



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Official Report

# MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 12 September 2012

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# Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 12 September 2012

[The Presiding Officer *opened the meeting at 14:00*]

## Scottish Government Question Time

### Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth

#### Business Rates (Review)

**1. Mark McDonald (North East Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to review business rates. (S4O-01246)

**The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Derek Mackay):** The Scottish Government intends to review business rates later this year.

**Mark McDonald:** In that review, what does the minister intend to do with the small business bonus scheme, which has been extremely popular with small businesses and from which many of them have derived significant benefits? Does he foresee the scheme having a key role going forward?

**Derek Mackay:** The review will consider how the business rates system can better support business and economic growth. It will cover a range of issues, including the effectiveness of current tax breaks—worth more than £540 million this year—rating appeals, transparency, tax avoidance and other matters. However, we have committed to continue the small business bonus scheme for the lifetime of this session of Parliament, thus providing a lifeline to more than 85,000 small business premises across Scotland.

**Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):** I ask the minister to consider a situation that arose in a number of places in Scotland, but particularly in Ballater in the north-east where a revaluation resulted in businesses going from receiving a 100 per cent discount under the small business bonus scheme to receiving no discount at all. Is there a means by which small businesses can in the future be protected from such changes?

**Derek Mackay:** I confirm that such matters can feature as part of the review that we are about to conduct.

#### Public Sector Pay Levels (Temporary and Agency Staff)

**2. John Park (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it

includes the rates of pay of temporary and agency staff when considering public sector pay levels. (S4O-01247)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney):** We do not directly take into account the pay of temporary and agency staff when considering public sector pay policy. In taking decisions on public sector pay levels, we look at the impact of each of the elements of the pay policy on the wider public sector as well as those bodies that are directly subject to the pay policy.

**John Park:** I thank the cabinet secretary for that response. I welcome the decision by the Scottish Government to ensure that all directly employed employees are paid the living wage.

I am sure that the cabinet secretary will agree with me that if employees who work for the Scottish Government—or for any other employer—are paid what is regarded as the going rate in terms of the living wage, that might encourage their employer to look at expanding the use of agency and temporary workers. What is the Scottish Government's view on ensuring that the living wage is extended to agency and temporary workers who work in the Scottish Government?

**John Swinney:** I confirm that, in relation to employment arrangements, the Government's preference is not to encourage the use of temporary and agency staff. We prefer to have employment arrangements that are structured around permanent employees. I am sure that Mr Park would welcome that.

Given that the Government is committed to the implementation of the living wage, of course we would encourage others to follow our example. In yesterday's debate I referred to the increasing prevalence of the policy in the local authority community. Clearly, in the private sector there is an opportunity to emulate the Government in that respect.

I assure Mr Park that in our pay arrangements we try to maximise the proportion of permanent staff among our employees, who will carry entitlement to the living wage arrangements. We will continue to encourage others to follow the leadership that the Government has demonstrated on this issue.

#### Business Improvement Districts

**3. Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government how businesses can benefit from being part of business improvement districts. (S4O-01248)

**The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Derek Mackay):** Business improvement districts such as those in Inverness

and Elgin enable the private and public sectors to work together and invest in improvements to the local business environment while contributing to the wider regeneration of the local community. Businesses also benefit from the sharing of good practice across BID areas.

**Jamie McGrigor:** The minister may be aware that, in Argyll, Oban businesses are currently voting on whether to establish a BID in the town, with the result of the postal ballot due in early October. Will he join me in paying tribute to the BID4Oban team, who are seeking support from their fellow businesspeople for their positive proposal? Does he agree that a BID in Oban has the potential to boost the local economy and support local retailers, as has happened through BIDs elsewhere?

**Derek Mackay:** Yes, absolutely. The Scottish Government concurs with those words. A number of BIDs are being developed—18 are at the development stage, six of which are in Mr McGrigor's constituency. I hope that the Oban result is positive, leads to change and further contributes to the agenda to regenerate that community through, for example, the CHORD—Campbeltown, Helensburgh, Oban, Rothesay and Dunoon—programme.

**Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP):** The minister is obviously aware of how the BID process and setting up a BID can benefit a community. Jamie McGrigor expressed very eloquently how a BID can support Oban. Hamilton, too, is going through the BID process and its ballot deadline is 11 October. I extend an invitation to the minister from the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce to visit Hamilton just before the ballot deadline in order to lend his support.

**Derek Mackay:** I confirm that we support that BID proposal. I support it personally and, diary permitting, I will try to make the deadline for the ballot. I look forward to a positive outcome. I hope that BIDs will help to regenerate communities such as Hamilton.

#### **Tourism Promotion (West Scotland)**

**4. Stuart McMillan (West Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what recent action it has taken to promote tourism in West Scotland. (S4O-01249)

**The Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism (Fergus Ewing):** The west of Scotland is promoted throughout VisitScotland's suite of marketing activity, including on the organisation's national tourism website, which receives circa 13 million visits annually.

**Stuart McMillan:** Last weekend, I attended a few of the doors open day events in Inverclyde—I

am sure that colleagues from across the chamber did the same in their parts of the world. I was disappointed that Newark castle in Port Glasgow was not involved this year, although it has been involved in previous years. I ask the minister to speak to Historic Scotland and to encourage it to reconsider that decision for future years, please.

**Fergus Ewing:** I thank the member for advance notice of the content of his supplementary question. Doors open day gives visitors free access to hundreds of fascinating buildings throughout Scotland that are normally closed to the public, such as the Inn Bru factory, which members may be interested in visiting. The point of the event is to open the doors of buildings that are normally closed to the public. I am advised that Newark castle is already open to the public seven days a week from 1 April to 30 September and that it was for that reason that Historic Scotland decided not to include it in this year's event. I take the opportunity to recommend that colleagues pay a visit to Newark castle before 30 September.

#### **Retail Sales and High Street Footfall (Scottish Borders)**

**5. John Lamont (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on figures showing an 8.2 per cent drop in retail sales on 2011 and an average 17 per cent drop in high street footfall across eight towns in the Borders in the last four years. (S4O-01250)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney):** The Government takes a number of steps to support Scotland's retail sector through actions such as the small business bonus scheme and other reliefs, which provide zero or reduced business rates for 63 per cent of retail premises in Scotland. The Scottish Government is also working to provide support for our town centres. On 9 September, the Deputy First Minister announced details of the Scottish Government's national town centre review. As part of that review, we are working with the Scottish Retail Consortium to consider the role of the modern town centre in 21st century Scotland.

**John Lamont:** Towns such as Selkirk and Duns in my constituency have seen drops of up to 30 per cent in footfall on their high streets. Retailers are crying out for more help from the Scottish Government but, instead, the Government is hitting them further with damaging measures such as the SNP's retail tax, which has led to a £95 million increase in business rates. Will the Scottish Government finally take real steps to help Scottish shops and high-street businesses and stop that hugely damaging measure?

**John Swinney:** It is some years—to my shame—since I have been in Duns, but I cannot imagine that many properties there will be paying the Government's public health supplement. If I am incorrect, Mr Lamont can correct me, but as he is not doing so I think that I am on safe ground.

Mr Lamont's point is utterly misplaced, given that the Government is providing support for the majority—I would imagine—of retailers in Duns town centre and the other town centres that he mentioned through reduced or zero business rates. That is a direct contribution to the town centres to which he referred.

Through the work that my colleague Richard Lochhead is doing on food and drink, the Government is getting involved in actively encouraging quality local produce—Mr Lamont represents a part of Scotland that has a fine reputation in that regard—to be available and promoted locally. That is an essential part of linking together all the reasons why people should shop locally in some of the fine towns and communities that Mr Lamont represents.

#### **Budget (Block Grant Reductions)**

**6. Fiona McLeod (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it will use the budget to address the reductions in the block grant from the United Kingdom Government. (S4O-01251)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney):** Within the financial constraints that have been imposed, we are maximising the impact of our spending on the economy, jobs and improving public services. Subject to further detail in next week's draft budget, I can outline our approach.

We are prioritising infrastructure investment to generate jobs and stimulate growth; accelerating capital; switching revenue to capital; and using the non-profit distributing pipeline. Announcements in February and June further committed more than £500 million to infrastructure over the period to 2014-15. Meanwhile, we are protecting national health service budgets; maintaining 1,000 additional police officers; upholding the council tax freeze; ensuring that there are no tuition fees; improving school quality; and maintaining teacher numbers.

All that is set against continuing year-on-year real-terms cuts to the Scottish budget. The UK Government's economic strategy has failed, and its austerity approach is at odds with the wishes of the people of Scotland.

**Fiona McLeod:** I look forward to seeing the detail of the budget in the coming weeks. If Westminster finally gave the go-ahead to the

Scottish Government's list of shovel-ready projects—including the University of Glasgow centre for virology research, which has been proposed for the Garscube estate in my constituency—how much of an impact would that have on construction and employment in Scotland?

**John Swinney:** The Government has estimated that the list of projects that we have proposed to the UK Government would, if applied, have the effect of supporting more than 4,000 jobs. We estimate that approximately 60 per cent of those jobs would be in the construction sector.

Any member who has visited any of the construction projects that are under way in Scotland at present will have noticed the significant amount of personnel who are involved in the management and operation of the sites. Encouraging further projects and capital investment would be a welcome contribution to economic recovery.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):** Question 7 has not been lodged, for understandable reasons.

#### **Construction Projects (United Kingdom Government Approvals)**

**8. Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what the impact on the economy would be if the shovel-ready projects proposed to the UK Government were approved. (S4O-01253)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney):** As I said in my answer to Fiona McLeod, if the projects on the list that the Government has provided were taken forward, they would provide an immediate boost to the construction sector and the wider economy by supporting more than 4,000 jobs. They would help to kick-start wider private sector investment and provide a double benefit to the economy: a short-term benefit from the building of the assets and a long-term benefit from their use.

The Scottish Government recognises the importance of sustained capital investment, and we have repeatedly called for action from Westminster to bring forward capital investment now in order to boost the economy.

**Colin Beattie:** In my constituency of Midlothian North and Musselburgh, even a small proportion of the work related to the £300 million of shovel-ready projects would help to kick-start the local economy, which relies substantially on construction-related projects for its prosperity.

Does the cabinet secretary agree that the United Kingdom Chancellor of the Exchequer and

the Westminster Government are significantly failing the people of Scotland in refusing to back the Scottish Government's efforts to maintain employment, jobs and prosperity in Scotland?

**John Swinney:** One point that I will make to Mr Beattie in agreeing with the thrust of his question is that, this morning, my first engagement was with the Fife economy partnership, involving a range of members from the Fife Chamber of Commerce. As regards the concerns expressed at that event about the health of the construction sector, it was clear to me that the type of investments that Mr Beattie talks about are of real relevance in stimulating local economies.

I assure Mr Beattie that the Government will continue to pursue that approach with the United Kingdom Government. The essential impact of the shovel-ready projects is that they provide immediate economic benefit in local areas in Scotland and have the effect of creating wider investment confidence, which is crucial in meeting the challenges that we face. This Government will continue to pursue that line of argument with the UK Government. Of course, I am also considering those issues as I plan the budget statement, which will be given to Parliament next Thursday.

**Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab):** I ask Mr Swinney what the impact has been on the Scottish economy—on joblessness in particular—of his decision as finance minister to cut £86 million from the housing budget.

**John Swinney:** I am surprised that Mr Macintosh has returned to that territory after the explanation that the Deputy First Minister gave him so forcefully yesterday.

The Deputy First Minister was able to demonstrate that although this Government has had, of necessity, to allocate a lower amount of money to the housing budget because of the 33 per cent cut in our budget—of course, to be fair to my Conservative colleagues, that is a lower cut to the budget than would have been applied had Mr Macintosh's friends remained in government in the United Kingdom—we have still been able to build more social housing, despite those difficulties, than were built under the Administration that Mr Macintosh supported.

We have therefore been able to support construction employment; I add the schools that are being built, the roads that are being developed, the bridges that are being built and the other projects that are being taken forward in Scotland.

There is strong ground for good agreement to be reached in this Parliament to make the point to the United Kingdom Government that the reductions in capital investment have gone too far. Given all the information that I marshalled in

Parliament yesterday, there is an absolute necessity for sustained investment in capital projects. We hope that we will have Mr Macintosh's support in making that case to the United Kingdom Government.

### Construction Sector (Stimulation)

**9. Michael McMahon (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what measures it will put in place to stimulate the construction sector. (S4O-01254)

**The Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism (Fergus Ewing):** In the face of United Kingdom Government cuts to the Scottish capital budget of over 30 per cent, the Scottish Government is maximising its capital expenditure to support infrastructure investment and jobs across Scotland. We are switching more than £700 million from resource to capital spending over the spending review period. We are also taking forward a new programme of non-profit distribution investment worth £2,500 million. As a result, total capital spending will be more than 25 per cent higher in 2014-15 than in 2011-12.

**Michael McMahon:** In the past few months, as the minister will know, my constituency has—among other setbacks—lost more than 500 jobs at W J Harte Construction Ltd. It has recently seen Laing O'Rourke Construction Ltd decide to close its Bison concrete plant, where it makes an array of products for the construction sector.

At Terex, 70 job losses have been announced, and it is to go on to short-time working. I recently visited Terex and I was disappointed to learn just how little support and advice it has received from Government bodies, when it is facing its most difficult period in years, due to contraction in its main markets overseas, which are very dependent on the economies of America and China. Will the minister investigate why Terex believes that it is being overlooked and not considered favourably in relation to ticking all the boxes because it does not put up wind turbines, but makes equipment to build roads and to dig quarries?

**Fergus Ewing:** We certainly agree and are acutely aware of the difficulties that the construction sector faces across Scotland. Michael McMahon knows that we make every effort to engage with businesses; we will certainly do so in the Terex case since he has raised it in the chamber. I undertake to look personally into that case and to report back to him as quickly as possible.

I also engaged with Michael McMahon on the W J Harte case. In that very difficult case, the partnership action for continuing employment response was welcomed by Mr McMahon and the employees who had the opportunity of receiving



PACE services. In fact, 38 out of the 48 who attended one of the events said that it could not really have been better, which was a tribute from people who, in a particularly difficult situation, were able to recognise that the PACE service in Scotland has been very good during successive terms of Government.

These are very serious matters. We have brought forward a range of construction projects—I do not have time to read out the whole list—but we have transferred money to capital precisely to address the issues that Michael McMahon has fairly raised today.

### **Remploy**

**10. Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what recent discussions it has had with the United Kingdom Government regarding the future of Remploy factories in Scotland. (S4O-01255)

**The Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism (Fergus Ewing):** Scottish ministers and officials are in regular contact with the United Kingdom Government regarding the future of Remploy factories in Scotland. I have been engaged directly in dialogue with Maria Miller, the former UK Minister for Disabled People. Following the UK Cabinet reshuffle, the new minister, Esther McVey, will meet me during a visit to the Scottish Parliament in October.

Parallel to that ministerial engagement, I have set up a stakeholder group which includes the Department for Work and Pensions, Remploy, the trade unions GMB and Unite, Scottish Enterprise, Just Enterprise, the voluntary sector, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and partnership action for continuing employment—Scotland's redundancy support and advice service. The group has met under my chairmanship on three occasions and will meet again on 19 September. It is working with the DWP to ensure the best possible outcomes for Remploy staff.

**Bob Doris:** The minister will be aware of my ongoing concerns about the sales process for Remploy Springburn and how workers and unions have been treated. Does the minister agree that, with the new minister Esther McVey MP now being in charge of disability issues at UK level, the UK Government has the opportunity to rethink its approach, to guarantee workers' rights under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations, and to reconsider the detrimental pension and redundancy conditions? When he meets the minister, will he make such representations to her, as I have done?

**Fergus Ewing:** Bob Doris has raised the issue of Springburn in his constituency and members

from all parties have raised the plight of the Remploy workforce. I cannot think of any workforce that is more deserving of our support, or that is more vulnerable, than the Remploy workforce. At all stages of the process, we have made crystal clear our views about the UK Government's decisions, and we adhere to those views. Our duty now is to do the very best with the situation as it is, rather than as we would prefer it to be. We will continue to do everything possible to assist the workers who are affected in Remploy factories throughout Scotland—not only those who are in phase 1 and who face the prospect of immediate redundancy, but those in other factories whose futures are uncertain. I am sure that we will come back to the issue many times in this chamber in the months ahead.

**Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab):** I thank the minister for his support, but he will be aware that the leader of Scottish Labour has written to him to ask whether it would be possible for the Scottish Government to consider a range of measures, like those that have been proposed by the Welsh Assembly Government, such that employers who wished to take on redundant ex-workers from Remploy would be assisted to do so for up to four years in order to carry out any necessary modifications to their premises and to see to other related matters. The minister might not be aware that I have written to the Equal Opportunities Committee to ask that it undertake an inquiry into the entire issue of Remploy because—as Bob Doris rightly said—there are a number of issues about how the process has been carried out. Does the minister intend to agree to Ms Lamont's proposals, and will he back my proposals?

**Fergus Ewing:** I am afraid that I am not aware of all those matters. In particular, I am not aware of any detailed proposals having been received, but I say to Patricia Ferguson that I undertake to look into that and at any correspondence that has been received, and to reply as swiftly as possible.

Plainly, we will consider seriously any appropriate and workable suggestions for measures that could be undertaken. That is why we work so closely with people who are involved, such as the trade union representatives who sit with other colleagues on the stakeholder group that I have chaired on three occasions, and will chair again on 19 September.

We are also looking—my colleague Nicola Sturgeon will pursue this—at ways in which we can assist supported workplaces through local government procurement. That is an area in which we have done sterling work, which I believe offers hope for the future.

Finally—albeit that we are not in the driving seat because we are not in charge of the process of

trying to ensure that the Remploy factories that face closure have every chance of continuing under new ownership or management—we hope that that can be achieved for as many of the factories as possible. It is a challenging task, but we look forward to working with all members in pursuing it over the very short period of the next few weeks.

### **Planning System (Performance Improvement)**

**11. Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how it plans to work with local authorities to improve performance in relation to the planning system. (S4O-01256)

**The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Derek Mackay):** We are determined to see an improvement in performance across Scotland and we have already worked closely with planning authorities on the new planning performance framework. Authorities' first performance reports are due this month and we will discuss with them the implementation of their service improvement priorities.

**Graeme Dey:** Although councils at times create difficulties through the way in which they interpret planning guidelines, it is also the case that being at the coalface gives them a feel for how the system might be simplified and improved. Will opportunities be afforded to individual local authorities to feed into the process of reform, or will the Scottish Government engage only indirectly via the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities?

