



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Tuesday 20 November 2012

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

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Good afternoon. The first item of business is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader today is the Rev David Gordon, who is the minister of Kirkintilloch Baptist church.

The Rev David Gordon (Kirkintilloch Baptist Church): Presiding Officer, members of the Scottish Parliament, ladies and gentlemen. Early on 16 May 1998, a bus left from Kirkintilloch Baptist church with people of all ages. The destination was Birmingham. The purpose was to participate in the Jubilee 2000 campaign to form a human chain around the International convention centre to coincide with the meeting of the G7 leaders. The aim was to agitate for the cancellation of debts owed by some of the world's poorest countries.

They resisted the temptation to privatise the gospel concerned only with personal salvation but insisted that it was also about their relations with brothers and sisters all around the world and the structural sins that deny so many of them an opportunity in life.

The churches went into glorious overdrive, with a public and political mission to cancel debt and change the world in favour of the poorest. They became as biased as God. One of our convictions as Baptist Christians is a long-held belief in prophetic and dissident sociopolitical engagement: believing in the separation of church and state, yet actively challenging—often from the margins—established policies and institutions from a gospel perspective.

In our following of Jesus, that means having a double vision of the way that things are and the way that things can be from the perspective of the kingdom of God. Perhaps this poem, which is entitled “The Prophet’s Speech” and is based on the vision of the apostle John in the book of Revelation, is a reminder to all of us not only of how society should be, but of how it one day will be.

“I was standing on the Necropolis, looking down over the city;
and the cold blue autumn sky broke open over my head;
I saw Glasgow, the holy city, coming down out of heaven;
shining like a rare jewel, sparkling like clear water in the eye of the sun;
and all the sickness was gone from the city,
and there were no more suburbs or schemes;

no difference between Bearsden and Drumchapel.
I saw the Clyde running with the water of life;
as bright as crystal,
as clear as glass,
the children of Glasgow swimming in it.
And the Spirit showed me the tree of life
growing on Glasgow Green.
I looked out, and there were no more homeless people,
no women working the streets,
no more junkies up the closes,
no more rapists,
no more stabbings,
no more IRA graffiti; no more Orange marches,
because there was no more hate!
And none of the children were ever abused,
because the people’s sex was full of justice and of joy.
I saw an old woman throw back her hair,
and laugh like a girl;
and when the sky closed back, her laughter rang in my head
for days and days.
This is what I saw, looking over the Gallowgate,
Looking up from the city of death;
and I knew then that there would be a day of resurrection,
and I believe
there will be a day of resurrection.”

Thank you.

Topical Question Time

14:04

Flood Prevention

1. Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): No question on flooding can be quite as attractive as that was.

To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on its flood prevention programme. (S4T-00122)

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change (Paul Wheelhouse): The Scottish Government is working with partners to implement the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009, which is the most substantial change to flooding legislation in 50 years. The 2009 act helps to ensure that communities and businesses across Scotland benefit from a modern and sustainable approach to flood management, which is suited to the needs of the 21st century and to addressing the increasing impact of climate change.

Christine Grahame: I refer the minister to Derek Mackay's answer to question S4W-06436 on 19 April, which referred to an application by Scottish Borders Council for around £3.5 million for flood prevention schemes in Galashiels, at Plumtree, Wilderhaugh and Netherdale. Was the application successful?

Paul Wheelhouse: I confirm that the scheme will receive support from the Scottish Government of up to 80 per cent of the total cost, via the general capital grant to local authorities. The current estimated total cost is £3.6 million. I hope that that answers the member's question.

Christine Grahame: That is fine for the local authority. However, an individual who runs a successful business at Flotterstone in Midlothian finds that his inn is flooded too regularly and that it is almost impossible to find the proprietors round about who are liable. What can he do, other than approach his MSP to try to get help? How can he access flood prevention schemes?

Paul Wheelhouse: Christine Grahame makes a fair point. It is difficult to comment on an individual case when I do not know the full detail. In general, flooding from one private property to another should be resolved by negotiation between the parties concerned. I will be happy to comment further on the details of the case if the member writes to me about it.

Annabelle Ewing (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): I thank the minister for coming to Comrie this morning after yesterday's serious flooding. The village very much appreciated that the minister came and listened.

Will the minister undertake to speak to the chief executive of Perth and Kinross Council by the end of the week and to secure from her a firm commitment on the start date of the remedial work that has been identified?

Paul Wheelhouse: I had a productive conversation with Bernadette Malone on Monday regarding the situation in Comrie and I was glad to visit Comrie today, to hear directly from members of the community. I recognise the severity of the impact on the village. The fact that there have been two floods in a short period of time has had a substantial impact on the community. I undertake to speak again to Bernadette Malone about the options that are available and the timescale for the remedial works, and I will write to the member on the outcome of that meeting.

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): In light of the continual landslides and blockages on the A83 at the Rest and Be Thankful since 2007, with the problem recently exacerbated by heavy rain, when is the relief road due to be completed? On 19 July, in reply to my written question, the Minister for Transport and Veterans said:

"The works are programmed to start in August and be completed by November 2012."—[*Official Report, Written Answers*, 19 July 2012; S4W-08320.]

It is 20 November and there is no sign of completion. Will the minister apologise on behalf of the Government to the people and businesses in Argyll and Bute who are affected by the continual closures? Will he explain why the promise that was given has been broken and give us an update on progress towards completion of the relief road, so that we can keep a vital lifeline route open?

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The member knows that we are considering flood prevention. I expect questions to be a bit more focused on the rain that has fallen during the past few days. I am sure that the transport minister will answer his question in due course; there is no need for the Minister for Environment and Climate Change to do so.

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): Further to Christine Grahame's question, what discussions has the Scottish Government had with local authorities and the police and fire services on its flood prevention programme, particularly in the Borders, which are part of the South Scotland region, which I represent?

Paul Wheelhouse: As I said, implementation of the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 offers an opportunity for us to take a strategic view of flood prevention measures in Scotland for the first time and to target resources at areas that are at most risk.

I am aware that a number of areas in the Borders are vulnerable to flooding or are identified as potentially vulnerable areas in the flood risk management plan. Our agreeing to fund the scheme in Galashiels should be welcomed by all people in the Borders. I will be happy to discuss with Claudia Beamish what more we can do on flood matters in the Borders.

