicates the difficulties that teachers face day to day. The support for the Polish boy in the school and the support for me as a teacher was limited. Indeed, I was more terrified than he was at the prospect of having to teach him.

**Kezia Dugdale:** I welcome that intervention. Neil Findlay has highlighted that getting to grips with English as an additional language will help the Government's strategy because it will get it one step further along the way, if we do it properly. It is already referred to in the modern languages report, but if the minister could progress some of the issues, he would make his long-term goals more achievable, at the same time.

Leith primary school staff also told me that they relish the opportunity to teach modern languages in the primary school setting and that they had found that the best way to get teachers to do that is to send them abroad for training. We might think that that would be difficult and resource intensive, but they found a source of European Union funding called the Comenius fund, which provides for all the costs for travel and subsistence so that teachers can go abroad for between one day and six weeks to learn to be a modern languages teacher.

I found no reference to Comenius funding in the language report strategy document. In fact, I found no reference to European Union funding anywhere in the document. I strongly urge the minister to look at alternative sources of funding that he could draw on to progress his agenda. The funding need not all be drawn from Scottish Government pots.

Of course we are broadly supportive of the Government's ambition, but we need to see the audit so that we can understand what resources are needed to fulfil that ambition. When we know how much it will cost, we will be in a position to match that boldness with the necessary budget. Will the Government take the lead when the true cost is known? On verra; veremos; wir werden sehen. We shall see.

10:37

**Dave Thompson (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP):** Thòisich mi a'sgriobhadh m'òraid 's a Ghàidhlig ach cha robh mi cinnteach gun tuigidh sibh gu soilleir na thuirt mi 'san eadar theangachadh.

*Following is the translation:*

I started writing my speech in Gaelic but I was not sure that you would clearly understand what I said in translation.

*The member continued in English.*

I also thought that I would put in a few words of Chinese, or French—not that I speak these languages—an a thocht about screivin in ma mither tongue o Doric an aa, till a makit up ma mind that I could best explain my position on this important subject in English. I share this dilemma with members to emphasise that we already live in a multilingual nation and that effective communication requires linguistic fluency from both the speaker and the listener.

Ensuring that our education system gives young Scots the linguistic toolbox to allow them to pick up second and third languages to fluency must be a priority—as has already been said—and I welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to adopt the 1+2 Barcelona model of language learning for Scotland. The European Union is

pushing for every person in the EU to speak two languages in addition to their mother tongue because language learning helps to build communities and enables effective trading.

I do not need to stress that language acquisition must begin in childhood. On the back of the languages working group report, the Scottish Government's announcement that it will explore opportunities for all young people to start learning a second language in primary 1 is welcome.

Those of us who have tried to learn a language in adulthood—and who are still learning many years later—are downright jealous of schoolchildren who pick up languages as casually as they pick daisies in the summer. I believe that we will transform language learning in Scotland by giving five-year-olds first-class language tuition. With the tools to pick up languages, they will be ready to face the international world in adulthood and to represent Scotland on a global stage. If we are all agreed that bilingualism and even trilingualism—or more—are to be coveted, the question arises as to how we will get there.

In Scotland, we start with a distinct advantage in that we are already rich in languages, although in the past we, too, have been on the receiving end of obtrusive linguistic policies that have been far from beneficial to our cultural heritage. I am talking about the slow but enforced decline of our two native tongues, Gaelic and Scots. Our linguistic heritage should mean that we are even more sympathetic towards, and appreciative of, the benefits of multilingualism, but it should also mean that we are quick to protect and enjoy the indigenous languages of our nation.

Across the country, in 14 different councils, there are 2,316 primary school children in Gaelic-medium education. Every child who is educated in a Gaelic-medium school is fully bilingual by the age of 10, with the ability to read, write and speak fluently in at least two languages. Because many of the children are immersed in Gaelic from the age of three, they are confident in using the language both within the school gates and outside them. It is not just a school language; it is their language in much the way that English is. The growth of the Gaelic economy means that Gaelic can now be heard on the radio, seen in supermarkets and on road signs and read in the newspapers. It also has its own television channel. All of that reinforces the relevance of the language.

In February 2011, the curriculum for excellence Gaelic excellence group reported that modern language teachers in secondary schools were consistently impressed with the ability of Gaelic-medium educated pupils to acquire other languages. Those pupils appreciate the importance of languages, display confidence in

picking up another language and find it easy to switch between languages. Surely, those are exactly the skills that we want to see in young Scots.

Gaelic speakers can pick up French, German, Spanish or any other language with confidence, appreciation and determination. There are many benefits of Gaelic-medium education. Yes—learning Gaelic means that one has a unique window on Scottish heritage, and it is a precious cultural gift, but I remind Parliament that learning a second language to fluency when one is still a child means acquiring the toolbox to pick up a third and a fourth language much more easily. I am not downplaying the importance of teaching and learning European languages or other languages in our schools and I do not believe that learning Gaelic is a substitute for that. However, Gaelic-medium education can be an essential building block in that learning. That could also be true of the Scots tongue. We have some way to go to bring it up to the level of Gaelic in literacy terms, but that is also a target to which we should aspire, because that would give us three immersion languages in our language toolbox.

In Scotland, we have a great gift that we do not appreciate enough in that we have an indigenous language that is distinct from English. That is an important point, because someone who is fluent in English and Gaelic—two languages whose structures are almost diametrically opposed—can master anything in between. We have an education system that provides our children with an excellent linguistic toolbox, and we have extensive exposure to the language in everyday life. In short, we have all the ingredients for effective language acquisition and we should all grasp the opportunity that that brings.

10:44

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** I very much welcome the debate and I am pleased with the way in which it has been framed. Too often, the ability to speak another language is seen as something that is nice to have rather than a key skill—one that matters and which has the potential to open up the widest range of opportunities. Linda Fabiani, who I do not think has ever been in black and white, was right: for too long, we have derived false comfort from the misguided assumption that the world speaks English. As the minister said, 75 per cent of the world's population speak no English and only 6 per cent are fluent in it.

With figures for language provision in state schools showing the most dramatic drop-off in recent years, there is a real risk that an ability to speak languages will somehow become associated with privilege instead of being an entitlement. That point was made forcibly by

Doreen Grove in her report "Talking the talk, so that Scotland can walk the walk: A rapid review of the evidence of impact on Scottish business of a monolingual workforce". I am pleased that the Government's languages working group recommends not only that children have access to an additional language from primary 1, but that language learning should be an entitlement for all young people at least to the end of S3.

Before going any further, I should probably declare a couple of interests. As the son of a former French teacher and as someone whose sister teaches modern languages at a Glasgow secondary while sending her children to the local Gaelic school, my support for the recommendations that the excellent languages working group has made should come as no surprise. Indeed, it is probably a filial duty.

As someone who has had opportunities not only to study multiple languages at school and university but to live, work and study in Spanish and French-speaking countries over recent years, I know how much I have benefited from the richness of those experiences. There are economic advantages to language learning, and I will touch on them shortly, but I absolutely agree with the British Council's emphasis on the important role that proficiency in languages plays in creating an outward-looking mindset among our population.

Speaking a foreign language shows our willingness to engage with the wider world, and on an individual level it can do wonders in developing self-confidence and encouraging inquiry. During a recent family visit to Barcelona, I noticed that my youngest son seemed to be as thrilled at having been able to ask the porter in our hotel which bus would take us to the Nou Camp as he was at seeing Lionel Messi in the flesh.

However, there is a critical economic dimension to this debate, as Liz Smith indicated. In a week when the views of business leaders on the readiness of young Scots for the world of work have been the subject of much heated debate, it is fair to acknowledge the long-standing concerns about how prepared our young people are to operate in a globalised and multicultural economy. The economist James Foreman-Peck has suggested that language is a barrier to trade that is equivalent to that of a tax. Neil Findlay made that point. James Foreman-Peck explains that a common language causes trade, and trade causes economic growth, so a lack of language is effectively a barrier.

I know from my experience of working overseas in a multinational company that having people with the right mix of not just language skills but cultural understanding to do business in each country is critical. After all, it is generally accepted that

people buy in their own language. As former German Chancellor Willy Brandt once observed, and I am sure that Stuart McMillan will back me up on this,

"If I am selling to you, I speak your language. If I am buying, dann müssen Sie Deutsch sprechen."

I suspect that, somewhere in Orkney, Mr Turner will be doing metaphoric cartwheels at receiving the news that the first foreign language that I have spoken in the Scottish Parliament is German.

The cost to the Scottish economy of that barrier to trade is significant. Neil Findlay put it at about £500 million, but a figure nearer £600 million has also been quoted. Doreen Grove cites an example in which a major petrochemical company decided against even inviting a bid from its Scottish headquarters for a new European sales office due to problems in recruiting language speakers. That meant not only a loss of jobs, but a loss of £4 million a year in investment.

I well remember a visit to Wolfson Microelectronics, where management stressed how important it is for the company to recruit individuals who have not only the requisite design and technical skills but an ability to operate in a foreign language environment. At that stage, the company was experiencing serious difficulties in recruiting, not just in Scotland but in the wider UK market.

Language does matter. It improves young people's opportunities and indeed opportunities for those of all ages. Neil Findlay made a good point about the point at which people look to expand their language horizons, a little like Kezia Dugdale. Even when someone has proficiency, if they do not have an opportunity to continue using the language, they quickly lose their fluency and confidence. Far more emphasis needs to be placed on that area in future.

I restate my support for what the Scottish Government is seeking to achieve. My concern is, as it was when we debated these issues last year, that I am not entirely clear how the minister expects to achieve the objectives that he has set. There is nothing in the motion that demonstrates that the laudable ambition is matched by a credible, costed plan. In that sense, both the Labour and Tory amendments make entirely legitimate points by highlighting the importance, but the inadequate provision, of suitably qualified teachers and language assistants. In the case of the latter, the British Council has quite rightly been shouting its concern from the rooftops for some time. Scotland has seen the number of language assistants plummet from 284 in 2005-06 to 70 this year. We have 3 per cent of the UK total, while Northern Ireland, with a third of our population, has 60 per cent more such assistants.

Orkney Islands Council is in the fortunate position of being one of the local authorities to have such provision. I know that the support to teachers has been invaluable. Assistants not only enhance linguistic fluency; they bring a cultural dimension that is otherwise almost impossible to create. The minister's advisory group recognised that, and I hope that that will result in significant improvements over the parliamentary session.

The group has made sensible proposals on initial and on-going teacher training and development in languages. Graham Donaldson made the point in his report that that is vital in providing teachers with the confidence that they need. However, the curriculum for excellence and, indeed, developments in information technology already offer real opportunities to be imaginative about the way in which languages—whatever languages they are—are taught in our schools.

Finally, I acknowledge the working group's focus on the role that the higher education and further education sectors play. As well as improving transitions from primary to secondary school, there is much more that our colleges and universities can and should do to support learning and underscore the value of languages through the demands that they place on their students and would-be students.

I again congratulate the Government on bringing forward the debate and I very much share the ambition that has been set out, but we must see a far clearer commitment from ministers on exactly how that ambition will be realised. The work of the language advisory group is comprehensive and can chart a path towards the outcomes that we all wish to see. As Linda Fabiani said, we can see those outcomes if we have the patience to stay the course, but we should be under no illusions. The distance that we need to travel is significant in many areas. Marco Biagi offered thoughtful observations on that and the reasons behind it—and lifted the veil on the UK's plummeting fortunes at the Eurovision song contest. In some cases, we are actually moving in the wrong direction.

Back in 2010, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education observed:

"Globalisation has transformed the way we live, learn and work. The pace of technological change, particularly the ease and speed of communication, has continued to accelerate. Scotland is increasingly enhanced by people from different countries, cultures and religions, and who speak languages other than English. Education must prepare young people to flourish in this new and changing world."

I could not agree more.

10:52

**Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP):** I was going to begin my contribution in parliamento Glasgow, but I thought that I had better not, as even I have trouble understanding it. Perhaps the minister could try to use it in summing up.

I am pleased to be able to speak in the debate. Like other members, I believe that expanding and delivering the opportunities to learn extra languages at a very early age will benefit our children and the whole of Scotland, and I welcome the working group's recommendations on that in particular.

As the MSP for Glasgow Kelvin, I am very aware of the large Gaelic community in the constituency; indeed, I think that the Gaelic community in it is the largest outwith the islands. The Glasgow Gaelic school is based in Berkeley Street in Kelvin, and it is a huge success. An overwhelming number of people want to go to the school. People do not necessarily only learn the language; they can learn about the way of life as well. Dave Thompson mentioned that. Whenever I visit that school, which I do often, it is a great pleasure to see the fantastic work that is done there.

As I said, languages are important. When people go to the Glasgow Gaelic school and schools that teach other languages, there seems to be an ethos about the culture that shines through. I congratulate Donalda McComb and all the staff at the Glasgow Gaelic school, whose dedication knows no bounds.

The minister mentioned Confucius hubs, which are excellent facilities not only for languages, but for understanding, trips and twinning with the Chinese community. I thank the staff in Hillhead high school, which is in my constituency, for the fantastic work that they do in the Confucius hub there.

I visit schools and nurseries in my area. In fact, I visited Strathclyde nursery school just on Friday and saw a graduation ceremony for tots. They can speak French, which is fantastic. I was amazed to see children as young as three learning another language. The children learn through song and play. That is entirely different from my experience at school.

I do not know whether other members had the same experience as me, but the only language that was available to me and others at that time was French. Basically we learned by rote and sometimes through song, but mostly through verbs, grammar and many hours of writing down conversations. It was not an enjoyable experience, which is why I am so pleased when I see the difference now in schools, where kids learn languages conversationally. They are interested in

the language. They learn names, colours, flowers, books, magazines and films—Linda Fabiani mentioned watching a television programme in black and white, which I can also remember. All those things encourage kids to learn and keep their interest.

Kezia Dugdale said that she did not have an ear for learning languages, but that she wishes that she had done, because it would have been useful in later life. Similarly, when I was 16 I decided that I would go and learn German. I went to Jordanhill College. I had never learned German in my life before, but I wanted to do something even though school had not encouraged me, or others. Perhaps if we had had the type of learning that we have now and which we will have in the future, we might not have been quite so frightened to learn other languages.

There is a fantastic opportunity now and we are giving kids the chance to learn languages. Liam McArthur and others mentioned the economic benefit of learning languages and that is fantastic for Scotland as a whole. However, it is not only about the economic benefit; it is about the confidence that kids get from learning languages and the fact that it opens up a whole new world to them. In fact, my granddaughter was born in Barcelona and by the time that she was two she could speak Catalan. The extent to which kids can absorb information like sponges and pick up a language is unbelievable.

That is why we should all welcome the Government's forward programme. I am sure that the minister agrees that there may be issues that we have to look at; Elizabeth Smith and others picked up on some of those issues. However, it is worth looking forward to ensure that our kids have a great opportunity.

The working group's recommendation 18 states "that SQA keep under review the suite of languages offered".

Recommendation 19 states

"that there be further engagement with the FE and HE sectors".

Recommendation 23 states

"that universities work together as a consortium of university providers to support delivery".

Finally, recommendation 27 states

"that Scottish Government and Universities work with Local Authorities".

I highlight those recommendations because they mention universities, the SQA and others but, as far as I can see, there is no mention of the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council. Will the minister pick up on that when she sums up the debate? Without the Scottish funding

council, the moneys to deliver languages in universities are not there. What role does the funding council have in the process?

Maureen Watt and Kevin Stewart both mentioned the teaching of the Polish language. There is a fantastic course at the University of Glasgow in Czech, Polish and Slavonic studies, but its funding is being ended. The Scottish funding council is obviously involved in that situation, too. The centre for Russian, central and east European studies is the only one of its kind in Scotland. If the centre closes, people who want to continue their studies in that subject will have to go to London; that will be the only option left in the UK. It is imperative that the Scottish funding council considers the situation and ensures that the centre continues, given the good work that it does. Polish has been mentioned and there is also Russian. All countries should be involved. Kids should be encouraged to learn all languages.

**Hanzala Malik:** I agree with what the member says about language provision at the University of Glasgow. The cuts have obviously had an effect but, rather than make a negative comment, I will make a positive one. We need to look at ways of funding universities so that Scots continue to have the opportunity to learn such skills. One possible way forward would be to encourage private industry to step in and support universities locally. Perhaps the minister could shine some light on that.

**Sandra White:** I agree entirely with Hanzala Malik—we have raised that issue.

A petition has been lodged about the course that I referred to, which the Public Petitions Committee is considering. When the committee asked questions of the Scottish funding council, the council's reply was that it had conducted a review and that

"Our review concluded that demand for Czech and Polish in Scotland is very low".

The committee continues to consider the petition. I ask ministers to look at the issues and the idea that Hanzala Malik suggested, which is for the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee.

11:00

**Margaret McCulloch (Central Scotland) (Lab):** I join the consensus about the importance of languages in the education of our young people and in helping Scotland to realise our potential as a nation. The report by the languages working group opens with a single powerful statement. It says simply that

"Language learning is life enhancing."

I associate myself with that accurate sentiment.

From French to Spanish and from Cantonese to Urdu, Gaelic or even British Sign Language, learning another language allows our children and young people to develop their cognitive and interpersonal skills. It also enhances their understanding of the world that is around them.

Being able to communicate across borders and cultures is a special ability and is a skill that opens up a range of new possibilities and economic opportunities. Young people who become increasingly multilingual through their school education will be far better able to work, learn and trade internationally in later life, so their language skills will be of value not just to them but to Scotland as a whole.

Across the chamber, we all share an aspiration to ensure that Scotland is always open and inclusive and that, in every community, people from all backgrounds and all walks of life are made welcome. We are a diverse society. If we want to bring together that diverse society so that different communities can relate to one another and so that we can promote social participation, we must address language barriers.

The appropriate language skills must exist in our public services to ensure that those in society for whom English is not a first language can confidently access the national health service, the education system and local services. For example, I know from speaking to Lanarkshire carers centre that, in sections of the black and minority ethnic community, blood-borne viruses are a particular concern.

Raising awareness requires a big investment of time and effort in education and outreach work. I cannot help but feel that the job of the people involved would be easier if more people in the communities that they target felt comfortable about approaching the NHS or advice services.

The working group's report recognises that today's Scotland is a multicultural and multilingual society, so let us reflect on the full range of the diversity in Scotland. In Scottish schools, 138 languages are spoken. English is of course by far the most common home language; it is followed by Polish, Punjabi, Urdu, Arabic, Cantonese, French and then Gaelic, Bengali, German and Spanish.

Changing the way in which we introduce children to languages and teaching a second additional language from the later stages of a child's primary education gives schools the scope to do more than just teach young people about engaging with the world beyond Scotland. It also creates opportunities to teach young people more about the country in which they live. I ask the Scottish Government to reflect on those points as it decides how to prioritise the languages that our children are taught. There should be more



awareness of languages that are already spoken in today's Scotland and better teaching of English as a second language for those who have a different home language.

Of course, the comprehensive teaching of languages is of great value not only to the individual but to the economy. Our failure to keep up with the rest of Europe means that Scotland is losing out as some international investors are taking their jobs and contracts elsewhere. Members are aware of reports that the decline in language learning is costing the Scottish economy an average of £500 million per year—evidence from the Confederation of British Industry Scotland and Scottish Enterprise backs up that claim.

Schools will have to make a choice about the languages that they teach. It is sensible to build on the good work that is done in teaching the main European languages, but we must also look further afield, so that future graduates can communicate and perform in the changing world economy.

There is broad agreement that a strong and sustainable recovery in Scotland will have to be export led and that we will have to gear our economy towards the BRIC nations. The working group is aware of the case for teaching Portuguese, Arabic, Russian and other eastern European languages, but the point is not developed, so it is unclear to me how schools will decide which languages to teach as a priority.

I will talk about implementation, in the context of the Labour amendment in Neil Findlay's name. The introduction of languages, particularly at an earlier age, requires planning and resources, which are currently scarce. I draw members' attention to the words of Dr Dan Tierney, from the University of Strathclyde, in *The Herald*. He said:

"The targets are welcome, but extremely ambitious and will be very difficult to achieve. To achieve coherence from P1 through to secondary will require better planning in terms of teaching and learning and teacher supply."

The working group has proposed a major shift in how our schools teach languages. If its recommendations are to be implemented successfully, the minister will have to address as an urgent priority the lack of trained teachers and foreign language assistants. I agree that there is a strong and compelling case for change, but if we are to have confidence in the Scottish Government's commitment to languages, we need clarity about how language teaching will be prioritised and resourced.

11:06

**Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP):** During my schooldays in Aberdeen there was little choice available when it came to learning languages—

there was little associated fun, too. There was no access to a foreign language at primary level and no choice when we entered secondary school. Like everyone else, I was sentenced to French—at least, that is what it felt like.

I recognise entirely the picture that Sandra White painted. The teaching approach in those days, certainly at my school, was simply to drum the vocabulary into us. No attempt was made to get us to embrace French, and the net result was that we—or mostly the boys, it should be said—were utterly disengaged long before the advent of S3 and the escape route that it offered. To this day I can reel off the days of the week, name certain colours and count to about 20 in French, but if I am asked to converse in the language I am completely lost.

That is something that I deeply regret. The lack of a decent grasp of French or indeed any other foreign language returned to haunt me in post-school life. My career in journalism took me to many corners of Europe, and I was thankful that our cousins in mainland Europe are widely capable of conversing in English, which allowed me to get by. However, my trips were not without moments of linguistic embarrassment for me and for colleagues who were similarly linguistically challenged. Perhaps the worst moment for me came on a trip to Italy, when I thought that I was asking for butter to apply to my bread but had actually requested a donkey. I was not alone. A colleague who tried to tell a Spanish waiter that he was embarrassed about something or other declared that he was pregnant.

Sadly, unlike Kezia Dugdale, I am too long in the tooth to put right my lack of grasp of foreign languages.

**Members:** Never!

**Graeme Dey:** Well, I am aware that my predecessor constituency member, Andrew Welsh, became well versed in Mandarin while serving in the Parliament.

**Neil Findlay:** I am astonished by the revelation that members of the Scottish press corps were ignorant of foreign languages.

**Graeme Dey:** I don't think you really mean that.

We can and must ensure that coming generations of Scots are encouraged and supported to do better than I did. That will require starting them younger, and where better to start than in primary 1, when kids are most receptive to learning, as Liam McArthur said?

A Dutch acquaintance who moved to Scotland in the late 1980s brought his young daughter with him. She had no difficulty settling into school life in Dundee, because even as a youngster she had a decent command of English. Indeed, she had a

developing command of four languages, all told, because at her school in Holland several languages were on the curriculum. If my memory serves me rightly, I think that at the time Scotland had not even started to introduce French or German into the latter stages of primary education—at least, not to a significant extent. Here we are, years later, still playing catch-up.

I watched a late night TV programme on the subject last week and was taken by the manner in which primary school children were learning French. They were role playing and acting out a scene in a cafe, with customers giving orders to waiters. It struck me that if I had been taught French—or any language—through such methods, I might well have taken to the subject. However, in his foreword to the languages working group's report, the chair, Simon Macaulay, said:

"there has been a significant and worrying decline over the past decade in the number of languages taken forward to SQA certification. There is, moreover, evidence that young people are not always sufficiently challenged and motivated by current language learning approaches."

The suggested solution to that—earlier access for primary school children to language learning and so on—strikes me as entirely sensible. The need to head down that road is just as obvious. Of course there are challenges to be overcome, not the least of which is how to ensure equality of access. How do we ensure that a child attending Isla primary school or Mattocks primary school in my constituency is as able to learn French, German or Spanish as the kids who are schooled in Arbroath and Kirriemuir? We must also ensure that a full range of languages is available, stretching from Gaelic all the way through—in light of the growing influence of China's economy—to Chinese.

As we look to build a more prosperous Scotland, there can be no doubt about the need to equip our children to engage more fully with the world, and to do so in the other languages of the world. It would be arrogant in the extreme not to challenge the perception that learning languages does not matter, because everyone speaks English. As the minister and Liam McArthur reminded us, 75 per cent of the world's population do not speak English. In addition, it is worth noting that less than 27 per cent of internet usage last year was conducted in English.

It would be wrong not to go beyond merely learning the language and seek to develop an understanding of the culture and protocols of the country where that language is spoken. Hopefully, the 1+2 approach will allow many more Scots to do just that.

Some months ago, I was approached by a German television station that wanted to interview an SNP MSP on the subject of the referendum.

The production team chose Arbroath abbey as the location of the interview because they understood its historic connection with Scottish independence. It was also clear from the questioning that they understood entirely the arguments that can be advanced for and against a yes vote, and the context that they are set against. It was not just that they put a wee bit of preparatory work into putting together the piece; they actually understood the subject. It should go without saying, too, that the interview was conducted in perfect English, much to the discomfiture of this interviewee, who could not help but think of his complete lack of German, not to mention his limited knowledge of that country's political scene.

Scotland's people have a rich tradition of going out into the wider world and making their mark. There are many high-profile examples of that, and many other less well-known examples, too—how many members here today are aware that the Buick motor company was founded by an Arbroath man? However, it is a different world now, and we must furnish our children with the language skills that they will need if they are to follow in those footsteps. The 1+2 approach offers hope that we might just be able to do that. That is why I am delighted to support the motion.

#### **The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):**

We come to closing speeches. I remind members that, if they have participated in the debate, they should be in the chamber for the closing speeches.

11:12

**Liz Smith:** This is a timely debate and it has included thought-provoking and informed contributions from many members. As various speakers have noted, learning a language is not only a useful discipline in itself but can open many other doors to the history, geography and literature of the country whose language is being studied. It can also help with an understanding of the true meaning of internationalism and of how we can widen our horizons in what is an increasingly global community.

That global community is changing fast, all the time. It is becoming increasingly competitive, especially with the emergence of new economic powers, and it is vital that we respond to those changes and do not automatically assume that English is the main language of international trade.

Those employers who tell us that there must be more focus on foreign language skills when it comes to marketing Scottish products also tell us that we must not underestimate in any way the powerful effect of fluency in a language, especially with regard to business lobbying, networking, getting a job—as in the case of Claudia Beamish's

daughter—and earning a higher salary. We ignore any of those observations at our peril.

Liam McArthur and Margaret McCulloch said that many economists have calculated that the problem of insufficient language skills is a barrier to trade. In fact, they have defined it as a tax that costs the Scottish economy up to as much as £591 million. The evidence for that was made clear in the CBI's April 2011 report and can be seen in the fact that, sadly, some major European companies are bypassing Scotland when it comes to major contracts.

There must be a happy blend between meeting Scotland's needs in a global economy and learning a language because of its intrinsic value. That is perhaps the biggest challenge that we face, because there are tensions in that regard—certainly for the SQA, which rightly says that its qualifications provision will depend on demand. Although there may be perfectly legitimate and scholarly reasons for learning Latin, Greek, Hebrew or any of the other languages that do not necessarily feature on the school curriculum these days, there are powerful economic reasons for learning Mandarin, Spanish or Russian—the growing languages.

Hanzala Malik and Sandra White raised extremely important issues in that regard. They highlighted concerns—in relation to the SQA and the Scottish funding council respectively—about the exact criteria that are to be used in offering the relevant qualifications; what happens when schools, colleges and universities decide which courses they will offer their students; and which examinations students may be able to take. As I pointed out at the start of the debate, decisions on those may determine how we ensure progression from learning in the early years of primary school right through to the learning that we expect students to undertake in the tertiary sector.

I stress again the importance of ensuring that the development of the 1+2 policy and the Barcelona agreement principles, which are mentioned in the Scottish Government's motion, is underpinned by giving pupils as firm a grasp as possible of their own language in the first instance. I know that debate very well, and I have spoken to many language teachers about it. We must have a proper balance between rigour and the old-fashioned basis of ensuring that children have a grasp of grammar, which is important, and making learning much more relevant than it perhaps was during the schooldays of many members. When I discuss with modern language teachers what we need to take language teaching forward, they raise that issue almost without fail.