**Derek Mackay:** A range of activities can be undertaken to ensure that individual local authorities' voices are heard, including through the professional organisation Heads of Planning Scotland, through the continuing consultation "Planning Reform: Next Steps", through the national planning policy framework and through the performance framework. There is a range of ways in which local authorities can contribute their views on how planning can be shaped to support sustainable economic growth in Scotland.

**Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):** The minister will be aware that Eric Pickles announced in the House of Commons last week the intention south of the border to relax certain planning laws, including a temporary suspension of certain requirements. Has the minister considered whether those steps would be appropriate in Scotland, given that they could boost the economy and construction and, by reducing councils' workloads, perhaps improve their efficiency?

**Derek Mackay:** I inform Mr Johnstone that I will return to Parliament next week with a comprehensive statement on planning matters. It

will show that, once again, the Scottish Government is ahead of our United Kingdom counterparts on matters such as planning and supporting economic recovery. We will, of course, examine whatever measures are announced in England or other places and ensure that we have a competitive edge. I am sure that Mr Johnstone will listen carefully to my announcement to Parliament next week.

### **West Scotland (Additional Funding)**

**12. Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide additional funding to local authorities in West Scotland to deal with unemployment, deprivation and poverty. (S4O-01257)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney):** Sustainable employment is critical to addressing disadvantage and poverty. The Scottish Government is providing a range of funding to local authorities in West Scotland to support that. This year, local authorities in the region received £599,241 specifically to support the delivery of opportunities for all, including 16+ learning choices and activity agreements.

Additionally, North Ayrshire and Renfrewshire councils, which are in the West Scotland region, are receiving £1.6 million of the extra £9 million of funding that is available this year to support youth employment. Those authorities are also benefiting from European structural funding of £19.8 million until September 2013 and £4.3 million of European regional development funding until July 2014.

**Mary Fee:** Does the cabinet secretary agree that cutting the revenue allocation to Renfrewshire Council, which received the fifth-worst cut, will have a serious impact on services on which the most disadvantaged people depend?

**John Swinney:** As Mary Fee will know—and as I think I explained to her and her colleagues Jim Sheridan MP and Douglas Alexander MP on what we might call the picket lines of the Cabinet meeting in Renfrew—Renfrewshire Council's funding settlement is driven by the local authority distribution formula that is agreed by all local authorities through the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. Although it is essentially a population-based formula that predominantly structures the amount of resources allocated to individual localities, it takes due account of deprivation, rurality and sparsity of population, in certain cases, and of a variety of other indicators in order to arrive at the fairest distribution of resources around the country. The mechanism was last reviewed in the spending review and was signed up to by all local authorities in Scotland.

### Public Sector Pension Reform

**13. Jamie Hepburn (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it has received clear information from the United Kingdom Government regarding its plans for public sector pension reform. (S4O-01258)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney):** In March 2012, we entered in good faith into negotiations with stakeholders to develop pension scheme designs that are appropriate for Scottish circumstances. Since then, the UK Government has indicated that it intends to use its forthcoming public service pensions reform bill to prescribe a number of significant constraints to that process. That has changed the context of our negotiations significantly, so I am actively pressing the UK Government for further clarity as a matter of urgency.

**Jamie Hepburn:** Is the cabinet secretary able to tell us the issues on which the UK Government has not provided the clarity that he is seeking, and how they might impact on the ability to negotiate?

**John Swinney:** As I have indicated, the issues are the subject of active correspondence with the Treasury. I wrote to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury most recently on 7 September—one of a number of letters that I have written seeking clarity on these points.

I understand that the constraints that I referred to will be set out in the public service pension reform bill that the UK Government will publish later this week. Among the key questions on which I am seeking clarity is whether an absolute link will be established in statute between the normal pension age and the state pension age. I think that if there is to be flexibility, there is significant scope for negotiation in that area. However, I fear that such a link will be established, which will reduce flexibility in negotiating pension scheme arrangements in Scotland.

The bill might have other characteristics that will restrict our ability to undertake negotiations in Scotland; in particular, I am interested to know whether the powers and responsibilities of Scottish Government ministers will be eroded in any way by the implications of the bill, which might involve giving the Treasury the ability to exercise control over changes to scheme regulations beyond the current areas of activity.

Although I am unable to give Mr Hepburn a clear answer to his question just now, I suspect that some of the details will become clear in the not-too-distant future.

### Long-term Unemployment

**14. Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to tackle long-term unemployment. (S4O-01259)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney):** The range of actions that the Government is taking on the issue of long-term unemployment is captured in its budget proposals and capital programmes. We will shortly publish our refreshed employability framework, which seeks to better align services for people who are out of work and thus help them to overcome their barriers to employment. We are also investing £64.6 million of European social funds to support employability initiatives worth £168 million in some of the most disadvantaged parts of the country.

Moreover, through our youth employment strategy, we are focusing significant efforts on strengthening transitions for young people from school into appropriate training, work experience and employment. Those efforts are supported by an additional £30 million-worth of investment.

**Iain Gray:** I thank the cabinet secretary for quite a broad-brush reply to what was, in fairness, a broad-brush question. However, the devil is often in the detail. In my constituency, the number of people who have been claiming jobseekers allowance for more than 12 months has almost doubled. Today's unemployment figures mean that that situation is unlikely to have improved. Behind that detail, figures that were released yesterday showed that East Lothian and East Renfrewshire had recorded the largest rises in female unemployment over the past four years—rises of more than 275 per cent.

The cabinet secretary will be well aware of the strong link between female unemployment in particular and child poverty. Today, the Scottish Government held a summit on women's unemployment. Will he mention any practical policy actions that he expects to emerge from the summit and which he will implement that might give some hope to the unemployed women in my constituency?

**John Swinney:** The Government recognises the seriousness of the issue that Mr Gray raises. Yesterday's debate, the updates to our economic interventions and the variety of different interventions that the Government is making to support people to enter the labour market and, particularly on capital investment, to support the economy in order to create job-growing projects, will all assist in stimulating the economy and encouraging people back into employment.

Mr Gray is correct that, today, the Government—along with the Scottish Trades Union Congress—hosted a summit on female

employment. I expect to hear the outcome of that event shortly. As part of that process, the Government recognises the link that Iain Gray establishes with child poverty. The purpose of the summit was to identify what further actions the Government could take to address the issue. I assure him that we will take those points forward seriously as a consequence of the dialogue that took place today.

### **Payday Lending (Regulatory Regime)**

**16. Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what recent discussions it has had with the United Kingdom Government regarding the regulatory regime in relation to payday lending. (S4O-01261)

**The Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism (Fergus Ewing):** In April, I wrote to the UK minister Norman Lamb seeking greater regulation of payday loans and urging the UK Government to consider a cap on interest rates for high-interest and payday lending.

Further to that letter, the UK Government has reached an agreement with the industry's four main trade associations to strengthen the industry's code of practice.

**Chic Brodie:** Veritec, a US software company, provides a small credit database to a number of US states and to Australia. That system allows high-street lenders to check whether customers have loans from other lenders and allows states to regulate payday loans, cap them and prevent them from rolling over, thereby protecting consumers from creating huge debts. In the light of the proliferation of high-street lenders, will the minister suggest that UK Government consider a similar system of regulation?

**Fergus Ewing:** I am particularly interested in the idea that there is a technology that can detect whether individual potential borrowers already have previous debts. That should be explored.

On the proposal for regulation along the lines of regulation in the USA, where payday lending is illegal in 13 states and regulated in 37, we have already raised the idea of a cap with the UK Government. The issue is serious and there are very strong arguments in favour of a cap. I am not persuaded that the UK Government's approach will be sufficient to address the problem, although I recognise that some progress has been made. Therefore, we will repeat and renew our efforts to regulate payday loans.

If only we had the full range of powers in Scotland, we would certainly regulate.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I regret that we are unable to take any more questions.

## **Proposed Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill**

### **The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):**

The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-04061, in the name of Derek Mackay, on the consultation on the proposed community empowerment and renewal bill. I invite members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons now—that is, if they have made certain that their cards are in place and that their directional microphones are pointing towards their faces.

14:40

### **The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Derek Mackay):**

I am delighted to lead this debate to highlight the exploratory consultation on our proposed community empowerment and renewal bill. I will set out why the Government believes that it is a crucial element of our legislative programme and why the consultation provides a real opportunity to shape the proposed bill. I will cover what I mean by community empowerment, why the Parliament should be debating community empowerment now, and why the Government believes that the proposed bill can make a difference to the lives of our fellow Scots. I welcome the Labour amendment, which we are minded to support.

Just as we believe that the people who live in Scotland are best placed to make decisions about its future, so it follows that local communities are best placed to make decisions about their future. This Government has a track record of delivering policy and financial approaches that allow local solutions and decisions to flourish.

What do I mean by community empowerment? During my summer visits, I have been enthused by a range of local projects such as the Shetland Community Bike Project, St Abbs community centre, Campbeltown regeneration, and the food train in Dumfries and Galloway. Those are just some examples of community-led activity on the ground. Community empowerment is the community owners of Gigha increasing the population of the island, improving housing and creating jobs and businesses. It is the people of Govanhill bringing their swimming pool property back to life, creating an arts and health centre and a range of social enterprises—I look forward to visiting them shortly.

Community empowerment is the work of community-based housing associations, charities, community councils, collectives, uniformed organisations and many others who make our communities so vibrant. It is the hundreds of development trusts realising the potential of local

facilities, ambitious community renewable energy projects, and the daily actions of volunteers who give of their time to support their community. Every day, across the country, thousands of volunteers are working to create better futures for their families, friends and neighbours. In Scotland we cherish community, with a belief that we can take our own decisions and do things for ourselves but, as we know, unnecessary barriers sometimes get in the way. It is this working together, to deliver what local people know will make a difference, that is community empowerment.

Our approach has economic activity, tackling social injustice and empowering communities at its heart. Why should the Scottish Parliament be debating community empowerment now? Colleagues in the chamber are only too aware of the significant challenges and pressures that still face too many of our communities and people. Those pressures will not be eased in the face of the continuing Westminster cuts. Whether problems are those associated with inequality, drugs and alcohol, ill health, chaotic lifestyles, rural isolation or crime, we know that the evidence tells us that we cannot solve them without local people playing an active role in delivering the solutions.

We cannot keep doing things to people. We must do things with people and trust them to do things for themselves. The commission on the future delivery of public services in Scotland, which was led by the late Campbell Christie, made that point repeatedly and strongly. The responses to Christie from the Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities agreed that that was a crucial element in the reform of public services and the review of community planning, and a vital ingredient in the preventative spend agenda.

Community empowerment is not about dumping liabilities or unfair responsibilities on communities while the public sector walks away. On the contrary, it is about providing the tools to do the job, and addressing what are seen as blockages to progress. That is why I am delighted that we are working in partnership with COSLA to develop the bill.

We will work alongside our partners in the public, private and third sectors to ensure that we are doing our utmost to support and encourage community empowerment. This morning we held the first meeting of a cross-sector reference group, and I look forward to working with the group as ideas move ahead and the bill evolves.

Why is the Government considering legislating on community empowerment and renewal? A lot is going on that we can celebrate, and there are fantastic examples of community-led action that is supported by the public sector, but we can do so

much more. The ideas in the consultation are aimed at removing barriers, upping our collective game, making standards more consistent and cementing good practice in the legislative framework. Not every action will require legislation, and resources must follow the aspiration.

Our consultation has the potential to deliver the biggest transfer of power to communities since the creation of the Scottish Parliament. Ideas that are being progressed include an urban community right to buy; a right for communities to request to take over unused or underused public sector assets; a right to challenge the quality of service delivery; a greater say for local people in how local budgets are spent; strengthened compulsory purchase powers; an overarching duty on the public sector to engage; and a duty on all public sector partners in relation to community planning. We are also exploring issues to do with supporting common good funds, support for allotments, tenant-managed housing and participatory budgeting.

The decisions on whether to take ideas forward will be informed by the response to the consultation and by the practicality of the ideas. Legislation must be effective and meaningful. We must be able to realise ambition in practice. It is right to ask questions now, to give everyone a chance to have their voice heard in the debate. We are at the start of the process. It might be that not all the ideas that we are asking about go forward, and there will be great ideas that we have not thought of. That is why the listening process continues.

There is much work to be done. The exploratory consultation period closes on 26 September. We have built into the timetable the opportunity to consult on a draft bill next year, which will mean that we get the technicalities right and proceed with workable legislation that is fit for purpose in the years to come. I look forward to working with people across the country, the Local Government and Regeneration Committee and the Parliament to establish how best we can do that.

Our proposed bill is not the only example of the Government's commitment to supporting community empowerment; colleagues across the Government have invested in a range of work. For example, since May 2007 more than 800 grants for community renewables, worth some £16 million, have been allocated under the community and renewable energy scheme and its predecessor scheme. We also set a target of 500MW of community and locally owned renewables by 2020.

**Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):** How much has gone to large multinationals in the same timescale?

**Derek Mackay:** The relevance of that intervention to the debate is not clear.

**Neil Findlay:** Will the minister—

**Derek Mackay:** I will continue. In the community-owned renewables sector, more than £2.4 billion could be generated over the lifetime of projects that are led by communities and rural businesses—that seems like a sizeable contribution to change in this country. The approach will ensure that local people can use their skill and determination to benefit from a crucial plank of our future economic growth, by investing in their own futures.

We have delivered a new Scottish land fund, worth £6 million over the next three years, so that many more communities can follow in the footsteps of pioneers such as the people of Eigg and Assynt and reap the rewards of land ownership. We are investing around £6 million per year in community anchor organisations such as housing associations and development trusts, through our people and communities fund, which enables organisations to increase their role in supporting employability and early intervention projects.

For the Government, community empowerment is not a peripheral issue but sits alongside our core belief that the people of Scotland are best placed to take decisions about their futures. Empowered communities are central to shaping a modern Scotland and reforming public services, along the principles of the Christie commission—prevention, integration, workforce development and improved performance. Empowered communities will play an increasingly important role in a confident, prosperous and democratically vibrant nation.

We believe that Scotland's greatest asset is our people. Our communities are a rich source of creativity and talent, and the proposed community empowerment and renewal bill will be a major opportunity to help to realise our potential as a nation. I ask members to join us in developing the crucial work to strengthen and grow empowered communities across the country and I ask them to support the motion, which welcomes the consultation on the proposed bill.

I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the current exploratory consultation on the proposed Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill and the commitment to ensuring that Scotland's communities are supported to take independent action to achieve their goals and to have their voices heard in the decisions that affect them; commends the Scottish Government's continued efforts to work in partnership with COSLA, local authorities and the wider public, private, third and community sectors to further this aim; congratulates the many individuals and organisations from across Scotland who are making a positive difference in their

communities through community-led action, and encourages everyone with an interest to get involved and share their ideas on how to empower Scotland's communities by responding to the consultation paper.

14:50

**Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** I welcome the opportunity to debate the progress of the proposed community empowerment and renewable—that is a Freudian slip; I mean “renewal”—bill. For Scottish Labour, this is very much unfinished business. Our flagship right-to-buy legislation in the first session gave communities in rural areas the capacity to utilise land to the benefit of those areas. People were attracted to move to those areas and create economic prosperity. Crucially, it enabled some of our most remote rural communities to maximise the opportunities that came from the people and the land.

We believe that it is crucial that we learn the lessons of community successes. Community development and finance were critical. To pick up on the minister's points about Gigha, what the community there has been able to do in regeneration, attracting people to the island and developing renewables is inspirational. That has been done to the point at which the community is pretty much self-sufficient. It has made fantastic use of different types of renewable energy, and it has made opportunities for tourism developments on the island. Big money was needed to make that work.

**Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** Does the member have any idea how much of Highlands and Islands Enterprise's budget, publicly funded by us, goes into revenue funding?

**Sarah Boyack:** No. The member would have to ask the minister that question. The point that I am making is that investment, wherever it comes from—whether from HIE, the Big Lottery Fund or the Scottish Government—is crucial in unlocking the door so that communities can make the most of developments.

Effective community management, co-operative models and different types of ownership models are crucial for long-term success in urban communities, too, but that is not acknowledged in the Scottish Government's consultation paper. My purpose in lodging the amendment was to ask parties across the chamber to give the legislation the political priority that is needed to make it effective and to add to the menu of options in the consultation document. I welcome the minister's initial support for our amendment and will try not to put him off that support before decision time.

I have some sympathy for the critique in the Conservative amendment, as many people have

said to me that the bill could be seen as a deliberate counterbalance to the Scottish National Party's growing reputation as a centralising Government. Whether we are talking about our police and fire services, our colleges or the SNP's criticisms of local government when it does not do its bidding, the SNP's track record on subsidiarity is not perfect. We have never seen the Scottish Parliament as being the place where power should rest. Rather, we are committed to devolving to local authorities and devolving from them as well.

That is the challenge of the bill. The challenge should not be seen as being only for local authorities—there is also a challenge for our national health service, Scottish Water and the Scottish Government. I hope that the minister will be prepared to have tough arguments with his Cabinet colleagues to identify opportunities that simply will not be realised without political will.

We very much welcome the discussion of the bill, and we have a raft of ideas that we want to see reflected and incorporated in it. In particular, I want to highlight two issues in respect of which we would like a different flavour to come through in the consultation.

First, we would like a shift in the principles that underpin the bill. The consultation paper's introduction implies that the bill's purpose is to achieve "sustainable economic growth". We do not necessarily disagree with that objective, but we think that it is crucial to ensure that inequalities across communities are addressed in the bill. The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations makes some powerful points in that regard. That approach is important philosophically because, without it, there is nothing to guide the difficult decisions that need to be taken and the bill could inadvertently lead to the widening of inequalities by favouring those who already have the capacity to take action to be successful. We believe that that approach will help to underpin the bill. It goes to the heart of how we identify communities, whether they are communities of interest or geographical communities. Therefore, we will argue for the principles of social justice and equality to underpin the ambition behind the bill.

Many public services exist not because of market failure but because we believe that the provision of services and the exercise of rights can be delivered and shaped in a more cost-effective and comprehensive way through collective action. We think that public services are important and, in freeing up local resources, whether land or buildings, that test will need to take place at a local level as well. That is why it is disappointing that the consultation exercise unfortunately fails to refer to the role of councillors. The COSLA paper talks about that. It would have been good if the Government's consultation had noted that

councillors reflect the aspirations of communities and are often the key champions in communities, generating support for initiatives to make better use of resources, whether that involves asking outside bodies for resources or making difficult decisions within councils to unlock resources.

The role of councillors needs to be acknowledged because they have a legitimacy that comes from the electoral process. They also have to weigh up individual community ambitions against wider collective ambitions. That is a tension that should run through this document and needs to be explored further.

