



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 3 March 2010

Session 3

Wednesday 3 March 2010

CONTENTS

	Col.
TIME FOR REFLECTION	24127
URE ELDER FUND TRANSFER AND DISSOLUTION BILL: FINAL STAGE	24129
<i>Motion moved—[David Stewart].</i>	
David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)	24129
Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con)	24130
REGENERATION	24133
<i>Motion moved—[Alex Neil].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Johann Lamont].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Jamie McGregor].</i>	
<i>Amendment moved—[Ross Finnie].</i>	
The Minister for Housing and Communities (Alex Neil).....	24133
Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)	24137
Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con)	24141
Ross Finnie (West of Scotland) (LD)	24144
Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP)	24147
Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab).....	24149
Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP).....	24151
Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)	24153
Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD)	24156
Maureen Watt (North East Scotland) (SNP).....	24158
Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab).....	24160
Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee West) (SNP)	24162
Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab)	24164
Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD)	24166
Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con)	24169
Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)	24170
Alex Neil.....	24173
BUSINESS MOTION	24177
<i>Motion moved—[Bruce Crawford]—and agreed to.</i>	
PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU MOTIONS	24179
<i>Motions moved—[Bruce Crawford].</i>	
Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)	24179
The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson)	24180
POINT OF ORDER	24182
PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU MOTIONS	24183
<i>Motions moved—[Bruce Crawford].</i>	
DECISION TIME	24184
FAIRTRADE FORTNIGHT	24197
<i>Motion debated—[Bill Butler].</i>	
Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab).....	24197
Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP)	24200
Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab)	24202
Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con)	24203
David Whitton (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)	24204
Hugh O'Donnell (Central Scotland) (LD)	24206
Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab)	24207
Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green).....	24209
Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)	24210
Gil Paterson (West of Scotland) (SNP)	24212
James Kelly (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab).....	24213
The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Fiona Hyslop)	24214

Scottish Parliament

Meeting of the Parliament

Wednesday 3 March 2010

[The Presiding Officer *opened the meeting at 14:30*]

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): Good afternoon. As always on a Wednesday, the first item of business this afternoon is time for reflection. I am pleased to welcome our time for reflection leaders today, who are Kamal Akil and Caley Gallison from the middle east youth festival.

Kamal Akil (Middle East Youth Festival): Good afternoon. I am Kamal Akil from Lebanon.

Caley Gallison (Middle East Youth Festival): And I am Caley Gallison from the United States.

Kamal Akil: We are here today as representatives of the global citizens corps—GCC—a youth initiative by Mercy Corps.

GCC unites youth leaders around the world to take action on global issues such as climate change, hunger and disease. As Mahatma Gandhi once said, we should be the change that we wish to see in the world.

Through global interaction in the form of video conferences, online dialogues and festivals, we as GCC leaders are working to overcome cultural barriers in order to surpass the geographical boundaries of our communities to promote the concept of belonging to a global village.

Caley Gallison: Global citizens are open minded and take many views into consideration. The idea of the GCC is to create a worldwide network of youth leaders to generate a larger impact. In order for things to be accomplished, people have to work together and become interdependent. GCC started as a seed and planted a global garden—in the US, the UK, Lebanon, Pakistan, Jordan, Iraq, Gaza and Indonesia. The hope is that the GCC will expand further to become a truly global network.

A bird flapping its wings in the US can cause a storm in Lebanon. This is what the GCC is about: even the smallest actions have a worldwide impact.

Instead of waiting around for others to solve the problems, we as GCC leaders take the initiative to make a difference. If every human being was a global citizen, war would be replaced by peace, no human being would be in poverty, and the policy concerning a death penalty for homosexuals in

Uganda would not even be in consideration because 6 billion global citizens would not be comfortable sitting at home while others were suffering.

Kamal Akil: In Lebanon, for example, we organised a marathon to help end world hunger. People in countries all over the world, including in Baghdad and Gaza, participated in the event to help people who suffer from hunger.

Caley Gallison: In the US, we held a hunger banquet to help educate community members about hunger. For a little more than an hour, students and community members got a taste of the different levels of hunger and how they could become global citizens and take action.

Kamal Akil: In Iraq, the global citizen corps lobbied the Government for water rights. In Gaza, students organised a community clean-up to remove grass from their streets. These activities are samples of hundreds of actions that GCC leaders have taken across the world to raise awareness and promote change.

Kamal Akil and Caley Gallison: We are global citizens.

Kamal Akil: As global citizens, we believe in a better world and want to be a part of the solution. We are the future of this world, and it is our responsibility to ensure a better future for generations to come. Global citizens are the change. This is why we believe that awareness—

Caley Gallison: Plus action—

Kamal Akil and Caley Gallison: Equals impact.

Ure Elder Fund Transfer and Dissolution Bill: Final Stage

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is a debate on motion S3M-5817, in the name of David Stewart, on behalf of the Ure Elder Fund Transfer and Dissolution Bill Committee.

14:34

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I am delighted that the bill has reached this final stage, and I am pleased to open the debate.

To recap briefly on how we got here, the Ure Elder Fund for Indigent Widow Ladies was set up in accordance with the wishes that were set out in the will of Mrs Isabella Elder. It was constituted by an act of Parliament in 1906 and it is a registered Scottish charity. Currently, its main purpose is the relief of impoverished widows who are connected with Glasgow or, specifically, Govan. However, one problem that the trustees of the fund encounter is that they are constrained by the terms of the fund to paying a maximum of £25 per annum to each beneficiary.

The fund was set up in the last century in the context that it was a modern and forward-thinking charitable body. Looking at the fund and its aims today, the trustees could see that the gap between its original intentions and the spirit of those intentions and its achievements was steadily widening. Having explored how to remedy the situation, the trustees concluded that the fund should be restructured so that it could help more people and have a broader range of activities.

However, the statutory nature of the charity meant that the only way to achieve that was for the trustees to introduce legislation, through the private bill procedure, that would transfer the assets of the existing fund to a new charitable trust and which would dissolve the existing fund. The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator concurred with the plan and, accordingly, a bill was introduced to the Parliament on 1 October 2009.

The bill is very straightforward—its single purpose is to transfer the rights, properties, interests and liabilities of the Ure Elder fund to a new charitable trust, the Ure Elder trust. In doing so, it will dissolve the fund. A few weeks ago, we debated the preliminary stage report by the Ure Elder Fund Transfer and Dissolution Bill Committee. Parliament agreed to its general principles and in the usual course of events, we would have moved on to the consideration stage to deal with amendments to the bill. In this case, no amendments have been lodged and we have used provisions in the Scotland Act 1998 and

standing orders to enable us to truncate the procedure and move straight to the final stage.

As was mentioned in the preliminary stage debate, the bill has not taken much time to pass through Parliament and some may say that it has not excited great interest in committee or in the Parliament—despite my best intentions. However, it would be wrong to equate the time spent on the bill and the interest in it with the outcome, and I put on record my thanks to the other committee members, Nanette Milne and Shirley-Anne Somerville, and the clerks, particularly Sarah Robertson, for all their help in administering the bill's passage. The changes that will be wrought if Parliament passes the bill this evening will be significant for the trustees and for future beneficiaries of the trust.

That said, before I move the motion in my name, I want to return to one aspect of the process that the bill committee raised in its preliminary stage report, which relates to the situation of other charitable bodies that were set up under an enactment and which may require modernisation. The Government has said that it will review the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 in due course and will consider whether there is a more efficient method of reorganisation for certain types of charity. It is questionable whether bodies that work hard to raise funds and are mostly set up to benefit the public should spend time and resources on pursuing private legislation, with the attendant costs and time commitment that that process demands. However, that is a debate for another day.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees that the Ure Elder Fund Transfer and Dissolution Bill be passed.

14:39

Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con):

As David Stewart noted, when it was constituted, the Ure Elder fund was a modern and forward-thinking body, which was set up by a modern and forward-thinking lady. In the preliminary stage debate, I spoke of the remarkable nature of Mrs Isabella Elder. She married into a remarkable and notable family. When I became a member of the committee, as a North East MSP, I little realised that I would come to know so much about Govan and Isabella Elder.

Isabella Elder's father-in-law was David Elder, who is often described as the father of marine engineering on the Clyde. Her husband, John Elder, a marine engineer and owner of the Fairfield shipbuilding yard was apparently an enlightened employer, who, among other things, provided schools for the children of his employees. He initiated a pattern of philanthropic works that

was continued on a larger scale by his widow, Isabella.

Elder Park was established in 1885 by Mrs Elder as a monument to her shipbuilder husband. She wanted to give the people of Govan healthful recreation through music and amusement, the music being provided in the bandstand that used to be in the park.

Statues of the husband and wife can still be seen in the park. John Elder stands beside one of the compound engines that underpinned Fairfield's success, and Mrs Elder is depicted in a statue by the Scottish sculptor, Archibald Shannon, dressed in academic robes to denote her honorary doctorate from Glasgow University in 1901—which was quite a feat for a woman at that time.

Elder Park library, built with funds that were given by Mrs Elder, is the only surviving Glasgow branch library, and predates the Carnegie libraries. Apparently, Mrs Elder insisted on Sunday openings for the library, in order to make it accessible to working people—as I said, she was quite farsighted.

I can understand why one of the trustees to the fund, Dr McAlpine, felt moved to write a book about Mrs Elder. It is entitled, "The Lady of Claremont House: Isabella Elder—Pioneer and Philanthropist". Claremont House was Mrs Elder's home in Glasgow for the 36 years of her widowhood. Mrs Elder certainly justifies a book about her life and works, and we could speak at length about her achievements. However, in relation to the specific achievement of the Ure Elder fund, I simply want to say that I commend the trustees of the fund for seeking to free up its workings and for seeking out new beneficiaries.

The £25 that the trustees are allowed to give recipients under the terms of the act that set up the fund was a significant amount of money at the time. However, over 100 years later, that amount of money is clearly trifling and is of no real value to potential beneficiaries. By changing to a modern charitable trust, the trustees will be able to disburse more significant amounts of money and should be able to attract the interest of more people who could derive meaningful benefit from the intended largesse of Isabella Elder.

The trustees have made a great deal of effort and incurred a significant amount of expense in the process of bringing a bill to Parliament to repeal the act that set up the Ure Elder Fund for Indigent Widowed Ladies. Their efforts, which will enable them to proceed with their plans to more meaningfully benefit more recipients of the funds that are at their disposal, will be justified when the trustees of the newly created trust meet to discuss and agree on the new applications for the funds. I wish them well in their efforts.

The Elder family name and spirit lives on in the name and works of the fund—which will soon, we hope, become a trust.

I ask Parliament to support the motion at decision time today.

Regeneration

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is a debate on motion S3M-5852, in the name of Alex Neil, on regeneration.

14:43

The Minister for Housing and Communities (Alex Neil): Regeneration of our deprived and disadvantaged communities is a key priority for this Government. It is critical to achieving our purpose of sustainable economic growth that benefits everyone in Scotland.

Regeneration is at the heart of every aspect of this Government's policy, in terms of physical infrastructure regeneration and economic and social regeneration. However, much of the responsibility for delivering regeneration rests with our friends in the local authorities and their partners, particularly those partners who are involved in community planning partnerships. Further, the role that local people play in regeneration is absolutely critical. Community empowerment is not an add-on to regeneration; it is a fundamental building block.

Solutions cannot be imposed from the top down by people sitting in offices in Edinburgh or elsewhere; a bottom-up approach is required so that the community can take ownership of regeneration projects.

We need communities to shape the services that they receive and to be able to deliver change for themselves. The Government's role is to provide the tools for the job. We set the national policy context, lead innovation and support delivery. In that way we can create an environment in which the lasting transformation of areas is possible.

During the period of economic downturn in the past two years or so, the importance of regeneration has been enhanced. It is often the work of regeneration projects that has allowed communities to maintain higher levels of employment and income than would otherwise have existed.

If we look at the history of regeneration in Scotland since the first modern, large-scale regeneration project was launched in the east end of Glasgow in the late 1970s—the Glasgow eastern area renewal or GEAR project—we can learn certain lessons about what constitutes a successful regeneration project. There are two or three fundamentals that apply irrespective of the timescale or what kind of community we are considering. Whether it is a large or small community, a peripheral housing estate or a city

centre, certain underlying principles can contribute significantly to the success of regeneration.

The first lesson to be learned from GEAR is that the focus should not be only on the physical regeneration of an area. To be successful, we have to tackle not just the physical needs but the economic and social regeneration of the area.

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): I agree with what the minister says, but does he agree that the situation in which voluntary sector projects that support the social infrastructure that he mentioned are closing all over Glasgow, such as the Castlemilk stress centre, is not supportive of the objective that he is setting out to the Parliament this afternoon?

Alex Neil: There is no doubt that the pressures on public finances will have consequences for a number of projects not just this year and next year but for the foreseeable future. The reality is that, as there is a cut in our budget, so inevitably there is a reduction in what is available to those organisations that are supported by the Scottish Government, with the consequences that that entails. One of our objectives is to try to ensure that our budget goes further and that, where possible, we use the public money that is available through the Scottish Government to leverage in additional resources, for example from the European Investment Bank, whose remit includes encouraging, financing and supporting urban regeneration.

In addition to the first lesson about the need to tackle not just the physical problems but the economic and social ones, one of the key differences between the old Highlands and Islands Development Board and its successor organisation Highlands and Islands Enterprise as compared with the Scottish Development Agency and its successor Scottish Enterprise is that the HIDB and HIE both had or have a social remit as well as an economic one. Many communities in the Highlands and Islands have benefited from that combined economic and social remit, which is appropriate, particularly to small communities in the northern part of Scotland.

Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab): Given what the minister has just said about local economic regeneration, does he agree that Scottish Enterprise should be looked at once again and should have that social remit put back?

Alex Neil: It never had a social remit, so it is not a case of putting it back. When the legislation was introduced, it did not carry a statutory social remit for Scottish Enterprise, and the legislation has never been changed since it was passed in the early 1990s.

The second underlying lesson is about the need for community ownership. A couple of weeks ago, I visited Neilson, which is a community of just over 5,000 people just south of Paisley. Although it is a small community, it has an historic legacy of success in industry, particularly in the textile and related industries.

Neilston is a very good exemplar and shows what can happen not only when the community supports a project but when it has originated it. In this case, the community used powers under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 to purchase the disused bank building in the town and make it the focus of community regeneration, and it is now planning a 20-year development strategy to regenerate their community in a self-sustaining way. It intends, for example, to establish a community-owned wind farm facility that, once up and running, will generate up to just under £500,000 of revenue that will be put back into the community. That in turn can be used to attract additional investment.

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): What discussions has there been with Scottish Enterprise about the role of Co-operative Development Scotland, which sits within the organisation, in supporting such initiatives and ensuring that the number of co-operatives with the community dimension that the minister has identified can grow?

Alex Neil: As the member knows, we fund Co-operative Development Scotland, which is probably much more integrated into Scottish Enterprise with regard to developing these matters. Certainly in my own field of housing I very much support the whole concept of housing co-operatives, which involve the active participation of tenants and the management at a local level of what is a very vital physical, economic and social asset.

Another underlying principle is embodied in the approach taken by communities such as Neilston and Blairgowrie, which submitted a very imaginative and successful proposal to the town centre regeneration fund to develop an indigenous renewable energy resource that would also generate an income stream over a sustained period for reinvesting in the community. By doing all this on a third sector basis, the bodies in question can access not only all the money that Government agencies can access but other sources of funding including lottery funding that very often are not available to agencies.

The ethos of the organisation that delivers regeneration in these areas is also very important. It must not be a bureaucracy or part of the state per se; instead, it should be under the local community's ownership and control, with the involvement of all key stakeholders, be they

voluntary organisations, private sector companies or indeed individuals. The proposals submitted by many organisations to the town centre regeneration fund—and, indeed, the fact that the fund itself was two or three times oversubscribed—clearly demonstrate that local communities have assets that not only have major economic potential but provide economic benefits.

Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab): That very important point raises the question of why, when there is so much unmet need, the tap has been turned off.

Alex Neil: It was turned off because the fund's £60 million was accelerated from next year for spending this year. That was agreed by all parties and while the budget negotiations were going on no one suggested that we should set aside another £60 million next year. Quite frankly, the UK Government's £800 million cut in our budget has meant that that money is simply not available. Had that £800 million been available, we would have been happy to extend the town centre regeneration fund. Labour members cannot have it both ways. They cannot turn off the Parliament's tap in London on one hand and then demand more money for this, that and the next thing on the other. The reality is that we are making maximum use of the money that is available.

The town centre regeneration fund, which was originally suggested by our friends in the Conservative party, has been an excellent initiative that we as a Government have been happy to comply with and enthusiastically implement. Many projects throughout Scotland under its auspices, such as the Lochgelly Business Centre, are now coming to fruition. They are not only one-off projects; the new Lochgelly Business Centre, for example, will provide the capacity to build up a new industrial base in Lochgelly of small new start-up companies that can bring new jobs and investment to that part of Fife. The same will happen in many areas.

All the weapons that we can use—town centre regeneration funds, urban regeneration companies, all six of which are doing a great job for their particular areas, the vacant and derelict land fund, and the range of other resources that we make available to regeneration projects—are part and parcel of growing the Scottish economy for the 21st century, and trying to ensure that both our urban and rural communities play their full part in doing that and realise their full economic, physical and social potential in the years and decades ahead.