I will dwell for a moment on foreign language assistants, because they are worth their weight in gold, especially if they are able to work across the

transition years. As several members have said, the current scarcity of foreign language assistants, particularly in the state sector, is nothing short of a disgrace and the drop is far in excess of that south of the border.

Kezia Dugdale made an important point about how we address the resource situation. I return to the argument that I made in my opening remarks, which is that rather than focusing simply on resources being provided by local authorities, which, as we all know, have great difficulties in providing such resources just now, we must be imaginative about drawing on other resources. That could involve seeking European funding or encouraging the private sector to make at least some provision to help with classroom assistants. We must address the issue.

One of the most interesting recommendations in the working group's report highlights the need to do much more about the transition between primary and secondary school. That is very important, not just in language teaching but in other areas of education. I am interested in drilling down further in that regard, because we need some detail—particularly in the context of curriculum for excellence—on exactly what can be done in those crucial years.

Careful planning is required, and there is an issue with finding space in the curriculum—we cannot get away from that. We have heard far too often about the difficulty of allocating time for many subjects such as physical education, history and music. There has been a great deal of publicity about that in recent months and the Government must face up to the challenge of dealing with it—it is a challenge, and I do not think that any of us are in a position to solve it. There is a dilemma in the fact that the curriculum for excellence is based on much greater flexibility, and we must ensure that no Government, of whatever political colour, decides in too much detail exactly what students are learning.

I will finish by stressing two important points that Linda Fabiani and Malcolm Chisholm raised: the need for a long-term strategy to get away from the piecemeal approach that has been taken in the past, and the importance of ensuring that any policy that we develop is based firmly on evidence.

The debate has been important and enjoyable, and I am happy to support many of the themes that have been developed.

11:19

**Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab):** The speeches in this morning's constructive debate leave little doubt that we can and should do more to promote language learning. As my colleague Neil Findlay said, Labour welcomes the languages

working group's report, which makes a number of positive recommendations.

We know from a recent survey that has already been mentioned that in many European countries nearly all secondary school pupils learn two or more foreign languages, while more than half of the senior secondary pupils in the UK do not study a foreign language at all. As Neil Findlay, Stuart McMillan and a number of other members have made clear, language learning is life enhancing and opens up possibilities that are not available to those restricted to only one language.

Claudia Beamish, Liam McArthur and others set out the economic case for language learning; indeed, as we know, the report estimates that the decline in language learning has cost the Scottish economy around £0.5 billion. As a result, the cultural and economic motivation for improvement is clear.

Many members recognised the dedication and commitment of modern language teachers and assistants up and down the country, and I am pleased that the working group report has acknowledged the

"considerable innovative practice in relation to the teaching of languages".

Although the 1+2 policy that the working group has outlined is to be welcomed, and although increased language learning is a good and ambitious idea—as Neil Findlay, Kezia Dugdale, Liz Smith and Liam McArthur have stated—there are clear and obvious concerns about its proposed implementation. There is universal recognition that developing language skills from an early age is best supported by well trained teachers and language assistants but, as many of my Labour colleagues and other members have pointed out, the numbers of both have fallen significantly since 2007.

The report states that foreign language assistants in primary schools and secondary schools will have a key role to play in the successful implementation of a 1+2 policy but, as we have heard in this debate, there are only 59 such assistants this year, down from almost 300 in 2005-06. The report clearly states that this ambitious goal will be achievable only with the right resources, and it is obvious that the Scottish Government must take action to address that decline if we are to avoid another strategy that sounds great on paper but fails to deliver on the ground. Given estimates that council funding for foreign languages will have to double—or possibly even treble—to make this policy a reality in our schools, I would welcome more detail from the minister on how the Government intends to fund this initiative. He mentioned a figure of £4 million

and we look forward to seeing more detail on what that £4 million is for and what it will provide.

Although the 1+2 model of language learning in primary schools is to be welcomed, it is not enough in itself and the languages working group report makes a number of other key points and recommendations. As Neil Findlay mentioned in his opening remarks, there is also an issue about the emphasis placed on learning additional languages from P1 and the lack of a requirement for secondary pupils to study an additional language beyond a certain age. Such subjects are no longer part of the core curriculum. As Margaret McCulloch, Hanzala Malik and many others pointed out, we must tap into the many international languages that the children and young people in our schools already speak.

We must also look at enhancing partnership working between primary and secondary schools to ensure continuity of learning. The working group's report highlights that very issue and research carried out by Scotland's national centre for languages indicates that up to a third of the primary schools that responded have no regular language links with secondary schools in their areas.

Perhaps the most worrying part of the working group's report is the recognition of a significant decline in the number of languages taken forward to SQA-certificate level. I do not believe that that is just an issue of take-up—to believe that would be to blame pupils' motivations; possibly, it is part of a worrying trend of high school pupils being unable to choose the higher and advanced higher that they want to choose at their local school.

I am aware that in at least one local authority the overall number of higher and advanced higher in languages and other subjects taught in school has fallen. It is vital that that is part of any audit. I suggest that the Government carries out a similar audit to see if the general number of higher and advanced higher is reducing in schools in the other 31 local authorities to ascertain whether our young people are getting the choices locally that they deserve.

As many members have mentioned, the reality is that 75 per cent of the world's population does not speak English, and we should give consideration to learning the languages of countries whose economies will undoubtedly play a stronger role on the world stage in the future. Claudia Beamish mentioned China. Brazil, Russia and the countries of Eastern Europe are other obvious examples. Although the working group did not set a specific hierarchy of languages to be learned by pupils, it did note the strong case to be made for learning languages such as Portuguese, Arabic and Russian, as well as other Slavonic and Eastern European languages.

I note that part 5 of the report details the working group's recommendation that the Government should engage with higher education to look at the implications of the report for that sector and for students. I was pleased to see the suggestion that universities should look to expand the number of languages offered to take account of a future increase in the number of languages taught in schools and the anticipated increase, over time, of pupils studying to higher level and beyond. The Government therefore needs to be serious about supporting the teaching of languages at Scottish universities.

Sandra White referred to the Public Petitions Committee, which is considering a petition in the name of Dr Jan Čulík, a senior lecturer in Czech studies at the University of Glasgow, calling for the Scottish Parliament to protect lesser-taught languages at our universities. The petitioners are rightly concerned that a lack of targeted funding for lesser-taught languages will mean that Scotland is at risk of losing much of the teaching provision for lesser-taught languages. The petition seeks the Scottish Government's support for the University of Glasgow's unique languages-based programmes in Czech, Polish and Slavonic studies, and in Latvian, Estonian and Hungarian. Once lost, the existing expertise will not be easy to regain and I hope that the Scottish Government will give the petition serious consideration.

The Labour Party is committed to providing opportunities for young people across Scotland. Members have given numerous examples of how language learning can help to do that and provide significant cultural and economic benefits. Therefore, it is vital that any policy is realistic and takes into account the challenges faced by schools and education authorities.

The 1+2 policy must be fully resourced, to allow well-trained teachers and language assistants to help children develop language skills from an early age. We need enhanced partnership working between primary and secondary schools. Action must be taken to address the decline in language courses being offered in secondary schools. Support must be given to higher education institutions that provide strategically and economically important, but vulnerable, language courses.

Increased language learning is a good idea but the challenge is as the report states, that we need "the right approach and the right resources" to make it achievable.

11:28

**The Minister for Youth Employment (Angela Constance):** In contrast to Dr Allan, who has a

self-expressed passion for languages, I was encouraged to do art instead of languages at school. I was also encouraged to do cooking instead of science, but perhaps that is a story for another debate.

Like many other members who participated in the debate, when I look back on my education I very much regret my lack of application and, indeed, the lack of encouragement to pursue—or the discouragement from—learning a language. However, looking forward as a mother of a wee boy who will start primary 1 later this year, I am very much enthused by the prospect that, in time, the education that my son and thousands of children like him will receive will include active encouragement to apply themselves to learning not just one language, but two. It is quite clear from the debate that that ambition for Scotland's children is shared across the chamber and across the political divide.

I regret to say that the Government will not be supporting the amendments of Liz Smith and Neil Findlay; I do so with a heavy heart. That is because neither amendment reflects the comprehensive and considered comments that those members made during the debate. As the Labour amendment seeks to delete the part of the motion from "supports", it supports nothing. The Conservative amendment focuses primarily on foreign language assistants. I make it clear that foreign language assistants are important. They add to teaching, they help children to become fluent, they can bring a language alive and they can contribute to learning across the curriculum. However, foreign language assistants are just one element of our policy; the introduction of the 1+2 model is not dependent on them.

**Liz Smith:** I entirely acknowledge that they form only one part of the Government's policy. However, I devised my amendment after speaking to many modern language teachers who believe that more foreign language assistants and teachers gaining a higher level of qualification is essential if we are to ensure that the Government's ambitious policy works.

**Angela Constance:** What I dispute is the idea that the policy will stand or fall on foreign language assistants. We can agree that they are a valuable addition to the skills and expertise of teaching staff and that they complement the work that should be being done under curriculum for excellence. I would have hoped that members across the chamber would welcome Dr Allan's announcement that an additional £4 million will be provided in 2013-14, on top of the £4 million that is already in the system.

**Neil Findlay:** The minister referred to the Labour and Tory amendments, but does she not find it surprising that Alasdair Allan's motion

makes no reference to funding the roll-out of the programme?

**Angela Constance:** Like me, Mr Findlay has been in the chamber all morning, so he will have heard Dr Allan's extensive remarks about how we will take forward the funding and the planning of the programme. I would have hoped that Mr Findlay and others would recognise that this Government has had the courage and the honesty to provide an honest critique of the position that we start from as we seek to achieve our ambition for children to speak two languages in addition to their mother tongue.

Before I respond to the substantial points that other members have made during the debate, in my capacity as the Minister for Youth Employment, I want to reinforce Dr Allan's central message. In essence, that message is that, in today's globalised world, learning other languages is more important than ever and that our commitment to our long-term ambition will maximise the opportunities for young people to learn languages.

As Stuart McMillan pointed out, multilingual youngsters have a competitive advantage. For example, I am acutely aware that many major international hotel groups are reluctant to recruit on to their trainee management programmes young people who are not multilingual, because they want to have the opportunity to deploy their young recruits in other parts of the world. I am aware that successive CBI surveys have pointed to the concerns that some employers have about the lack of language skills in the workforce.

The link between language skills, employability and the corresponding economic benefits is obvious. If we want to compete, we need to show the rest of the world that Scotland is, indeed, open for business. We need a workforce with the right linguistic skills of confidence and the ability to communicate, and outward-looking individuals who understand and are tolerant of difference.

**Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP):** In respect of the points about employability and language, will the minister acknowledge that those who do not have English as a first language, such as those who are deaf and use BSL, are currently disadvantaged, and that we should be encouraging the teaching of BSL as a language at primary level to raise awareness?

**Angela Constance:** Absolutely, and I hope that Mr Robertson welcomes the Government's commitment to treat BSL as a language and not just as a mode of communication.

While I am talking about skills and employability, I want to take advantage of the opportunity offered by the recent media commentary on our young people's employability and skills. To be absolutely

clear, young people are the future of this country. They are part of the solution and not part of a problem. Our young people will help us to grow our economy and to grow as a nation. They have every right to expect an education system that will enable them to compete effectively at home and abroad. Liam McArthur is absolutely right on that point. Our young people should look at the learning of all languages as an entitlement and not just as an added extra. Many members have spoken about the economic cost to this county, of in excess of £500 million, because we do not have suitable linguistic skills.

Many members have also rightly spoken about how learning a foreign language is complementary to understanding our own language better, and vice versa. Dave Thompson spoke eloquently about Gaelic-medium education and how that enables young people to be fleet of foot in learning many different languages. Marco Biagi and Claudia Beamish talked about how learning cannot be compartmentalised and how adults must lead by example. On that note, I encourage Graeme Dey and others and say that, despite their age, they too can lead by example. It is never too late to learn.

It is also important to recognise that all children have the opportunity to learn a language. Maureen Watt spoke well about that when she made the connection between language and football, particularly for boys. Recently I had the privilege of visiting Glencryan school in Cumbernauld, which is a school for children who have learning disabilities. Despite their difficulties, those children are also learning languages in the context of the world of work. As well as learning employability skills in the school's restaurant, they are also learning some modern languages, which will enhance their employability in the local hospitality sector.

Linda Fabiani made a useful contribution during which she spoke about Scots being the world's best diplomats. I might have been sitting in this chamber for too long but that is not something that I have previously been informed about.

I thank Kezia Dugdale for the information on European funding. She will know that the Government always takes an interest in European funding and that, recently, we have had some success in unearthing an additional £25 million from the European social fund for young people.

Liam McArthur, Maureen Watt and Sandra White also spoke about further and higher education. They are absolutely correct that those sectors need to complement what is currently happening or will be happening in schools. We need that continuity to build on the curriculum for excellence. I assure Sandra White and Hanzala Malik that the Scottish funding council is

monitoring language provision in the college and university sector. I am keen on our improving and getting more connectivity between the worlds of education and work if we are going to take advantage of the economic opportunities that lie ahead of us.

Dr Allan began the debate by saying that we need to create a cultural and educational environment in which multilingualism is the norm. We are right to be ambitious for our children and young people. We need to be bold and embrace the opportunity for change, and redress the situation in which our young people are losing out. We need to boost our children's language skills over the next decade if we are to have any prospect of improving their life chances, as well as the economic performance of this country.

## Scottish Executive Question Time

### General Questions

11:40

#### Rural Policing

##### 1. Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):

To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will undertake an audit of rural policing resources and police stations prior to the establishment of a single police force. (S4O-01029)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill):** The police service, under the leadership of Chief Constable Kevin Smith, is collecting information on policing resources, including police stations, as part of the work to create the police service of Scotland.

**Liz Smith:** The cabinet secretary will acknowledge that in recent years a considerable number of key stations have closed down; in some cases, they have been sold. What assurances can he give that the formation of a single police force will not mean a further reduction in the essential local policing that rural areas require?

**Kenny MacAskill:** I can give the member that assurance. I am aware of her concerns. The intention behind having a single service is to ensure that in the face of swingeing cuts, we manage to preserve the integrity of the police service in Scotland and provide the necessary resources to cover a variety of matters in all parts of Scotland, and not in just those areas in which there is perhaps some critical mass.

Equally, we are conscious of the old adage that all policing is local. It is important that policing remains that way, and it is therefore our intention that the information will be available to boards and to the new police authorities that are coming in at local authority level. We can trust in their good judgment, as we can trust those who will be on the Scottish police authority and the new chief constable—whoever he or she is—to ensure that the local, visible police presence that has resulted in a 35-year low in recorded crime is maintained.

##### David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

Does the cabinet secretary share my view that there is a strong case for hubs in the current Northern Constabulary and Grampian Police force areas, which emphasises the comparative advantage that they would bring to a single police force in relation to, for example, rural roads policing, wildlife crime, finance and information technology?

**Kenny MacAskill:** Those are ultimately operational matters for the police service. I have never interfered with the structure of the eight current forces and I would not do so with a single service.

The member's point has been made previously by those who have been pursuing the benefits of a single police service in Scotland. It is not about centralising everything into one hub but about ensuring that we have flexibility. It is equally about ensuring that all areas of Scotland are covered, given the geography of the country.

Some of the member's points will be taken on board by those who are involved in the restructuring.

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** I am sure that the justice secretary will be aware that Kevin Smith recently attended a meeting in Inverness at which concerns about the threat of police staff job losses and centralisation of support services were clearly expressed. What assurances can he provide to those in the Northern Constabulary region about those concerns, particularly in relation to Orkney, where staffing levels and station provision are back at what could be considered bare minimum levels? What guarantee can he offer that a single force will not result in a reduction in staffing or station provision?

**Kenny MacAskill:** The Government has made it clear that there is a correlation between the record number of police officers and the 35-year low in recorded crime. It is our intention to maintain the 1,000 additional officers, not simply numerically but in terms of their contribution in our communities. In restructuring, as we go from eight services to one, it is accepted that some civilian jobs cannot be justified. Such matters, whether in human resources or in other areas, are part of the cost saving that will be made as a result of restructuring.

We recognise the importance of the wider police family and, as I have said previously, the importance in Orkney of maintaining at least the rank of the current chief inspector who is based there when we have divisional commanders, and of maintaining the numbers, which, I recall, is something like 26 in the Orkney Islands. All that will be dealt with. I have no doubt that those who serve in the wider police family by carrying out civilian tasks will be equally required post restructuring.

However, in other areas in Scotland, whether in relation to communications or human resources, we simply cannot continue to do things eight times over, because we cannot justify the cost. On that basis, we will preserve the visible police presence

in our communities, whether in Orkney or our major cities.

### **Prisons (Independent Monitoring)**

**2. Annabel Goldie (West Scotland) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Executive what progress is being made to ensure the continued independent monitoring of prisons. (S4O-01030)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill):** My officials have worked closely with Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons in Scotland to develop a statutory monitoring service that will be both operationally and financially integrated within the inspectorate and which will report to HM chief inspector of prisons. The new service will be split on a geographical basis and carried out regularly by three monitors. I consider that to be proportionate to facilitate regular monitoring in Scotland's prisons and that it will create a more robust reporting mechanism.

**Annabel Goldie:** Currently, the independent monitoring of prisons is significantly enhanced by prison visiting committees, which provide cost-effective access for prisoners to independent advice. Can the cabinet secretary reassure me that the new arrangements will embrace those twin virtues of cost effectiveness and independence, and that those will be protected?

**Kenny MacAskill:** Absolutely—I can give that assurance. I understand the member's concerns. I again pay tribute to those who have served on visiting committees. The Government has taken action to develop an advocacy service, which we think is necessary to deal with offenders' needs, particularly those who are part of the churn of constant reoffending. Another aspect of the work of visiting committees is independent monitoring. I give the member an assurance that the system that will be provided within the office of HM inspectorate will be independent, will have the appropriate skills and information and will meet the requirements that she and others understandably seek.

### **Flood Prevention (Scotland) Act 1961**

**3. Nigel Don (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether a scheme promoted under the Flood Prevention (Scotland) Act 1961, which does not yet have confirmed statutory consents, will be eligible for grant support, including beyond the current spending review period, and to a level of 80 per cent of eligible costs. (S4O-01031)

**The Minister for Environment and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson):** The Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities agreed last year that the flooding component of the general capital grant for the spending review



period would be distributed for large schemes and by application. The first round prioritised confirmed Flood Prevention (Scotland) Act 1961 schemes with planning consent. An announcement regarding a further round of applications is likely to be made towards the end of this year.

**Nigel Don:** The minister will be well aware that my concern is about the flood prevention scheme in Brechin in my constituency. What assurances can the minister give that, as that scheme and the many others like it in Scotland get the appropriate consents, money will be available, subject to the 80 per cent limit and the availability of funds?

**Stewart Stevenson:** I need to be careful, because there is a planning issue. I understand that there is an objection to the flood prevention scheme to which the member refers and which the council in the area has submitted. It is important that, through that process and the planning system, we make progress towards a scheme that is implementable. I am willing to talk further when the process is complete and we have a scheme that can be implemented. Of course, it will be necessary for the scheme to demonstrate a positive cost benefit ratio, and the commencement of the scheme will have to be within the spending review period.

**Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):** In view of on-going concerns about flooding in parts of my region such as at Whitesands in Dumfries and in Peebles, can the minister give the Parliament details about Scottish Government research projects on flooding and say how those will help with flooding mitigation in the south of Scotland and more broadly in Scotland, and how that connects with the land-use strategy?

**Stewart Stevenson:** For the first time we have a national picture of the distribution and potential effects of floods, which will help us to focus resources where they will be required and target our efforts on areas where the greatest benefit can be gained.

The member is correct to make a link to land use. Part of what we will do in that context is look at the role of natural flooding to relieve water pressures on urban and developed areas that are affected by flooding. The natural systems that can help us will therefore form part of our consideration under the land-use heading.

#### **Air Rifles (Regulation of Use)**

**4. Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it plans to introduce legislation regulating the use of air rifles. (S4O-01032)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Kenny MacAskill):** Yes. We have a long-standing

commitment to address the misuse of air weapons and we will bring forward legislation to regulate their ownership and use at the earliest possible opportunity.

**Colin Beattie:** With frequent reports of attacks on members of the emergency services such as fire brigade and ambulance staff, among others, does the minister agree that there is a need to control better who can possess those potentially lethal weapons and to introduce some form of licensing without delay and as soon as the intended devolution of the power to do so makes that possible?

**Kenny MacAskill:** Absolutely. Sadly, people have been using those weapons entirely inappropriately. I say for the record that I recently met the parents of Andrew Morton and gave them the same commitment that I give members. I also pay tribute to Andrew's parents for their efforts to ensure that we bring in an appropriate regulation scheme.

Air rifles are not toys: they hurt, maim and, tragically, even kill, as we know all too well. It is the Government's intention to bring in a regulation scheme that will license new weapons. We are working with the consultative committee to ensure that we take on board the legitimate use of air rifles by those who have to deal with pests and control vermin and those who are members of legitimate, authorised sporting clubs. However, the days of taking those weapons out and using them entirely inappropriately in housing schemes must end. We owe it to the memory of Andrew Morton to ensure that action is taken on that.

#### **Fife Energy Park (Foundry)**

**5. David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on RGR Foundry Ltd's plans to build a new foundry at Fife energy park in order to supply the offshore wind market. (S4O-01033)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney):** The Scottish Government is fully supportive of RGR Foundry Ltd's plans to build a new foundry at Fife energy park as that will create an opportunity to develop a large-scale cast components facility for the offshore wind industry. That will be crucial in building on Scotland's success in attracting major investment in our offshore wind sector.

**David Torrance:** Samsung, 2-B Energy, BiFab, the Hydrogen Office and RGR Foundry are just some of the companies that are investing in Fife energy park. Given that investments in the renewable energy sector provide a much-needed boost to the local economy, including important

employment opportunities, what further support can the Scottish Government offer?

**John Swinney:** Our enterprise agencies are fully involved in the development of different business opportunities at the Fife energy park. The park is a source of enormous investment. There is also enormous excitement about what the facility can create for the Scottish economy.

Scottish Development International is working with RGR Foundry to explore how regional selective assistance could be utilised to assist the development of the project. SDI has also brokered discussions between RGR Foundry and wind turbine companies that are looking to set up in Scotland. Those are just two examples of the areas in which SDI and our other agencies can provide assistance. That assistance is available in a variety of different locations around the country.

#### **NHS Ayrshire and Arran (Patient Care)**

**6. Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what it considers the most significant improvements have been to patient care in the Ayrshire and Arran national health service board area since 2007. (S4O-01034)

**The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Cities Strategy (Nicola Sturgeon):** A range of significant improvements have been made to patient care in Ayrshire and Arran since 2007.

There have been big improvements in the priority area of infection control. For instance, between 2007 and 2011 the number of Clostridium difficile cases fell by 66 per cent. On waiting times, although there are no comparable figures for 2007, in December 2011 some 91 per cent of patients were being treated within 18 weeks of referral—up from 72 per cent in January 2011.

My first act as health secretary in 2007 was to overturn the previous Administration's decision to close the accident and emergency department at Ayr hospital. That has meant that local people have continued to benefit from the A and E unit and its full range of support services, with around 43,000 attendances every year.

**Kenneth Gibson:** Will the cabinet secretary confirm that NHS Ayrshire and Arran has launched a pre-planning consultation to build a new 206-bed hospital in North Ayrshire to provide state-of-the-art care and rehabilitation for adult mental health patients? Can she inform members what the impact of that will be in improving the delivery of mental health care in Ayrshire and Arran in the years ahead?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** I confirm the ambition of NHS Ayrshire and Arran to deliver real improvements

for patients with mental health issues. Kenny Gibson mentioned the plans to build a new hospital, which will provide state-of-the art, high-quality care for those who require hospital treatment. In tandem with that, NHS Ayrshire and Arran—in common with other health boards—is developing community services so that people can be as well supported as possible within the community. That reflects the vast improvements in mental health that we have seen in recent years. However, as members will be aware from our on-going work around our mental health strategy, there is still more work to do. Developments such as those in NHS Ayrshire and Arran are examples of that further work.

#### **Aberdeen City Council (Planning)**

**7. Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions the Minister for Local Government and Planning has had with Aberdeen City Council regarding its plans to improve public buildings. (S4O-01035)

**The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Derek Mackay):** I have had no formal discussions with Aberdeen City Council on its plans to improve public buildings.

**Maureen Watt:** Given that the redevelopment of Aberdeen art gallery is contingent on the use of tax increment financing, does the minister agree that Labour's undemocratic decision to overturn the referendum on the city garden project could scupper the prospect of that redevelopment? Does he also agree that the Labour-Tory-independent council administration would do better to invest in Aberdeen's infrastructure instead of rewarding itself with pay rises and plush offices?

**Derek Mackay:** The Scottish Government has made it clear that it is up to Aberdeen City Council to decide whether to proceed with using tax increment financing for the city garden project, and that continues to be the case. In view of the referendum, it would be very disappointing if the city council did not take that opportunity.

**Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab):** Does the minister agree that it is for Aberdeen City Council to determine how best to improve public buildings and community-owned assets in the city? If so, will he have an early meeting with Aberdeen City Council in that spirit to offer support from the Scottish Government for the improvement of the city and the public realm in Aberdeen?

**Derek Mackay:** Mr Macdonald is absolutely right. I would be the first to say that, as an independent corporate body, the council will make that decision. However, it would be wise to listen to the people of Aberdeen, who voted in a

democratic referendum to proceed with that project. Perhaps the council would be wise to listen to its electorate's views on pay rises for elected members as well.

### Scottish Enterprise (Meetings)

**8. Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Executive when it last met Scottish Enterprise. (S4O-01036)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney):** I last met Scottish Enterprise at a meeting of the industry group chairs that took place on 30 March. Scottish Government officials meet their counterparts in Scottish Enterprise regularly to discuss a range of subjects.

**Gavin Brown:** What would be the annual cost of additional business rates paid by Scottish Enterprise as a result of the proposed legislation on unoccupied properties?

**John Swinney:** I will have to write to Mr Brown with the specific detail on that.

The Government's proposals on empty property relief are designed to provide every incentive to ensure that business rents are set at an appropriate level to encourage occupancy and growth in the economy and to get companies active in the economy to create jobs. I am surprised that the Conservatives are so obstructive of such a good objective from the Government.

**Linda Fabiani (East Kilbride) (SNP):** At his next meeting with Scottish Enterprise, will the minister discuss match-funding and whether something additional can be done to help those who invent extremely useful products for Scotland's future?

**John Swinney:** Along with its counterpart, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Scottish Enterprise establishes clear working relationships with individual companies, many of which produce the inventions and creative solutions to which Linda Fabiani referred, and works out how they can best be supported in taking their products to market.

Under the approach set out by ministers, the enterprise agencies are required to ensure that the companies are well supported both through the business gateway system, in partnership with our local authority colleagues, and by the enterprise agencies directly. If Linda Fabiani is referring to any specific companies that she thinks could benefit from further support from Scottish Enterprise, ministers would be only too happy to mention them to Scottish Enterprise for further investigation.

## First Minister's Question Time

12:00

### Engagements

**1. Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab):** To ask the First Minister what engagements he has planned for the rest of the day. (S4F-00701)

**The First Minister (Alex Salmond):** I will be taking forward matters of importance to the people of Scotland.

**Johann Lamont:** These are tough times. People across Europe are fearful of what will happen if Greece defaults on its loans and leaves the euro zone. The situation in Spain, Portugal and Italy is also looking increasingly perilous. If Greece leaves the euro, and others may follow, what are the First Minister's estimates of the impact on the Scottish economy?