One of the lessons that can be learned from rural areas' experience of the right-to-buy agenda is that disadvantaged areas do not automatically have the range of expertise that is needed in the development of community assets. Capacity building and skills development are key. That point is made very effectively by Planning Aid for Scotland.

As they go through the consultation process, ministers must reflect on the crossovers and linkages between existing land reform legislation and the new bill. I would like the minister to clarify the role of the land reform review group and how he sees it feeding into the consultation. There needs to be a join-up between land reform and right to buy in urban areas and in rural areas. That was the case following the initial land reform legislation, which is why we saw it as unfinished business. There are communities that are sometimes seen as rural and sometimes seen as urban. We need to ensure that there is a seamless join-up in terms of the ground rules.

I would like the minister to flesh out the issue of access to privately owned land, which was a key issue with regard to the rural right to buy. It is not fleshed out in the consultation. I think that the minister is giving himself more time, but I would like to know what he thinks the ground rules should be. It is, potentially, a radical element of the bill in the context of urban communities, but the consultation gives us no indication of the Scottish Government's intention in relation to the bill. The Carnegie Trust and the Scottish Sports Association suggest that having a register of assets would be a key tool to get things moving. I would like there to be some debate about whether that register should just be for the public sector or whether it should include the private sector as well.

**Derek Mackay:** These are helpful contributions, and it is right that the Opposition should ask what our intent is. However, I restate that this exploratory consultation is to capture ideas and suggestions that can be taken forward. Asking for concrete answers at this stage is not necessarily relevant, as we are continuing to gather

information about what people aspire to and how it would work in practice.

**Sarah Boyack:** I take that point, but I think that there is a point about leadership, how the role of Government is utilised and what the Government's aspirations are for the legislation. That is why it is important to link social justice to the economic aspirations and understand the reality of disadvantaged communities that need extra support. The co-operative movement is a key way to lock in economic development and social progress at a local level.

My final comment is on the community empowerment elements of the bill. Some tremendous best practice has been developed over the past decade, but without community capacity building it will be difficult for the potential of community renewal and regeneration to be achieved in practice. As COSLA noted, issues such as poverty, poor education, poor health and poor transport can act as barriers to bringing about empowerment that brings real change. That is why we regard it as fundamental for social justice aspirations to be built into the bill's philosophical aspirations. That is why I think that the vision behind the bill is important: it needs to direct us. I accept that consultation will help flesh out the detail of the proposals, but the bill also needs a driving ambition behind it. I think that we had that in the land reform legislation in the first session of Parliament.

The bill could provide fantastic opportunities, such as community cafes, renewables co-operatives, new allotments and gardens, and new businesses harnessing derelict and empty buildings. There are many examples across the country of rural communities making superb progress in land use and we now need to match that in our urban communities. There is a transformative and radical potential, but only if we all seize the day. I look forward to the rest of the debate.

I move amendment S4M-04061.2, to insert at end:

“, and notes in particular the need to learn lessons from the successes and experiences of rural communities exercising their right to buy using the legislation introduced in the first parliamentary session and acknowledges that support for communities and access to finance was critical and that effective community management and cooperative models are key to the long-term success of empowering and renewing communities.”

15:01

**Margaret Mitchell (Central Scotland) (Con):** I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate. The community empowerment and renewal bill consultation states that the bill seeks to strengthen

“opportunities for communities to take independent action to achieve their own goals and aspirations and ensure communities are able to have a greater role in determining how their local public services are delivered.”

That is certainly an aspiration that everyone in the chamber will support. I will highlight some of the provisions that are most worthy of support and which I hope can be progressed.

I welcome views being sought on how common good assets are currently managed and whether communities should be involved in the process. Such assets are left to communities for their use, but there have been countless occasions when local people have been angered and dismayed when local authorities have undertaken, at taxpayers' expense, legal action to use the assets for a purpose other than that for which they were intended.

The consultation also asks what changes should be made to better support communities taking forward grow-your-own projects. Recent research demonstrates the clear demand for allotment plots across Scotland. When land is made available, it can be put to good use not only as allotments but as community gardens. The community garden in Bothwell, for instance, became a reality as a result of a concerted effort by local people to have a place where individuals and pupils and organisations can meet and where vegetables, plants and fruit can be grown. Subsequently, numerous positive physical, mental and educational outcomes have been achieved for the community through the garden.

That kind of initiative evolves from consensus and drive within the community and, as such, it has the greatest chance of succeeding and enduring. Consequently, it is a type of empowerment that is to be encouraged and supported. That view was highlighted by the Scottish Sports Association in its comments about the important role of volunteers in empowering communities. The publication of public asset registers is hugely important in progressing that kind of empowerment of communities, as that information is critical for communities to take community garden projects forward.

However, to put the community empowerment debate in perspective, it must be recognised that empowering legislation in itself does not necessarily achieve the desired objective. The SCVO emphasised that point in its initial response to the consultation. The question is therefore whether, in encouraging urban empty and unused property back into use, the minister has considered the lessons to be learned from the community right-to-buy legislation that already exists.

According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, although that legislation has been beneficial, the



take-up of the powers has been relatively low. The major deterring factors include the complexity of the process, the resource-intensive administrative requirements and a lack of available funding. The clear message is that empowering legislation will not be effective without funding to accompany it. That is perhaps one of the tools to which the minister referred as being necessary to do the job.

The Conservative amendment highlights an issue on which Government rhetoric has not met reality. On a number of occasions, communities that are totally opposed to projects and initiatives, such as wind farms, incinerators or mobile phone masts, have had their views ignored by central Government. That has happened despite the fact that, more often than not, the local authority has refused planning permission only to have that decision overturned centrally by the Scottish Government.

**Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** The member will be aware that many people lament the lack of mobile phone coverage across Scotland. If we cannot put masts in the right places to get coverage, how on earth will we achieve it? Which would the member prefer—mobile phone coverage or no masts? We cannot have both.

**Margaret Mitchell:** The member makes a reasonable point but, given the choices that are available for the siting of mobile phone masts, it does not seem sensible to site them next to a school playground for example. However, that is the sort of decision that is being taken. We need to get some perspective and balance into the debate. In my region alone, there are numerous examples of such situations—in Shotts, Harthill and Greengairs, to name but a few. That is the antithesis of what empowering legislation seeks to achieve. I hope that the consultation response will reflect that concern and will lead to a change of heart by the minister and his Government.

I have major reservations about some of the proposals in the consultation. One proposal is that communities should have the right to request that a local authority use a compulsory purchase order on its behalf to bring vacant and unused property back into use. The other is the suggestion that councils should have additional powers to sell or lease long-term empty homes and non-domestic property when it is in the public interest to do so. The right to own property is a fundamental right in any free, civilised and democratic society. Consequently, the term “public interest” would have to be precisely defined.

There is much to applaud in the consultation and I look forward to reading the responses when it closes.

I move amendment S4M-04061.1, to leave out from “commends” to “aim” and insert:

“hopes that the consultation results in the reversal of a centralising trend under the SNP administration, which demoralises local people and stifles community empowerment;”

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):** We come to the open debate, with speeches of six minutes.

15:07

**Annabelle Ewing (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** I am pleased to be called to speak in this afternoon’s debate. As we have heard, the consultation is an important and wide-ranging one on how we can, collectively and working together, transform our communities and empower them to meet the challenges that they face at local level. I therefore echo the minister’s encouragement to individual citizens and groups across Scotland to respond to the consultation. There is still time for them to do so and to ensure that their views and ideas are heard and can be taken into account. In time, that will ensure that we have the best possible legislative footing for what the minister rightly suggested could be a significant power transfer to local communities.

As we have heard, the consultation focuses on three key areas, the first of which is how we can strengthen community participation. There are many ideas on the table, and I expect that we will hear many more as a result of the consultation, but I would like to say a few words about the role of community councils, which has not yet been addressed in the debate. From my experience as a member of the Westminster Parliament and now, happily, a member of this Parliament, I would say that individuals who are elected to community councils are hard-working representatives of their communities who are dedicated to making a difference. They know and understand their communities well and they bring with them different areas of expertise.

Although community councils are the only type of community group that has a formal statutory role in the planning system, I believe that, from time to time, they see themselves as being eclipsed to an extent in many areas of local life by other forms of community engagement that have been developed in recent years.

**Margo MacDonald (Lothian) (Ind):** Let me cut to the chase—does Annabelle Ewing think that community councils should have bigger budgets?

**Annabelle Ewing:** Community councils should have greater resources in general, including more extensive powers to do the job that they all seek to do.

There is also a role for all those individuals in communities who are determined to make a difference, but there should not be a competition between different structures of community engagement because that would be counterproductive. Therefore, the minister's challenge—to coin a phrase—should he choose to accept it is to find a way forward whereby community councils are helped to maximise their positive role, at the same time as other forms of community participation are encouraged and facilitated.

**Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Lab):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Annabelle Ewing:** I am afraid that I must make progress.

Presumably, the ultimate aim must be to secure engagement among all those who wish to be involved, so that we maximise the potential of each community.

Another important part of the consultation looks at unlocking enterprise and community development. That is a subject that is close to my heart since the contract work that I did for some years a while back for the Comrie Development Trust, which is a successful development trust that operates in the village that I am pleased to call my home. If an example of best practice in unlocking community potential was ever needed, I submit that Comrie, through not only the development trust but the community council—there are 50 different groups and bodies involved in the community—would be at the top of the tree. Underlying all those groups are determined, visionary and indefatigable individuals who have ideas and a wish to see their ideas come to fruition. Those individuals have made an enormous difference in a village with a population of fewer than 2,000 people.

I will mention two particular examples in the limited time available. First is the establishment of the Comrie junior strings, which happened within one year of the idea being mooted. A group of people saw that children were not getting access to tuition in stringed instruments. They therefore went out, raised money, and got donated violins and cellos, including from people's attics. They then got together and we now see—with the lead of the indefatigable Jean Kidd, who is well known in music circles across Scotland—nine children at primary school age in Comrie learning the violin and the cello. That is an amazing example of what can be done locally if there is the individual determination and can-do spirit.

The other example is that, again, within one year of the idea being mooted among running enthusiasts in Comrie—I am afraid that I am not one of those, which might be evident from my

physique—we saw the launch of a Comrie mountain marathon. That is a two-day event that first took place last October. It attracted thousands of participants to Comrie, to stay overnight and to enjoy the hospitality. Again, people were not simply satisfied with having the idea but wanted to ensure that it came to fruition.

We need to find a way to take best practice to bottle that can-do spirit that is present in communities across the length and breadth of Scotland. It is also about, as Sarah Boyack said, increasing capacity. We are fortunate in the village that I call home in that we have a number of people who have experience of different things that have helped with those processes.

On the issue of community buyout, I am pleased to see that the land reform review group has been set up and that it is to be tasked with looking at improving the process. I support the extension of community buyout to urban areas. That has been such a landmark success of this Scottish Parliament and, of course, the first buyout we saw was in Crossgates in Fife.

The consultation is an excellent example of action by a Government that is determined to make a difference to the lives of our citizens, is listening to people and, with a final plea from me, is emptying dangerous buildings. We must do something about that because it depresses communities throughout Scotland. I am sure that the minister will be determined to ensure that local authorities have the necessary powers to tackle that problem.

15:14

**Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** I welcome the opportunity to take part in today's debate on community empowerment and renewal. This is an early debate on a wide range of proposals and, although the document certainly identifies the problems, there are still lots of question marks over what the solutions might be. We should emphasise the importance of the purpose of the proposals and we need to be sensible and proportionate about where and when legislation is needed.

Although some of the discussion is about the transfer of assets, there is also a recognition that local authorities need to be given additional powers to deal with many of the challenges in their area. Laurence Demarco of Senscot has commented that the proposals have the potential to be either a damp squib or a significant advance in local democracy. It is clear that increasing democracy is not just a matter of empowering communities but about devolving more powers to local authorities when appropriate.

We are in difficult economic times, and local government will need to manage very difficult budgets over the next few years, with increasing pressure on their services. We need to be mindful of that context. We are not asking people to help us to spend money; we are asking them to participate in some very difficult decisions. That approach can provide opportunities for doing things differently—the minister referred to the Christie commission—and the comments in the consultation on strengthening participation will provide options for debate. We should also ask how the proposals will address inequality in our communities and how they will include the communities that are often the most difficult to reach.

The benefits of the proposals should be widely accessible. The briefing from the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations notes:

“Without measures to ensure that communities have the opportunity to engage with and benefit from the Bill, there is a risk that it will widen inequalities by favouring those communities who already have the capacity to take action.”

Proposals must be tested against this measure. As Sarah Boyack said, sustainable economic growth is not enough. The process must be about increasing social justice.

There is an appetite for the issues identified in the consultation. As shadow spokesperson for rural affairs I am only too aware of the importance of ensuring that there is a healthy and strong relationship between people in their community and their land. The consultation document identifies the interest in extending to urban communities the benefits brought to rural communities through the land reform legislation. Scotland already has many positive examples of community: buyouts such as the ones involving the Galson estate in Lewis, which has been run by residents since 2007, the Stornoway Trust, Gigha and Machrihanish. Some 500,000 acres of land in Scotland are now in community ownership. The bold measures taken during the early years of the Parliament, along with the commitment of local communities, have helped to transform rural and island communities in Scotland.

It is important that the successes should be given the chance to be replicated in urban environments, not just through the more familiar model of tenant ownership but by going further into community ownership to examine, for example, the benefits of alternative energy models and how they could be used to tackle the fuel poverty that exists in many communities.

To confine the discussion to the issue of transferring public assets or public services is to miss the complexity of the issue and to limit the benefits it can deliver. Local government is a key partner in future models. While the transfer of

ownership can be the catalyst for change, empowerment can also be achieved through increased community decision making. It is important to achieve the right solution for an individual community. In addition to owning an asset, communities can become empowered through influence and involvement in service delivery.

As part of open doors day last Sunday I visited Ravenscraig community gardens and allotments in Kirkcaldy. Previously a disused space owned by Fife Council, it was opened in February this year.

**Jamie McGrigor:** I agree that buyouts are marvellous, but how can they be made to produce revenue?

**Claire Baker:** That is an important issue and the resources need to be examined in the document. I refer to the way an island like Gigha has become self-sustainable. There are opportunities for raising revenue in the new models of community ownership.

I refer again to my experience on Sunday in Kirkcaldy allotments. It is quite a mouthful but Kirkcaldy Community Gardens and Allotments community interest company was created in order to set up a 25-year lease of the site in the Ravenscraig walled garden for allotment provision. The company provides more than individual allotments. A training area is available for local schools and community groups. I spoke to members of the company, who expressed the need for a streamlining of the process but said that the local authority continued to be a positive partner in their work.

A recent report from the rural policy centre at the Scottish Agricultural College highlighted the dangers and risks faced by many towns and communities. Its vulnerability index placed Kirkcaldy, Alloa and East Wemyss—all within my region—in its top 20. These towns across Scotland need the opportunity not only to survive but to thrive.

There is an interesting contrast between East Wemyss and West Wemyss. East Wemyss is 13th on the list of vulnerable towns in Scotland, but its neighbour, West Wemyss, has seen a bit of a turnaround. The West Wemyss Walk Inn is owned and operated by the community. Driven by the West Wemyss Development Trust, lottery money was awarded to support the initiative, and the social enterprise has now been open for a year. Due to that investment, it provides a lot to the community—it is not just a bistro; it also runs children's clubs and baking clubs. Only 10 years ago, the community had only 60 people in it, but it has seen a huge turnaround through that involvement and community ownership.

There is agreement about what the challenges are, but the policy is a ship that needs to be steered and the direction of travel needs to be clearly defined as one that is about delivering on social justice and tackling inequalities in communities throughout Scotland.

15:20

**Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP):** I have been following the proposed bill with a lot of interest since the idea was first put forward in the SNP's manifesto, and I very much support it. The minister and the previous minister will know that I was never out of the office, pushing the bill on, because it is very important. I appreciate that it has taken a while to get it where it is today, but we are here now and it is a great opportunity to give local people a real say in their communities.

Margaret Mitchell mentioned what she said were some good things in the proposed bill. I absolutely agree with you, Margaret, about common good funds—they have to be looked at—and community gardens. However, if we took out of the motion what the amendment in her name suggests that we take out, it would not say that we are to look positively on the

“partnership with COSLA, local authorities and the wider public”

and it would not say that we are to congratulate the huge number of people throughout the country who dedicate their time and energy to making

“a positive difference in their communities”.

That seems to be what the Tory amendment would make the motion not say. Instead, it talks about demoralising people and stifling community empowerment.

**Mark McDonald (North East Scotland) (SNP):** They are the experts in that.

**Sandra White:** I leave it to the Tories to talk about that. As my colleague has just said, the Tories are the experts in demoralising people and stifling communities. I am sorry to see that type of amendment being lodged.

**Margaret Mitchell:** It is important that we look at the situation as it is. Rather than pat ourselves on the back and say that we are talking to all those different parties, we should recognise the reality that, often, the wishes of local communities are overturned and their views are ignored. That is what our amendment seeks to highlight in the hope that it will lead to a change in direction and thinking on the Government's part.

**Sandra White:** I accept your explanation. It is a pity that that was not part of the amendment, which certainly did not read that way to me. The bill is all about what the member says—giving

people more powers to be involved in their communities.

Members have talked about local government. The concordat between the Scottish Government and local government has its detractors—we have heard from a few of them today—but its real aim is to devolve more power over decision making to local authorities so that they can decide what their priorities are. Surely that is a good thing. Although we may debate that in another sphere, it must be a good thing to be able to work together to give real power to local communities.

The Labour Party's amendment seems entirely reasonable. The community right to buy, which Sarah Boyack mentioned, is one of the Scottish Parliament's landmark achievements. Like Sarah Boyack and others, I hope that the experience of rural communities will generally inform the process to be followed in urban areas. For instance, in Glasgow—in my constituency and in others—we have often looked on enviously as communities in rural areas have been able to take forward a real vision of what they see as a local asset and have been able to provide it to the community, being able to take over public assets. It would be fantastic if we could do that in inner cities as well.

Members have cited examples from their areas. There is a fantastic building at the bottom of Byres Road, in my constituency, which used to be the Church Street baths. When I have been walking around my constituency, people have asked me on numerous occasions whether we can turn the building back into swimming baths, but I do not know. They have also said, “It's a great building. Can we turn it into a market?” I do not know, although I have written letters about it. If we could get a commitment to turn it into something that people would dedicate themselves to, that would be absolutely fantastic. It would also be fantastic if the bill could give us the necessary tools to do that.