I finish by emphasising the importance of rural regeneration as well as urban regeneration. Regeneration should not be confined to urban Scotland. In many parts of rural Scotland, including the part that the Presiding Officer

represents, regeneration activity is needed to boost employment opportunities and investment. Despite the very difficult financial situation that has been imposed on us from London, the Government is absolutely determined to use every available resource to maximise the potential of every community in Scotland and to ensure that, for our people's future, we maximise job creation and investment potential.

I move,

That the Parliament acknowledges the continuing need for regeneration of communities across Scotland, particularly in challenging economic times; also acknowledges the critical role of local government, community planning partners, the private and voluntary sectors and community members in delivering regeneration, and recognises the contribution that regeneration makes to increasing sustainable economic growth and the improvement of opportunities for people living in deprived communities.

14:57

Johann Lamont (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab): The minister's motion is straightforward. Indeed, despite my best endeavours, I could not find anything in it with which to disagree. We will therefore support it and the other amendments. In the interests of consensus, I am keen that we have a substantial debate about regeneration issues rather than a more aerated discussion—I am sometimes involved in such discussions.

The minister must accept that the budget that he has to spend this year has grown. I do not think that the Scottish National Party's position is that the UK Government ought not to have bailed out the Scottish banks. It is recognised that the consequence to the public finances of doing so must be dealt with across the United Kingdom.

There is concern that there may be a gulf between what is said about regeneration and what is happening at the local level. I want to raise several issues that I hope the minister will address.

As the minister has said, we must recognise the connections between economic, physical and social regeneration. In focusing on economic development, we must understand the need for the physical and social development of communities. That means that we must take a strategic, Scotland-wide approach. We must look across Scottish Government departments' budgets and resources, and not simply talk about regenerating a community from one budget; we must recognise that that has implications for justice department spending and health budgets, for example. We must recognise that there are links and that things are interdependent.

There has been concern. When the Scottish National Party came to office, set up its

directorates and separated community planning, which was under the minister with responsibility for local government, from community regeneration, which was under the communities minister, I remember discussing the dangers inherent in such an approach and the likely disjunction that would emerge.

There is a genuine fear that we are now beginning to see the result of that mistaken decision, which is that community planning is regarded not as a catalyst for community regeneration and as a vehicle to revitalise communities, but as a mechanism for the distribution of resources. The minister must address that.

Physical regeneration is important, which is why time and again members raise concerns about what is happening in the construction industry. Public building through the construction industry is an important part of challenging the recession but, from where we sit, it looks as though there is paralysis in Government policy in that regard, with the consequence of lost opportunities for jobs and apprenticeships and for people to retain their skills.

Alex Neil: Does the member accept that figures that were published last week demonstrated a record build of 7,700 new social houses in Scotland and that that was never achieved in the first 10 years of the Scottish Parliament?

Johann Lamont: I recognise that moneys were brought forward and that there was two years' spend in one year, but only 40 per cent of that spend went on new build. There is a concern that a significant amount of money was spent on off-the-shelf housing that was languishing in the market.

A broader issue is that not one hospital or school has been built through the Scottish Futures Trust. That is a lost opportunity in our local communities. We talk about the importance of economic activity, but it is critical to link that to local opportunity. There is concern about the fact that the Scottish Government does not have an employability strategy and that its skills strategy is entirely blind to the barriers and discrimination in the employment market. We must recognise that it is the Scottish Government's job to address the economic, social and personal barriers. I am all in favour of the go local message, but we still need national support. The levers at the Scottish level must be used to support that local activity.

If there was ever an example that captured the lack of understanding of how all those aspects come together, it is those who criticised the Glasgow airport rail link for being simply a train line. The frustration at the loss of GARL was that it was an opportunity to create jobs and to provide

community development and regeneration in a deprived community. The scheme would have created 1,300 jobs for local people, which would have made a huge difference. That regeneration issue must be addressed.

The same issue arises in relation to the role of Scottish Enterprise. The minister said that Scottish Enterprise never had social responsibility under the legislation, but the fact is that, in the past, when there was physical regeneration in the constituency that I represent, Scottish Enterprise was round the table talking about how to link the training and employment opportunities to the people in the community. Scottish Enterprise has told me that it no longer has that role. It does not have responsibility for training or for directing economic activity to deprived communities, which is a huge problem. Deprivation has a geographical dimension, so there ought to be a geographical responsibility in an agency that is so well funded. Scottish Enterprise should not be led simply by demand from companies; it should actively support local economic activity. I make the same point about community development in Scotland. There are huge opportunities, but I am not convinced that those are recognised in Scottish Enterprise.

I want to flag up issues about the planning system, because regeneration at all levels must be supported by a strong planning system. However, people in the planning system who are committed to working in communities tell me that local authorities are deciding to make planners redundant and to reduce their planning departments. I am told that community engagement with the planning process is not as rigorous as it should be. In the current times, that is a critical job. To an extent, we will plan our way out of recession, so we must have strong planning departments to do that.

As someone who supported community planning, I have a great fear that it is being honoured in the breach. There is an issue about the role of the voluntary sector in community planning partnerships. They are not at the table. I ask the minister whether that will be sorted and whether voluntary sector representation will, as of right, sit at the table in every community planning partnership.

One of the big issues in the old social inclusion partnership process was the extent to which we were able to bend the spend sufficiently. I recognise that we did not do that; mainstream budgets were not directed sufficiently into communities. However, it seems that that process is now even worse.

We need real community engagement, but the feeling is that there is now less. Community engagement is critical in prioritising budgets,

understanding need and knowing where the real challenges are. To be fair to the minister, he referred to that in his opening speech. However, he will know that the study of the fairer Scotland fund by the Scottish centre for regeneration, which was based on case studies in a number of local authorities, concluded that many respondents felt that, in comparison with the more local, geographic and project-focused approaches of previous programmes, it has become more difficult to engage communities in the more thematic community-planning-partnership-wide approaches, which are becoming more common. I am sure that we would all be interested to know how that problem is being addressed.

The minister said quite rightly that local government is a critical partner, but it is facing severe financial pressures now—not in the future—despite a growing budget. There will be a time when we will have to ask whether a centrally imposed council tax freeze on local authorities is the best approach when we need to sustain communities and the groups that Robert Brown quite rightly identified.

There is a particular issue around single outcome agreements and the extent to which they are delivering on the local priorities that would support regeneration. A report by Audit Scotland states:

“The audits showed many CPPs to be overly bureaucratic and not focused ... on outcomes for local people.”

Equally, there is a need for community planning partnerships to make clear the impacts that their single outcome agreements, and specifically, the fairer Scotland fund-related elements, will have on equalities groups in their area.

There is a disjunction between what the Government wants to do with regeneration and what it has said and the vehicle through which that is being delivered.

Single outcome agreements are still not equality impact assessed. In those circumstances, I am not confident that the rounded view of community regeneration is being recognised.

Robert Brown mentioned the impact on voluntary organisations locally. Will the minister confirm the willingness of himself and John Swinney to intervene where they feel that voluntary organisations are disproportionately feeling the impact of the financial squeeze locally? That in itself seems counterproductive when we are talking about regeneration.

Regeneration should be part of an anti-poverty framework. It is unfortunate that single outcome agreements emerged ahead of the achieving our potential framework, the equally well framework and the guidance on equalities. As a

consequence, spending on regeneration locally has not been shaped by anything other than the warm words of the frameworks. We are not seeing any delivery at local level that is influenced by the frameworks at Scotland level.

An example of that is the supported employment framework, which is important in relation to regeneration. The framework has come out, but there is no role for Scottish Enterprise, no money and no evidence that where the Scottish Government has let big contracts, work to support those who are further away from employment is being recognised.

I would welcome the minister's comments on how he sees the Southern general hospital contract providing community benefit and employment opportunities. Is there an opportunity to use article 19 of the European Union public procurement directive to support sheltered workplaces? Those are examples of how thinking at a local level can support a strategy on regeneration.

I recognise the important comments that the minister made about how regeneration works and how it should be central. However, he will understand, as we all do, that saying it does not make it happen. The levers have to be used more to ensure that there are not just warm words, that there is a Scottish strategy that recognises the geographical nature of deprivation and the challenge in some of our communities and that, therefore, genuine local partnerships can be fostered to ensure, along with the Scottish Government, the employment and economic, social and physical regeneration that the minister talked about and which we in the Labour Party supported.

I move amendment S3M-5852.1, to insert after second "regeneration":

"; notes in particular the importance of an effective planning system and the necessity of genuine community engagement to secure real change".

15:09

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I am pleased to open for the Scottish Conservatives in the debate. I well remember the HIDB and the good that it did, which was normally under Conservative Governments. It goes without saying that we Scottish Conservatives are committed to the regeneration of deprived communities in rural and urban settings. That is why we successfully persuaded the Scottish Government to adopt our policy of the town centre regeneration fund, which has proved popular and about which I will say more later. We Conservatives would like more of that regeneration but—unfortunately—Labour's

mismanagement of the economy means that funding for such projects will be hard to find.

Repairing the UK economy is key and fundamental to regenerating our Scottish communities. Economic growth means not only that more individuals have jobs and thus a sustainable income but that individuals can more successfully set up small businesses and that existing small businesses can thrive and become larger enterprises. That is about acorns becoming mighty oaks rather than the sudden oak death disease that is afflicting our economy UK-wide.

Local and national Government must generate adequate resources to help to put in place the infrastructure and other support that help towards regeneration. That must be planned for by a Government with a long-term vision. Improving the British economy is a number 1 priority for the next Conservative Government and will help all communities in Scotland.

I am proud of the record of previous Conservative Governments in Scotland in making community regeneration a priority. The new life for urban Scotland, to which our amendment refers, was launched in 1988. Under the initiative, four parts of Scotland were selected for the establishment of new urban regeneration partnerships—Castlemilk in Glasgow, Ferguslie Park in Paisley, Wester Hailes in Edinburgh and Whitfield in Dundee.

The new life projects are now—rightly—seen as landmarks in urban regeneration in Scotland. In October 1999, Cambridge Policy Consultants commended them and found that their "pioneering approach" had levered in private sector investment and slowed the rate of depopulation. Surely we all agree that retaining an area's population—whether in an inner city or in a remote or island community—is critical to enhancing and facilitating the regeneration effort there. Under the new life initiative, combined with the right to buy, resident satisfaction increased substantially. The scheme also provided value for money in comparison with other UK regeneration schemes, such as the single regeneration challenge fund and the London Docklands Development Corporation.

Community involvement was at the heart of the new life initiative and that is how it should be, so I agree with the reference in the Government's motion to the role of community members in delivering regeneration. There is no point in imposing regeneration from on high or from central layers of Government; rather, local people need to have a stake and a say in achieving improvements in their neighbourhoods, in helping—when possible—to design the facilities that they require and in working in conjunction with a range of organisations, including their local authorities,

community councils, housing associations, charities and businesses.

A good example of a grass-roots community regeneration campaign in my region comes from the work of international architect John McAslan and his team in Dunoon, who seek to restore the Burgh hall to its former glory so that it can once again be a key cultural destination for the whole community. That campaign has caught the imagination of local residents and engaged local members in open days and public meetings. I wish it every success as it seeks to revive the building as a cultural centre not just for the town, but for the wider region.

Often, such projects can act as a catalyst for wider redevelopment and regeneration. The Burgh hall's regeneration is a good example of effective use of limited funds. It now needs revenue funding to expand its cultural amenities for the community's benefit and a cultural co-ordinator is needed. Good culture plays a big part in regeneration, because it instils pride in population centres.

As I said, funding for regeneration is a problem. Could community funding from renewable energy projects such as wind farms and hydroelectric schemes—especially in the Highlands and Islands—be used by community councils for regeneration projects in their areas?

The Scottish Conservatives fought hard for the Government to adopt our £60 million town centre fund, which has proved to be a boost for communities. Our town centres are at the heart of community life and it is right that the Government supports communities, residents and businesses in their efforts to re-establish civic pride in our town centres, many of which have been hit by Labour's recent recession. Dowdy and dilapidated town centres do not inspire confidence among investors, whereas regenerated ones can provide the vital spark.

Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): Will the member give way?

Jamie McGrigor: I am sorry, but I do not have time.

I am delighted that communities in my region of the Highlands and Islands including Dunoon, Oban and Bowmore in Argyll and Bute; Stornoway in the Western Isles; Forres, Elgin, Lossiemouth and Buckie in Moray; Lerwick on Shetland; and Wick and Thurso in Caithness are all benefiting from the implementation of Scottish Conservative policy on regeneration. For instance, in my local town of Oban, the gateway to so many beautiful Scottish islands, the enterprising local people who have started the Oban Bay Marine company are benefiting from this Scottish Conservative policy; it has rewarded them with £800,000 towards the

creation of short-stay visitor pontoons in Oban bay. Thurso is benefiting from signage and access improvements. The interest in the fund from communities the length and breadth of Scotland and the innovative ideas and schemes that have been proposed and are going ahead has been very encouraging. It is clear that many Scots are ready to play their part in regenerating their communities. They need the incentive and they need a recovery in our UK economy, which—unfortunately—has been so damaged.

As I have said, we welcome today's debate. Our constructive and positive actions while in Opposition in this Parliament show that we are ready to work with others to increase the opportunities for local communities. Time prevents me from speaking in detail about housing policy, but I reiterate our strong support for the housing association sector that has helped to transform so many communities. We also believe very strongly that those councils that have not yet done so should pursue housing stock transfer. That would remove housing debt and unlock investment, in itself a massive boost to community regeneration. Our amendment recognises the good work that has taken place in the past and looks forward to further progress.

I move the amendment S3M-5852.2, to insert at end:

“; acknowledges the success of the New Life for Urban Scotland initiative focused on Castlemilk, Ferguslie Park, Wester Hailes and Whitfield and described as a landmark in the history of urban regeneration in Scotland in the official assessment of the scheme, and welcomes the £60 million Town Centre Regeneration Fund secured in the 2009 budget.”

15:17

Ross Finnie (West of Scotland) (LD): We should not lose sight of the scale of the task. I understand why Jamie McGrigor gets so extraordinarily excited about the fund for which he claims entire credit. It is a useful tool, but let us not get carried away. The issue of regeneration in Scottish communities has been a long and difficult one. The minister was right to point to some of the long-standing background; we should not lose sight of how difficult all of us in Scotland of every political persuasion have found dealing with regeneration.

I describe regeneration is an aspect of market failure. Whenever a community has suffered a major change in economic activity from which it shows no sign of spontaneous recovery, there is need for that community to make a collective effort in partnership with Government, private sector and all the agencies to address the problem. Although that has been recognised for some time, we should also recognise just how difficult it has been.

The minister rightly pointed out, as did Jamie McGrigor, the need for us to recognise the great difficulties that changes in agricultural and fishing patterns in our rural communities can bring about. It was undoubtedly the late Russell Johnston who first suggested in 1964 the Highlands and Islands Development Board. I do not recollect his Conservative opponent making any mention of that in the Inverness campaign, but perhaps I am misreading history. As the minister rightly said, there was always a social dimension and that has led to different prescriptions in the Highlands.

It is instructive to remember that the problems in our urban communities stem from coal mining, ship building, heavy engineering and steel making. Although it is understandable that those communities grasped at electronics jobs as they moved forward, the sad fact is that, despite all the best efforts by successive Governments, the worst areas of community disintegration and where the greatest need for regeneration are to be found are in those self-same communities. Our present problems stem from the decline of heavy engineering and so on. We have to remember that.

In central Scotland, whether we are talking about housing or economic regeneration, we have adopted models that have not quite worked. The minister is right: parties of all political persuasion have learned lessons.

We have learned that solutions must be from the bottom up and that local authorities must be given greater discretion. We have not wholly learned about the critical importance of the voluntary sector. I remain to be persuaded that the Government of which I was part quite appreciated the sector's role or extent, although it tried. The same is true of the current Government.

The private sector also has a role to play. Often there are misgivings that the sector's economic drivers are not wholly consonant with the social and economic goals that others seek to achieve.

There is also the role of Government. I was pleased to hear the minister say today that regeneration must be bottom up, but that is not an excuse for a Government of any persuasion to say that it will allow regeneration to take place on an ad hoc basis. The approach that we take must be rather different from the kind of proposals and plans that any Government would bring forward; it must both recognise the need to allow local autonomy and a bottom-up approach and give cohesion to what we are seeking to achieve. That is why the amendment in my name asks the Government for a plan.

We are not looking for the minister to meddle and interfere with individual issues or suggesting that we return to a top-down approach. On the

other hand, there are important historical lessons that we must learn, as the outcome that we are trying to achieve is not just regeneration for today but regeneration that will last, be sustainable and allow some of the communities that have suffered first, second and third-generation problems of deprivation, unemployment and a lack of community regeneration to get off the list.

It is instructive that Jamie McGrigor points in his amendment to the

"Urban Scotland initiative focused on Castlemilk, Ferguslie Park, Wester Hailes and Whitfield".

He is right to do so, but—crikey—those were the very communities that were in the forefront of regeneration projects in the 1960s; it was necessary for someone as young as me to go to the library to find that out. In my area of the West of Scotland, successive generations of the poor people who have lived in Ferguslie Park have been badly let down. That is curious, as the motives of the Governments that invested in and helped those communities could not be questioned, but the approach that was taken was not wholly successful.

We must look critically at where we are going now, at the initiatives that are still in place—the minister referred to a number of them—and at the funding streams. I share many of the concerns that Johann Lamont expressed about wrapping up those funding streams in local government single outcome agreements. When I was in government, I was keen to have a form of outcome agreement and was involved in Cabinet committees that looked at the matter. One critical issue was how to get general outcomes to result in more specific action. I say to the minister that the phrase "making progress towards" leaves me cold. I do not think that we are getting an accurate or plausible measurement of progress in the area.