**The First Minister:** It is precisely because of the seriousness of the situation that we have identified Government time next week for a debate on exactly that subject. The Government will contribute our thoughts on the matter and I am sure that the Labour Party and other parties will contribute as well. Clearly, it is a very serious situation and there are potentially substantial implications for the United Kingdom and for the Scottish economy.

**Johann Lamont:** It would have been good if the First Minister could have shared some of his thoughts now, since that was the question that I asked him.

The last time that our banking sector hit crisis, a Labour Government immediately rescued our banks so that ordinary families in this country could still get money out of the cashpoints. That included Scottish banks, of course. There was no question, no hesitation and no negotiation. It was the kind of action that the Greeks and the Irish can only dream of. Our banking system was saved by one of the most successful economic unions in history—the United Kingdom.

Is not the real lesson of the euro crisis that you cannot share a currency and have monetary union without a fiscal union and a political union?

**The First Minister:** I gently remind Johann Lamont that the governor of the Bank of England, who was in office during the period that she talks about, published last week the most devastating assessment of the delay and dithering. In fact, he accused the last Government and its lack of action of being responsible for the depth of the recession.

If that is what the governor of the Bank of England, who was in office when Alistair Darling

was chancellor and Gordon Brown was Prime Minister, says, I do not think that I have to add to that by pointing out that Labour's absolute responsibility for the depth of the recession is clear on the record and cannot be escaped by any member of the Labour Party.

Johann Lamont says that a monetary union must inevitably carry with it a fiscal union. There are two totally different situations. In the case of the euro, we are talking about a situation in which the productivity rate of Greece is about 40 per cent below that of Germany. That creates huge difficulties and tensions within the euro area.

It would be better at this juncture if people came forward with positive ideas as to how to give opportunities and hope to the people of Greece within that euro area, rather than merely carping from the sidelines, which seems to be what the United Kingdom Government is doing. To be absolutely frank, I have not heard anything from Ed Balls that is a substantial argument as to how the euro zone can be maintained in its current condition.

I hope that, when we come to the debate next Wednesday, Johann Lamont will come with not just a bit of remembrance of the past and Labour's absolute responsibility for the mess that the economy was in, but also some positive ideas for the future.

**Johann Lamont:** This is the man who said that the problem with the banking system was that it was overregulated. We also note that he refuses to confront the logic of his own position that the Bank of England would be the lender of last resort for a Scotland that was outside the United Kingdom.

People in this country and throughout Europe are looking for certainty and stability in an uncertain world. The First Minister used to say that we needed a Scottish pound because interest rates set in London were bad for Scotland, yet now that is what he advocates. He used to say that we would join the euro because the pound was failing. Now, louder than William Hague ever did, he is saying, "Keep the pound." You know, consistency is a wonderful thing.

Is not the real reason why the First Minister keeps changing the economic case for leaving the UK that he cannot find one that adds up?

**The First Minister:** When I heard the words "consistency is a wonderful thing", the three words "council tax freeze" came to mind as far as the Labour Party is concerned.

The former Labour Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, argued in a speech that there should be no-touch regulation of the financial sector. He actually argued that position. The Labour Party

was in favour of adopting the euro, and it was going to have a referendum to consolidate that position when Tony Blair was Prime Minister. Lectures from the Labour Party on economic consistency with regard to the euro area absolutely take the biscuit in this chamber.

It will substantially assist the Scottish economy if we have fiscal control—that is, if we control Scotland's taxes and resources and have the ability to manage our economy on that basis. Independence will give us that strong position and there seems to be no other option available that could offer a strong position. I would have thought, despite Alistair Darling wanting cuts that were tougher and deeper than Margaret Thatcher's, that there would now be agreement between the Scottish National Party and the Labour Party that direct capital spending is necessary to revive our economy. We have articulated that case with our Labour colleagues in the Government of Wales to try to convince the chancellor in London that that is the right mechanism to use right now to revive the economy. Would it not be better if we as a Parliament could just decide to get on and do that with independence, instead of having to go cap in hand to UK Tory chancellors? [*Applause.*]

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** Order.

**Johann Lamont:** Instead of the First Minister giving us his greatest hits in lines of not answering the question, he should take responsibility and reflect on what is happening in Europe now and the consequences that that will have for Scotland. We have all heard that the First Minister is planning a big day out at the pictures tomorrow. For many of us, the cinema is a form of escapism, but evidently, for the First Minister, his economics are escapism. Europe is facing the greatest economic crisis since the depression, but instead of looking up E for "Economists" in his address book, he is looking up C for "Celebrities". I suppose that that makes a change from dialling M for Murdoch. [*Interruption.*] This is a serious business.

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Johann Lamont:** Like people across Europe, Scots fear what will happen to them if the euro zone collapses, but the First Minister's message to them is, "Turn off the news and put down the paper. There is nothing to worry about." I think that we know now what will be showing at the multiplex in Fountainbridge tomorrow: "Alex in Wonderland". [*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**The First Minister:** I hope that by the time that Johann Lamont gets to the debate next Wednesday, which has been called in Government time so that the Parliament can seriously address a serious issue, she will have

something more to say than she has managed this afternoon.

The economy is a huge and abiding concern for the Government. That is why we are working daily to bring jobs to Scotland. We take some satisfaction from recent employment figures in Scotland rising and the unemployment figures falling, but we are not complacent about that. That is why we are calling for direct investment in shovel-ready projects around Scotland and why we are making the case for having control over the fiscal levers of the economy, which can come only with independence.

The idea that we are the only party that is planning and getting arrangements made for a constitutional debate seems to me to be rather wide of the mark. I read in *The Mail on Sunday*—it was the first time that I had read that newspaper—that

“Senior aides to David Cameron took part in a secret all-party ‘council of war’ at former Labour Chancellor Alistair Darling’s Edinburgh home ... The six men spent three hours discussing their battle plans at the meeting held a month ago at Mr Darling’s home in the Abbotsford Park area that has become their unofficial HQ.

Fortified by tea and sandwiches ... they agreed that the only way to defeat Mr Salmond”—

**The Presiding Officer:** I think that we get the gist, First Minister. Could you just get to the answer?

**The First Minister:** That was described as the “Abbotsford accord”. If that is what the no campaign has to offer, the campaign that will be launched tomorrow will be fundamentally successful.

### Secretary of State for Scotland (Meetings)

**2. Ruth Davidson (Glasgow) (Con):** If the First Minister is looking at what is on at Cineworld tomorrow, I say for his information that “Dark Shadows” and “The Dictator” are playing.

To ask the First Minister when he will next meet the Secretary of State for Scotland. (S4F-00692)

**The First Minister (Alex Salmond):** I have no plans to meet the secretary of state in the near future.

**Ruth Davidson:** Two years ago, the Scottish National Party Government withdrew its commitment to publicly fund the new sick kids hospital in Edinburgh. Yesterday, NHS Lothian confirmed that the project has been delayed yet again—not for the first or second time but for the fifth time. The health secretary approved the plans that promised us a new sick kids that would be completed by early next year. When will the doors open at a new children’s hospital facility in Edinburgh?

**The First Minister:** The full bouquet of the absurdity of that question comes from the fact that a party in government in London that cuts the direct capital budget by 30 per cent and then calls for direct capital investment has a credibility gap that is as wide as the River Forth.

We are looking at the non-profit-distributing model to build the sick kids hospital. The hospital will be built, but NPD programmes inevitably take time, because of their nature. The commitment from the Government is there.

If the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats wish to see a direct capital investment plan to help the sick kids hospital and other such projects in the national health service, they should restore the money from the capital cuts that the chancellor in London has made.

**Ruth Davidson:** Those excuses do not work. The Government promised a hospital and the hospital has not been built. I can tell the First Minister that the projected date of completion has now slipped to 2017, but the sad truth is that the chair of NHS Lothian reported yesterday that NHS Lothian is being forced to prepare a plan B, which would keep the hospital at the old site.

I have a personal interest, as I am one of the many thousands of people across Scotland whose lives were saved by the specialist care that they received at the sick kids hospital in Edinburgh. I know how beloved the old Sciennes building is. However, the site’s limitations, the building’s age and its distance from an acute emergency hospital mean that the facility is no longer suitable to provide the world-class care that our children deserve into the future.

Plan B is not good enough. Plan A has slipped five times on the First Minister’s watch. The Government cannot sit on its hands and let the project fall apart, because it is too important. Will the First Minister now show the political leadership that patients and their families expect? Will he make the hospital a political priority and bring to bear all the power that the Government has to get the players round the table, to get the bricks laid, to get the doors open and to get children treated by 2017?

**The First Minister:** When we have debated capital spending, the Conservative Party has referred to the budget consequential that have increased the Scottish Government’s budget. I asked officials to prepare figures for the Government’s capital budget with the addition of the consequential from the last autumn statement and the last budget. In 2010-11, the capital budget—including those consequential—that was allocated to the Scottish Government was £3.293 billion. In 2014-15, that budget will fall to £2.489 billion, which is a cut of almost 30 per cent. A party

that, in government at Westminster, imposes a 30 per cent capital cut and then calls for direct capital investment across the country is guilty of the most overwhelming hypocrisy.

The alternative to keeping our commitments to the people of Scotland—which I say that we shall keep, as another ex-patient of the sick kids hospital in Edinburgh—is to go for non-profit-distributing funding. The securing of non-profit-distributing funding inevitably takes time, but it shall be done.

The capital programme in the national health service in Scotland is infinitely superior to what is happening south of the border. Just occasionally, Ruth Davidson and her colleagues should take a glance at the decimation of the national health service in England, which will never happen as long as we are in government in Scotland.

**Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD):** The First Minister will be aware of the plight of Mr Ken Maitland, from Aberdeen, who suffered from dementia and died earlier this month. His wife revealed last weekend that he had had 106 different carers in one year. Sadly, that is not the only case in which a multitude of different carers have trooped in and out of someone's home.

In 2009, the Scottish Government made dementia a national priority and drew up a charter of rights for people with dementia and their carers in Scotland. Standards of care for people with dementia include the statement:

"I have the right to be regarded as a unique individual and to be treated with dignity and respect".

Does the First Minister agree that Mr Maitland's care package failed to ensure that he was treated with dignity and respect and that something has gone badly wrong in the way in which home care is provided? Will he instruct his health secretary to take stock of the situation throughout Scotland and issue new, stricter guidelines, which ensure that councils and care agencies provide proper, person-centred care plans, with a focus on continuity of care?

**The First Minister:** I heard Mrs Maitland articulate her case on the radio and I thought that she did so with great dignity, under the circumstances. Clearly the situation that her husband faced was completely unsatisfactory.

I disagree with Alison McInnes. It is not a case of publishing new guidelines; it is much more a case of looking to two things: first, the integration of health and social care, which should help enormously in the management of home care cases; and secondly, the bill that we are about to pass, which will entrench patients' rights in the rule of law and give people options to command their own care packages. I would look for the

integration of health and social care and the legislative basis for action to protect patients, rather than just for the issuing of guidelines.

**James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP):** The First Minister will be aware of the recent announcement that 90 job losses are planned at the ClydeUnion Pumps plant in my constituency. What discussions has the Scottish Government had with ClydeUnion Pumps about the job losses? Former owner Jim McColl, when he sold the company, said that he thought that new owners SPX

"would be a good responsible owner of this business and would continue to support its growth",

and that he wanted to

"see the ... employees go on and prosper".

Does the First Minister agree that, given the plant's 125-year history in the community of Cathcart, new owners SPX should seriously consider Jim McColl's wishes?

**The First Minister:** I share the member's concern about the announcement by SPX that around 90 jobs will be lost at ClydeUnion Pumps in Cathcart, and about the impact that that will have on the affected employees and their families.

I can confirm that we acted immediately to provide assistance through the partnership action for continuing employment initiative. On Tuesday this week the Glasgow PACE team met the company to discuss support for employees who might face redundancy. I assure the member that PACE will provide as much support as possible to the employees, to minimise the time that individuals are affected by redundancy and are out of work.

### Cabinet (Meetings)

**3. Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD):** To ask the First Minister what issues will be discussed at the next meeting of the Cabinet. (S4F-00697)

**The First Minister (Alex Salmond):** We will discuss issues of importance to the people of Scotland.

**Willie Rennie:** The First Minister will have seen the open letter from 40 leading figures that calls for a Scottish public inquiry into the Lockerbie prosecution. The group made it clear that it wants a Scottish inquiry, whether or not there is an appeal.

The Scottish Government's Scottish Criminal Cases Review Commission identified six grounds for appeal, including the conduct of the Crown Office, withheld evidence and doubt about identification.

The First Minister has said that he would be prepared to co-operate with a United Kingdom inquiry. If he has no objection in principle to an inquiry, will he agree to hold the Scottish inquiry that the group wants?

**The First Minister:** The place where an individual's guilt or innocence is determined is a court of law. As Willie Rennie should know, the relatives of Mr al-Megrahi have the ability, if they so choose, to go back to the Scottish Criminal Cases Review Commission and seek further leave to appeal. That is the process that can be followed. The Parliament would do well to take the view that a court of law is not just the best place but the only place to determine guilt or innocence.

Willie Rennie described the SCCRC's report. The Scottish Criminal Cases Review Commission is part and parcel of the Scottish judicial system. It exists to provide checks and balances in the system. It is right and proper for the SCCRC to refer cases back to the court of appeal, if it thinks that there is reason to do so. That does not automatically mean that cases will be successful on appeal—we should look at the record to see that.

Mr Rennie should in fairness note that, now that we have the full detail of the SCCRC report—as he knows, I campaigned for years to have it published—we can see that the forensic trail that led to Malta and Libya was upheld in the SCCRC's exhaustive review. That is not always clear in the reporting about the report.

**Willie Rennie:** This is not just about guilt or innocence; it is also about the conduct of the Crown Office. Surely, a liberal society should be prepared to look hard at its justice system, even if it is worried about what it might find. Whether or not that is determined surely cannot be left in the hands of a family somewhere in Tripoli. If the First Minister chose to act on the inquiry, he would have the support of Desmond Tutu, Terry Waite, John Pilger and many others.

This is not a normal case; it is Scotland's biggest terrorist atrocity. These are serious questions that have been raised by serious people, and the world is watching. Will the First Minister act?

**The First Minister:** I have no axe to grind as far as the Crown Office of 10 years ago is concerned. This Government was not in office then. There is no reason for me to be unreasonably protective of law officers, the Lord Advocate and members of the Crown Office from that time. However, the basis on which we must proceed is to see whether the appeals are exhausted within the system. It is not something that we can shrug aside and say that it should not be up to the family of Mr al-Megrahi whether they want to go back to the

SCCRC. That is the process of Scots law. That is what the SCCRC is there to do.

Given the exhaustive nature of the SCCRC report, the evidence that it compiled and the witness statements that it took over a period of years, we have every reason to suppose that it will do its job properly, as it clearly has done before.

I ask Mr Rennie to remember that the SCCRC is part and parcel of our judicial system. It is not something that is outside the judicial system. The SCCRC is part of the judicial system.

The people whom Mr Rennie cited genuinely believe that Mr al-Megrahi was innocent. That is why they are arguing that case. The place to determine guilt or innocence is in a court of law. Other people who want an inquiry into Lockerbie are not looking for an inquiry into the points in the SCCRC report; they are looking for an inquiry into the ultimate responsibility for Lockerbie. That touches on matters of huge international import, and it would be beyond the ability of a Scottish inquiry to summon witnesses and compel evidence and so on in that context. That is why we have said, clearly, that we would co-operate with any such inquiry. However, if an application to determine the guilt or innocence of Mr al-Megrahi comes forward, that is a matter for the SCCRC, which is an independent body, and that is the process by which things can be properly pursued.

## Economy (Euro Zone Impact)

**4. Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** To ask the First Minister what impact the continuing uncertainty in the euro zone is having on the Scottish economy. (S4F-00690)

**The First Minister (Alex Salmond):** I think it is important to recognise that employment in Scotland is rising and unemployment falling—both at a faster rate than across the United Kingdom as a whole.

This week's Bank of Scotland labour market barometer showed the 18th month of improvement in the Scottish labour market, which was a highly satisfactory finding.

However, as we have said many times, the recovery remains fragile and action is required to boost growth and create job opportunities. With around 45 per cent of Scottish international exports destined for European markets, an end to the on-going uncertainty and a strong recovery in Europe is important for not just the Scottish economy, but the global economic recovery.

**Kenneth Gibson:** The UK coalition Government, which controls macroeconomic policy, has now matched the previous Labour Government by leading the UK back into recession. Although continuing euro zone

uncertainty has impacted on Scotland and the UK, does the First Minister agree that the fact that the UK is in double-dip recession and has the worst economic performance since the recession of any G20 country excluding Italy is clear evidence of the negative impact of UK economic policies? Will the First Minister again call on the coalition Government to abandon its austerity-at-all-costs approach, lest its actions continue to jeopardise Scottish economic recovery, and does he agree with former Bank of England officials, Howard Davies and Marian Bell, who said:

“The markets recognize that if the economy turns out weaker than expected and you try to compensate for that by tightening even further, then that way madness lies”?

**The First Minister:** Yes, I agree with that. It is important to recognise that, when even the International Monetary Fund is calling for an alternative approach to combat recession, it is high time that the Chancellor of the Exchequer recognised the role of direct capital investment in stimulating the economy.

As members in the chamber know, I have made that case many times, but I am pleased to see that there are at least some converts to the cause. Even if Labour members here do not recognise their absolute responsibility for the current plight of the economy, they may have noticed last week the comments from Nick Pearce, who was Gordon Brown’s head of policy at number 10. He called for a major capital investment programme, while admitting in the same quote:

“That cut, by the way, was a decision of the last Labour government which the Coalition inherited—so to register this ... is not to make partisan points”.

Oh, that we could have such admission and honesty from the Labour members in this Parliament.

**Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con):** It may be time for a supplementary question that the First Minister has not seen in advance.

Given the substantial implications for the Scottish economy, can the First Minister tell us how many times his Council of Economic Advisers has met since the euro zone crisis reared its head again a few weeks ago, and when it is next scheduled to meet?

**The First Minister:** The Council of Economic Advisers has met twice since the election. It meets three times a year and provides on-going substantial advice on substantive routes forward, and it is comprised of some of the greatest economists in the world.

I say to Gavin Brown that I would not need notice to answer his questions.

## **Lockerbie Bombing (Criminal Investigation)**

### **5. Graeme Pearson (South Scotland) (Lab):**

To ask the First Minister what progress is being made with the criminal investigation of the Lockerbie bombing. (S4F-00693)

**The First Minister (Alex Salmond):** As Graeme Pearson—of all people—will know, criminal investigations and prosecutions are conducted independently by the Crown Office and the police.

I am informed that the investigation into the involvement of others with Mr al-Megrahi in the bombing of Pan Am 103 has not been closed—it is a live criminal inquiry—and the Crown is working with Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary and the United States authorities to pursue all available lines of inquiry.

An international letter of request was issued by the Lord Advocate to the new Libyan authorities in February this year to allow the investigation to proceed in Libya. The letter of request details the specific lines of inquiry in which law enforcement officers are interested.

The Lord Advocate travelled to Tripoli in April this year to meet the interim Libyan Prime Minister and the Minister for Justice to discuss and encourage co-operation with Scottish law enforcement officers.

It is a live criminal inquiry, and it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on the investigation. However, I can say to Mr Pearson that we have every confidence and belief that the new Libyan authorities will co-operate fully with the inquiry.

**Graeme Pearson:** I thank the First Minister for that reply, and note his earlier replies on the matter and his continued declarations of open government. Would he be surprised to know that, following my unanswered questions in the chamber on 29 February, I wrote to the Cabinet Secretary for Justice to request specific facts about his visit to Greenock prison, the meeting between departmental officials and Libyan representatives and his view on a possible conflict of interest in those matters?

In spite of repeated reminders, I had to wait for 70 days, before finally submitting an additional freedom of information request and receiving a refusal of my request within hours. How does the First Minister intend to repair the damage that has been done to Scotland’s reputation for justice and good governance if he cannot demonstrate the accountability of his Government to this Parliament and to members in the chamber?

**The First Minister:** Graeme Pearson should know—he certainly should have known before he entered the chamber—that all relevant documents



were published on the web by the Scottish Government in August 2009, including all the information that could be disclosed.

That is in marked contrast, of course, to the decisions of the Labour Government at Westminster. It was only with the publication of Gus O'Donnell's report on 7 February 2011 that we found out that United Kingdom Government

"Policy was ... progressively developed that Her Majesty's Government should do all it could, while respecting devolved competencies, to facilitate an appeal by the Libyans to the Scottish government for Mr Megrahi's release under the Prisoner Transfer Agreement or for release on compassionate grounds ... Such an approach was understood across all relevant departments."

While Labour Party members in this chamber were attacking the justice secretary, their colleagues in London were campaigning for Mr al-Megrahi's release on any grounds.

#### **Ministry of Defence (Radioactive Contamination of Land)**

**6. Nigel Don (Angus North and Mearns)**  
**(SNP):** To ask the First Minister what the Scottish Government's position is regarding reports that the Ministry of Defence might have sold land in Scotland that was contaminated with radioactive material. (S4F-00712)

**The First Minister (Alex Salmond):** The Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment recently wrote to the United Kingdom Secretary of State for Defence urging the MOD to make available all necessary information on any such land that might be potentially contaminated to the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, the agency responsible for regulating such matters in Scotland. We understand that assessments to identify any such contamination at RAF Kinloss and other MOD sites are on-going and it is vital that the MOD co-operates with SEPA to ensure that local communities can be provided with peace of mind as quickly as possible.

**Nigel Don:** Does the First Minister agree that the MOD really must learn the lesson of Dalgety Bay, investigate all current and former sites in Scotland and be free with the information that it discovers for the benefit of our local communities?

**The First Minister:** Lessons should be learned from the radioactive contamination at Dalgety Bay. Although that contamination was first detected in the early 1990s, it has only been in the past few months that the MOD has taken the necessary steps to begin a full-scale investigation. The fact that it was left to SEPA, rather than the MOD, to identify and remove high-activity particles in Dalgety Bay last year shows that the MOD has been dragging its feet on this issue for far too long and I call on the ministry to carry out its investigations at other sites in Scotland in a

prompt, comprehensive and transparent manner and in full co-operation with the regulatory authorities in Scotland and the communities affected. Only by doing so can it regain the confidence and trust of the people in those communities.

**The Presiding Officer:** That ends First Minister's question time.

12:31

*Meeting suspended.*

14:00

*On resuming—*

## Scottish Executive Question Time

### Infrastructure and Capital Investment

#### Supported Employment (Public Contracts)

**1. Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive how it procures public contracts for supported employment. (S4O-01039)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment (Alex Neil):** Public bodies in Scotland can procure goods and services from organisations with supported employment, either by reserving contracts under article 19 of the European public procurement directive or in open competition with other potential suppliers. The Scottish procurement directorate is in the process of establishing a national collaborative framework agreement for supported factories and businesses, which is expected to be in place by the autumn.

**Ken Macintosh:** The cabinet secretary and many other members will share my concern about the future of Remploy. I believe that the consultation on the issue is about two thirds of the way through. The biggest support that the Scottish Government can offer the employees and trade unions is to place further contracts with Remploy. Has he been able to use article 19 or the other techniques that are available to him to place such contracts and is he looking to do so in future?

**Alex Neil:** Since October 2010, through the public contracts Scotland mechanism, 13 contracts have been issued to supported businesses, which are valued at £14.6 million. In addition, Scottish public bodies have spent £24.1 million with Scotland-based supported businesses in the most recent financial year for which figures are available, which is 2010-11.

We are in discussions with Remploy. I have made it clear to it that we are committed to trying to maximise the opportunities for Remploy and other supported businesses to get contracts from the Scottish Government, particularly under article 19 and similar mechanisms. I am also encouraging supported businesses, when appropriate, to tender for more general work, because they sometimes offer a more competitive tender than private companies can offer.

**Stewart Maxwell (West Scotland) (SNP):** Ken Macintosh mentioned the future of Remploy following the decision by the United Kingdom Government. Will the cabinet secretary update the Parliament on what actions the task force on the

issue is taking? How often is it meeting and what impact will it have on the possibility of Remploy surviving and flourishing in future?

**Alex Neil:** The task force is looking at all the consequences and implications of the UK Government's regrettable decision to close the Remploy factories in Scotland. It is equally regrettable that factories south of the border are being closed. We have a number of objectives. First, we want to ensure that the people who are displaced as a result of the decisions have the best opportunity to find alternative employment. Secondly, as I said, we want to ensure that Remploy can maximise its opportunities for future procurement and work through public sector contracts. Thirdly, we are anxious to ensure that we assist those who depend on Remploy, either directly or indirectly, for employment and income. The task force is addressing all those issues. It meets fairly regularly with a view to putting together a plan to do the best that we can in Scotland to overcome the consequences of what I think is a fairly harsh and inhumane decision.

#### British Geological Survey (Meetings)

**2. Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government when the Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment last met the British Geological Survey. (S4O-01040)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment (Alex Neil):** I have not met the British Geological Survey.

**Chic Brodie:** The cabinet secretary will be aware of the increased worldwide demand for rare-earth minerals and the possible restrictions on them from the likes of China, which would have a serious impact on our industries. He will also be aware of the Tellus geosurvey project in Northern Ireland, which cost £5.8 million in 2006 and 2007 and which has since generated £21 million for the Government in exploration licences. The British Geological Survey has expertise on the geology of Scotland. In 2008, it carried out a geological survey across Ayrshire and specifically around Patna. Will the Scottish Government now engage with the British Geological Survey to commence a full-scale Scottish project like the Tellus project in Northern Ireland?

**Alex Neil:** There have always been major golden nuggets around Patna, so I am sure that we would find a lot of productive resources there—some have left, of course.

The Scottish Government has no plans to commit to full-scale geological surveys of the type indicated. The matter is for the British Geological Survey, but we are happy to discuss with it any opportunities that might arise for economic

development and jobs in Scotland from the work that it has done and may do in the future, although that is primarily a matter for my colleague Fergus Ewing.

### **A90 Upgrade (Balmedie to Tipperty)**

#### **The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):**

Under rule 7.5 of the standing orders, members should not refer to any matter in which legal proceedings are active except with the consent of the Presiding Officers. I consider the Aberdeen western peripheral route plan, which is currently before the Supreme Court, to be such a matter.

**3. Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD):** Thank you for that guidance, Presiding Officer.

To ask the Scottish Executive whether it is considering accelerating the work on upgrading the A90 between Balmedie and Tipperty. (S4O-01041)

**The Minister for Housing and Transport (Keith Brown):** The A90 Balmedie to Tipperty scheme will be procured alongside the Aberdeen western peripheral route in a non-profit distributing model form of contract.

**Alison McInnes:** The short stretch of dualling would make a big difference to my constituents because it would not only ease congestion for those travelling from Buchan and Ellon into Aberdeen but tackle road safety problems. Currently, residents of Balmedie and Balhelvie have to negotiate a very difficult junction at the north end of Balmedie where the dual carriageway currently ends. In addition, residents of Newburgh have great difficulty turning on to the main road at Fontainebleau.

The problem with the minister's chosen approach is that he has rolled a series of projects together and progress has been hindered because one component of the package has stalled. I urge him to think again and get on with building the Balmedie to Tipperty link now. Let us not wait any longer for the outcome of legal wrangling.

**Keith Brown:** If Alison McInnes and the Liberal Democrats were so keen for this scheme to proceed as soon as possible, they would have done something about it in the eight years during which they had the opportunity to do so.

As I have said before to Alison McInnes, the approach that we are taking has been supported by the local councils and we will continue with the approach on the basis that the benefits of doing it in that way are substantial. Of course—I am bearing in mind the Presiding Officer's injunction—if we proceeded ahead of the result of the legal proceedings only to find out that we did not get the legal outcome that we are looking for, we would be

criticised by Alison McInnes and others for wasting public resources. We will proceed in the way that we always said we would, and we will get this road built.