Since the consultation opened, I have sent out loads of messages to my contacts to ask them to respond, and I know that they have done so. People are very excited and energised about what the bill could do for them, and local communities will certainly use the opportunities that it provides.

Community planning partnerships, community councils and local groups are working together, but they sometimes feel that they are hindered by current legislation and the lack of devolved decision making at a local level. I ask the minister and encourage the Government to work closely with those groups, local authorities and others to facilitate the devolution of more power to local communities.

We can learn from what has already been achieved. One example of good practice is the

Glasgow Woodlands Community Development Trust, which was set up in 1985 by local residents with support from Glasgow City Council and, later on, from the Scottish Parliament. It has gone from strength to strength, involving local nurseries and schools, and it is a fantastic community asset. The climate change fund, zero waste Scotland and—as I said—Glasgow City Council have all helped in taking it forward.

Another example is the SAGE—sow and grow everywhere—project, which is in the middle of Glasgow city centre, not far from where I live. I have an allotment there, although I must admit that I should get my green fingers out and do some work. The project has been taken forward with Government funding and help, and we need to look at that type of thing.

It is important that we give local communities a say, and the provisions in the bill will enable us to do that. I look forward to further consultation and to examining the ideas that come in, and—I hope—to another debate to scrutinise the consultation results. The bill is really good, and I congratulate the minister on taking it forward.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Before I call Malcolm Chisholm, I remind members to speak through the chair and address each other by their full names.

15:27

**Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab):** Engagement and empowerment are ideas that we have been talking about in different contexts for many years in this Parliament. They have led to important documents such as the current Government's "Scottish Community Empowerment Action Plan", and a previous Government's "National Standards for Community Engagement", which I seem to remember launching in 2005.

Notwithstanding the good examples that the minister has given, it is fair to say that policy and practice have often diverged over the years. The important thing in this debate is to ensure that we come up with practical ways of driving forward the agenda.

To be fair, the consultation paper is full of many such suggestions. I will deal with the three parts in reverse order.

On part three, I welcome the additional powers that are suggested to sell or lease long-term empty properties, which picks up on a theme that we debated in the Parliament last week. I like the idea of communities having the right to request local authorities to use compulsory purchase orders, although we must look at strengthening them. I welcome question 38, on the recovery of

costs in relation to dangerous and defective buildings, although I gently suggest that the minister looks at David Stewart's proposed member's bill for an answer to that question.

Moving on to part two, there is the fundamental concept of the transfer of assets. As a city MSP I would be delighted if the right to buy that rural communities have had was extended to urban areas, as we all know about the success of that policy in rural parts of Scotland. I received a communication this week from Maggie Fyffe of the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust. I do not have time to read it all out, but she said:

"Eigg is a different world than it was 15 years ago—owning Eigg has opened up so many opportunities for development ... because confidence has grown, a lot of new independent businesses are springing up & because there is so much happening, we're seeing young people return & settle here which is probably one of the most important aspects".

I like the idea in part two of communities having the power to request that the public sector transfer underused or unused assets, but in that regard we must confront the issue of state aid rules, which are often a barrier. In my own constituency, about two years ago a community group wanted the transfer of land at Granton, but the council invoked state aid rules as a barrier to that. My understanding is that those rules apply only when there is a commercial competitor, which probably means that there is not an issue in many situations. I suspect that the state aid rules are being overused by some public authorities, so I hope that the Government will look at that.

Given that there are general block exemption regulations at a European level, I wonder whether the Government could take action by asking for a GBER notification for all community assets. I do not know whether that is possible, but perhaps it could be explored.

Part one, about strengthening community participation, is of course central to the whole consultation paper. I welcome the idea of a duty to follow the national standards for community engagement. This is not mentioned in the paper, but I also think that we should look at using and developing the co-operative model that Sarah Boyack mentioned. I am glad that the Scottish Government has accepted that amendment. I suggest that the Government looks at what is going on in Edinburgh at present—of course, there is a council coalition in Edinburgh between Labour and the Scottish National Party, although it is fair to say that the co-op model was a flagship policy of the Labour manifesto earlier this year.

We should also build on the work of community councils. I regularly attend them—I have a high regard for their work—and building on their work is the right way to go. In relation to strengthening

participation, I also want to highlight that effective participation starts with effective communication—that should be central to policies in this area. There are examples of best practice that we can learn from, where community activists are using the tools that they have to hand to improve communication in the hope that that will strengthen local interest and participation.

As we begin to adapt communication technologies to aid participation, a large number of independent sites that allow for highly localised content have started to emerge. One such site is *The Edinburgh Reporter*, which provides regular updates through a hyperlocal news site. The focus is on the activities of community councils and news stories that are of particular appeal to local residents. If participation can be improved through developing greater links to an open and accountable council system, straightforward reporting of council and community council meetings can help to achieve that.

Some of *The Edinburgh Reporter's* most popular stories have come from a comprehensive coverage of campaigns, as well as an unbiased account of what is really going on in the city council. That news can be delivered immediately using Twitter and live blogs and can invite responses from any interested party.

I am not saying that in order to give *The Edinburgh Reporter* free publicity—I believe that the success of this local online news service should be an example for the whole of Scotland. I appeal to the Government to do everything that it can to support and encourage the development of such services.

In that context, I should also mention Greener Leith, which provides a similar local news service, and the Greener Leith social website, which is an interactive forum for raising awareness of local concerns. If such a format can be applied to hyperlocal news, why not to community councils or to local social events as well?

I can see that I am running out of time to talk about my suggestion of an online hub that could be established to provide a two-way flow of information between community councils, or community planning partnerships, and community members. I cannot say more about that, but new technologies can help to change the culture of “doing to” to a culture of “doing with”. At the end of the day, that is what this debate is all about.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** There is a bit of time in hand for interventions, although not much at this stage of the debate. I call Chic Brodie.

15:33

**Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP):** I welcome the debate on the consultation on the proposed community empowerment and renewal bill. If I do so with a hint of frustration, it is because I believe that we need to move quickly beyond the consultative phase on community powers and pursue action and change to inspire, revive and renew our communities. In the bill proposal, there is already a wealth of information about what needs to be done or might need to be done in favour of communities and community powers. However, I believe that structure is important too, and it also needs to be considered.

We have had 10 years of community planning and community planning partnerships. Frankly, I was appalled recently when I looked at the minutes of one CPP meeting—22 people from all the support services attended. No doubt each was a worthy contributor, but I suggest that a meeting of that size is not conducive to fast responses to community needs and action. One has to ask how one can attain a single outcome, let alone many, with such a large representative body, well meaning and community spirited though each member of that body might be.

I suggest to the Government that real determination of community needs must be complemented by a wider consultation that ensures and secures meaningful representation of communities on the ground. I do not denigrate the proposals that might be made in the bill, but I want to know what the communities and people want.

For example, the role of local authorities is not just to serve one community but to serve the different needs and wants of the many and varied communities in their area. If we mean that local authorities facilitate and maintain community planning, including consulting and co-operating with communities, I suggest that we are confusing the local authority management regime with that of the much-needed management of the smaller defined communities within that local authority area. We should be devolving meaningful management, leadership and funding to those communities. It is suggested that real outcomes will be achieved only when we establish quite clear delineation of responsibilities and anticipated outcomes between central Government, local authorities and communities.

I accept that CPPs have been a qualified but reasonable success, but there has been confusion because they are not standard—nor should they be—in their methodology of engaging the range of public bodies and representation of the third and private sectors. There is confusion around how we measure outcomes and the effectiveness of each CPP. Communities the length and breadth of Scotland are different, which is why local

communities must be major players and fully consulted on the proposed bill and its powers.

I think that it was Churchill who said in 1951 that we should “set the people free”. I believe that the bill should be about setting communities free and devolving leadership and responsibility to each and every community. It should give them the right to manage and challenge local authorities. As it is today, the structure is too complex because too many of the CPP stakeholders understandably have an eye to their accountabilities at the local authority level.

The Government should link the bill tangentially, where it can be linked, to the proposed procurement bill, so that communities have more of a say not only in the provision of services to their community, but in buying and in some cases managing those services. The burden on the Government in the proposed bill will hopefully be to encourage, develop and empower community councils. It will give them prominence in funding, budget and asset management, and the design, procurement and delivery of services and facilities to their individual communities. Of course, after the bill is enacted, certain areas will be reserved to local authorities—housing, education and transport, for example—but engagement and security of community interest will be achieved only by true devolution of management and leadership of the communities to those who live in and own them.

The current local authority system is slightly antediluvian and far too wide. The proposed bill will give us a chance to consult on a meaningful local and community service that will meet the aspirations of the people who live in our communities, and our aspirations as a nation.

15:39

**Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD):** The Liberal Democrats welcome the consultation on the proposed community empowerment and renewal bill. Turning over power to those at the local level is a fundamental aim of our party, and we look forward to working constructively with the Government once the consultation is over and the bill has been introduced.

It is difficult to talk about community empowerment without referring to the work of the Christie commission, and the minister has already done that. We are fortunate that we have such a wide-ranging and comprehensive blueprint for the future delivery of public services, but the ethos of the commission’s report goes beyond public services. It is, at its heart, about putting communities first. Christie stated:

“effective services must be designed with and for people and communities - not delivered ‘top down’”.

I believe that that holds true across Government. Wherever possible, we in the Parliament should not dictate to communities, but rather give them the tools to tailor their own solutions.

Our home rule commission is to some extent building on Christie’s work. We are expanding it far further and looking at our overall vision for a strong Scotland within the United Kingdom, but its basis is about giving communities the power to set their own agenda and take back control of the things that are important to them.

There are a number of interesting possibilities—too many to discuss them all in full today—for how we might translate the goal of community empowerment into the reality of action in Scotland. I encourage as many people as possible to consider what they and their communities would like to become part of the bill. I particularly commend to the minister the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce’s citizen power project and, more generally, the work of the Carnegie Trust and Nesta, and I urge him to draw on their research. At a local level, there is much good practice in Aberdeenshire, in my region, and a range of rural partnerships and community trusts is already in place.

One idea that is mooted in the consultation—it is already in place with some success in England and Wales—is to give communities the power to take over key local assets. That might be in the shape of community centres or parks, or perhaps something more fundamental such as social housing. We should think of that not as asset transfer but as asset exchange—something that allows communities to weave together the latent assets in individuals and organisations for the benefit of the whole community.

However, we must guard against trying to graft good ideas on to problematic structures, so we need to take time to get the framework right. It will take a significant culture change to make public services more human scale—Chic Brodie mentioned that—and to localise economic power as well as political power.

Occasionally, we already see community groups saving failing public amenities, but we might look to expand that further. One option is to give communities the power to come together formally and take control of a raft of services from local authorities. That might, for example, allow them to take control of all their recreational or social care facilities and receive an appropriate proportion of the council’s budget as funds, be that from council tax, business rates or whatever. They would have full control over how the money is spent, along with legal recognition of their role.

However, the key has to be flexibility. Rather than we in the Parliament determining what role communities should take, we should put in place a framework that allows them to determine that for themselves. What works for one community will not necessarily work for all. It is essential that all communities benefit, not only those that currently have the capacity to take action. Sarah Boyack was right to point to the SCVO's representations on that point.

The bill provides an opportunity for us to look at the way in which planning works at a local level. Margaret Mitchell touched on that. One of the main weaknesses in our planning system is the tension that is created between residents and council planning committees—a tension that is unlikely to be resolved simply by passing planning control further down the line. I would be interested to know what consideration the minister has given to how the bill could resolve that, whether through a greater role in the process for community organisations or perhaps through a fairer method of ensuring that the financial benefits of developments are kept in the community.

We have an ageing population—we never stop talking about that in the Parliament—yet society increasingly devalues older people and many older people feel overinstitutionalised and disengaged from society. The bill represents an opportunity to develop more inclusive and innovative solutions to improve older people's lives.

Those are just a few possibilities. I hope that, when the consultation responses are published, we will see a fuller picture of how people throughout Scotland believe that local decision making can better work for them. The trick will then be to ensure that ministers listen to what respondents say is important to them. No doubt that will be a big challenge.

The bill will be an important one. It is a real test of where the Government's and indeed the Parliament's intentions lie—in localism or in centralisation. I firmly believe in localism, so I want to be able to work constructively on the bill. I cannot help being concerned for its final form, because the Government has just pressed ahead with one of the biggest centralisation programmes that the Parliament has seen, but I live in hope.

15:44

**Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** I pay tribute to all the many community volunteers across the Highlands and Islands—indeed, across Scotland—who work selflessly for the benefit of their communities. I can personally attest that the work at the coalface of community development is often done in very difficult

conditions, in the face of economic fragility and deprivation, and in a culture in which power is not always surrendered easily to communities that wish to grasp the opportunities available to them.

Nevertheless, since the right to buy was introduced in 2003, and especially when that was combined with the income generation opportunities that renewable energy projects offer to communities, community development has begun to transform the face of the Highlands and Islands. I could pay tribute to a very long list of communities but it is only right that I should pay particular tribute to my fellow islanders in the communities of Eigg and Gigha, who paved the way for many other communities. I know that the people of those two communities would agree that, having taken responsibility for community ownership, their path has not always been easy, but they would also agree that it has been worth while.

I am delighted that the Scottish Government has committed a further £6 million to the Scottish land fund, because there is an appetite on the part of many more communities to benefit from bringing local land and local assets into much more productive use. That is why I am also delighted that the right-to-buy legislation will be revisited and reviewed so that we can apply the lessons that we have learned over the past nine years or so and improve the legislation. However, it is right that we should take our time with that and with the proposed community empowerment and renewal bill, because these are complex matters that are sometimes fraught with difficulties, which can be hard to appreciate except by those who are actively engaged in community development at the grass roots.

The community empowerment consultation covers a number of areas and proposes a number of interesting ideas—all of which have merit and which I am sure will, at least in theory, receive support across the chamber. However, it is crucial that the practical implementation of those ideas is considered carefully, all the more so because we owe it to volunteers and community activists—the people who give up their valuable time without recompense—across Scotland to get it right and not to present them with more difficulties than they already face.

I am particularly glad that consideration is being given to extending the right to buy to urban areas. Too often, there is an urban-rural divide. Opportunities that are open to rural communities should also be open to urban communities and to communities of interest.

The underlying theme seems to be one of bringing assets into more productive use. Should it really matter whether those are in rural or urban areas or how a particular community is defined?



That applies equally to underused public properties. Who owns public properties should be neither here nor there, because they are public assets—they belong to us all.

Empowerment of communities means disempowerment somewhere else, for power is neither created nor destroyed. Too often in Scotland's past, power has been expressed as the ability to say no to the legitimate aspirations of individuals and communities. Real power is the power to say yes and to facilitate the aspirations of Scotland's communities. I am therefore delighted that this Scottish Government is taking forward the consultation with a will to share power and to do so wisely to empower communities and to engage them in their own success by giving them the tools to secure better futures for themselves and, ultimately, for us all.

15:49

**Anne McTaggart (Glasgow) (Lab):** I welcome the opportunity to take part in today's debate, for which the term "the graveyard shift" springs to mind. Community empowerment and renewal go to the heart of not only my values but Labour Party values. Therefore, I relish the opportunity to speak about the good work that is being done, and the vital work that is still to be done, on that policy area.

I am surprised that we are having the debate so early in the legislative process—so early that the Government has not closed the consultation. However, it is good to see that the minister is eager to discuss community empowerment and renewal. I forgive his haste and welcome his keenness and aspirational approach.

**Derek Mackay:** I clarify that I requested the debate so that the Parliament could help to inform the future debate and work. That seems a democratic thing to do. In addition, I am trying to highlight the consultation so that we can encourage all parts of Scotland to contribute to it so that we get it right.

**Anne McTaggart:** As a member of the Local Government and Regeneration Committee, I look forward to the bill being presented to that committee. I think that it will contain much on which committee members will find consensus. However, the committee will also scrutinise the bill when necessary. I want the bill to provide real support for localism, with power being devolved to the most local levels and those local levels being resourced and funded adequately to enable that devolution.

Community empowerment and renewal have risen in prominence over recent years. In 2003, one of the Labour-led coalition's flagship bills was the Land Reform (Scotland) Bill, which, for the first

time, gave communities the right to buy land in their areas. That legislation was much welcomed and went a long way in encouraging communities to buy into their own land. However, work is still needed to ensure that communities in urban areas—such as Glasgow, the area that I represent—are given the same opportunity to be enfranchised and are encouraged to find use for unused and derelict land and buildings.

Since the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 was passed, local people have made more than 120 applications to buy out land in their areas. We should learn the lessons from rural areas and apply them to urban areas. Throughout Scotland, there are towns and cities that have been left out of community renewal and which are in desperate need of regeneration. Therefore, it is essential that, when the Government formulates and considers the bill, it makes urban areas and areas of deprivation a priority.

The Government must resist the urge to centralise and it must realise that local government is best placed to deliver the initiative. The bill should be about a localised, bottom-up approach to regeneration to allow local communities to grow and flourish. It must put in place a framework that will ensure that local people are able to access their communities. Localism must be at the heart of the bill, and the Government must find a way to work with local government to ensure that that goal is achievable.

Glasgow City Council has been putting localism and Labour values into action. That process has been led by Councillor Aileen Colleran. Only last week, the council's stalled spaces programme won top prize for community involvement at the Scottish awards for quality in planning. That programme is a community project designed to target temporarily vacant or underused land and bring it back into use.

I was happy to lodge a motion in the Parliament last week congratulating the council on that achievement. The programme is a real achievement not only for the council and Glasgow but, most importantly, for the local community. It is important to highlight successful projects in the Parliament, but community projects flourish only if the Government is serious about putting stable funding and resources in place for them.

**Margo MacDonald:** Anne McTaggart said that those projects will succeed only if the Government is willing to put money in. Is it not true that the projects will not succeed unless they correctly identify the right local people, in the right place, at the right time, who have enough confidence in themselves to go ahead?

**Anne McTaggart:** I stand corrected by Ms MacDonald. Claire Baker mentioned that if

projects are set up in good faith, they can sustain themselves and do not need the same amount of funding thereafter.

For the bill to be successful, there must be strong local leadership. Community development courses should be reinstated rather than cut, to allow communities to grow and be trained. There must be joined-up working between local government and the Scottish Government, and a real effort to engage communities in regeneration. There are times when communities do not feel that they are part of the decision-making processes that determine what they look like. The Scottish Government must be explicit to ensure that the bill will empower communities, rather than simply pay lip service to them. Otherwise, it will let down the communities that the bill purports to represent.

15:56

**Mark McDonald (North East Scotland) (SNP):**

I welcome the debate, which is timely. As the minister indicated, holding the debate before the end of the consultation allows us to put views into the consultation and to promote it to wider Scottish society.