Johann Lamont was right to say that we are not questioning the Government's motives; we are not having a silly debate in which we disagree with what it is trying to achieve. However, it is not good enough to have an omnibus agreement that is not sufficiently specific to give anyone comfort on what actual outcomes will be, far less to enable members of the Parliament to hold the minister to account. It is now easy for the Government to say that it is making progress. What progress is it making? Can the minister quantify that or say where it is coming? He cannot. That is not necessarily his fault, but it is a result of the fact that the Government has written the agreement in terms that make it more difficult to quantify progress.

My colleague Robert Brown will say more about the role of the voluntary sector, which is critical and has been grossly undervalued. As I have

already said, the previous Government did not develop that role, either, but it requires a great deal more attention.

Those two elements—on one hand, a greater sense that the Government has a plan and a purpose; on the other, greater recognition of the need to give more support to the voluntary sector—are the import and purpose of the amendment in my name.

I move amendment S3M-5852.3, to insert at end:

“and therefore calls on the Scottish Government to bring forward detailed proposals on how it intends to deliver its regeneration ambitions in the context of its economic recovery plan and how it will protect and enhance the contribution of the voluntary sector through structured and sustainable funding from central and local government”.

15:25

Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP): Despite decades of talking about regeneration, we continue to discuss it without ever quite getting there. I would go as far as to say that some communities need generation, let alone regeneration. Regeneration is an economic and social issue. We cannot say, “We have failed, so we will do no more”; we must keep going and we must measure progress appropriately, as Ross Finnie said.

Johann Lamont talked about community planning partnerships. Partnership—between national Government, local government, Scottish Enterprise and other Government agencies, for example—is important in the context of generating and regenerating communities. The education system is important. Colleges and schools are a vital part of communities.

The voluntary sector is also important. When I talk about the voluntary sector I do not mean only the people who provide services professionally; we must take nothing away from the value of the work that unpaid volunteers do in all our communities throughout the country. Unpaid volunteers work in small ways to keep their communities ticking over, although they are not often recognised.

The Parliament is a bit hard on business sometimes. Many small and medium-sized enterprises and even some larger businesses have a degree of social responsibility and contribute quite a lot more than general employment to the communities in which they are based.

Johann Lamont: On how community planning partnerships and the voluntary sector are critical to regeneration, what should be done to ensure that there is voluntary sector representation on CPPs

in Scotland? Is there a role for the Scottish Government in ensuring that that happens?

Linda Fabiani: There is an enabling role for Government, but we must fight against the setting up of organisations or quasi-organisations that become no more than talking shops, which has happened so often. That has been a concern of mine over the decades. We must empower communities, which brings me back to the volunteers that I mentioned—the people who know what is best for their area.

Mistakes were made in the past in the planning of communities. The peripheral estates that started to appear in the middle of the previous century tore the heart out of communities. Lots of houses were created, but there was no infrastructure that would enable people to feel that they were part of something. It is certain that the architectural and planning communities have learned from those mistakes and are now talking about place making. That is not just another term that is loosely thrown about. We missed the importance of place over the decades and we must get our heads round what it means. Communities that feel that they are part of something have a sense of security, of belonging, of history and of continuity.

We have started to rectify the mistakes of the past in our approach to inner-city regeneration. For example, we are rehabilitating existing tenements. Members talked about housing associations and community ownership. Housing co-operatives are a model that offers tenants truly democratic empowerment—another word that we like to use a lot—and control of the housing stock that they occupy. That gives people an incentive to make their area thrive. Co-ops, whether they are fully mutual or not, are not just experts in housing; they are involved in community facilities, training and employment and public art, the value of which to communities is often ignored but is extremely important.

There are great models of co-ops around, whether the South Lanarkshire Council one in West Whitlawburn, Easthall Park Housing Co-operative in Glasgow or Tenants First Housing Co-operative in Aberdeen. Those organisations, which are volunteer led, are truly working within their communities towards what we keep calling regeneration.

I am delighted that the Government and the minister recognise the value of the housing co-operative as a social and economic model around which communities can be built. As the minister said, we have had so many initiatives: the GEAR, the cities growth fund and then the town centre regeneration fund. Some successful work was done under the latter fund. The North Lanarkshire town centres received more than £2 million for a

worthwhile cause and East Kilbride & District Shopmobility received £100,000 for soft play and the sustainability of the organisation.

The sustainability of communities is at the heart of this debate. It is not just about pumping in money through some new initiative then cutting the initiative off because it has been successful and looking for something else. It is about sustainability and continued growth.

In my last minute, I will consider the new towns as an example of what has been carried out. I am fortunate to represent two new towns: Cumbernauld and East Kilbride. East Kilbride is held up as Scotland's most successful new town—it is certainly the oldest one, having been established in 1947. It works in the sense of place making about which I talked. Part of the reason that it works is that the new town was built round an existing community, albeit a small village community—East Kilbride village—with a recognition of the rural community that was round about the area. Its wonderful history—I commend Mr Bill Niven, our East Kilbride local historian who documents it all well—gave the town the important sense of place, the security of belonging and sense of continuity that define a sustainable place of which people feel proud and that want to make and keep successful.

My plea for today is that we recognise that people need places where they feel comfortable and happy. They not only need a roof and a job, but somewhere where they feel at home.

15:32

Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab): A number of points have already been made on which I think we would all agree. I do not doubt the minister's sincerity in trying to ensure that regeneration is at the heart of what he wants to do in government, but I am not quite so persuaded that that is the case for some of his colleagues or persuaded about where it sits in the broader scheme.

I start off by raising the issue that I raised with the minister in relation to Scottish Enterprise. He correctly points out that the agency never had a statutory social remit but, previously, workers in Scottish Enterprise in Ayrshire, which I represent, and in other areas felt that they had some social responsibility to the area in which they were located. It seems that they are now specifically being told that they do not have that responsibility. The difference may seem to be subtle and semantic, but it has huge implications for how the agency operates on the ground.

I was interested to hear about the minister's visit to Neilston and the work that is being done there. Members have commented that regeneration is

about more than renewing and regenerating buildings but the reality is that if, when local residents walk out of their houses every day, they face a village centre or main street in their town that is dilapidated, is run down and contains buildings that have been boarded up and left abandoned for years, it does not make them feel the good sense of place about which Linda Fabiani talked.

The Scottish Government needs to consider afresh how we can quickly bring some of the derelict buildings back into productive use. I have corresponded with the minister, his predecessors and other ministers on that. The reality is that, in far too many communities, there are still sites that are, to be frank, an eyesore and a disgrace. Something needs to be done about the way that local authorities are able compulsorily to purchase those buildings and bring them back into productive use, particularly where the owners have simply disappeared off the face of the earth, leaving local communities to deal with the blight.

I urge the minister to consider having an audit of the use of vacant and derelict land, and try to pin down in each local authority what buildings or sites cause the most problems, who owns them and how they can be brought back to something that will benefit the local community. That leads on to issues that Johann Lamont raised, such as how local authorities could use their procurement policies and the opportunity for sheltered work spaces for people at local level.

I will say a couple of words about the town centre regeneration fund. I know that the Tories will want to claim all the credit for that, but while Jamie McGrigor is at it, I hope that he will remember that some of the issues that we face, particularly in the former coal-field areas, did not happen in the past couple of years but stretch back to when the Conservatives were in power. We are only beginning to get to grips with some of those issues, after a very long period of trying to regenerate the communities. I will not be entirely churlish, though, because I acknowledge that there was cross-party support for the town centre regeneration fund.

However, as the minister pointed out, the issue was that the need was greater than the sum of money that was available. Certainly, in some of the communities that I represent, particularly in the Carrick area, people feel that there was overpromising and underdelivering. They all felt that they had very good bids that were equal in value, status and importance to some of the successful bids. No one wants to deny to the people who had the successful bids their right to them. However, people feel that other areas were equally worthy and in need of support, but that is not available now.

There has been much talk about the voluntary sector and co-operatives. I have been involved with co-operatives for many years and, indeed, have worked in the voluntary sector. I offer a wee word of caution on this area, because capacity building in the voluntary sector does not happen just because we say it is a good idea. Historically, co-operatives have arisen because a need was identified in a local community and people banded together to work in a democratic way to provide a service, without private profit being made from it. That is an excellent principle that I am sure we all want to see taken forward. However, in some of our more disadvantaged areas, such things cannot be sustained without support, particularly in the start-up phase. I worry that, by talking so much about the voluntary sector and co-operatives, we almost let local authorities off the hook. It will not be good enough for local authorities simply to offload some of the difficult bits and some of the bits that they have not got right, and expect local communities to take on the ownership and running of them without being provided with the resources to do so.

An aspect that has not been covered yet is that, for many of the communities in the former industrial areas, as the minister will be well aware, there will not necessarily be future opportunities in the traditional industries. That means that we must join up our thinking on tourism and rural industries as the focus of regeneration. I hope to see a much more joined-up approach from the Government on links from those areas into transport and the infrastructure that is required for those communities to thrive.

15:38

Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): I thank the minister for his contribution in lodging the motion for debate. I also thank Johann Lamont and Jamie McGrigor for their very constructive amendments, which do much to enhance the motion and the debate. I will wait until I hear Robert Brown before making up my mind about the Liberal Democrats' amendment.

I will just pick up on what Cathy Jamieson said about eyesores and vacant land. Funnily enough, I have figures here about vacant land that show that 10,863 hectares of land in Scotland is classed as vacant, and that 3,352 hectares—37 per cent, which is a lot—has been unused for at least 23 years. Those are handy figures to have, and Cathy Jamieson is quite right to ask the minister or local government to consider how they can use such land.

Karen Gillon: One of the issues that I have been pursuing and which the minister has been looking at is reviewing the use of local authorities' compulsory purchase powers, which could enable

them to take over some derelict land and bring it back into productive use. Perhaps when the minister sums up, he can tell us where that issue is in the framework.

Sandra White: Karen Gillon is absolutely right about that. I hope that local authorities will be able to look at that suggestion.

A good example is Drumchapel, which I visited on Friday to meet with what used to be called Drumchapel Opportunities. The area has been deprived for—gosh—decades, but it still has derelict land sitting there. That is not just an eyesore but an absolute disgrace. It would be good if something could be done about that. The land was supposed to be for regeneration 10 years ago, but I honestly do not know what has happened, as the "For Regeneration" signs have been taken down. To wake up to that every morning, or to see that when going to the shops, certainly does not make people feel good.

As a Glasgow MSP, I have seen many changes, particularly in the city centre with the regeneration of the harbour site. We should congratulate Steven Purcell—I know that everyone here will wish him all the best for a speedy recovery—on working to achieve that along with other agencies. He has done much to redevelop the harbour site, so we should give credit where credit is due. However, local government obviously needs to work in tandem not just with the Government of the day but with many other organisations. Although that has happened in Glasgow's harbour area development, regeneration has not really reached other areas of Glasgow. That is a real disappointment. With the Commonwealth games coming to Glasgow, we must ensure that those areas that have not enjoyed regeneration also now benefit. They need not just short-term, quick-fix jobs and housing, but long-term benefits for everyone in those communities and for the people at large.

As the minister mentioned, regeneration needs to be targeted not just by Government but by local authorities, community planning partnerships, community health and care partnerships, the voluntary and private sectors and the local communities. All of those groups need to be consulted and involved. However, as Johann Lamont mentioned, a recent report highlighted Glasgow as one of two areas where the CPPs and CHCPs do not engage with the voluntary sector or with local communities. Indeed, I am sure that I am not the only MSP to have been told by voluntary groups that their local knowledge of problems and issues is overlooked by the CHCPs and CPPs. As other members have said, the voluntary organisations feel that those partnerships are not operating as they should. I ask the minister to look into that, because I am

sure that those partnerships were set up to operate with, rather than just talk down to, the local groups on the ground. Unfortunately, in Glasgow—and in another area, which I cannot remember but which is mentioned in the report—the partnerships do not operate in that way.

I also ask the minister to look at the boards of those organisations. As Ross Finnie mentioned, many different organisations, such as SIPs and so on, were set up many years ago to try to help deprived areas. However, their boards are often unrepresentative not just of local people but even of the political parties. I ask the minister to look at the boards of the CHCPs and CPPs to see whether they are representative. I hope that something can be done about that to ensure that there is parity for all on those boards.

For decades now, in Glasgow—and elsewhere, as Ross Finnie mentioned—we have had various schemes to try to target deprived areas. Billions of pounds have been spent, but the same areas are still suffering from deprivation. After decades in which money has basically been thrown at them, those areas have never risen out of deprivation and people are, unfortunately, still suffering and still in need. In this day and age when we are looking at fresh thinking, we cannot allow that situation to continue so I would like some form of monitoring of the money that is invested in those areas. Perhaps if we had had such monitoring 10 or 20 years ago, those areas might not be in the position that they are in today. We could learn from our successes and from our mistakes, but that has never been done despite all the moneys that have been pushed through SIPs or anything else. When various colours of Government—whether Tory, Labour or Labour/Lib Dem—have been in power, we have never had feedback to tell us exactly how well those schemes are doing. Therefore, my plea to the minister and the Government is for some form of monitoring so that we can see where the successes are, which we can then replicate, and perhaps catch in time—before the situation goes on for another decade—those schemes that are not successful.

All that I am saying is that it is about time that we targeted the moneys. Not just the Government and the Scottish people generally but the people who live in those communities need to be able to see that they get long-term benefits, such as employability and long-term sustainability.

15:45

Marilyn Livingstone (Kirkcaldy) (Lab): I am pleased that the minister has acknowledged the continuing need for the regeneration of communities across Scotland, and that he recognises the number of stakeholders that need to be involved in ensuring its success. However,

when he is making his winding-up speech this evening, I hope that he will tell us what practical steps the Government is going to take to ensure that regeneration continues.

As we have heard from other members, regeneration is about economic and social restoration, the physical regeneration of the communities in which we live and work, the tackling of poverty and disadvantage as Cathy Jamieson said, and the safeguarding of a sense of community. The physical regeneration that is involved in building new houses and restoring old buildings must be part of a process of empowering our communities; that is vital.

It is also vital that major stakeholders across the economic, social and community services work together to provide improved economic opportunities and infrastructure. It is about building a better environment, safer communities and community engagement. A holistic approach is needed if we are going to bring back some sense of pride in the communities that I represent.

Cathy Jamieson talked about the impact of what happened during the miners' strike on many communities. It certainly had a huge impact on the area that I represent.

I am a member of the Dysart regeneration management group, which was set up during the previous Administration. It has played an important role in bringing the community together. Members have mentioned confidence building, the development of new skills and people actively participating to shape the area in which they live, and they are all key factors in the success of regeneration. In Dysart, the encouragement of community spirit resulted in the re-introduction of the Dysart gala day as well as the formation of community teams for initiatives such as the Scottish coastal rowing project, which exhibited in Parliament recently. As a community, we have developed our village, and it is now an important tourist destination with improved services and opportunities for our children and young people.

I talked about a holistic approach at a local level, but I call for such an approach to also be taken at Government level. For example, the townscape heritage initiative that I have discussed previously could be seriously impacted by the concessionary fares scheme, which the Government has cut, taking £20 million out of public transport across Scotland.

We have heard a lot about community planning partnerships and building from the bottom up. In the initiative that I have been talking about, we have seen modern apprenticeships working in the built environment, and stonemasonry is a compulsory part of that scheme. However, the Scottish Funding Council is looking at the

redistribution of funding, and funding for training in the built environment will be adversely affected if the plans go through, which will affect the number of planners that we can train. There does not seem the same enthusiasm across the Government for community regeneration as we have seen from the minister today. My plea to the minister is to see that the holistic approach that he is asking communities to take is also practised in Government.

According to the Fife regeneration health and wellbeing study, 37 per cent of people in Kirkcaldy are dissatisfied with the physical appearance of their local area. That builds on what members have said about derelict buildings and a sense of place. Investment in regeneration has begun and the issues are being addressed. The example that I gave of the Dysart townscape heritage initiative has been on-going. Although I welcome the £1.6 million funding that is to be given to Kirkcaldy, I ask the minister to consider continuing the scheme because it is only tackling the tip of the iceberg.

Regeneration is about need as well as opportunity. As the minister will know, last year in September work began in my constituency to improve the tenure, mix and quality of the affordable housing. Housing is a big part of regeneration, but it is not everything. I again make the plea that there is investment in creating and supporting jobs in the construction industry, and I hope that the minister will talk to his colleagues about making training an integral part of any project. When that has worked, we have seen young people getting not only jobs but vital skills. I wish Margo MacDonald well in her recovery, and I think that, if she were here, she would support me on the issue of stonemasonry jobs.

Town centre regeneration must be high on the Scottish Government's agenda. We have heard about that today, and the funding that has been made through the town centre regeneration fund is very important to Scotland's economic growth. As convener of the cross-party group on town and city centre development, I have chaired discussions on the town centre regeneration fund and asked delegates from the Scottish Government to ensure that social deprivation is taken into account when funds are allocated. People are not clear whether that has happened, but, as Johann Lamont said, it must be part of the Government's poverty agenda.

A town centre that has featured in the United Kingdom's top 20 high streets worst hit by the recession is Kirkcaldy. The £2 million is welcome and will allow us to move forward.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): You should be finishing now.

Marilyn Livingstone: No one can disagree with the words in the motion—they are very warm—but

I would like to hear how they will be transferred into action.