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): The minister will be aware that the village of Aberfoyle was similarly inundated this week with floodwaters that impacted on a number of businesses. It is not the first time in the past few years that that has happened. Would he be happy to discuss with me what best could be done—together with Stirling Council—to alleviate matters for Aberfoyle? The businesses affected are important, because they provide lifeline jobs in an area whose economy is based on tourism.

Paul Wheelhouse: I am more than happy to discuss issues in Aberfoyle with Bruce Crawford. Having seen at first hand the impact that the flooding has had in Comrie, I certainly appreciate that in Aberfoyle, too, the perceived risk to businesses and individuals could be quite damaging to confidence in the community. I am therefore more than happy to meet with the member to see what more we can do for the people of Aberfoyle.

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): What guidelines are in place to ensure that Scottish Water deals with regular flooding from sewers such as that in Aberdeen's merchant quarter?

Paul Wheelhouse: I am aware that my colleague the Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities, who has responsibility for Scottish Water, is looking at issues in relation to Aberdeen's merchant quarter. I am sure that if the member writes to the cabinet secretary, she will be more than happy to address the point that he raised.

College Funding 2012-13

2. Hugh Henry (Renfrewshire South) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government when the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning first became aware that there would be a reduction in college budgets for 2012-13. (S4T-00132)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Michael Russell): Presiding Officer, with your permission, I first wish to apologise to the whole chamber for the answer that I gave to Mr Malik on 28 June. I said that there was no reduction in funding for colleges in the financial year 2012-13. However, when all the budget revisions are included, the revised 2012-13 budget is £9.3 million lower than the budget for the

previous year. I should have immediately recognised that the answer that I gave was not right. I did not—I apologise for that to the whole chamber and, in particular, to Mr Malik.

Turning to Mr Henry's question, as members know, I wrote to the convener of the Education and Culture Committee on 18 October setting out the accurate budget figures, including all revisions. That, I hope, reassures members that my answer to Mr Malik was a genuine mistake.

The figures for college budgets that were originally published as part of the spending review in September 2011 have, of course, been revised at various points since then as a result of budget decisions by this Parliament. Those revisions have sought to help the college sector by adding additional funding to the baseline budget in 2011-12 and in 2012-13. I shall go on seeking ways to help in-year as I always have.

As the First Minister has set out, last week's inaccurate information was based not on an overstatement of spending in 2012-13 but on an understatement of spending in 2011-12. However, let me be clear: even after the additional funding is added in, the revised revenue budget is still falling. I acknowledged that in my evidence to the Education and Culture Committee on 23 October and in the debate last week, and I do so here again today.

At the weekend, Larry Flanagan of the Educational Institute of Scotland encouraged all of us to focus on the substantive issues that are facing colleges, including funding. On that basis, I welcome the proposed debate this Thursday on Scotland's colleges and the regionalisation process that is currently under way.

I make it clear again that my apology is full and unreserved. It is to the whole chamber, including to Mr Henry. It should not have happened.

Hugh Henry: Presiding Officer, there should have been a full statement by Mike Russell. To apologise in this way shows a real contempt for the Scottish Parliament. Presiding Officer, I ask you to release to MSPs the original letter of apology that was sent to you by Mike Russell.

The ministerial code—

The Presiding Officer: Mr Henry, this should be a question to the cabinet secretary. If you have a further question for the cabinet secretary, please ask it. In relation to letters that are sent to me, it is not for me to release them; it would be for the minister himself. If you could now concentrate on a question to the cabinet secretary, I would be grateful, and so would the members in the chamber who are waiting to hear from you.

Hugh Henry: Certainly, Presiding Officer.

The ministerial code says that any inadvertent error should be corrected at the earliest opportunity. Mike Russell misled the Scottish Parliament in June despite knowing the true figures since February. Why has it taken him five months to apologise?

The Presiding Officer: Cabinet secretary, I think that that was a question for you.

Michael Russell: In response to Mr Henry's request for a statement, I have indicated not only that I am responding to his question and issuing a full and unreserved apology, but that there will also be a full debate at the request of the Liberal Democrats on Thursday, in which we will have the opportunity to debate all the issues surrounding college funding and regionalisation. I shall be entirely open in that debate, as I am now.

Matters of the ministerial code are not for me but for the First Minister.

Hugh Henry: I did not ask why the ministerial code has not been applied. The question that I asked was why it has taken the cabinet secretary five months to apologise, and he has just ignored it.

The ministerial code also says that ministers who knowingly mislead Parliament will be expected to resign. Mike Russell knew in June that he had misled the Parliament when he said:

"There is no reduction in funding ... in ... 2012-13."—[*Official Report*, 28 June 2012; c 10776.]

He then, knowingly, misled the Parliament again last Wednesday when he said:

"I have never said that there were no cuts".—[*Official Report*, 14 November 2012; c 13463.]

He has knowingly misled the Parliament not once, but twice. Why has Mike Russell not offered his resignation?

Michael Russell: The answer that I gave on 28 June was given in good faith. I have apologised for that answer, as it was erroneous. I have apologised twice for that answer in this statement, and I apologise again for that answer. It was certainly given in good faith.

In terms of the debate and discussion of this issue, I made it clear last week—I said so in my statement—and in my evidence on 23 October, and I make it clear again, that I have always acknowledged that the budget would fall over the spending review period. That is what I said, and it is why I have worked so hard to get in-year additions within the budget. Those in-year revisions have been designed to help the situation, and I will continue to seek them.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): In the First Minister's statement on Thursday, he produced a revised baseline figure for 2011-12 of

£556 million instead of the £545 million that was cited in the Audit Scotland report. Can the cabinet secretary confirm that that amended baseline figure is correct and that it therefore means that the colleges budget has suffered a cut of more than 24 per cent in real terms?

Michael Russell: I can confirm the first part of that, which is to say that the figure is correct. However, I would also say—I indicated this in my statement and do so again now—that there have been in-year revisions. For example, the figure in the following year was raised by, I think, £39.5 million, and revisions will continue to take place for next year. Indeed, those are indicated in the figures issued to the Education and Culture Committee. It is also indicated that there remain sums that have not yet been allocated but which I hope to allocate to the college sector after discussion.