I will highlight a number of examples from the north-east that demonstrate best practice and indicate the kind of projects that could be realised and strengthened as a result of this process. The first example harks back to my maiden speech in this chamber, in which I highlighted the work of the Udney community wind turbine. It was established as a result of the community council deciding that it wanted to develop a local wind turbine and fund local projects with the money that was generated from selling the electricity to the national grid. The council projected that, over a 20 year period, as much as £4 million to £5 million could be raised for that small community, which comprises only a couple of villages in Aberdeenshire. I had the pleasure of visiting the turbine after it had been officially switched on.

The Udney community wind turbine went on to be awarded the community initiative award at last year's Scottish green energy awards. It is a fantastic example of the kind of community renewable initiative to which the minister referred in his opening speech and it sets a strong example of what can be achieved by communities coming together, recognising a strong project and working to deliver it. Those things could be strengthened by some aspects that could be introduced to the bill.

I also want to touch on leased community centres. In Aberdeen, where I had the pleasure of serving as a local councillor, a number of community centres are already leased and more will become leased. I want to highlight the

Inchgarth community centre, which I have experience of from my time working for Maureen Watt and from standing for election to another Parliament as a candidate for Aberdeen South.

Inchgarth is a leased community centre that is run by and for the community, and it is popular and vibrant. A tea room has recently been added to it, which is doing a roaring trade. One of the centre's volunteers, 17-year-old Ruairidh Morrison, was recently awarded the young volunteer award at the Aberdeen impact awards, which are run by the Aberdeen Council for Voluntary Organisations. The centre's chairman, Paul O'Connor, was recently awarded an MBE for his work in the community. The centre runs a range of different classes and projects that are tailored to deliver on the community's behalf and which are proving extremely popular.

In such operations, communities can take ownership of the programme and what is delivered. Communities are often much more aware of what the community is looking for than council officials are, in terms of the programme that they would deliver.

**Margo MacDonald rose—**

**Mark McDonald:** I see that Margo MacDonald wishes to intervene. I will happily let her.

**Margo MacDonald:** Where did the people at Inchgarth come from? Were they already there on the ground? Did they have previous experience? How was the team put together?

**Mark McDonald:** It began very much with a group of committed individuals who used the centre and saw the potential to do more with it. That also happened at the Powis gateway community centre in Aberdeen, where the management committee, which had been advising council officials, was encouraged to take over the running of the centre and is delivering a much more vibrant and fulfilling programme for the community than the council was delivering.

It is about using local knowledge and drive, but often it is important that volunteers are in place from the beginning. The issue is how we ensure that people are involved or willing to get involved in their communities. I think that Margo MacDonald's point, which I take, was about capacity building. Councils need to build capacity in communities.

The one note of caution that I strike in relation to the leased community centres is that Aberdeen City Council has sent letters to centres that suggest that if they do not sign up to new lease agreements, which are currently being negotiated, they will be evicted by the end of November. It is unfortunate that the council sent such letters

before the negotiation process reached its natural conclusion.

There is an extremely good community garden in Dyce—the village where I live and which I represented on the local council. One of my unfinished projects when I was a councillor—it was unfinished because I was elected to the Parliament—was to develop a community garden in Bucksburn. I am still keen to drive forward the project, which will bring together the community, the council and other interested stakeholders.

In Dyce, the community council received a generous grant to upgrade the path network in Central park, and was fortunate enough to have money left over from the project, which it sought to spend wisely. It spotted a play area that had fallen into significant disrepair, and by using the talents of its members and the community planning officer, and after seeking the community's views, it was able to develop the play area so that what had been fairly ramshackle and disused is now probably extremely vibrant and well used.

As that example demonstrates, councils sometimes hold assets that they do not regard as a priority for upgrading, because of budgetary constraints and so on, which local communities can develop if they are given the opportunity and the resources to do so. I hope that the minister will take such examples on board. I will be happy to share more information with him if he wants me to do so, to inform how he shapes the bill. There are good examples of how the bill can work, and I will be excited to see how the bill develops, because it has exciting potential for Scotland's communities.

16:03

**Margaret McDougall (West Scotland) (Lab):** I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate. Given that the public consultation has been extended until 26 September, I hope that the debate will inform the process and generate ideas that will be included in the proposed community empowerment and renewal bill.

The bill is intended to strengthen our communities and allow them to take over public assets, where appropriate, to make them more responsive to the community's needs. The intention is also to enable communities to use vacant and unused properties, to enhance the urban environment. Empowering and devolving certain powers to communities is long overdue. Ideas such as a community right to buy, devolving certain budgets to communities and giving communities control of assets have been talked about for a long time. I am pleased that they are being developed.

Communities currently attempt to improve the places in which they live, but they tend to find the

current legislation a hindrance rather than a help. I will welcome the bill if it can make the process easier and if the correct checks and balances are included, to give communities the power to improve their areas, if they wish to do so, while being protected should projects fail.

Volunteer Development Scotland warns that we must be careful not to thrust too many powers on to communities that either do not want them or do not have the capacity to fully manage them. That would serve only to increase inequalities and burden our communities. In addition, the bill must not be seen as a money-saving exercise involving the transfer of assets to communities simply to remove them from public service budgets.

We need to get this right; we must not half-heartedly put in place a range of measures with the aim of devolving powers to local communities and leave it at that. Instead, we must involve third sector bodies, voluntary organisations and all parts of local authorities to work together to ensure that projects are sustainable. That is a key point. We must ensure that projects are sustainable and consider what will happen if a community project fails for whatever reason—for example, because the community leader has left the area. Will the asset revert back to the previous owner or be sold on the open market? In that case, robust measures must be in place to ensure that there is no financial gain for individuals.

We must remember that communities differ throughout Scotland, so any legislation that deals with community empowerment must define exactly what is meant by a community. Do we mean community councils, community associations and tenants associations, or would any constituted group be allowed to take over an asset as long as there was a benefit to the community? We need further clarity on that.

In North Ayrshire, we already have practical examples of communities that are working together and enhancing their urban and rural environments. Pennyburn Regeneration Youth Development Enterprise—or PRYDE—brought the community together when it transformed the disused New Penny pub into a youth drop-in centre. It had to acquire the building, get planning permission and obtain funding, as well as build the capacity of volunteers. All of that took around 10 years. The centre has since opened and become a vibrant community hub and resource instead of being a vacant, run-down building that was an eyesore in the centre of the estate. That success was more to do with the volunteers' determination than with the help that was received from other agencies.

It is good that the consultation paper talks about updating the allotment legislation. The Garnock valley allotment association in Kilbirnie and the

Eglinton growers in Kilwinning have shown that such projects bring into use land that would otherwise lie vacant. We have already heard about the benefits of allotments through promoting health and wellbeing and sustainable communities, and bringing communities together to grow healthy foods that could be put back into the community. I welcome the idea that more land could be made available for allotments by using unused and underused public sector land, if that is what the community wants.

To conclude, we need to ensure that we get the bill right and actually empower communities throughout Scotland. We cannot allow it to increase inequalities by shifting public assets to communities that do not want them and do not have the resources to manage them, or to where that would not be sustainable. The idea could really breathe new life into communities by allowing them to decide what is best for them, based on local ingenuity and the availability of resources.

16:08

**Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP):** I am pleased to speak in this debate on the consultation on the proposed community empowerment and renewal bill. If the Scottish Government gets the bill right, I firmly believe that history will show that the legislation was the most empowering law for local communities for many years. As Scotland quite rightly seeks more powers for herself, it is only right that we should all consider how we can give other powers directly to our communities.

I want to use two local issues in Glasgow to highlight how the bill could empower Glaswegians and ensure that councils across Scotland do better to ensure that there is real community planning locally, not just a tick-box exercise at the end of a process, once decisions have been taken. We must ensure that community priorities are implemented as a result of real consultation, at the start of the process, rather than there being consultation at the end, confirming a local authority's view that it knew best all along.

The two examples that I will use involve situations in which Glasgow City Council has not achieved a high standard, and I hope to show how the bill could help it to do better in future. In doing so, I do not intend simply to lambast the council for its past shortcomings; rather I intend to offer pointers on how we can work together constructively, so that it can do better in future.

The first example concerns the more than 20 primary schools that the council closed a few years ago. The issues with that programme are well documented. There was no real consultation process; it was seen as a done deal—a fait

accompli. Indeed, the only school that received a reprieve from the mass school closure policy was Ruchill primary school, which moved to a new campus a year or two later—the local authority had forgotten that it contained a co-located autism unit and that, if the school closed, the unit would be left sitting on its own.

I do not want to open the can of worms of the rights and wrongs of the policy; I want to consider what happened to the school buildings that were closed. Most of them were deemed to be surplus to requirements and were demolished. In some cases, there was an option to transfer them to City Property, but the fact is that the consultation document that was issued at the beginning of the process presupposed that the schools would be demolished. Where was the community empowerment in that?

St Gregory's primary and Wyndford primary, on the Wyndford estate in Maryhill, were closed and were scheduled for demolition. However, such was the strength of the local campaign that the council decided to set up a task force for the area. The outcome of that was that one of the schools was relaunched as a community hub—indeed, it was nicknamed the Wyndford hub. It is now run by Glasgow community and safety services and it provides some vital facilities for local areas. However, to be honest, it is limping along financially. That is because it was set up as an afterthought in the community planning process.

If community empowerment is to mean anything, communities should be engaged at the outset in issues around the school estate, such as whether schools stay open or close and whether their use should change. However, that did not happen in Glasgow. A similar situation may have happened in other local authority areas, too, and the bill will ensure that there is a statutory duty to ensure genuine community empowerment. Further, where possible, let us not have Glasgow community and safety services running a building; let us have it run and managed by the community.

I will give another example of where Glasgow City Council took the wrong approach. All politicians would agree that the Cadder community centre has been run down over many years, first by Glasgow City Council and latterly by Glasgow Life, one of the council's arm's-length organisations. When, a few years ago, its doors were locked—again, a fait accompli, without any consultation—there was a local campaign to save it. I am delighted to say that the council listened, but it listened at the end of the process. I am thankful to community campaigners and Cadder Housing Association, who took on responsibility for running the building.

If a community asset such as a community centre has been run down in a planned fashion

over five, 10 or 15 years, which is why it is underutilised, why does the community have to wait until the local authority puts a padlock on the door before it is allowed to take it over? I believe that if the bill is to mean anything, a community should have a statutory right to take over a community facility if it does not agree with the council's strategic plan for that facility or if it thinks that the council is managing its planned decline. Further, that right should be followed up by funding—as has been said already, the policy should not be about disposing of community assets as part of planned decline and de-investment on the part of local authorities.

Those two aspects are vital if local authorities are to get community empowerment and community planning right. Glasgow has not always got it right. I think that that is not because it does not want to get it right; I think that there is a cultural problem. We have to support improvements in that culture, and the bill is the way to do it.

I commend the considerations that I have outlined to the minister as part of the consultation on the bill.

16:14

**George Adam (Paisley) (SNP):** I, too, welcome this debate on the consultation on the bill. I will not try to say what it is called, because as Margaret McDougall showed, it is quite a mouthful. However, I agree with her that it is extremely important that we get the bill correct, because it can make a radical difference to all our communities.

I come from a local authority perspective that is similar to Anne McTaggart's, given my personal experience in Renfrewshire Council. I say to all members who expressed some doubt about the consultation and where we are going with it that when Derek Mackay, the Minister for Local Government and Planning, says that potentially the bill represents the biggest transfer of power since devolution, assuredly he means it. I say that not because I am the minister's pal on the back benches, but because I have worked with him for years and I know that Derek Mackay is an individual who believes in getting the facts right and ensuring that we get results. He does not generally deal in hyperbole.

My own time in local government showed me how important community empowerment is. In Renfrewshire Council, we created local area committees. As one of the conveners, I had to ensure that the community was involved and wanted to turn up to the meetings. Sitting for three hours in what is effectively a council meeting can

be a dry experience, but we had to ensure that there was a vision and that people were involved.

We had the general fund, the common good fund and various legacy funds. However, without vision and ideas from the community, we had nothing. Once the money was gone, nobody would turn up to the meetings; "EastEnders" and "Coronation Street" would win and you would be sitting in an empty council chamber with no one else to talk to. We had to ensure that we had a vision and could get a programme together.

As I have said before, we created a £20,000 outdoor gym and pensioners playpark. It seemed silly at the start, but it is now used constantly. The park had a tennis court that had not received investment for some time, but we managed to get £220,000 from Tennis Scotland to ensure that young people in the south end of Paisley could play a sport that they did not have access to previously.

That is what community empowerment is about. It is not just about the councillors, the council or politicians in general telling the public what to do. As Margo MacDonald hinted at earlier, if we do not encourage the public and use their ideas, they will walk away and will not get involved. Therefore, it is about members of the public gaining empowerment and thriving. That is one of the things that I have always tried to push forward.

**Margo MacDonald:** I was impressed to hear that in Paisley they are playing tennis these days. It used to be tig with axes, as they said.

However, I would like to know who looks after the tennis facilities. Is there a council watchman? Is it the people themselves who look after them?

**George Adam:** I am glad that Ms McDonald brought that up, because that was part of my speech that I forgot to mention—I skipped that part. We had a plan for a stage 2 in which, we hoped, the local tennis club and various other clubs in the area would turn the tennis facilities into some form of hub, take control of it and eventually get further funding for floodlights and a clubhouse, so that it could be used during the winter. That was my idea for stage 2. If we get the bill correct, I think that it would help to further that project. That is one of the things that I would be looking at as well.

Community planning was one of the most important things that I found out about during my time on the council. It is important that we ensure that there is further involvement with communities and the public and private sectors to find common ground and work towards the greater good.

My members' business debate last week on the Renfrewshire witch hunt 1697 project was essentially about community cultural planning. The

community developed an idea and led the project, and everyone got involved, including the actors who were part of it, and supported it. That model has been extremely successful and it could be used as a tool to regenerate towns and other areas. However, it is extremely important to ensure that everyone is involved in community planning.

One of the other things that excites me about the bill is the possibility of community compulsory purchase, which I believe could empower many groups in our communities, as Sandra White said.

In many constituencies, there are buildings and areas that we could make better use of and which have lain there for years with nothing happening. In many cases, they are owned not by the local authority, but by private investors who, because of the economy or other reasons, have left them or possibly stripped them to the bone. There are a number of examples of that in Paisley, such as the Territorial Army building in the university district and the part-time school that was part of the old Ferguslie cotton mill. All those buildings could be considered for development. Another project is the Paisley Development Trust's on-going work with the Russell institute, a building that was provided to the people of Paisley by Agnes Russell and eventually given to Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS board, which has now pulled out. The development trust is trying to get involved.

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The member needs to start winding up.

**George Adam:** If we are radical, we can take some of our high street problems by the scruff of the neck and deal with the real issues. There are high streets with empty retail outlets and countless landlords, with subletting three or four times. We need to get buildings back into use. Of course, there needs to be a local vision and a substantial plan for long-term gain. I believe that the proposed bill could provide the foundations to encourage, engage and empower our communities.

16:21

**Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green):** I, too, welcome the opportunity to debate the proposed community empowerment and renewal bill at this early stage. The debate helps to encourage a wide range of views to be heard and, by its nature, cross-cuts policy and intersects with on-going Government work such as the recent land reform review group, the national review of town centres, the short-life working group on community councils and the continuing planning reforms. Many of those reviews and potential policy changes provide the opportunity to work together in more coherent ways to ensure that community empowerment is not promoted by one group and

stifled by another. I hope that a coherent vision and framework will arise.

**Derek Mackay:** To give direct reassurance on that point, in my ministerial portfolio I am involved with all those agendas to ensure that we produce a strategic plan.

**Alison Johnstone:** I thank the minister for that.

As Bob Doris mentioned, it is important that the principles of decentralised powers are fully accepted and that the approach is not just about decentralisation from Westminster to Holyrood. I would go further than Bob Doris and ask that we remove the financial straitjacket that has been forced on local authorities. Financial freedom is vital, because it is not empowerment simply to give people a pot of money and say, "There you go—spend it how you like." Empowerment means a group having the ability to raise funds and the freedom to spend it on its aims. At least to an extent, it means financial independence.

The consultation talks of participatory budgeting, which is an idea that I fully support. In my region, the Leith decides initiative allocated £16,000 of council funds through a highly successful participatory budgeting event. I would like the empowerment agenda to explore how more tax-raising powers, for example in relation to allotment fees or parking charges, could be devolved to community councils or neighbourhood partnerships along with a concerted effort to build the capacity of that hyper-local democracy.

On community asset transfer, I cannot speak highly enough of the efforts of the Splashback community group, which is working to reopen Leith Waterworld, which is a unique asset in north Edinburgh that is well suited to the young, old and those who are less mobile. The group's bid to run the pool with the City of Edinburgh Council has been submitted, and the council will make a decision on 20 September. That is a fine example of a community sports hub if ever there was one, and it surely meets all the criteria for a meaningful legacy from the great games that we have just witnessed.

Also in Lothian region, another community—track cyclists—has taken on the management and control of all cycling activities and equipment at the Meadowbank velodrome. That illustrates the important point that communities of interest must also be represented in our plans for the right to buy or asset transfer.

The Common Ground Association has formed to help people to explore the potential of community ownership of local hills and woodlands. The aim is to enhance and protect sites such as Lothian's Craighouse for future generations. In south Edinburgh, local people who are tired of the loss of local shops that have been steamrollered by the

supermarket juggernaut are working to set up a community greengrocer, which is to be stocked with produce from local allotments and gardens such as the Royal Edinburgh community gardens, which was once a stalled space but is now an abundant one.

Those groups are all working with others—from Senscot to sportscotland—and, to some extent, with the council. I agree with the Royal Town Planning Institute that a one-stop shop for best practice would be an invaluable aid and with its call to help folk through existing mazes, not build more. Working with the groups that I have mentioned has highlighted the need to ensure that communities have access to expertise in business planning and market research, for example.

The consultation also refers to common good assets. There is a clear case for the creation of democratically controlled common good trusts, with the scope to manage the transfer of assets to community control.

Local energy has been mentioned a few times. If public sector land or roofing is available for renewable energy, the community should be able to work with the council to create local energy companies to generate energy and revenue.

I want to see our communities flourish, being confident to take their own decisions, cohesive and equitable, so that everyone who needs it finds support in their community, and resilient to shocks and changes that occur as part of changing environmental, social and economic circumstances.