### **Victoria and Albert at Dundee (Transport Infrastructure)**

#### **4. Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee City West) (SNP):**

To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to ensure that there is adequate transport infrastructure in place for visitors to the V&A at Dundee. (S4O-01042)

**The Minister for Housing and Transport (Keith Brown):** The Scottish Government will review the transport needs for the V&A at Dundee after Design Dundee Ltd has produced a transport strategy to support its planning application for the museum. Ahead of that, Transport Scotland contributed £1 million towards the redevelopment of Dundee railway station into a major transport interchange hub in advance of the opening of the museum in 2015.

**Joe FitzPatrick:** I assure the minister that the people of Dundee are grateful for the Scottish Government's contribution towards improving our train station.

The V&A has the potential to be one of the biggest attractions in Europe, let alone Scotland. Given that we are expecting up to 500,000 additional visitors to Dundee as a result, will the Scottish Government carry out an impact study for Dundee on how rail, bus, road and air services can be improved to accommodate the increased volume of visitors?

**Keith Brown:** The Scottish Government will carry out a joint economic study with its partners to look at the role of the city airport in serving Dundee and the surrounding area. The study will look at the opportunities for developing air services, as the member mentions, and at how the airport can contribute to the wider regeneration work that is being done in the city, including, crucially, the waterfront development, so that we can promote and enhance those developments.

### **Scotland's Digital Future**

**5. Jamie Hepburn (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress has been made in implementing "Scotland's Digital Future—Infrastructure Action Plan". (S4O-01043)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment (Alex Neil):** The Scottish Government is making excellent progress in implementing "Scotland's Digital Future—Infrastructure Action Plan". We will publish very soon our procurement plan, which sets out the Government's approach and the action that we will

take to deliver a step change in broadband speeds and reduce the digital divide by 2015. The plan has been developed in collaboration with local authorities and sets out our commitment to delivering the much-needed digital infrastructure across Scotland in partnership with them.

Procurement in the Highlands and Islands is now at an advanced stage of negotiations, with contract award expected in August and the delivery of improvements expected early next year. Procurement covering the rest of Scotland will go to tender in September, with contract award in early 2013 and the delivery of improvements as soon as possible thereafter.

**Jamie Hepburn:** I thank the cabinet secretary for that comprehensive answer. He has previously said that a key criterion in deciding where the broadband strategy will be rolled out first will be which areas are ready for it to be rolled out in. He has suggested that North Lanarkshire Council could not be described as being ahead of the game in that respect. Many constituents have complained to me about poor broadband access, and I have written to North Lanarkshire Council, urging it to get involved with the Scottish Government's broadband strategy. Has North Lanarkshire Council made any formal approach for support from the Scottish Government?

**Alex Neil:** Members know that I am not one to criticise North Lanarkshire Council unfairly. I will state the factual position. North Lanarkshire Council is not known by the Scottish Government to have developed a local broadband plan. Although representatives of the council attended an early Scottish Government broadband workshop on local authority engagement in June 2011, the council is not known to have acted proactively with regard to broadband development since that time. However, as part of our on-going engagement with local authorities in connection with the implementation of programme 1, we will enter into dialogue with the council to identify its priorities over the summer. We will hold a series of workshops with local government to progress the matter and North Lanarkshire Council will be invited to participate.

**Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab):** I am sure that the recently returned Labour administration of North Lanarkshire Council will be happy to take part. However, is late 2013 not quite late in the day to be awarding specific sums for local projects when some of the targets in the infrastructure action plan are for the next two years?

**Alex Neil:** No, it is not too late at all. We have said that, by 2015, 85 to 90 per cent of Scotland will be covered by superfast broadband, with speeds of between 40Mbps and 80Mbps in most cases. Over the past two years, in particular,

substantial progress has been made in the Highlands and Islands, and a number of areas including Grampian, the south of Scotland and Fife are well advanced in their plans. I urge Mr Baker to encourage other local authorities, including North Lanarkshire Council, to follow the example of those councils that are well ahead of the game.

### **Community-led Regeneration (South Scotland)**

#### **6. Paul Wheelhouse (South Scotland) (SNP):**

To ask the Scottish Government what support is provided to community-led regeneration in South Scotland. (S4O-01044)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment (Alex Neil):** The Scottish Government is committed to community-led regeneration, which is at the heart of our approach as set out in "Achieving a Sustainable Future: Regeneration Strategy". On 8 May, I launched the people and communities fund, which is designed specifically to support community-led regeneration across Scotland. Also, we will shortly launch our consultation on the community empowerment and renewal bill, which will support communities to achieve their own goals and aspirations.

Local authorities are responsible for local regeneration and we expect them to deliver that alongside their other critical functions and place community-led regeneration at the heart of their regeneration plans.

**Paul Wheelhouse:** I thank the cabinet secretary for his helpful answer. As he is aware, alongside Stranraer, where the Scottish Government already has a task force, Eyemouth and Hawick were identified in a recent Scottish Agricultural College study as being among the 10 towns most vulnerable to public sector job losses. Both towns face particular regeneration challenges but have great potential, and there has been a significant amount of community-led regeneration activity in Eyemouth in the past six months. Can the cabinet secretary offer any mechanism whereby ministers might support that local work and encourage partnership working between the Scottish Government, Scottish Borders Council and the Government agencies to maximise the chances of both towns' successful regeneration?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I am afraid that I have to ask for more succinct questions and answers.

**Alex Neil:** Okay, Presiding Officer. I will be very succinct, as usual.

I am very much aware of the challenges that face those two towns in the Borders in particular. I invite the member, along with representatives of Scottish Borders Council, to meet me to discuss how we can do more to help the council and others to regenerate the two towns.

### **Borders Railway (Construction Costs)**

**7. John Lamont (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Executive whether it expects the estimated costs of constructing the Borders railway to change. (S4O-01045)

**The Minister for Housing and Transport (Keith Brown):** The estimated capital costs of constructing the Borders railway are expected to remain within the £235 million to £295 million range at quarter 4 2012 prices.

**John Lamont:** I thank the minister for confirming that the construction costs of the railway will not exceed the current estimates. Will he say what the projected income will be from the railway once it is operational?

**Keith Brown:** I am happy to write to the member with details of that. As he will know, the information was outlined in the business case that was made for the railway. Given the question that he asked, I hope that we are now seeing from him some support for the railway, which is different from his previous stance. I am sure that the railway will be an outstanding success and the Government remains committed to seeing it through.

### **Veterans Associations**

**8. Annabelle Ewing (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what recent discussions it has had with veterans associations and what issues were discussed. (S4O-01046)

**The Minister for Housing and Transport (Keith Brown):** I regularly meet and visit a range of veterans organisations at both national and local level. I also meet representatives of Veterans Scotland, which is the umbrella body for veterans organisations in Scotland, four times a year to discuss ways in which veterans charities and bodies can and do help to inform Scottish Government policy in respect of its devolved responsibilities where they impact directly on veterans.

**Annabelle Ewing:** I imagine that, in recent weeks, veterans will have been concerned about what might be coming down the line given the United Kingdom Government's refusal, which was repeated again yesterday, to rule out further cuts to Scotland-recruited units. What representations will the minister make to the UK Government to seek to ensure that Scotland's ever-decreasing defence footprint is not further reduced by the London Government?

**Keith Brown:** The member is right about the concern that that is causing among veterans. We have already made representations to the UK

Government. Bruce Crawford, the Cabinet Secretary for Parliamentary Business and Government Strategy, wrote to the Secretary of State for Defence on 2 March and again on 11 May calling on the UK Government to retain the Army's links with Scotland's proud regimental names, battle histories and traditions, and he will discuss that and other defence matters of concern to Scotland when he meets Nick Harvey, Minister of State for the Armed Forces, in the near future.

### **Affordable Housing (Highlands and Islands)**

**9. Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Executive what action it is taking to build affordable housing in the Highlands and Islands. (S4O-01047)

**The Minister for Housing and Transport (Keith Brown):** The Scottish Government recently announced funding of nearly £33 million, as part of the affordable housing supply programme, to build houses in the Highlands and Islands over the next three years. The funding will provide additional developments to those that were successful in the 2011 innovation and investment fund and initiatives such as the national housing trust, which is already providing affordable housing in the Highlands.

In addition, schemes such as the new supply shared equity with developers scheme provide further opportunities to increase affordable housing in the Highlands and Islands.

**Jamie McGrigor:** Will the minister join me in welcoming the news that Argyll Community Housing Association will begin work next week on new-build affordable homes at Dalmally in Argyll and Bute? Despite the good work that is done by ACHA, however, does the minister agree that too many people are having to wait too long to get affordable homes in Argyll and Bute? What action will ministers take to ensure that new affordable homes are built in the most rural and remote island communities as well as in towns and the larger villages?

**Keith Brown:** I outlined in my previous answer the action that the Government is taking, not least in relation to the £33 million across the Highlands. Each council area has been given its allocation, and the work is being done in collaboration and through dialogue with the Scottish Government. However, it is for local government to take forward initiatives with local partners to ensure that there is a proper spread of affordable housing and that it meets all the rural parts of each council area.

If the member has particular concerns and thinks that the Scottish Government can play an additional part, I will be more than happy to listen to that.

**Dave Thompson (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP):** The minister will be aware of the important housing construction summit in Inverness last week. Will he provide an update on the results of the summit?

**Keith Brown:** The member is right. The Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment hosted a construction summit in Inverness on 14 May along with the Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism and the Minister for Local Government and Planning, and a range of key construction industry stakeholders were involved. The purpose of the summit was to hear attendees' experiences and thoughts on the challenges that the construction sector is facing to enable the Scottish Government to identify areas in which it can better provide support on a local and regional basis.

As with previous construction summits—I attended one in Inveraray a few months ago—issues to do with planning, procurement and affordable housing were raised, which resulted in positive discussions taking place.

#### **Council Houses (Right to Buy)**

**10. Margaret Burgess (Cunninghame South) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what recent discussions it has had with local authorities regarding the right to buy council houses. (S4O-01048)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment (Alex Neil):** We are committed to consulting on ways of further reforming the right to buy, and my officials have had discussions with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers about the content and timing of the forthcoming consultation.

**Margaret Burgess:** I am sure that the cabinet secretary is looking forward to working with the new Scottish National Party administration in North Ayrshire, which is led by Councillor Willie Gibson. In North Ayrshire, the right to buy has reduced the stock of social housing by up to 47 per cent and put some areas under severe pressure. What measures has the Scottish Government taken to help to increase the supply of social housing in North Ayrshire, given the impact of the right to buy?

**Alex Neil:** We are doing two things in North Ayrshire, as we are throughout the country. Through a subsidy to councils, we are encouraging them to build council houses again. Between the council and housing associations, 245 new houses have been or are being built in North Ayrshire with our assistance. Our previous reforms to the right to buy mean that councils can build new houses knowing that they will not be

asset stripped in future. It is a great pity that the new Conservative-Labour coalition in East Lothian has decided to reintroduce the right to buy, which makes nonsense of Labour's position on that policy issue.

## **Culture and External Affairs**

### **Arts and Culture (Local Authorities)**

**1. Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government how it promotes arts and culture in partnership with local authorities. (S4O-01049)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop):** The Scottish Government recognises that local authorities are crucial partners in the delivery of arts and cultural activity across Scotland. We continue to work closely with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Voice of Chief Officers of Cultural and Leisure Services in Scotland, which is Scotland's national association for local authority culture and leisure managers, to support the sector and improve and maintain cultural service provision. Examples of how the Scottish Government, its agencies and national bodies are doing that can be found across the wealth of activity that is taking place in the year of creative Scotland, Creative Scotland's place partnerships, the cultural programme for London 2012, and the range of activities across Scotland's local authority areas that are being undertaken by the national performing companies.

**Drew Smith:** I welcome the initiatives that the cabinet secretary has highlighted.

The cabinet secretary will be aware that my colleague Patricia Ferguson recently raised with her the issue of incentivising and supporting local authorities to continue to invest in the arts, even when budgets are tight. In my region, Glasgow City Council has a proud record of support for the arts and culture. Has the cabinet secretary raised the issue of local authority arts budgets with her appropriate ministerial colleagues? Does she believe that the cuts to local arts budgets are having a major effect on cultural provision across Scotland?

**Fiona Hyslop:** On the national budget for culture, we have managed to protect front-line services very well. The share of the local authority percentage of Scotland's budget has been maintained, of course, and it is up to individual local authorities to make their decisions. I am pleased with the response of local authorities in difficult times in recognising the value of culture and the economic drivers of cultural tourism. Drew Smith's perspective might be coloured by Glasgow—I do not know whether it is—but across

the country, there are good and strong stories to tell. If he knows otherwise, I am more than happy to hear from him.

**Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green):** The way in which Creative Scotland funds organisations such as Drake Music and Edinburgh Mela in my region has changed. There has been a change from two-year funding for good-quality companies to produce good-quality art to a grants system that is based on project proposals. How will the Government ensure that the new system delivers sufficient financial certainty and continuity for arts organisations and ensure the widest possible participation in the arts?

**Fiona Hyslop:** The recent announcements clearly show two things: nobody has had their funding cut and there is continuity, as the vast majority of the organisations will secure funding. It is responsible of Creative Scotland to review all the flexibly funded organisations. A range of organisations can achieve certainty about the quality of production, including those that Alison Johnstone cited. However, it must be remembered that the system that Creative Scotland inherited originally involved competitive bidding. Certainty—particularly in times in which more lottery resources are available from Creative Scotland—is a good news story for cultural organisations. Creative Scotland is able to talk to individual organisations; it must speak to them if they have uncertainties, and I encourage it to do so.

#### **Cultural Initiatives (Aberdeen)**

**2. Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it supports cultural initiatives in Aberdeen. (S4O-01050)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop):** The primary responsibility for the delivery of cultural services and activity in Aberdeen lies with the council. However, we support cultural initiatives in the city through the work of our agencies and our national sponsored bodies. For example, Creative Scotland has a formal place partnership agreement with the council and is supporting activity that is taking place as part of the year of creative Scotland, and as part of London 2012.

**Kevin Stewart:** Does the cabinet secretary agree that it is great that Aberdeen is looking to become the 2017 city of culture? However, the controversial Labour-led administration, which has just put the pay of senior councillors up by 5 per cent while Scottish National Party councillors in Angus have reduced theirs by 5 per cent, is also being controversial in that it plans to drop tax increment financing funding, which will halt the possible development of cultural icons such as Aberdeen art gallery.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Can you ask a question, please?

**Kevin Stewart:** I asked a question at the start, but I will ask another one.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Do so now, please.

**Kevin Stewart:** Does the cabinet secretary agree that that is wrong-headed?

**Fiona Hyslop:** I agree with the member's first point. It is great that Aberdeen has the ambition to become the 2017 city of culture. Secondly, we have always made it clear that it is up to Aberdeen City Council to decide whether it uses TIF. Obviously, the plans include the extension and improvement of the city art gallery. If the council decides not to proceed with the TIF project, it is up to it to make that decision, but in that case it will have to determine, if it wishes to proceed with the plans—including the extension and improvement of the city art gallery—how it will finance the project. That is a very serious question.

#### **Historical Artefacts (Inventory)**

**3. John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it keeps an inventory of historical artefacts from the Highlands and Islands that are held by museums outside of Scotland. (S4O-01051)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop):** The general responsibility for record keeping lies with individual museums. National Museums Scotland and accredited local museums keep a record of all loans and disposals relating to their collections and they adhere to set guidelines and policies that govern those matters. The Scottish Government does not keep a central inventory.

Scottish ministers recognise the importance of preserving the curatorial independence of our museums and cultural bodies. That principle has, for example, been respected in the recently passed National Library of Scotland Bill.

**John Finnie:** I thank the cabinet secretary for her reply, although I found it a bit disappointing. What consideration would the Scottish Government give to compiling such an inventory of national or Highlands and Islands artefacts?

**Fiona Hyslop:** I made it clear that it is up to individual museums to keep lists of what they sell and what they acquire for their collections. It is clear from his disappointment that John Finnie would like us to be able to identify all artefacts around the world that have been sourced from Scotland, and to repatriate them if we so choose. A consequence of that would be that people may want likewise to repatriate many artefacts that are in Scottish museums. The return of the ghost shirt

from Glasgow is a good example of that. That balance has to be struck. A variety of negotiations already take place. As I said, our museums keep the inventories; it is not a central responsibility.

Curatorial responsibility for individual artefacts—which is what John Finnie is asking about—is not the responsibility of the Scottish Government. Perhaps he wants to change the legislation to ensure that we would have ministerial direction over individual artefacts. If he had listened to the debate last week, he would have heard that there was a lot of disagreement about ministerial direction over curatorial matters.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Question 4 has been withdrawn for understandable reasons.

### **Charles Rennie Mackintosh Buildings**

**5. Anne McTaggart (Glasgow) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive what funding and leadership it provides to protect and maintain Charles Rennie Mackintosh buildings. (S4O-01053)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop):** Through Historic Scotland, the Scottish ministers work to protect and enhance our country's historic environment. That is carried out through a wide range of legislation, policy and guidance.

Since 2007-08, Scottish ministers have, for example, given grants for repairs totalling £445,000 to the Glasgow School of Art.

Buildings by important architects, such as Charles Rennie Mackintosh, can be recognised by Historic Scotland through the listing process. When change is proposed, the planning system ensures that the desirability of protecting the particular character of a building is a key part of the wider consideration of an application.

**Anne McTaggart:** Given that it is the 144th anniversary of Rennie Mackintosh's birth next month, does the cabinet secretary agree that the Scottish Government has a significant role to play in leading the various owners of the buildings to ensure that neither the legacy nor the constructions of one of Scotland's most cherished architects are left to crumble?

**Fiona Hyslop:** None of the buildings is being left to crumble. Many of them are in trust ownership, and the responsibility for producing plans for improvements lies with owners. The national bodies' responsiveness in relation to funding for Rennie Mackintosh buildings has been exemplary.

I absolutely acknowledge the heritage. I am not sure whether 144th anniversaries are always recognised but, in relation to the 150th

anniversary, the member makes a good point about the opportunities to celebrate the heritage.

In difficult times, I have managed to maintain the grants that are available from Historic Scotland, precisely to protect our built heritage. However, property owners must come forward with proposals. Because of their quality, Charles Rennie Mackintosh buildings would certainly meet the merit criterion for historic building repair grants. I stress again that it is up to owners to make proposals.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I must make a plea again for more succinct questions and answers.

**Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP):** Does the cabinet secretary agree that the grant funding of the Lighthouse, which represents the rebirth of a building, was vital in securing the legacy that is well known to be associated with Charles Rennie Mackintosh?

**Fiona Hyslop:** Yes. Funding for the Lighthouse is one example; I gave another example, which was investment in Glasgow School of Art. In the period up to 2007, funding was provided, but since 2007 almost £250,000 has been spent on Rennie Mackintosh architecture. That must be recognised.

### **Public Library Services**

**6. Margaret McCulloch (Central Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Executive what its position is on the report on the future of public library services by the Carnegie UK Trust. (S4O-01054)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop):** The Scottish Government welcomes the Carnegie UK Trust's report as a useful contribution to the debate about public library services in the 21st century. The report asks important questions about the future of public library services, on issues such as their relationship with individual and community wellbeing and the future role of library buildings as community assets. The trust's offer of facilitating further debate is helpful and I hope that it will be welcomed by local authorities, which are the statutory providers of library services.

**Margaret McCulloch:** Does the cabinet secretary accept that libraries have a great deal of potential for the future and that many libraries are underdeveloped community resources? Will she look at how libraries can promote social cohesion, given the success of the library-based clubs and courses in parenting and nutrition that are offered to some of the most excluded of my constituents in South Lanarkshire through South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture Ltd trust?



**Fiona Hyslop:** There are a great many examples of how such facilities can be used for the community's betterment. Bathgate library in my constituency is part of a wider partnership centre, and South Lanarkshire Council has funded a number of library buildings.

Margaret McCulloch is right to identify the potential and opportunity to create facilities that can help many people in many ways. Libraries are not just about books, as in the past, but are about services for the future.

**Aileen McLeod (South Scotland) (SNP):** Does the cabinet secretary agree that the finding in the Carnegie report that 76 per cent of people in Scotland feel that libraries are very important or essential for communities shows continued and strong support in Scotland for the public library service?

**Fiona Hyslop:** Yes. That figure is important and shows the strength of feeling—it is strong relative to the rest of the United Kingdom—among the public for their libraries. If we can marry that to the potential for a modern dynamic in terms of how libraries are used, the future of libraries could be strong.

### Major Events (2017)

**7. Jim Hume (South Scotland) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Executive what major events it plans to support in 2017. (S4O-01055)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop):** The programme for 2017 is still in the very early stages of development. However, I can confirm that EventScotland is working with partners to develop a proposal for Scotland to host the opening stages of the 2017 tour de France.

**Jim Hume:** The cabinet secretary will be aware that, when London hosted the grand départ of the tour de France in 2007, the local economy benefited by about £88 million, so I welcome EventScotland's efforts, which she mentioned. I wrote to EventScotland 16 months ago to promote the communities of South Scotland as ideal locations for any stage of the tour de France. Will the cabinet secretary confirm that South Scotland communities will feature prominently in EventScotland's bid, to enable towns such as Penicuik, Galashiels and Haddington to share in the economic benefits that the capital would experience in the event of a successful bid?

**Fiona Hyslop:** As I said, we are in the early stages of discussion. The benefits that Jim Hume talked about are enormous; potential certainly exists. It has not been determined that any area will not be part of the tour de France, and I am sure that the Borders, with its wonderful scenery, is an ideal candidate. The decision is not my

responsibility, but I will ensure that the people whose responsibility it is understand the strong arguments that the member has put forward.

### Aung San Suu Kyi (Visit)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Sarah Boyack to ask question 8. It is good to see you back in the chamber.

**8. Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** Thank you, Presiding Officer.

To ask the Scottish Executive what action it is taking to secure a visit to Scotland by Aung San Suu Kyi during her planned visit to the United Kingdom in June 2012. (S4O-01056)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop):** I echo the Presiding Officer's remark.

I congratulate Aung San Suu Kyi on her recent electoral success and welcome the steps that Burma is taking towards democracy. I have written to Aung San Suu Kyi, to invite her to visit Scotland during her forthcoming visit to the United Kingdom. I understand that City of Edinburgh Council and Glasgow City Council have issued formal invitations to her to accept their freedom of the city awards.

**Sarah Boyack:** I very much welcome the Government's support for a visit to Scotland. For Edinburgh, giving Aung San Suu Kyi freedom of the city in 2005 was an important political statement of sympathy with her campaign for democracy in Burma.

Groups such as Burma Assist and the Burma Educational Scholarship Trust, of which I am a trustee, support young people in particular, in Burma. The cabinet secretary's preparedness to promote a visit to Scotland will be of huge significance to the many people who have campaigned for a more democratic Burma. When Aung San Suu Kyi was asked how, on a scale from 1 to 10, she ranked Burma's progress towards democracy, she answered:

"We are on the way to one."

There is a long way to go.

**Fiona Hyslop:** I know that there is a long way to go and I recognise Sarah Boyack's support for the Burma Educational Scholarship Trust. Aung San Suu Kyi has accepted an invitation to the United Kingdom and we are promoting a visit to Scotland, along with the cities that want to celebrate the freedom of the city awards that they have given her, as well as all those who campaigned to help to support democracy in Burma.

## **Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund 2012**

### **9. Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP):**

To ask the Scottish Government what projects will be supported by its 2012 Edinburgh festivals expo fund. (S4O-01057)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop):** The Scottish Government's Edinburgh festivals expo fund continues to support a diverse range of quality artistic projects that feature at the festivals. Highlights of this year's superb programme include a series of major public art commissions in the new town, a world dance festival, a world jazz orchestra, and a world writers conference. The expo fund has supported successful projects at the recent science and Imagine festivals, and just last week I launched the made in Scotland programme, which is also funded as part of the expo fund.

**Clare Adamson:** Will the cabinet secretary talk about the benefits of the young talents programme, including the project that was developed for film fans aged between 16 and 18, through which selected participants are given free Edinburgh international film festival student passes, which allow them access to the full range of festival events?

**Fiona Hyslop:** The young talents programme is a good example of how we support young artists in developing their careers. It involves bespoke meetings with film-makers, events and screenings. The feedback from last year demonstrated its success and I wish the people who are involved in this year's programme well.

**Annabel Goldie (West Scotland) (Con):** Does the cabinet secretary agree that the festivals' undoubted potential for remarkable activity in the arts would be enhanced by the presence in Edinburgh of a medium-sized concert hall? I do not expect the cabinet secretary to wave a magic wand, but will she keep the matter on her radar screen?

**Fiona Hyslop:** I absolutely will do. The point is well made. As we heard earlier, the reductions in the Government's capital budget make things challenging. However, as programmes are worked up, I know that a number of people will be interested in taking forward such a project, and I will pay keen attention to proposals.

## **St Andrew's Day**

### **10. Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie)**

**(SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what preparations are being made to mark St Andrew's day 2012. (S4O-01058)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop):** With partners,

we are progressing plans for this year's winter festivals programme, which brings together our most important cultural celebrations. The programme is kicked off with St Andrew's day celebrations and will bring together people from all over the world to celebrate our modern culture and our traditions. Details of all the celebrations will be provided in the autumn.

**Gil Paterson:** What discussions have taken place with local authorities in order for the day to be marked across the country?

**Fiona Hyslop:** Local authorities are absolutely key in promoting St Andrew's day. Angus Council, Dumfries and Galloway Council, Renfrewshire Council and the Scottish Borders Council organised a holiday on or around St Andrew's day last year. As the new councils take shape and new councillors take office, we hope that more local authorities will take the opportunity to mark our national day.

## Alcohol (Minimum Pricing) (Scotland) Bill: Stage 3

14:40

### **The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):**

The next item of business is stage 3 proceedings on the Alcohol (Minimum Pricing) (Scotland) Bill.

In dealing with the amendments, members should have before them the bill as amended at stage 2, the marshalled list and the groupings—documents SP bill 4A, SP bill 4A-ML and SP bill 4A-G, respectively.

The division bell will sound and proceedings will be suspended for five minutes for the first division of the afternoon. The period of voting for the first division will be 30 seconds. Thereafter, I will allow a voting period of one minute for the first division after a debate.

Members who wish to speak in the debate on any group of amendments should press their request to speak button as soon as possible after I call the group.

Members should refer to the marshalled list of amendments.

### **Section 1—Minimum price of alcohol**

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Group 1 is on the meaning of “unit”. Amendment 3, in the name of Richard Simpson, is grouped with amendment 4.

**Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** During stage 2, when I moved a more complex set of amendments to section 1, I believed that it was important to simplify the overall formula. However, I have taken on board Jim Eadie’s criticisms of those amendments, which were that my stage 2 proposals would complicate the bill by introducing two definitions. I welcome the cabinet secretary’s acknowledgement at stage 2 that the central purpose of my amendments was to promote the measure of strength that we all hope that the public will increasingly understand and accept—namely, the unit—and the idea of how safe or, indeed, unsafe it is to consume units. I also accept that, in law, what is required—and what the formula lays out in the bill—is the much more complex measurement of strength by volume.

However, the fact remains that, although the public have some understanding of strength, they need to begin to understand that the bill and its consequences are about minimum unit pricing. Therefore, not to define “unit” seems to me to be remiss. The formula, after all, relates to minimum price per unit.

What exactly constitutes a unit? That should be defined in the bill with clarity, and my simplified amendments achieve that end.

The other argument from the cabinet secretary, which was a rather legalistic one, was that there is no current statutory requirement to display the number of units on a bottle or other container. However, the industry has agreed to introduce such information on a voluntary basis within the next 18 months. Knowing that a bottle of wine is 15 per cent might tell someone that it is strong, but telling them that it is nine or even 10 units indicates how safe consumption is.