I am happy to confirm that the figure of £555 million is accurate—I think that it is £555.7 million—but I continue to seek in-year revisions as I have always done in order to ensure that as much as possible is spent on the college sector.

Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP): I welcome the cabinet secretary's remarks, following those of the First Minister on Thursday, apologising for the inaccurate figure presented to Parliament. Can the cabinet secretary confirm that the corrected figure for 2011-12 shows that the Scottish Government actually spent more on colleges in 2011-12 than was indicated by the uncorrected figure?

Michael Russell: As I made clear in my answer, last week's inaccurate information was based not on an overstatement of spending in 2012-13 but on an understatement of spending in 2011-12. That understatement of spending was, I think, of the nature of £9.3 million. The figure is at the root of this matter, and it is an understatement of what we actually spent on the college sector.

I continue to offer my sincere apologies, particularly to Mr Malik. However, I think that that places a context for those figures that at least needs to be understood.

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): Last Thursday, as the First Minister was misleading Parliament at First Minister's question time, television viewers could also see Mike Russell nodding vigorously in support of the First Minister's answers to Johann Lamont. Why was Mike Russell nodding so enthusiastically when he knew that the figures that were being quoted were wrong?

Michael Russell: I can only say to Mr Bibby what I have said to the whole chamber, which I repeat: my mistake was a genuine one, for which I apologise. I am sorry that, as yet, that apology has

not been accepted by members of the Labour Party, but it is meant for them as well as for everyone else in the chamber.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): I welcome the cabinet secretary's concession of a further debate on Thursday this week, but I repeat Neil Bibby's question: why did he nod vigorously throughout First Minister's question time when he knew that the figures were wrong?

In light of the Presiding Officer's comments, will the cabinet secretary also clarify whether he is willing to release the letter that he sent to the Presiding Officer at the end of last week?

Michael Russell: I shall certainly consider that matter, Presiding Officer. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer: Order.

Michael Russell: I am grateful that the member has acknowledged the apology that I have made to him and to the whole chamber; I hope that he will recognise that it was a genuine mistake that I made. I am entirely happy to take part in the debate that he has called for. During that debate, we will have the chance to discuss a range of issues to do with regionalisation.

I remind Mr McArthur, along with the rest of the chamber, of the words of Larry Flanagan of the EIS, who encouraged all of us to focus on the substantive issues that colleges face. I believe that that is what we should do, and that is what I will try to do.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): The cabinet secretary can pretend that he did not know that the figures were wrong, but on the radio this morning Mr Swinney told us that he knew that that was the case and yet did nothing to stop the First Minister misleading Parliament.

The Presiding Officer: Can we have a question, please, Mr Findlay?

Neil Findlay: I am coming to my question.

On 25 October, Mike Russell told the Education and Culture Committee that he had looked at the college budget figures

"front-ways, back-ways, sideways and upside-down".—*[Official Report, Education and Culture Committee, 25 October 2011; c 324.]*

Why did he not just look at them straightforwardly and honestly?

Michael Russell: I provided the member, along with all other members of the Education and Culture Committee, with the accurate figures—they were provided in a letter dated 18 October. I acknowledged the fact that the funding was falling over the spending review period in my evidence to that committee. I have reread that evidence, and it is quite clear that I was—as I remain—at pains to

have a full discussion of the issues of college funding and the way in which we can take forward what are necessary but difficult reforms in the sector.

I apologise for that mistake; I also apologise for the effect that it will have on debating the issue, which Larry Flanagan has drawn attention to. I am very keen that we continue to debate seriously the changes that must take place in Scotland's college sector so that we can focus on the needs of and the opportunities for young people.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con): The cabinet secretary has said several times today that there was no overstatement of the 2012-13 budget. The figure of £546 million relies on a sum of £13 million, which is entitled "College places—SDS". Independent sources suggest that that £13 million is split over two years, with £8 million being for 2012-13 and £5 million for 2011-12. One of those independent sources is the Scottish Government's own budget revision document. Can the cabinet secretary categorically assure us that not a penny of that £13 million has been spent in a year other than 2012-13?

Michael Russell: Mr Brown must recognise that, in dealing with the college and university sectors, there is a difference between academic years and financial years. That is reflected in the figures, but the figures as provided are accurate.

The Presiding Officer: George Adam—I take it that your question is about college funding.

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): Yes, it is.

I will take the advice of Larry Flanagan of the EIS and talk about education. Will the cabinet secretary confirm the number of full-time Scottish college students on higher education-level courses who are benefiting from the Scottish Government's free tuition policy, while their peers south of the border pay fees of more than £6,000 per year on average?

Michael Russell: I am informed by the Student Awards Agency for Scotland that there were 26,335 students studying HE-level courses at colleges in 2011-12. They are the ones who would be adversely affected by any change in the fee regime.

Air Passenger Duty

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-04874, in the name of Keith Brown, on air passenger duty. Members who wish to speak in the debate should press their request-to-speak buttons now. I call on Fergus Ewing to speak to and move the motion. Mr Ewing, you have 14 minutes. I remind all members that time is extremely tight. I allowed an extra five minutes for topical questions, which impinges on the time for this debate.

14:25

The Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism (Fergus Ewing): I welcome the opportunity to set out the Scottish Government's position on air passenger duty. We welcome the support of Scotland's four main airports for the devolution of air passenger duty. As the Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism, I recently had the opportunity to meet separately and at length the chief executives of Edinburgh and Glasgow airports, and I am scheduled to have a formal meeting with Derek Provan of Aberdeen airport in the new year.

As the motion makes clear, we have seen the worst recession in living memory, which has impacted on tourism in Scotland. However, the gross value added figures from 2008 onwards have shown an encouraging rise to the current annual figure of £2.9 billion. We have also seen welcome growth in both domestic and international passenger numbers in the past 12 months. That record of success is hugely appreciated, but it is unfortunate that APD has prevented us from being even more successful.

That is the global context, and 2012 is the first year for which the United Nations World Tourism Organization has predicted that there will be 1 billion tourism arrivals around the globe. For the first time in the history of the planet, 1,000 million people will be able to enjoy a holiday, something that all of us here and our families have probably taken for granted. That figure is expected to grow to 1,800 million by 2030, almost doubling in a relatively short time.