There is some focus in the consultation document's introduction on sustainable economic growth, but that will not, as an overriding purpose, create the community development that the proposed bill describes. Opportunities for increased collective wellbeing come from letting communities decide what matters to them and letting them act on those decisions with appropriate support. In some cases, community needs will override the slavish and blind adherence to growth for growth's sake: a community might decide that it does not want to have a large-scale supermarket move into the area and that it wants to keep existing local traders and business; it might decide that it wants a not-for-profit cafe, rather than another clone town coffee shop.

Let us see communities fully involved in the decisions that affect them, from local energy generation to the provision of local sports facilities. As we debate the future of Scotland, there is no better time to do so.

**The Presiding Officer:** I call Margo MacDonald. Ms MacDonald, you have six minutes.

16:26

**Margo MacDonald (Lothian) (Ind):** That amount of time is a surprise, but thank you very much, Presiding Officer.

I was impressed by Mark McDonald's speech—he sounded like a good councillor and that he knew what was going on in his patch. I am glad that he is submitting the information that he referred to to the consultation and I hope that the Government will listen to it because it sounded full of good sense, rather than long windy words.

What did Margaret McDougall do? She put the cat among the pigeons when she asked for the definition of a community. If members were to listen to some of the other fine words and sentiments that were expressed, it would seem that we are going to embrace all communities in Scotland. However, if a community pops up that people do not like to have in their area, will it be looked upon with such kindness? I say that with some bitter experience—it was many years ago, admittedly—from trying to establish a halfway house in a leafier part of Edinburgh. The attempt was not particularly successful and, although it is an easier thing to do now, there are still lots of places that would shy away from communities of people who have difficulties in life and who are trying to get back on board again. What exactly is a community? What are we talking about when we talk about communities of interest, and how do they stack up alongside geographical or social communities? That is something to think about.

Let us turn to the groups that call on our community assets or community good resources, as mentioned by Margaret Mitchell and Sandra White. We must look at how the new-found power of control over assets will be used. Alison Johnstone mentioned that the Government should think about transferring the powers to trusts—that is a sensible, down-to-earth suggestion that is not airy-fairy and must be looked at in every circumstance to see whether it works and suits the particular local community that it is rooted in.

I had a part to play in the establishment of an excellent community empowerment project—community flats—in south Edinburgh, which has now been rolled out in another couple of examples. The need was for basic living and lifestyle skills. I know that sounds a bit hame knittit, but nobody could make a pot of soup among the young lassies who were given homes in the tower blocks. There were all sorts of basic things that people did not know how to do and that only needed basic home skills. There were a lot of elderly women there, many of them widows, who did not have much to do, and men, who could do stuff around the place. The council and the health board co-operated with the project and a nurse was seconded to it. We were given the use of a

flat for a community flat, which became absolutely stowed out. We offered services which the council could not provide, including anger management classes next door to the soup-making classes. A cup of tea was always available when needed. It was a place where the community was able to mix and mingle and it acted as a catalyst for further ideas that were put into effect.

I am not going to give the minister all the evidence from the project, because he knows enough about it, and it is all on the record at the council if he wants to find out more. However, what I have described is the kind of empowerment that is needed for our poorest communities.

I very much support what Bob Doris wants for his area, and I like the sound of what is happening in Paisley with regard to sports facilities. Local sports facilities that are run and used by local people and their children are a form of empowerment for a community. However, in many cases the enthusiasts become involved rather than the whole community. I may be proved wrong in the view that I am about to give—there is, for instance, the swimming pool in Stonehaven that was taken over as a locally managed venture and is very diverse in what it does and in the groups that it appeals to—but it is not as simple as saying that if we have a facility, the community will be empowered and things will get better for people. We need to be flexible about the structure and we must be organised about training the volunteers, and do so without patronising folk, so that they are willing to step up to the plate, because people who live in a depressed area can be that bit more scared about taking on debt.

I take the opportunity to say to the minister that I am looking for some support for a project in Edinburgh which will empower the community—the velodrome to which Alison Johnstone referred. There are heaven knows how many young cyclists in Edinburgh who do not have a proper velodrome. We are not looking for the bells and whistles of the velodrome in Glasgow; what is needed is a good working model where kids can learn and train. A bit of money is needed—it is not much. We are also looking for a bit of money to put a paddle sports facility into Leith docks because without it, the regeneration of the area will fail.

I am grateful for the chance to inform the minister.

16:33

**Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** I welcome the opportunity to make the closing contribution on behalf of the Scottish Conservatives. I thank those organisations that have provided useful briefings for today's debate including Planning Aid for Scotland and the SCVO.

There have been some good speeches from members on all sides, including my friend Margaret Mitchell, who laid out our general approach to the matters under discussion. Our broad-brush approach is that while we absolutely support the empowerment of communities and their renewal, the argument is still to be conclusively made that these should be matters for legislation, instead of strategic decision-making by Government, backed with resources and practical assistance. Legislation empowering communities will not, in itself, result in the desired outcome.

As I have indicated, there are many themes in the consultation document that the Scottish Conservatives are happy to support and which are supported by members of all parties. Indeed, many of the themes also mirror those associated with the big society being promoted by the Prime Minister and the UK Government. The big society consists of people who volunteer their time and effort to make things happen. Never has that been more evident than at the recent Olympic games, where countless volunteers—or games makers, as they were called—took part in helping and guiding the athletes and visitors and in the outstanding ceremonies that opened and closed both the Olympic games and the Paralympic games. It is interesting to note that many more people responded to the call for stewards than responded to the call just for volunteers, which shows how vital it is to label voluntary positions correctly, giving people a far greater sense of achievement and value in what they are doing.

**Mike MacKenzie:** Does the member agree that community activists and volunteers have been working for their communities—and that, indeed, the Olympic games have been held very successfully all over the world—since long before David Cameron came up with the idea of the big society?

**Jamie McGrigor:** Of course, that is absolutely true. I will move on from there. I was only pointing out that they were a successful Olympic games and that David Cameron is a successful Prime Minister. Let us hope that the legacy of the volunteer spirit, having been rekindled, continues for many years to come.

We agree that those who deliver our public services must work with communities to design and deliver those services around the communities' needs. That should go without saying. We welcome the fact that ministers have said that they wish to strengthen opportunities for communities to take independent action to achieve the goals that they have decided that they want to achieve. Like other members, I am very positive about the role that the third sector can play in community planning and the delivery of local



services. There is merit in the suggestion in the consultation document that each public sector authority should have a named, accountable officer who is responsible.

We support the concept of housing tenants engaging more with their local authority or registered social landlord. Like other members, we are also positive about providing communities with space for allotments and community gardens, recognising that that can lead to better health through good diet and exercise. We would support practical proposals to enable communities to make greater use of unused and underused properties, but we would want appropriate and genuine protection for the owners of private land who may wish to utilise it in a different way in the future.

A number of members have taken the opportunity to highlight examples of good practice in their constituencies and regions, and I will do the same. Just last week, the small but vibrant community of Craignish, in Argyll and Bute, was commended in the community involvement category of the Scottish awards for quality in planning for its community plan. The judges described the plan as an

“excellent example of how communities can work together to deliver a good quality land-use plan for a small amount of resource”.

I congratulate all my constituents who were involved. It is not the first time that I have congratulated the people who live in the Craignish peninsula, including those in Barbreck glen, Craobh Haven and Ardferr. It is one of the strongest communities in Argyll and Bute and has a volunteering ethos that is second to none.

I also pay tribute to the work of community councillors throughout my region. As Planning Aid for Scotland suggests, community councils require support and training, as they are the only community group with a statutory role in the planning system. Our manifesto last year sought to boost the role of community councils by requiring local authorities to allocate a budget to them that was proportionate to the size of the area that they cover, so that they could undertake their own projects.

The Scottish Conservatives encourage as many people as possible to make responses to the consultation. We will assess the results of the consultation carefully and the subsequent draft bill that ministers have pledged to produce. The ministers will have to ensure that, at all times, they are not just introducing more or disproportionate red tape, bureaucracy or regulatory burdens that serve only to disempower communities and people.

I end on a more positive note. I was delighted to hear the minister stress the importance of enabling

people to start managing their own projects in their local communities—at least, that is what I think I heard him say. I was also delighted to hear Mike MacKenzie's excellent point about practice being just as important as theory and Margo MacDonald's point about soup. Soup rivals the invention of penicillin in importance.

16:39

**Sarah Boyack:** Today's debate has been good, as it has demonstrated the huge number of opportunities that we as representatives see, not only in our regions but throughout the country, that could come from the bill if we collectively get it right.

We have heard examples of best practice in community ownership and management from members on all sides of the chamber. I could talk at length about the experience of a local community sports facility in my region. It was built by the community and local people did all the fundraising, but they could not manage it successfully. It ended up going to a leisure company and the city council, and it has now been passed to a different community organisation called Basketball Scotland.

We need to look at all the experiences in the round. Community ownership is about not just buildings, but management—Alison Johnstone talked about the need for marketing and financial skills. Members have mentioned the issue of generating revenue, for which a whole set of complex skills is needed depending on the complexity of the projects. Support in that regard is crucial.

In my constituency, the backgreens initiative has flourished behind a mix of private and housing association tenement properties. The land was previously just left to rot, and it has now been transformed and brought back into use to make those areas much more attractive. Again, there was an issue around management skills, and external support and a bit of finance were needed to pump prime the project.

The Inch park was formerly run by the council and is now run by the local community. Again, it needed external support to make it work. I was just going to congratulate Margo MacDonald on raising the issue of the Edinburgh velodrome, but she has left the chamber. The velodrome is a good example of a facility that, although currently not fit for purpose, would need only a bit of investment to bring it up to scratch and enable it to be managed thereafter.

We have volunteers and people with skills. In the context of building on the Olympics, we need to use land better and build for activity, but we also need to think through the management issues,

because those are not always straightforward. Communities can be good at raising funds, but the skills for managing a project thereafter and making it successful require another layer of experience.

I will make a suggestion to the minister that the Scottish Sports Association has made to me. The Scottish Government could take a look at how it as an organisation could facilitate volunteering, and that model could then be used by other public sector organisations and by the private sector. I am thinking in particular of financial management skills, which, although they might often be the bread-and-butter skills that someone uses in their day job, may in a local community be a vital skill that the community cannot afford to buy in. We need to use that enthusiasm and experience and think about the assets that we have across the public sector at a national and local level.

National public sector assets have not been mentioned very much today. Alison Johnstone mentioned the fantastic example of NHS Lothian transforming unused land into allotments that are now benefiting patients and the local community. However, the health board is not keen to give the land away in perpetuity, although it is happy to lease it.

The detail that the minister will get—I hope—in response to the consultation is crucial. Short-term leases can suit public sector organisations that have long-term aspirations for the land but not the short-term capacity to use it, and the land could be used by other people for things such as allotments or community gardens. However, longer-term leases are crucial if community groups are to attract lottery or trust funding, or if they want to invest on the ground. It is important that we think through the detail of leases, because they can be used in different circumstances and for different community groups.

I will give members a current example of a no-win situation. The Scottish Prison Service is about to sell off the prison officers' club at Saughton, which is a fantastic local club that is run by the prison officers for the local community and the officers themselves. It may be lost because the SPS is determined to sell the land to the highest bidder.

We must be up front about that type of conflict. There will be conflicts, whether at a national or a local level, but I hope that the bill will set a different framework to take into account wider community interests or to trade off some of those interests.

It has been suggested to me that there should be someone at a council level—if the council can manage that—who looks at assets and thinks about the different categories. The council might want to sell some assets to the highest bidder in

order to reinvest at a wider level across the community, but other assets might be much more appropriate for community disposal or for community management. The national asset register is a good idea and I am keen to see that happen.

Community ownership and co-operatives are important models and we wanted to add them to the debate because we want to see an investment that generates benefits locally, so that the accountability can be captured and the direct benefit can be seen. Colleagues across the chamber have talked about community trust models and renewables models. I want to put on the record that I think that Co-operative Development Scotland could be a key agent in helping to support communities and in giving them the skills and the expertise to mobilise and to maximise opportunities from land and building.

One theme that has emerged across the chamber is that, given the detail and the complexity of trusts and the complexity of financial management, it is important to ensure that the relevant skills are available in local communities. That help has got to be there from the start.

**Margo MacDonald:** I want to prod further whether the co-operative movement in Scotland can provide the training that we need for local groups.

**Sarah Boyack:** There are some absolutely fantastic examples, particularly in the Highlands, where community renewables developments have been taken forward. Community Energy Scotland has been critical to that. The co-operative movement has also been supportive. However, it is about having the financial management and things such as risk management. If communities are building renewables or taking over a building there are health and safety issues, so support for local communities is crucial. That support is there, but it needs to be made available. One suggestion was to consider guidance—that might be worth looking at when the minister is pulling together the different ideas.

I would be keen to hear in the minister's winding-up speech how he will manage the consultation process. An extended process has been opened up—the minister will report back on the draft bill as it comes forward. I suspect that all the members have found that the challenge in preparing for the debate was that it is quite a short period of time to go through the different key sections in the bill. Each section of the bill could have generated quite a useful discussion this afternoon. We need to think about how we break down the bill between the chamber and the Local Government and Regeneration Committee—I think that Anne McTaggart made that point—to

ensure that each section gets the debate that it deserves.

I want to highlight the issue of dangerous buildings that was included in the consultation—Malcolm Chisholm mentioned it. It is a controversial and a complex area. I suggest that the minister gets his officials to explore why the provisions in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 have not been used by local authorities. That is a critical issue to address before we bring in new legislation. I look at the issue in Edinburgh—we have had the statutory notices fiasco where there are powers to take the money back. It is a really complex issue and my constituents would like it to be explored in detail.

**The Presiding Officer:** Will the member please wind up?

**Sarah Boyack:** I totally support David Stewart's aims, but the detail is crucial.

There have been some fantastic speeches. Let us come back and debate this again—this is definitely not the last word on it. I was delighted to be in a formerly privately-owned tavern last night in Newtongrange. Lord Lothian gave it back to the community. Let us look at not just the public sector in terms of community land disposal, but the private sector and what it can bring to the table.

16:48

**Derek Mackay:** This has been an excellent debate, which has—as Sarah Boyack said—raised the opportunities that exist in terms of taking forward the bill. Through the consultation, there have been a range of methods—we will continue to bring forward the ideas and the practicalities to ensure that this works. I say again to Sarah Boyack that we will accept the Labour amendment. I feel a closeness with the Labour Party on this debate—clearly my red tie is having more benefits than I envisaged when I put it on this morning.

There may be tough choices ahead, because clear conflicts could arise in relation to areas such as assets. However, the cross-sector reference group this morning, the parliamentary debate and the discussions in other places all show a great deal of enthusiasm for the bill—not just for the legislative framework that could be produced, but for the guidance, best practice and resources that can be found to ensure that we meet the aspirations that have been outlined by many members. It is important that we turn ambitions into reality and ensure that it is sustainable, so that projects that are created through this work can survive into the future.

Further work is also to be carried out on empty properties. Although there is no immediate asset

management account plan, Scottish Enterprise and others are working on a register of empty properties, which is a tool that could assist communities in identifying what is available.

Claire Baker and Sarah Boyack raised the important issue of inequality. Our ensuring that the bill's proposals are consulted on or implemented will not make inequality worse: it will tackle inequality. I assure members that the membership of the reference group includes Oxfam, Shelter Scotland, the Scottish Community Alliance, the poverty truth commission, the Scottish Youth Parliament and many others. Membership alone does not tick a box—of course it does not—but I seek to reassure members that much work will be done to ensure that the concept and the issues around inequality will be addressed.

Annabelle Ewing is right to be excited about the programme and the proposals, and she is right to identify the can-do spirit that it could encourage. Aspects of the bill could also make progress on empty and dangerous buildings.

Claire Baker said that we should be sensible and proportionate, which is absolutely correct. She also mentioned the potential of community energy projects, from which we could also learn lessons. She referred to council decision making and how it affects individual local elected members: we want to engage further with COSLA and councils on the proposals.

Sandra White is an enthusiast for the programme of community empowerment. She is such an enthusiast that the consultation was launched in her constituency, which I know she welcomed warmly. That is a good example of a facility going from council ownership towards community ownership.

Malcolm Chisholm has made a substantial contribution to community empowerment—not just to this debate or as a minister or MSP, but in so many other ways. We recognise that and want to build on the best practice that previous Administrations established by taking on board the comments about state aid rules and best practice. He made a helpful suggestion about having an online hub to promote best practice in community-led projects. We created an online hub some weeks ago—our-great-ideas.org—so we are ahead of Malcolm Chisholm with that idea, but he also identified some good work that is being done by the Labour-SNP Administration in Edinburgh, just as many other members have been able to identify great projects in their areas.

We are considering David Stewart's bill, but we believe that a range of powers could be considered with local government to tackle enforcement and private sector property that might need to be addressed.

Alison McInnes was right to cover the Christie commission and its important place in the debate. She referred me to the Carnegie Trust, which is also a member of the reference group. It is a rather large reference group, but we have made sure that all interests, including the private and third sectors, are represented in order that we get things right. The group is co-chaired by COSLA. Alison McInnes was also right to say that we are talking about more than just legislation or regulation; we are talking about culture, leadership and the practical support that can be provided to deliver community empowerment in the way that has been suggested.

Of course, there is a crossover with the planning system, community planning and geographic planning as they affect communities. However, I disagree with Alison McInnes's perspective on police and fire reform. From my experience in local government, and now as a minister, I believe that the emerging accountability will be better than it was under the previous arrangements that we had in relation to those services.

I agree with Mike MacKenzie on the dedication of volunteers in a number of projects across his constituency, some of which I was able to visit during the summer recess.

Anne McTaggart raised a question about the process. There will be an on-going debate, consultation and reference groups. Roadshows have been done with local government and others. There is a website, and packs were sent to community groups across the country to raise consciousness of the concepts as proposed in the exploratory consultation. Of course, there will be an opportunity to review the draft bill when it is presented to Parliament.

I, too, commend the Glasgow stalled spaces initiative for what it has achieved. We want to replicate that type of project across the country. However, the work is about resources—human and physical—and we must ensure that the appropriate checks and balances are in place.

Mark McDonald made some helpful suggestions, as always, and Margaret McDougall's contribution was also helpful, as she identified the barriers that exist in some community asset transfers. We want to explore those technical issues to ensure that we can remove any unnecessary barriers from the system.

We do not want simply to create burdens on communities; we want to empower them genuinely in the way that Bob Doris described. He described the scenario in which a council determines which assets to dispose of, and sometimes they are the liabilities, or the less attractive community facilities that might otherwise have been heading for

demolition. The bill could represent a step change in the process. Communities could lead the process of transfer and could determine which facilities are appropriate to be transferred as local community projects.