It is to help the public that the term “unit” should be defined, and not to do so would be a missed opportunity. I am advised that the industry would welcome a clear definition. After all, we are not passing a bill that talks about “minimum price per 10ml of pure alcohol”; the bill talks about the price per unit. What a unit is should be clearly on the face of the bill, otherwise it is open to manufacturers have their own definition of unit.

I move amendment 3.

**The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Cities Strategy (Nicola Sturgeon):** I fully understand what amendments 3 and 4 are trying to achieve. However, my strong view is that the amendments are not required in order to calculate the minimum price of an alcoholic drink. The minimum price is set by reference to the drink’s strength, its volume and the unit price that is set by Scottish Ministers.

The fact that a unit is 10ml of pure alcohol is already factored into the formula in section 1, and it is therefore unnecessary to add a separate definition of the term as amendments 3 and 4 seek to do.

14:45

I agree with Richard Simpson that it is desirable to raise awareness of what a unit of alcohol is, but putting that information in the text of a bill is not the best way to achieve that. An explanation of what is meant by a unit of alcohol will be provided in the explanatory notes and in the material that is prepared around implementation. Those are better places for such an explanation, as legislation should not contain superfluous provisions.

It will be made clear that a unit is 10ml of pure alcohol, and that the method of calculating the number of units in the formula in the bill has been devised on that basis.

Ultimately—and most importantly—public awareness of what the term “unit of alcohol” means is an educational issue. For that reason, it is right that we consider what we can do in that

regard during the implementation of minimum pricing.

I have said that we will work with the industry on implementation and help to produce whatever will assist those who are selling alcohol to calculate the minimum price of any product. That would also assist those who are ensuring that the minimum pricing provisions are being adhered to. I hope that that process, along with whatever else we are able to do, will help the general public understanding of what a unit is.

I understand and have sympathy with what the amendments seek to achieve. I recognise that there is an educational issue, but simply putting that information in the text of the bill is not the way to address the issue.

For those reasons, I ask members to reject amendments 3 and 4.

**Dr Simpson:** As I indicated in my opening remarks, I have accepted that the formula is quite clear and that there is no need for the complex set of amendments that I originally proposed at stage 2. However, I maintain that not to define “unit” in the text of a bill that has minimum pricing as its whole context is seriously remiss. There is a possibility that people could define “unit” differently, notwithstanding any guidance that might be subsequently issued by the cabinet secretary. My amendments would put that issue beyond doubt and make it absolutely clear exactly what, in Scots law, a unit of alcohol is. I therefore press amendment 3.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The question is, that amendment 3 be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** As we are not agreed, there will be a division. As this is the first division at stage 3, I suspend the meeting for five minutes.

14:47

*Meeting suspended.*

14:52

*On resuming—*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We move to the division on amendment 3.

**For**

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)

Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)  
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)  
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

**Against**

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)

MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 33, Against 84, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment 3 disagreed to.*

*Amendment 4 not moved.*

### After section 1

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Group 2 is on recovery of increased revenues. Amendment 5, in the name of Richard Simpson, is the only amendment in the group.

**Dr Simpson:** Amendment 5 relates to a scheme for recovery of sums in relation to certain licensed premises—or what has come to be known in debates as the windfall tax.

I make no apology for returning to the issue of the additional revenue that will accrue to the industry—mainly to the off-trade but also to the on-trade. This is not just Labour's red line.

The supermarkets in particular are predicted to gain around £100 million out of the £124 million raised each year from a minimum unit price of 50p. There are mechanisms in place to claw back

the money, and in amendment 5, we have not defined how the Government should do that.

I acknowledge that the retailer public health levy is designed to tax large retailers, but only if they sell tobacco and alcohol. Some major stores do not sell tobacco—they may be joined by others—and they will presumably be exempt, which will give them a commercial advantage. Labour voted for the levy in committee even though it is crude and its impact has not yet been examined in depth.

The social responsibility levy would have the merit of a broader base and covers only alcohol. Which licences it should be applied to could be a matter for local determination—it could be sensitive to the needs of local communities. Other clawback methods might be considered. For example, a separate rating of the licensed area in relation to the off-trade, based on turnover, has been suggested to redress the balance between off-trade and on-trade, given that that approach already applies to the on-trade. The amendment does not specify how to do that—it simply recognises that one of the public's gravest concerns about minimum unit pricing is that it profits the retailers.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies has said that how the market responds will undoubtedly contribute to the outcome. On the one hand, the price of premium brands will rise to maintain differentials if commoditisation occurs; on the other hand, companies such as Whyte & Mackay, which produce own-brand spirits, may well adapt with its retail partners to create new brands, which, although profitable, are lower in price than the current premium brands.

It is highly likely that competition will continue to be fierce in what is an increasingly profitable market, which will be more profitable if the windfall tax is not put in place. Advertising is likely to increase, along with promotion activities. It is frankly naive to think that retailers will abandon what is an even more lucrative market to subsidise bananas or other staples.

Amendment 5 takes into account the technical flaws in the amendment that I proposed at stage 2.

I turn to the other criticisms made at stage 2, some of which were more helpful than others. Bob Doris's comment that clawback powers already exist is true. However, amendment 5 would make it clear that, from the day of implementation in April 2013, the Government would claw back the windfall. Industry would have the certainty that it needed to plan, rather than assuming that the windfall would be available to it for some uncertain period. Business needs that certainty.

Gil Paterson questioned the use of the word "profit" and asked how profit would be defined. I

agree that that was a difficulty, so I have changed the wording to “increased revenue” and suggested that it be based on modelling after discussion with those affected.

I welcomed Jackson Carlaw’s support at stage 2 for the sentiment in my proposal. I am not opposed to working with the alcohol industry. The World Health Organization is clear that there should be no input from the tobacco industry in discussions, but the alcohol industry is quite different. I would be very sympathetic to the industry discussing how, as part of its corporate community responsibility, it could add value to the use of, for example, the social responsibility levy, perhaps in promoting community safety schemes, as it has done at St Neots in Cambridgeshire, or for youth diversion work. Amendment 5 does not rule out voluntary, locally agreed schemes.

At stage 2, the cabinet secretary summarised some of the points that I have referred to, but added, in effect, that it was all too difficult and that we did not know what would happen. If the amendment is not agreed to in its new form, we will just have to wait and see what the market does. That would be an approach of masterly inactivity, which I am afraid characterises too much of this Government’s complacent attitude.

The Government has failed to recognise the genuine concerns of respected commentators such as Nigel Hawkes, who wrote in the *British Medical Journal* that windfall revenues were one of the central reasons why he believed that the policy was not worth pursuing. If we must have a minimum unit price, let us use the tax that is being imposed on the community, for that community.

I move amendment 5.

15:00

**Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP):** In paragraphs (3)(a) and (3)(b) and subsection (4) of the new section that amendment 5 seeks to insert in the bill, the principal word is “estimate”. My question is: who will estimate the profits? Will it be the VAT man, the Inland Revenue or the business owner? If the business owner is to do it, how would he or she manage the process? How would they quantify costs against profit? What kind of quagmire would a business get into if it had to separate on the basis of profit hundreds of lines of drinks, all of different prices, from thousands of other lines? They would need to attach all costs to make the sums work, estimate or not. Items such as delivery, personnel, discounts, quantities, business rates, rents, wages and many other costs would need to be split to come up with the estimate that amendment 5 calls for.

Richard Simpson’s proposed new section defines the perceived profits to be those that exist at the final point of sale, but what would happen if the producer retained the profit but, because of the price increase from the manufacturer, the retailer doubled the price? Would the estimate be based on what was charged by the retailer prior to the producer’s increase? What authority could go to court to challenge an estimate?

Labour’s television language is about supermarkets making big profits, but its amendments would affect all licence holders. Labour has consistently rubbishised minimum pricing on the basis that the drinks industry would make huge profits from it, but the drinks industry has threatened court action to stop minimum pricing. I can just see the next meeting of Diageo shareholders, with the chairman announcing that the dastardly Government had tried to push big profits the company’s way, but that the board was magnificent in stopping it.

The profits question that Labour has posed—which is about playing to the gallery—does not add up, nor do Labour’s amendments. No wonder Labour members do not want to say how it would work.

**Jackson Carlaw (West Scotland) (Con):** I am surprised that we are considering this amendment at stage 3, given the discussion that we had in committee at stage 2. In that discussion, Gil Paterson outlined from a business perspective the technical difficulties that would be encountered in attributing any additional profit that had been raised entirely to minimum unit pricing as opposed to the multitude of other actions that a business could take that might have contributed to an increase in revenue or profit. It was evident that those difficulties were insurmountable. This afternoon, Gil Paterson has again detailed those problems to the chamber.

I understand and sympathise with Dr Simpson’s concern. In promoting and supporting a minimum unit pricing policy, none of us, as Conservatives, is comfortable with the idea that the net effect of the policy would be that retailers would benefit financially. However, to call it a windfall is almost to deny that the policy will be a success because, if the policy is a success, it should reduce alcohol consumption and, therefore, the amount of profit that would otherwise be generated.

Conservatives have said that we would prefer an approach that involved adjustments to duty at a national level, but let me be perfectly candid: never in my life have I heard a Chancellor of the Exchequer, in proposing to increase alcohol duty at Westminster, say that he is doing it because he thinks that it is in the public health interest to do so and because he wants to contribute to a rehabilitation scheme for people who drink too

much. Alcohol duty has always been raised purely in an effort to raise money.

Our preferred route is for the Government to work with industry in the light of what happens, and to seek to generate from it a voluntary contribution towards the rehabilitation of those who have alcohol abuse problems. We do not believe that a legislative approach that would involve the imposition of an additional tax, over and above everything else, is the right way to go. I must say to Dr Simpson that, given that it takes a page and a bit to define his scheme, I rather suspect that it would cost as much money to administer, interpret and implement as it would raise.

**Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP):** It has been said that the idea of a supermarket tax

“is an example of town centre regeneration in reverse”,

and that

“it shows little or no understanding of the interests of Scottish business or workers.”

Those are not my words, but the words of a Mr Andy Kerr, who was the Labour finance spokesperson in the previous parliamentary session, when opposing a £30 million tax brought forward by this Scottish Government on supermarkets.

Mr Kerr also said:

“Labour is not in a position to support this unacceptable policy”.—[*Official Report*, 2 February 2011; c 32875, 32876-7, 32876]

What has changed? Andy Kerr is no longer here, but one thing that has not changed is Labour's absolute hypocrisy in relation to the taxing of supermarkets and their profits. In Parliament, the Scottish Government has proposed a Scottish public health supplement. I am content that the £95 million that the largest retailers that sell alcohol and tobacco will need to pay in the next three years represents a balanced approach to ensuring that they make an appropriate financial contribution to society.

Labour is now pointing to the Sheffield study in targeting the concept of windfall profits. Dr Simpson has sought to rubbish the Sheffield study at every turn, but he has spectacularly failed to do so. He now points to one part of it that he completely misunderstands. The Sheffield study does not talk about windfall profits but about potential increased revenue. From Dr Simpson's contribution, we can see that he clearly does not understand the difference.

Let us look at the potential increased revenue from a minimum unit price of 50p. Nowhere is £124 million mentioned, as Dr Simpson suggests. The figure is £98 million, but that is for both the

on-trade and the off-trade. The supermarkets could get a share of £69 million but that figure will be reduced because of the small amount of off-sales and the small proprietors out there in the economy who will take additional revenue. It is additional revenue, not profit.

I far prefer what Jackson Carlaw and Gil Paterson said. We must take a balanced view and approach to taxing supermarkets appropriately. The Government will seek to do that, and we will take no lessons from Labour, which is why members should reject Dr Simpson's opportunistic and, frankly, deeply flawed amendment.

**Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD):** I have sympathy for what Richard Simpson is trying to do. I can understand the concern that, by the end of this process, all that we will do is increase supermarkets' profits. However, as other members have done, I point to the practicalities of the scheme in his amendment, which would be enormously expensive to implement and difficult to calculate, so we will not support it.

The intention behind the amendment is right. The House of Commons Health Committee identified that we should proceed by using a combination of price and duty to deal with the issue of consumption that leads to harm. Now that the UK Government is considering minimum pricing, perhaps it will consider going with that combination of duty and minimum price. That would help us to achieve the ambitions that Richard Simpson has set out.

In the meantime, we cannot just wait for that to happen; we have to get on with it. We have been debating the issue for a number of years. I do not want to wait for something perfect to come along before proceeding with the bill, and I am disappointed that Richard Simpson has taken that view today.

We need to reflect on the fact that it will not just be the supermarkets and off-licences that will benefit from the measure. There is a whole supply chain—a whole industry—that could benefit from increased profits. There is a difference between revenue and profit. We might end up with the more expensive brands having narrower margins for the supermarkets, so there might be a proportional increase in profit. As I said, we cannot support the amendment.

On Jackson Carlaw's point, I note that the bill's intention is to suppress consumption, and if consumption is suppressed, we suppress revenue and profit. Let us make the policy a success.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** Richard Simpson quoted expert opinion in moving amendment 5, and I am sure that it was eminent expert opinion. I just think that it is such a shame that Richard Simpson and his Labour colleagues continue to ignore all the

other expert opinion in the debate: the doctors, nurses, police officers, children's charities—all the people who work every day with the consequences of alcohol misuse. It is time that Richard Simpson and his colleagues started listening to that expert opinion.

We should call a spade a spade: amendment 5 is nothing more than a fig leaf. All Labour's other reasons for opposing the bill have fallen away or been demolished, so this has become its last line of defence. It is a rather strange last line of defence, though. The same arguments about so-called increased profits—I will come back to why that term is misleading in a second—that Richard Simpson uses to oppose minimum pricing applied to the ban on quantity discounts as well, and yet Labour enthusiastically supported quantity discounts; in fact, it said that we did not go far enough. There is absolutely no consistency in Labour's position.

**Dr Simpson:** That is a misrepresentation of the discounting issue. Richer people take up opportunities to purchase discounted alcohol to a far greater extent than those who are poorer. The discounting ban had a principle behind it that we could support, which was that nobody in our society should be encouraged to buy a greater quantity of alcohol by paying less for more. In addition, because that policy affects the rich more than the poor, it fulfils some of Labour's values, with which the Scottish National Party does not seem to agree.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** We were talking about increased revenue.

The first reason why I oppose amendment 5 is that it is utterly misleading. Bob Doris has already gone into the issue, but Labour talks repeatedly about £124 million of increased profit. Richard Simpson might be interested to know that that sum in the Sheffield report includes the increased revenue from the quantity discount ban that Labour enthusiastically supported. When we strip that out, the figure becomes £98 million, a third of which would go to the on-trade. I am not sure that anybody is suggesting that tilting the balance in favour of the struggling pub trade is a bad thing. Perhaps Labour should reflect on that.

Some of the remaining £69 million will go to small corner shops and smaller retailers. Labour is being completely misleading on the issue, which is the first reason why amendment 5 does not deserve support.

The second reason is that amendment 5 is unworkable. A number of issues make it difficult to calculate increased revenue from minimum pricing. Many alcohol producers are multinationals, and a very small amount of their production is sold in Scotland. Amendment 5

seeks to calculate the change in revenue relating to a very specific policy intervention in the Scottish market. Increased revenue is not the same as increased profit.

The third and final reason for opposing amendment 5 is that it is completely unnecessary. As other members have said, we have the public health supplement, which has already raised £25 million this year to help to address health and social problems—a public health supplement that was in the budget that those on the Labour benches voted against. Of course, we have powers in the Alcohol etc (Scotland) Act 2010 to introduce a social responsibility levy, should we consider at any point in future that that is a necessary step to take.

I ask all members to vote against amendment 5 because to do anything else would simply be to collude with Labour to provide a fig leaf for its embarrassment over its ineptitude on this policy.

**Dr Simpson:** We have been consistent on this issue from the outset of the debate—

**Members:** Oh!

**Dr Simpson:** We have been totally consistent about the windfall issue.

In its briefing for the debate, Children 1st expressed considerable disappointment that the social responsibility levy, which nobody said at the time was too difficult to collect—no one raised that in debate—is not being collected. It is not being collected because this Government has decided at this point in time not to collect it.

Whether the figure is £124 million, or whether it is more or less than that, we are talking about a model. We have said from the outset that that model may or may not prove to be accurate. In answer to Gil Paterson, that is why amendment 5 says:

“The estimates mentioned in subsection (3) are to be based on such research and modelling as the Scottish Ministers consider appropriate.”

15:15

One big flaw in this whole operation is that the Treasury intake will reduce, while the supermarkets' and off-trade's intake will increase. The producers are unlikely to get additional money.

If members do not want to listen to me, what about the Institute for Fiscal Studies? It has said:

“the policy would probably transfer large sums from drinkers to alcohol retailers and manufacturers. We suggested it would be preferable to move towards a more equal taxation of different drinks on the basis of their alcohol content, helping introduce a floor price through the tax system but allowing the revenues to flow to the Exchequer instead.”



From the tone of the debate, it seems that the Parliament is going to decide to hand a substantial quantity of money to retailers. Just because the amount is difficult to assess, that does not mean that we should not attempt to assess it. In the stage 2 debate, an issue was raised about the use of the term “profit”, but the change to the term “increased revenue” would allow differentiation.

It is regrettable that the tone of the debate on amendment 5 has been less about looking at the issue seriously in the way that groups such as Children 1st have asked us to do, and more about making spurious attacks on what is a reasonable amendment. I press amendment 5.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The question is, that amendment 5 be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

#### For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)  
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)  
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

#### Against

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)

Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 McLetchie, David (Lothian) (Con)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

#### Abstentions

MacDonald, Margo (Lothian) (Ind)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 35, Against 83, Abstentions 1.

*Amendment 5 disagreed to.*

#### Section 1B—Report on operation and effect of minimum pricing provisions

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Group 3 is on the evaluation of the operation and effect of minimum pricing. Amendment 6, in the name of Richard Simpson, is grouped with amendments 7, 1, 1A and 2.

**Dr Simpson:** This is the last group of amendments on the bill. My amendments 6 and 7 seek to achieve additions to the welcome amendments that the cabinet secretary has proposed, which are amendments 1 and 2. I thank the cabinet secretary and her officials for responding positively to the intentions of my amendment 12 at stage 2. I welcome amendments 1 and 2, which will underpin the MESAS—monitoring and evaluating Scotland's alcohol strategy—programme of research on minimum unit pricing.

My amendment 12 at stage 2 sought to lay out in considerable detail many of the elements that I believe are necessary to show whether a minimum unit price is effective. The models make predictions about many beneficial changes but, if those changes occur, we will know that the policy is working only if the multiple variables are controlled for, which will not be an easy task.

I can give some examples. The number of deaths with alcohol as an underlying cause has reduced since 2005. The most recent figures are from 2009 and they show a 15 per cent reduction in that number, which amounts to 231 fewer deaths. In other words, there are 58 fewer deaths in that regard on average each year. The Sheffield model predicts that minimum unit pricing will produce a reduction of 60 deaths in the first year. However, that figure could be met on the present trend and, with the discount ban, it may even be exceeded in year 1 without the introduction of minimum unit pricing.

There have been similar reductions in hospital discharges, with the latest figures showing a reduction of 2,500. The Scottish schools adolescent lifestyle and substance use survey shows that there has been an increase in the number of non-drinking children aged 13 to 15.

The Scottish health survey shows a downward trend in hazardous drinking from 28 to 22 per cent. Something is therefore already happening and I suspect that it is the result of the new licensing acts and all the debate that surrounded that and the fact that we have been debating the alcohol issue in the Parliament on and off for the past three years.

Something is happening out there, for whatever reason, whether it is minimum unit pricing, the discount ban, excise and VAT increases—which the coalition Government followed Labour in introducing; 2 per cent above inflation every year—or changes in the excise policy for different drinks, with a reduction in the tax on low-strength beer and a change in the definition of cider. Those elements of the coalition Government's alcohol policy will also have an effect on what happens to alcohol consumption. There is also the fact that unemployment has risen substantially and that there is therefore considerable income restraint. Those two factors may also affect alcohol consumption.

Before we sell the Government's alcohol policy, which I still believe is deeply flawed, to the rest of the world, we need to ensure that it is properly evaluated and studied and that its effects are properly understood. I welcome the cabinet secretary's funding of the Queen Margaret University group that is looking at seriously harmful drinkers. A previous study found that they consumed an average of 197 units a week. Such individuals are known to treatment teams and they form the one group that I have always accepted could benefit from minimum unit pricing, because an increase in the price of their alcohol will help underpin their desire to stop drinking or to achieve controlled drinking.

However, I remain extremely sceptical about the effect of minimum unit pricing on harmful and hazardous drinkers, which is the group that we should wish to affect most, and I am still sceptical about the effect that the policy will have on young adults who binge drink, which is the age group that even the Sheffield team acknowledged the policy would have the least effect on.

I welcome the cabinet secretary's commitment to the research project. I hope that she will take the opportunity to put on record a commitment to present to the Parliament a comprehensive programme to examine the possible effect—or lack of effect—of minimum unit pricing.

In the meantime, my amendment 6 simply requires data to be published as we go along, with an accompanying analysis of the available statistics. That would involve a revision of the annual Information Services Division alcohol statistics.

My amendment 7 invites the Government to look at the response of the market, which has not been examined so far. We discussed it a bit in the previous amendment. The Sheffield researchers, in their evidence to us, offered to make predictions on how the market would respond. Regrettably, that offer was not taken up by the Government.

I hope that the Sheffield group, or Professor Hastings's unit at the University of Stirling, which has advised the House of Commons committees on alcohol, or any other reputable research unit with a track record in market effects, will be invited to undertake this important research. As I indicated previously, the Institute for Fiscal Studies has suggested that market adaptation could seriously undermine the intended effect of the policy.

As far as amendment 1A is concerned, the Health and Sport Committee report drew particular attention to the issue of protecting children who may be growing up in a household where alcohol is being abused and the detrimental effect that that can have on their care, development and wellbeing.

We understand that around 80,000 children in Scotland are currently affected by their parents' harmful drinking. As I said earlier, Children 1st was disappointed that no specific reference was made in the reporting requirements to assessing the harm caused to children and young people by parental alcohol misuse. Although one of the licensing objectives in section 4 of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 is to protect children from harm, that has tended to be interpreted with a focus on restricting the sale of alcohol to under-18s, rather than on the wider issue of the harm that is caused to children by alcohol misuse among adults. That issue is, however, reflected in the guidance accompanying the act.

The children's charities have called for the specific inclusion of "children and young people", which is what amendment 1A addresses. However, if the cabinet secretary can provide assurances that the age category in amendment 2 would cover an evaluation of whether minimum pricing had reduced the impact of parental alcohol misuse on children and young people, I will not move amendment 1A.

I move amendment 6.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):** I call Jackson Carlaw.

**Jackson Carlaw (West Scotland) (Con):** Thank you, Presiding Officer. We will not—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I beg your pardon—I should have called the cabinet secretary first to speak to amendments 1 and 2

and the other amendments in the group. Forgive me.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** This group of amendments sets out provisions for the evaluation of minimum pricing. Richard Simpson lodged an amendment at stage 2 that set out the detail of what he wished to see included in an evaluation. As I said at the time, I agreed with the essence of that amendment but did not consider the level of detail proposed to be appropriate for primary legislation. I therefore gave a commitment to have discussions with Richard Simpson regarding evaluation arrangements once minimum pricing had come into force. Those discussions have taken place with my officials and were positive. I am glad to hear Dr Simpson say that he is supportive of amendments 1 and 2.

As I said to the committee, I believe that we already have the basis for a comprehensive evaluation of minimum pricing in our monitoring and evaluation of Scotland's alcohol strategy programme. MESAS is led by NHS Health Scotland and will ensure that the impact of minimum pricing on consumption and harm is closely monitored over time and that any differential impacts on or between groups are properly identified and explored. Those factors are set out in amendments 1 and 2. We are currently working with NHS Health Scotland and academic partners to consider what further research might be required to monitor fully the impact of minimum pricing and the amendments provide the flexibility to allow additional factors to be considered.

Other areas are being covered in the evaluation, but we consider them too detailed to be set out in the amendments. For example, a study primarily funded by the Government and led by Queen Margaret University is already under way to determine the impact of minimum pricing on heavy drinkers who are in contact with specialist services. The study will also consider whether there are any possible displacement or substitution effects. It will use a longitudinal design to determine whether minimum pricing results in changes among those drinkers in consumption, the type of beverage, the price that is paid or substitution with industrial or illicitly produced alcohol or drugs. It will also determine whether any changes are differentially patterned—for example, by deprivation.

A Newcastle study arm will enable the researchers to determine whether any observed change in behaviours in Scotland is attributable to minimum pricing and will help us to identify the impact more generally. The evaluation will seek, where possible, to compare trends in Scotland with those in other parts of the UK. Members will appreciate that the extent to which that is possible will depend on the availability of data and whether

other countries follow our lead in implementing the policy. Comparative analysis of that kind is standard practice. NHS Health Scotland has committed to publishing an annual MESAS report and it will publish a detailed evaluation and research plan before the implementation of minimum pricing. That will help to ensure that the evaluation is both robust and transparent.

**Margo MacDonald (Lothian) (Ind):** A propos the matter of testing the theories and the policies when they are implemented, why are we comparing ourselves with the rest of the UK when we already know the answer to that, because so many studies have been done? Why are we not comparing ourselves with countries that are like ours and societies that have the same roots, such as Ireland, Norway, Iceland and Finland?

15:30

**Nicola Sturgeon:** I certainly take that point on board and I am happy to feed it into the work that is done on evaluation. When I referred to comparing us with the rest of the UK, I was referring not to doing that now but to looking at comparing the effects of minimum pricing and its impact on alcohol consumption in Scotland with what might be happening in other parts of the UK at different times. However, I am more than happy to factor that in.

**Margo MacDonald** *rose—*

**Nicola Sturgeon:** I am also more than happy to take a final intervention from Margo MacDonald.

**Margo MacDonald:** With all due respect, I think that it will be difficult to separate the effects of the policy from the effects of the recession.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** Again, I accept that point, but if Margo MacDonald was listening to what I said about the detail of the evaluation, as I am sure that she was, she will know that that is exactly what it is intended to do—to try, as best we can, to look at the specific impact of minimum unit pricing. The reason why we will have a range of studies and methods of evaluation is to try to capture that as effectively as possible.

In my view, Richard Simpson's amendment 1A duplicates what is already covered by section 1B and amendments 1 and 2. Amendment 2 specifically permits the report to cover the effect of minimum pricing on specific age groups such as children and young people, and that is certainly the intention. In addition, section 1B(2)(a) requires the report to the Parliament to include the impact of minimum pricing on the licensing objectives, one of which is protecting children from harm. I therefore consider that the issue is already adequately covered and that amendment 1A is unnecessary.

I turn briefly to amendments 6 and 7. In those amendments, Richard Simpson has returned to some aspects of the amendments that he lodged at stage 2. Amendment 6 sets out a timetable for the laying of reports that contain analysis of data on the impact of minimum pricing. As I said, MESAS provides the basis for a comprehensive study, and we are seeking to build on that. The bill requires the Scottish ministers to evaluate the effect of minimum pricing five years after it comes into force and to report to the Parliament on that. The report must include information on the effect of minimum pricing on the licensing objectives, which include protecting and improving public health and reducing crime and disorder; the effect on premises licence holders, such as the pub trade, the retail sector and the wider licensed trade; and the impact on alcohol producers.

In preparing that report, ministers will also be required to consult people who have functions relating to health, crime prevention, children and young people, education and social work, and those who represent premises licence holders and alcohol producers. In evaluating the policy, we will of course consider any data and statistics that are relevant. I do not consider amendment 6 to be necessary to ensure that that happens.

Amendment 7 seeks to ensure that research is carried out on the response of retailers and producers to the introduction of minimum pricing. I absolutely agree that such research should form part of the overall evaluation, but it is already covered by the generality of section 1B, which states that the report must cover the impact of minimum pricing on

"holders of premises licenses granted under the 2005 Act, and ... producers of alcohol".