Scotland, for all our manifold attractions, is in competition with the rest of the world for each and every one of those potential customers. Therefore, I hope that it can be agreed by all sides on this debate that our competitive stance is a key factor, not just in attracting an increasing share of the burgeoning global market, but in retaining the business that we have already won, which the industry across Scotland, from the bed and breakfasts to large hotels and visitor attractions,

has worked so hard to achieve over the years with the quality of the offering that it has provided. There is a propensity for 40 per cent of business tourists to return to Scotland—that is, there is a 40 per cent likelihood that a business tourist who comes to Scotland will come back. Therefore, the importance of bringing new people to see Scotland for the first time cannot be overstated.

Air passenger duty is a heavy cost on our tourism offering in Scotland. The York Aviation research is clear that APD is the most expensive aviation duty in Europe. It is estimated that the increases in APD rates since 2007, plus those projected through to 2016, will result in a loss of 2.1 million passengers to Scotland's main airports every year. A stark illustration of the effect of the APD burden is that because of it, together with other burdens such as VAT and taxes on petrol and diesel, the United Kingdom as a whole, despite the excellence of our offerings, facilities and infrastructure, is rated by the World Economic Forum as the 134th least competitive country in tourism from a list of 137.

Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD): The minister referred to the York report and cited the projected reduction in numbers by 2.1 million by 2016. Does he blame APD for all of that loss?

Fergus Ewing: I am not in the blame game. I hope that we can put party politics aside and recognise that this is a serious issue and one where it would be better if we had control in Scotland. I was encouraged by Michael Moore's remarks when he said that the matter should be devolved to Scotland, and I was encouraged by Charles Kennedy's remarks when he pointed out the damage that he believes it has caused. I hope that, cross-party, we can recognise that, beyond peradventure, APD is playing a significant part in that statistic.

I hope that that means that we can move on.

Willie Rennie: Airport chiefs are quite clear that there is a multitude of factors. They blame APD in part, but a big proportion of the problem is the economic impact of the recession that we have had. Can the minister split apart what APD and what the economy are responsible for? It is important to get the evidence right.

Fergus Ewing: I believe that the report makes it clear that APD plays a very substantial role, and it goes beyond that to quantify the impact. The statistics are projections; they are one view and nobody is saying that there can be perfection about them, but Mr Rennie has asked a question so I will give this answer. The estimated loss of passengers because of the increases in APD rates from 2007 to 2016 is 2.1 million. Frankly, that is a shocking statistic. The economic loss to tourism is £210 million. We really cannot afford to suffer

losses of that order as a result of being able to be singled out in the European Union as having APD rates that are so much higher than those in other countries.

Since Mr Rennie opened the door, I may as well give him some statistical analysis. These are highly relevant figures because we are competing with these countries for tourists. Long-haul aviation tax rates in economy are €35 in Austria, €42 in Germany, €3 in Ireland and €113 in the UK. The maximum rate of aviation tax for any class is €35 in Austria, €3 in Ireland, €5 in Italy and €226 in the UK. The last time I noticed, the difficulties faced by peoples in Europe affected all EU states. I do not understand how other EU states that face economic challenges—just as the UK does—are able to offer minute levels of APD in comparison with the rates applicable in the UK. I look forward to Mr Rennie's explanation of that in his speech.

In looking at the options for APD, we will of course assess the carbon emission implications of our proposals in the same way as we will assess the financial implications.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Will the minister take an intervention?

Fergus Ewing: I am not sure how much time I have got left, Presiding Officer.

The Presiding Officer: You have seven minutes.

Fergus Ewing: Well, okay.

Patrick Harvie: I am grateful.

In September, at the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, I asked the minister whether that work was being done prior to the formulation of Government policy—whether they were looking at the evidence before deciding what policy should be. He told me that the work to assess the carbon impact had not been done, but he opened the door to asking the UK Committee on Climate Change to undertake it. The next day in the chamber, the First Minister said much the same thing, when he said:

"It is our responsibility to put forward an estimate in that respect and we will do so."—[*Official Report*, 13 September 2012; c 11415.]

The Presiding Officer: Mr Harvie, interventions must be brief.

Patrick Harvie: Why has no progress been made?

Fergus Ewing: I am happy to stand by the First Minister's comments. From memory, I think he made them on 12 September. He pointed out to Mr Harvie that we shall be assessing the environmental impacts, as we are assessing the economic impacts. He also pointed out something

that most of us accept: the real impact on emissions is from people taking several flights, because the more that aircraft land and take off, the greater proportion of fuel they use. Our policy and desire is to have fewer flights, more direct flights and fewer short-hop flights. By having them, we will, I hope, manage to please Mr Harvie. That is a high objective and ambition, but I hope that Mr Harvie agrees with the point that I have made.

Direct flights will make it easier to attract business tourism to our country and to increase our share of that vital market. When airlines—flag carriers in particular—look to crucial direct routes, they are keen to consider the economic potential of the linked cities. That is why we should remember that airports whose operations are currently harmed by APD are far more than places that people shuffle into and out of. Airports invest substantially in their amenities for passengers and the surrounding infrastructure for business. They are major employers in areas, both directly and indirectly. For example, Glasgow airport not only employs around 420 staff directly; if we add in contractors and service providers, the figure rises to 4,500. Glasgow airport has estimated that it supports 7,500 jobs across Scotland. That underscores the importance of Glasgow airport and all our other airports to the whole economy.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con): The minister spoke about wanting to see fewer flights. If that happened, what would happen to employment and the number of jobs that the aviation industry supports?

Fergus Ewing: I said that we would rather see more long-haul and direct flights and fewer short flights, not a total diminution in the number of flights. I hope that we all want more direct routes to Scotland. I do not know what the Tories' policy is, because Ruth Davidson wants to scrap APD. That is the pledge that she made, and I will wait with interest to see whether it will be supported by the Conservatives in the Scottish Parliament today. If it is, how on earth will they obtemper that pledge, as they do not want the power in question to be passed to the Scottish Parliament and their colleagues down in the coalition Government at Westminster have uttered not a single intention even to cut the rise in APD, never mind scrapping it? Therefore, I do not think that we will take any lessons on the matter from the Conservative Party in Scotland.

