



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Official Report

# MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 10 March 2010

Session 3

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# Scottish Parliament

## Meeting of the Parliament

*Wednesday 10 March 2010*

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 14:30*]

### Time for Reflection

**The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):** Good afternoon. The first item of business is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader today is Sister Isabel Smyth, an honorary lecturer at the centre for inter-faith studies, Glasgow university, and secretary to the Catholic Bishops Committee for Inter Religious Dialogue.

**Sister Isabel Smyth (Honorary Lecturer, Centre for Inter Faith Studies, Glasgow University and Secretary to the Catholic Bishops Committee for Inter Religious Dialogue):** This week we celebrate international women's day, a day set aside to honour and celebrate the achievements of women. Today I would like to remember a woman whose life has, I think, a message for all of us.

That woman is Stella Reekie, a Church of Scotland deaconess who set up the International Flat in Glasgow and established the first interfaith group in Scotland, the Glasgow Sharing of Faiths.

As a former missionary to Pakistan, Stella worked in the 1950s with the new Scots, who had mostly come from India and Pakistan, helping them to integrate into their new surroundings. She realised how important it was to establish understanding and respect not just between cultures but between different faiths.

Behind her commitment to that work was her wartime experience. She had been present in the first days of the liberation of Belsen and had seen for herself the horror and destruction of human lives that can emerge from philosophies that judge one group to be superior to another or dehumanise people because they are different.

Perhaps the best tribute to Stella was at her funeral, when a Sikh friend said:

"For Christians Stella Reekie was a Christian but she was something more than that. She was above labels. For me, a Sikh, Stella was a Sikh because I could see Sikhism reflecting from her daily life.

To me she was like clear running water. If you pour it into the glass, it takes the shape of the glass. If you pour it into a flask, it takes the shape of the flask. She became the shape of what was needed at any time."

That, I think, is the great lesson that we can learn from this amazing woman. So often we limit ourselves by our labels, whether they be religious,

political, cultural or whatever. Those labels often confine the way that we look at things and prevent us from seeing the truth in other points of view. We can be so hampered by our labels that we are prevented from expressing the values that at heart are our motivation and the source of our commitment. In Scotland we are lucky to have the values that bind us together as a society spelled out on our mace: wisdom, justice, compassion and integrity.

Perhaps we can allow the memory of Stella Reekie to inspire us to work for those values so that we too can respond to the concerns of others and not curtail that by the labels we give ourselves.

## Aquaculture

**The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S3M-5908, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, on aquaculture. We have a little time available during the afternoon, but not much, so I ask members to stick pretty closely to the times that have been allocated.

14:34

**The Minister for Environment (Roseanna Cunningham):** I am glad to be here today to talk about Scotland's thriving and growing aquaculture sector, but before I do that, I had better say sorry to members who were unable to access as far in advance as ought to have been possible the document "Delivering Planning Reform for Aquaculture". I could go into a long, complicated explanation of what happened behind the scenes to create that difficulty, but suffice it to say that it meant that we did not have the appropriate amount of time set aside. The document is, however, only nine pages long, as those who have seen it will have realised, so although the delay was an unfortunate oversight, it was perhaps not fatal for the debate.

I want to offer some thoughts on where the industry is, where it would like to go and how we are trying to help it to get there, not least through the publication of the paper that I mentioned. Scotland's aquaculture sector is a success story. Frankly, I cannot say that often enough. Aquaculture accounts for almost 40 per cent of Scotland's food exports, and the sector's total output is worth about £400 million a year at farm-gate prices. That puts aquaculture pretty much on a par with sea fisheries. I do not think that people realise how significant the aquaculture sector is to Scotland's economy. The bulk of the production is salmon, of which Scotland is the second largest producer in the world and the largest in the European Union, but trout and shellfish are also important, and there are niche species such as halibut, which is reared to great effect in a sustainable way in Gigha.

Much of Scotland's aquaculture production is focused in the west and north of the country and it supports strong remote and rural communities in those areas, so it makes an important contribution to the fabric of our society. It is easy to overlook the huge benefits that aquaculture brings to parts of Scotland that badly need those jobs and that economic development. However, we can sometimes be so focused on local developments that we fail to see them in their wider context. The development of Scottish aquaculture needs to be seen in a global context. Aquaculture is now the world's fastest growing food-producing sector.

Internationally, it has grown at a rate of between 6 per cent and 8 per cent since the millennium. It already accounts for more than half of the fish supply for human consumption.

Two primary factors will contribute to the growing importance of aquaculture for us all. First, the world's population will continue to grow quickly, from 6.8 billion people now to an estimated 9.1 billion by 2050. Secondly, global warming is predicted to lead to water scarcity and a reduction in the world's productive land. We need to use our marine resources more effectively to feed the world's population, and that means through aquaculture. We are aware that Scottish salmon production is benefiting from the worldwide shortage in the supply of salmon that was caused by the collapse of the Chilean industry. That presents our industry with an opportunity to grow, but also to invest in taking the sector to the next stage. I will come to how we are supporting the sector to do that in a way that is designed to avoid the mistakes that were made in Chile.

So where are we going? Demand for our aquaculture produce will continue to rise—that is the big global picture. What possibilities does that hold for Scotland? The Scottish salmon industry tells us that it can grow its value by £150 million in the next five years and create up to 400 new jobs. We are starting to see the fruits of that optimism as new planning applications are being made to local authorities—the rightful place for decisions to be made on such applications. It is that optimism in the industry that so struck me when I came into my job this time last year. Despite the economic recession, I met people in the industry who were hugely optimistic and highly ambitious, notwithstanding the enormous difficulties that were pretty obvious elsewhere. The recent successful application for a fish farm to be operated by Lakeland Marine Farm Ltd at Carradale in Argyll and Bute is just one positive example of the growth that we are beginning to experience and the opportunities that it can offer local communities.

I am also excited by the prospects for growth in the shellfish sector. For that reason, we have commissioned a study of the prospects and opportunities for shellfish farming in Scotland, which will try to quantify the scale of the opportunity and report later this year. Between 2007 and 2008, mussel production in Scotland grew by 22 per cent to almost 6,000 tonnes. In the previous round of European fisheries fund awards in 2009, grants to the mussel sector were signed off that alone should lead to a further increase in production of 1,400 tonnes. People will realise the scale of what we are talking about when they consider the reality of those numbers.

Mussels feed entirely on plankton, and so require no feed from their farmers and no therapeutants to keep them healthy; it seems to be the ideal farming experience. Oysters are similarly environmentally benign and tremendously healthy, and oyster production experienced a 45 per cent growth in 2007-08. The establishment of the national shellfish forum last year indicated the hopes that we have for the sector and my determination that it will thrive.

The trout sector, which produced almost 8,000 tonnes in 2008, is also striving to improve its market position to allow investments in stock improvements to improve fish profitability and returns, and to increase large trout production in Scotland. We support those efforts, and encourage the sector to apply for European fisheries fund support in the south and east of the country with that in mind.

We are supporting the aquaculture industry to achieve its goals. First, I will discuss the "Delivering Planning Reform for Aquaculture" document that was published yesterday morning. The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth, together with me, established the aquaculture planning task force in 2009. That task force, which involved those local authorities that have an active interest in aquaculture development, the industry and the statutory consultees to the planning process for aquaculture, has led to agreement on a number of specific actions that will improve the planning service for aquaculture.

The process supports the retention of the fundamental purpose of the planning system, securing through democratic means development that is consistent with community and local interest. It also delivers tangible benefits to the aquaculture sector through improved efficiency. Those include up-to-date development plans, which provide greater certainty to communities and to industry; improved planning applications and environmental statements from the industry to speed up response times from the public sector; a more streamlined statutory consultation process; greater co-operation between public and private sectors; partnerships between stakeholders to deliver better developments in the right places; and improvements in the openness and transparency of the process.

A key aspect of the process is the roll-out among statutory consultees of the modernised approach of providing prompt, solution-oriented and proportionate advice, and I ask members to support that today.

In addition to "Delivering Planning Reform", work is continuing apace on the six working groups that, as members will recall, were established by "A Fresh Start: The renewed

Strategic Framework for Scottish Aquaculture". Those groups will report to me at the ministerial group on aquaculture on 22 June, but their progress to date has been commendable.

The healthier fish and shellfish group has been tasked with further strengthening the industry's approach to sea lice and disease control, through synchronised production and treatments within management areas of an appropriate size. The group is currently engaged in an intensive period of discussion with the industry and will make its proposals to me in the summer.

The work of the group is critical to ensuring that Scotland retains its comparatively good fish health status intact as it grows, avoiding the boom and bust that has occurred in other countries when production volume has been chased without due regard to the inescapable facts of biology.

The group that is examining improved systems for licensing aquaculture developments is considering issues such as the need to revise the current locational guidelines for fish farms, in light of changes in the levels of nutrients that are discharged from such farms as feeds change. It is also considering how to model the effect of larger fish farms as salmon farmers seek to move into deeper waters with greater dilution of discharges from the sites.

The improved containment group is carrying out incredibly exciting and important work as it develops a Scottish technical standard for fish-farming equipment such as moorings, cages and nets to minimise escapes of fish. The group aims to have that standard in place in 2011. I know that Robin Harper is keen to promote closed containment systems in both freshwater and seawater. I acknowledge the concern of those who worry about a perceived impact on wild fisheries of escapes such as last week's unfortunate escape on the Lochy.

The containment working group is considering the question of closed containment. A focused closed containment sub-group has been established and meets for the first time next week. The membership of the group includes the industry, wild fisheries interests and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency. We should give the group time to carry out its work. We must remember that moving from cage sites to freshwater or seawater tank production would require considerable capital investment and lead to higher on-going costs with an increase in carbon footprint. All those issues must be considered in the round and I expect the closed containment sub-group to do that.

The technical standard for fish farms will cover freshwater production and will perhaps deal with some of Robin Harper's concerns. Therefore, I do

not propose to accept Robin Harper's amendment, although I hope that he accepts that progress is being made.

The better marketing and improved image group is focused on addressing any misconceptions of the industry and on developing a coherent approach to the promotion of healthy Scottish seafood, which for example involves working with schools to ensure that children understand and enjoy our produce.

The improved access to finance group is developing better data sources for information on Scottish aquaculture so that the industry can better present itself as a good prospect to investors. The group will also seek to build links between Scottish and Norwegian investors so that we can share lessons. I probably do not need to add that some of the difficulties that are being experienced throughout industry with accessing finance and getting the banks to come on board are also being experienced by those who are involved in aquaculture. The same issues apply to aquaculture.

I am particularly pleased by the creation of the national shellfish forum, which I mentioned. For the first time, the forum brings together the key players in the shellfish industry and its regulators in a regular conversation on the future of the sector and what we can do to support its sustainable growth. I am keen for the public and private sectors to co-operate to ensure that Scotland benefits as much as possible as the sector develops.

I hope that members have got a sense of my enormous enthusiasm for the industry. There is a huge amount of support. The Government has been expending considerable effort to ensure that what is a vital and growing part of Scotland's economy and industry gets what it needs to continue growing. I fully intend to stay as committed as possible to the very bright future that aquaculture has.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the continued development of an ambitious and sustainable Scottish aquaculture industry; recognises the economic importance of the industry to Scotland as a whole and many coastal communities in particular; notes the considerable work being carried out under the auspices of *A Fresh Start - the renewed Strategic Framework for Scottish Aquaculture*, published on 21 May 2009, and notes the continuing commitment to dialogue on the future of the industry in Scotland.

14:47

**Elaine Murray (Dumfries) (Lab):** This is our third debate on the important topic of aquaculture in less than 18 months. We debated the topic in November 2008 and again in May 2009, on the day that the strategy was launched. On that

occasion, I expressed disappointment that the document was not available until the day of the debate, which meant that members did not have the opportunity to study the strategy or to receive representations from stakeholders. If my memory is correct, Robin Harper did not receive a copy of the strategy before he spoke in the debate. I am therefore disappointed that the document "Delivering Planning Reform for Aquaculture" also appeared at short notice and that there has been little chance to speak to the industry, local authorities or other stakeholders.

I appreciate that people outwith Government are involved in the aquaculture task force, so it might have been their timescales that determined the date of publication. However, it would have been useful to have been able to be briefed in advance by a wider section of interests. The debate could have been scheduled for next week or the following one to give members more time to consider the contents of the document and to receive representations. I suspect that, given the minister's long session at the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee this morning she, too, might have appreciated a different timescale. I appreciate the minister's apology to Parliament on behalf of the Scottish Government. I hope that her colleagues will bear the issue in mind in future.

I turn to the subject of the debate. Since the previous debate on the issue, I have had the opportunity to visit, along with Nanette Milne, freshwater and seawater fish farms in the Fort William area and the Marine Harvest processing plant. That was during the summer recess. I draw members' attention to my voluntary entry in the register of member's interests in connection with that visit, which was extremely useful in improving my knowledge of the industry. Gutted fish is packed in ice and distributed for further processing to companies such as the St James Smokehouse in Annan in my constituency, which is a specialist producer of hand-carved smoked salmon that employs about 20 people, and the Seafood Company, which took over Pinneys of Scotland in the same town and which employs more than 500 people. It is Marks and Spencer's leading supplier of seafood dishes.

I am fortunate in having managed to observe the chain of salmon farming from the introduction of smolts to their new home in a freshwater loch to enjoying the final product.

Two weeks ago we debated Brian Pack's interim report on the future of support for agriculture in Scotland and how we can encourage a vibrant industry that supplies healthy and environmentally sustainable food, produced as locally as possible. Like agriculture, aquaculture contributes to the Scottish economy and sustains employment in remote rural areas. Last week the



Rural Affairs and Environment Committee visited Shetland to take evidence on the Crofting Reform (Scotland) Bill. The employment provided by aquaculture and the oil and gas industry on the island helps to sustain a fairly healthy crofting tradition. In many parts of Scotland, aquaculture is part of the complex mix of activity that retains communities in rural locations. Indeed, although there is not a great deal of aquaculture in my constituency at the moment, downstream processing is a very important contributor to the local economy. Pinneys of Scotland, for example, is probably the largest private sector employer in my constituency.

In common with agriculture, aquaculture supplies healthy food produced here in Scotland. One of the challenges is to ensure that the industry is environmentally sustainable and does not impact adversely on other interests, such as wild fishing, which uses the same locations and is also important to the Scottish economy. In its briefing, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds raised concerns that the planning document seems concerned only with economic growth based on the principles of sustainable development. It is important that reassurance is provided by the Government on that important issue.

I am aware that other groups are considering the issues of animal health, disease control and containment, and that they too will report to the ministerial group, although I am not sure how their work feeds into the work of the aquaculture planning task force. My colleague Richard Simpson will discuss issues of health and disease control. I apologise on Richard Simpson's behalf—he has a school visit that has prevented him from being present at the beginning of the debate.

I am unsure about how the planning framework fits with the ecosystem objectives that must be contained in all marine plans or the duty to create an ecologically coherent network of marine protected areas. Much of the work on the planning framework was undertaken before the Marine (Scotland) Bill was passed and I would therefore like to know what will be done to ensure compatibility with that bill, as amended at stage 3.

Although I am happy to welcome the work that the task force has undertaken on improving planning procedures in relation to aquaculture, I continue to regret that the Scottish Government did not take the opportunity offered by the Marine (Scotland) Bill to include aquaculture in the same marine licensing system as other marine activities.

Page 19 of "A Fresh Start" identified as an issue the simplification of procedures and links with the Marine (Scotland) Bill and Marine Scotland with a desired outcome of having a

"Clear indication of how freshwater and marine aquaculture will be dealt with including maximising opportunities for linkage to other marine industries."

I guess that that is the intention of the document that we are discussing today, but the Scottish Government and the Parliament did not take the opportunity to further achieve that outcome afforded by the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010. I remain of the opinion that the results of our failure to do so will become more apparent with the passage of time and the development of mixed marine applications.