15:52

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): As I have listened to the debate, I have been struck by just how much knowledge, detailed information and insight is held by members who have particular knowledge of the subject. I will obviously break the trend, but all the speeches thus far have added significant points.

Linda Fabiani talked about the role of place, which is very important. Sandra White made an extremely good point—and I am not saying this just because I want a vote for the Liberal Democrat amendment—about the CHCPs and the CPPs, how they work together, to whom they are accountable and how they operate. I have something to say about that in a minute. There were also a number of speeches from Labour members—Johann Lamont and Cathy Jamieson in particular—on issues of importance.

Alex Neil is one of my favourite ministers. In fact, he is probably my only favourite minister—I do not want to overstate the point—but I was a bit disappointed with both the motion and his contribution. It had an element of an academic treatise rather than a speech by a minister who is in charge of doing things.

The Government motion is full of warm words, but it is short of specifics, which is why the primary call in the Liberal Democrat amendment is for the minister to put some flesh and bones on his regeneration ambitions and to tell us more about what lies ahead. As I know, he is a minister who has great knowledge and experience of and commitment to regeneration.

Ross Finnie was right to say that the fact that there is an emphasis on local control and bottom-up approaches is not an excuse for the Government to say, "This is nothing to do with us—we've launched it, let's get on with it." It is not that sort of situation; the Government has an important role to play.

An important point was made about the fact that the issue is not exclusively about infrastructure and bricks and mortar. It involves a mix of more human-scale support and backing that could help to transform life, much of it instigated or provided by the voluntary sector. The projects that deal with mental health, addiction or learning support, that support disabled people into employment or that give young people on the verge of criminality more positive life choices are all central to community regeneration.

To my mind, there is no doubt that the voluntary sector faces the biggest challenge in several

generations as a result of a triple whammy. First, the economic crisis means that private funding organisations have fewer resources—Lloyds TSB, for example, because of huge banking losses, and others because of lower returns on investment.

Secondly, public funders—whether the Government, the council, the lottery or others—are increasingly strapped for cash, also as a result of the economic crisis.

I observe in passing that it is outrageous that the poorest and most needy in society pay for the greed of city bankers to be fed, while the bonus feast seems to go on regardless.

Thirdly, a parallel process of prioritising in-house services and staff is tending to marginalise the role of voluntary sector providers, which is a problem. I want to mention three projects that I know of that are in that position, although I recognise that the minister is not directly responsible for any of them.

The first is Castlemilk stress centre, which provides a wonderful service to people who are afflicted by anxiety or depression, addiction, bereavement or other mishaps. It has been operating for 15 years. The service that it provides is not discriminatory in the sense that people are not labelled or dealt with in clinical categories, and it has helped to salvage the lives of many people and get them back into employment or useful and meaningful activity.

When I visited the centre recently, I heard many personal and inspiring stories of people whom the centre had helped to rebuild their lives, who had gone on to provide peer support for others who attended the centre; some of those people had even become counsellors. Funding from the CHCP has been withdrawn on the basis that people can attend another service in Govanhill, but there has been no evaluation, no consideration of capacity and no recognition of the fact that the stress centre fulfils, at modest cost, a rather different function.

Sandra White: I fully agree with the member on the action of the CHCP in relation to the Castlemilk stress centre. Does he agree that it is ridiculous that the CHCP gave one week's notice for its withdrawal of funding?

Robert Brown: Absolutely. That is the point that I am making. Let me put it this way—there is no excuse for financial cutbacks in situations in which organisations take short-term, budget-led decisions without having regard to longer-term strategies. Removing one bit of funding from an organisation is like pulling away a thread. When there is no support for one side of the house, the whole house falls down. The threat to other bits of funding is not taken account of, with the result that a service is taken away. Such a cut might seem reasonable on paper when it is looked at from the

centre, but all sorts of linkages that have been built up over a period are lost.

The second project is Youthbike in Cambuslang, which helps motivate and direct young people through their interest in motorbikes. The fact that one of its sessions is on Saturdays helps to keep young people off the booze on Friday nights. It has won a number of awards, and the number of young people that it puts through Motherwell College as bike mechanics and the like is growing. The project is council run, but RegenX is no longer able to fund it, so it may have to close. The cost will be measured in an increase in the number of young people who get into difficulties and go off the rails.

The third project is the autism resource centre in Ruchill, which I revisited on Monday. I met a tremendous bunch of people, who are clearly mutually supportive of each other, but who face all the social relationship issues that autism sufferers frequently face. Funding cutbacks mean that the project will have to move to Bridgeton and will be unable to sustain the informal drop-in and group activities that are part of its appeal. The result will be a loss of support and motivation for people who are looking to go back into work.

An issue that emerges from that is how people survive in the current climate. Projects can fail and sometimes have to be closed down, but they should be properly terminated after evaluation. I return to the point that Ross Finnie made about the role of government. What have become of the local government-voluntary sector concordats that we went to some lengths to develop in the most recent parliamentary session? Do they have any continuing significance? How does the Government see them operating? What can the Government do to provide the structure and the strategy that allow voluntary sector organisations to prosper and survive in these difficult times?

The Government uses the alibi of Westminster cuts. The concordat and the single outcome agreements are all very well in their place, but there is no excuse for having a positive and sustainable strategy for the people-enhancing aspects of regeneration. I make a plea to the minister not to do a Pontius Pilate in this area, but to take specific responsibility at Government level for how such matters operate across the board.

15:59

Maureen Watt (North East Scotland) (SNP): I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate, as regeneration is an issue that affects communities the length and breadth of the country. I am sure that there will be few MSPs who cannot think of an area that they represent that would not benefit from being regenerated and

given a new lease of life. The sad fact is that the number of communities in such need will no doubt have increased significantly as a direct result of the recession. Empty shop fronts and derelict housing may be a clear sign of the economic damage that has been done to individuals and businesses, but they also represent real blows to the vibrancy of a local community.

Without successful businesses at the hub of local communities, there is less interaction between residents, fewer visitors to an area and, of course, less money circulating locally. That is why, as well as the town centre regeneration fund, the Scottish Government's small business bonus has been a crucial measure during the economic downturn. The money that small businesses have saved has often made the difference between their folding and their being able to continue as a viable concern.

The recession might have done major damage to many businesses and the communities that they support, but how much worse would things have been without the small business bonus, which Labour and the Liberal Democrats sadly failed to vote for in the 2008 budget, which introduced it?

I am glad that the Scottish Government recognised the importance of local businesses to the future of communities in some of the awards that were made under the town centre regeneration fund. For example, the retail rocks! Aberdeen project in the Torry area of the city, received £573,000 from the fund towards its plans to provide up to nine empty shop units rent-free for a year to budding entrepreneurs. That will help to re-energise the local community. I hope that some of those entrepreneurs will come from the Polish community, which already has some shops there, and that that will help community and social integration. I look forward to those businesses being developed in that area later this year.

Similarly, the safer places improved spaces project will benefit the Mastrick shopping centre in Aberdeen, which has been on a downward spiral since the demise of its largest shop, Woolworth's. Because of the project, that empty unit will be occupied by a new tenant, which has already been identified.

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab): Could the member tell us what the effect of John Swinney's announcement of a massive hike in business rates will be on the companies that she has mentioned?

Maureen Watt: I think that Cathie Craigie will find that the poundage will still be lower than it is in other places.

Just as important to successful communities as flourishing businesses are the facilities that are necessary for social groups and local events to

take place in. I am therefore pleased that the town centre regeneration fund has awarded funding to improve town halls across the country.

In Laurencekirk, the Dickson hall trust received £467,000 for a complete upgrade of the hall and its facilities, and Stonehaven town hall received £181,000 for roof repairs and other improvements. The importance of such halls is never greater than in times of crisis, as was demonstrated by the fact that St Bridget's hall in Stonehaven was used as an evacuation centre for people who were affected by the recent flooding in the area and the landslips at the Bervie braes. Such halls help to tie communities together, and improving the facilities that they offer has a knock-on effect, as it can stimulate community groups and generate pride in a local area.

On Karen Gillon's point about vacant and derelict land, I say that the Scottish Government has a fund that provides money to local authorities that have great concentrations of long-term vacant and derelict land, to enable them to bring that land back into productive use. Surprise, surprise—that fund totals £36.6 million and is ring fenced for the period from 2008 to 2011.

Karen Gillon: I think that the member misunderstood the point that I was making. I am working with the minister to try to make progress on the issue of compulsory purchase, and I believe that the minister announced a review of the matter in our previous debate on this issue. There is a gap in policy that prevents local authorities from using some of that money to better effect and taking that policy forward. I was not disagreeing with the point that had been made; I think that there are things that we can do together.

Maureen Watt: I agree, but I think that, sometimes, local authorities do not use the powers that they have to drive that forward.

As many members have said, community planning partnerships are best placed to doing the sort of work that we are talking about. However, the efforts that the Scottish Government has made to encourage regeneration across communities are welcome and, in many cases, have made a real difference to the lives of residents.

16:05

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab): While I was thinking about what to say in this afternoon's debate, I read on a website:

"The purpose of regeneration is to improve the social, economic, physical and environmental wellbeing of our local communities."

A local community activist who read that might wonder what it has to do with them. In plain speak,

regeneration should be about improving people's lives and the environment where they live and work, and about giving everyone the chance to enjoy a good quality of life in a warm, dry home, with work to get up for in the morning. I think that the people whom I represent would understand that better than some of the authors of Government documents, Government websites and local authority websites.

Like other Labour members who have spoken this afternoon, I find myself in the unusual position of agreeing with Alex Neil's motion. I was encouraged by his opening remarks, in which he claimed that regeneration is a key priority and is at the heart of the Government's work. I paraphrase his words. However, when Johann Lamont spoke, she pointed out the facts on the ground and identified the serious holes at the heart of the Government's key priority—holes that we must all work together to try to fill.

I will use the time that I have this afternoon to talk about a couple of projects in my constituency. I know that the minister is familiar with them because I had the pleasure of welcoming him to Cumbernauld last summer to look at an area and officially open a new housing estate where residents had come together to challenge a difficult situation. When the minister spoke today, I was encouraged to hear him say that solutions must not come from the top down and that communities need to take ownership. The minister could see for himself in the area that we visited that the community had taken ownership of the problems in the flats in Ainslie Macle hose Road. Community activists came together to work with the partners—the local authority, the Government, Scottish Homes and Communities Scotland—and find solutions. The solutions that they found were driven by the community activists and their set of problems. We are not finished yet. Regeneration takes a long time, as the minister knows, but we have travelled in the right direction with the community taking the lead. I am pleased about that. Volunteers have done a lot of work to get to where we are today.

I contrast that project with another problem of which the minister is aware, and that is the methods that have been used in a so-called partnership approach to deal with the undoubted difficulties that we face with the high-rise flats in Cumbernauld. In that example, a partnership of the Scottish Government, North Lanarkshire Council, Cumbernauld Housing Partnership and the Sanctuary Group made a different set of proposals. It came forward to tell the community what it should want from the regeneration of the flats. Instead of consulting and involving the community, it came forward with a solution that it thinks would be best for the community. I do not disagree. I do not think that there would have been

completely different outcomes had the partnership gone about things in a different way and involved the community from the start, but we now have a disgruntled community because people feel that they are being told from the top down what should happen rather than their being involved and telling the council, the housing partnership and the Government what they want.

I am informed by a document from the Cumbernauld Housing Partnership, which is part of the Sanctuary Group, that the proposal was put forward because it was the only game in town and because the Government said that demolition of the blocks was the only option for which public funding would be available. I do not think that that is the right way to start a consultation process. Years ago, I felt that Governments and councils did not know the difference between consultation and participation and it seems to me that we are taking a step back to the time when councils, Governments and housing providers simply told residents and tenants what they wanted instead of letting them participate in a decision-making process that affects their lives. I hope that this particular case in Cumbernauld is a one-off problem from which we can recover and from which the minister can learn lessons.

We must ensure that participation is at the heart of any Government's regeneration policies and programmes. At the moment, though, I have my doubts in that respect, and I hope that the minister will address them in his summing up.

16:11

Joe FitzPatrick (Dundee West) (SNP): The chamber has witnessed a few heated debates and it is fair to say that from time to time members have opposing views on various matters. However, from the tone of today's debate, I think that we are all clear that regeneration is a priority for communities throughout Scotland and for us as elected politicians—and is even more so in the challenging times of a recession.

Last year, after a slight hiccup, the chamber came together to set up the town centre regeneration fund, through which millions of pounds have been invested in local communities to help shake off the recession. We cannot understate the benefits of regeneration at such an important time. Last August, for example, community members in Lochee in my constituency welcomed the allocation of £2 million from the town centre regeneration fund to bring new life to the town's high street. I thank the minister and his officers for that decision, which, as well as allowing structural improvements to be made, has allowed community partners to engage in new projects to rejuvenate Lochee.

More important, the money from the fund has complemented the previous efforts of active community members who had until then been constrained by a lack of financial resources. With the support of the Scottish Government and Dundee City Council, Lochee high street is in the process of being revitalised; much needed repairs and refurbishment are being carried out; and steps to make residential areas safer have been introduced. Regeneration efforts in Lochee have strengthened not only the high street's physical structures but the local community, and the emphasis on partnership working and economic, social and environmental benefits is paying big dividends.

Dundee itself is a long way to go before it fulfils its full potential. However, that potential is enormous, and the waterfront project aims to capitalise on that. The Scottish Government's £33 million investment in the waterfront regeneration project can create 3,500 new permanent jobs and generate £2.6 billion for our economy. Although the current SNP council is taking forward these ambitious plans, it is continuing the previous administration's good work and, in line with the tone of the debate, credit should go where credit is due.

The process of regenerating Dundee's waterfront started back in 1986, with the return of RRS Discovery and the launch of the city of discovery campaign, which has been quite successful in turning around the city's fortunes. In its new one city, many discoveries campaign, Dundee is looking back at its past while looking forward to the new technologies that are becoming increasingly important to its economic future.

Dundee's waterfront remains key to the city's regeneration. The jewel in the crown of the waterfront project will be the Victoria and Albert Museum in Dundee, which the Scottish Government is working towards jointly with Dundee City Council, Dundee's two universities and other partners. An international competition is under way to find a design team to create an iconic building near RRS Discovery. It is hoped that that building will be set not only next to RRS Discovery, but on the Tay, and that it will be an iconic building on the waterfront for people from Fife, who will see it as they go across the bridges, as well as within the city. The Victoria and Albert Museum in Dundee will potentially generate 900 jobs, and it has been estimated that it will bring in 130,000 visitors to Dundee every year. That will be a huge boost to the Scottish economy as well as to Dundee's economy. It will tie into the other cultural centres in Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow and really make Scotland a global cultural place to visit.

As well as investing in the waterfront, the Scottish Government has been doing a lot of other work with Dundee City Council and other partners to help Dundee to recover. There is £22 million for a new swimming and leisure centre, and there are five new primary schools. The refurbishment of Harris academy in the next few years has been approved. Those things will help to protect vital construction jobs in Dundee and the surrounding area.

Communities throughout Scotland have seen job losses over the past two years because of the recession. Scotland appears to have suffered less than the rest of the UK, but our regeneration efforts must focus on job creation. The Parliament's world-leading climate change legislation represents a huge opportunity for our communities to create jobs. Forth Ports, Scottish Enterprise and Dundee City Council are working together in Dundee to take advantage of the growing renewables markets and to use the port as a location for offshore turbine manufacturing and maintenance. Such opportunities are being grasped not only in Dundee, but in several locations throughout Scotland. The prize is big enough for all of us to share. With the loss of manufacturing jobs in Dundee as a result of the closure of NCR's manufacturing base, that could prove to be real and sustainable alternative outlet for our highly skilled engineering workforce. Scottish companies in the offshore wind turbines industry have the potential to supply the European market, and the construction of renewables sector hardware in Dundee is an opportunity that must not be lost.

Regeneration must be about more than just buildings; it must be about communities, and it must provide sustainable benefits on multiple levels.

I am pleased to support the motion.

16:17

Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab): It is a pleasure to take part in this debate.

For most of my working life, I have been involved in regeneration in one form or another. Many people have worked hard on regeneration over those years, as members have said, but it sometimes seems that we have not got very far. There has been much analysis of why that is the case and of why communities, despite millions of pounds being spent on their regeneration, still face the same problems that they had at the beginning of the process.

My biggest criticism of all Governments is that they take too short term a view of regeneration—that also applies to all of us. That view has been based on the length of the parliamentary session,

and it seems to need us to change policies, even when we perhaps had the policy right, simply because there is a new Administration. We end up with short-term fixes that do not take a long-term strategic view that carries on from one Administration to another. The challenge for the current Administration is to find out how we can come together at a strategic level to develop a policy framework that is based on consensus and that can last across different Administrations; how we can focus on the poorest communities, whether those communities are urban or rural; and how we can make the approach last for more than four years.

A bottom-up approach needs to be taken, but that does not mean the abdication of responsibility, as others have said. There should be a bottom-up approach not only to community organisation, but to policy development, because physical, emotional or economic regeneration does not just happen; it takes time.

If we are serious about regeneration, we must focus on individuals as well as communities. We need to start at the very beginning, with education. One of the greatest barriers to true regeneration is poverty of ambition for individuals and communities. Too often, lifelong learning or education pigeonholes people because of where they come from, the community that they grew up in or their family background.