To conclude, the Scottish Government has been clear that air passenger duty should be devolved as soon as possible. The Calman commission recommended its devolution in June 2009. It is extremely frustrating that the UK Government has still not seen fit to act on that recommendation, and it is interesting and significant that the airports in Scotland believe that APD should be devolved.

They believe that, I think, not simply because they know that we support it, but because they feel—I hope that they feel—that the political mood in Scotland is more conducive to a more sympathetic result for them across parties. I sincerely hope that that will be evident this afternoon.

By devolving air passenger duty to Northern Ireland, the UK Government has clearly recognised that a one-size-fits-all policy does not work. It does not reflect the inherent differences in the UK aviation sector or the challenges that face our airports, our passengers' needs, or what Scotland needs to compete on a global stage.

I move,

That the Parliament notes with concern the recent report by York Aviation on behalf of Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow airports regarding the impact in Scotland of rises in the UK Government's air passenger duty (APD); particularly notes that rates for short-haul services have increased by around 160% since 2007, with long-haul rates increasing by up to 360% over the same period and further increases planned, at a time when Scotland and the rest of the UK have been experiencing one of the worst recessions in living memory; further notes that APD is the most expensive aviation duty in Europe and that increases in rates since 2007 and those projected through to 2016 are estimated to result in a loss of 2.1 million passengers to Scotland's main airports per year and that, as a consequence, by 2016 £210 million less will be spent in Scotland per year by inbound visitors; also notes that direct flights are more environmentally efficient than the multi-stop journeys via overseas hub airports that APD currently incentivises; believes that the only way to properly support the ambitions of Scotland's aviation industry, the needs of passengers and the growth of Scotland's economy is for APD to be devolved to Scotland, as has happened in large measure in Northern Ireland, and that this should take place as soon as possible, and further believes that, as a measure to provide some immediate respite to the aviation industry, passengers and businesses, the UK Government should announce a freeze in APD levels.

14:39

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab):

The announcement yesterday of the new services that are to be operated by Virgin airlines from Scottish airports to Heathrow was welcome and a timely reminder, given the debate, of the importance of our airports to Scotland's connectivity with the rest of the UK and the world. The issue is crucial for our economy as well of course. Tourism is a hugely important business for Scotland, and that is reflected in the fact that business tourism will be debated in the Parliament tomorrow, when we will see the minister again.

Some years ago, the aviation industry was booming and there was keen competition to provide cheap fares. Today, with the world economic downturn, rising fuel costs and more people deciding to stay at home rather than travel abroad, airlines and our airports face a much tougher time. That has brought into sharp relief the

issue of APD levels, which contribute to making many of today's journeys by air a great deal more expensive.

Because of the lack of direct routes into Scotland, APD imposes a greater burden on Scottish passengers and those travelling into Scotland. Although there are exceptions for the Highlands and Islands airports, there is no doubt that in general APD imposes a particular burden on the Scottish economy. That has been made evident in the study commissioned by the Scottish airports on the economic impact of APD, to which the minister referred.

On the effects of high levels of APD on Scotland as a whole, the minister was right to point also to the earlier studies in 2010 that detailed the general economic impact on individual airports and their areas. For example, the study commissioned for Aberdeen airport, which is in my region, showed that Aberdeen airport supports more than 2,000 jobs and that the figure would rise to 4,000 jobs by 2030 with successful implementation of the airport's master plan. The plan would also enable the airport to contribute more than £150 million to the local economy. The economic potential of airports is therefore clear. In addition, Aberdeen airport is of fundamental importance to the oil and gas industry, which is a key driver of the wider Scottish economy.

If increases in APD continue at their current rate—the duty increased by 8 per cent last year—they will threaten the ability of our airports to make the maximum contribution to growing our economy. No doubt the Treasury is attracted by the nearly £3 billion that the current level of APD will raise, but that will be a false economy if it means that we cannot grow tourism as we would have hoped or if it means that airports cannot recruit the additional employees that they clearly hope to recruit.

Concerns about the current level of APD have been expressed not only in this Parliament. In Westminster, a motion was agreed with support from members on the Labour benches—and, indeed, from members on other benches as well—that expressed concern over the high level of APD and called for an urgent review of its impact on the economy prior to the next budget, when APD is due to increase again.

There is a particular concern about the level of APD here in Scotland because we are particularly disadvantaged due to the lack of direct routes. That means that passengers from Scotland pay APD twice. A passenger from London flying direct to Orlando from Heathrow will pay APD once, but a passenger from Aberdeen flying to London and then on to Orlando will pay APD on both journeys. We see that as clearly unfair, because it means that there is a disproportionate burden on airports

and passengers here. That is why we have called on the UK Government to address the issue as a matter of urgency.

That is also the reason for our strong focus on the potential for devolution of APD, to which the minister referred. We, too, believe that an extremely strong case has been made for the devolution of APD, and we can agree with the vast majority of the terms of the Scottish Government's motion. We do not see devolving APD as being the only way of properly supporting the ambitions of the aviation industry—Willie Rennie made a good intervention on that point—given that there are a range of interventions that ministers can take, including marketing Scotland abroad and ensuring ease of access to our airports.

The Minister for Transport and Veterans (Keith Brown): Can I seek clarification on that point? I welcome the final point in the Labour amendment, which calls for “immediate action” to resolve the anomaly that Richard Baker has just mentioned, but the amendment also mentions the need for further reviews of whether APD should be devolved. Richard Baker will remember that the Labour Government did not “attach priority”—those were the exact words of its response—to such a measure. Will he clarify whether the Labour Party now, as of this moment, supports devolution of APD to Scotland?

Richard Baker: We established our position at the former Scotland Bill Committee—of which I see many members here in the chamber—and I do not resile from one word of that cross-party commitment. I absolutely agree on the issue of devolution of APD, which we agree is of fundamental importance. That is why the Calman commission recommended APD as a suitable tax for devolution. As we heard earlier from the minister—and as I have just restated—the Scotland Bill Committee found exactly the same, so we are persuaded of the case.

Although we might look for action on this issue sooner from the UK Government, I have no doubt that devolution of APD will be an important consideration for all those who are looking at future powers for this Parliament, as Scottish Labour is doing through the devolution commission.