On the contents of the planning document, I note that there is a commitment that the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities will work with the Scottish Government to ensure that planning services within local authorities are adequately resourced to meet the challenges of improving the planning system for aquaculture. Given the pressures that council planning departments already experience, I wonder whether the minister can advise whether additional funding might be allocated to councils for that purpose and whether the matter will be considered in the next spending review.

On pages 6 to 8 of the document a series of actions to be completed by defined dates are listed. All those on page 6 should be complete already. Will the minister advise whether they have all been achieved and, if not, which actions are still outstanding and when they are expected to be completed?

The final paragraph of the document states that progress on specific actions will be reported to the ministerial group on aquaculture through the licensing sub-group on a six-monthly basis. Will the minister advise whether progress will also be reported to Parliament, perhaps through correspondence with the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee or through publication on the Scottish Government website?

We have heard much about undeveloped sites in the past and I was surprised to note that the sub-group on improved systems for licensing aquaculture developments found that the assumptions regarding undeveloped leases on which the strategic framework was developed were incorrect.

The industry data analysis shows limited unused but usable capacity—only 4.4 per cent of farm sites were found to be inactive with potential use and 2.4 per cent were inactive with uncertain potential. Stakeholders had advised that an issue to address was the

"large number of undeveloped leases".

It would now appear that that was a perception, rather than a fact. It is hoped that other misconceptions have not found their way into the

five key themes and that, if they have done so, they are identified and rectified, as that one was.

The Liberal Democrat amendment makes important points about skills and training, which David Whitton will discuss in his speech. The points about protected geographical status are also important. At present, eggs and smolts can be imported from countries with lower environmental and inspection standards and the final product can still be marketed as Scottish farmed salmon. Peter Peacock will develop that theme in his speech. We are happy to support the Liberal Democrat amendment.

The Conservative amendment causes me some concern, because it seems to take a gung-ho approach. It refers to removing barriers to the development and growth of the industry without any mention of sustainability or growth within environmental limits. As it stands, it is not compatible with the sentiments of the Marine (Scotland) Bill, which we passed so recently. I look forward to hearing clarification of that during the debate. Despite my reservations about the lack of reference to environmental factors in John Scott's amendment, we heartily concur with his position on affordable housing.

The Green amendment refers to replacing

"net farming with closed containment systems as soon as possible."

I have discussed that issue with industry representatives, who believe that, at the moment, the energy requirement and the carbon footprint of the technology required to keep cages clean would probably be prohibitive. They also said that in the heavy seas of the north of Scotland the tides are such that sea lice do not proliferate on farmed fish. However, the improved containment subgroup suggests that closed containment might have future potential, to which the minister referred in her speech. Presumably that could involve combined renewables and aquaculture projects. I would welcome the minister's views on any timescale for that to be progressed. Closed containment could provide opportunities for aquaculture in environmentally sensitive locations if the technological problems can be overcome. However, it is premature to demand that freshwater and seawater net farming be replaced by closed containment.

Scotland is now the second-biggest exporter of fresh salmon—which is due in part to the problems of the industry in Chile. However, it is important to encourage consumption in Scotland of this good, healthy, local product. The industry is increasingly important to our economy, but we must also bear in mind that it must not expand at the expense of our environment or other important users of our

fresh and sea waters or to the detriment of other industries that depend on those locations.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss aquaculture again, because it is an important industry in Scotland. We must bear in mind its contribution to health and our food security as well as to the economy. We must always bear in mind the need to develop the industry within safe environmental limits.

I move amendment S3M-5908.2, to leave out from second "notes" to end and insert:

"; also recognises the potential of the industry to increase the availability of healthy, environmentally sustainable, locally-produced food; notes the considerable work being carried out under the auspices of *A Fresh Start - the renewed Strategic Framework for Scottish Aquaculture*, published on 21 May 2009, and notes the continuing commitment to dialogue on the future of the industry in Scotland; regrets, however, the late publication of *Delivering Planning Reform for Aquaculture* on the Scottish Government website on the day before this debate, and urges the Scottish Government, in future, to ensure that sufficient time is allowed between publication of government documents and their debate in Parliament to enable stakeholders and MSPs to adequately consider their contents."

14:58

**John Scott (Ayr) (Con):** I welcome the debate and the much-needed proposals to streamline and improve the efficiency of the planning process. I note at the outset the missed opportunity to do that in the Marine (Scotland) Bill, which we passed recently. However, we are where we are and the reality of the situation is that Scotland's aquaculture industry is one that we can all be hugely proud of, given that it employs some 6,200 people in full and part-time jobs. It is an industry with an enormous future and with the potential to grow massively in coming years, with 400 new jobs in prospect in the near future.

At the moment, Scottish salmon is the best farmed salmon product in the world and represents the major part of our aquaculture industry. Ninety per cent of United Kingdom aquaculture is based in Scotland and our Scottish salmon has attracted the label rouge award from France because of the quality of our product and the high welfare standard to which it is reared.

As you will be aware, Presiding Officer, because of infectious salmon anaemia in Chile, Scotland and Norway have an enormous opportunity to supply a growing world market for farmed fish. That is why the debate is important and timeous.

Scotland's proximity to a growing and undersupplied European market is also an opportunity of which our industry and producers must be able, and must be allowed, to take advantage. Our shellfish industry must be allowed and encouraged to meet the almost insatiable

growth in European demand. That industry now produces almost 7,000 tonnes of mussels a year, and Scottish Conservatives offer it every support.

To maximise that potential, we must identify and seek to remove the barriers to further growth in the industry. One major barrier is the planning and licensing process. As we all know, a single body—the Crown Estate—used to control that process, before responsibility was given to local authorities in 2007. It is fair to say that the transfer of that planning responsibility to local authorities has been less than successful, consistent or widely acclaimed by the fish farming industry. Each local authority that is involved has—willingly or unwillingly—had to develop expertise in that new responsibility, and some authorities have responded more enthusiastically than others.

Consistency throughout Scotland in dealing with planning applications has been lacking and the Government missed a huge opportunity to standardise the approach when it did not give Marine Scotland planning control for aquaculture. Tavish Scott and the Liberal party will bear the responsibility for that mistake in years to come.

**Liam McArthur (Orkney) (LD):** Does John Scott appreciate—as I think that he has acknowledged—that, since 2007, local authorities have invested in the technical expertise to deliver planning? Given that they have garnered that expertise, it would be wrong to remove the responsibility from them, as John Scott and Elaine Murray have suggested.

**John Scott:** I am afraid that the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee did not hear evidence to that effect. I appreciate that Liam McArthur was the only committee member who did not agree to the committee's position, but he must acknowledge that what he says is not the view of the industry—or the view in Orkney and Shetland.

The question today is whether “Delivering Planning Reform for Aquaculture”, which was published yesterday, will suddenly free up the planning and licensing process, which is—the minister should make no mistake about this—a barrier to current and future development.

Under the heading “Delivering Specific Actions” on page 6 is a huge checklist of tasks that are to be undertaken, eight of which are to be done by March 2010.

**Roseanna Cunningham:** As Elaine Murray and John Scott have raised that issue, I confirm that all the actions that were to be undertaken between January and March have been done, so we are absolutely on track.

**John Scott:** I thank the minister for that reply, which pre-empts my next question about whether the Government is on track to meet the March

delivery times. Are the seven objectives that are scheduled to be delivered in April 2010 also on track? Perhaps she could answer that in summing up.

My key point is that the Government needs to address other barriers—the lack of affordable housing in fish farming areas and fish farmers' inability to source suitable staff as a result, which inhibits the growth of those businesses. We all understand the difficulties of providing affordable housing in the peripheral and island areas of northern and western Scotland but, if the minister is serious about growing the industry—as I know that she is—hand wringing alone will not solve the problem. Her Government must find a way of addressing the housing shortage soon.

The industry must put its own house further in order by better containing fish and reducing escapes. I wish the closed containment sub-group every success in its work to protect the environment. Like the common cold, sea lice are likely to remain a problem for the foreseeable future, but that does not mean that further research into treating the problem should not be conducted. Perhaps research institutes such as the Moredun Research Institute could look into that when they develop vaccines to treat parasites in sheep, for example. Who knows? Transferable technology might be available to be built on.

A further growth inhibitor in the industry's development is the apparent inability to raise capital to finance fish farming companies in Scotland and the UK. That is why our very Scottish industry is owned largely by Norwegian companies that are financed by capital that is raised on the Oslo stock exchange. We need venture capitalists, Scottish entrepreneurs, Scottish Enterprise and others to wake up to the huge opportunity that exists here to invest in a growing and sustainable industry that will play a huge part in delivering food security in future.

The output of land-based agriculture will grow only by percentages in the years ahead, but fish farming has the potential to grow in multiples as it moves offshore and as we develop the technology perhaps to create integrated platform structures that combine renewable energy harvesting with harvesting fish from our seas.

Before that happens, we need to free up our planning and licensing system and develop our potential closer to home. In addition, we need to train and encourage more planners to move to planning departments and local authorities in the north and west of Scotland, where the demand for such expertise now lies. We must wait and see whether “Delivering Planning Reform for Aquaculture” delivers what it says on the tin. Like Elaine Murray, I suspect that, this time next year, we will back in the chamber debating the subject

again, as we did this time last year. Conservatives hope that the document will deliver a better, streamlined planning system, but only time will tell.

In the meantime, I will move what is intended to be a constructive amendment that reminds the Government of other barriers that must be recognised and removed, besides those that it has highlighted today. I regret that we cannot support the Labour amendment because, if we do, our amendment will fall automatically, through pre-emption; however, I do not disagree fundamentally with the content of the Labour amendment. We will support the Liberal amendment, but I regret that we will not support Robin Harper's amendment.

I move amendment S3M-5908.4, after "continuing" to leave out to end and insert:

"need to consult with industry stakeholders on the development of the industry in Scotland, and further notes that ways must be found to streamline the planning process and remove barriers to the development and growth of the fish farming industry such as the lack of affordable housing and available sites for fish farms in order to allow the industry to grow to its full potential."

**Elaine Murray:** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Can you confirm that, if our amendment is agreed to, the Conservative amendment will amend the motion as amended by our amendment and that the amendments are not incompatible? The wording is similar.

**The Presiding Officer:** I am fairly certain that Mr Scott is correct and that your amendment pre-empted his; that is the judgment that we made last night. We will check the point and I will make a final announcement at decision time.

15:06

**Liam McArthur (Orkney) (LD):** Whatever challenges Scottish aquaculture faces, a lack of exposure to the gentle probing of largely consensual parliamentary debate is surely not one of them. Like other members, I find myself the veteran of three exchanges on aquaculture in the past 18 months. Notwithstanding the importance of the sector, all of us might find more variety in our future parliamentary diet beneficial. Having spent a morning together going over the issue of crofting, we might also achieve consensus on the less than ideal timing of the debate, to which Elaine Murray referred.

I welcome and accept the minister's apology for the delay in publishing the planning reform document, although lodging a motion that fails to mention the document is perhaps a little forgetful. Nevertheless, we have no difficulty supporting the motion. Elaine Murray's amendment makes a number of good points that I would support, but not at the expense of allowing Parliament to put on record the issue of affordable housing, to which

John Scott's amendment refers. Clarification on the issue of pre-emption would be helpful. I am disinclined to support Robin Harper's amendment, largely for the reasons that Elaine Murray and the minister set out.

I echo the comments of the minister and others on the quality, breadth and value of the sector. The importance of aquaculture to Scotland is without question and goes beyond pounds and pence. In its various forms, it has helped to sustain economies and communities in some of the most remote parts of the country, including the islands that I represent.

The timing of the debate is perhaps even more unfortunate because it comes the day after the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change unilaterally decided to change the timetabling arrangements for ferry services to the northern isles. Without any consultation with key users, including aquaculture businesses in Orkney and Shetland, decisions appear to have been taken to bring forward departures and to lengthen travel times. The week-round shipping of farmed fish and shellfish from the isles is time critical. In Shetland, such shipping amounts to more than 47,000 tonnes per annum; in Orkney, the figure is almost 7,000 tonnes. Apart from the potential impact on other sectors of our island economy, taking such a risk with the profitability—perhaps even the viability—of such a large part of Scotland's overall aquaculture production without consultation seems utter madness.

After all, Scotland's industry has developed an impressive foothold and an enviable reputation in the global marketplace. Our fin fish and shellfish command a premium price, and demand from existing as well as new markets appears to be strong. At the debate in May last year, I highlighted the formidable presence of the Scottish sector at the European seafood exposition in Brussels. At that stage, opportunities in the middle east had been identified, as well as in the US, due to the effects of ISA on the Chilean industry. It would be helpful if the minister could update Parliament on whether that demand remains strong and, if so, on what is being done by officials in Scottish Development International to identify and develop those and other market opportunities.

An important part of the exercise involves brand and marketing. I noted with interest comments that were recently attributed to the cabinet secretary, suggesting that his appetite is growing for mandatory country-of-origin labelling through European food information regulations. As he pointed out, country-of-origin labelling

"can help provide ... consumers with greater clarity and guidance about the food they buy and strengthen Scotland's reputation as a land of food and drink."

The message from Mr Lochhead seems to be “European legislation the sooner the better”. However, as the minister will not need reminding, it is not as simple as slapping a saltire on a pack of salmon and demanding that the Scottish shopper do their patriotic duty—I note that Aileen Campbell’s saltire points scheme appears to have been quietly dumped in cold storage. For any such labelling to be meaningful, it needs to rest on demonstrable quality standards. Any dilution of that risks undermining the reputation and value of the brand.

It is all the more strange that SNP ministers appear to be reluctant—to date—to offer a view on any proposed change to protected geographical indication status for Scottish farmed salmon. Quick to denounce their UK counterparts over their negotiating position with Europe on country-of-origin labelling, Scottish ministers appear very reluctant to make clear their position on possible modifications to PGI status whereby smolts could be brought into Scotland to be sold later as Scottish salmon.

I fully appreciate that that is an issue on which people in the industry have different views. Given the economics of the industry, I can well understand why the case is being made for altering PGI regulations. All the arguments require to be weighed up before decisions are taken, and ministers cannot and must not pretend that the Scottish Government is merely a mailbox for onward communication to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs—and then to the European Commission.

Underlying all that is the fact that the value of the Scottish product in the marketplace relies implicitly on the highest welfare and environmental standards being maintained. As in other parts of the food and drink sector, although the quality of our natural environment gives us a competitive advantage, the quality of our product depends on industry doing the right things with and in that environment.

In that regard, the industry’s code of good practice is very welcome. Also welcome is the Government’s renewed strategic framework, which builds on what Mike Russell described as the “strong foundations” that were laid by the previous Executive.

With Parliament’s passing of the Marine (Scotland) Bill earlier this year, we have an opportunity to develop this vital industry in the context of marine spatial planning. Despite Tory and Labour reservations, I remain convinced that Parliament was right to reject attempts to centralise the planning function for aquaculture and to leave in charge local councils, many of which had invested heavily in building up a wealth of local knowledge and technical expertise. That

issue having been settled by the Parliament—not just Scottish Liberal Democrats—it would be helpful, even at this early stage, if the minister could indicate what impact she expects the legislation to have on the siting of existing and, perhaps more important, future fish farms.

As for the practical implications of the proposals that were announced in the document that was published yesterday, it would be helpful if the minister could outline how she will ensure that they can be implemented without in any way eroding the safeguards that fundamentally protect the reputation and long-term profitability of the industry.

I turn now to a theme that I have raised in each of the previous debates on aquaculture: skills and training. It is self-evident that, given the standards to which we want the industry to aspire, we must retain and attract skilled workers. Small to medium-sized enterprises must be supported in creating genuine career opportunities and structures. Qualifications are critically important for both those aims.

In the Highlands and Islands, where the workforce is generally older, training providers and aquaculture companies are worried about the impact that removing skills funding for over-20s might have on efforts to improve and extend the skills base. Often, distance learning and work-based courses deliver real value. I therefore urge the minister to reconsider that specific matter, as well as the wider issue of skills and training, as reflected in my amendment.

The quality of our natural environment, the skills of our workforce and the reputation of the product that the workforce produces give cause for real optimism that Scotland’s success in the sector can be maintained and enhanced in the future. I have pleasure in moving the amendment in my name and I encourage Parliament to support it.