George Adam mentioned good practice in local area committee funding in Renfrewshire, and Alison Johnstone made an important point about financial powers and how they should be addressed. Margo MacDonald made a number of points in her interventions, including a naked attempt to lobby on behalf of her pet project, which I will certainly pass on to the sport minister.

Chic Brodie asked how radical the debate should be. I say to him that I want to "set the people free" through the community empowerment and renewal bill. We want radical suggestions to change Scotland for the better. He also said that we can have action now and that we do not need to wait for legislative change, and he is absolutely right. There are many actions that can be taken now to empower communities, to standardise consultations and to transfer assets. The views from the grass roots so far have been encouraging.

I found the Conservatives' contributions to the debate disappointing—in stark contrast to the contributions from every other party in the chamber. We will require legislation and other measures. We want to give communities the tools to do the job, but our approach is absolutely not the big society, which would be the kiss of death for proposals in Scotland. For the Conservatives in England, the big society means that people are on their own, whereas for us, community empowerment means that we will give them the tools to do the job. That is genuine empowerment.

**Margaret Mitchell:** Will the minister take an intervention?

**Derek Mackay:** I am reaching the end of my speech.

We are making a genuine attempt to empower communities and we are listening to people, as a listening Government. Just as we believe, as a Parliament and a Government, that the people of Scotland are best placed to take decisions about their future, communities are best placed to take decisions about their future. We are raising ambitions for Scotland, realigning resources, removing barriers, unlocking potential and delivering new powers and new rights to communities in a way that we have not been able to do before. We are unlocking human potential towards a renewed democracy.

There is more to this debate than just finance: it is also about general wellbeing. We support the principle of subsidiarity. Just as we want powers to come from London to Edinburgh, we want to

transfer more to communities, in the spirit of this debate. The proposed bill represents the biggest potential transfer of powers to local communities since devolution. If that is what we can do with devolution, just imagine what we could do with independence.

## Business Motions

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-04071, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a revision to the business programme for Thursday 13 September.

16:58

**The Minister for Parliamentary Business (Joe FitzPatrick):** In moving the motion, I bring it to Parliament's attention that, as agreed at the Parliamentary Bureau meeting yesterday, we have changed Thursday's business with the insertion of a ministerial statement on the renewables obligation Scotland review announcement.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees the following revision to the programme of business for Thursday 13 September 2012—

delete

2.30 pm                      Scottish Government Debate: Electricity Market Reform

and insert

2.30 pm                      Ministerial Statement: Renewables Obligation (Scotland) Review Announcement

*followed by*                Scottish Government Debate: Electricity Market Reform—[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-04070, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Tuesday 18 September 2012

2.00 pm                      Time for Reflection

followed by                Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by                Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by                Ministerial Statement: National Planning Framework 3

followed by                Stage 1 Debate: Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Bill

followed by                Financial Resolution: Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Bill

followed by                Legislative Consent Motion: Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill – UK Legislation

followed by                Business Motions

followed by                Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm                      Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 19 September 2012

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions  
Justice and the Law Officers;  
Rural Affairs and the Environment

followed by Scottish Labour Party Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 20 September 2012

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

12.30 pm Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Ministerial Statement: Draft Budget 2013-14

followed by Health and Sport Committee Debate: Inquiry  
into Support for Community Sport

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 25 September 2012

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

followed by Topical Questions (if selected)

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 26 September 2012

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm Portfolio Questions  
Health and Wellbeing

followed by Scottish Government Business

followed by Business Motions

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

followed by Members' Business

Thursday 27 September 2012

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions

12.30 pm Members' Business

2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.30 pm Scottish Government Business

followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time—[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-04072, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a stage 2 timetable.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Local Government Finance (Unoccupied Properties etc). (Scotland) Bill at Stage 2 be completed by 28 September 2012.—[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

*Motion agreed to.*

## Decision Time

17:01

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** There are three questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S4M-04061.2, in the name of Sarah Boyack, which seeks to amend motion S4M-04061, in the name of Derek Mackay, on the consultation on the proposed community empowerment and renewal 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)  
 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)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (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, Helen (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (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)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 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)  
 MacDonald, Margo (Lothian) (Ind)  
 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)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 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)  
 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)  
 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)  
 Walker, Bill (Dunfermline) (Ind)  
 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

Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Lothian) (Con)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)

Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 108, Against 0, Abstentions 12.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S4M-04061.1, in the name of Margaret Mitchell, which seeks to amend motion S4M-04061, in the name of Derek Mackay, on the consultation on the proposed community empowerment and renewal bill, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### For

Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (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)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McLetchie, David (Lothian) (Con)  
 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)  
 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)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (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)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (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)  
 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)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (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)  
 Walker, Bill (Dunfermline) (Ind)  
 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

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)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Cowdenbeath) (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)  
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (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)  
 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 18, Against 66, Abstentions 36.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S4M-04061, in the name of Derek Mackay, as amended, on the consultation on the proposed community empowerment and renewal 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)  
 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)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (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, Helen (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (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)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)

Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 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)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 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)  
 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)  
 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)  
 Walker, Bill (Dunfermline) (Ind)  
 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**

Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McLetchie, David (Lothian) (Con)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)

Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 107, Against 0, Abstentions 12.

*Motion, as amended, agreed to,*

That the Parliament welcomes the current exploratory consultation on the proposed Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill and the commitment to ensuring that Scotland's communities are supported to take independent action to achieve their goals and to have their voices heard in the decisions that affect them; commends the Scottish Government's continued efforts to work in partnership with COSLA, local authorities and the wider public, private, third and community sectors to further this aim; congratulates the many individuals and organisations from across Scotland who are making a positive difference in their communities through community-led action, and encourages everyone with an interest to get involved and share their ideas on how to empower Scotland's communities by responding to the consultation paper, and notes in particular the need to learn lessons from the successes and experiences of rural communities exercising their right to buy using the legislation introduced in the first parliamentary session and acknowledges that support for communities and access to finance was critical and that effective community management and cooperative models are key to the long-term success of empowering and renewing communities.

## Scottish Steelworkers Memorial Fund

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):** The final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S4M-03317, in the name of Clare Adamson, on the Scottish steelworkers memorial fund. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

I ask members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons as soon as possible, to arrange their microphones and put in their cards.

*Motion debated,*

That the Parliament recognises the work of steelworkers in Scotland; considers that, over two centuries, they have revolutionised the Scottish economy and contributed to its long and proud international reputation for high-quality iron and steelmaking; notes that the Dalziel Ironworks in Motherwell opened in 1872 and understands that the industry prospered over many years until the closure of the Ravenscraig facility in 1992; believes that this closure had a devastating impact on the population at a time that witnessed widescale de-industrialisation and a huge number of job losses; believes that steelmaking remains a flagship industry in Scotland, through the continued contribution of Dalzell, Tata Steel (Motherwell) and Clydebridge (Cambuslang); commends and recognises the Scottish steelworkers' memorial fund, which aims to fund the construction and installation of a steelworkers' memorial as part of the Ravenscraig regeneration project; understands that the memorial will represent and commemorate the contribution of all steelworkers in Scotland, and believes that it would serve as a lasting tribute to the brave workers in that industry who faced significant danger or lost their lives in the workplace.

17:06

**Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP):** I am a Lanarkshire lass, born in Motherwell, and so the motion is close to my heart. My grandfather worked at David Colville and Sons, and many of my close family and friends have connections to the steel industry, so I give great thanks to members from across the chamber who supported the motion and have given Parliament an opportunity to recognise the centuries of Scottish steel-making history that contributed much—literally in blood, sweat and tears—to the building of industrial Scotland.

In the debate, we also recognise the brave workers who were injured and maimed, and those who sadly lost their lives in a dangerous and physically demanding role. I commend the work of the Scottish steelworkers memorial fund to construct and install a steelworkers memorial on the Ravenscraig site.

There has been a great deal of interest in the debate. In the public gallery we have Terry Currie, who is chair of the memorial fund; Tommy

Brennan, who is its secretary; and John Scott, who is a trustee of the fund. Mr Scott has a deeply personal reason for his commitment to the fund, as his uncle tragically lost his life while working in Ravenscraig.

Also in the gallery to witness the debate are members of the trade union movement throughout Scotland, which supports the campaign. We have Jim Baxter and Hugh Gaffney from North Lanarkshire trades union council, and we have Stephen Boyd, who is the assistant secretary of the Scottish Trades Union Congress.

There are also steelworkers who are interested in the debate, including Jim Fraser and Stevie Jeffrey, who marked the 20th anniversary of the Ravenscraig plant's closure with a reunion of former ironworks, engineering and production staff. We also have Pat Donnelly from the union Community, which has generously donated £20,000 to the steelworkers memorial fund, on condition that the materials be sourced in Britain and manufactured in Scotland. I will leave procurement aside, for the moment.

It is hard to encapsulate the influence that steel making had on my life and my family's life. Steel is so ingrained in our psyche that the nickname of Motherwell Football Club is the Steelmen. Only yesterday evening, I attended an awards ceremony at St Aidan's high school where, as in so many Lanarkshire schools, the award for academic excellence is the David Colville dux medal. The Dalzell steel and iron works in Motherwell was founded by David Colville in 1871. It was nationalised in 1976 and is now operated by Tata Steel.

Ravenscraig dominated my childhood skyline. Often, it had a none-too-pleasant effect on the olfactory system, and I can still remember the noise and the night sky being illuminated like fire as the slag was released from the furnaces. However, the sensory effects that I remember from childhood are nothing compared to the hardship that the workers endured.

In his history of the steel-making industry, "Sons of Vulcan: Ironworkers and Steelmen in Scotland", Robert Duncan states:

"The making of molten steel in open hearth furnaces depended on hard manual labour, dexterity and considerable powers of mental and physical endurance."

Workers were exposed to extreme levels of heat and were often exposed to noxious and toxic fumes. One can only imagine the stamina that was required by workers who were tasked with hand stripping and clearing the slag from the chamber beneath the furnaces, in cramped and hazardous conditions with only hammers to assist them. That was only one of the many dangerous jobs that were undertaken by steelworkers and contractors.

The stresses, strains, injuries, occasional fatal accidents and constant danger were obvious features of steel making in this period.

As in many of the industries that are associated with the industrial revolution, the labour force was the steel industry's least valued asset, so no records exist that quantify the levels of injury and death that occurred in it. Robert Duncan also references the Royal Commission on Labour from 1892, in which John Hodge, who was leader of the steel melters union in Scotland, stated that although fatal accidents were few and unusual, there were many small accidents, such as men losing a toe or a finger, or getting burnt. The truth is that we will never know the full extent of the fatalities and accidents over the centuries. Anecdotally, I know that barely any family in a steel-making community has not been touched by the tragedy that is associated with our industrial heritage.

**Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston)**

**(Lab):** I commend Clare Adamson on her excellent motion. Does she agree that Gartcosh steelworks, in my constituency, was also an important contributor to Scotland's steel industry until it was viciously closed in 1986 by Margaret Thatcher, who threw hundreds of steelworkers on the scrapheap and devastated the whole community?

**Clare Adamson:** I could not agree more with Elaine Smith. The sacrifice of Ravenscraig and the Scottish steel industry set me on the road to politics and brought me here today.

Scotland's steel industry is still very important today. Vallourec Mannesmann's plant in Mossend and Tata Steel's Dalzell and Clydebridge plants are important to Scottish industry. Anne Glover, the European Commission's first-ever chief scientific adviser, sang the praises of Scottish steel industry in this building last week, when she described the use of our steel at European Transonic Windtunnel, which uses liquid nitrogen to freeze its chamber to subzero temperatures and in doing so uses half the power grid of the city of Cologne. It required the highest quality steel, which was delivered from Scotland.

We have a strong tradition in Lanarkshire of recognising the sacrifices that were made by workers and their families in building this nation. I count my colleague, Elaine Smith, as one of the many inspiring speakers who I have listened to at workers memorial day, which is remembered at Summerlee heritage museum. We show solidarity with workers from around the world who have lost their lives or been injured, and we highlight the preventable nature of most workplace accidents and associated ill health. We seek to promote campaigns and union organisations in the fight to improve workplace safety.

Earlier in the summer at the festival of politics, I witnessed a discussion about the great tapestry of Scotland, which will depict our history as a nation from neolithic times. The discussion of who should appear in the tapestry was quickly overshadowed by the discussion of what should appear. Crofters, jute workers, rent strikers, miners, shipbuilders and, of course, steelworkers were considered as important as individual heroes such as Adam, Maxwell, Wallace and Lanarkshire's own David Livingstone.

I thank members for the opportunity to bring this motion to Parliament, which is very important to me. I commend it to Parliament.

17:13

**John Pentland (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab):** I thank Clare Adamson for lodging the motion and I extend a warm welcome to the representatives of the memorial fund committee, who have joined us in the gallery. I declare an interest as someone who worked in the steel industry for 30 years. The subject is close to my heart and that of my constituency of Motherwell and Wishaw, which includes the Dalzell steel plant in Steelopolis, as Motherwell was nicknamed, and the neighbouring site of Ravenscraig, where the memorial is to be sited.

The industrial history of Motherwell and Wishaw is dominated by steel producers, steel manufacturers, engineering firms and boilermakers, such as Marshall Fleming, Morton, Anderson Boyes, Findlay, Pickering, Bone, Connell & Baxter, Butters Bros, Clyde Alloy, Motherwell Bridge and, perhaps most famous, Colville, whose plants were nationalised and privatised twice and include the Dalzell plant, which is now part of Tata. Last, but not least, there was the beacon that lit up the sky at night—the Craig, which is, alas, no more.

Hundreds of Lanarkshire workers lost their lives in the steel industry. The sculpture will commemorate them and all those who devoted their lives to the Scottish steel industry. Thousands of people who began their careers as fresh-faced innocents straight from school were, during their first days, amply supplied with requests from the gaffer such as “Go for a long staun,” “Get a bubble for the spirit level,” “Get the tartan paint,” or “Get a bucket of blue steam.”

I am pleased that the motion recognises the work of the Scottish steelworkers memorial fund to promote the memorial. I thank supercounty for supporting the campaign and I hope that the difficult task of acquiring funding will have success. We should give credit to supercounty's chief executive, John Scott, whose brainchild the memorial is. I welcome the discussions with

sculptor Andy Scott, who is famous for large-scale public art, including the heavy horse by the M8. I note that the proposed 6m-high sculpture will depict

“a steel worker rising out of smoke and molten metal releasing an athlete sprinting towards the county's future.”

In that spirit, the sculpture will be more than a memorial to the past. It will also be, as it should be, a commitment to the future.

Scottish steel can again be central to Scotland's economy, through emerging markets such as renewables. Government has a crucial role in building an industrial strategy that can deliver much-needed opportunity, and it must work with the steel industry to promote Scottish steel in a competitive global marketplace. The strategy must involve capital investment projects that provide opportunities for steel and other home-grown Scottish industries.

I hope that the Scottish Government heeds the cross-party support that is being shown in the debate. I invite the Government to join us and put much-needed resources into the regeneration of Ravenscraig, to make Europe's largest brownfield site a national priority and—once again—a beacon for the Scottish economy.

17:18

**Jamie Hepburn (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP):** I congratulate Clare Adamson on securing the debate and welcome members of the Scottish steelworkers memorial fund committee to the public gallery. I apologise for not being able to stay behind after the debate to meet them, and I apologise to the Presiding Officer and members, because I might miss the end of the debate—I must leave early to get back to my constituency.

I am happy to speak in the debate, because the steel industry has been important to west central Scotland's industrial past. I was pleased that Clare Adamson lodged the motion, because she has spoken eloquently many times about the industry's importance to her family and how it motivated her to go into politics. We heard more eloquence from her this evening.

I do not have the direct experience of steelworks that Clare Adamson and John Pentland have, because I did not grow up in the vicinity of a steelworks. I grew up in Glasgow, so it was the horn of the shipyard, not the steelyard, that I heard. Of course, the shipbuilding industry was served by the steel industry, which reflects steel's importance to wider west central Scotland. I note with sadness the decline in the shipbuilding industry, which is similar to that in the steel industry.

However, many of my constituents have direct experience of the steel industry. I have many constituents who worked in it and, of course, many more who worked in mining, which served the steelyards. Again, that emphasises the importance of the industry to the wider west central Scotland area.

It is right and fitting that we ensure that those who have lost their lives in industries are marked with a memorial. That has happened in other industries. Earlier this year, the First Minister unveiled a memorial to the 73 people who died in the construction of the Forth rail bridge. A memorial of the Auchengeich disaster has also been created in recent years. That memorial, which the First Minister also unveiled, is not a million miles from my constituency. In the Condorrat area of Cumbernauld, there is a memorial that marks not only the war dead and the radicals of 1820 but the men who died in the Auchengeich disaster. It is therefore absolutely right that there should be a memorial to those who lost their lives in the steel industry, and it is fitting that Ravenscraig should be the location for such a memorial because of its iconic value. I am sure that Elaine Smith might have argued for Gartcosh, but it is right that Ravenscraig should be chosen as the site for the memorial.

The memorial will not be a memorial only to those who died; in some ways, it will be a memorial to the industry. It will mark the sad loss of Scotland's manufacturing capacity. I think that we all wish that it could have been built at an active steelworks in Motherwell but, sadly, that is not the case.

I once again congratulate Clare Adamson and the committee that is taking forward the attempts to get the memorial created. If I can be of any assistance in that regard, I am happy to be.

17:22

**Michael McMahon (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab):** I, too, congratulate Clare Adamson on securing the debate. Like Jamie Hepburn, I apologise, as I have to get to a cross-party group meeting in around eight minutes, or I will leave many people without someone to lead the debate.

The debate is on an issue that is of great importance not just to communities in the shadow of Ravenscraig but to communities throughout Lanarkshire and in many other parts of Scotland. Steel making was as much a part of the lives of people in those communities as breathing. This debate is not just an opportunity to remind ourselves of the past and the fundamental role that the steel industry has played in shaping Scotland; it is also an opportunity to celebrate the

industrial capacity and skills that we still have at our disposal.

It is true that Scotland's steelworkers have revolutionised the Scottish economy over the centuries, and there can be no greater legacy than to see it contributing to Scotland's future growth and the emerging markets, especially in the renewable sector. In that regard, I pay special tribute to the Clydesdale tube works in my constituency and the many generations of highly skilled workers whom it has produced. As a boilermaker, he might be a bit surprised by this, but I particularly welcome my colleague Pat Donnelly from the Community trade union. Pat is the national executive representative for the steelworkers union in Scotland and a union stalwart of the Clydesdale tube works. I place on the record the invaluable role that the Community trade union—which was formerly the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation—has played in the industry over the years, all too often in the face of enormous difficulties. It has led the way for independent working-class representation in one of the most traditional industries, and it deserves the Parliament's respect for doing so.