Of course, with devolution of APD would come new responsibilities and challenges. Those would involve funding any reductions in APD and striking the careful balance that is required to support our crucial aviation sector in the context of the Scotland-wide targets on reducing CO₂ emissions. We do not see spiralling APD as an appropriate tool for that agenda; instead, we look to other ways of encouraging the industry to reduce emissions.

The motion refers to the environmental benefits of having more direct routes to and from Scotland and reducing the need for connecting flights. It was to promote just that goal that the Labour and Liberal ministers in the previous Scottish Executive introduced the route development fund. It was unfortunate that the scheme fell foul of EU state-aid rules, so it would be welcome if the Scottish Government would consider alternative approaches to support at least some of the objectives that the fund was introduced to make progress towards. The Conservative amendment is right to argue that ministers could have done more on that.

Fergus Ewing: Does the member accept that action has been taken? An example is the establishment of the Inverness to Amsterdam route, which has been hugely welcomed in the north and which received marketing assistance that did not breach the EU rules. Does the member therefore accept that the Government has, with its partners, taken positive action?

Richard Baker: We absolutely welcome that instance of action, but we believe that the Scottish Government could have made a broader effort and taken that approach in other circumstances.

The importance of the high cost of air travel as a barrier to achieving our goals for the aviation and tourism industries is reflected in the fact that it is not only our airports that have made a strong case on APD, but business organisations including the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, the Institute of Directors Scotland, the British Hospitality Association and, in my region, Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce. There is a strong coalition of concern about the impact of APD, not just on the aviation industry, but on the wider economy.

Although the motion and amendments suggest that we will not achieve absolute agreement on every point, the minister is right to point to general concern about APD and a broad consensus on the role that the Parliament might have in determining the levels in future. We will not be slow in coming forward if we think that the Scottish Government is not implementing the right policies to promote growth in our economy. Clearly, in a number of areas, we believe that the Government is not doing so. We will press the Government to do more to support our aviation industry. We certainly believe that the Government should have done more to improve connectivity to our airports. Ministers should not have cancelled the rail links to Glasgow and Edinburgh airports and must do much more to improve surface access to Aberdeen airport.

As I said, we do not believe that APD is the only way in which to address the challenges that the industry faces. In itself, devolution of APD would

not provide all the answers; there would need to be further debate on what the new level of APD should be. As the Liberal Democrat amendment states, that would require an explanation of how any changes would be funded.

We believe that our amendment closely reflects the reality of the current debate. However, although the Scottish Government motion is not word for word what we would have written and although caveats apply, our concerns are not strong enough to persuade us that we should not send out as clear a message as possible from the Parliament about the concern about the effect on Scotland of the current level of APD and the strong case for devolution. On that basis and in that context, if our amendment falls, we will not oppose the Government motion and will seriously consider supporting it.

We will make the case when the Scottish Government is wrong, but we believe that ministers are right to highlight the urgent need to address the impact of APD on Scottish passengers and airports and on the Scottish economy. I hope that the UK Government will listen to the concerns that I am sure will be raised by members from around the chamber and that the minister will consider supporting our amendment. We will certainly continue to encourage as broad support as possible for the progress that we need on this key issue for our economy.

I move amendment S4M-04874.3, to leave out from "the only way" to end and insert:

"the Scottish Government should work with Scottish airports and airlines operating in Scotland to explore what further incentives might be put in place to reduce carbon emissions in the industry; notes that the previous Scottish administration introduced the route development fund to bring new routes to Scottish airports; recognises that the Calman Commission on Scottish Devolution recommended that APD should be devolved and that the Scotland Bill Committee found a strong case for devolving APD and that this will inform the work of the Devolution Commission; further recognises that APD on long-haul flights has already been devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly, and believes that devolution of APD to Scotland should form part of an immediate wider review of APD by the UK Government, which should, as a first step to addressing the current concerns over APD in Scotland, take immediate action to resolve the anomaly whereby passengers in Scotland pay APD twice through making journeys to UK hub airports."

14:48

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): I genuinely welcome the opportunity to discuss this important issue for Scotland's economy and aviation industry. In fact, I stand close to Fergus Ewing in his desire for market forces to be used to ensure that Scotland succeeds in the long term. However, given that I was one of the many

members who worried over every section of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 and that I actually thought that I was voting for something when I eventually supported it, I see a certain inconsistency in the position that the Government chooses now.

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Alex Johnstone: Not at this stage.

In his opening speech, the minister rightly praised the York Aviation report and used the opportunity to advance key points regarding APD. His assertions included a repetition of the long-held view that direct, long-haul flights to and from Scottish airports are somehow more environmentally friendly

"than the multi-stop journeys via overseas hub airports"

that the Government's motion mentions. However, there is now some evidence that the market is beginning to give the lie to that assertion. There is now plenty evidence that large aircraft flying between major hubs can achieve economic and environmental efficiency. That means that, in future, more visitors to Scotland, rather than fewer, may travel via connecting services. That is easily evidenced by the fact that, only this week, Virgin Atlantic announced its intention to fly new routes from Aberdeen and Edinburgh to London Heathrow from March next year.

The minister also told us:

"the only way to properly support the ambitions of Scotland's aviation industry, the needs of passengers and the growth of Scotland's economy is for APD to be devolved to Scotland".

He went on to suggest that that should take place as soon as possible and that the UK Government should announce an immediate freeze of APD levels. Therein lies the problem. I admit that even I can see that the devolution of air passenger duty might hold superficial attractions, but there can be no guarantee that the move would solve the problems that the industry faces.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): Will Alex Johnstone give way?

Alex Johnstone: No, thank you.

Even if the power to levy the tax was to be transferred to the Scottish Government, there is no guarantee that the rate would not be increased. Of course the nationalists will scoff at the suggestion, but that is what they do every time it is suggested that some future Government of Scotland might have to raise a little more revenue. Their habitual claim that, in an independent Scotland, every tax will be reduced or abolished while, at the same time, every budget will be increased is no more

than a case of the emperor's new clothes. They are now left exposed every week.