I move amendment S3M-5908.3, after “particular” to insert:

“; calls on the Scottish Government to clarify what action it is taking to develop and retain a skilled and qualified workforce in the sector; supports industry calls for greater clarity about the food consumers buy through country of origin labelling, and invites ministers to make clear their intentions regarding any moves to amend protected geographical status for Scottish farmed salmon;”

15:14

**Robin Harper (Lothians) (Green):** Aquaculture represents the fastest growing food production system in the world, as we have heard from several members. That is why we must continue to debate how the planning system operates.

There seems to be a fixed view that the planning system is a barrier to development. I

regard the planning system quite differently; it is there to protect the environment from total destruction. If we had unlimited aquaculture development throughout Scotland we would go down the route that Chile went down. The placing of an unnaturally large number of farmed fish into a body of water inevitably causes serious problems, as we have seen. Chile and Norway learned the lesson the hard way and lost a massive number of farmed fish to disease and parasite attack. The Norwegians have high standards in aquaculture, and I hope that their system will survive.

The industry in Scotland has not been immune to disease and lice. The most frustrating aspect of the issue is that the risks can be avoided. We should be aiming for responsible, environmentally sustainable aquaculture that has a negligible impact on wild fish populations, marine habitats and water quality. The siting of farms is of fundamental importance, and I will vote for the amendment in Elaine Murray's name at decision time.

It is unfortunate—that is the mildest term that I can use—that “Delivering Planning Reform for Aquaculture” was published on the Government's website only yesterday. The document is not—by its nature, I suppose—closely aligned with the Marine (Scotland) Bill, and relevant stakeholders do not seem to have been consulted. The document is entirely focused on growth—and just growth, not sustainable growth, growth within environmental limits or growth that is sensitive to the carrying capacity of our fragile marine environment. I hope that ministers will address my fears about the nature of growth in the industry, which are shared by organisations such as RSPB Scotland.

**John Scott:** Given that “Delivering Planning Reform for Aquaculture” is not well aligned with the Marine (Scotland) Bill, which the Parliament passed recently, and with the benefit of hindsight, does Robin Harper wish that he had supported the amendment to the bill in the name of Elaine Murray that would have given control of planning to Marine Scotland, to deliver the objectives that he and I seek?

**Robin Harper:** I reserve comment on that, but I acknowledge that Mr Scott has made a point.

We must limit escapes and disease. I have long advocated that the simplest and most effective way to do that is to adopt closed containment systems, for which I call in the amendment in my name. I have discussed the issue with the minister and industry representatives. The technology is still at research and development stage, but it offers huge potential for the industry and needs further support, through finance and Government policy. We must move towards the adoption of the

technology as soon as possible. I cannot understand members' reactions to the amendment in my name, which simply calls on the Parliament to urge the Government to do something that is patently a good thing, as I will show.

An area on which we can and must move now is the containment of smolts. We cannot allow the continued rearing of smolts in open net-pens in freshwater systems, where migratory native fish are present. The practice is unsustainable. It is banned in Norway and it is frowned on by most scientists. The Norwegians cannot believe that we still allow it. Only in the past couple of weeks there was yet another massive escape from smolt pens, when about 100,000 fish escaped straight into Loch Lochy. Scientific research is now starting to prove what fishery managers have long known: not only is there a huge risk to the gene pool of native salmon from escapes but there is a serious risk of interference with the migratory behaviour of native sea trout. Wild fish around the cages grow much larger and fatter than they do elsewhere, due to the easy pickings of pellets, and can reach a staggering 7.3kg, compared with an average of a little more than 0.5kg. The availability of food also has a significant impact on the migratory behaviour of trout. Fish that would normally have gone to sea simply think, “Why bother?”

There is also the issue of all the waste products from 61 million farmed fish, which go straight into the lochs. At the closed containment sea farm in Hardangerfjorden, the solid waste is collected and pumped ashore, so that it can be treated like any other sewage. In Scotland, all that stuff merrily cascades into freshwater and sea lochs 24/7. Terrestrial farmers are not allowed to let the run-off from their slurry tanks leak into water, but that, in effect, is what we allow the fish farmers to do.

I will give an example of a company that is doing well with raising its smolts in cages on land. I met representatives of Landcatch recently and was fascinated by its set-up, which is powered by its own, home-produced hydroelectricity. It manages to power its own site and feed back to the grid. I cannot understand the objections that John Scott and the minister have raised about increases in carbon and the impact on the atmosphere from the extra energy that would be required to run closed containment systems in our lochs, given the future availability, on which we are already working, of tidal, wave and—particularly up and down the west coast of Scotland—wind power. How can we possibly think that it could be anything other than an advantage for fish farms to use a little bit of extra electrical energy that is generated sustainably right on their doorsteps rather than taken off the grid? I grant that energy taken off the grid is unsustainable at present because so much of it comes from coal.

Landcatch is also extremely passionate about the labelling of Scottish salmon, and in that regard I will support Liam McArthur's amendment. Salmon that spend but a few months of their lives in Scotland should not benefit from the premium that comes from being labelled Scottish. Scottish salmon should be born, bred, dead and—if we all want to be healthy—ett in Scotland.

**Roseanna Cunningham:** And exported.

**Robin Harper:** Yes, and exported. I got carried away there by the possibility of another bit of rhyming slang. However, as much as possible, we should eat Scottish salmon in Scotland.

The consumer wants salmon that are born, bred and dead in Scotland, and we should not allow them to be deceived into buying a sub-standard product simply in order to benefit a few large-scale foreign companies.

I could not speak in an aquaculture debate without again raising sea lice. We have roughly 85,000 wild salmon and sea trout in the areas where salmon farming takes place, compared with around 61 million farmed fish. Closed containment systems will work to prevent the spread of sea lice.

I am running out of time, so I shall stop there. I will take the liberty of mentioning a couple of other things in my closing speech.

I move amendment S3M-5908.1, to insert at end:

“, and urges the Scottish Government to phase out the rearing of smolt in freshwater open net-pens in systems that contain native migratory fish and replace both fresh and sea water net farming with closed containment systems as soon as possible.”

15:22

**Maureen Watt (North East Scotland) (SNP):**

The minister is obviously keen to impress on us how important aquaculture is to Scotland's lucrative food and drink sector. As other members have said, this is the third time that we are debating the topic in 18 months, which is a sign of how highly the Government regards the sector. It is keen for all members and for the wider Scottish public to know that.

Scotland has a key place in the global aquaculture market, as the minister said. Aquaculture is hugely important as an export industry—it is worth hundreds of millions of pounds to our economy. Scotland is now the second-largest producer of farmed salmon, largely because of the collapse of the Chilean market. As a result, it is obviously the largest producer of farmed salmon in the EU. That is perhaps another reason why Scottish ministers need to lead on fisheries at the top table in the EU.

However, the Norwegians still enjoy the vast share of the global market. Unrelated to the debate and not knowing that it was coming up, I read an article on how important aquaculture and sea fisheries are regarded in Norway. The importance of fish is embedded in the psyche of the Norwegians—not only their politicians but the public at large. I am sure that as long as Scotland is thirled to Westminster, fish will not enjoy the same importance in the UK. As long as Scotland is peripheral, fisheries will be peripheral, but it is important to recognise that fish are highly important to Scotland and the rest of the UK.

In 1992, Scottish farmed salmon was the first product outside France to be awarded the prestigious label rouge mark—a testament to its quality and status as a premium product. Indeed, despite the harsh economic conditions, sales of label rouge Scottish salmon grew by 19 per cent in 2009 to reach a record level of 7,251 tonnes. Such expansion is important and welcome, but it must go hand in hand with maintaining quality because a reputation for quality will be a key part of our aquaculture sector's future success if it is to continue to grow.

Like Robin Harper, I have had people raise with me issues about protected geographical indication status. PGI status is an important designation that protects Scottish salmon in the same way as, for example, champagne is protected by the requirement that the product comes from a particular region of France. Does the minister agree that it is important that salmon eggs and smolts originate in Scotland in order to ensure that our PGI status is protected? For example, cattle must be born, bred, slaughtered and dressed in Scotland in order to qualify for labelling as Scotch beef. That issue warrants further consideration if we are to maintain Scotland's reputation for high-quality salmon, so I would welcome the minister's thoughts on that in her closing remarks.

A key part of the reputation for quality that Scottish salmon enjoys is due to the efforts that have been made to keep our farmed salmon sector as free as possible from infectious salmon anaemia. The ISA virus has recently had a severe impact on the industry in Chile, as has happened in other countries in previous years. The renewed strategic framework that was published in 2009 clearly recognises the need for continuing efforts to maintain high standards of biosecurity. Although last year's outbreaks of ISA in Shetland were cause for concern, I welcome the fact that they were effectively contained. The severe outbreak of ISA in Chile is a tragedy for the industry in that country—production is not forecast to return to previous levels until 2015—but, nevertheless, the outbreak in that country has created an opportunity for Scottish aquaculture.

As members of all parties will surely agree, aquaculture is an industry that is ideally placed for expansion and for a larger share of the international market. In our previous debate on the topic, in May 2009, the obstacles to such growth were clearly identified as a perceived lack of sites available for expansion and difficulties in accessing finance. Although the continuing economic situation will have done little to help to increase access to sources of finance, yesterday's publication of proposals to streamline the planning process will indeed be welcome news for the sector.

Expansion in the aquaculture sector is very much welcome, and I am glad that the Scottish Government is making significant efforts to encourage it. Such expansion is not at odds with ambitions to ensure that aquaculture in Scotland is the cleanest and greenest in the world. The value of the product that is produced here lies in its quality, which can only be increased by ensuring that best practice is maintained and marketed.

As the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee went round our coastal and remote communities, taking evidence on the Marine (Scotland) Bill—which has now been passed—and, more recently, on the Crofting Reform (Scotland) Bill, we saw that aquaculture is one of the most important businesses for families living in our coastal communities. Aquaculture can also provide an additional source of income for crofters, so its importance to those areas cannot be underestimated.

I believe that Scottish aquaculture has a bright future ahead of it and, with the right encouragement, significant opportunities for expansion. Scottish aquaculture's reputation and the value of its brand lie in its quality, so I welcome the work that is being done to ensure that quality fundamentally remains at the core of this valuable industry.

15:29

**Peter Peacock (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):**

As others have said, the salmon and shellfish industry brings huge economic benefits to the whole of Scotland, and not least to the Highlands and Islands, which I help to represent. As Maureen Watt has just said, in travelling around Shetland and the Uists recently—and in Argyll in earlier visits for a previous bill—the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee has seen how important the industry is in sustaining jobs in those areas. If we add to that the processing jobs in more urbanised areas, the overall benefit is immense. In my time in politics in the Highlands and Islands, fish farming has meant that we have had to reopen schools in remote rural areas in order to sustain the population. In previous

generations, the community infrastructure, which includes post offices, rural transport and so on, had been threatened.

The aquaculture industry is highly significant for Scotland—it supports more than 6,000 jobs and is a major exporter—and is, as I said, particularly important for the Highlands and Islands. As the minister and others have said, the industry is doing extremely well, at present. It has full order books, there is growing demand for its products and there is great optimism about its future. That is partly due to the collapse of the industry in Chile, which has meant that there is, in the marketplace, more demand than supply. That represents an economic opportunity for Scotland. However, Chile will recover from its present position. That will take two or three years, after which the normal market challenges that face the industry will return. There is a window of opportunity for the Scottish industry to expand its market and to turn the disaster that the Chilean industry has experienced to our advantage.

**John Scott:** The opportunity is far greater than that, in that we will be able to establish a market for our high-quality product. If, in the meantime, the Chileans' market is taken up by Scottish and Norwegian product, the Chileans will have to come up to that standard, and it will take them much longer than two or three years to do so.

**Peter Peacock:** I quite agree. I will come on to quality in a moment.

The Chilean situation is instructive: it demonstrates that aquaculture is an international industry, with Scotland, Norway and Chile being the three biggest producers in the world. It also demonstrates that there is interdependence and interaction between those marketplaces. It is instructive to think about how the disease got to Chile. The fact that it is believed that it came from Norway reveals that there are international movements of fish eggs and smolts. It would be interesting if the minister could say a bit more about the implications of that for Scotland, and any lessons that we have learned.

That takes me on to the Norwegian dimension. The Norwegians are big players in Norway, obviously—it is their industry—and in Chile and Scotland. The industry in Scotland is now mostly owned by Norwegian companies. The independents that started off the industry here have largely gone and there are few Scottish companies in existence.

Norway's relationship with Scotland is important and interesting. The Norwegians employ a lot of people in Scotland because of the companies that they own. We should be grateful that that is the case, but they benefit from the reputation of Scottish salmon. As others have said, it is a



premium product that attracts a premium price because of its recognised quality. Norway and Chile are the big-volume producers. It can be argued that Scotland will never produce such volumes, so we need to maintain our quality niche. However, as John Scott said, there is still scope for our industry to grow. The downturn in Chile is undoubtedly an opportunity in that regard.

It is worth noting that production in Norway has grown by well over 200 per cent since 2002, whereas production in Scotland has remained largely static. That means that much of the investment by the Norwegians is going into Norway, even though they own many Scottish companies. It also implies that much research and development, downstream activity and expertise are based in Norway rather than in Scotland. Similarly, much egg and smolt production takes place in Norway, where we know that there are lower standards on provenance, traceability and health. If more research and development, and more egg and smolt production took place in Scotland, there would be more jobs and we would have a stronger ability to monitor quality in our country.

As John Scott rightly said, quality is the key for Scotland. As Maureen Watt mentioned, label rouge accreditation is vital, as is PGI status in the European Union. Liam McArthur touched on the fact that PGI status protects quality. We must be extremely robust about that in the future. As Maureen Watt also said, the Scots know how to produce, label and market quality food—look at what we do with beef and lamb. As Robin Harper said, it is all “born, bred and dead” in Scotland. That is part of the process of maintaining quality. Our ambition should be to have standards for Scottish salmon that are no lower. Ministers must consider the PGI consultation extremely thoroughly. That is important to all of us in the Parliament and to the whole industry, so I urge ministers to engage with all parties in the chamber about the PGI consultation, using the usual channels. Getting the PGI criteria right might signal the maintaining of our quality standard and, potentially, more jobs coming to Scotland.

The salmon and shellfish industry engaged thoroughly with members on the recent Marine (Scotland) Bill, which demonstrates that it is a professional industry that seeks to be responsible. It has made significant progress on standards of husbandry, pest control, and disease control, although there are continuing problems with lice. However, mistakes of real consequence still happen. In Lochaber last month, the newspapers reported that something like 150,000 smolts had been released by mistake, which has potential implications for the genetic depletion of wild stocks. There was real anger, dismay and bewilderment in the angling community and on

river boards that such mistakes can still happen. The industry needs to take such incidents much more seriously and it must do more and be more robust about containment. New procedures need to be put in place. I was glad to hear what the minister said about the containment sub-group that is considering those issues. I hope that she will, when she sums up, comment on the timing of that.

As I have said, the industry is important and it is vital that we keep our focus on the quality of Scottish production. I hope that the minister will take a close interest in it in the coming months.

15:36

**Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands)**  
(Con): I refer members to my fishery interests as recorded in the members' register of interests.

We all accept that it is difficult to overstate the economic importance of the industry—especially to my region of the Highlands and Islands—and its interconnected social importance to the communities that are sustained by its jobs. That is especially true in our most remote rural and island communities in the Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland, where many economies are very fragile.

Scottish salmon production, from the fish egg to the finished product, smoked or fresh, has earned a reputation for exceptional quality, which of course attracts a premium. However, we must remember that Scotland produces only 10 per cent of the world's farmed salmon, so we must strive to keep that distinction at all costs. In that respect, I was worried by Maureen Watt's remarks about PGIs. I understand that the Scottish Government will launch a consultation to discuss a possible amendment, and it is incredibly important that the Scottish Government get it right so that the industry can maintain its reputation and label of excellence.