I apologise for the length of that explanation, Presiding Officer, but I hope that members will see, first, that the Government, with its amendments, has attempted to respond to points that were made at stage 2 and, secondly, that the other amendments in the group are not necessary as they are covered in the generality.

I urge members to support amendments 1 and 2 and to reject amendments 6, 7 and 1A.

**Jackson Carlaw:** The Scottish Conservatives support amendments 1 and 2, and we are persuaded by the cabinet secretary's arguments and will not support amendment 1A if Dr Simpson moves it.

Amendments 6 and 7, however, have caused us to ponder in more detail. In supporting the legislation, the Scottish Conservatives want it to succeed. The whole purpose of supporting minimum unit pricing is to tackle Scotland's relationship with alcohol, although we are sceptical that everything that has been claimed for the

measure can be achieved and we are grateful for the support of the cabinet secretary and the Labour Party for the sunset clause that we proposed at stage 2.

We also know that the cabinet secretary will allow the legislation to be the subject of a voluntary notification to the European Commission. In part, my problem with amendments 6 and 7 is that, given that we cannot know the timetable of that notification or the subsequent timetable if the legislation is challenged by the industry in the courts, the setting of dates in the amendments is inappropriate. It presumes that the legislation will have been implemented and in effect for a period of time, but that might not be so. Had the amendments used terminology such as “three years after”, it would have been easier for us to support them. That causes me to rule out support for amendment 6.

We have decided that we will support amendment 7, notwithstanding that reservation. When we discussed earlier an amendment that was lodged by Dr Simpson, we talked about the need for a voluntary partnership with industry in view of the contribution that could come from it to help to support and fund rehabilitation programmes. If the challenge to monitor the bill's effect on producers and retailers is included in the bill, that will send a shot across the bows of producers and retailers that we will deliberately focus on their response and they should therefore take that into account. For that reason, we will support amendment 7.

**Dr Simpson:** I thank the cabinet secretary and Jackson Carlaw for their contributions, which have been very helpful.

The first of the two most welcome things that I have heard today is that there will be an annual report by MESAS on the statistics and the analysis. In effect, that is what is suggested in amendment 6. With that proviso and the hope that the cabinet secretary will ensure that that is laid before either the Parliament or the Health and Sport Committee, I am happy to seek to withdraw amendment 6.

Jackson's Carlaw's points on amendment 7 are well taken. It is important to include it in the bill. We are not including stuff about windfall profits in the bill, but including that amendment will at least indicate that there will be an examination—I hope that it will be a strenuous one—of the industry's response. That is important. Part of the reason why we are in the situation that we are in with the growth in alcohol problems over the past 15 or 20 years is the shift in the purchasing of alcohol from on-trade purchasing to off-trade purchasing. However, we have all agreed in the debates over the past four years that there have been

unacceptable practices in using alcohol like any other commodity. That term, which is used in the WHO analysis, is critical. Retailers need to treat alcohol unlike any other commodity.

Agreeing to amendment 7 will send the message to the industry that it will be under scrutiny by the Parliament. We will want to ensure that any surplus revenue that it accrues is used for the greater good and not to line the pockets of the top people or the shareholders. That is critical. If society's attitude is to change, it is critical that the attitudes of the supermarkets and other retailers also change. Therefore, I will move amendment 7.

In light of the cabinet secretary's comments and assurances, I am happy not to move amendment 1A.

*Amendment 6, by agreement, withdrawn.*

*Amendment 7 moved—[Dr Simpson].*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The question is, that amendment 7 be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

**For**

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothian) (Ind)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)  
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Lothian) (Con)  
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)

Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)  
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

#### Against

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
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 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
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 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
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 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 50, Against 68, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment 7 disagreed to.*

*Amendment 1 moved—[Nicola Sturgeon].*

*Amendment 1A not moved.*

*Amendment 1 agreed to.*

*Amendment 2 moved—[Nicola Sturgeon]—and agreed to.*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That ends consideration of amendments.

## Alcohol (Minimum Pricing) (Scotland) Bill

### **The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):**

The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-02967, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on the Alcohol (Minimum Pricing) (Scotland) Bill. I call on Nicola Sturgeon to speak to and move the motion. The cabinet secretary has a generous 10 minutes.

15:41

**The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Cities Strategy (Nicola Sturgeon):** For the purposes of rule 9.11 of the standing orders, I wish to advise the Parliament that Her Majesty, having been informed of the purport of the Alcohol (Minimum Pricing) (Scotland) Bill, has consented to place her prerogative and interests, so far as they are affected by the bill, at the disposal of the Parliament for the purposes of the bill.

I thank the Health and Sport Committee's members and clerks for their attention and input to the bill. A great deal had already been said about minimum pricing by the time that the Health and Sport Committee in this session of Parliament came to scrutinise the bill, but I appreciate the fact that members came to it with a fresh eye. I thank them for that and for the amount of work that was done on the bill.

I also thank sincerely all my officials and my bill team for all their hard work, advice and support during the passage of the bill. Anyone who has not witnessed the bill process at close quarters cannot really appreciate how much work is done behind the scenes to support the passage of any bill—even a bill as short and focused as this one.

We are today debating and—I hope and expect—passing a bill that will have a significant and historic impact on Scotland's relationship with alcohol. It has been a long time in the making, but I am delighted that this moment has at last arrived.

The bill will kick-start a change in our alcohol culture by addressing a fundamental part of that culture: the availability of high-strength, low-cost alcohol. During the passage of this bill and the previous bill, the Parliament has come to accept that a pricing intervention is part of the solution; it is not the whole solution, but it is part of the solution. The Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives have reflected on their previous positions and they are now supportive of minimum pricing being that intervention and are, at the very least, prepared to give the policy a chance. I should mention the Greens, who have, of course,

supported the policy not only in this session of Parliament but in the previous session.

Who knows, even at this late hour, it may be that those on the Labour benches will allow themselves to see the bigger picture and will finally, at the 11th hour, drop their petty, party-political opposition to the bill and join the rest of us in Parliament in voting for minimum pricing.

I accept and appreciate that there are those who are sceptical about whether the bill will have the impact that I believe it will have, but the sunset clause provides the reassurance that if minimum pricing does not work, it will not continue. On that basis, I think that Parliament should come together at 5 o'clock and pass the bill unanimously. Support for minimum pricing across the whole of the Parliament will send out a very strong signal to Scotland as a whole that we are serious about tackling the levels of alcohol misuse that this country suffers from.

We have seen support for minimum pricing continue to grow. It has support from doctors, nurses, the police, children's charities, faith groups and significant sections of the alcohol industry, for which I thank them all. I see people in the public gallery who have given the measure their unwavering support, and I put on record my sincere thanks to them for that.

In addition to that coalition of support in Scotland, other countries are beginning to take our lead. Ireland and Northern Ireland are discussing introducing a minimum price, and the United Kingdom Government is now committed to introducing minimum pricing for England and Wales and is consulting on the price.

Scottish Labour is in abject isolation on the policy. Its position has been rendered all the more ridiculous—if that is possible—by the fact that Labour south of the border also agrees with the Scottish Government. We are leading the way in Scotland; others are following and still others are interested in following.

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** Will the cabinet secretary take an intervention?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** If Jackie Baillie wants to comment on Diane Abbott's support for the Scottish Government, I will be delighted to take an intervention.

**Jackie Baillie:** I thank the cabinet secretary for her generosity. First it was the First Minister, and now the Deputy First Minister is following Diane Abbott. I am delighted that they have the time to follow Labour MPs on Twitter.

Yvette Cooper, the shadow Home Secretary, who speaks for Labour on the issue, said that

"the Government needs to make sure it does not just create a cash windfall for the supermarkets"

and that it supports

"better prevention and treatment of alcohol abuse".

Surely we can come together at 5 o'clock to agree with that.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** What Jackie Baillie does not tell members is that, before saying that, Yvette Cooper said that she supported minimum pricing. That is the position of Yvette Cooper and of Labour south of the border. No matter how hard Scottish Labour tries to find the fig leaf to hide its embarrassment, its position is one of isolation and—if it has any sense—complete embarrassment and shame. However, it is not too late for Labour members to redeem themselves at 5 o'clock by joining the consensus in favour of the policy.

Having used five minutes of my generous 10 minutes, I will address issues that have arisen in the debate. Early in the debate, people often posed the question why, if we had powers over excise duty, we would not prefer to use excise duty as the best way to address the issue. In answer to that question, I pose a question: if using excise duty is the better way to proceed, why has the UK Government, which has excise duty powers, also opted for minimum pricing? The answer is that the UK Government has come to the same conclusion as we came to, which is that minimum pricing is a more effective way of targeting the cheap, high-strength alcohol that is causing so much damage in our society.

I say to those who are concerned about the impact of minimum pricing on various groups that, as I said during consideration of amendments this afternoon, we will monitor and evaluate the impact and we will consider the effect on people such as those on low incomes, harmful drinkers and young drinkers.

To those who say that the policy is not legal, I reiterate my view that minimum pricing per unit of alcohol complies with European Union law, provided that it is justified on the basis of public health and social grounds. I am confident that the policy is justified in Scotland.

I take the opportunity to tell Parliament that, following the bill's passage, we will commence the process of EU notification under the technical standards directive. The draft order that sets the price will be notified as soon as possible, with all the accompanying documents, including the bill—or act, as it will be. That process will happen as quickly as possible, and notification will certainly take place well within one month of the bill's passage today.

Minimum pricing will make a significant difference, but it is not—and I have never argued that it is—a magic bullet. We should not forget that we have in place many other measures to tackle alcohol misuse. The framework for action sets out more than 40 measures that seek to reduce consumption, to support families and communities, to encourage more positive attitudes and positive choices and to improve treatment and support services.

That broader approach also focuses on education, diversionary activity, support for families and preventive measures, such as alcohol brief interventions. We have made record investment of £196 million to tackle alcohol misuse since 2008. The bulk of the funding is being invested in local prevention, treatment and support services. Along with minimum pricing and other measures, such as the approach to quantity discounts and irresponsible promotion of alcohol, that wider package will help to create the cultural shift that is required if we are to change our relationship with alcohol.

The inescapable fact is that alcohol misuse affects each and every one of us. Whether we drink a lot, a little or not at all, each and every one of us pays £900 every year towards the cost of alcohol misuse. That money could be better spent elsewhere.

Last week I announced that I am minded to set the minimum price at 50p per unit. That was not an easy decision, because there is an important balance to be struck between the benefits to public health and the impact on industry. The decision was made after taking account of relevant factors, which have been updated since I proposed a price per unit of alcohol of 45p in September 2010. Factors included the updated modelling that has been carried out by the University of Sheffield, and data on alcohol sales, price bands, affordability and harm. In addition, I took account of the fact that the earliest the policy is likely to be implemented is April 2013.

Taking all those factors into account, 50p per unit is broadly equivalent to the 45p that was announced in 2010. More important, it is estimated that the minimum unit price will deliver significant benefits. I remind the Parliament of those benefits: 60 fewer deaths in the first year, 1,200 fewer alcohol-related illnesses in the first year and 1,600 fewer hospital admissions in the first year. It is also estimated that there will be around 3,500 fewer crimes per year. Over 10 years, we expect 300 fewer deaths per year and nearly 4,000 fewer illnesses and 6,500 fewer hospital admissions.

I absolutely accept that people ask whether the modelling will translate into reality. However, if we think that benefits on anywhere near the scale of those in the model are within our grasp, we have a



moral duty to go for them. That is what the Government is doing.

Presiding Officer, I suspect that your generosity is running out, so I will come to a close. Tackling alcohol misuse is one of the most important public health challenges that we face in Scotland. The Parliament has the opportunity today to take a significant step towards reducing alcohol-related harm. I sincerely hope that members of all parties will support the bill and create an historic moment for the public health of Scotland's people.

It gives me great pleasure to move,

That the Parliament agrees that the Alcohol (Minimum Pricing) (Scotland) Bill be passed.

15:53

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** I, too, welcome the opportunity to participate in the stage 3 debate on minimum pricing, and I too record my thanks to all involved.

Throughout the passage of the bill, Labour has been clear that there is much on which we can agree. We agree on the scale of the problem and the need for cultural and generational change. We agree that a range of measures is required to tackle a complex and multifaceted problem. We agree that there is a relationship between price and consumption. However, we disagree on the best mechanism for achieving our aims. In essence, we do not think that minimum unit pricing is the answer. However, I acknowledge the parliamentary arithmetic, so it is important that we seek to mitigate the unintended consequences of the bill.

There is no doubting the scale of the problem of alcohol abuse, which happens across the board and is not defined by age, gender or income. The cost to our public services is significant, as is the cost to people's lives.

We should focus on reducing the volume of drinking, but we need to consider how people drink. There is a particular problem with binge drinking in Scotland, which simply is not addressed by price and has not been modelled by the University of Sheffield—I hope that the cabinet secretary will consider the need for such work in future. North and south of the border, the price is the same, yet we drink 25 per cent more than people in England, so there is clearly an underlying problem, which is currently unaffected by price and is perhaps more to do with culture.

**Margo MacDonald (Lothian) (Ind):** Could the member briefly examine whether that figure of 25 per cent is a mean figure across the country? I doubt that it is. I am sure that there are areas of the country where people drink a lot more than 25

per cent more than people in England do. In my area, they do not drink nearly enough.

**Jackie Baillie:** I think that the figure varies by income, which I think is the point that the member is making. I am sure that people will look forward to drinking more with Margo MacDonald in future.

Drinking is not just a problem of the poor. I heard a telling comment from an Edinburgh wine merchant who told a middle-class audience that they should all support minimum unit pricing because it would not affect them—"We drink wine, not cider," he said. However, the greatest growth in the number of people abusing alcohol involves middle-aged, middle-income women. Indeed, the rise in consumption in Scotland since 1994 is wholly explained by wine, while the consumption of beer and spirits has declined in that period.

We have concerns about three main areas: the legality of the measure; its efficacy; and, related to that, the windfall of £125 million, which will go, in the main, to supermarkets. On the issue of legality, I note that the cabinet secretary is offering to notify the price-setting order to the EU, and that is welcome. However, the bill itself should be notified, and not simply as an accompanying document. The cabinet secretary knows that there is a difference. The bill forms an important context. It describes how minimum pricing will be applied and it contains the mechanism for calculating the price of products on the market. I believe that the Tories thought that the cabinet secretary had promised them that she would notify the whole bill, but she is not delivering that in full.

On the issue of efficacy, there is little impact on young people or on binge drinking and there is no impact on caffeinated alcohol products such as Buckfast, which we know causes wired, wide-awake drunks who engage in a disproportionate level of violence on our streets. As I said, of all alcoholic drinks, the consumption of wine is increasing at a considerable pace, yet the minimum unit price will have only a marginal impact.

I acknowledge that, for some people, the minimum unit price will have an impact. Further, at least people are talking about the issue and awareness has been raised in a way that it has not been before. Indeed, the level of consumption has helpfully, although slowly, been on a steady decline since the passing of the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005, under the previous Administration.

The purpose of our reasoned amendment is to recoup the windfall of £125 million. The University of Sheffield model predicts that a minimum unit price of 50p will generate approximately £125 million each year as revenue for alcohol retailers. We know that supermarkets would be the biggest

beneficiaries of that. The Confederation of British Industry believes that the figure will be in excess of £150 million. However, whatever the figure is, at a time when money is tight and the Scottish National Party is cutting the alcohol treatment budget by 7 per cent—more than £3 million—handing that money to supermarkets is, frankly, astonishing.

I am disappointed that the cabinet secretary has set her face against using—at least for the foreseeable future—the social responsibility levy, a measure that we supported. She could, of course, use the public health levy. Contrary to the SNP's assertions, Labour supported the public health levy at the Local Government and Regeneration Committee when the order was debated. However, the public health levy takes back only £35 million in one year and applies only to retailers who sell tobacco and alcohol, yet a minimum unit price will generate £125 million each year, which is four times more than the cabinet secretary will claw back.

I know that the cabinet secretary believes that the supermarkets will reduce the price of bananas, which is, frankly, naive. Already I hear proposals to decrease the price of premium drink as a marketing ploy and to stock supermarket own-brand products in preference to others, but not one peep do I hear from the supermarkets about reducing the price of bananas.

This will be a massive leap of faith. Labour believes that there will be significant unintended consequences if the windfall remains with supermarkets, and that they could undermine the very purpose of the bill. That view is supported by the Institute of Fiscal Studies.

Our preference would have been to build on the alcohol duty escalator that was introduced by Alistair Darling and has been continued by the coalition, which brought about rises of 2 per cent above inflation, which this year meant a rise of 7 per cent. We supported a proposal from the alcohol commission that would create a duty floor, added to which would be the price of invoicing—the French have been using such a measure to good effect. We even suggested on a cross-party basis in the chamber that the restructuring of duty to link it to alcohol strength would be preferable; that was later suggested by the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

All those things would have raised the price of alcohol considerably, and would have returned the money to the public purse to be used for public services. Under the SNP's proposal, not one penny will be spent on education, enforcement or treatment. Instead, the SNP wants to give supermarkets, which make billions of pounds of profit anyway, even more money. The SNP is stuffing the supermarkets' pockets with gold when

budgets across the public sector are being cut and it is cutting the alcohol treatment budget. People in Scotland just do not understand that: it does not make sense.

In closing, I observe that the cabinet secretary's closing speech at stage 1 was very big on rhetoric but quite short on detail, which is surprising. I expect more of the same as the debate carries on, but I gently suggest that she change her tone—*[Interruption.]* I think that she should, because in her last speech she said that I was putting a blanket over my head on the issue, in an apparently witty reference to the lack of blankets in our hospitals, although she denied that at the time. That spectacularly backfired, so a bit of caution is required.

Tackling our relationship with alcohol is a serious issue. We have come forward with a serious suggestion to improve the bill and empower public services in tackling alcohol abuse in Scotland. There is time for the cabinet secretary to have a unified chamber, but she is in danger of losing it when she decides to fill the pockets—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I am afraid that the member is running out of time.

**Jackie Baillie:** —of large supermarkets at the expense of hard-working public services.

I move amendment S4M-02967.1, to insert at end:

“but, in so doing, strongly believes that the Scottish Government should bring forward proposals to eliminate the windfall to large retailers arising from the minimum unit price by means of the proposed public health levy or other targeted levy.”

16:02

**Jackson Carlaw (West Scotland) (Con):** Today is a significant day. Alcohol minimum unit pricing has been the centre of debate in the current session and the previous session of Parliament, almost to the detriment of the wider discussion that the Parliament needs to have about Scotland's relationship with alcohol. I do not want to detract from what the cabinet secretary said a few moments ago about the bill being one of a raft of measures that are already in place, but it has undoubtedly preoccupied the debate in the chamber.

We Scottish Conservatives have changed our position. In the previous session of Parliament, we felt that the legislation that was implemented by the previous Labour-Liberal Democrat Administration had not had time to prove itself, and that the evidence base was not sufficiently balanced to allow us to support alcohol minimum unit pricing at that time.

In one of my first speeches to Parliament, I said that I personally did not rule out alcohol minimum unit pricing, and in supporting it today, I very much hope that it will work. I fear that the measure cannot achieve all that some have hoped for it as the bill has progressed through committee, but I believe that it will make a contribution. The Parliament must hope in passing the legislation that it succeeds.

I am pleased that, where Scottish Conservatives have led, London Conservatives have chosen to follow. That is a perfect example of Scotland and Scottish Conservatives showing our colleagues in the south the way forward in tackling major policy issues in public health.

We are concerned that some of what has been claimed for the bill may not be achieved, and we respect the views of those who, throughout the progress of the legislation, have argued that it cannot succeed. We understand that there is a degree of scepticism, even while we think that the balance of evidence has now tipped very much in favour of allowing the policy its moment to shine.

That is why we proposed the inclusion of a sunset clause, and we were grateful for the support of other parties in that regard. The cabinet secretary's point is worth emphasising: for those who are sceptical about the policy, the sunset clause is their opportunity to know that, in the event that the policy demonstrably does not have the effect that is claimed for it, the legislation will fall.

On that basis, there is really no good reason for the Parliament not to unite tonight around the policy, and to give it the authority that would enhance it by having all-party support in the chamber so that the people of Scotland can see that we are all robustly in support of it and behind its every prospect of success.

We are keen that the legal position be established, and we are grateful that the Government will allow the legislation to be the subject of a voluntary notification. I hope that that process will be completed at the earliest possible date, because we want to know that—in proposing pioneering legislation that the rest of the world will be looking at—we did everything we could to establish the legal position in advance. I heard what the cabinet secretary said about legality. We very much hope that that is the case, and that the legislation can be implemented and take effect to the timetable that the cabinet secretary has identified.

Dr Simpson, for whom I have considerable respect, talked about the windfall tax being Labour's red line. During the committee stages, I understood his reservations about the legislation—*[Interruption.]* I am sorry, but until stage 2, I never

heard the Labour Party say that it would vote for the bill if agreement was reached on that one aspect. In that regard, regrettably—I have no wish for a party-political debate—I have sympathy with the cabinet secretary's argument that we are divided at this final stage for political reasons.

I have something to say to Jackie Baillie, to Richard Simpson, and to Drew Smith—clearly the front runner for the future leadership of his party. Does he want to have this stain on his character in future years when people come to look at what this Parliament did? They are lost in the detail of Dr Simpson's experience and prejudices, to the extent that Labour has lost sight of the bigger picture. I do not think that Labour members sit behind him comfortable in what they are doing, and even now, I appeal to them to allow the chamber to unite and give the policy the authority that it commands.

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

16:06

**Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP):** The arguments against minimum pricing on the basis of potential supermarket profits or increased revenues have been well and truly exposed this afternoon as deeply flawed. I do not take any personal satisfaction from that because, at times, that debate has got in the way of analysing the potential public health benefits of minimum pricing.

In that regard, I make a concession to Jackson Carlaw. He has accused SNP back benchers a number of times of being overtly evangelical in promoting the potential benefits of minimum pricing. Perhaps at times we have been, Mr Carlaw. However, it is vital to state clearly the estimated potential health benefits that the Sheffield modelling work suggests, and to once more put the details on the public record.

Those benefits include potentially 60 fewer deaths related to alcohol per annum, 1,600 fewer hospital admissions and 3,500 fewer crimes estimated in the first year. In 10 years' time, the figures could increase to 300 fewer deaths and 6,500 fewer hospital admissions. Whatever the figures are, we have to accept that the health benefits that will be accrued from minimum pricing will be substantial. I accept that they may be a bit less than estimated but, conversely, they could be greater.

If, in 10 years, an additional 250 lives are being saved every year by minimum pricing, and not the 300 that were estimated by the Sheffield study, that would still be a significant achievement. In 10 years' time, society will not be talking about the distinction between windfall profits, revenue or whatever. The argument will have moved on.

Whether it is in one year's time or five years' time, or whenever, the Labour Party will have to take a serious look at itself and ask why it was discussing a flawed argument on supermarket profits, when everyone should have been talking about how we could turn around Scotland's relationship with alcohol. That is for Labour to answer, which it will have to do sooner rather than later.

**Margo MacDonald:** I wonder if the member would like to answer a question for me. What does he see as the result of this measure? Does he see everyone drinking a little less or everyone changing from cider to wine? How does he see this measure having an effect on the individual?

**Bob Doris:** It is not how I see it; it is what the evidence points to, which is that the most harmful drinkers will be most affected by these measures. That is what the evidence shows, and it is true across all income groups. The measure will have a "significant impact"—those are not my words; they are from the evidence that our committee carefully examined. We came to accept that as the most significant aspect.

Do we have four minutes, Presiding Officer?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Yes.

**Bob Doris:** Oh dear. I will be brief.

The health benefits of minimum pricing differ according to which group we are talking about. It is said that minimum pricing will have slightly less of an impact on younger people in comparison with the rest of the population but, as it will still have a significant as opposed to a negligible impact, it is a measure that is worth taking. In addition, it has been said that minimum pricing will not cut the frequency of binge drinking, but binge drinkers will drink significantly less during such episodes. Therefore, minimum pricing will bring health benefits across the board.

Like Mr Carlaw, I hope that, as a Parliament, we can unite and put party-political considerations behind us and support the bill unanimously. I am delighted to have spoken in this stage 3 debate.

16:10

**Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP):** I am grateful to be able to speak in the debate, given that I am not a member of the Health and Sport Committee.

I want to look at the bill in a slightly different way. The health issues, which are extremely important, have been covered, but I want to focus on two specific issues: overconsumption of alcohol and availability of cheap alcohol, and the problems that they give rise to.

As the constituency member for Glasgow Kelvin, I represent an area that has the greatest concentration in Glasgow—possibly in Scotland—of pubs, clubs, theatres and entertainment venues, which stretch from Byres Road in the west to Sauchiehall Street and the merchant city in the city centre. The area is the hub of Glasgow's night life, where thriving businesses attract thousands of visitors—tourists and locals alike—at the weekend. They are what makes Glasgow famous and so vibrant.

However, it would be remiss of me not to say that in some—but not all—areas we have problems that are caused by overconsumption of alcohol. Overconsumption causes problems not just for the consumer of alcohol, but for the police, medics and the public in general. The issue must be tackled. Although, as the cabinet secretary said, minimum pricing is not a panacea, we must do something to ensure that we no longer see people lying on pavements or in gutters absolutely drunk. We must do so not just for health reasons, but for the sake of the economy and of the people who visit Glasgow and other parts of Scotland.

The pubs and clubs are not solely responsible for the problem; it is mainly a result of the so-called pre-loading of cheap alcohol that has been bought in supermarkets. In some cases, it is cheaper to buy a litre of alcoholic drink than it is to buy a litre of water. I have spoken to many people in the licensed trade in Glasgow. Paul Waterson of the Scottish Licensed Trade Association says that we need minimum pricing because there is no control over the drinking of people who buy alcohol from supermarkets at knock-down prices. He believes that some people drink for drinking's sake. Pre-loading of cheap alcohol has become endemic. People who go to licensed premises drink in a controlled environment, but if they drink at home, there is no control. When people go out after getting tanked up on cheap supermarket booze, it is the pubs and the clubs that have to deal with them. We should listen to the SLTA.

The Deputy First Minister mentioned the fact that the pub trade is struggling, and she is absolutely right. Once-thriving pubs, many of which used to be hubs of their communities, are indeed struggling because supermarkets are selling cheap booze. Local pubs that were once social meeting places for many people are closing. I think—I know that the licensed trade does, too—that the balance has shifted too far, so we need to look at restoring the balance.

At one time, people would go out to pubs to enjoy the sociable atmosphere, but with the availability of cheap booze, that is no longer the case. I have some figures that illustrate that. Off-trade sales increased by 52 per cent between 1994 and 2010, whereas the on-trade experienced

a fall in sales of 29 per cent. I am talking about the city centre of Glasgow and other areas that I represent; I am talking about pubs that are hubs in their communities and are social gathering places. It is time we listened to the licensed trade. I hope that we can resurrect some of those local pubs, which do so much for communities.

As I have said, minimum pricing is not a panacea, but it is a start, and we should all fully support it.

16:15

**Graeme Pearson (South Scotland) (Lab):** I thank Jackie Baillie for covering most of the ground on the thinking behind Labour's approach to the bill. Equally, I thank Sandra White and Bob Doris, who have outlined many of the problems on which the bill seeks to deliver.

In that context, it is unkind of the cabinet secretary to describe our position as "ridiculous" and embarrassing. As rehearsed at stage 3 and in this debate, it is true to say that Scottish Labour members still have legitimate reservations about the bill. It is not just about the windfall that we have discussed; concerns have also been expressed by the Conservatives about the bill's compliance with European law, which is why we have asked repeatedly for access to the legal advice that the Government obtained earlier. It has been tricky to nail that down. Nevertheless, the cabinet secretary remains adamant that the measure is legal, so I welcome her voluntary reference to the EU and the impact of the act, should the bill be enacted at the end of the day.