There is also the simple fact that the reduction or abolition of the tax in Scotland alone could only ever have a marginal effect in comparison with its reduction or abolition on a UK-wide basis. However, the Government is determined to sever links with Westminster altogether and, by doing so, end any influence that it might have on future discussions. It is cutting off its nose to spite its face.

Fergus Ewing: We have heard a lot from Mr Johnstone about why he thinks that we are wrong. Will he explain what the Scottish Conservative policy on APD is? Is it the policy that Ruth Davidson set out—namely, that APD should be scrapped?

Alex Johnstone: Our objective is to benefit the industry by ensuring that passengers to Scotland pay as little tax as possible in future. To be effective, that means dealing with APD on a UK-wide basis.

In addition to the issue of APD, there is also the vital issue—which many in Scotland will bring to the minister's attention—of ensuring that capacity in London is maximised or increased. The case for an additional runway at Heathrow has been well made. It is essential to Scotland's future development that we retain influence in that policy area also.

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): Will Alex Johnstone give way?

The Presiding Officer: The member is in his last minute, Mr Stewart.

Alex Johnstone: We might also wish to exert influence on the suggestion that there should be an additional runway at Gatwick.

Can the Government really think of only one measure to help the aviation industry in Scotland? It could always consider bringing back the route development fund, which it abolished in 2007. I suspect that it is a case of the pot calling the kettle black. In fact, it could be suggested that if the Government wants advice on route development, it could do a lot worse than consult York Aviation, whose website seems to indicate that that is one of its areas of specialisation.

I move amendment S4M-04874.2, to leave out from “also notes” to end and insert:

“therefore encourages the UK Government to do what it can to help the industry, and calls on the Scottish Government to justify its refusal to use its existing powers to bring forward a suitable replacement for the route development fund.”

14:54

Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD): I accept that cutting APD may lead to economic regeneration, that we may get more benefits to the tourism industry and that there may be wider business benefits from doing so. However, I am not convinced by York Aviation's report, which has a number of inconsistencies in it. If we are to make decisions about valuable tax take and economic growth, we need to base them on solid evidence.

Members should look at some of what I consider to be contradictions in the report. Airport chiefs tell me that the economy—and not just APD—is part of the reason for a reduction in passenger numbers. The report does not separate out what is responsible for which effect. There was a reduction of 1.2 million passengers from 2007, which was when the APD was increased, but that was also when the recession hit the economy the hardest. There seems to be an inability to separate the two issues. The figures also show that passenger numbers have increased from 2010—at a time when APD has increased too. Therefore, there is no simple correlation that, if APD is increased, passenger numbers go down. The report does not necessarily add a contribution to this debate.

Kenneth Gibson: I understand what Willie Rennie is saying but, at the same time, would the Scottish economy not gain from having lower or zero APD?

Willie Rennie: Of course it would, but the equation is not as simple as that, because we must consider how the money that APD raises will be spent. In effect, if APD was taken back to 2007 levels, it would mean a reduction of about £90 million this year.

Kevin Stewart: Will the member take an intervention on that point?

Willie Rennie: Not just now; I am answering Mr Gibson's point.

If APD is taken forward to 2016 at the same level, it would mean the loss of about £400 million-worth of investment. That is £400 million that could be spent on shovel-ready projects. We have heard numerous demands in this Parliament for the Westminster Government to invest more in shovel-ready projects, but we seem to have had a sudden change in strategy to say that cutting APD is now the single answer to improving our economy. All that I am saying is that we have choices to make, and it cannot be simply said that if we cut APD nothing else bad will happen.

Kevin Stewart: Mr Rennie's amendment refers to a change that, according to the York Aviation report,

"would result in a loss of around £90 million to the Scottish Government".

The reality is that the York Aviation report does not say that at all; it says that there would be an annual loss in tourism expenditure, not in tax receipts. Willie Rennie's amendment is flawed from the very beginning.

Willie Rennie: We have worked out from the report the effect of taking the APD levels back to 2007. If Mr Stewart looks at that, he will find out that we are absolutely correct.

Kevin Stewart: The Lib Dems are not correct.

Willie Rennie: The Government's motion does not even propose to go back to 2007 levels; it is proposing only to freeze APD levels. If the Government freezes the level of APD, it will not recover the 2.1 million lost passengers that the motion and the report set out to recover. There is an inconsistency in that: the Government complains about the loss of 2.1 million passengers, but it is proposing to do very little about it. If the report is to be believed, the action in the motion would have the effect of recovering only 300,000 passengers. That is the difference between the two.

Fergus Ewing: We believe that, as a matter of practice, there should be no further increase in APD as planned. Does Willie Rennie share that view?

Willie Rennie: The reason why I am setting out the issues is because it is really important that we understand the effects on passenger numbers and what is causing the reduction. That is why it is important that we wait for the Treasury report that is considering those matters. Reading the York Aviation report would lead someone to conclusions that are simply not correct. The impact of the economy on passenger numbers is significant, but the report ignores it. The report should consider that issue because, as the airport chiefs have told me, it is a consideration worth undertaking.

On a point of consensus—

Stewart Maxwell (West Scotland) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Willie Rennie: Not just now.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith): The member is in his last minute.

Willie Rennie: On a point of consensus, we believe that APD should be devolved. We have stated that for some time. That would allow Scotland to target more routes in order to improve route development and to grow long-distance routes, as the minister has pointed out. We support that objective. Our disagreement involves the Government's assertion that freezing APD or

taking it back to its 2007 level will suddenly bring back 2.1 million passengers. I do not believe that the report contains any evidence to support that.

At the end of the day, this debate is about choices that politicians have to make. We cannot simply say that shovel-ready projects are the first and most important thing that we can do and then change our strategy the next week simply because we want to have another pop at the UK Government.

I move amendment S4M-04874.4, to leave out from "with concern" to end and insert:

"the debate around the future of air passenger duty (APD); agrees that APD should be a tax exercised at a Scottish level by the Parliament as part of a federal UK, with tax powers and responsibilities shared between different levels of government in the UK; notes that returning the level of APD to 2007 levels as discussed in a recent York Aviation report would result in a loss of around £90 million to the Scottish Government, and calls on those who advocate such a change to set out their proposals to reduce public spending to match the reduction in tax receipts."