It has been estimated that in areas of the Highlands such as Lewis and Harris, the Uists, Skye and Lochaber, for every £1 that is paid to employees in the sector, a further £4.58 is generated in the local economy, and that 70 per cent of all employees live within 10 miles of their place of work, which makes John Scott's point about housing so important. That demonstrates the importance of the industry. However—I always seek to make this important point in aquaculture debates—wild river and loch fisheries for trout, sea trout and salmon are also important and significant in respect of the image and reputation of Scotland and the Scottish tourist industry. The Scottish Government must therefore strive for successful co-existence between fin-fish farming and the wild fisheries industry.

The issue of escapes of farmed salmon and rainbow trout—big fish and little fish—remains of real concern to many of my constituents in the wild fisheries sector. Despite the efforts of the fish-farming sector, it seems that there are new escapes every other week. I agree with Robin Harper's sentiments on the issue, but not with what he said about closed containment. Surely it should be possible for farmers to check their nets more often and they should be heavily penalised if escapes occur due to negligence.

I also echo colleagues who have today mentioned the critical issue of sea lice. Site fallowing is crucial in that regard. Can the minister tell me what is the protocol for fallowing salmon or rainbow trout sites in fresh water as opposed to sea water?

In a previous debate on aquaculture, I mentioned halibut farming, which is being pioneered by three farms in Argyll, including Kames Fish Farming Ltd near Oban. Will the minister say whether any progress has been made following my question about setting up the relevant border control inspection at a Scottish airport in order to allow young halibut stock to be imported directly into Scotland rather than into London or Manchester? My constituents believe that that would greatly benefit Scottish businesses, that it would improve the welfare of the young fish in transportation and that it would boost survival rates.

The farmed shellfish industry is also very important in my region. One must remember that shellfish farms produce less waste and detritus than their equivalent fin-fish farms. Sustainable co-operation with wild fisheries, which I mentioned earlier and which is so important, can be achieved through good husbandry and a code of good practice, which most fin-fish farms now follow. It is extremely unfortunate that a few still cut corners—it was bad husbandry, after all, that led to the outbreaks of diseases including ISA in Chile, which ironically have given the Scottish industry more opportunities for outlets that, as John Scott said, the Scottish Government must encourage. Our Highland Scottish waters have a reputation for cleanliness and purity that elevates the image of Scottish farmed salmon worldwide and allows shellfish to be farmed, and wild shellfish to be harvested, without pollution risks.

I was delighted to hear the minister extolling shellfish farming at last. It is a growing element of aquaculture in which Scotland is already a world leader and can be more so. I pay tribute to my constituents Walter Speirs and Janice McGhee of Loch Etive's Muckairn Mussels Ltd. Established in 1985, this excellent business has increased production substantially and now produces more

than 200 tonnes of mussels per year, largely for the wholesale market.

I am also pleased to note that the Crown Estate has reduced rents for Scottish shellfish producers by an average of 15 per cent from January 2010. In addition, new leases will be for a more attractive period of 25 rather than 15 years. I therefore put in a word for the Crown Estate, whose Scottish team has increased its efficiency and improved its image in Scotland, certainly with business operators. I congratulate it on a metamorphosis since devolution that has led to a transformation in its working with Scottish businesses.

Lastly, I am aware that the aquaculture industry—Marine Harvest, for example—sponsors events and sports such as shinty in my region. As spokesman on sport for my party, I thank the companies for their on-going support. Their sponsorship is highly important to Highland communities.

Given the importance of aquaculture to Scotland, it is right that we debate it regularly in Parliament. There are many challenges ahead, but there are also real opportunities, which we must help the industry to grasp. I support the amendment in John Scott's name.

15:42

**Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP):** Others have rightly said how important an industry aquaculture is to Scotland as a whole, but I had not considered how important it is to shinty, too.

It is worth commenting that, in the Western Isles, aquaculture provides much of the population with a source of income. It supports about 350 full-time-equivalent jobs on dozens of farm sites in the islands, and the industry has an annual production income of around £60 million.

As other members have mentioned, Scotland accounts for 90 per cent of the United Kingdom's farmed fish—to which figure the Western Isles makes a significant contribution—and is one of the largest producers of farmed salmon in the world. Most of the fish farms in the Western Isles that contribute so valuably to the local economy are involved in farming salmon, although there are also cockle, mussel and scallop farms. Vital as fish farming jobs are to coastal communities such as my own, the real prize in additional employment comes with the related processing work.

I am sorry to say that, for the moment, the number of farmed fish processing jobs in the Western Isles has declined with the closure of the Lighthouse Caledonia Ltd factory at Marybank in Lewis a year ago. I will not lightly forget the unhappy experience of meeting the workforce

there on the days when activity in the plant was grinding to a halt.

With the loss of well over a hundred jobs directly and many more indirectly, the closure was a huge blow for a small island economy, but there are now hopes once more that the Western Isles will in the near future reap at least some of the employment potential from fish farming. There are increasingly hopeful signs of the creation of a new Lighthouse Caledonia fish processing factory at Arnish in Lewis, as well as for major fish farming programmes by other companies in Barra. There is little doubt that those schemes have the potential to be of significant economic importance to the Western Isles. I am sure that other members will make similar points about their constituencies.

Salmon farming represents 95 per cent of the Scottish aquaculture industry. Exports have increased enormously in the past 20 years and the sector is now worth £200 million to the Scottish economy. Many people in remote areas such as the one that I represent rely on the industry and, according to a Scottish Government multiplier, their wages represent a value of around £165 million to the Scottish economy, and more income is retained in the economy by fish farming than is retained by the majority of other sectors in the Scottish economy, perhaps because of the remote location of much of the employment. However, it is perhaps globally that the figures are most daunting. Around the world, fish farming accounts for half of people's seafood consumption—a huge increase from only 9 per cent in 1980.

Impressive as those statistics are, there is a recognition on the part of all stakeholders that growth must be sustainable, to use an overused phrase.

One of the previous Administration's last acts, which received unanimous support in Parliament, was the Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2007. It sought to ensure that the development of aquaculture took place in the context of increased inspection and enforcement in order to ensure that adequate measures are in place to deal with problems including parasites. The Scottish Government is now seeking to build on that act by developing its principles further through the proposals in "A Fresh Start: The renewed Strategic Framework for Scottish Aquaculture". The themes that were identified by respondents during the consultation on the document were not surprising: sea lice, escapes and licensing. What is perhaps new is the willingness to tackle issues in respect of the planning system. As has been publicised in the past few days, the Scottish Government wants to reform the planning system in aquaculture to allow for a much more streamlined aquaculture planning process and to

attract further investment by improving on decision making.

Undoubtedly there is a growing global demand for what Scottish aquaculture produces. There is also recognition that in the face of significant competition from other countries, Scottish farmed salmon must continue to trade on its justified image of good quality and environmental standards. The proposed changes to the planning system should be seen in that light: they will make much clearer what is required by way of information to support a planning application.

After some debate on this point, the Parliament recently passed the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, which makes it clear that planning matters in this area should be in the hands of local authorities. I hope that we will also now have a planning system that is more streamlined and which achieves a more transparent relationship between the role of public bodies that make recommendations and the interests of the public. The Government's approach on that has received broad backing from the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation and the Association of Scottish Shellfish Growers. I believe that what is being put forward is a reasoned set of proposals that will ensure a long-term future for the industry. The measures will secure for aquaculture more protection against disease and parasites. Equally important is that the measures acknowledge the needs of the wider environment to be protected from escapes and pollution. The willingness of all who are involved to engage in reconciling those objectives and to come forward with plans that make sense for this vitally important sector of my local economy, and the economy of Scotland, is to be welcomed warmly.

15:48

**Dr Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** I apologise for not being here for the opening speeches, but I was on a school visit. I will not make a habit of missing the opening speeches of debates.

Before I speak, I should declare an interest, in that I still hold an honorary professorship at University of Stirling, which has a significant aquaculture department.

I will not talk about containment and planning, as other members have already covered those issues. I want to talk about disease, protected geographical indication status and some academic aspects.

As others have said, Scotland's aquaculture industry is vital to us. Although we provide only 10 per cent of the world's supply at present and, as Peter Peacock said, that figure has been static for the past decade, salmon nevertheless accounts

for 40 per cent of our food exports, and the quality mark means that we have a niche in the market, which should be sustained on the basis of quality. Quality will be determined by how we tackle a number of issues that I will address.

The sea-lice problem has been mentioned; it remains a major problem in salmon farming the world over. I wonder whether, in the light of Professor Randolph Richards's update to the ministerial group, we now have regular data on sea-lice induced mortality rates and whether those data are collected, collated and regularly published. I also wonder whether we are totally comfortable with the protocols on use of chemicals—in particular, repeated use and occasional use at levels beyond the prescribed levels, because clearly that is still the main way in which sea lice are tackled.

I want to address an issue that has not been referred to by other members—bacterial kidney infection. I understand that this is a corynebacterium. It is acid-fast on staining, rather like the tuberculosis bacillus, and is—rather like TB in cows—endemic in wild fish and is vertically transmitted. All those facts are important, because if we do not maintain high standards of disease control and inspection in respect of the condition, we are liable to have problems. Norway has recently upgraded its disease control and attack on bacterial kidney infection. We are still at the same level as Northern Ireland, which is a significant source of eggs and smolts for us.

**Jamie McGrigor:** It has already been stated that most of the Scottish industry belongs to Norwegian enterprises. Is the member suggesting that different things are being done in Norway, compared with what is being allowed in Scotland?

**Dr Richard Simpson:** The question is whether we maintain the current controls, upgrade them or downgrade them. I suggest that we apply the same rigorous conditions to our eggs that are applied in Norway. As I understand it, that is not occurring at present. The information that I have is that the effect of not increasing our requirements with regard to eggs is that our export of eggs and smolts will end, because we will not be able to export to countries that have a higher grade of requirement in respect of disease control. I am not an expert in this area, but I am obviously interested from the medical angle. I ask the minister whether, in her summing up, she can give us some information on the matter.

In respect of disease control, I commend the company that is based in Alloa—although I understand that it may not be there for much longer—that I was involved in trying to protect and promote in the first session of Parliament, and which uses DNA analysis and tagging to improve both the resistance of the brood stock and rapidity

of growth. By having faster growth and faster harvesting, fewer chemicals are required, so the whole system is improved. That company has obviously done an excellent job using new technology.

On protected geographical indicator status, I understand that the current consultation and debate is on the potential for downgrading the status, which was upgraded a year ago. That would not be appropriate. If we are going to maintain the brand quality and our niche status, we must maintain the PGI status. If we get to a situation in which juveniles can be imported, spend less than half their life in Scotland and still be given the Scottish brand, someone will twig that that is not the Scottish brand. I understand—John Scott and others will tell me if I am not right—that there was an issue about whether beef and lamb that was brought here for fattening could have the Scottish brand on it. The animals now have to be born and bred in Scotland. It is important that we allow the importation of eggs, but not of smolts or juveniles.

Finally, I turn briefly to the academic side. We have a number of academic departments in Scotland, including at the University of Stirling, with which I have been associated; at Heriot-Watt University, which works with disease control; at the University of Aberdeen, which has done considerable work on immunology; and, of course, there is the Marine Scotland laboratory. I ask the minister to say in her summing up a few words about the research network forum. I understand that it is helping quite a lot to develop a network of research in Scotland, which is important in maintaining the quality of our brand, tackling disease control and maintaining the niche market, which is vital to our exports

15:55

**Jim Hume (South of Scotland) (LD):** There is a long tradition of fish farming in Scotland. The past few decades have seen tremendous growth in the industry and I believe that it has the potential for a long and prosperous future. Scotland produces about 90 per cent of the UK's farmed fish and shellfish and receives about £340 million per annum from aquaculture. In fact, aquaculture represents 50 per cent of the value of Scotland's food exports. We know that world consumption is set to increase, so we must ensure that Scotland is in a position to gain from that increased demand. We are in a strong position to do that because we have a good climate for aquaculture. As Maureen Watt said, aquaculture in Scotland is the cleanest and greenest in the world. That helps with the quality and health of the fish, which in turn has helped us to become world renowned for high quality.

Freshwater trout represent a key industry for inland Scotland. I can think of many good examples of trout production in the South of Scotland, not just for normal consumption but for stocking sporting pools: leisure fishing is one of the most popular hobbies in the country. An example is the specialist Yarrow Fishery, which was nearly washed away during the floods in November but which, thankfully, was saved. The risk of flooding is a hazard for many a freshwater fish farm.

It is not just the Highlands and Islands, which Peter Peacock and Jamie McGrigor mentioned, in which aquaculture is important. As I said, it is also important in the South of Scotland, from the aptly named Musselburgh down to Eyemouth, and on the Ayrshire and Solway coasts in the west. Research has shown that 13,000 tonnes of oysters and 19,000 tonnes of mussels could be farmed on the Solway in the future. Work by local authorities, such as Scottish Borders Council, and the Scottish sustainable marine environment initiative has meant that councils have the expertise and are in a prime position to help the industry with planning and other matters. That was helped by the recent Lib Dem amendment to the Marine (Scotland) Bill, which stopped the Labour and Tory supported proposal to centralise such decisions. I know that John Scott will not agree, given his previous comments, but that proposal had the potential to throw the baby—or should I say the smolts?—out with the bath water.

When the minister sums up, I would be interested to hear what training initiatives the Government is funding in order to encourage growth in aquaculture, because we Liberal Democrats recognise that training is essential if Scotland is to retain its lead in fish farming. I hope that the minister is listening. Shellfish and salmon lead the way and dominate the aquaculture market in Scotland, so we need to focus on the development of skills in those sectors. The Scottish salmon brand is well known throughout the world. We need to develop and retain people for long-term careers in fish farming.

Both Jamie McGrigor and the minister mentioned containment. That is important. We do not want a repeat of the disasters that occurred when crayfish were released into Loch Ken and the Ettrick Water in the south of Scotland. I would also be interested to hear what the Scottish Government has to say about SEPA's charges in relation to fish farming, which are often cited to me as being high, onerous and a barrier to the growth and perhaps even the survival of fish farms.

As I said, aquaculture is important to my region and to Scotland as a whole. The Liberal Democrats have recognised that for a long time. After all, it was back in 2003 when Ross Finnie

launched the first strategic framework for Scottish aquaculture. There are opportunities for growth and some diversification in the industry, but we need to encourage new entrants through training programmes. I hope that the minister will discuss that when she sums up. I look forward to Scotland leading the way with the further growth of a healthy, wealthy fish farming industry.

15:59

**Dave Thompson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** I agree that our aquaculture industry is vital for many of our most vulnerable local communities. However, the experience of other countries shows us how easily such a vital industry can collapse if regulation fails.

Aquaculture provides and supports thousands of jobs in areas where other sources of employment are difficult to provide without devastating the very thing that makes such areas special—their unblemished environment. The importance of the environment to this vital rural industry cannot be overstated, as the unspoilt quality of the waters in which fish are reared is one of the reasons why this produce from Scotland is hailed internationally as among the finest to be found anywhere on earth.

Today, the picture for the aquaculture industry looks rosy, but we must be aware that it can be more vulnerable than most to the dangers of disregarding the needs of the environment. We need only look, as has been mentioned, as far as Chile, where the volume of fish that is produced today stands at just a fifth of the level that was reared in 2008 when the country was the world's second largest producer of farmed salmon.

Chile's catastrophic collapse in production, which led to thousands of job losses, followed a headlong dash to maximise production by cutting the length of time for which waters were left fallow to recover from the stresses of being used for the intensive rearing of fish. That is why the Scottish Government's strategy as laid out in "A Fresh Start", which aims to ensure that Scotland's industry remains healthy, is to be commended. Although some in the industry may grumble about supervision of their affairs by civil servants far away, monitoring is vital if we are to avoid the consequences of an unchecked rush to crop as many fish as possible from our waters.

Another key threat to the industry is the spread of sea lice. Praise is due to those at the marine centre in Scalloway in Shetland, who have recognised the potential of using wrasse, which eat sea lice, as a biological solution to their spread, and who have researched the commercial farming of that interesting fish. Fortunately, funding for the development of such an important

new pest control method is available from the European Union fisheries fund, so that promising new species may shortly be reared on a commercial scale in Scotland.