We limit people's expectations of their children because they grow up in a particular area or go to a particular school. We should have the same ambition for a child growing up in a single-parent family living on the minimum wage as we have for the children of the captains of industry. However, we do not have that yet. Each child should have the opportunity to realise their potential and the belief that they can do so. If people do not believe in themselves, they limit their ambition and fall into a cycle of unemployment, lack of educational attainment and lack of expectation.

I said that I have been involved in regeneration for a long time. My working life began in Blantyre in 1991, when I saw young people who had only ever known their parents being unemployed and who had little opportunity for unemployment. That is why I nearly choked when Jamie McGrigor said that he was proud of the legacy of the Thatcher and Major years. The legacy of Thatcher and Major is the scars that we are still trying to put right in some communities.

Jamie McGrigor rose—

Karen Gillon: Let me finish the point and I will let the member respond.

In the community where I grew up, our textile industries were devastated. In the communities that I now represent, the Ravenscraig and

Gartcosh works were shut because of a systematic decision by Government. In the communities that Marilyn Livingstone and Cathy Jamieson represent, the mines were shut because the Government did not like the miners. That was the reality of the 1990s and that is the reality of the communities that we now support. The reason why the Tories have only one MP in Scotland is that they still have not realised that communities the length and breadth of Scotland suffered in the 1980s and 1990s and that young people still grow up with parents who do not have a full time job or do not earn more than the minimum wage. That is a scandal that we must all tackle and face.

Jamie McGrigor: The new life for urban Scotland projects that I mentioned were highly commended in 1999 by the University of Cambridge as examples of excellence. Can the member give me one example of anything better that her party has done in the past 10 years?

Karen Gillon: I do not dispute that new life for urban Scotland was an effective project, but the reality of systematic destruction of industrial heritage is that people have no opportunity. The communities cannot be regenerated because people cannot get employment or get an income.

The member wants to talk about achievements. The national minimum wage is probably one of the biggest and proudest achievements of my Government. The fact that my mother got a pay rise when the national minimum wage was introduced says a lot about what I stand for. People have the ability to spend, support themselves and be proud of who they are—that is what the Tories took away and that is what we have put back. The reality of regeneration is that it is as much about people as it is about buildings. That is why there is a difference between the parties when we come to the general election. I hope that Stewart Hosie gets to grips with that, too.

16:23

Jim Tolson (Dunfermline West) (LD): In September 2007, John Swinney announced that local regeneration activities were to become the responsibility of local authorities. However, local authorities are already struggling financially and have had to make substantial budget cuts, even to front-line services, to cope with the impact of the economic downturn and the Labour and SNP funding cuts. The problem is exacerbated by the effect of the council tax freeze, as councils have no control over raising their revenue. Even some SNP councils have warned that continued imposition of the council tax freeze will have a further impact on top of already significant cuts.

For example, in evidence to the Local Government and Communities Committee, SNP-run Dundee City Council warned that a centrally imposed council tax freeze risked support for children and action to stop homelessness and business advice. However, the Government refuses to acknowledge the difficulties that local authorities are facing.

Tricia Marwick (Central Fife) (SNP): The member referred to a centrally imposed council tax freeze. Does he not acknowledge that it is for each council to make up its own mind whether it wants to introduce the freeze?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan): Perhaps we could get back to regeneration please.

Jim Tolson: Indeed. That is the same get-out clause that I hear quite often from Mr Swinney and his Cabinet colleagues, but it is not realistic, given the problems that local government faces.

Another area in which the Government's track record on regeneration is in doubt is in relation to the fairer Scotland fund, which is rolled up in the local government finance settlement as of this month. We know that local authorities are already struggling financially at the hands of the economic downturn, the council tax freeze and the priorities that have been imposed on them through single outcome agreements. As a result, it is highly possible that the fairer Scotland fund will get absorbed into plugging those gaps in funding, rather than being focused directly on regeneration and tackling deprivation.

Joe FitzPatrick: Given that the member does not support the council tax freeze, at what level would he set council tax throughout Scotland? What would the Liberal Democrats' top limit be and what impact would that have on economic regeneration?

Jim Tolson: I will respond to that only briefly, Presiding Officer. The £70 million that the Government claims that it is putting forward, which is effectively a bribe, should be part of the local government settlement in the first place, which would allow local authorities real self-determination in their areas.

The key funding stream for the voluntary sector is the fairer Scotland fund, which is delivered by central Government and distributed through community planning partnerships. The aim of the fund is to assist CPPs in achieving economic growth through regenerating disadvantaged communities, tackling poverty by helping vulnerable people and groups and overcoming barriers to employment. The fund is worth £435 million over the 2008-11 period and is ring fenced within the local government settlement until March 2010, when it will cease to exist as it will be rolled

up in the local government settlement. Allocations of the fairer Scotland fund to community planning partnerships were based on levels of need in each local authority area, using the Scottish index of multiple deprivation in 2006.

There have been some good contributions this afternoon. On finance, the minister said that there were pressures for the foreseeable future. That is a perfectly fair point to make, but, with all due respect to Alex Neil, it seems to be the same old rhetoric that we keep hearing from the Government, which blames the UK Government more than anyone else, and does not take responsibility for the financial situation in which we find ourselves.

Alex Neil: Is it not the case that Mr Tolson's leader also blames the UK Government for the state that we are in?

Jim Tolson: If we managed to get to our feet nearly as often as Alex Neil and his colleagues do, we would have a mountain to climb for the number of times that we blamed the UK Government. I say to Mr Neil that with all due respect his comment does not really add up.

The Government certainly needs to look at the funding agreements across the board. It seems to agree with the points that my colleague Ross Finnie made earlier. Therefore, I hope that when the minister comes to deciding how his group will vote later, he will agree to back the Lib Dem amendment.

Many members mentioned the voluntary sector and the effect of the single outcome agreements on it. Johann Lamont among others said that SOAs would have a significant detrimental impact on it. By and large, I agree with her—I have certainly seen much of that in my community in west Fife.

Robert Brown gave strong examples from Glasgow of the impact on the voluntary sector of the loss of services. In many ways, his was the speech of the day, because his passion, knowledge and well-thought-out contribution certainly held the attention of everyone in the chamber.

I was surprised that local authorities did not get much mention from many members, although Johann Lamont talked about the planning system being a barrier to jobs and progress. I raised that point with the minister at the Local Government and Communities Committee this morning and I have done so at other times. Local authorities are a crucial partner in helping ensure that we overcome many concerns.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I ask the member to wind up, please.

Jim Tolson: Jamie McGrigor extolled again the virtues of the right to buy. Is it possible to bring him from the 20th to the 21st century so that he realises the severe damage that the right to buy has done to our communities and particularly to the provision of local authority housing?

16:30

Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con): The debate on regeneration has been good and fairly constructive. What matters most about our debate is what we are doing to try to help the lives of people throughout Scotland and what we will do in the medium and longer term to ensure that future policies succeed. We must recognise that the debate takes place not in a vacuum, but in extremely difficult financial circumstances for the budget that is about to come into force in April and—more important—probably for budgets in the next five years or so, according to independent experts.

The Scottish Government's website describes regeneration as

"the lasting transformation of places to benefit those who live and work there."

The minister was right in his speech to add to that the point that regeneration is of course about places but is—more important—about sustained employment and economic activity for people. If we are to improve the life chances of people throughout Scotland, we must consider lifting our economic activity all over the country.

That is why the business start-up rate in Scotland is critical. In the past 10 or 15 years—the years for which we have data—that rate has flatlined, despite the best efforts of politicians of all stripes. Our rate is behind that south of the border. Occasionally, being behind south of the border can be argued away by saying that business is great in London and that we are fairly similar to other parts of the UK, but that does not apply to start-up rates. The only region whose rate we are ahead of is Yorkshire and Humberside. It is a big ask but, if the minister has anything in his closing speech about what the Government might do next on start-ups, that would be well received.

We have heard about the small business bonus scheme in the past couple of years. The fact that it could be open to holders of multiple properties whose rateable value is under £25,000 is a big step forward. Just last week, I had a conversation with a small businessman who is thinking seriously about opening a new shop in another part of town on the back of that policy. He had obtained a rent reduction on a vacant and derelict property, because it was not hugely attractive at the time, and he thinks that if he had a small business

bonus on top of that, that would be the tipping point that pushed him into opening that shop.

We have heard much about the town centre regeneration fund, which was a Conservative manifesto commitment. We pushed for that in last year's budget and it has had a positive impact throughout Scotland, to the tune of £60 million. I accept Ross Finnie's argument that the problem is far bigger; the minister said that demand for the fund outstripped supply. I note that there were 132 applications and 36 winners in round 1 and that there were 136 applications and only 30 winners in round 2, which was a ratio of 4:1. I am pretty certain that those figures are just the tip of the iceberg. Far more than 136 towns, villages and parts of cities could be eligible and wanted funding but simply did not get round to applying or could not do so in time. Far more must be done.

The key question is from where the money will come to continue the regeneration that has been undertaken for the past 30 or 40 years. Whichever way it is dressed up, this year's Scottish budget is static.

As I said earlier, we know in going forward that less money would be available. We also know from what we have seen in the pre-budget report and subsequent analysis that the capital budget appears to have been hit disproportionately. Of course, that may change in the next budget. We will hear about that at a later stage. The best analysis thus far suggests that the capital budget will be hit. We will have to be innovative in how we leverage in funding from the private sector to ensure that regeneration can happen.

What is the Government's current view on tax increment financing? Under such financing, local authorities borrow on the strength of future council tax revenues and business rates revenues if developments are built in their area. Recently, the Scottish Conservative leader, Annabel Goldie, proposed a business dividend fund—a fund that would allow local authorities that achieved above target business rates revenue as a result of businesses being set up in their area to keep a proportion of that revenue. The idea is to encourage local authorities to push economic growth in their area. If they achieve over target, they get to share a slice of the revenue. The idea is to align central Government and local government objectives.

Not only do we not live in a vacuum, we live in straightened financial times. There is much to be done. It will take innovative thinking.

16:30

Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab): Stanley Baldwin once said:

"A platitude is simply a truth repeated till people get tired of hearing it."

As platitudes go, this afternoon's motion is one of the best examples of the hackneyed truths that Baldwin must have been thinking about when he made his observation. The Government motion contains nothing but platitudes. Fortunately, the debate has shown that the issue under discussion is hugely important. That cannot be hidden, even under the banality of the motion.

I share Cathy Jamieson's view that the minister's opening speech indicated a clear commitment to the area. I concur with others that the introduction of the town centre regeneration fund was a good way of helping our hard-pressed town centres. It highlighted the demand in our communities for such assistance. As I said to the minister in my intervention, our question on the fund is why it was a one-off fund, despite the evident demand for more funding. As the minister highlighted, there were 202 unsuccessful applications for the TCRF—a total of £139 million. That demonstrates the real need for regeneration in our town centres—a need that is not being met. In the communities that were left out, people have to wonder why the SNP did not commit to on-going support for our town centres. Perhaps, like the Glasgow airport rail link and the downgrading of Ravenscraig from a national to a regional priority and other such examples, it comes down to the short-sightedness of this Administration.

Tricia Marwick: I listened to what the member said about the town centre regeneration fund. If it was such a priority for Labour, why did it not lodge an amendment to the budget? Also, why did it vote against the budget?

Michael McMahon: Because budgets are not about single issues. The overall budget that the Government put forward, which it was not prepared to discuss sensibly with us as an Opposition did not merit our support.

I am not saying that the Government has got it wrong on absolutely everything, but it cannot discuss regeneration without also focusing on the adverse impacts of the failure of the Scottish Futures Trust to build anything. The result of that is that development and regeneration plans have, at best, been delayed if not put on ice. Given that the SFT has not laid a single brick, 28,000 construction jobs have been lost in Scotland. Twenty two members of staff and a salary bill of £1 million may be many things but it is not a regeneration project.

As ever, the shadow of the concordat looms large over the potential for economic and social regeneration. Single outcome agreements are expected to show how community planning partnerships have agreed the strategic priorities

for their local area and yet SCVO claims that "many" local authorities

"continue to exclude voluntary organisations in planning and delivering public services."

SCVO has made it clear that in most areas, the third sector is represented in CPPs, but it also notes that being at the CPP table does not guarantee good involvement in the community planning process. That is simply not good enough.

As the minister and others have said, whether or not the approach is bottom up is irrelevant if community groups are not at the table when deals are made. Ross Finnie was spot on when he highlighted the fact that so far we have not got that right.

The Scottish centre for regeneration has expressed legitimate concerns about the end of ring fencing of the fairer Scotland fund. That will lead to money being used to fill gaps in local authority departmental budgets—for example, in education. Although the majority of SOAs contain details of how FSF moneys are being used, the fact that 10 SOAs contain no statements of that kind is a glaring omission that undermines the Government's ability to engage with local communities in effective regeneration projects. Serious action is required in that area.

It must be more than an aspiration or a good idea to have decision-making structures at neighbourhood level that bring together key players to develop a regeneration strategy, based on an assessment of community needs. Such structures must be seen to work, and evidence of the proposals must be tangible. Access to knowledge and expertise, sufficient powers to facilitate the development of networks and the effective implementation of projects are a must, but so far we have heard little beyond the platitudes in today's motion about how the Government intends to make that happen.

In all probability, communities will take different approaches to achieving the right balance of physical regeneration, training, job creation and community building, but there must be some standardisation of the overall process; at present, that is missing. Ross Finnie, Johann Lamont and others were right to ask for the issue to be addressed.

In this period of economic downturn, community-led renewal will be a vital aspect of how we climb out of recession. The current economic situation could stimulate a rethinking of the way in which we do regeneration. As we try to deal with the multitude of problems that face our localities and neighbourhoods, new approaches will need to be developed and strengthened. The resources that are available from government, both central and local, need to be used smartly to

maximise positive outcomes for local people and to create virtuous cycles of education, employment, equity, civic pride and community cohesion. Third-sector, community and voluntary organisations must not only be seen as a valuable additional resource but be put at the heart of the regeneration process. Often they are a mine of knowledge and increased capacity at local level, with a successful track record of action that makes a real difference to local communities.

Taking a positive outlook, the potential for community development to fill the resource deficit and offer other locally appropriate and sustainable solutions to local regeneration is an exciting prospect. Government must create the space and capacity to assist communities in the regeneration of their areas. As Johann Lamont explained, the planning framework is central to that. Communities do not just need access to discussion forums for their areas—they need access to funds to help them to regenerate those areas, bringing derelict properties and waste ground into productive use, promoting community engagement, and creating local jobs and training opportunities in the process.

The minister is correct to say that regeneration is not just about paying for new buildings—it must increase social justice and quality of life by overcoming poverty and disadvantage and producing more inclusive, equitable and sustainable local areas. As Jamie McGrigor correctly pointed out, there must be a place in regeneration strategies for community enterprises, credit unions, co-operatives and housing associations, among other community-based organisations. The member was right to list the areas that have benefited from additional funding but, like Karen Gillon, I wonder whether he really believes that signs in Thurso replace the devastation that was caused by the pulling down of the towers of Ravenscraig in Lanarkshire.

Jamie McGrigor: Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is about to finish.

Michael McMahon: The bottom line is that we cannot talk about the need for regeneration and praise the role that local authorities and the third sector play, and at the same time choose to slash the housing, regeneration, enterprise and tourism budgets, while claiming—as the Government does—to have sustainable growth as our purpose. We will support the motion tonight, but the platitudes of which it consists are not enough.

16:44

Alex Neil: We have had a good debate. The speech that I enjoyed the most was that of Karen Gillon. I did not agree with everything that she

said, but she hit a number of notes and underlined the important point about the need to succeed in regeneration. She repeated a point that Ross Finnie made, which is that some towns and cities are currently the subject of regeneration projects for the second, third or fourth times. We must ensure that when we regenerate an area we do so in such a way that the area becomes self-sustaining at the end of the regeneration period. That is why I talked about the projects in Blairgowrie and Neilston, which provide not just capital investment in physical regeneration but an income stream, which will be an investment stream for the communities in future.

Another important point that Karen Gillon and many other members made is about the need to ensure that economic prosperity and investment underlie regeneration activity. We have had problems in the past when successful physical regeneration, as happened in the GEAR project, was not of itself enough, because jobs were not there to sustain the community after the physical regeneration had taken place. If there has been no economic regeneration, over time the benefits of physical regeneration often start to be eroded as the area declines again.

Johann Lamont: I absolutely acknowledge the need for physical regeneration to be supported by economic regeneration. Therefore, is not there a critical role for an enterprise agency to identify geographical areas in which the Government should sustain, support or stimulate economic activity? Rather than leave the matter to the free market, should not an agency have a role in identifying areas that need jobs to match their physical regeneration?

Alex Neil: I will come on to the role of the economic development agencies and target sectors.

We must consider not just economics but fairness. I recommend to members the book, “The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better”, if they have not already read it. It was published last year. The authors demonstrate that the societies that are the fairest are also the best economic performers. It is important to ensure that our society is not only economically prosperous but fair.

A consequence of not having a fair society is that the second, third and fourth generations of some families are experiencing unemployment, poverty and deprivation. Regeneration is all about breaking that cycle of poverty and deprivation, and I hope that members are united on the substantive points of principle that must underlie our effort.

We are working to a national strategy. I will not “do a Pontius Pilate” and abdicate responsibility—quite the opposite. We have an overriding strategy

in the Scottish Government, which is designed to make Scotland wealthier, fairer, safer, greener and smarter. Within that, we also have a strategic approach to regeneration, which is encapsulated in our document, "Equal Communities in a Fairer Scotland: A Joint Statement". Through community planning partnerships and the delegation of responsibility, for example for the fairer Scotland fund, we want to empower partnerships, which should include the voluntary sector, to spend money in their areas on the basis of what are locally agreed to be the top priorities.