Contrary to the general perception, it is a fact that, of all the steel-finishing processes to be carried out in our area, the most extensive and longest lasting was tube manufacture. By the latter half of the 20th century, Stewarts and Lloyds had the monopoly of that industry in the United Kingdom, and it had four large facilities in the Monklands district, at the Imperial, Calder, British and Clyde works.

The decline in the industry began in the 1960s, and that led to many Lanarkshire workers transferring with it to follow the work to Corby. Many of those families originally came to Scotland from Ireland, Poland and Lithuania—the Mossend area is synonymous with the Lithuanian community in Scotland—in the 19th century as the steelworks grew. They migrated again to continue to work in the steel industry away from Lanarkshire as it declined.

By the 1980s, the centre of tube manufacturing was in two mills in the Clydesdale works at Mossend. That plant is now owned by Vallourec Mannesman Oil & Gas UK, which, is the largest—indeed, the only—United Kingdom-based manufacturer and supplier to the North Sea oil and gas industry. I would like it not only to maintain that position but to grow and expand in the years ahead. For those like my father, grandfather and uncles who worked at Clydesdale, that would be the best memorial that we could build.

17:25

**Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP):** I thank my friend and colleague, Clare Adamson, for bringing this timely debate to the chamber.

Industrial Scotland was built on steel and coal. With the advent of the industrial revolution, coal and iron ore—the raw materials of industry, which were found in plentiful supply in many areas of the country—were turned into the steel that ensured a solid base for the population growth of many communities that we all know today. The countless thousands of workers whose sweat oiled the businesses that made riches for some in the land are to be held in the highest regard. They are, after all, our own recent and distant ancestors, so we do well to honour them through support for the Scottish steelworkers memorial fund.

My memories of the fight to save steel production and thousands of jobs in Scotland revolve greatly around what we called the steel camp, which I and a number of friends established at the gates of Gartcosh in early 1986. I have probably aged less well than Elaine Smith since that time—I see that she is hiding her shyness, having left the chamber.

Gartcosh was a major campaign. For the people who worked there, it was more than that—it was their lives and their families' lives. We were happy to stand alongside them. It snowed, of course, but we had four tents and a camp stove and took two or three-day shifts at the camp, trying to show our support for the steelworkers and to provide our own focal point for protest at the threatened closure. We had the television, radio and newspapers visit us, as well as many well-wishers who brought supplies. However, it was the kindness of the staff and regulars at the nearby Gartcosh social club that sticks in my memory. They gave us a place to wash in the mornings and the occasional proper meal—because, although we tried, it is impossible to live on Mars bars for a month—and showed solidarity with us, much as we were trying to do with them.

My family background is in shipbuilding and engineering and, as is obvious, those required a constant supply of top-quality steel. The links between communities across Scotland are greatly shaped by the steel that was produced in the great mills of Ravenscraig and the other production sites that have been mentioned. My dad suffered from industrial deafness from working in engineering—at least, that is what he told us when we asked for a couple of pounds on a Friday night. That is the kind of person who showed support for the steelworkers, and the steelworkers were strong in showing their support for other people across the country, which was always welcome during the industrial disputes of the 1970s and 1980s.

The coal mining communities worked in tandem with their industrial cousins, and we should mention them, too. The jobs were always dangerous and, as I have spoken at conferences that were organised by the STUC and the Scottish hazards campaign, I am well aware of the sad sacrifices of the many who suffered injury and death at their workplace in the course of steel manufacturing. It is fitting that those sacrifices should be marked by a permanent memorial.

It is with heartfelt pride that I speak here today to thank the generations of steelworkers and their families, who have contributed so much to the Scotland of today. I fully support the Scottish steelworkers memorial fund and the efforts of those who are in the public gallery tonight and others who are involved in marking the contributions of those who worked in the steel production that made our country what it is today and all those who were, sadly, injured or killed in that work.

17:29

**Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** I, too, thank Clare Adamson for securing the debate and I put on record Margaret Mitchell's apology to Clare Adamson and the chamber for being unable to attend as she has a prior engagement in central Scotland.

As energy and enterprise spokesman for the Conservatives, it has fallen to me to participate in the debate. I am a Highlands and Islands MSP, so the memorial for the steelworkers will be pretty far from my region. Nonetheless, Scottish Conservatives try as much as possible to support members' business debates.

I understand the empathy with her parents' working background that Clare Adamson spoke of eloquently, as Jamie Hepburn said. I fully understand that, given that my father worked in agriculture all his life. However, given my lack of familiarity with the debate's topic, I found myself reading about it in the *Motherwell Times*, the *Hamilton Advertiser*, the *Morning Star*, the *Daily Record* and, of course, on the BBC website. Apart from the latter, that is not my normal reading on a weekly basis, but it was very interesting nonetheless.

All those sources covered the issue that is the topic of this debate with the respect and dignity that it merits. The *Motherwell Times* stated:

"Those behind the project are in complete agreement with the council and the development company in that the structure should be inspirational and of a scale to be a worthy memorial and at the same time complimentary to the innovative developments which will take place on the site."

I like that, because it fully respects the proposed memorial to Ravenscraig and the workforce and recognises the innovation taking place and moving forward. Richard Lyle gave a positive endorsement of the campaign for this worthy memorial in the same edition of the *Motherwell Times*.

If funding is secured and the project is delivered by next year, it would coincide with the celebrating Lanarkshire 2013 initiative to highlight achievements in Lanarkshire over the past 200 years. The memorial will therefore be not just a worthwhile initiative but a critically timed one.

A deputy lord lieutenant of Lanarkshire, Terry Currie, who I believe has joined us in the gallery, chairs the memorial fund. He has fully endorsed and acknowledged the memorial as a remembrance to those who died and something that will honour all the steelworkers in an industry that, as he has stated,

“revolutionised the Scottish economy and ... allowed Britain to become the workshop of the world.”

At the highest point of the structure, on a flow of steel, a sprinting athlete will be seen powering towards the future, symbolising Lanarkshire's regeneration and a new start. I understand that the monument is to be in a paved area in front of the new Ravenscraig regional sports facility, which is at the heart of one of the largest regeneration projects in Europe.

Again, I thank Clare Adamson and apologise on behalf of Margaret Mitchell. I hope that I have been worthy of speaking in the debate. It is a fitting tribute to the steelworkers who died and, indeed, to the industry, and a recognition of the innovation that is taking place and moving forward.

17:33

**John Park (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** I congratulate Clare Adamson on bringing the debate to the chamber and I congratulate Mary Scanlon on reading her first edition of the *Morning Star*. Should we now call her sister Scanlon? [*Laughter.*]

I nervously bring a bit of balance to the debate in the form of an east coast accent, because in my formative years working at Rosyth dockyard we faced similar struggles to those that were faced by the workers in places such as Ravenscraig and the Timex factory. Such struggles awakened a generation of young workers to some of the issues that their parents and grandparents had faced more sharply in more difficult times, particularly in terms of securing employment. Certainly, the struggles shaped a generation of trade union officials and people involved in politics. I associate myself with Clare Adamson's explanation of that.

For me, it went much deeper than that. A former industrial chaplain at Ravenscraig, John Potter, eventually found himself working at Rosyth dockyard and acting as a go-between for the trade unions and management. That was not his official role, but he certainly did it and he had clearly picked up the appropriate skills from his time at Ravenscraig.

John Potter will never know the influence that he had on me during my time in Rosyth dockyard. He passed on his experience from Ravenscraig to me and my colleagues. I wanted to mention him for two reasons, the first of which is the advice that he gave at that time. For example, he would say, “Managing is far too important to be left to managers, John—you need to go and influence them.” He tried to get me to take a much more rounded approach to industrial relations. More importantly, I wanted to mention John Potter because he had a huge impact not just on Ravenscraig, but on industrial relations more generally at that time. He deserves to be mentioned in the Parliament, so I am pleased to do that.

Michael McMahon mentioned Pat Donnelly, who is the Scottish rep on Community's national executive committee. It is important to mention Community, which was formerly the ISTC, and its work in relation to the steel industry. I do not just mean the welcome donation that the union has given for the steelworkers memorial. At a difficult time for workers and trade unions, Community is always scanning the horizon on behalf of its members and taking a progressive approach to industrial relations. It considers how to influence politicians and the Government and how to promote concepts such as industrial strategies to ensure that, in the future, we have a manufacturing base and highly paid and skilled jobs.

A lot of that work goes on behind the scenes and is never reported in the media or highlighted in any way, but it is an important role for trade unions, particularly in the private sector, where companies are up against competitors from across the globe, not just from down the road, as they perhaps used to be. It is important that that partnership happens in the workplace and between Government and trade unions, so that we can design opportunities as we go forward.

**Nigel Don (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP):** Will the member give way?

**John Park:** Sorry, but I have only a couple of seconds left.

I hope that Community will work hand in glove with the Scottish Government and with parliamentarians across the board on the forthcoming procurement bill to ensure that there

is a future for steelworkers in the renewables industry and that public sector interventions in the industry provide steelworkers and other workers across Scotland with the best opportunities that can be found for them.

17:37

**Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP):** I, too, congratulate Clare Adamson on bringing the debate to the chamber, and I welcome the steelworkers memorial fund committee to the gallery.

On the day that Ravenscraig steelworks closed in 1992, I was a young reporter with *The Scotsman* newspaper, based in the Glasgow office. I was immediately sent to Lanarkshire to write what we in the industry called a colour piece, to reflect the feelings of the community. It was a bit like one of those dreadful moments on television when a reporter is asked to interview someone who has just had a bereavement, and they ask, "How do you feel?" It was not an easy job because, basically, I was asking the people of a community how they felt after suffering what was in effect a collective bereavement.

The mood on the ground was not one of shock, surprise or mourning, because the intention to close had been announced months before. The mood was one of resignation and quiet anger, because the closure had been a long time coming. The death of Ravenscraig was slow and torturous—it was not so much death by a thousand cuts as death by a thousand temporary closures.

For years, it was clear that Ravenscraig was being set up because it was not part of British Steel's corporate strategy at the time. The plant was deliberately run down to concoct a fraudulent economic case for closure but, embarrassingly for the company's bosses, the workers at Ravenscraig just kept breaking records for efficiency. It is good to see Mr Brennan and his colleagues in the public gallery. We should remind ourselves that their campaign back in the 1980s and 1990s might not have saved the plant but they won the moral argument. As a result, Scotland won the moral argument, because the existence of this Parliament is due in no small part to the story of Ravenscraig.

We have many memorials in our villages, towns and cities across Scotland. Some are to long forgotten generals; most, I am pleased to say, are to fallen soldiers. The steel industry, too, has its fallen soldiers: men who gave their lives to an industry that was key to this country's prosperity and to whom future generations owe a great debt. That is why the Scottish steelworkers memorial fund is so appropriate.

Scotland's status as a mature economy rests on the backs of generations of steelworkers who, along with miners, gave the workshop of the world its raw materials. In 1888 alone, the Steel Company of Scotland had 33 open hearth furnaces, a technology that we developed and which revolutionised the industry. Beardmore's had three furnaces, as did Williams of Wishaw; David Colville and Sons had four; and Mossend had five. Around the same time, 30 plate mills were supplying Scotland's shipbuilding industry and, indeed, that of Northern Ireland, too. Lanarkshire steel launched the *Lusitania*, the *Queen Mary*, the *Queen Elizabeth*, the *Empress of Ireland* and the *Queen Elizabeth 2*. Thanks to our ability to produce plentiful high-quality steel, a third of all the shipbuilding tonnage in the UK was launched from the Clyde.

We continue to benefit from that achievement. It is not confined to history, as our contemporary reputation as a nation of engineers dates back to that time because, of course, our engineering excellence grew up on the back of shipbuilding, which grew up on the back of steel. That is the steelworkers' legacy: a nation that is still benefiting from its reputation for technical expertise and invention.

I opened my speech by remembering my visit as a journalist to Ravenscraig on the day of its closure, but that sense of loss and tragedy came home to me again 20 years later when, last year, I visited Steel Engineering in Renfrew. That company recently launched TRESTA—the renewable energy skills training academy—with a £500,000 grant from the Scottish Government. Steel Engineering works with the enormous underwater structures that are used in the offshore renewables industry, such as for marine power and offshore wind. In the next few years, there will be an enormous spike in demand for that steel. I could not help being struck by what a great pity it is that Scotland's capacity for producing steel was so recklessly reduced back in the 1990s.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** It would be welcome if the member could draw to a close, please.

**Joan McAlpine:** I am heartened to hear of the continuing role of the remaining Scottish steel plants in Lanarkshire in the renewable energy industry, and I am pleased to hear that they have won £20 million-worth of investment from Tata Steel over the past two years. That is the largest investment in 20 years and it has created 60 new jobs in the companies.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Could the member close now, please?

**Joan McAlpine:** Colin Timms, who is the plant manager at Dalzell, has mentioned that the



renewables industry is our future. That is a fitting memorial to the workers of past centuries whom we commemorate today.

17:43

**Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):** I commend Clare Adamson, not just for securing the debate, but for securing my favourite daily morning newspaper with an additional reader. To Mrs Scanlon I say that I am more than happy to ask the delivery people to double up on their rounds in the morning so that we can get a newspaper direct to her office—or, in the spirit of “better together”, I will pass on mine once I have finished with it.

Scotland’s industrial heritage is vital. It allows us not only to recognise the contribution of people who are no longer with us or to educate present and future generations but to build on our past successes and develop the industry and jobs of the future. Iron, steel, shale, coal and shipbuilding were the very things that built our nation and areas such as Lanarkshire and my backyard, West Lothian. They made Scotland the global player that it became and employed huge numbers in the process.

I will speak only briefly, but many of my constituents, especially in towns such as Fauldhouse, Whitburn and Bathgate, worked in Ravenscraig or are still working in Dalzell. Not far from my house there was a direct rail line that ran from Polkemmet colliery to Ravenscraig that was used to supply the furnace with fuel. The influence of the industry went beyond the boundaries of Lanarkshire. Those who still work in the industry tell me of a modern, high-tech industry competing globally with a quality product, and of skilled workers with a supportive community in which the reach and influence of the industry, past and present, permeates every house, pub, bookie, school, shop and social club.

Steel, like coal, is part of our national and local being and identity. The slogan for international workers memorial day is

“Remember the dead, fight for the living”.

That is not some dewy-eyed nostalgic phrase but a call to action. The initiative highlighted in Clare Adamson’s motion shows how these people are taking that call to action very seriously.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Before the final speech, I say that I, too, welcome the construction of this memorial as my great-uncle spent his whole working life at Colville.

I invite the minister to make the closing speech on behalf of the Government.

17:46

**The Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism (Fergus Ewing):** I am honoured and proud to join colleagues in recognising the steelworkers of Scotland and, as other members have done, I thank Clare Adamson for securing the debate, which has been characterised by members describing their connections with the industry. I was particularly struck by John Pentland’s saying that he had spent perhaps the majority of his adult life in the industry. His eloquent contribution plainly informed the debate. I pay homage to the steelworkers who literally built this country, the Commonwealth and the empire. I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of members of the supercounty civic group, who themselves are former steelworkers. As we have heard, many of them have very personal reasons for starting the steelworkers memorial fund.

Wherever we go in the world, we are reminded of the reach and the breadth of our steel-making heritage. Although many plaques remind us where the iron and steel that made bridges and buildings came from, there is a dearth of recognition of the men who put their lives at risk working in the harshest of conditions, as we have heard. At that time only men did that work. I thought the section of Clare Adamson’s speech when she alluded to the working conditions of the time was particularly moving.

As recently as the mid-1970s, manufacture of steel involved the dangerous production of iron in a blast furnace and then transfer of cold pig iron or liquid iron to an open furnace to be mixed and melted and to be poured, moulded or fabricated. The open furnaces have been replaced by oxygen furnaces. A process that lasted 10 hours has been reduced drastically, and along with that—happily—there has been a reduction in the daily risks that face today’s workers.

**Nigel Don:** I am truly grateful for being allowed to intervene, because I am very conscious that members have referred to the risks that were taken. John Park and others mentioned the role of the trade unions. I am concerned that no one has mentioned the fact that towards the end of the period of steel in the UK, the trade unions became a spur for health and safety legislation—some of which we sometimes now berate, but which has transformed in a generation the safety of our industrial processes.

**Fergus Ewing:** Nigel Don is correct. The role of the trade unions in achieving the establishment of health and safety legislation across many industries is well documented. The existence of that legislation has enabled us to avoid even greater loss of life. Therefore, that is a debt that we rightly acknowledge tonight.

Ravenscraig was western Europe's largest producer of hot stripped steel, which was processed at Gartcosh. It also produced slab steel for shipbuilding and offshore oil platform construction.

As this is the 20th anniversary of the closure of Ravenscraig, which at its height supported 13,000 Lanarkshire jobs, it is fitting that we remember the significant contribution and sacrifices of our steel workers to our economic and social history.

The site is now extremely different, of course. I am pleased that we will see Ravenscraig as the country's first new town in more than 50 years and one of the largest regeneration projects in Europe, covering 450 hectares—an area that is equivalent to 700 football pitches and that is, I am told, twice the size of Monaco. Ravenscraig will become home to more than 10,000 people and is expected to create 12,000 jobs and to attract in excess of £1,200 million of private sector investment over the next 15 to 20 years. That, in itself, is a form of tribute. The creation of a memorial on the site would provide a lasting reminder to the new residents and their families of the important place that Ravenscraig has in our industrial history.

I was struck by the number of speeches by members who have personal connections with Ravenscraig, whether through family or through political campaigning and other activity of various types over the years. I am sure that all of us in the chamber will very much welcome the call for recognition of the contribution of the workforce, and for a lasting memorial.

Future generations will also—as they should—be able to remember our steelworking heritage. I recommend the Education Scotland website as an excellent resource for anyone, but particularly for any young person who wants to know more about the history of steel making in Scotland. The resource on the website includes a site record of the Ravenscraig steelworks by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, which includes digital images, drawings and facts about the mill. Those are a poignant reminder of the size and scope of Ravenscraig, and a reminder of the people who worked there. That website is a form of virtual memorial to the people who worked there for such a long time and who gave so much to Scotland.

I pay tribute to the eloquent speeches that members from all parties have made. It is a fitting debate that has been dignified and interesting. I am delighted that we have had the opportunity to discuss the subject and I pay particular thanks to Clare Adamson for bringing the debate to Parliament. I am sure that her grandfather would be proud of her. I am equally sure that the planned memorial, which is to be designed by Andy Scott, will be a fitting tribute to Scotland's steelworkers.

*Meeting closed at 17:52.*

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