The use of that native species as a cleaner fish to control in an environmentally sound manner one of the most problematic hazards to threaten the industry may help to lift the reputation of Scottish aquaculture still higher, as it would allow fish farmers to reduce their reliance on the artificial pest control compounds that are provided by pharmacological and chemical companies.

The use of wrasse as a form of biological pest control is already well established in Norway, where the fish is to be found, kept in cages with the crop fish, at almost a third of fish farms. However, that most environmental of solutions has so far been adopted by less than five per cent of the sites in Scotland. Nevertheless, that development in pest control, coupled with the opening of the North American market that was previously served by Chile, has added to the bright future that is predicted for Scotland's aquaculture industry. Indeed, I am told that that hopeful perception appears to be making it easier for the industry to convince lenders to provide the funds that are needed to continue the sector's responsible growth and to encourage further research into new developments. If that is the case, it is to be welcomed.

Increasingly, aquaculture will be viewed as a stable long-term prospect that is well equipped to grow to meet the world's increasing food demands. Scotland is already the largest producer of farmed salmon in the European Union, and is second only to Norway in the world since Chile's industry was decimated by the problems that I mentioned.

Such a promising future has given Aquascot Ltd in Alness in the Highlands, which is one of the industry's main players, the confidence to embark on an exciting new future as a wholly employee-owned business with a new forward-thinking management and ownership structure for which the founders are to be commended. Aquascot directly employs 135 staff and provides work for a further 400 people in stakeholder businesses throughout the Highlands and Islands, including farming supply partners, hauliers, feed manufacturers, vets and mechanics. That multimillion pound firm has already begun the process of transferring its ownership completely to a trust whose sole beneficiaries are the staff, on a model that is used by firms such as the John Lewis Partnership. That will ensure that ownership and control continue to remain close to the community that relies on the firm for economic activity and employment. The staff will earn a partnership bonus—a form of dividend when the

firm is in profit—thereby ensuring that all staff are focused on maximising profits.

With such firms at the forefront in Scotland, it is surely time that Scotland's aquaculture industry came to be one of the country's most celebrated food sectors. The industry has developed into one of the main employers in some of our most fragile and remote communities around the fringes of the country as well as in towns such as Alness. That is why we must unite to ensure that it continues to prosper.

16:05

**David Whitton (Strathkelvin and Bearsden)**  
**(Lab):** It is always a pleasure to follow Mr Thompson, even if this morning it was watching his back disappear into the distance in the sport relief MSPs mile. I welcome the opportunity to take part in the debate. Although my constituency of Strathkelvin and Bearsden has more agriculture than aquaculture, the element of skill shortages and what to do about training the future workforce is common to both industries. Only this morning, I read in *The Scotsman* that Scotland has overtaken Chile as the world's second-biggest exporter of fresh salmon, which other members have mentioned. We have heard about the value of the industry to our economy and we all recognise the important contribution that aquaculture makes in rural areas, where it sustains vital employment, as Mr Thompson mentioned.

I support the Labour amendment on the importance of the sector. I welcome the fact that the industry has the potential to grow. However, that growth can be sustainable only if training and skills become a priority. From reading various Government publications, including "A Fresh Start: The renewed Strategic Framework for Scottish Aquaculture" and "Delivering Planning Reform for Aquaculture", I cannot help but notice the glaring omission of any substantial reference to skills training for the workforce. That is particularly unfortunate when, as the minister said, a further 400 job opportunities are expected to be created in the next five years.

I might sound like a broken record, but skills improvement and training are vital to all industries in Scotland, not just aquaculture. In 2003, Labour member Allan Wilson, the then Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development, in his introduction to "A Strategic Framework for Scottish Aquaculture" urged improvements to skills development and learning. That is imperative to ensure a well-equipped aquaculture workforce and competitive industry. To quote Mr Wilson from 2003:

"Overall, the level of skill needed by aquaculture workers is expected to increase. Employers have identified skills gaps among their staff, with job-specific skills, communication and problem-solving heading the list."

That is not only Allan Wilson's view. Lantra, the sector skills council for environmental and land-based industries, found through its labour skills foresight survey of aquaculture that the qualification level of staff is fairly low, with 29 per cent of those interviewed holding no formal qualifications at all and only 50 per cent having undergone some form of training in the previous 12 months.

A 2008 survey of training needs in the Scottish salmon industry that was undertaken by the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation and Lantra also found glaring skills gaps throughout the sector. The data included findings from 11 of the largest companies in the Scottish salmon industry, representing 85 per cent of the farmed salmon tonnage in the United Kingdom. Gaps in essential skills were identified, for example in literacy, numeracy, communication and customer relations. Specific skills gaps in fish husbandry, computing, management, finance and health and safety also need to be addressed. Fish husbandry is particularly relevant, given that, as we have heard, one main reason why we have overtaken Chile is the disease problem there.

To upskill the aquaculture industry, which is reported as one of the world's fastest-growing food-producing sectors, flexible work-based education and training provision is required, especially if we want to attract new people into the sector. It is heartening to hear from Willie Fergusson, Lantra's national director for Scotland, that it has identified 12 key strands for workforce development based on improving business performance, developing and recognising the skills of the workforce, and raising the quality of entrants to the sector. I accept that the industry needs to work hard to attract new entrants and retain current staff. As Mr Scott mentioned in his speech, in some cases site remoteness and access to affordable housing can hinder progress. However, I agree with Lantra that the provision of clear progression and development opportunities would be a step in the right direction.

Aquaculture is labour intensive, and requires staff for boat work and processing. Training and work-based learning can increase staff motivation, confidence and proficiency. From fish farm owners to marine operatives, flexible bite-sized learning opportunities that reflect industry needs surely have to be promoted. The key themes of "A Fresh Start"—healthier fish and shellfish, licensing, improved containment, marketing and access to finance—are important, but when you cannot find trained staff to crew the boats or rear the fish, it is all a wee bit academic.

The improved containment sub-group report from 24 November last year—which was supported by the industry, suppliers and SEPA to name a few—identified the lack of recognised aquaculture qualifications, the lack of trained site staff, and escapes due to human error as priorities that needed to be tackled by the industry. If containment is such a priority, Clare Backman from Marine Harvest Canada has the best advice. She said:

"The single factor that maintains a low frequency of escapes is employee training."

In Norway, the implementation of NYTEK regulations—an industry standard for fish farming installations—changed people's perspective. As Petter Arnesen from Marine Harvest Norway said:

"The general feeling is that Nytek lifted the awareness around escapes and amongst other things forced farm managements to improve training of personnel."

Again, it all comes back to training and skills. Changes in regulations and legislation and the increased use of technology will increase the importance of demonstrating competence across the industry. Choice and quality in learning and development are required to ensure that it matches the needs of the employer and employee in size, style, timing and location. That will undoubtedly lead to an improvement in productivity. However, if we cannot upskill and develop our workforce, we could be left behind. Technology could soon take over the role of traditional jobs, such as processing and grading, so we need to ensure that our modern workforce can be utilised. Currently in aquaculture there is only a modern apprenticeship at level 3, so I welcome the announcement by Lantra that it is introducing a level 2 qualification. The demand is evident and it will be funded through the skillseekers budget.

I finish on a positive note: I congratulate the industry on the great news about exports. Let us also ensure that the development of skills and training in the industry becomes another world leader.

16:12

**Ian McKee (Lothians) (SNP):** I note the earlier remarks about the number of aquaculture debates that we have had in this Parliament. I must confess to being an aquaculture virgin. I hope that the hardy regulars do not mind my joining in. My party must have felt that the debate needed a new infusion of blood to keep it fresh, or perhaps there was some other reason that I do not know.

The Scottish Government's aim to increase sustainable economic growth in remote and rural communities in the Highlands and Islands through the development of aquaculture has been

welcomed across the board by the aquaculture industry and Highland communities. As has been pointed out, aquaculture is one of the most important food sectors in Scotland and produces healthy and nutritious seafood to the value of more than £400 million a year, which is second only to beef, at £467 million a year. Considerable investment has been made in various parts of the industry, which will have a positive impact on jobs and growth. The Government's vision for aquaculture has never been clearer. Scotland must become a more competitive country in which to do business, and aquaculture needs to be at the centre of that competition.

I will focus my speech on three aspects. The first is the crucial need to market our products as quality products in order to compete internationally. Secondly, I will highlight the need for Scottish fish to be a healthy product before it can be sold as a healthy food. Finally, I will speak about sustainability in any planned growth of the industry.

Scottish farmed salmon is renowned worldwide for its high quality, as we have already heard. The First Minister recently recognised the important role of salmon in Scotland's exports. More than 13 million fresh Scottish salmon were exported in 2009—an increase of 24 per cent compared to 2008—according to the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation. Fresh salmon is now exported to 55 countries worldwide. The EU is the industry's biggest export market—France, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Spain and Ireland are notable importers. Salmon exports account for more than 55 per cent of Scotland's total food exports.

The excellence of Scottish salmon gives us a commercial advantage domestically and internationally. However, more work needs to be done in the food industry and other areas of aquaculture to achieve and maintain top status. The Government has made it clear that the food and drink industry is a key economic sector for development. There is a target to increase the value of the sector from £7.5 billion to £12.5 billion by 2017. We are well aware that the Scottish aquaculture industry faces considerable competition from other EU and non-EU countries. Only by promoting the positive aspects of Scottish quality will our industry be able to compete globally. Marketing is one of the five key objectives of the Government's strategic framework for aquaculture.

It would not be an aquaculture debate if we did not analyse the health issues involved. The first is the health of the products and the need for a robust disease and parasite control strategy. The second is the health benefits of eating fish, particularly oily fish and shellfish. Aquaculture has

a fundamental challenge: to maintain and develop production standards while fulfilling all its environmental responsibilities. Scotland's fish health status compares well with that of other countries that farm the same species. The industry has a long history of research on managing and controlling sea lice on farms.

Growth can bring problems. For example, salmon farm cages need to be carefully sited and they need a regular throughput of water so that excrement and waste food do not collect below the cage but are dispersed, so that disease is avoided—until further measures such as Mr Harper has suggested are brought in. Many ideal areas for cages have already been identified and cages are situated in them. Will the new sites that are developed be adequate for that purpose?

The cages need to be strong enough to resist intrusion by seals or storm damage. Care must be taken that fish are gutted and bled well away from the cages. Could cages that are situated further away in our sea lochs than they are now be a hazard to shipping or our tourism industry? Those factors need to be taken into account.

The importance of preventing disease can be well illustrated by the fate of Chile, where the introduction of infectious salmon anaemia, whether by imported salmon and eggs or poor husbandry, has decimated the industry. We must not let that happen in Scotland by relaxing too much our tight planning regulations. Scotland is currently involved in a programme of scientific projects that are designed to improve the production of cleaner fish and to help farmers understand how best to limit sea lice movement between areas. The Scottish Government's memorandum of understanding with Norway, which allows for significant investment in collaborative research into sea lice and other fish health matters, has been largely welcomed by the industry.

Finally, there is the importance of keeping in Scotland the research to which my colleague Richard Simpson alluded. The industry comprises mainly Norwegian companies, but we have a tremendous record of research on aquaculture in Scotland, which can not only benefit aquaculture in Scotland but, in years to come, improve aquaculture throughout the world. That will maintain Scotland's international record. We must not let that important resource slip through our fingers and disappear to Norway or elsewhere.

Aquaculture is a nationally important industry, which is why it must rise to the challenge of foreign competition and move on from being better to being best. I support the Government motion.



16:19

**Robin Harper:** The debate has been interesting. I will respond to one or two points that members made before making my final comments.

I will support the Liberal amendment. Salmon should definitely be bred, fed and dead in Scotland, but just some of them should be ett, of course. Salmon is an important export.

Dr Richard Simpson talked about disease. The great advantage of a closed system is that the treatment of disease is quick and needs minimal chemicals, especially in comparison with treating fish in an open system. Preline—the company from Norway whose work I will cite—had a minor malfunction in testing its system that meant that some sea lice got in, but the company took half an hour to get rid of them with a small amount of chemicals. The company just closed things down, put in the chemicals, let them do their work and started everything up again.

John Scott made a point about licensing. Removing the responsibilities that local authorities assumed would have been a little previous. However, if local authorities fail to protect the environment and to live up to the expectations on them to protect wild river interests, it will be a future Government's duty to consider removing the responsibilities from local authorities and giving them to the only alternative—Marine Scotland.

David Thompson talked about using wrasse, which I mentioned in an aquaculture debate in the Parliament 10 years ago. At that time, the industry's response was that obtaining a variety of wrasse that would survive in Scottish waters was difficult. However, it is clear that some progress is being made. The Government should give that attention, because such soft options in cages—which will be around for a while—will be good for the future.

I propose moving towards a low-maintenance system that removes the seal problem—because seals cannot get into it—and which has no lice and no ISA. The results from Preline in the short time that it has used its system are that the fish become bigger and fatter and are just as healthy as are fish in open systems. Other closed systems are being tried elsewhere in the world.

I urge the Government to consider introducing closed systems as soon as possible. I get the picture that the other parties are not disposed to urge the Government to do that, but the point will be raised for discussion again. When such systems show themselves to be not just good environmentally, but even better for profitability than is the old-fashioned way—as I am sure they will in the near future—companies will start to adopt them. At that point, we should give them every encouragement that we can.

Some small attention has been paid to research that is being conducted. It is important that the Government is more encouraging of the marine research that is taking place. Exciting developments are happening across the board. I am familiar with the research at Dunstaffnage near Oban into symbiosis, in which seaweed, shellfish and caged fish are grown and researchers see how they react with one another to produce better results all round.

I will mention sea lice again. In Norway, some areas still struggle with sea lice. The Government there is running low trigger levels for live treatments and has said that it will order compulsory harvest or clear farms in areas where the treatment has not worked. We seem to have the lice problem under control here for the time being, but I fear that that is as much through luck as good practice. I urge the minister to make clear what contingency plans the Government has in place to deal with sea lice if they get out of control. Will the Government follow the Norwegian example?

We should abandon the practice of raising smolts in freshwater pens containing native migratory fish. Recirculating aquaculture system technology is used in Norway, Denmark and Canada. If we are to be world leaders in the industry—an aim that all members have and to which many have given voice—we must not have smolt net-pens in places such as Loch Shin, Loch Ness and Loch Lochy. Scotland has a superb opportunity to lead the world in that respect, by working with companies that have developed closed containment systems of fish farming. We need to focus on quality as much as quantity—perhaps in preference to quantity—and to stop trying to beat nature at her own game.

16:25

**Liam McArthur:** Like Robin Harper, I believe that this has been a useful and interesting debate. We do not appear to have suffered from overexposure to the issue. By and large, members have succeeded in being consistent without being repetitive. That may be due in no small part to the contributions of aquaculture virgins such as Ian McKee. I particularly appreciated his comments on the health benefits of the fish, to which he was one of the few speakers to allude. I am not entirely sure that those benefits would be the same if we were force fed the entire output of Scotland's aquaculture sector, as Robin Harper seemed to suggest before he clarified the point.

Robin Harper highlighted a number of the risks that the sector faces. No member doubts the seriousness of those risks, but any response to them needs to be proportionate. What Robin Harper suggests may be slightly disproportionate;

rather than simply urging the Government to introduce closed containment systems, his amendment calls for the phasing out of open net-pens. I am sure that the issue will remain live, but the amendment goes further than the chamber is comfortable with at the moment.

Like other members, Maureen Watt drew the chamber's attention to the sector's success, including the attainment of the acclaimed label rouge mark of quality. The figures that she quoted for the sector's growth were impressive, and she highlighted the market opportunities worldwide that remain strong, despite the current economic difficulties. I was, therefore, not sure why we were then treated to the stump speech about the seating plan at the top table. None of the messages that have come through from the industry in the briefings that I have received for any of the aquaculture debates in which I have participated suggest that independence would convey any benefits to it. I am sure that the Scottish ministers will and should take a leading role in discussions on issues such as the minimum import price and, possibly, PGI status.