The last thing that we need is ministers or civil servants in Edinburgh trying to write the budgets of every local authority, ring fence all the funds and decide how CPPs will spend their money when the people on the ground are best placed to do that. I do not see how it is possible to argue on the one hand for community empowerment and, on the other, say that we should ring fence all the funds from Edinburgh and dictate to people what they can and cannot spend their funding on.

Cathie Craigie: Those are fair points, but what does the minister say to the SCVO, which says that many councils are still not allowing community organisations around the table in the first place and that even more councils, when they let such bodies around the table, still do not give them a voice? They are there, but their representation is tokenistic.

Alex Neil: My experience is that it is mainly Labour councils that are not giving community organisations a voice because other councils are definitely doing it. The most complaints that I get about deliberate attempts by a local authority to squeeze out community councils and similar organisations certainly come from Glasgow and North Lanarkshire, so I do not think that the Labour Party is in a good position to criticise other people in that respect.

Michael McMahon: Will the minister give way?

Alex Neil: No, I will not at the moment.

I also put it on record that Cathie Craigie's description of the situation with the high flats in Cumbernauld was totally alien to the true situation. I will not go into detail because other members will not be aware of it but the idea that the Scottish Government has laid down what should happen to the high flats in Cumbernauld is absurd to say the least.

Cathie Craigie: Will the minister give way?

Alex Neil: I will not give way to Cathie Craigie again.

The reality is that we must think about how we make progress because there is no doubt that, in the immediate period ahead, irrespective of who wins the general election on 6 May, our budget

and that of the UK Government will be squeezed. I say to whoever is elected in London on 6 May that it is highly important—Vince Cable has made this point—not only to tackle the medium-term problem of the budget deficit but to be very careful about where we make the cuts. The danger is that we cut the wrong things and, in doing so, put more people on the dole, which would make the deficit worse in turn. That is why we are engaged in an innovative approach to the joint European support for sustainable investment in city areas—JESSICA—initiative and other matters.

The proposition that we should spend all the extra money that Labour demands while it cuts our budget by £800 million a year is equally absurd. That is why we need control over our budgets in Scotland to protect our people against Labour and Tory cuts from London.

Business Motion

16:53

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S3M-5858, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Wednesday 10 March 2010

2.30 pm Time for Reflection
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Scottish Government Debate: Aquaculture
followed by Business Motion
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Thursday 11 March 2010

9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party Business
 11.40 am General Question Time
 12 noon First Minister's Question Time
 2.15 pm Themed Question Time
 Education and Lifelong Learning;
 Europe, External Affairs and Culture
 2.55 pm Scottish Government Debate:
 Serious and Organised Crime
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 17 March 2010

2.30 pm Time for Reflection
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Scottish Government Business
followed by Business Motion
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Thursday 18 March 2010

9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Scottish Government Business
 11.40 am General Question Time
 12 noon First Minister's Question Time
 2.15 pm Themed Question Time

Health and Wellbeing

2.55 pm

Scottish Government Business

followed by

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm

Decision Time

followed by

Members' Business—[Bruce Crawford.]

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): The next item of business is consideration of six Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Bruce Crawford to move en bloc motions S3M-5859 to S3M-5864, on the approval of Scottish statutory instruments on the Aberdeen western peripheral route.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the A90 (Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route) Special Road Scheme 2010 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the A90 (Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route) Trunk Road Order 2010 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the A90 (Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route) (Craibstone Junction) Special Road Scheme 2010 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the A96 (Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route) Trunk Road Order 2010 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the A956 (Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route) Special Road Scheme 2010 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the A956 (Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route) Trunk Road Order 2010 be approved.—[*Bruce Crawford.*]

16:54

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): I have often remarked how amazing it is that the language of sustainable development has been taken up by political parties right across the chamber. Only one thing amazes me more: how quickly that language is dropped whenever a road order comes up for discussion.

Every political party in the Parliament is committed—at least on paper—to concepts such as sustainable transport and climate change targets, but I honestly cannot remember a single example of a major road scheme that has been ditched because of its environmental impact.

Each time I raise the challenge, I am told “We must strike a balance, you see, between the environment and the economy,” as though the latter could possibly exist without depending on the former. In reality, the balance is always shifted decisively in favour of short-term and shortsighted economic considerations.

Stewart Stevenson answered my objections on carbon emissions from the scheme in committee last week by telling me that he did not recognise the figure of a 9 per cent increase in emissions from this project alone. Well, he should recognise it, because it is from the environmental statement that was published in 2007, with which I am sure

he is familiar, and is in paragraph 58.3.9, if he wants the reference.

Nobody will be surprised that the Greens remain opposed to this nonsense of a road project, and I will not be surprised if we are the only ones opposed to it. However, I ask other members to consider why we are being asked to nod through the road orders when three key questions remain outstanding. First, does the scheme meet the requirements of the Aarhus convention, which this Government claims to support, as did the previous Administration? A complaint under the convention is currently under investigation by the Compliance Committee, with local campaigners expected to give evidence in the coming weeks. Secondly, does the scheme breach the habitats directive? Again, a complaint has been deemed admissible and accepted, and in this case the European Commission is investigating. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, how much will the scheme cost? Its final price tag—either the burden on council tax payers or on the Scottish budget—is unknown and uncapped.

On any one of those three grounds, the decision to go ahead with the scheme is premature. That is quite apart from the wider question of a sustainable transport policy and whether any Scottish Administration will ever have one. The decision to go ahead has been taken before we consider the prospect of a judicial review, which I know the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change feels unable to comment on.

The Green view is clear: the road is a bad idea and should not be built. I know that most members will disagree. However, why should any member be relaxed about signing a blank cheque for a project whose compliance with legally binding obligations is in so much doubt?

The Presiding Officer: Before I call the minister, I ask members that, if they must have conversations, they do so in whispered tones rather than just chat among themselves. I call the minister to respond to Patrick Harvie. Mr Stevenson, you have up to three minutes, too.

16:57

The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson): The Aberdeen western peripheral route is of course somewhat more than simply a strategic road for the north-east of Scotland: it is important for the whole of Scotland and substantial economic benefits will accrue from it. I will turn my attention to a number of points that Patrick Harvie raised.

On the Aarhus convention and the habitats directive, those matters are of course under active consideration elsewhere, and I am inhibited in what I can say specifically about them, apart from

making the obvious point that this Government would take no action in such matters if we believed that they were not legal. On matters of cost, I shall meet, as part of a regular programme of meetings, with the chief executives of Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council and the leader of the latter council in about nine days, and the issue of costs will be included in our discussions. They have been content with our approach thus far.

One of Patrick Harvie's key suggestions is that every project that has a carbon impact should simply not be proceeded with. Well, of course, were that to be the argument, it would mean that we would not spend on costs to insulate houses to improve their energy efficiency, because there is a carbon cost. We have always said that, across our programme as a whole, we will seek to deliver on the targets that we as a Government and Parliament committed to when we passed the Climate Change (Scotland) Act last June.

It is appropriate to draw members' attention to another motion on which we will shortly vote that relates to the carbon reduction commitment energy efficiency scheme. That scheme, which was debated in committee in the form on which we will decide on it at decision time today, will lead at United Kingdom level to the reduction of 4 million tonnes of CO₂ per annum. The Scottish share of that is around a third of a million tonnes. I concede that the effect of the Aberdeen western peripheral route will be an addition of 10,000 tonnes. The decisions that we make at five o'clock today will therefore have the effect of reducing the carbon emissions that we in totality are responsible for by some 320,000 tonnes. The totality of the programme is the important point. The Aberdeen western peripheral route is a vital link for the north-east of Scotland that is, I think, broadly supported—we shall see at decision time—by members from across the chamber. I am happy to endorse the motions that my colleague has moved, which I commend to the Parliament.

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

Point of Order

17:00

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer. In his winding-up speech in the debate on regeneration, Alex Neil accused me of misinforming the Parliament about the Scottish Government's involvement in the issue of Cumbernauld's high-rise flats. Can I advise Parliament that I in no way misled members? I have before me the document "cumbernauld towers project" that was jointly published by the Scottish Government, Cumbernauld housing partnership and North Lanarkshire Council. Let me read the comment to which I referred:

"The Scottish Government, Cumbernauld Housing Partnership and North Lanarkshire Council believe that the demolition and new build option is the best long-term solution to the problems within the flats, and this is the only option for which public funding is available."

The Government signed up to that document. I did not mislead Parliament, so I would like to ask Mr Neil to withdraw his statement.

The Presiding Officer: As the member is probably aware, that is a debating point rather than a point of order for me. She now has the matter on the record, so it will be up to the minister to respond if he thinks it appropriate to do so.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:01

The Presiding Officer: The next item of business is consideration of further Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Bruce Crawford to move motion S3M-5865, on the approval of a Scottish statutory instrument.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the draft CRC Energy Efficiency Scheme Order 2010 (SI 2010/draft) be approved.—[*Bruce Crawford.*]

The Presiding Officer: The question on that motion will be put at decision time.

I also ask Bruce Crawford to move motion S3M-5866, on the designation of the lead committee for the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Bill.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1.—[*Bruce Crawford.*]

The Presiding Officer: Again, the question on the motion will be put at decision time.

We have two further Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Bruce Crawford to move motion S3M-5867, on days when the office of the clerk will be open, and motion S3M-5868, on parliamentary recess dates.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that, between 4 December 2010 and 31 January 2011, the Office of the Clerk will be open on all days except: Saturdays and Sundays, 24 (pm), 27, 28, 29, 30 and 31 December 2010, 3 and 4 January 2011.

That the Parliament agrees the following parliamentary recess dates under Rule 2.3.1: 23 December (pm) 2010 – 9 January 2011 (inclusive).—[*Bruce Crawford.*]

The Presiding Officer: Again, the questions on those motions will be put at decision time, to which we now come.

Decision Time

17:02

The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson): There are 15 questions to be put as a result of today's business.

The first question is, that motion S3M-5817, in the name of David Stewart, on the Ure Elder Fund Transfer and Dissolution Bill, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Ure Elder Fund Transfer and Dissolution Bill be passed.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is that, amendment S3M-5852.1, in the name of Johann Lamont, which seeks to amend motion S3M-5852, in the name of Alex Neil, on regeneration, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is that, amendment S3M-5852.2, in the name of Jamie McGrigor, which seeks to amend motion S3M-5852, in the name of Alex Neil, on regeneration, be agreed to.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S3M-5852.3, in the name of Ross Finnie, which seeks to amend motion S3M-5852, in the name of Alex Neil, on regeneration, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)

Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

Abstentions

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)

McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 65, Against 0, Abstentions 45.

Amendment agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The question is, that motion S3M-5852, in the name of Alex Neil, on regeneration, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

That the Parliament acknowledges the continuing need for regeneration of communities across Scotland, particularly in challenging economic times; also acknowledges the critical role of local government, community planning partners, the private and voluntary sectors and community members in delivering regeneration; notes in particular the importance of an effective planning system and the necessity of genuine community engagement to secure real change; recognises the contribution that regeneration makes to increasing sustainable economic growth and the improvement of opportunities for people living in deprived communities; acknowledges the success of the New Life for Urban Scotland initiative focused on Castlemilk, Ferguslie Park, Wester Hailes and Whitfield and described as a landmark in the history of urban regeneration in Scotland in the official assessment of the scheme; welcomes the £60 million Town Centre Regeneration Fund secured in the 2009 budget, and therefore calls on the Scottish Government to bring forward detailed proposals on how it intends to deliver its regeneration ambitions in the context of its economic recovery plan and how it will protect and enhance the contribution of the voluntary sector through structured and sustainable funding from central and local government.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-5860, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument on the Aberdeen western peripheral route, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)

Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)

Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

Against

Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 107, Against 3, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-5861, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument on the Aberdeen western peripheral route, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)

Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)

Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

Against

Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: One member has been hauled back into line.

The result of the division is: For 108, Against 2, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-5862, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument on the Aberdeen western peripheral route, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)

Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)

Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

Against

Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: Free will obviously still exists.

The result of the division is: For 107, Against 3, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-5863, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument on the Aberdeen western peripheral route, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)

Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)
 McMahan, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

Against

Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: I give up.

The result of the division is: For 108, Against 2, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-5864, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument on the Aberdeen western peripheral route, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)
 Allan, Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brown, Gavin (Lothians) (Con)
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)

Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Mulligan, Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Elizabeth (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

Against

Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 108, Against 2, Abstentions 0.

Motion agreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-5865, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on approval of an SSI, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the draft CRC Energy Efficiency Scheme Order 2010 (SI 2010/draft) be approved.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-5866, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on the designation of a lead committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that the Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-5867, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on the office of the clerk, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees that, between 4 December 2010 and 31 January 2011, the Office of the Clerk will be open on all days except: Saturdays and Sundays, 24 (pm), 27, 28, 29, 30 and 31 December 2010, 3 and 4 January 2011.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S3M-5868, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on parliamentary recess dates, be agreed to.

Motion agreed,

That the Parliament agrees the following parliamentary recess dates under Rule 2.3.1: 23 December (pm) 2010 – 9 January 2011 (inclusive).

Fairtrade Fortnight

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S3M-5768, in the name of Bill Butler, on Fairtrade fortnight 2010. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament welcomes Fairtrade Fortnight, which runs from 22 February to 7 March 2010; applauds the efforts of church groups, charities, schools and individuals in promoting the benefits of fair trade in Scotland; considers that the fair trade movement has already made a positive difference to the lives of thousands of people and communities across the globe; recognises that the fair trade concept is based on traditional cooperative principles of community ownership, concern for communities and democratic membership control; notes that estimated sales of fair trade products across the United Kingdom total over £700 million; welcomes moves to establish a cross-party group on fair trade in the Scottish Parliament; notes the continuing success of the Scottish Fair Trade Forum, established in January 2007, ahead of its third Fairtrade Fortnight tour of Scotland; notes that the tour will cover 15 local authority areas in order to raise awareness of the final push to make Scotland the world's second Fair Trade nation by the end of 2011, and would welcome as many schools, local authorities, further and higher education establishments and businesses as possible striving to achieve fair trade status.

17:12

Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab): Thank you, Presiding Officer. I thank, too, the 60 members from across the chamber who signed my motion. They have helped to send out the message that this Parliament unreservedly supports the concept of fair trade and that all of us will have groups and individuals working away in our constituencies on a daily basis, particularly during Fairtrade fortnight, to promote that ideal.

Fairtrade fortnight highlights the work that the fair trade movement carries out as it plays its part in helping to build a world in which there is trade justice, unfair debt is dropped and more aid is targeted at countries in the developing world that are in desperate need.

Fair trade is a guarantee of many of the standards that we take for granted. Small-scale farmers receive a fair and guaranteed price, minimum health and safety standards are met, no child or forced labour can be used, all producers are free to join a trade union, and there is a social premium. Those standards are a guarantee of civilised, humane production.

The fair trade ethos is predicated on the co-operative principles of community ownership; democratic membership control; the equitable distribution of profits; and a commitment to building long-term, sustainable trading

relationships on local, national and international levels. Those values safeguard the rights and the welfare of workers and consumers alike, and as such they are conducive to a better quality of life for all and greater cohesion in the global marketplace.

To be awarded a Fairtrade mark, products must meet a stringent set of criteria based on those principles. In recent years, we have witnessed a boom in sales of fairly traded produce, to the extent that sales have risen to an estimated £700 million across the UK alone. Indeed, Britain is the world's largest market for fair trade products. The Fairtrade Foundation is rightly delighted with that growth rate. Fair trade products are high quality and sustainable and they offer genuine value for money, but most important the Fairtrade Foundation's standards include a fair and stable price being paid to farmers in developing countries.

To that end, I recognise and salute the pioneering work of the Co-operative Group, which has supported the Fairtrade mark since its inception in 1994 and has played a crucial role in bringing ethically traded produce to national prominence. In recent months, we have all seen companies such as Marks and Spencer and Cadbury commit to widening their range of fair and ethically traded products. Their conversion to the cause is welcome, but it should not be forgotten that, as with so many retail initiatives, it was the Co-op that led the way.

In 2006, my close colleague Patricia Ferguson, who was then the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, announced that Scotland was to seek fair trade nation status. For that to happen, we must demonstrate a serious and enduring commitment to promoting and supporting Fairtrade produce: 100 per cent of local authorities and 60 per cent of universities and colleges must have groups that are working towards achieving that status, and 75 per cent of the population must purchase Fairtrade products annually.

Since 2006, significant progress has been made in schools, church groups and small, community-led projects across the country. Groups such as the one established at the school where I once taught, Stonelaw high school—students and teachers from which are in the gallery—all provide a positive and passionate grass-roots base on which we can build our bid.

Jack McConnell (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab): Will the member take an intervention on that point?

Bill Butler: Not at this minute.

I know that many members will wish to talk about groups that operate in their constituencies and regions, so I would like to use the rest of the

short time that has been allotted to me to talk about the role of Government and what it can do to help achieve fair trade nation status.

It is crucial that the Government encourages local authorities to continue to promote fair trade. I am extremely proud to say that over the past decade, huge strides have been made in my city of Glasgow, which became a Fairtrade city in 2006. Glasgow city chambers is completely Fairtrade for tea, coffee and other items on request, there are many Fairtrade schools across the city and Glasgow City Council has provided financial support for a number of fair trade projects and awareness-raising events in the city. We must all ensure that the rest of Scotland's 32 local authorities take similar action, and we look to the Government to encourage that.