As the bill stands, it will generate a significant windfall. Whether it be £68 million, £98 million or £125 million, most of it will end up benefiting the largest supermarkets. I would like to see that money go to treatment, diversionary activities for young people, policing and the cleaning up of areas that are affected by considerable alcohol consumption and antisocial behaviour. As the cabinet secretary herself said during the stage 1 debate, mechanisms are available that could deal with the windfall so, if the Scottish Government accepts our amendment, we will add our support to the bill.

I am pleased to note that the latest figures on alcohol-related admissions to hospitals show a fall for the second year in a row. However, we recognise that that is only one of many measurements of success in the future, and action still needs to be taken to combat the problems that alcohol causes in our communities.

The cabinet secretary has continually criticised Labour, but we have launched a consultation on a range of measures that are designed to help to tackle the problems that alcohol can and is

causing in many of our communities. The cabinet secretary did not seek to engage in that consultation. Was there no merit in our consultation at all? Does the cabinet secretary not think that all, or some of, alcohol arrest referral, banning orders, bottle-tagging, alcohol drug treatment and testing orders, and alcohol fine diversions could play a part in addressing the problems in the future? Surely she does not think that minimum pricing is the magic bullet? More has to be done and we are keen to play a role in that. I trust that the Government will rethink its position.

Before coming into the chamber this afternoon, I had a look at a poll that is being conducted by *The Scotsman*. Of 15,500 people who have contributed to that poll, 93 have indicated that they do not believe that the provisions of the bill will be effective by themselves. We need to think about what the public is saying to us in that poll.

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** Will the member take an intervention on that point?

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The member has no time. He has precisely 10 seconds left.

**Graeme Pearson:** I support the amendment in Jackie Baillie's name.

16:19

**Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** I have to say that I do not agree with the cabinet secretary because I do not think that Labour's pitiful opposition to the bill is a fig leaf so much as it is a tea leaf. Last year, caffeine was the smokescreen; now—suddenly—Labour members are all really worried that supermarkets are going to have plenty of money. We have now heard from Mr Pearson that it is really electoralism that is at the heart of the opposition, given his comments on the poll in *The Scotsman*. I take it that he meant 93 per cent rather than 93 respondents out of 15,000.

Today we have heard from the Labour Party curmudgeonly and desperate speeches that were mainly unenthusiastic, and I doubt that many Labour back benchers are tripping over themselves to press their buttons against the bill tonight. The reality is that there is opposition to this bill because it has been promoted by the Scottish National Party. That is what SNP members believe and, I think, that is what other members in this chamber believe. That really appears to be it.

Richard Simpson and Graeme Pearson will not be very popular with their former colleagues—in the national health service and in the police

respectively—because the people who are on the front line—those who have to deal with Scotland's alcohol problem—are not only the families of people who misuse alcohol, not only their friends and their workmates, but the police officers who have to face the problem day in and day out and the NHS professionals who have to deal with it. The bill is overwhelmingly supported by groups including the churches, the British Medical Association, the police, and charities here, there and everywhere because it is the right thing to do for the people of Scotland.

As Jackson Carlaw pointed out on the nonsense about supermarkets, if the bill is successful income to supermarkets will decline markedly. We have to look at what the bill is ultimately trying to do. I studied economics at university; a rule of economics is that as price goes up, consumption goes down. Harmful drinkers will have fewer instances of ill health as a result of that drop in consumption. That is what the study says.

My colleague Bob Doris hit the nail on the head: the bill is really about saving lives, saving people from illness, saving families from domestic breakup, and saving people from losing their jobs. That is why we are doing it. I am pleased that when the Labour Party in North Ayrshire controlled the council, which it did up until 3 May—I am glad to say that it is now an SNP council—it had the courage to support the SNP Government on the bill. Perhaps that was because the number of alcohol-related deaths in North Ayrshire—the area that my constituency of Cunninghame North is in—is 91 per cent higher than the Scottish average. The problem is particularly acute there.

The more that people drink, the greater the risk of health and social problems. That impacts directly on healthcare services, on the criminal justice system and on our wider economy. Let us appreciate what we are trying to do. As the cabinet secretary said, the framework for action contains 40 measures in addition to minimum pricing. Minimum pricing has for our party never been the sole way forward—we can do so many other things for the people of Scotland in this area and we are doing them. However, minimum pricing is a keystone—it is fundamental to the bill. Many years from now, it will be like the Smoking, Health and Social Care (Scotland) Act 2005. The Conservatives opposed it at the time, but I believe that they realise on reflection that perhaps they should not have opposed it.

Our passing the bill will make today a great day for the Scottish Parliament. The bill will take Scotland forward socially and it will help to change the culture that so many members have spoken about. I welcome the bill and I am pleased that it will be supported by an overwhelming majority of members of Parliament and of organisations that

have to deal with the scourge of alcohol on a day-to-day basis.

16:23

**Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD):** I thank Nicola Sturgeon for pioneering the bill. It is pioneering legislation and she is out there in front, proposing a measure that a lot of people will not like. We talk about the bill in Parliament as if it will be immensely popular. However, if it is going to be effective, a lot of people will not like it. Introducing such legislation takes a certain amount of courage, so I thank Nicola Sturgeon for the effort that she has put in over a number of years, despite opposition from my party, from the Conservatives and from Labour.

I have always believed in minimum pricing. I had to be relatively quiet about that in the past, but I have always been supportive of it—I always was at Westminster. The party in Scotland was finely balanced—it was not absolutely against minimum pricing, but the decision that the party came to was that it did not support it. I had to charm party members and I had to work on them when I became leader. Fortunately, they agreed with me and they now support the bill. I am pleased that we have put our differences with the SNP aside and are now working for the bill.

For me, the evidence is quite clear. The important connections, as referred to by Kenneth Gibson, are the connection between price and consumption, and between consumption and harm. If we look back 30 years, drink is more affordable now by between 45 per cent and 70 per cent. Price has gone up by 22 per cent, but incomes have gone up dramatically more than that—by 97 per cent in that period—so drink is much more affordable.

In the same period, consumption has gone up by 20 to 22 per cent and the number of deaths has doubled. As I have mentioned previously, I used to work in my father's shop and I cannot see a dramatic difference between the prices of whisky now and the prices that my father used to sell it at. That is simple and straightforward evidence that everybody can see.

I have seen at first hand in Dunfermline the problems in our communities. There is antisocial behaviour and families that are absolutely wrecked by alcohol abuse and the health problems that it causes. People are desperate to get into hospital to get treatment so that they can deal with their alcohol problems. That is clear evidence and a clear result.

We could easily go down the route of just doing the simple things that everybody suggests, such as education and information, but the reality is that the tougher we make the measures, the more

impact they will have. I ask the Labour Party how long we have to wait for the perfect solution before we move ahead? The bill might not be exactly right and it might not have exactly the desired effect according to the predictions, but let us get on with it because the situation is dire.

I referred earlier to public concern. I am a frequent user of Facebook and whenever I put up something about alcohol minimum pricing, the negative reaction is considerable. People out there will be angry about the measure, but if they are not angry, that is because we are not having an effect. For measures to be effective in reducing alcohol abuse, some people will have to feel them. That is why it is important that we move ahead with the bill. We have to be prepared for the backlash that I am sure will come.

I am grateful for the support of the organisations that are represented in the public gallery. Health bodies such as the British Medical Association, the Royal College of Psychiatrists and Alcohol Focus Scotland support the bill, but there are also some surprising supporters, including Tesco, as I have mentioned previously. That is the kind of backing that we will need to get us through the coming period. The battle to deal with the problem has just begun. We need to ensure that we are effective in that so that we deal with the blight of alcohol on our society.

16:27

**Richard Lyle (Central Scotland) (SNP):** As a member of the Health and Sport Committee, I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate. Alcohol minimum pricing is the latest step to change the drinking culture in Scotland. It is crucial that minimum pricing be implemented because, without it, our previous steps will prove to be less effective, because alcohol can be sold at rock-bottom prices.

As I have said previously in the chamber, before I was elected to the Parliament, I was not convinced that minimum pricing was the right way to change our drinking culture; I did not agree with the policy. However, after hearing the evidence that the Health and Sport Committee collected, I have changed my view. It is encouraging that all the major parties, apart from Scottish Labour, recognise the need for minimum pricing and are prepared to support the bill at stage 3. That type of cross-party approach will help to eradicate Scotland's drinking culture. I implore the Labour Party to change its position on the bill and to vote for it at decision time.

The culture needs to be changed. Let us not lose track of why it is important that we pass the bill. Alcohol is connected with more than 60 types of disease as well as to disability and injury, and

people in Scotland are drinking hazardously or harmfully. Scotland has one of the highest cirrhosis mortality rates in western Europe and is currently ranked eighth in the world for alcohol consumption per head of population. Alcohol is a contributory factor in a wide range of health and social problems, including accidental injury, violence and mental ill-health. Scotland has one of the highest rates of liver disease in the world and the figure continues to rise at an alarming rate.

Alcohol misuse affects not only the individual drinker, but has far-reaching consequences for friends and family, wider communities and society at large. Misuse of alcohol in Scotland costs £3.5 billion every year in direct and indirect costs. There is a growing consensus among professional bodies including the World Health Organization and the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence that minimum pricing could be the most effective means to reduce alcohol consumption.

The University of Sheffield has carried out various studies and has done modelling on minimum unit pricing, and Professor Tim Stockwell from the University of Victoria in Canada has said that introducing a minimum price for alcohol can bring significant health and social benefits that can lead to significant savings in the health service. Research has also indicated that minimum pricing will target high-alcohol products that are sold cheaply. Such products are often consumed by harmful drinkers and are very popular with young drinkers.

It is clear that alcohol consumption is a problem in this country and that something needed to be done to ease the social and economic problems that are caused by it. Studies have shown that the best way of tackling the problem is by introducing a minimum price for alcohol. Alcohol is a serious national health problem that must be tackled because it has a significant impact on the health of our nation.

I say to Scottish Labour that if I can change my mind over this issue, I am sure that others—in particular Labour members—can change their minds, too. Scottish Labour must show leadership. Its do-nothing attitude has isolated the party in the Parliament. Labour members can bluster all they want, but they have got it wrong and they must now see that. I agree with Jackson Carlaw that Scottish Labour should support the bill now.

16:31

**Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green):** I am very pleased that we are introducing minimum pricing of alcohol. The Scottish Greens have supported the bill in this session and we supported the similar bill in the previous session, before my

time here. The bill alone will not achieve the policy aim of changing Scotland's unhealthy drinking culture, but it is an important contribution, as the cabinet secretary pointed out.

BMA Scotland, Alcohol Focus Scotland and Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems stated in their joint briefing for the stage 1 debate:

"Without action on price, any other measures to reduce consumption and harm will be swimming against a very powerful tide. If we want to change 'culture' then price is a good place to start."

The bill is a good place to start, but the narrowness with which it was drafted has not allowed the fullest debate on other possible ways and complementary mechanisms to address our deep-seated issues with alcohol.

It was disappointing that the Government and Labour in the previous session were unable to work constructively together to produce a better bill. Proposals for legislation to deal with caffeinated alcohol have merit and are worthy of proper consideration. I am disappointed that in this session we did not manage to have the SNP and Labour sit down and work together on the windfall to large retailers and other issues. Such legislative opportunities are rare and it is important that we use our windows of opportunity in that regard to the best of our ability.

Throughout the bill process, the Greens have called for measures to tackle the structure of the drinks industry. To change our high-volume drinking culture we need to challenge the high-volume drinks industry. We also need to support community pubs and small-scale producers whose business models rely on quality produce, and we need to tackle the power of big brewers and producers, for whom shifting large volumes is the aim of the game.

This is a difficult issue, but I think that we all recognise that it is not only individuals who are responsible for what they drink, because their choices are made within a wider cultural setting that is heavily influenced by the nature of the drinks industry, its marketing message and the way in which it runs and supplies pubs and clubs.

So, where next? I welcome Dr Richard Simpson's and Graeme Pearson's members' bill consultation, which puts some good proposals up for debate, including limiting the caffeinated alcoholic drinks that I mentioned earlier, improving community involvement in licensing decisions and banning alcoholic drinks advertising in public places. The object of the ban would be to help to "de-normalise"—to use the consultation's language—alcohol for children.

It is essential that we achieve the culture change that we all seek. I agree with Children 1st

that passing the bill will be a huge step forward in beginning that process.

16:34

**Fiona McLeod (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP):** I welcome the debate that we have had, I welcome the bill and I welcome the fact that, at 5 o'clock tonight, it will become the law of Scotland. I also welcome the fact that the Liberal Democrats and Tories have finally seen sense and have moved from oppositional to evidence-based politics. However, I am sorry that Labour is still playing politics with Scotland's health; indeed, Labour members are making statements even today that are not based on any evidence.

It is important that the Parliament remembers why we had to introduce the bill. The figures for alcohol misuse in Scotland are both stark and frightening. Last autumn, Dr Peter Rice from the Royal College of Psychiatrists in Scotland—he is in the gallery—gave a presentation to a group of MSPs. In the past 20 years, the rate of alcohol-related mortality has gone from 15 to 40 per 100,000 of the population, and the incidence of cirrhosis of the liver has climbed from 28 to 72 per 100,000 of the population. At the same time, affordability of alcohol through off-sales has similarly rocketed. Beer has become 135 per cent more affordable and wines and spirits have become 110 per cent more affordable in that period. As we see the correlation between low prices and alcohol-related ill health, so the international research going back over a century proves that raising the price of alcohol leads to consumption falling—and when consumption falls, the incidence of alcohol-related ill health falls.

Professor Tim Stockwell, who has been mentioned, looked back over 20 years of pricing of alcohol in Canadian states and was able to show that a 10 per cent rise in the cost of alcohol led to a 3.4 per cent drop in consumption. Most relevant in that research is how harm reduction increases as price increases. Jackie Baillie and Margo MacDonald both referred to that, and Bob Doris went a long way in defending it. I refer any member who does not believe in the harm-reduction effects of the bill to the work that was done in 2009 by Meier et al. The highlight of that research, for me, is the finding that the groups whose consumption is most responsive to a rise in the price of alcohol are young people and high-risk drinkers. Those are the people in Scotland whom I hope we all want to help and support out of alcohol abuse.

In 2006, Scotland was bold with its ban on smoking in public places. We should again be proud today that Scotland learns from her mistakes and leads the way where others will follow.



16:37

**Jackson Carlaw:** This has been a short but slightly depressing debate in the sense that, even at this late stage, the argument about the bill has continued even though, after all the discussion that we have had about it over a considerable period, the balance of evidence has shifted and, despite the Labour Party's concern about and position on the alleged windfall, there is a clear view across the chamber that alcohol minimum pricing's time has come and there is support for it from all sides of the chamber.

Willie Rennie's speech encapsulated—for the first time in all the discussion that we have had—the question of the public's reaction to the policy when it is implemented. It has been said before that the Conservatives are fond of using Scotland as a guinea pig for new taxes—maybe that is not an argument that I will revisit this afternoon. In essence, however, this is a pioneering policy that we are implementing first in Scotland ahead of anywhere else.

When we were discussing the amendments, I made the point that, although the Conservatives would have liked duty to have been used, the sad truth is that, although duty ultimately raises money for the Inland Revenue and the Exchequer, the public perception of duty is not that it raises money to improve public health, but that it simply raises money for the Government. However, the very point of minimum pricing is that it does not raise money for the Government. Therefore, it cannot be argued—as Willie Rennie put it in discussing the policy's unpopularity—that the Government is implementing the policy because it wants to raise cash. The integrity that underpins the policy—the fact that the Government is implementing it because it believes that it will have a material effect on public health in Scotland—stands as a virtue.

We would like to see a participative relationship with the industry, and I hope that that will be forthcoming.

I want to return to the arguments of the Labour Party. I suppose that, in some ways, I should be pleased that the auld enemy is going to vote differently on the policy and to stand apart, but I genuinely do not believe that that is what Labour members, in their hearts, wish to find themselves doing, and the legislation will not benefit from that happening. They have made the windfall argument their red line, but I have to repeat that I do not recall, even when we discussed our joint scepticism of the legislation in the committee, that they stood up and said, "Look, we might finally be persuaded that this will work, but we're not going to support it for as long as there will be a windfall, as we see it, for the retail industry." That was never said until, suddenly, at stage 2, it became

the rock on which everything was subsequently to depend.

It is clear that, unfortunately, Labour is not prepared to support a policy that emanates from a Scottish National Party Government unless Labour's imprimatur is on it and Labour can claim ownership of it in some way. The Parliament could unite behind a public health measure that will advance the public health of Scotland. In the final analysis, of all the reasons to oppose the bill, for Labour to oppose it simply because the SNP proposed it is the saddest, most reprehensible and most depressing fact of all.

I know that there are members sitting behind the Labour front bench who do not want to be on the wrong side of the argument, who work closely with the police, the public health service, consultants and people in accident and emergency services, who have said to them, "This policy will advance public health in Scotland." I say to Labour members, although they will probably not believe it, that if they change their minds, we will not exploit that.

The Parliament has an opportunity to put its differences behind it and to unite behind a policy that we hope will work, which we must see does work, and which will advance the public health of Scotland.

16:42

**Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** In 2001, as the Deputy Minister for Justice, I recognised that Scotland had a growing problem with alcohol and that we were well into the third wave in our history of the sort of problems that were outlined by Jackie Baillie, the cabinet secretary, Richard Lyle and others. Although the level of consumption remains well below that which was reached in 1900, the increases were alarming.

In addition, it was clear that, although the price of alcohol was the same across the UK, Scots had been consuming 23 per cent more. What that said to me was that, although affordability was an issue, availability of the sort that was described by Sandra White and the culture that was described by other speakers were as important or more important.

The action that I took then was the Nicholson committee and the result was the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005. The concern was availability, because the number of licences had increased by 5,000 over the preceding 20 years, from 12,000 to 17,000.

Labour tackled some of the problems. The sales areas for alcohol in supermarkets are now restricted. No more do we have the pile it high, sell

it cheap approach at the front door, which was previously beloved of managers. There are now fewer licences, and licensing boards are at long last challenging any expansion where there is high density, using the unique provisions in the 2005 act on the public health interest and the protection of children from harm.

All that public debate and action over the past decade is having results. Consumption is down. Non-drinking reports in 13 to 15-year-olds are moving in the right direction. The proportion of consumer spend is down. Deaths are down by 15 per cent. Self-reported hazardous drinking has gone down year on year from 28 to 22 per cent, and even hospital discharges fell between 2008 and 2009 by more than the predicted fall in the first year under the Sheffield proposals.

Action is also being taken at the UK level. Labour and the coalition have increased excise duty by 2 per cent above inflation annually. To give it its due, the coalition has introduced a lower tax on lower-strength beer and increased tax on higher-strength beer. That has worked extremely well in Australia, where the only evidence for minimum unit pricing exists. Minimum unit pricing was not adopted in Australia. The definition of cider has also been tightened, and I hope that that will have a beneficial effect. The industry, which has been participative, as Jackson Carlaw would like it to be, has agreed to take a billion units of alcohol out of sales by 2015.

However, the bill is about minimum unit pricing. No matter how often the cabinet secretary repeats that the bill is not a magic bullet, it was drawn in such a way that nobody could amend it. I hope that, once we get minimum unit pricing out of the way, the SNP will sit down with us and the other parties and seriously consider some or all of the 14 measures that are proposed in the consultation on my bill which, as it says on the tin, is designed to shift the culture.

As Jackson Carlaw and Graeme Pearson said, we need a common way forward now. We achieved that with drug misuse. As Alison Johnstone indicated, it is regrettable that we have not tackled caffeinated alcohol. The cabinet secretary is still in denial about that being a problem. We could and should have a collective approach; we owe it to the people of Scotland to have that in the future. As I said, however, the bill is about minimum unit pricing, and it still irks me that even Jackson Carlaw has been convinced by the constant rhetoric from the SNP about our being against the bill because it is an SNP bill.

We are against the bill for a variety of reasons. Richer households are more likely to buy alcohol, and they are more likely to buy more alcohol than poorer households. They buy more expensive alcohol. For example, the wealthiest currently

spend 50 per cent more per unit on cider than those in poorer households. Cider is one of the contentious issues. Moreover, there is a difference in the types of alcohol that people buy. For the lowest income group, 40 per cent is spent on spirits and 28 per cent is spent on wine. For the richest income group, 16 per cent is spent on spirits and 52 per cent is spent on wine. The biggest increase is in wine, and the richest people will not be affected. There will barely be any effect.

**Mark McDonald (North East Scotland) (SNP):** Will Dr Simpson take an intervention?

**Dr Simpson:** No.

The Sheffield report predicted that off-licence sales will fall by a quarter for the poorest, but by only 12 per cent for the richest. To summarise, the rich drink more and pay more. They drink more wine and will barely be affected by minimum unit pricing.

There are more hazardous drinkers with each rising decile of income. It is the hazardous drinkers whom we need to tackle, not the harmful drinkers—they are a matter of medical treatment.

All price increases are regressive, but minimum unit pricing is far and away the most regressive measure that we can put in place. To put things simply, the UK coalition will impose a granny tax next year, and the SNP is imposing its own granny tax. A pensioner couple who want to enjoy a single dram each evening will pay £100 more annually from April 2013. [*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Kenneth Gibson should be quiet.

**Dr Simpson:** Every year, more goes straight to the alcohol retailers. It does not go to the hard-pressed national health service or the police, and it does not go on alcohol treatment; it goes straight to the retailers who behaved irresponsibly in the first place. As Nigel Hawkes said in his excellent article in the *British Medical Journal*, minimum unit pricing

“is a deal not worth doing”

because of that. In a poll in the *British Medical Journal*, 67 per cent of doctors said that it would not have an effect on drinking.

How will heavier drinkers respond? I have always said that they might show some response. Fiona McLeod has not read the evidence. In the 2008 Sheffield study, Petra Meier indicated that the price elasticity for hazardous and harmful drinkers was half—not twice—that for moderate drinkers. That reinforced the study by Chisholm in 2004, which said that harmful drinkers were around a third less sensitive to price. Therefore, at best, the jury is out.

Perhaps young binge drinkers are the public's and doctors' greatest concern. As Dr Holmes from the Sheffield team said, they are least affected of all the groups by minimum unit pricing. With a price of 45p, 18 to 24-year-olds will drink half a pint less a week on average.

**The Presiding Officer:** The member needs to wind up.

**Dr Simpson:** As always, Presiding Officer, time is against us.

As I have said before, I do not believe that this measure will work, although it will have some effect on harmful drinkers. The cabinet secretary has the opportunity to enable us to move forward unanimously in Parliament, despite our reservations, if she agrees to our reasoned amendment, which we first put forward at stage 1. I hope that that will happen, but I regret that it will probably not. I hope that minimum unit pricing will demonstrate that we were right and the others were wrong, but we should come together—*[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** Order. The member is winding up.

**Dr Simpson:** We should come together to tackle Scotland's problem, which can be tackled by price measures at a UK level and excise duty. Minimum unit pricing will affect only harmful drinkers; it will not benefit other groups.

16:50

**Nicola Sturgeon:** Richard Simpson talks of a reasoned amendment, but there is not a shred of reason in Labour's position on the issue.

For Richard Simpson to accuse anyone else in the chamber of being in denial suggests that he has an issue with self-awareness. When Labour members say that they are right and everyone else is wrong and are clearly wishing the policy to fail, they are not insulting me or anyone else in the chamber but are saying that they know better than the experts, the doctors, the nurses, the police officers, those who work with children, and the faith groups, who see the problems day in, day out. That is the arrogance of Labour's position and it is unacceptable.

It is a privilege for me to deliver what will be the final speech in support of the Alcohol (Minimum Pricing) (Scotland) Bill. It has been a long journey—it sometimes feels as if it has been very long—to get to this point. However, I am very glad that we are here now.

It is no exaggeration to say that it was one of the more frustrating experiences of my time in politics when, in the previous session of Parliament, we won the argument—as I believe we decisively

did—but still lost the vote. However, following an election, which was fought on a manifesto with minimum pricing at its heart, we are here today winning the argument and winning the vote.

There have been many very good speeches in the debate. I mention Jackson Carlaw, Bob Doris, Sandra White, Willie Rennie, who I thought made an excellent speech, Dick Lyle, Fiona McLeod and Kenny Gibson. I make particular mention of Kenny Gibson, because let us remember that he was the member who first introduced plans to introduce a smoking ban in Scotland. If Kenny Gibson had not had the guts to introduce his proposals, which were later taken up not only by SNP members but by Labour, the smoking ban would not be in place and saving lives.

We have heard quality evidence from a range of experts during the passage of the bill. Those are the experts who Labour members think they know better than. As I did in my opening speech, I publicly put on record my sincere thanks to all those experts.

I know that many retain a healthy scepticism about the bill. I want to say to them openly and honestly that I understand that scepticism. This is a deliberately bold move. Willie Rennie is right that the measure is controversial. Not everybody will agree with it and it will not be popular in every quarter of Scottish society, although I think that, in the years in which I have been proposing and advocating the policy, public opinion has shifted decisively in its favour.

This is a policy that has never been tried in this form anywhere else, which is why the robust evaluation that we talked about earlier and the sunset clause are so important. Let us not forget that it is backed by robust, credible modelling and emerging empirical evidence from Canada. It is a big policy that is designed to tackle a big issue and a big problem.

Alcohol misuse costs all of us—whether or not we drink—£900 each, every year. The truth is that we simply cannot afford to do nothing about pricing if we are serious about tackling alcohol misuse.

I said that I understand those who retain a healthy scepticism, but I deliberately exclude Labour from that understanding, because Labour's position is not healthy scepticism but crude oppositionism. Opposition for opposition's sake is never a particularly clever or attractive place to be. On an issue as important as our nation's public health, it is a disgraceful place to be, and Labour members should be ashamed of themselves.

Members should make no mistake: Labour's position on the issue is shameful. Let us cast our minds back. Before the SNP proposed minimum pricing, people such as Richard Simpson

supported it. However, on the day when the first bill on minimum pricing was introduced in Parliament and before the Health and Sport Committee or anyone else had taken a single word of evidence, Labour announced that it opposed minimum pricing. Ever since then, Labour has squirmed on the shifting sands of its petty party-political opposition as, one by one, its arguments have been demolished.

The process started with the counsel of despair that we could not introduce minimum pricing because no one else had ever done it. After we heard about the Sheffield work, the expert opinion and the emerging evidence from Canada, we suddenly did not hear that opinion from Labour as much.

We were then treated to the statistical contortions of Richard Simpson. He quotes Sheffield when it suits him and rubbishes it when it does not. He argues that, because the measure might have less impact on some groups than on others, that somehow invalidates the whole policy. All the time, he ignores the fact that the policy will have a big impact through 60 fewer deaths, 1,600 fewer hospital admissions and 3,500 fewer crimes in year 1 alone.

We heard that the policy would hit those with the lowest incomes hardest. Scottish Labour did not clear that line with Diane Abbott, who said on television last week that minimum pricing is not about hitting the poor. Scottish Labour's argument ignored the fact that 80 per cent of people in the lowest income groups do not drink at all or drink fewer than five units a week. However, people in those groups who drink are more likely to drink dangerously. Death rates among those groups are six times higher than those in the population as a whole. The reality is that the lowest income groups have the most to gain from minimum pricing.

The last, desperate line of defence was the fig leaf of so-called supermarket profits. The party that voted against the public health supplement now wants us to introduce a public health supplement. Labour's so-called reasoned amendment calls on us to "bring forward proposals" for something that already exists and which Labour voted against. If the issue was not so serious, that would be laughable.

Labour's position of putting petty party politics ahead of public health is morally flawed, and its position—in which Labour members are isolated even from the rest of their party—must also count as the biggest example of political ineptitude in the Parliament's lifetime. However, Labour members can still prove me wrong at 5 o'clock this evening, in just over a minute's time. If they do, I will be the first to congratulate them.