When Peter Peacock got to his feet, John Scott and I observed that the blinds were raised and the sunlight was allowed to cascade into the chamber. I am not entirely sure whether that was in some way symbolic, but I have observed that ministers have been keen to fête Peter Peacock for his thoughtful and considered contributions; today offered a further example of that genre. As the member pointed out, in light of the collapse of the industry in Chile following the ISA outbreak there, investment has been directed largely towards the industry in Norway. There are implications for output, but Peter Peacock was right to point to some of the serious concerns relating to research and development, especially in the longer term.

Jamie McGrigor focused his remarks on the quality of the Scottish product and on the economic and, more particularly, social contributions that the aquaculture sector makes in the parts of the country that he and I represent. I am confident that he has secured himself a place in the executive box at the Camanachd cup final this year. However, I acknowledge Jim Hume's point that the industry is not confined to the Highlands and Islands; the south of Scotland also has an important part to play.

Jamie McGrigor raised the issue of escapes. All members acknowledge that there have been improvements in recent years, but escapes are clearly a risk that can never be taken lightly. Every proportionate precaution should be taken to bear down on that risk.

Alasdair Allan, who is normally such a cheery chap, was right to sound a more sombre note. He acknowledged, as we all should, the challenging

environment in which the industry operates. It has not been a story of rise and rise. Job losses in communities such as those that he represents can have a significant impact.

Richard Simpson noted that 40 per cent of our food exports derive from the aquaculture sector. The reason for that is the quality of the product, which depends on addressing a range of issues in future, including escapes and lice. Richard Simpson mentioned bacterial kidney disease and its impact on our ability to export eggs and smolts in future. That appeared to be a hospital pass for the minister and I will leave her to deal with it in her winding-up speech.

In the spirit of hospital passes, I encourage the minister to make representations in the strongest possible terms to Stewart Stevenson to ensure that the views of the aquaculture industry in Shetland and Orkney—as well as of other stakeholders in the northern isles—are taken fully into account before any decisions are made regarding changes to the lifeline ferry services to those communities.

David Whitton spoke with authority about skills and training needs, which are mentioned in my amendment. As he said, the debate dates back to the first framework that was developed by the previous Executive. The evidence from Lantra is interesting, and not simply in an academic sense—some of the issues around escapes and so on can be addressed through better skills. Mr Whitton made that point very well.

Scottish farmed salmon is an iconic brand. That high-quality product commands a premium in the marketplace of somewhere between 20 and 25 per cent. We cannot compete on the basis of high volume and low price, but must target a niche market. Consumers expect transparency about the origin and provenance of salmon and that must be guaranteed so that authenticity and quality are in no way diluted. Consumers have that confidence at present, but care must be taken in attempting to support the continued sustainable growth of our world-class aquaculture industry. We must recognise that the first rule of Government is to do no harm. I believe that the minister is alive to the risk, and I encourage her to continue to work with the industry, with MSPs from across the chamber and with all those who share a real ambition for the future of the sector.

16:32

**Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con):**

This has been another useful and interesting debate on aquaculture. It has allowed members to take stock of the industry and the progress that has been made since the publication last year of

"A Fresh Start: the renewed Strategic Framework for Scottish Aquaculture".

There is general agreement that aquaculture is important for Scotland and that the farmed fish and shellfish industries need to grow. As they do so, they need to be sustainable, market led and profitable, promoting best practice and social benefits while respecting the environment. That is an ambitious target, but it is achievable if everyone who is committed to the prosperity of the fish farming sector works together in pursuit of it.

The Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation states in its briefing for the debate:

"Salmon farming is a major player in Scotland's food industry, producing for both the home market and for export to over 50 countries. It makes a significant contribution to the Scottish economy, and in particular to the fabric of rural communities".

As the global demand for seafood has increased, the aquaculture industry has grown to supply that demand. The proportion of farmed fish consumed has increased from 9 per cent in 1980 to more than 50 per cent of total consumption. Exports of Scottish farmed salmon have increased by 500 per cent over the past 20 years and it is now Scotland's leading food export, worth £200 million according to the SSPO.

Salmon farming represents 95 per cent of the Scottish aquaculture industry but, as we know, halibut, trout, char and cod are also important to the industry and there is enormous potential for developing the Scottish shellfish industry, particularly the production of mussels, as the minister detailed in her opening speech.

With demand continuing to grow, and given the problems that are being experienced in Chile, there is clearly increasing market potential for Scottish farmed salmon, which is regarded as a high-quality product across the world. As several members have said, it is recognised in France, under the label rouge, and in the EU through PGI accreditation. Although some issues in that regard were raised ahead of and during the debate, I, like Jamie McGrigor, hope that the Government will get it right for the Scottish industry during the forthcoming PGI consultation.

The industry needs to expand if it is to cope with demand. Scottish salmon farmers have committed to sustainable growth of 3 to 5 per cent per year during the next five years. Such growth must be accompanied by respect for the environment and high regard for the health of the fish that are produced. During my visit with Elaine Murray last summer to one of Marine Harvest's fish farms and processing plants—the visit is mentioned in the voluntary section in my entry in the register of members' interests—I was struck by people's clear commitment to monitoring and ensuring the

health of the fish that they produce, at all stages of development.

The need for vigilance and for research into the prevention and control of disease is well recognised by the industry, and the need for secure containment is of extreme concern to the people who work in the industry, because incidents such as the recent loss of smolts into Loch Lochy cause not only financial loss for the industry, but well-justified friction with wild fishing interests. The current review of the code of good practice and the on-going research and development programme are welcome and important.

Significant barriers to fish farm development have been identified, as John Scott said. The industry depends on workers who live locally and the lack of affordable housing in many of the remoter parts of Scotland is a serious issue that needs to be addressed. The licensing and planning systems have made it problematic for new fish farm developments to gain approval, so the Government's newly published document, "Delivering Planning Reform for Aquaculture", is welcome. The intention is to streamline procedures, clarify what information is necessary to support planning applications and encourage co-operation between stakeholders in planning fish farm development. I hope that the approach will result in the restructuring and rationalisation of existing farm sites and the development of new locations that the SSPO regards as necessary if we are to meet the industry's expansion goals and the Scottish Government's stated economic intentions. However, environmental non-governmental organisations have expressed concern about proposed industry growth. The Government and the industry will have to work with NGOs to ensure that future development is sustainable.

Scottish Conservatives are strong supporters of the aquaculture industry in Scotland. The industry is a success story for Scotland and deserves credit for promoting worldwide recognition of a high-quality Scottish food product and creating jobs that make a vital contribution to sustaining some of our most fragile rural communities. It is important that Government promotes the industry nationally and internationally and tackles barriers to its expansion, while ensuring that the environment is protected in some of our most iconic and scenic tourist areas. It is also important that our world-renowned salmon angling sector is protected from contamination from escaped farmed fish. Efforts must be redoubled to limit escapes and improve traceability when they occur.

If there is due vigilance and careful planning, the planned expansion of the aquaculture industry will secure Scotland's place as a market leader in

quality farmed fish production and will contribute significantly to Scotland's future prosperity and the sustainability of many of our most remote and fragile communities.

We do not intend to support the Labour or Green amendments, but we will support the Liberal Democrat amendment, although we think that it could have been better worded.

16:38

**Sarah Boyack (Edinburgh Central) (Lab):** In her opening speech, the minister highlighted the local and global significance of aquaculture. Aquaculture is hugely important to Scotland in the context of the jobs and income that it brings to our rural communities. It is also part of the global food production agenda.

It was important that we did not talk only about aquaculture. Some of Jamie McGrigor's suggestions about mussels, oysters and shellfish in general were important. When we consider the key objectives for growing our aquaculture industry, the need for a fantastic marine environment must be at the heart of the process. That is why the Labour amendment would strengthen the Scottish National Party motion by adding a reference to

"healthy, environmentally sustainable, locally-produced food".

We also wanted to highlight the need for more notice of documents that the Parliament discusses. As Elaine Murray said, in that regard our amendment is partly a shot across the Government's bows in general; we did not want to highlight Roseanna Cunningham specifically. If we are to have an open and accessible Parliament, not just members but people outwith the Parliament need time to read documents, so that they can get involved and give us their views.

There is an issue with the fact that the new legislative framework that we set out in the Marine (Scotland) Bill is not reflected in the documents that are before us. It might have been better to take slightly more time over some of those documents to ensure that not only the ethos of the bill—healthy seas being the starting point—but the suggested joined-up decision-making processes, which are fundamental to aquaculture's success, were brought into the debate more effectively.

We would have liked to hear more about the new provisions in the bill and the lessons that need to be learned from the experience in Chile, which almost every speaker mentioned. It was a catastrophic experience for the Chileans but it gives us an economic opportunity. However, unless we properly learn the lessons of that experience, we are not making the most of that opportunity. The minister made a brief reference to

the matter in her opening remarks, but it would be helpful if, in her closing speech, she talked a bit more about the lessons that have been learned.

Peter Peacock and Liam McArthur focused on protected geographical status. The minister needs to reflect on the many comments that they and other members made on that. The message from us all is that we are keen that she clarify the Scottish Government's intentions. We are all keen to support the aquaculture industry, which is why we are keen for the issue to be addressed effectively and properly. I think that Peter Peacock suggested that the minister conduct a briefing with members across the parties, which might be a good way to move forward.

One issue that has emerged not only in the Liberal Democrat amendment but in speeches from members from all parties is training. We clearly need trained and skilled staff. Aquaculture provides quality jobs in some of our smallest rural communities and, if we are to see anything like the expansion of 400 jobs that the minister talked about in her opening remarks, we need to know who will train those people and ensure that we continue to upskill workers who are already in the industry.

Training is linked to local planning, which we regard as crucial. When we look in depth at the framework in "Delivering Planning Reform for Aquaculture", we see the new demands that will be placed on local authorities. That brings us back to the points that Elaine Murray and John Scott made. The Labour Party did not support the centralisation of the decision-making process but felt that, for some local authorities, aquaculture planning is a tall order. I am not suggesting that it would be a tough issue for the Orkney Islands Council, which probably deals with the issue so regularly that it would be one of the authorities to which such responsibility should be handed back. However, there is a problem with expertise across the range of issues that local authorities will have to deal with under the framework. That is an issue for the delivery of an effective development planning framework in which we get the right decisions.

Let us examine what the document suggests. Development plans will need to be kept up to date. Anyone who knows anything about development plans knows that that does not happen overnight. It also suggests that aquaculture should be addressed in the local authority main issues reports.

**Liam McArthur:** Will the member give way?

**Sarah Boyack:** We will probably rehear the debate, but I give way briefly.

**Liam McArthur:** Sarah Boyack will remember that the bill does not preclude councils handing

back responsibility for licensing to Marine Scotland. Those that feel snowed under or incapable of delivering the framework are perfectly at liberty to hand that responsibility back.

**Sarah Boyack:** It is harder for a council to admit that it is struggling than to volunteer to take on the responsibility in the first place. A lot of time is wasted in that process.

Apart from what “Delivering Planning Reform for Aquaculture” says about development plans and main issues reports, it suggests that there should be aquaculture framework plans and multisectoral coastal plans to provide an effective policy basis. That is an awful lot of work for a small number of authorities to tackle when they have a huge number of other challenges on the go at the same time. The document also says that we need those plans in place

“where a wide range of competing interests”

exists. I cannot think of anywhere in Scotland where there will not be competing interests in aquaculture decisions.

Under the document, agencies will provide

“map-based advice on potential opportunities for aquaculture development.”

That will not happen instantly. Scottish Natural Heritage guidance on aquaculture and the landscape is due in spring next year and, once development plans are approved, agencies will support their implementation. I note that SNH will provide no more staff, but COSLA is now required to

“work with the Scottish Government to ensure that planning services within local authorities are adequately resourced”.

Huge pressure will be put on local authorities to deliver that framework in practice. We will find out in future the problem with our new system.

Given the new marine legislation that has recently been passed, we need to focus on delivering an effective network of coherent, well-managed marine protected areas that can co-exist with the development of new aquaculture opportunities. With the scale of development that is taking place in the aquaculture industry, the need for a joined-up approach is self-evident. As colleagues have mentioned, such a significant expansion needs to be sustainable. That means that we need support for independent accreditation of performance to ensure that quality is reinforced. We also need further action on escapees—that is not a new problem—on which, given their impact on wild stocks, urgent action is needed. Although I agree with everyone else in the chamber that Robin Harper’s amendment is too prescriptive at this time, I concur with the general sense that we need to see improved

practice. I would like to hear the minister reflect on that point in her closing remarks.

Other issues that we need to get right for the future include that of PGI status and that of the health of our fish, which was raised by several members. Robin Harper, Maureen Watt, Jamie McGrigor and Richard Simpson all made telling points about the need to ensure that the best research is translated into the best practice as soon as possible. Richard Simpson and Robin Harper in particular made some very interesting points about on-going research, on which I will be interested to hear the minister’s comments—especially on Richard Simpson’s comments about eggs and smolts.

One of the best conclusions to be drawn in today’s debate was by Alasdair Allan. I do not often praise him, so he should probably be worried at this point—

**Roseanna Cunningham:** He is in shock.

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney):** Perhaps Sarah Boyack should praise him more frequently.

**Sarah Boyack:** When he rises to the occasion, I will do that, cabinet secretary.

Alasdair Allan’s point that higher environmental standards and efforts to tackle disease need to go hand in hand was very well made and, I think, summed up the feeling of all members in the chamber. The key to future growth in the aquaculture industry is quality.

One issue that has not been mentioned today, which I hope the minister will still address, is RSPB Scotland’s point about the need for sustainable feed for fish. That issue seems fundamental, although it was not mentioned by colleagues.

A quality industry needs well-trained staff and a quality decision-making process that can make decisions swiftly. We need trained staff in our local authorities so that they are confident enough to make swift decisions. When staff are not confident, they do things a lot more slowly, which is not good for the industry. We need effective decisions but also good decisions. We need a quality environment that is capable of sustaining what we all think is an opportunity for rapid growth in the industry, particularly in the salmon sector. At the end of the day, it is all about having a quality product. Everyone has agreed that that is absolutely crucial and we need to market it effectively.

16:48

**Roseanna Cunningham:** I am somewhat surprised that some members believe that three

aquaculture debates within 14 months is too many. Such is my enthusiasm for the industry that, frankly, I do not think that three is enough. I would have thought that everyone would be extremely keen to celebrate the industry's success. The fact that a variety of issues has been highlighted today that I do not recall having been raised in previous debates suggests, as Liam McArthur hinted, that we may well have been justified in moving to a third debate.

I will not be drawn into reopening the planning debate that took place during consideration of the Marine (Scotland) Bill, but I hope that members will accept that the commitment shown in what was a joint ministerial initiative—let me say at this point that I am glad to welcome my colleague John Swinney, who has just joined us in the chamber for this debate—is a commitment to the future of our aquaculture industry. Elaine Murray and Sarah Boyack should be aware that that initiative was also about helping to build planning capacity in local authorities. Indeed, COSLA was fully involved as a key stakeholder all the way through the process. Like Liam McArthur, I believe that our local authorities will show themselves to be resilient in dealing with the issue.

Elaine Murray made one or two comments right at the start of the debate that I want to respond to because they also touch on other issues that have arisen. The issue of environmental sustainability is fundamental to the industry. That is why the phrase appears something like three times on page 1 of “Delivering Planning Reform for Aquaculture”. The fact is that we have acknowledged that point and put it up there. This industry of all industries knows perfectly well that environmental sustainability is vital to its future success. It has absolutely no vested interest in not achieving the goal of environmental sustainability, because it will suffer if it does not. The situation in Chile is a stark reminder of what happens if people get it wrong. Although that situation presents an opportunity that I hope and fully expect the Scottish industry will exploit to the full, it serves as a constant reminder of why going down the road of lifting regulation is not necessarily the answer.

It will simply not be possible for me to deal with all the issues that have been raised in the debate. First, I will concentrate on three key, overarching concerns: PGI status, skills and escapes, which are interrelated. I will deal with some of the other issues if I have time, and I undertake to follow up the issues of folk who get left out of that process after the debate.