Fairtrade products should be available in all of Scotland's schools, the fair trade message should form part of the national curriculum and pupils should be actively encouraged to participate by setting up, as many have done, their own fair trade groups. We also need the Government to support the Scottish Fair Trade Forum's final push campaign by pledging a significant proportion of its own catering budget to Fairtrade produce and by increasing public sector use of Fairtrade goods. We look to the Government to back that initiative.

The minister will be aware that I have lodged a series of written questions on the issue and that at question time tomorrow, I will ask her whether the Government will commit to increasing the number, and widening the range, of Fairtrade products that its catering services use. I hope that she will be able to reply positively to that very modest request.

The holding of the Commonwealth games in Glasgow in 2014 gives us a unique opportunity to ensure that Fairtrade produce is used at venues, training camps and the athletes village. By doing so, we can ensure that the games contribute not only to the regeneration of Glasgow and Scotland, but to farms, towns and villages in the developing world. I ask the minister to discuss that logical and reasonable suggestion with games organisers and the Fair Trade Forum.

Following the debate, fair trade campaigners will gather in committee room 4 for the first meeting of the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on fair trade. I encourage members of all parties to come along, sign up as members of the group and show their solidarity with workers across the globe.

We all know that the global market is distorted in favour of the rich, to the detriment of the poor. It is to help combat that distortion, to redress the balance and to ensure that people in the developing world gain greater control over their

own destinies that the fair trade movement exists. It is predicated on the principles of co-operation and a co-operative commonwealth. If we, as citizens of a global economy, learn to live by that principle, there is no reason why we should not all enjoy a fair share of the world's wealth.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We now move to the open debate. There will be four-minute speeches, and I must ask members to keep tightly to the limits, as a considerable number of members wish to speak.

17:15

Linda Fabiani (Central Scotland) (SNP): I thank Bill Butler for ensuring that we have our annual debate on fair trade during Fairtrade fortnight.

I was happy to sign this motion, and I think that this will be a good debate. First, however, I would like to make a couple of points. I do not want to sound negative or be a downer, but we must remember that, even though the fair trade movement is based on traditional co-operative principles of community ownership, which we should all be pleased about, the fact that a label is stuck on something does not mean that it is automatically good. I know, for example, that some of the co-operatives on certain fruit plantations in South America do not allow trade union membership, and that there are concerns about the rights of some workers in those places. That demonstrates why we must always monitor and evaluate the situation with fair trade practices.

Although I am delighted that we are moving towards Scotland becoming a fair trade nation—I offer congratulations to everyone who has been involved in that—we have to ensure that that designation is meaningful. When Patricia Ferguson spoke about it in January or February 2007, she spoke about the status as being serious and enduring. I know that the current Government has also spoken about that seriousness and has stated that it must be meaningful. We should hold on to that. Being a fair trade nation is about more than just the products that are bought in shops and having Fairtrade towns, councils and schools; it is about carrying on lobbying Westminster and Europe—and the Scottish Government, to an extent—in order to ensure that work that can be done around procurement and other big things continues to be embraced.

After an event that Bill Wilson and I attended a couple of months ago, he lodged a motion about ethical procurement in the national health service, which was inspired by work that was done following the visit of the British Medical Association's fair and ethical trade group's visit to Pakistan. I know that the Cabinet Secretary for

Health and Wellbeing is aware of that movement, and I believe that a member of her team is considering the issue closely.

Having said all that, I should say that I think that the things that happen in communities across the country are wonderful. In my area, East Kilbride and Hamilton are Fairtrade towns. I visited a school in Wishaw with Jack McConnell, and it brought us joy to see the way in which children embraced the fair trade idea.

Jack McConnell: I have been contacted by a number of schools where pupils who were involved in the establishment of school tuck shops that would have sold Fairtrade products as part of a co-ordinated effort in the school to motivate the youngsters and make an impact were banned from selling some Fairtrade products because they conflicted with national guidelines—because, for example, they contained chocolate. That demotivated those youngsters and drove them away from the good ends that we are concerned with rather than towards them. Will Linda Fabiani join me in asking ministers to consider the national guidelines to see whether they contain sufficient flexibility to enable those schools to meet the objectives of healthy eating as well as promoting fair trade?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: As that intervention was a speech, I will give you a couple of extra seconds, Ms Fabiani.

Linda Fabiani: I will not make my answer into a speech. I have sympathy for the point that Jack McConnell makes, as youngsters have approached me on the same matter. I believe that the issue has to be considered. Even though I want to promote healthy eating, the idea of not having Fairtrade chocolate poses a bit of a problem. The issue represents an anomaly that must be examined.

I must congratulate Strathaven academy, which is situated in Scotland's first Fairtrade town—I acknowledge that it shares that honour with Aberfeldy—on the Madinafest that it held last week. At that event, the youngsters pointed out, quite rightly, that fair trade is not about giving people handouts but involves a mutually beneficial exchange in the marketplace and represents a way of giving people a helping hand. They also tied in the fair trade movement with Strathaven's weaving history and the story of the radical uprising of 1820, which saw James "Perlie" Wilson executed for calling for workers rights.

That thread of history is important in relation to some of the things that Bill Butler said about fair working. The concept of fair trade and working together has been around for a long time. The pupils of Strathaven academy recognise that. One of the big benefits of the fair trade movement is

the recognition by people throughout the country that it is both historical and for the future. It is about giving a fair deal to workers in communities the world over.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before I call Mary Mulligan, I say to members that I will really have to start keeping them to a tight four minutes.

I call Mary Mulligan, to be followed by Gavin Brown.

17:25

Mary Mulligan (Linlithgow) (Lab): I congratulate Bill Butler on securing this evening's debate. Since he was elected to the Scottish Parliament, he has championed the cause of fair trade, as we might expect from a co-operator, so he is well qualified to lead the debate.

Members will be aware that fair trade has been around for more than 40 years. However, the labelling scheme with which we are all so familiar was not introduced until the 1980s. Then, in 1992, the Fairtrade Foundation was established by a union of the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development, Christian Aid, Oxfam, Traidcraft and the World Development Movement. A little later, they were joined by the Women's Institute. In October last year, I was pleased to lodge a motion that congratulated the Fairtrade Foundation on its 15th anniversary and I am grateful to the many members across the political spectrum who supported it.

In January 2000, the first bananas to carry the Fairtrade mark went on sale in more than 1,000 Co-operative stores. They are often seen as the first recognisable Fairtrade commodity. Later that year, coffee and tea carrying the Fairtrade mark also became available. In the past 10 years, we have seen retailers such as Starbucks, Sainsbury's and Tesco carrying Fairtrade goods. We have seen towns, banks, trade unions and even the United Kingdom Government signing up to support fair trade. No longer is it the preserve of specialist shops, the churches or the Co-op. That is real progress as it has made fair trade mainstream. There is still some way to go, but I will return to that.

First, let me recognise that that progress could not have been made had it not been for the efforts of many people. I am pleased to welcome to the public gallery tonight, along with the schoolchildren about whom we have already heard, fair trade supporters from my constituency—people from Whitburn, Bathgate and Linlithgow who give their time regularly and freely to promote fair trade in their communities. Their work has resulted in Whitburn and Linlithgow being recognised as Fairtrade towns and Bathgate is striving towards that. They have also joined up

with other communities in West Lothian, notably Broxburn, to consider ways in which to achieve Fairtrade status for West Lothian as a county. However, it is not just the title that they seek. They want to ensure that people understand that Fairtrade status is important because of the benefits that it offers to the producers of the goods that are sold.

What also impresses me about the people who are involved is that they come from a variety of social and economic backgrounds, that they are of various ages, and that they have various faiths and none. The principle that binds them together is fairness. I suggest that their work is even more commendable because they seek fairness for people whom they will probably never meet, but they know that it is the right thing to do.

I said earlier that, although we have come a long way, there is still some work to be done. I welcome the fact that, tonight, MSPs will establish a new cross-party group on fair trade, and I will be proud to be a member of it. I do not have time to respond to the Scottish Fair Trade Forum's proposals for an action plan for the Scottish Government, but I say to the minister that I hope that the Scottish Government will do what Bill Butler suggested and respond positively. I fully support the aim for Scotland to become a fair trade nation. I hope that, after tonight's debate, we will set about further promoting fair trade throughout Scotland and genuinely contribute to alleviating global poverty.

17:29

Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con): I, too, congratulate Bill Butler on securing this debate and on the speech that he gave a few moments ago. Of course, fair trade allows consumers to voluntarily send a signal about the conditions in which they want their goods to be produced, and we should never underestimate how powerful that signal is at an individual level and, more important, at a collective level as the movement grows and grows.

We find ourselves fairly close to the end of Fairtrade fortnight, which runs from 22 February to 7 March. It is fair to say that this fortnight has been bigger and better than ever before. What impresses me as much as anything is how innovative, cutting-edge and successful the organisation has been, embracing technology and using every possible means to get its message across people of all ages throughout the UK. This year's big idea, as it were, is the big swap, the challenge behind which is to get 1,000,001 people across the UK to agree to swap one household product that they would typically buy for a fair trade product for the whole fortnight. That is just the initial objective, and we hope that the people

stick with the fair trade product when the two weeks are up.

Looking in advance of this debate at the previous fair trade debates that have taken place in Parliament, I was interested to note that in the very first debate there were many jibes and comments about the quality of the bananas, the tea, the coffee and the chocolate. However, that debate is well and truly dead. The quality of the product right across the spectrum has changed and is as good as one will find anywhere else. As a result, I am hopeful that those who decide to take part in the big swap will continue to buy those products long after Fairtrade fortnight is over.

As I read through previous debates, I was comforted to note that the sales of fair trade products have not been negatively affected by the economic downturn. Those who have been loyal to the products have remained so. Indeed, according to the last figures that I looked at, there was 12 per cent growth in fair trade products in the UK, and Bill Butler mentioned a UK-wide figure of £700 million, which, as he said, makes us the world's largest market for fair trade products. Purely out of interest, I would be interested to see the Scottish share of that £700 million and whether we punch above our weight in the UK. I rather suspect that we punch well above our weight.

One of the reasons for the fair trade movement's continued success is that it is a genuinely grass-roots movement that has embraced everyone, including business and commerce, who has wanted to be part of it. Indeed, as Bill Butler said, Marks and Spencer and Cadbury have embraced various initiatives. Walking down the Royal Mile to work, I noticed that Starbucks was running a fair trade promotion and according the Fairtrade Foundation's website, Ben and Jerry's ice cream, which is designed to appeal to the younger consumer, has been signed up and is on board.

Clearly the movement continues to make progress. It has certainly made a positive contribution and I hope that growth over the next year and beyond will be stronger.

17:33

David Whitton (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab): I am delighted to take part in this debate and congratulate my colleague Bill Butler on bringing this important topic to the chamber. It provides me with a terrific reason to boast about what is being done in my Strathkelvin and Bearsden constituency to support the fair trade movement—and I assure the chamber that a lot is happening.

As we have already heard, Scotland has become an integral part of the fair trade market

with 71 per cent of the country's population now recognising the Fairtrade mark; six cities achieving fair trade status; and 10 Scottish local authorities, including East Dunbartonshire Council, earning fair trade zone status. The movement's national success has been made possible by local communities throughout Scotland.

East Dunbartonshire achieved zone status in 2007 and has been involved in countless projects involving schools, churches and the local business community to foster fair trade in Scotland.

In schools, the Glow Scotland online learning community was launched in 2007 as an education resource for teachers and pupils. East Dunbartonshire was chosen as a pilot area, and it has a forum for sharing ideas on fair trade issues. The fair trade steering group in the East Dunbartonshire Council area was established in 2004; it has since put the spotlight on the area's schools. The president of Dunbartonshire Chamber of Commerce, Robert Wilson, stated then:

"We set up a Schools' Fairtrade Network for Secondary School pupils as an opportunity for them to share information and ideas. This is now supported by a GLOW Fairtrade group which provides a unique opportunity for schools to communicate on this issue. We will develop the network and extend it to primary schools so that pupils from across the area can talk to each other and learn from each other's experiences of how best to promote Fairtrade in their school and community."

I know that, in addition to pupils talking to one another, primary schools and secondary schools have been in communication with schools in Malawi.

East Dunbartonshire was also chosen as a pilot area for the pilot Fairtrade school uniform initiative, the goal of which is to encourage the supply of and demand for Fairtrade uniforms, specifically in the cotton market, as that is a relatively unexplored fair trade market that has been especially hit by the economic recession. We heard my colleague Jack McConnell talk about school tuck shops. School tuck shops are being advised which Fairtrade products are suitable for sale, and nutritional information to accompany the goods is available. However, I am not sure about the chocolate.

An event for Fairtrade fortnight 2010 provided churches with the opportunity to have discussions with one other and share their thoughts on how they, too, can get involved in fair trade.

The local business community has been greatly involved with the fair trade movement. Companies such as Silver Birch (Scotland) in the third sector, Guala Closures and Harper Collins have all promoted fair trade to their employees.

Several projects are under way in East Dunbartonshire Council. Encouragement is being given to leisure centres in East Dunbartonshire to supply Fairtrade products.

A unique relationship has formed between the National Association of Smallholding Farmers of Malawi and Just Trading Scotland in fostering the Kilombero rice project. East Dunbartonshire's schools are significant markets for Just Trading Scotland's Kilombero rice. The Scottish Government and various grants facilitated that venture. A grant from the Lorna Young Foundation allowed an upgrade of a rice mill in Malawi, and Renfrewshire Council has helped with the purchase of other equipment. Rice has subsequently been distributed to East Dunbartonshire schools; it replaced rice that was previously supplied that was not fairly traded. Kilombero rice does not bear the official Fairtrade mark, but the use of it is recognised as part of a commitment to working towards achieving fair trade zone status. The rice project's success has led to its growth within and beyond East Dunbartonshire; schools in Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire are also buying that rice. There is now a 90kg rice challenge, in which churches, schools and other groups are challenged to sell 90kg of fairly traded rice, which is enough to send one child to a local high school in Malawi for a year. That is as good a reason as any for supporting Fairtrade fortnight.

17:38

Hugh O'Donnell (Central Scotland) (LD): Like other members, I congratulate Bill Butler on lodging the motion during Fairtrade fortnight, which we are coming to the end of, as Gavin Brown said.

I would like to widen our consideration and suggest that fair trade should be, like ethical foreign policies, our resting position—I refer to the practice, not just to the brand. That view is partly founded on the moral aspect. Many small producers throughout the world, whether of foodstuffs, cotton or other products, produce much of their stuff because of the demand of our consumers. Perhaps they have diverted from sustaining their own communities with adequate levels of foodstuffs and indigenous products to satisfy our desire to have out-of-season fruits or our continual demands for chocolate or tea. We have a moral obligation to ensure that producers who follow our desires get a fair return.

Fairtrade the brand has done remarkably well. Mary Mulligan rightly mentioned the existence of the movement prior to the branding, but we must now take the issue not only to consumers, but to manufacturers on a much higher level. We must ensure that the big purchasers are obliged, as far

as legally possible, to ensure that the conditions on which they supply products and buy from small groups of producers are fair and that they do not impose unreasonable conditions on their suppliers to get the prices that suit us or that provide the profit margins that they desire.

Cathy Jamieson (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab): Does the member agree that it is important to take that approach not only in the context of fair trade goods such as food and textiles, but in the context of travel and tourism and the issues that go along with them, so that we ensure that the workers who provide services are treated properly and fairly?

Hugh O'Donnell: Cathy Jamieson makes a good and pertinent point, which ties in nicely with the issue of what we call the all-inclusive holiday. Many big tour companies are at pains to encourage us to take such holidays. Unfortunately, the people fly into the resort and the money flies out and the workers earn the minimum wage. I have experience of that in Europe. As I said at the outset, we must widen our understanding of what constitutes fair trade. I see no reason why tourism services should not be included in the Fairtrade branding and the benchmarks that we have set.

As is traditional in such debates, I must refer to something in my region, which is the success of North Lanarkshire Council's Fairtrade schools programme. Having ticked that particular box, I again congratulate Mr Butler on the success of the debate and all those who are involved in the fair trade movement. I encourage the minister to consider adopting fair trade as a resting position and not just for a fortnight.

17:42

Marlyn Glen (North East Scotland) (Lab): I, too, congratulate Bill Butler on securing the debate. I hope that it will provide another impetus to the drive to gain fair trade nation status for Scotland. That is a worthy goal and I look forward to our reaching it in the near future. I remember the excitement that was generated when Aberdeen and Dundee were granted Fairtrade status in March 2004 on the same day—they both claim to have reached the line first. I congratulate the north-east towns of Montrose, Ellon and Inverurie, which have all gained Fairtrade status. Five goals must be met for recognition—the five Cs of council, commerce, community, common consensus and captains.

As an important impetus for the councils, I ask the minister to write to all local authorities for regular updates on their work towards Fairtrade status. The Parliament must take a lead, not just in serving Fairtrade products, such as the Divine Chocolate that is on sale in the building, but in

ensuring that we exercise the greatest possible influence to change the culture so that fair trade becomes a first principle in all procurement, as Hugh O'Donnell outlined. The responses from local authorities should be made available to members, who can then try to influence them to make the important choice to swap to fair trade.

Like other members, I was delighted to attend one of the many events that have taken place throughout Scotland and the UK during the Fairtrade fortnight. On Saturday, in Dundee's Bonar hall, there was a strictly Fairtrade tea dance—the only one in Scotland. It was a heady mix of delicious Fairtrade products and dance, which included street, salsa, tap and contemporary dance, with of course tea to follow. There were demonstrations of the dancing as well as opportunities for participation. The tea dance is an innovative way to introduce a wider audience to fair trade as well as to have fun.