Those of us who will vote to pass the bill are in a very different place from Labour. We know that the policy is bold and controversial and that it must be tested in practice. We know that it might still face hurdles along the way. However, in passing the bill, we are saying something powerful and profound. We are saying that our big public health problems are not inevitable. They do not need to be an unchangeable fact of Scottish life. Things can be different. However, to be different, we need to have guts and we need to be bold and brave.

I am very glad that a clear majority of the Parliament will show today that they have the guts and gumption to do the right thing. I hope that the will of the Parliament will be respected, that the policy can be put into practice and that we can get on with changing the nation's relationship with alcohol for the better.

## Decision Time

17:00

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** There are five questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S4M-03004.1, in the name of Neil Findlay, which seeks to amend motion S4M-03004, in the name of Alasdair Allan, on why languages matter, improving young people's opportunities, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

### For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothian) (Ind)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)  
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)

Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

### Against

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)

Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 55, Against 65, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S4M-03004.2, in the name of Liz Smith, which seeks to amend motion S4M-03004, in the name of Alasdair Allan, on why languages matter, improving young people's opportunities, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

**For**

Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)  
Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)  
Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)  
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
MacDonald, Margo (Lothian) (Ind)  
McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

**Against**

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)  
Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)  
Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)  
Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)  
Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)

Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)  
Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)  
Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)  
Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)  
Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)  
Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)  
McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)  
McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)  
McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)  
Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)  
Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)  
Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)  
Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)  
Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)

Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 21, Against 99, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S4M-03004, in the name of Alasdair Allan, on why languages matter, improving young people's opportunities, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

#### For

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)  
Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)  
Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)  
Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)  
Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)  
Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)  
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)  
Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
MacDonald, Margo (Lothian) (Ind)  
Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)

McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)  
McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)  
Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

#### Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)  
Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)  
Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)  
Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)  
Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)  
McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)  
McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)  
McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)  
Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)  
Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)  
Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)  
Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 85, Against 35, Abstentions 0.

*Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament agrees that, in today's globalised world, learning other languages is more important than ever and that it is in Scotland's economic and cultural interests that young Scots are able to speak other languages; notes the report of the Languages Working Group and its recommendation that children should learn another language from primary 1; supports the Scottish Government's far-sighted and ambitious aim to enable all young people to learn two languages in addition to their mother tongue during their time at school, and welcomes the Scottish Government's plans for a pilot project programme for 2012-13 to demonstrate how the aims of the 1+2 Barcelona model of language learning can be turned into a reality in Scotland over the course of two parliamentary sessions.

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S4M-02967.1, in the name of Jackie Baillie, which seeks to amend motion S4M-02967, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on the Alcohol (Minimum Pricing) (Scotland) Bill, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

**For**

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothian) (Ind)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)  
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)  
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

**Against**

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)



Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 37, Against 82, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S4M-02967, in the name of Nicola Sturgeon, on the Alcohol (Minimum Pricing) (Scotland) Bill, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Presiding Officer:** There will be a division.

#### For

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)

Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothian) (Ind)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

#### Against

Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)

#### Abstentions

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)  
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)

McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)  
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 86, Against 1, Abstentions 32.

*Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Alcohol (Minimum Pricing) (Scotland) Bill be passed.

## Glasgow Epilepsy Genetics Service

### **The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):**

The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S4M-02485, in the name of Kenneth Gibson, on Glasgow epilepsy genetics service. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

*Motion debated,*

That the Parliament congratulates what it considers the outstanding work undertaken by the Glasgow Epilepsy Genetics Service, which was established in the Duncan Guthrie Institute of Medical Genetics at RHSC Yorkhill in 2005 with support from the Muir Maxwell Trust; commends Yorkhill for being the principal testing centre for the UK and several other countries; understands that 2,500 individuals have already benefited from a growing number of investigations, currently across six genes, leading to a genetic diagnosis of epilepsy; notes that his work aims to help individuals and families understand the cause of their own or their child's epilepsy, save unnecessary tests and that it may change clinical management and improve outcomes; applauds this NHS National Services Division-funded service while welcoming further plans to offer a comprehensive genetic panel of epilepsy genes from mid 2012, earlier testing for children and adults, and a Scottish Paediatric Epilepsy Origins and Outcome Study; notes that the service also offers genetic counselling to assist families and individuals in moving forward from their diagnosis, and believes that a greater availability of epilepsy specialist nurses, such as in Ayrshire and Arran, would allow both new and existing cases of epilepsy to benefit from tailored information on taking medications and the opportunity of making informed lifestyle choices to maximise their physical, emotional and mental wellbeing.

17:07

**Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** I am pleased that my motion was selected for debate, and I thank MSPs of all parties who have signed it and made the debate possible in this epilepsy awareness week.

The past decade has witnessed rapid advances in identifying and understanding the contribution of genetic factors in causing epilepsy. I am delighted that Scotland plays a pivotal role as a world leader in this important field of research.

Genetic testing for epilepsy can inform patients of the cause of their condition and provide an accurate and definitive diagnosis while avoiding unnecessary tests and lead to effective drug management and control.

Epilepsy is the world's most common neurological condition. It affects more than 50 million people worldwide including tens of thousands in Scotland. There are many epilepsy syndromes, categorised by seizure types and cause. However, the majority of epilepsies are characterised by recurring episodes of seizures in

which a disruption in the electrical current and activity of the brain occurs.

There are two main categories of epilepsy: symptomatic epilepsies, in which the cause of the condition is known—for example, a lesion in the brain—and idiopathic epilepsies, in which the direct cause is unknown. It is thought that genetic factors make a greater contribution to, and have greater influence on, idiopathic epilepsies.

Research has demonstrated the influence of genetic factors in epilepsy and the existence of mutant genes, including studies of cases in which similar types of epilepsies were prevalent in identical twins. However, only in the past decade has epilepsy genetic research become more advanced. Genetic mutations and variations can determine the cause of the epilepsy, as well as—to varying degrees—factors such as susceptibility, mechanisms, syndrome, treatment response and prognosis.

The genetics of idiopathic epilepsies can be complex where an interaction exists between two or more genes. The relationship between genetics and juvenile myoclonic epilepsy has been known for some time. That type of epilepsy occurs during adolescence, and is estimated to affect 10 per cent of epileptic patients. It is characterized by myoclonic jerks—the contraction of muscle groups—and tonic-clonic seizures, which are grand mal seizures that involve muscle contraction and loss of consciousness. Mutations of the GABRA1 gene are associated with the cause. That gene encodes for a GABA—gamma-aminobutyric acid—receptor protein that inhibits and regulates nerve transmission in the brain, and those mutations can therefore lead to excitatory neurotransmission and can cause seizures.

The extent and understanding of the relationship of genetics with, and its influence on, other syndromes of epilepsy is an area in which Scotland is at the forefront of research. The Glasgow epilepsy genetics service is the primary genetic testing centre for the United Kingdom and Ireland, and it performs tests for Australia, New Zealand and other countries worldwide. Requests from doctors in less-developed countries are exceptional. However, one-off ad hoc tests have been performed, based on clinical judgement and in close consultation.

The service was established in 2005 and is partly funded by the Muir Maxwell Trust. It currently tests for six genes that are associated with epilepsy and carries out free tests for Scottish hospitals. Tests for more than 2,500 patients have been undertaken, which have given them definitive diagnoses. The service and the health workers involved are recognised as world leaders in modern genetic research.

The service's on-site consultant paediatric neurologist, Dr Sameer Zuberi, gave an insightful presentation to the cross-party group on epilepsy in which he explained how new genetic research in Scotland is benefiting epileptic patients. His work and that of his colleagues is responsible for maintaining the service's esteemed reputation. Dr Zuberi specialises in epilepsies that begin in infancy, which are thought to make up 10 per cent of all epilepsies. The service focuses on the genes that are responsible for those epilepsies, including the SLC2A1 and the STXBP1 genes.

Mutations of the SLC2A1 gene are associated with early-onset absence epilepsy in young children. Those mutations lead to difficulties in the normal transportation of glucose in the brain, which is deprived of energy with the resulting effect of recurrent seizures. The discovery of that mutation has allowed clinicians to prescribe a specific treatment: the ketogenic diet. Dr Zuberi illustrated the effect of that treatment by showing a video of an epileptic child to the cross-party group. The child transformed from being unable to maintain balance while walking to being able to walk in a straight line without aid. That highlights the life-changing practical benefits of genetic testing, which include giving accurate diagnoses and allowing the correct treatment, thereby preventing potential side effects from inappropriate medication.

Epilepsy sufferers often find themselves in a spiral of taboos, misconceptions and unanswered questions. Genetic testing can offer relief by providing a scientific cause for their condition and a definitive diagnosis.

It is estimated that 23 per cent of all epileptic patients in Scotland have been misdiagnosed, with all the consequences that that brings, such as inappropriately prescribed medication and false hope. The epilepsy genetics service assesses genetic mutations and changes in genes that are associated with the onset of specific epilepsy syndromes, and determines the patient's risk of developing epilepsy. It aids in the diagnosis of epilepsy, in combination with the patient's history and an electroencephalogram.

The service also operates a genetic counselling service for patients with an identified mutated gene. Genetic counselling assesses the patient's risk and their family's risk of developing epilepsy and offers guidance, support and confidence to patients who wish to have children. A survey that was performed by the service highlighted that 80 per cent of patients who were surveyed agreed that a genetic diagnosis is beneficial. The impact of genetic testing on epilepsy is only just being explored, but it is clear that Scotland is pioneering future research.

The epilepsy genetic service aims to carry out a Scottish paediatric epilepsy origins and outcomes study, which will relate genetic factors to epilepsy types, socioeconomic factors and outcomes in all new epilepsy cases.

The relationship between pharmacogenetics and drug resistance, which addresses the effects of genetic variation on drug response and adverse effects, is an area that is showing promising signs and in which there are possibilities for future expansion.

Common variation in gene SCN1A has been proven to limit the maximum dose of the anti-epileptic drugs phenytoin and carbamazepine. Implementation of pharmacogenetics will support the clinician and improve drug management, where drugs that complement the patient's phenotype and epilepsy syndrome can be prescribed.

A dense framework of supportive staff supports the success of the Glasgow epilepsy genetics service. However, the lack of neurologist nurses has been raised numerous times, and many health boards do not have the supportive staff whom they require. The deficiency in the number of neurological specialists prevents health boards from giving some patients necessary care and support, and is an issue to be resolved. I understand that there are currently only 17 epilepsy nurse specialists in Scotland, including two in NHS Ayrshire and Arran, which covers my Cunninghame North constituency.

The success and excellent reputation of the Glasgow epilepsy genetics service is a testament to the hard work and intellect of Scotland's healthcare professionals and researchers in making Scotland a leader in ground-breaking modern genetic testing that will help epileptics and their families, not just in Scotland, but throughout Europe and the world.

17:15

**Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife)**  
**(Lab):** I congratulate Kenny Gibson on securing the debate, and I welcome the opportunity to speak about epilepsy. His analysis of the work of the genetics service was excellent. I have always had an interest in the area, not only as a medical practitioner in my previous life, but as a parliamentarian who has held the positions of convener and deputy convener on the cross-party group on epilepsy for many years.

I join Kenny Gibson in congratulating the staff at the Glasgow epilepsy genetics service. Their dedication, enthusiasm and professionalism are helping and supporting families and individuals throughout Scotland and further afield through

modern testing for genetic association with epilepsy.

As Kenny Gibson said, the team continues its support after diagnosis, but there is a need to ensure that there are effective specialist nurses throughout Scotland, and it is critically important that we have the number of nurses that we need.

An early diagnosis of the genetic element can lead to better targeted therapy of the particular form of epilepsy and better use of the medicines that might be applied, to which there are different responses. The service is an excellent demonstration of exactly where medicine is going—the interaction between genetics, the diagnostic element and the fact that treatment will become more and more specialised.

It is a tribute to the excellent work carried out by the service that it is now the primary genetic testing centre for the UK and Ireland. The service also carries out tests for Australia, New Zealand and other countries, including parts of Europe. As the service's reputation has grown, so has the number of genes that it tests for—it started with one gene in 2005, and I think that it now tests for six or more.

In the past two years, the service has tested more than 500 DNA samples, and has detected mutations, such as the SCN1A gene, in 160 individuals. Fifty per cent of those diagnosed were children under the age of five, and 20 per cent were children under the age of two. More than 80 per cent of the parents who participated in a questionnaire found the testing helpful; more than half found that the testing led to a change in treatment; and around 45 per cent found that the change significantly improved seizure control.

It is important that we draw attention to epilepsy, which is why the recent epilepsy week motion, also in Kenny Gibson's name, has gained and will gain support from across the political parties in the Parliament.

With eight people developing epilepsy every day in Scotland, continuing awareness is required and is paramount if we are to identify those who are suffering from epilepsy and ensure their early diagnosis through effective first seizure clinics, so that their epilepsy can be managed and corrected, as far as possible.

At a Long Term Conditions Alliance Scotland event that took place the other night, members heard some discussions about the work that is being done by Epilepsy Scotland on employment, which is another issue that has developed. If employers understand how to work with individuals with epilepsy, they will receive immeasurable payback from those individuals.

Epilepsy Scotland's campaigning is extensive. I have worked with the organisation on a number of issues over the past few years, particularly in relation to justice. Considerable progress is beginning to be made on ensuring that those who commit offences that are associated with post-epileptic states are treated with justice.

Considerable advances are being achieved by the service. It is an excellent unit in an area in which Scotland plays a leading role in the world. We should show gratitude to the staff involved, and I am pleased to support Kenny Gibson's motion.

17:19

**Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con):** I congratulate Kenneth Gibson on bringing this debate to the chamber, and I commend Allana Parker of the Joint Epilepsy Council and all the committed members of the cross-party group on epilepsy, who do so much to raise awareness of a condition that affects the lives of so many people of all ages in Scotland, and to bring MSPs up to speed with the advances in its treatment and the problems faced by those who are diagnosed with it.

Clearly, the work that is being done by the Glasgow epilepsy genetics service is at the cutting edge of advancing the accurate diagnosis and more focused treatment of patients with epilepsy, with 2,500 people already benefiting from a genetic diagnosis of the condition.

I find it really exciting that the Glasgow centre is now the primary genetic testing centre for six genes—so far—for the UK and Ireland, that it does tests for Australia, New Zealand and other countries worldwide, and that NHS National Services Scotland, which now funds the service, has plans to expand it and to offer more tests that are currently not available anywhere else in the UK.

Given that genetic testing technology is moving on apace, it is clear that, with many conditions, genetic profiling will become increasingly important in determining patient care. Epilepsy genetics is leading the way, and that is very good news for patients and families who live with epilepsy.

The Glasgow service also offers genetic counselling to help families cope with epilepsy once the diagnosis is made, which gives sufferers a better understanding of the importance of taking their medications and helps them to adapt their lifestyle to reach their maximum potential physically, mentally and emotionally. That is where the epilepsy specialist nurse comes in, and I think that the nurse's role is crucial to the wellbeing of all epilepsy patients, new and existing.

Unfortunately, there are not enough ESNs in Scotland to ensure that all patients receive the recommended level of care, and I worry when I am told that, in these straitened times, many specialist nurses—and not just epilepsy nurses—are being returned to general nursing duties to assist health boards to keep within their budgets. Surely that is a false economy if ever there was one.

I also find disturbing the evidence that health boards submitted to NHS Healthcare Improvement Scotland as part of a peer review of their performance against 16 of the 104 clinical standards for neurological services in Scotland. That evidence showed that only seven of the 14 health boards are meeting the selected standard for people with epilepsy, and that half the boards cannot show that healthcare professionals who carry out primary care annual reviews for patients have completed appropriate epilepsy training.

Surely patients deserve better than that, and I hope that the Scottish Government will endeavour to ensure that the recommendations that were made following the review are implemented. It was recommended that people with epilepsy should have access to a specialist service that is appropriate to their needs, which should include an epilepsy specialist nurse; that they should have access to up-to-date, appropriate information about their condition; and that primary care clinicians should undergo adequate training in epilepsy.

I very much welcome the debate, which gives us the opportunity to put on the parliamentary record the excellent pioneering work that is being undertaken in Glasgow on the genetics of epilepsy, which has the potential to bring lasting benefit to many people who are diagnosed with the condition, not only in Scotland, but throughout the world.

However, while we rejoice in Scotland's place at the forefront of research on epilepsy, we must not forget that although improvements have undoubtedly been made in neurological services in Scotland—including services for epilepsy—in recent years, there is still a long way to go before all our health boards meet all the clinical standards that have been set for neurological services. We cannot rest on our laurels until they do so.

I thank Kenneth Gibson for securing the debate, and I look forward to the minister's response.

17:23

**Paul Wheelhouse (South Scotland) (SNP):** I, too, congratulate Kenneth Gibson on securing a debate on what is a very important subject. He is absolutely right to highlight the role of the Glasgow epilepsy genetics service and the important work

that it is doing as the principal testing centre for the UK and other countries.

Like Nanette Milne, I also commend Allana Parker—who I see is now in the public gallery—and the team at Epilepsy Scotland for the excellent work that they do on behalf of those who live with epilepsy, for the tremendous support that they give to the cross-party group on epilepsy and for their work in pushing for improved services for patients in areas such as the Borders, where I know that they have been extremely active. They are playing a significant role in securing the provision of specialist nurses, who are vital not only for paediatric epilepsy patients, but for adults with the condition. I agree with Nanette Milne that the value of specialist nurses cannot be overstated. Unfortunately, although progress is anticipated in the Borders, it is likely that there will be a lack of provision for adult sufferers and the position of those with learning disabilities remains a concern for the future.

Only seven of the 14 boards meet the standards for people who have epilepsy. Nanette Milne set out the detail of that, so I will not go over it. Unfortunately, Borders NHS Board meets only four of the 16 neurological health services standards criteria, whereas Dumfries and Galloway NHS Board meets 13 of them, so it is not merely an issue of rurality. There are rural health boards that are meeting the standards and others that are not. I know that NHS Borders chief executive Calum Campbell empathises with epilepsy sufferers and that there is a will to do work in the area. However, there is clearly still a lot to do to ensure that patients' needs are met in future.

Epilepsy Scotland has provided us with information on progress that has been made in the Borders, such as the appointment of a consultant neurologist and two clinical nurse specialists. However, action is required to

“ensure the engagement and commitment of senior management in the future development of its neurology service ... conduct audits to obtain robust data to monitor performance against standards ... ensure that patients with long term neurological conditions, in particular epilepsy, have access to a specialist services which meets their needs”,

which is clearly not happening at the moment, and to

“provide neurology specific training and education”,

as highlighted by Nanette Milne. That action is required to ensure that other healthcare professionals who are in contact with people who might have epilepsy understand the condition and symptoms.

I am one of the 54,000 people in Scotland—or one in 97—who have had epilepsy. I am extremely fortunate that I had it as a child and grew out of

the symptoms. Aside from memories of having to undergo electroencephalograms, take bitter pills, which I hated doing as a small child—I think that phenobarbitone was the nasty piece that I had to take—and make some unscheduled visits to the sick kids hospital, there have been no lasting effects. I have been very lucky.

The work of Dr Andrew Elder, a consultant in acute elderly medicine who appeared before the cross-party group, highlights the fact that there is a clear link between dementia and epilepsy. Because we have a rapidly ageing population, that can only present us with even bigger problems in the future. That is why it is so important for us to have specialist services in place.

Demand for such services will probably grow. As Kenneth Gibson said, not all seizures are the same, so it is vital that there are people with specialist knowledge who can distinguish different types of epilepsy and target the therapeutics appropriately. I commend the work of Dr Sameer Zuberi and his genetics team. He presented evidence to the cross-party group that will, I hope, lead to better targeting of the therapeutics to ensure that we do not use overly aggressive medication when it is not needed, and that we pick up on those individuals who do not actually suffer from epilepsy but suffer from parallel conditions.

17:27

**Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD):** I congratulate Kenneth Gibson on securing tonight's debate. He gave a scientific and detailed introduction to the Glasgow genetics service to which I do not want to add other than to congratulate the service on its work. I intend to focus my remarks on the other part of the motion, which relates to epilepsy support nurses and the other support that should be available to people in Scotland.

Scotland has 54,000 people with epilepsy and each one is an individual with potential. We should ensure that everyone, regardless of their condition, gets to live life to their full potential.

I thank Allana Parker, Epilepsy Scotland and all the other charities that are involved in providing information and advice to people who have the condition. Their work is invaluable.

Good management of epilepsy is important, and that is where epilepsy specialist nurses can really help. They work alongside and complement the consultant. New patients can be seen promptly. Nurse-led review clinics offer one-to-one support that I know is really valued, especially at the outset after a diagnosis of epilepsy. Specialist nurses assist with and improve the transition from child to adult care—the cross-party group has talked about that a lot and about how much still needs to be

done. Specialist nurses also provide better epilepsy management and develop good links with individual patients, offering them and their carers co-ordinated help. They do all that in a real value-for-money way. Each ESN costs the health service around £40,000 and can care for around 250 people.

As those of us who are involved in the cross-party group on epilepsy know, the provision of ESNs is patchy at best. Last week, Epilepsy Scotland provided the group with updated figures. Within my own region, NHS Grampian and NHS Tayside have some provision but I do not doubt that much more could be done. I hope that the minister will address that point in his closing speech.

Earlier this year, I visited the Quarriers epilepsy fieldworkers office in the north-east to learn about the work that they carry out across Aberdeen city and Aberdeenshire. I was really impressed with the range of support that they offer and the wealth of experience and expertise that they bring to people who have epilepsy, their families and carers and to other health professionals.

The theme of this week's national epilepsy week is "celebrating achievement". Newspapers and other media have certainly played their part, and I congratulate *The Guardian* in particular on its supplement on epilepsy earlier this week.

Raising awareness of epilepsy and the needs of those with the condition is a key part of ensuring that everyone can reach their potential. The biggest risk to young people with epilepsy is a lack of understanding, and we must ensure that they are not unnecessarily excluded from activities as they grow up.

I was disappointed to note the fresh research that Young Epilepsy published this week. It reveals that many young people are stigmatised and that their health and wellbeing are put at risk because others have a poor knowledge and understanding of their condition. David Ford, Young Epilepsy's chief executive, said:

"A major shift in awareness and understanding is the only thing that is going to improve this situation. We know that young people with epilepsy are getting a raw deal when it comes to education, employment and social interaction".

That is not good enough in Scotland today, and we must all challenge it—not just this week, but all year round.

It is particularly important that our young people are supported both in schools and in leisure activities. The involvement of epilepsy champions is a great way of providing role models for young people who might just be coming to terms with a diagnosis of epilepsy.

On that note, it is fitting that I close with a quote from Commonwealth, European and world champion 400m hurdler Dai Greene. He was diagnosed with epilepsy as a teenager and has pledged his support to help Young Epilepsy raise awareness—he certainly shows that young people do not need to let epilepsy get in the way of achieving goals. He said:

"My advice to other young people living with the condition would be, don't let it hold you back because anything is possible. Regardless of whether you have epilepsy, or any other condition to be honest, it takes a lot of hard work and effort to get where you want to be. I firmly believe that if you put the time and effort in you will be successful".

Let us make sure that all our young people who live with epilepsy can live their lives to the full. I pledge to continue work with others in the cross-party group and do all that I can to remove the unnecessary hurdles that face those young people.

17:32

**The Minister for Public Health (Michael Matheson):** Like others, I thank Kenny Gibson for bringing forward the debate. I congratulate him on securing time to allow this important topic to be debated.

In his comments, Kenny Gibson made a clear case for how progress has been made with genetic testing and, in particular, the benefits that testing can have for infants. Testing has also changed the way in which clinicians, particularly neurologists, manage conditions such as epilepsy. Early diagnosis can often save young children from undergoing invasive and complex tests. That is why genetic testing can have such benefits.

As several members have mentioned, the epilepsy genetics service that is on offer at the Royal hospital for sick children in Glasgow is leading the United Kingdom in the provision of DNA testing for various types of epilepsy. The service's success is based on the efforts of those who are involved, the wider epilepsy community and on a number of years of investment.

It would probably be fair to say that Scotland is now in the enviable position of being able to continue to improve our understanding of epilepsy as a condition; to ensure that children receive earlier diagnosis, which will ensure that they receive the most appropriate therapy at the earliest opportunity—Richard Simpson referred to that; to ensure that people's treatment is tailored in the way that is most appropriate to them, which will reduce the potential for serious complications; and, in general, to get a better understanding of the treatment that can be provided to those who have epilepsy.

Kenny Gibson also referred to the Muir Maxwell Trust, and it is fair to say that the service has benefited greatly over the years from support through that trust. I offer the Muir Maxwell Trust my sincere thanks for the way in which it has assisted in supporting the funding of new equipment and for its wider contribution to epilepsy research. That is extremely appreciated by the Government and—I have no doubt—by those who have benefited from the work of the service.

In Scotland, we now have four regional centres that can ensure that, once someone is diagnosed, genetic counselling can be provided to both the individual concerned and their family. As Kenny Gibson rightly highlighted, that is extremely important for the families, as it allows them to make informed decisions about treatment and care in the future.

It is important to recognise that the laboratory services that are provided at the centres are funded by NHS Scotland's National Services Division, which is responsible for commissioning the molecular genetics and cytogenetics laboratories in Scotland as well as for the Scottish paediatric epilepsy network. The approach of using NHS Scotland's National Services Division is unique in not only the UK, but the world, because it is the only service of its type that does not operate on a commercial basis. In that sense, it exemplifies the way in which things can be done collectively for the wider benefit.

A number of other organisations support the work that is taking place in Glasgow. There are plans to invest further in the PCR equipment, which will allow an increase in the number of genetic tests and in the range of tests that will be available. That will allow us to continue to improve the rate of early diagnosis and it will help the service to retain its status as a leading one in Europe, to which a number of members have referred.

Nanette Milne referred to the neurological standards. It is fair to say that the genetics service often complements our work to improve neurological standards. In the past two years, we have provided £1.2 million to NHS boards for the implementation of the neurological standards. A key part of that process is about ensuring that services are safe, effective and person centred in the way in which they provide care for those with a neurological condition.

Nanette Milne referred to the recent peer reviews that have taken place among the boards, which highlighted a number of gaps in the way in which boards are performing against the standards. That was the very reason for the peer reviews: to flush out the gaps so that we have a clearer understanding of where we need to make

progress, which is what we now intend to do. We have provided additional funding to the Neurological Alliance to establish a national advisory group, which will work on the neurological standards and advise and work with boards to ensure that we continue to improve in the area.

Kenny Gibson, Nanette Milne and others referred to the role of epilepsy nurses. In recent years, the number of specialist nurses in the NHS has increased considerably, and we now have around 2,250. I often hear concerns from those who are involved in other long-term conditions that some specialist nurses engage in clinical work that is outwith their specialism. I am sure that all members will recognise that, in the current period of financial constraint, it is appropriate for boards to consider the skills and talents of their nursing staff and ensure that they are utilised to best effect. However, the neurological standards set out clearly the important role that specialist nurses have as core members of the multidisciplinary team. We see the specialist nurses as having a clear and important role in implementing the standards. I recognise members' anxieties, some of which reflect the difficult financial climate in which boards are operating. Notwithstanding that, we see the specialist nurses as having an important role.

Richard Simpson referred to ensuring that employers have a better understanding of epilepsy. In recent years, we have funded Epilepsy Scotland to provide literature to assist employers and to ensure that they are aware of and have greater understanding of the condition. We have also funded Epilepsy Scotland's employer of the year awards, which aim to raise awareness of the condition and the role of employers.

We recognise the invaluable role of the genetics service in Glasgow and we will continue to work with and support it in undertaking that role. I congratulate all those who have been involved in delivering the service and who have supported it financially and in other ways to become a world-leading service of which we in Scotland can rightly be proud.

*Meeting closed at 17:39.*



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