PGI status was raised by a number of members. The current Scottish farmed salmon PGI criteria were set by the industry when it applied for PGI status in 2003. We have received an application to amend the PGI criteria. Once those criteria have

been finalised by the industry, they will be issued for public consultation, which will allow all interested parties to comment. That will allow us to make an informed decision on the future specification for PGI status. The Scottish Government is keen to support PGI criteria for Scottish salmon that are clear and unambiguous, and which are based on proposals from the industry that have been developed after consultation with wider interests.

Richard Simpson asked whether the proposed amendment would downgrade current standards. Absolutely not. It will clarify the production steps that must take place in the specified geographical area. The process will be open to full consultation, and we are keen to hear views from across the industry. The upgrade that Mr Simpson referred to was an amendment to include organic production in PGI status; no other aspects were amended.

I offer a mild caution to members. When they discuss PGI status, it is extremely important that they do not somehow give the impression that the present health and success of the product is in any way under threat. If people are not careful about how they discuss the issue, there is a danger that that is the impression they will give. It is absolutely not the case that the health and success of the product are under threat.

**Peter Peacock:** I fully accept the minister's point—indeed, I tried to couch my remarks in such a way as not to give that impression.

Does the minister accept that there are serious issues at stake and that it would be helpful to engage on an all-party basis on what may come out of the consultation before it goes ahead so that we can avoid the very problem that she highlights?

**Roseanna Cunningham:** I am not entirely clear what Peter Peacock is suggesting—I might have a conversation with him afterwards.

I turn to movements of ova and smolts, which are related to PGI status. International trade occurs, from which our smolt producers and Scottish buyers benefit. We must remember that. Norway operates to identical EU fish health standards, and there are currently no imports of live smolts from Norway to Scotland. I hope that members will take that on board.

A number of members, notably John Scott and David Whitton, talked about skills. Several colleges in Scotland offer Scottish vocational qualifications in aquaculture. As Richard Simpson said, masters degree-level study is possible in various aspects of aquaculture. Lantra covers the aquaculture sector—I think that it was David Whitton who mentioned Lantra's work in that area. We encourage industry to make applications for European fisheries fund funding in relation to skills, and we hope to see more such applications

being made. The better markets and image group has a remit to ensure a greater focus on education and training, including the promotion of aquaculture as a viable career, and it is actively involved in discussions on that issue.

Updating and improving access to formal qualifications on containment is also a recommendation of the improved containment working group. The issue of skills is embedded across the working groups, and it is quite important that it has not been separated off. Representatives from the fin-fish sector met in Fort William in December to review the national occupational standards, with a view to giving containment and predator control a much higher profile. The working group has identified as an immediate priority the elimination of escapes that are obviously caused by human error and, as was suggested, that means that there must be a programme of skills development and improved training of operators and site staff; the industry absolutely understands that, and work towards it is in hand. I hope therefore that members accept that the Government is very well aware of the issue of skills.

Indeed, during the tours that I undertook last summer, I spoke to people who are involved in the aquaculture industry. I have had subsequent meetings with them, and the issue of skills comes up regularly. The Government and the industry are well aware of the need to deal with that issue.

The skills question has informed the issue of farm escapes; several members have, quite rightly, raised that concern. As I said, we support the industry, but we have also made it very clear that it must act as a good neighbour. The recent escape clearly shows that the industry must do a lot more to address that issue; there is no doubt about that. The working group has identified the elimination of escapes that are caused by human error as the immediate priority and is working directly on that.

The memorandum of understanding with Norway includes an agreement for the Scottish Government to learn from Norway on containment, and to consider the adoption of Norwegian standards in Scotland. We do not condone poor practice but, if members were to stop and think for a moment, they would realise that the industry will hardly want that to continue either since the fish that escape and are lost are livestock. The industry will not benefit from not being vigilant.

Elaine Murray asked about the licensing group reporting to Parliament. A monitoring statement will be published on the Scottish Government website at regular intervals. I undertake to write to the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee with an update after each ministerial group on aquaculture meets.

Richard Simpson raised the issue of bacterial kidney disease, and I can address some aspects of that point. The Scottish Government is consulting the salmon and trout industries on the most appropriate and efficacious monitoring and inspection regime to control any risk of BKD spread. We are aware of the problem, but BKD levels in Scotland are very low and there is no evidence thus far of it being endemic. We need to keep that in perspective.

The subject of sea lice has been mentioned, as one would expect. That continues to be a real challenge for the industry but I return to the point that I made about containment and escapes—the industry gains nothing by allowing sea lice to develop out of control.

The debate was interesting if for no other reason than to hear Dave Thompson talk about a very interesting fish: the wrasse.

I can see that instead of wrasse, I will incur the Presiding Officer's wrath if I go on any longer. We will accept the Tory and Liberal Democrats amendments, but we reject the Green and Labour amendments.

## Business Motions

16:59

**The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S3M-5916, 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 17 March 2010

2.30 pm Time for Reflection

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Scottish Government Debate: Tourism

*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 Labour Party 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 Debate:  
International Development in Malawi

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business

Wednesday 24 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 25 March 2010

9.15 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by* Stage 3 Proceedings: Public Services  
Reform (Scotland) Bill

11.40 am General Question Time

12 noon First Minister's Question Time

2.15 pm Themed Question Time  
Justice and Law Officers;  
Rural Affairs and the Environment

2.55 pm Continuation of Stage 3 Proceedings:  
Public Services Reform (Scotland) Bill

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm Decision Time

*followed by* Members' Business—[Bruce Crawford.]

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next item is consideration of business motion S3M-5917, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a stage 1 timetable for the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Bill.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1 be completed by 2 July 2010.—[Bruce Crawford.]

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next item is consideration of business motion S3M-5918, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out an extension to the stage 1 timetable for the Legal Services (Scotland) Bill.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Legal Services (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1 be extended to 30 April 2010.—[Bruce Crawford.]

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next item is consideration of business motion S3M-5919, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a stage 2 timetable for the Control of Dogs (Scotland) Bill.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that consideration of the Control of Dogs (Scotland) Bill at Stage 2 be completed by 26 March 2010.

*Motion agreed to.*



## Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:01

**The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):** The next item of business is consideration of six Parliamentary Bureau motions. I invite Bruce Crawford to move motions S3M-5920 to S3M-5925, on approval of Scottish statutory instruments, en bloc.

*Motions moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Budget (Scotland) Act 2009 Amendment Order 2010 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Community Care (Personal Care and Nursing Care) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2010 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Public Appointments and Public Bodies etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 (Treatment of Office or Body as Specified Authority) Order 2010 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Housing Support Grant (Scotland) Order 2010 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications and Deemed Applications) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2010 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Local Government Investments (Scotland) Regulations 2010 be approved.—[*Bruce Crawford.*]

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

## Decision Time

17:01

**The Presiding Officer (Alex Fergusson):** There are six questions to be put as a result of today's business. I remind members that, in relation to the debate on aquaculture, if the amendment in the name of Dr Elaine Murray is agreed to, the amendment in the name of John Scott will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S3M-5908.2, in the name of Elaine Murray, which seeks to amend motion S3M-5908, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, on aquaculture, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**For**

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Fergusson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

**Against**

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)  
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)  
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 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)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Somerville, Shirley-Anne (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

**Abstentions**

Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)

Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)  
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 43, Against 58, Abstentions 14.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S3M-5908.4, in the name of John Scott, which seeks to amend motion S3M-5908, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**For**

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)  
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Ochil) (SNP)  
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)  
 Brownlee, Derek (South of Scotland) (Con)  
 Campbell, Aileen (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Livingston) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee West) (SNP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Hume, Jim (South of Scotland) (LD)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Marwick, Tricia (Central Fife) (SNP)  
 Mather, Jim (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney) (LD)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)

Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Liz (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)  
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)  
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

#### Against

Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)  
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)  
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)  
 Kelly, James (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Kerr, Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)  
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)  
 McCabe, Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 73, Against 43, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S3M-5908.3, in the name of Liam McArthur, which seeks to amend motion S3M-5908, as amended, be agreed to.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S3M-5908.1, in the name of Robin Harper, which seeks to amend motion S3M-5908, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### For

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

#### Against

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, 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)  
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marilyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 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)  
 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)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Liz (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)  
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)  
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 2, Against 114, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S3M-5908, in the name of Roseanna Cunningham, on aquaculture, as amended, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

**For**

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)  
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Alexander, Ms Wendy (Paisley North) (Lab)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Western Isles) (SNP)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)  
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)  
 Brocklebank, Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Brown, 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)  
 Foulkes, George (Lothians) (Lab)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)  
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West of Scotland) (Con)  
 Gordon, Charlie (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Harvie, Christopher (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 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)  
 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)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McKee, Ian (Lothians) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLaughlin, Anne (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 McLetchie, David (Edinburgh Pentlands) (Con)  
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 O'Donnell, Hugh (Central Scotland) (LD)  
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)  
 Park, John (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Paterson, Gil (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)  
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)  
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)  
 Russell, Michael (South of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)  
 Smith, Liz (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)  
 Stone, Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Govan) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (North Tayside) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Tolson, Jim (Dunfermline West) (LD)  
 Watt, Maureen (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Welsh, Andrew (Angus) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)  
 Whitton, David (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Lab)  
 Wilson, Bill (West of Scotland) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

#### Abstentions

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

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 113, Against 0, Abstentions 2.

#### *Motion, as amended, agreed to,*

That the Parliament notes the continued development of an ambitious and sustainable Scottish aquaculture industry; recognises the economic importance of the industry to Scotland as a whole and many coastal communities in particular; calls on the Scottish Government to clarify what action it is taking to develop and retain a skilled and qualified workforce in the sector; supports industry calls for greater clarity about the food consumers buy through country of origin labelling, and invites ministers to make clear their intentions regarding any moves to amend

protected geographical status for Scottish farmed salmon; notes the considerable work being carried out under the auspices of *A Fresh Start – the renewed Strategic Framework for Scottish Aquaculture*, published on 21 May 2009; notes the continuing need to consult with industry stakeholders on the development of the industry in Scotland, and further notes that ways must be found to streamline the planning process and remove barriers to the development and growth of the fish farming industry such as the lack of affordable housing and available sites for fish farms in order to allow the industry to grow to its full potential.

**The Presiding Officer:** I propose to ask a single question on motions S3M-5920 and S3M-5925 in the name of Bruce Crawford, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, on approval of Scottish statutory instruments. If any member objects to a single question being put, they should say so now.

There being no objection, the question is, that motions S3M-5920 and S3M-5925, on approval of SSIs, be agreed to.

#### *Motions agreed to.*

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Budget (Scotland) Act 2009 Amendment Order 2010 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Community Care (Personal Care and Nursing Care) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2010 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Public Appointments and Public Bodies etc. (Scotland) Act 2003 (Treatment of Office or Body as Specified Authority) Order 2010 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Housing Support Grant (Scotland) Order 2010 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications and Deemed Applications) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2010 be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the draft Local Government Investments (Scotland) Regulations 2010 be approved.

## Commonwealth Day 2010

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Alasdair Morgan):** The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S3M-5832, in the name of Sandra White, on Commonwealth day 2010, science, technology and society. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament considers that the Commonwealth has a valuable role in strengthening relationships between nations across the world; welcomes the continued contribution of Scotland and its people to those relationships; reaffirms its support for the work of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA); notes that, this year, the CPA Scotland Branch and the Scottish Government have, as a key focus, continued to develop relationships with Australia, Canada, Malawi and New Zealand; considers that Scotland has contributed throughout the Commonwealth to promoting technological innovation as a powerful tool for fighting poverty and climate change; commends the CPA Secretariat for facilitating an online discussion via web and teleconferencing during the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December 2009; believes that it would be helpful if international organisations and donors focussed on science and technology to strengthen expertise in this area, particularly among developing countries, and commends the theme of Commonwealth Day this year, Science, Technology and Society.

17:07

**Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP):** I begin by sending the warmest of welcomes to our distinguished guests from around the Commonwealth who are in the Parliament for today's debate. They would have been in the public gallery, but I believe that they are meeting the Presiding Officer.

In this debate, we will celebrate Commonwealth day 2010 and the invaluable work that Commonwealth associations throughout the world undertake in fostering better relations and understanding between our nations.

As we all know, last year, the Commonwealth celebrated its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Karen Gillon led the debate that we had on that occasion and stressed the enduring importance and relevance of the Commonwealth 60 years after its inception. This year, the world faces new challenges and opportunities, and it is therefore entirely fitting that, as we move forward into the next 60 years, we focus on the huge potential for positive change that science and technology can bring to the Commonwealth nations.

As we know, the success of the Commonwealth is also marked by its huge diversity. It includes some of the world's richest nations and some of the poorest, which presents us with a unique

opportunity to share disparate experience and expertise in many areas.

Those sentiments were echoed in "An Uncommon Association—A Wealth of Potential", the final report on the Commonwealth's conversation, which was published last Monday to coincide with the annual Commonwealth day. I recommend that members get hold of a copy of that document as it makes excellent reading. It is very truthful and to the point.

It is entirely appropriate that the Commonwealth should focus on the benefits that can be brought about through greater shared use of science and technology. As we go away from today's debate, let us reflect on the fact that one of the major findings of the report was that, although people are inspired by the values and principles of the Commonwealth, they are frustrated that we do not always uphold them. I believe that upholding the moral and ethical considerations that have brought us together and shaped us and which bind us will be the greatest challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. If the Commonwealth is to take its place as an important international organisation, it must hold to its core values and beliefs, have the courage of its convictions and speak out on behalf of the many nations within it that feel increasingly disfranchised in a world that is increasingly bereft of ethical and moral guidance.

I hope that many other members share my view that it is time to define and carry forward those moral and ethical considerations for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Although the report recognised that the Commonwealth has all the necessary ingredients to be a leading, effective and influential association in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it pointed to the fact that the Commonwealth family must adapt and make more strategic use of its many assets in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Through a greater recognition of science and technology, more can indeed be done with less, for those two disciplines have been fundamental driving forces throughout the past century in redefining how society operates by making knowledge and innovation tangible to all societies, wherever they may be. That, in turn, has helped society to develop in myriad ways, be it through better health care and a better understanding of how to live sustainably or, indeed, through greater knowledge of an individual's human rights.

Although we recognise the genius of Scots such as Alexander Graham Bell, John Logie Baird and Alexander Fleming, it is incumbent on the many organisations that are involved in science and technology to work with developing countries to strengthen their expertise in this area. I believe that that is what the Commonwealth is all about and that that is what the many countries that are part of the Commonwealth—developed and

developing—wish. I wish the debate well and I wish the future of the Commonwealth well.

17:11

**Karen Gillon (Clydesdale) (Lab):** I congratulate Sandra White on securing a debate on this important issue.

The theme for this year's Commonwealth day is science and development; it could come at no better time. Scientific advances are a central feature of all aspects of society—from communication to health, technology and education—and they offer an important means of tackling the serious underdevelopment that threatens the lives of some of the world's poorest communities. For those in less economically developed countries, access to scientific knowledge and understanding is fundamental to challenging two great threats to development: poor health care provision and the debilitating effects of climate change.

In many sub-Saharan African Commonwealth countries, including Malawi, the prevalence of HIV continues to grow, maternal and infant mortality remains very high, malaria continues to take lives and containable and curable diseases ravage communities due to lack of access to vaccines. Compounded by a lack of access to basic water supplies, poor levels of sanitation and turbulent food security, good health care provision is a luxury of a few, despite being a right for all.

In a number of areas, science can offer a means of reducing, and in some cases eliminating, the scourge of such diseases. In the case of both malaria and HIV/AIDS, drug science and innovative technology play an important role in seeking to reduce their damage and, in turn, promote health provision as an essential component of development.

Despite the fact that malaria is a relatively easy disease to treat, the lack of access to basic but hugely effective preventive methods, such as treated anti-malarial nets, guarantees that many—particularly in the tropical regions of Africa—are at risk of contracting the disease. Ninety per cent of malarial deaths take place in Africa. Furthermore, the long distances that individuals often have to travel to reach medical assistance allows the malarial parasite to replicate and decreases their chance of survival. For children under the age of five, it is one of the leading causes of death. Science can play an increasingly important role in tackling the disease, particularly in the light of growing resistance to currently available drugs, as well as investigating new vaccines.