It is really important that we get the message of fair trade across to as many people as possible in as many ways as possible.

To quote Councillor Richard McCready of Dundee's fair trade forum, the serious message is that Fairtrade tea still represents only 10 per cent of the UK market and everyone, individually, needs to swap their cuppa to a Fairtrade tea. Workplaces, schools, shops and local cafes need to make the switch to ensure that tea producers and workers in the developing world get a fair deal.

Tomorrow in Dundee there is an event looking at fair trade's accomplishments and its effects on the lives of people in Palestine. There will be a talk from Palestinian olive oil producers from the Fair Trade Development Center in Bethlehem.

I have watched Dundee's Fairtrade city campaign go from strength to strength since 2001, when the council was the first in Scotland to adopt a fair trade policy. Now, the fair trade forum has been established by the One World Centre.

I have always believed that the individual can make changes to their own lives, which, when added together, will have wide-ranging consequences. Fair trade is everyone's responsibility. Each of us needs to act to help meet the ambitious target of a million swaps to Fairtrade to help transform the lives of producers, as Bill Butler outlined.

It is also the responsibility of the Scottish Parliament to be seen to take a lead in supporting Scotland to become a fair trade nation. I welcome the establishment of the new cross-party group and I will be delighted to become a member of it.

17:46

Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green): I congratulate Bill Butler on securing the debate. I am delighted to speak in it.

Fair trade and Fairtrade fortnight's success and popularity keep growing. I will take the opportunity to congratulate the many primary and secondary schools, churches, community groups and businesses in my region that now support fair trade, because their actions make a real difference to communities around the world.

I would particularly like to congratulate this year's winner of the 2010 Lord Provost's awards in Edinburgh: Hadeel. Given that I am a member of the cross-party group on Palestine, it will not surprise members to know that I was delighted that Hadeel won the award. It is a Fairtrade shop based at St George's West church, which aims to provide a sustainable source of income for craftspeople who work with social enterprises in the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Galilee and the Negev. It provides so much more than just an income, as many of the social enterprises help provide health, education and emergency services in communities in which there is a complete vacuum in terms of local government. We hear stories from all over the world about the overall effects of fair trade.

Congratulations must also go to the National Library of Scotland, which won the best newcomer award in Lothian, and St Peter's Episcopal church, which won the Fairtrade faith community award.

I also highlight the success and hard work of the pupils of Dyce Academy who brought a petition before the Public Petitions Committee that challenged regulations that meant that their school tuck shop had to stop selling Fairtrade sweets and chocolate. I remember presenting a robust defence of the delights of the odd nibble of a bit of delicious Fairtrade dark chocolate—it is supposed to be one little bit, but it is remarkable how quickly the bars disappear once we open them. I believe that their campaign managed to overturn the complete ban, so pupils can rest assured—I hope that the Government will confirm this—that they can continue to help other children and young people throughout the world once or twice a week in their Fairtrade shops.

Despite the successes, we can still do better. I am sure that most members will be aware of the current situation in the NHS: the BMA has suggested that at least one fifth of all surgical equipment is made in northern Pakistan, where child labour is very common. The BMA is now campaigning to ensure that the NHS uses more Fairtrade and ethically sourced medical kit. The campaign follows the BMA's survey of 383 doctors, which suggested that although eight in 10

doctors were supportive of the NHS purchasing ethically sourced goods, only one in 10 was actually aware that such equipment existed.

Fair trade has the potential to be the very foundation stone of a new world economy—a stable, green, fair and equitable world economy that is based on a new set of values, including, along with the vision of world equality that Bill Butler advocated so passionately, new relationships with our environment; new relationships between commerce and communities; new relationships between rich and poor nations and communities; and a renewal of the commitment to quality that should permeate all trade, to which Gavin Brown referred in his remarks. That is what Fairtrade stands for: quality and equality.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am minded to accept a motion without notice to extend the debate by up to 30 minutes.

Motion moved,

That, under Rule 8.14.3, the debate be extended by up to 30 minutes.—[*Bill Butler.*]

Motion agreed to.

17:50

Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab): Like colleagues, I congratulate Bill Butler on lodging the motion. It is significant that, even in a recession, fair trade products are still doing incredibly well. Bill Butler's motion highlights the progress that is being made on raising people's awareness of and commitment to the principles that underpin fair trade. That represents a huge amount of work by producers, retailers and campaigners. In tonight's debate, we celebrate the contribution that they have all made.

I was delighted and proud that all three winners at Edinburgh's fair trade awards last week, which Robin Harper just mentioned, are in my constituency of Edinburgh Central. The overall winner was Hadeel, as he said. I put on record my thanks to Carol Morton and her husband, Colin, who first made the contact with Palestinian producers 22 years ago. That represents a phenomenal commitment. Hadeel is a trading arm of Palcrafts and is the only Palestinian trading arm in Britain that deals with fair trade goods. Hadeel the shop and Palcrafts, which works on a mail-order basis, have done incredibly well.

It was fantastic to have in Edinburgh this week Hind El Arabi, who is the United Nations Relief and Works Agency women's programme officer. She has worked in the west bank and Gaza for more than a decade. Her examples of the impact of fairly traded products such as embroidered

goods that are made by women, particularly in Gaza, were fantastic.

Hugh O'Donnell: Will the member give way?

Sarah Boyack: I would normally give way, but I am under time constraints. I acknowledge that Hugh O'Donnell has been to Gaza.

When 80 per cent of Gazans rely on food aid, it is almost impossible to stress enough how important being able to trade economically is for people in Gaza. The moral support that they obtain from knowing that the rest of the world is not ignoring them is hugely important.

I am delighted that representatives of Zaytoun, the olive oil producers, are here from Palestine this week. I hope that more such activity will be spread across the country.

As part of Fairtrade fortnight, the National Library of Scotland made its big swap. It has recently refurbished its cafe and has made a fantastic commitment by saying that it just made sense to convert to fair trade. Such decisions are being made throughout the country. I hope that we will become a fair trade nation.

It is a long time since I lobbied the then Presiding Officer, David Steel, to have fair trade coffee in the Parliament. As we establish the cross-party group on fair trade tonight, I lobby for fair trade goods in the parliamentary shop. I have lobbied for Palestinian coasters that are embroidered with a Scottish flavour—the manufacturers are happy to produce whatever we want, whether the design is a saltire or any other form. One problem in Palestine is coming up with new ideas; people there must constantly refresh their products.

Why do we not sell olive oil, almonds and Palestinian coasters? I understand that the purchasing policy has recently changed, so we could revisit the idea. If we sold fair trade goods in our Parliament, that would be a practical example. I hope that that might be one of the cross-party group's first successes. I am sure that Patricia Ferguson, who has called the group's meeting, has many campaign ideas up her sleeve, but that is the idea that I put on the agenda for tonight.

The fact that we debate fair trade almost every year, that we come up with new products each year and that new commitments are made in our communities each year shows that Scotland is moving towards fair trade nation status. The debate provides one way to contribute to pushing for that status. We acknowledge the community groups and businesses and the campaign work that has been done to take us to that fantastic goal.

17:54

Gil Paterson (West of Scotland) (SNP): The Scottish Parliament has an excellent record of bringing fair trade issues to the public's attention. The topic of tonight's debate—Fairtrade fortnight—continues this fine record. Bill Butler should be congratulated on securing the debate. It gives the chamber the chance, once again, to highlight why fair trade is a goal that is worth pursuing.

I draw attention to how difficult it is for people in the developing world to achieve a fair share of the marketplace and a fair price for what they have produced. When it comes to trade in Scotland or the UK as a whole, we can say that we live in a sophisticated, well-connected and organised society. However, even here, farmers who are part of this society and who have unions and co-operatives of their own and are highly organised, articulate and experienced in their approach to business find to their cost that vested big business interests by way of multinational supermarkets and large-scale, middle-men distributors are hard to bargain with. Farmers and producers have to do that if they are to achieve a decent price for their produce.

In this country, farmers and producers have an enormous fight on their hands just to break even, never mind achieve a fair price. We have to remind ourselves that that is happening even with almost the full support of politicians of every persuasion plus Governments, the public and the great support of the press. The battle that our farmers and producers wage has gone on for years. A producer in a developing country battles against the same powerful people as our farmers and producers in Scotland do, but they have to do that with little or no support from politicians or the media—with some notable exceptions. We can imagine how difficult it is for them to get a fair deal. In doing deals with the big guys, the fair trade producers will always come off second or third best unless interventions are made on their behalf. Giving time and support to champions such as my very good friend John McAllion to enable them to assist in informing the Scottish public on the need to buy fair trade goods is not only a pleasure but a social and economic obligation.

Small countries such as Scotland are in the vanguard of promoting fair trade issues. If Scotland were to become a fair trade nation, it would be a win-win situation. It would be a win for fair trade producers because more opportunities would be opened up for fair trade in this country and more publicity generated for the cause of fair trade—Scotland becoming a fair trade nation is bound to be worth a few column inches and comment around the world—and it would be a win for Scotland because it would put us on the map for all the right reasons.

I encourage members, the Parliament as a whole and the Government to push forward on such a worthwhile project that would anticipate and can deliver substantial benefit for people who are clearly helping themselves but who need partners and friends to make the difference in overcoming powerful vested interests. I am delighted to support Bill Butler's motion.

15:58

James Kelly (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab): I am delighted to take part in this evening's debate on fair trade, coming as it does at the end of Fairtrade fortnight. It is a fitting end to such a successful fortnight. Like others, I congratulate Bill Butler on bringing the motion to the chamber. The fact that the motion was signed by so many MSPs shows the degree of support that exists for fair trade across the Parliament.

I welcome to the public gallery the Stonelaw high fair trade group, the pupils of which are led by their teacher Isabel Gilchrist. I know that Bill Butler strongly endorses the work of the group; some years ago, he was a teacher at Stonelaw high.

The Stonelaw high fair trade group is one of the most successful school fair trade groups in Scotland, is always active and participates in all local events in the Rutherglen and Cambuslang area; indeed, it has been invited to many meetings throughout Scotland to showcase its work. It is not just a case of talking about work; the group puts its principles into practice in the sales that it has been able to generate and the links that it has made in relation to fair trade. It must be congratulated on that work.

Like other MSPs, I am fortunate to be able to talk about active fair trade movements in my constituency. The Camglen fair trade forum is an active and successful campaign, with the objective of achieving Fairtrade status for both Rutherglen and Cambuslang. It has many active supporters in the community, especially on the committee, which is fronted by Kieran Dinwoodie and John Sanderson.

There are clear benefits to fair trade. Obviously, there are benefits in the countries with which we trade, as we build up links and ensure that there are benefits commercially and in respect of the skills that countries are able to build up. There are also benefits to Scotland. From the number of groups, schools and churches that participate in fair trade, it is evident that fair trade has awakened the social conscience of many people throughout our country. It plays an important role in schools, as it provides children with good models and helps them to grow up as model citizens. Jack McConnell made that point when he spoke about ideas for tuck shops.

It is not enough to make fine speeches in the Parliament—we want the Parliament to take practical steps. I welcome the fact that Patricia Ferguson has set up a cross-party group on fair trade. I believe that the group will be successful and will act as a platform for propelling forward fair trade ideas in the Parliament. It will give us the opportunity to interact successfully with the Scottish Government and allow the Government to move forward ideas in the areas of health, procurement and community involvement.

Tonight's debate has been successful and has acted as a clarion call not only to the Parliament but to groups throughout Scotland. It has talked up the success of fair trade and moved us forward into the future, to ensure a better life for all throughout the world.

18:03

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Fiona Hyslop): I echo the chamber's sentiments and thank Bill Butler for securing today's debate. I have been encouraged by members' supportive comments, which show that fair trade is above politics and has cross-party support in Scotland. I understand that the inaugural meeting of the cross-party group on fair trade will take place after the debate; I wish it well. I welcome the establishment of the group and look forward to hearing the outcomes of the meeting.

As we know, many more people now know the meaning of fair trade and understand its importance. That has been no more evident than at the events in which I participated as part of Fairtrade fortnight. Those included addressing the fair trade experience in Glasgow, which was sponsored by the co-operative movement. Bill Butler was right to salute the work of the co-op movement, especially in this area. At the event in Glasgow, I met people from Stonelaw school and the daughter of Jim Kelly, who has just spoken—although I am not sure that he is paying attention. I also attended a fair trade fashion show in Linlithgow, at which the models were pupils from the local fair trade group. At the Glasgow event, fashion was modelled by pupils from Strathaven academy.

In paying tribute to the excellent work that has been done on fair trade across West Lothian, Mary Mulligan will recognise the challenges that arise in relation to local authorities. Marlyn Glen identified what happens in local authorities as a key area in which we can move forward.

I have had the pleasure of meeting Haitham Hasasneh, a livelihood development officer who works with olive oil producers in Palestine. He has been taking part in events throughout the country, courtesy of the Scottish Fair Trade Forum. My fair

trade swap has been to Palestinian olive oil. Gavin Brown talked about quality, and I can testify to the quality of olive oil from Palestine.

Fair trade fortnight is drawing to a close, but that should not mean that we forget the cause. As members said, promoting fair trade is a year-round challenge. Events such as this debate help to raise awareness, and the message seems to be getting across.

It is a pity that Jack McConnell has not stayed to hear my response to the debate, because I want to address a point that he made about fair trade and school tuck shops. I make it clear that there is flexibility in legislation to allow schools to sell products that are not normally allowed, such as fair trade confectionery, including chocolate—Robin Harper alluded to that. The Minister for Children and Early Years, Adam Ingram, wrote to all directors of education on 11 February to highlight the flexibility that exists in regulations to enable schools to achieve a balance between providing for healthy, balanced diets and addressing wider issues, such as support for fair trade. The minister's letter also highlighted the flexibility to ensure that social and cultural activities can be enjoyed and celebrated. Fair trade is about social responsibility in that regard. I hope that members will ensure that people are aware of the minister's letter.

It is important that we recognise the commitments to convert to fair trade that have been made by global companies such as Cadbury, Nestlé, Green and Black's and—recently—Ben and Jerry's. There has been a big shift in recent years. Other large retailers and independent shops around Scotland stock a diverse range of fairly traded products and ensure that there is more choice. Such companies are helping to mainstream fair trade into our daily lives. As a result, the Fairtrade Foundation has confirmed another increase in the value of Fairtrade sales, to almost £800 million in 2009. Two out of three Scots continue to buy the same number of Fairtrade products despite the current economic climate, and 57 per cent of Scots buy Fairtrade products regularly.

That is a good baseline from which to build as we take our country towards fair trade nation status. The programme is gaining momentum and good progress has been made. I am delighted that all of Scotland's six cities are already Fairtrade. A number of universities, schools and local authorities have also achieved Fairtrade status. However, we cannot be complacent; there is still a great deal of work to be done. The Scottish Government is serious about making Scotland a fair trade country and remains committed to driving forward progress to achieve that. I commend the efforts of churches, faith groups,

charities, schools and individuals in promoting the benefits of fair trade. I was particularly interested to hear about the glow fair trade group, which David Whitton mentioned.

I hope that the strong fair trade movement in Scotland continues to flourish. The Scottish Fair Trade Forum has launched its final push campaign, which is about finishing the work that is needed to become a fair trade nation and moving on to the next stage. To achieve the fair trade nation criteria, we must treble the number of Fairtrade towns in Scotland, which is no small task. However, it is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the Scottish Fair Trade Forum that we have reached this point. I look forward to continued collaboration between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Fair Trade Forum. There is great excitement about the challenge of exploring how we can best support each other in the final push. The forum has just produced its call to action and has yet to approach Government, but I encourage it to do so.

It is not simply about raising awareness in Scotland; producers in developing countries are beginning to realise what fair trade can do for them. Fair trade can bring us closer together. Countries such as Malawi, which I visited a few weeks ago, are becoming increasingly engaged. During a visit to the Scotland-Malawi business group I saw for myself producers' hard work and dedication and witnessed the lives that they lead. Many producers live below the poverty line, but there is hope. Malawi produces tea, nuts, sugar and many other products that people in Scotland consume in some quantity.

I was interested in the point that was made about rice. There is an issue to do with procurement in that regard. I was also interested in Robin Harper's points about the health service. Scotland has reached a certain level and status in the context of fair trade, but we must push much harder and ensure that there is depth and range in our activity. I look forward to taking the issues forward.

We have achieved a lot but the fight goes on. I hope that members of the Parliament will continue to support fair trade here and in their constituencies to help to end the poverty that producers face.

The fair trade movement is a campaign for fairness and solidarity. It is a shared responsibility for all global citizens who want the world to be fairer. Fair trade is trade with dignity, meaningful trade and sustainable trade. It is a deal but, as Gil Paterson said, it is a fair deal.

I am delighted to respond to the debate for the Government. I congratulate Bill Butler on bringing the subject to the Parliament for debate. I wish the

cross-party group every success not only for tonight but in a good future campaign to take Scotland and the Parliament to fair trade status.

Meeting closed at 18:10.

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

Published in Edinburgh by APS Group Scotland

All documents are available on
the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.scottish.parliament.uk

For details of documents available to
order in hard copy format, please contact:
APS Scottish Parliament Publications on 0131 629 9941.

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact
Public Information on:

Telephone: 0131 348 5000
Textphone: 0800 092 7100
Email: sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk

e-format available
ISBN

Printed in Scotland by APS Group Scotland