Despite a growing awareness among health professionals and in civil society of the causes of the spread of HIV, the disease is still one of the

world's most prevalent killers. It robs children of their parents, teenagers of their adolescence and communities and countries of skilled workers and it further entrenches poverty in countries with relatively low economic productivity. Particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, the pandemic has left a generation gap as millions of men and women have contracted the virus, with many dying of AIDS.

Tackling HIV/AIDS does not require only one particular solution. Due to the multidimensional character of HIV/AIDS, a strategy of engagement is required that addresses a wide range of growing technological challenges. Combinations of poverty issues including food insecurity, gender bias, population movements and a lack of education and health facilities contribute to increasing the vulnerability of communities to the spread of HIV and AIDS.

However, there are many potential uses of science and technology to be explored in seeking to improve health provision, particularly in the developing world. A growing global body of doctors and medical professionals are seizing the opportunities that are afforded to them by e-health. We are a long way off technological input to some of the most deprived communities, but there are examples of good work here in Scotland, such as the growing strategic links between medical and public health staff at the University of Edinburgh and the College of Medicine in Malawi. That is certainly an area of work that Commonwealth nations can seek to strengthen.

Another important area is climate change, which is a real challenge for people in the developing world. In Malawi, we saw at first hand how a combination of tackling climate change and promoting a model of sustainable energy has been used to good effect in helping to provide access to health care in remote communities. A partnership has grown between the University of the West of Scotland at its Bell College campus and Malawian engineers on the use of energy models that run on solar energy to power rural health clinics. Not only does that signify a commitment to cleaner and lower-cost forms of energy, it is essential in providing electricity to ensure that the clinics are best equipped to meet the health needs of the surrounding communities.

Such bilateral relations, which encourage the sharing of expertise, labour and experience, form a method of tackling issues such as climate change. The Commonwealth nations would be wise to continue to develop such work, further enabling sustainable forms of development in order to improve health care provision and mitigate the potentially debilitating impacts of climate change on some of the world's most vulnerable communities.

I believe that the Commonwealth and the co-operation that it engenders are as relevant today as they were 60 years ago. I look forward to working with parliamentarians throughout the Commonwealth to ensure that we can all share in the benefits of science and technology for the benefit of all our countries.

17:17

**Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP):** I, too, congratulate Sandra White on securing this important debate. I know that she is deeply committed to developing Scotland's contribution to the international community and I commend the work that has been done by her and her colleagues in the Scottish Parliament branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

I want to focus on the theme of the day, which is science, technology and society. Perhaps in a typical Miss Marple style, I want to approach the theme from two angles, both of which are firmly rooted in my experience. The first comes from looking around my constituency, where there are a number of communities that have a place in the history of scientific and technological innovation. I will give just three examples. First, the village of Darvel was the birthplace of Alexander Fleming, whom Sandra White mentioned and whose discovery of penicillin revolutionised medicine around the world. Secondly, Galston was home to the Rev Robert Stirling, who invented the Stirling engine—an early rival to the steam engine that is attracting new interest in this age of green technology. Thirdly, Kilmarnock was home to the world's first commercial bicycle factory in the premises of Thomas McCall.

Those examples and others in the fields of engineering, materials sciences and food production helped to shape the economy and communities of Kilmarnock and Loudon, but today, even an area with such a strong track record struggles to hold its place in those fields. Local industries with strong scientific and technological traditions passed into the ownership of multinationals. Many have since closed, their intellectual capital stripped out by companies that perhaps owe their allegiance not to local communities but to shareholders. I will shortly pull together a science summit to examine how Ayrshire's communities can stay connected to developments in the fields of science, technology and engineering.

The lesson that I draw is that the Commonwealth is right to focus on how we can strengthen science and technology in communities, especially in developing countries. I am sure that communities around the world contain the same human and intellectual capital that Kilmarnock and Loudon have demonstrated

over many years, but they need the opportunity to develop and retain that capital. That means providing access to scientific and technological education at every level, and respecting local knowledge and initiative. We have to challenge the practice whereby multinational companies register patents on knowledge that was derived from developing countries with little or no benefit going to the source community.

The pattern of patent filings shows just how divided the world is becoming. In 2009, just three countries—the USA, Japan and Germany—accounted for a staggering 59 per cent of international patent applications. Although developing countries make up more than 78 per cent of the countries that are signed up to the patent co-operation treaty, they accounted for only 14 per cent of total applications, with China and the Republic of Korea accounting for two thirds of that figure.

The concentration of scientific and technological innovation in such few hands is not sustainable and can only fuel a backlash throughout the countries that are left behind by the dash to control the world's intellectual property.

I will touch briefly on the second issue. As convener of the cross-party group on digital participation, I make a plea for special attention to be paid to the role that digital technology can play as a driver of economic growth and as a tool for education and development.

The digital mobile phone is already having an impact in developing countries; Africa is a notable example. As it involves much lower infrastructure costs than cable-based communications, digital mobile phones are achieving unprecedented levels of penetration. Local companies have emerged as major players and there are huge numbers of small-scale and micro businesses. The technology is helping to deliver secure and cheap money transfers, even across national boundaries.

In some areas, specialist services are being developed to allow access to the internet by mobile, which has the potential to allow local companies to achieve global penetration for limited cost. Digital technology and its implications for developing countries may be of interest to the cross-party group on international development.

The Commonwealth provides an opportunity for countries at all stages of development to come together. The selection of the theme of science and technology for Commonwealth day 2010 shows the Commonwealth's continuing relevance, and demonstrates that it can help its members to address the key challenges that face communities around the globe.



17:22

**Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I am grateful to my colleague Sandra White for securing this afternoon's debate. We who serve in this place have a variety of committees and cross-party groups through which, on a non-partisan basis, we can develop an interest in the wider political process. For my part, I have long regarded the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association as among the most important of those wider interests.

As my party's representative on the cross-party executive committee of the CPA Scotland branch, I have been impressed by the way in which members of all political hues have worked constructively to develop the CPA's ideals. Specifically, I believe that the Scotland branch has contributed hugely to the Malawi partnership, not least, as the motion mentions, by

"promoting technological innovation as a powerful tool for fighting poverty and climate change".

I look forward to returning to that subject in the full debate on Malawi next week.

This afternoon, I will veer slightly from the motion to discuss last October's cross-party CPA visit to Australia and New Zealand. I was extraordinarily grateful for the opportunity to make the trip, along with Ross Finnie, Rhoda Grant and Sandra White, under the leadership of Presiding Officer Alex Fergusson. I cannot commend too highly the official report of the visit, which is due for publication tomorrow.

Those who are occasionally lucky enough to go on such visits do so in the realisation that they will be accused of junketing at public expense. However, the most peremptory study of the report would suggest that covering a distance of 26,000 miles and holding some 80 meetings in eight major cities, as well as addressing four universities on some of the topics mentioned in the motion, all within a two-week timescale, afforded little opportunity for junketing, even if the inclination had been there.

That brings me to Tommy Sheridan. It may come as a surprise that I consider this place to be the poorer since Mr Sheridan's departure. I never agreed with anything that he said, but the stance that he and his supporters adopted acted as a kind of compass that often allowed the rest of us to steer a less risky political course.

It was no surprise when dispatches arrived in Australia that quoted Mr Sheridan to the effect that if our mission looked like a junket and smelled like a junket, it probably was a junket. It was clearly soundbite time in the Glasgow North East by-election. The Solidarity candidate fumed,

"We used to send criminals in chains to places like Australia".

Actually, we did not—that was the United Kingdom Government. If Tommy had spent more time studying history than his permatan, he would have known that few Scots criminals were ever sent to Australia at all. Rather, educated Scots lads chose to emigrate there—and, of course, ended up running much of the place.

Never one for letting the facts get in the way of a good rant, Tommy branded our group as criminals for daring to go where Lachlan Macquarie, Malcolm Fraser and other great Scots had led. It was time ankle shackles were reintroduced, he declared—or he told the *Daily Record*. His intimate knowledge of such restraining methods is legendary. I refer to his regularly being escorted from places such as Faslane in handcuffs, usually followed by spells languishing at the pleasure of Her Majesty.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The member is beginning to stray slightly from the topic under discussion.

**Ted Brocklebank:** Yes.

Anyway, if the state of total exhaustion in which I found myself on returning from Australia and New Zealand did not bear witness to the hard work that we did, I believe that the report of our visit will, and that the 10 key objectives that the delegation set itself were more than attained. All delegates had specific interests. Ross Finnie involved himself with climate change, an issue that is mentioned in the motion. My particular interest was in the way in which the Maori language has been revived and mainstreamed, which I am sure could have major significance for our threatened minority culture of Gaelic. The report makes several recommendations in that regard.

Time does not allow me to deal in detail with the other recommendations, but I urge members to study our report carefully. Ultimately, the public will be the judges of the success or otherwise of the mission. I remain extremely grateful to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the clerks and other parliamentary staff who contributed so much to our trip. I am grateful to the Parliament for allowing me to play a small part in a process that will, I hope, continue to strengthen the bonds between Scotland and the wider Commonwealth of nations.

17:26

**Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD):** I, too, congratulate Sandra White on lodging the motion. Through accidents of electoral misfortune, a tragedy—in the case of the death of Margaret Ewing—people retiring and other reasons, I find that I am the longest-serving

member of the executive of the Scottish branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

I want to dwell on the word “society”, which appears in the motion. I believe that the word is about the interrelation of the peoples of the Commonwealth countries and their legislatures. I will take three bites. First, I want to mention the trip that Alasdair Allan, Murdo Fraser, Tom McCabe and I made to Canada last year, with Margaret Neal. We went to Quebec, Nova Scotia and Ontario. The abiding theme of the exchange was the sheer friendliness of the Canadians and the interest that they showed in all matters Scottish. It was truly heart warming and made me believe that there is something that we can build on for the future. It is a great treasure and we should be grateful for it, even if I was bombarded by bread rolls during my speech in Nova Scotia. Apparently, that is a custom of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly and is considered a friendly move.

Secondly, I and other colleagues feel that the way in which the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association has gone about its business in the past has possibly put too much weight on one foot and not enough on the other. By that, I mean that the Commonwealth came to be seen—perhaps for reasons of history—as being very much about Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. That has sometimes led to a two-tier Commonwealth in which some of our African friends have felt excluded. It is fair to say that, over the years, there have been discussions about that in the executive committee, as is right and proper.

I do not want to go into too much detail, but I think that Scotland can offer something unique in trying to improve how we do things. We do things rather differently from Westminster. The spirit of “A Man’s a Man for a’ That” or the idea that we are all Jock Tamson’s bairns are more suitable for the Commonwealth today than is what we might call the sound of fanfares of dying empire. We can do things differently. It is hugely encouraging that Dr William Shija, the secretary-general of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, will join us in Holyrood later this month. I hope that the discussions will be helpful in taking the society and the interrelation and working together of the Commonwealth one step further.

My third and final point is that the news last night from across the Irish Sea was truly momentous. It is enormously important that in Stormont the Northern Irish have made a decision about the future of policing. We can offer a great hand of friendship and we can work together with Northern Ireland—one of our nearest neighbours in the Commonwealth. As others in the CPA do, I hope that we can increase and improve the links

across the Irish Sea. However, it is not just about our short-range relations with Northern Ireland; it is about working with our friends and colleagues the world over.

There is no doubt that the Commonwealth can be a great power for good in the future. It provides a unique link, which is to be treasured above anything else. We can work together in partnership and, if we get the balance right and treat each other as equals, there is a great future for the Commonwealth. Because of the way in which we do things here at Holyrood and because of the Scottish attitude, we can contribute to that in a more modern way and be part of the glue that makes the Commonwealth grow and prosper.

17:30

**The Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change (Stewart Stevenson):** This has been an interesting debate that has been brought to the chamber by Sandra White. I, too, add my thanks. I confess that I have not read the report on the Commonwealth conversation, which was published last week; however, I might be inspired to seek it out and see what it says.

Sandra White referred to morals and ethics for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is fair to say that that strand ran through several of the speeches tonight. The CPA is essentially not economic or military, but is an association of people who share values and want to build a world that is fair to everyone. In introducing that in her opening remarks, Sandra White was absolutely on the money.

Karen Gillon focused, as did Willie Coffey, on science and development. She talked about the need for access to knowledge in many parts of the Commonwealth and about the role that Scotland and the Commonwealth as a whole can play in ensuring that countries that have less capability than we have receive the support that we can give. She graphically illustrated some of the health threats in one of our close partners, Malawi, and focused on the academic links that both benefit the academics in Scotland by increasing their knowledge base, and benefit countries around the Commonwealth through the knowledge that we can transfer to them. That is done somewhat outside the parameters of the patents system, to which Willie Coffey referred and which is sometimes a severe inhibitor to the useful transfer of intellectual property for good social and health purposes.

Karen Gillon also raised one of my particular ministerial interests when she talked about climate change and mentioned the role of engineers in generating electricity. When we talk about technology, we tend to think about the advanced computer stuff and high-precision engineering.

However, it is interesting to see how quite simple things make real differences to people's lives. When I was in Barcelona for a pre-meeting for the Copenhagen climate change conference, I saw a solar furnace—a portable umbrella that a person can carry around in a bag and which, when set up with a kettle in the middle of it, will boil the kettle in 20 minutes by the power of the sun alone. There are many innovations that are simple, inexpensive, can be replicated without vast industrial infrastructures and which will be of use to Commonwealth countries around the world.

Willie Coffey referred to the patents system, and highlighted the role that global system for mobile communications phones have played throughout Africa. Occasionally, there is an advantage in not having an existing infrastructure, because that allows a country to leap forward over the old technologies to new technologies. The Commonwealth can be a vehicle for enabling countries to do that.

Ted Brocklebank spent over much of his time talking about Tommy Sheridan. My view of Tommy Sheridan is that he is his own worst enemy, which is—when we consider the competition—a terrific achievement.

As someone who is one and a half generations away from Gaelic and regrets having virtually none of it, I also found it interesting to hear what Ted Brocklebank said about work on the Maori language.

Jamie Stone has been engaged with the Commonwealth through his work in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association for some considerable time.

Members talked about many people joining the Commonwealth. One of the interesting things that really illustrated the value of the Commonwealth was Rwanda's joining in 2009. Of course, that country has no historical connection to the United Kingdom, but was a colonial outpost of Belgium and Germany. The fact that it has joined shows that the idea of the Commonwealth is much bigger than perhaps anyone imagined when it was first dreamed up. The Commonwealth is a glue that binds many countries together.

Later this year, the Commonwealth games will be held in Delhi, after which we will see the transfer of host status from India to Scotland. The year 2014 will bring the Commonwealth, on the sporting field, directly to Scotland, which will show what we can contribute to the world on the sporting field and that we can organise such an event.

As a country, we have always looked beyond our borders. We might not have sent many convicts to Australia, but because I do family research, I know that one of my distant cousins—a

first cousin four times removed, I think—was a member of Parliament in Australia, although I hasten to add that that was 130 years ago.

We are still managing to find the money to fund an international development budget. We are increasing it from £6 million to £9 million in 2010-2011. That is part of Scotland's contribution to the global fight against poverty.

My colleague the Minister for Culture and External Affairs will publish four components of a programme of engagements with south Asia before the summer recess. We are looking to build further links with India, Pakistan and south Asia more generally.

The Copenhagen conference was a great disappointment to many people but it was, nonetheless, an opportunity to make terrific links with various countries, which will serve us well as we progress the climate change agenda. In sub-Saharan Africa, the threat of climate change is real and imminent and is of a different character from the difficulties that we would experience from climate change. Running through the climate change agenda is the moral core that we need to take action on the climate in order to help people around the Commonwealth and around the world.

This has been a first-class debate, although it has barely scratched the surface of an immense subject that we will, I am sure, debate again and again, and always to good purpose.

*Meeting closed at 17:38.*



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