15:00

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): It is not usually Willie Rennie who sets my colleagues in the Green parliamentary office to scrabble for their pens and buzzword bingo sheets, but his repeated references to "shovel-ready projects" will have had them very excited.

When the Parliament first agreed in principle that we should set long-term, ambitious climate change targets and we passed the legislation unanimously to put those targets into effect, and when the current members of Parliament reaffirmed those targets—again, unanimously—we did something extremely important, which is something that few countries, legislatures or jurisdictions have achieved. That kind of consensus on climate change is not being won easily around the world.

Climate change is a polarising issue in many places, where industries such as the aviation industry and the fossil fuel extraction industry scurry around, lobbying against environmentally responsible policy and spreading disinformation. However, this Parliament achieved consensus from left to right, including Alex Johnstone, who spoke earlier about the possible contradiction between the position that the Government took then and the position that it is taking now. Clearly, he is comfortable with a contradiction in his own position, having voted for those targets.

Is it the case that we achieved that world-leading position of unanimity on climate change targets and will now prove ourselves unwilling to take the difficult actions that are necessary to achieve those targets?

In taking action on any area of policy, the Government should consider the evidence first and then decide what its position should be. However, as was shown by the answers of Mr Ewing and Mr Salmond to my questions in September, ministers have decided what their policy is and are now thinking that, possibly, they will consider what the climate impact might be. The First Minister says that it is the Scottish Government's responsibility to come forward with that assessment, and yet the work has not been done. The Government is going to decide the policy and then look at the evidence—a classic example of science abuse in the policy-making process.

It is clear that relentless aviation growth will lead to relentless emissions growth from the aviation sector. Aviation is an inherently high-carbon mode of transport. That is not going to change. There might be measures to ameliorate it or slightly reduce it, but it will remain an inherently high-carbon transport mode.

Demand growth is being facilitated—even stimulated—by the Government without regard for the climate impact, which should be assessed beforehand.

Stewart Stevenson: Is the member aware of the experiments on the in-service use of biofuels, which are, essentially, close to being carbon zero?

Patrick Harvie: It is possible that small-scale use of locally sourced biofuels can be close to carbon zero, but I think that the member knows very well that the industrial-scale production of biofuels brings with it a host of other environmental problems, as well as not in fact being carbon neutral. Simply suggesting that the aviation industry can replace its gargantuan demand for kerosene with a gargantuan demand for industrially produced biofuels is not environmentally responsible.

The other approach that has been suggested is the inclusion of aviation within the emission trading scheme. It is clear to me that the emission trading scheme is not having the long-term impact on reducing emissions that it was designed to have.

Aviation is included in the Scottish targets, but only with a multiplier of 1, despite the fact that we know that aviation has a higher impact on climate change than other sources of greenhouse gas emissions. Members have talked about promoting long-haul and direct flights to replace short-haul aviation. If the air route development fund that the previous Executive was so proud of had reduced the amount of domestic short-haul aviation, I might have been interested, but it did not reduce the number of those flights. More long-haul flights plus short-haul still equals more flights, and we must acknowledge that, even if the objective of reducing

or eliminating short-haul flights is achieved, there will be more empty slots at the other end of a short-haul route and those slots will fill up with additional long-haul routes.

Kenneth Gibson: The number of flights from Scotland has diminished. This year we could fly to Cape Verde and to the Dominican Republic from Glasgow, but we will not be able to do that from next year. Does the member not accept that from Edinburgh it costs 0.69 tonnes of carbon per person to fly to Beijing and 0.81 to Heathrow? He is not talking about reducing the number of people who are travelling but about making them go through Heathrow. I know that he knows that because he has been to Bangkok and Cape Town in recent weeks.

Patrick Harvie: My amendment makes it clear that the use of APD or other financial or other methods should be about reducing demand, not simply about achieving a short-term change such as replacing short-haul with long-haul flights.

Others have suggested that it is unfair to charge people the level of tax in APD. The reality is that a reduction in APD would be regressive for many of the same reasons that many Labour members argue that a reduction in the council tax is regressive. The wealthiest fly most so they would save the most money. Aviation is a low-tax mode of transport compared with every other mode of transport that we have available to us.

In proposing my amendment, I say that how the powers are exercised is much more important to me than where they are exercised, and they should be exercised in a way that is compatible with the unanimously agreed climate change targets.

I move amendment S4M-04874.1, to leave out from “the recent report” to end and insert:

“that greenhouse gas emissions from the aviation sector in Scotland have risen relentlessly and were 118% higher in 2009 than in 1990; considers that continual aviation growth is incompatible with the climate change targets that were agreed unanimously by the Parliament in 2008 and reaffirmed unanimously in 2012, and supports the use of financial measures such as air passenger duty, alongside other approaches, to restrain the growth of aviation emissions within limits that do not threaten the goal of a low-carbon Scotland.”

15:07

Colin Keir (Edinburgh Western) (SNP): Like every other business sector, those stakeholders who deal with or are on the periphery of the aviation industry fight their corners. Passenger groups look for better deals from airlines and better airport services, airlines look for better deals from airports, and so on. However, air passenger duty achieves the almost impossible and has everyone singing from the same hymn sheet.

On 31 October, I was fortunate to chair the first full meeting of the cross-party group on aviation at which air passenger duty was the main item on the agenda. Among those present were airline representatives from British Airways, easyJet, Virgin Atlantic and Loganair. Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen airports were also represented, as were others from tourism, chambers of commerce and other business sectors. The main source of information was the report that the consortium of Scottish airports commissioned from York Aviation—and what a damning report it is.

As has been mentioned, APD rates have rocketed since 2007, with short-haul flights being penalised to the tune of around 160 per cent. The report gives what it calls real-world examples, which might be closer to what Patrick Harvie said. Before the APD increases in 2007, a family of four going on holiday to Spain would have paid £20 duty, but in the summer of 2012 that would have risen to £52.

If that is not bad enough, the APD that is levied on long-haul passengers has leapt by between 225 and 360 per cent. Prior to 2007, the APD rate for the same family to fly to Florida would have been £80, but this summer they would have had to pay £260. Although I would not expect to hear many complaints about that from ex-Etonians, particularly those who are in Mr Cameron's Cabinet, I would expect complaints from those who are on a fixed salary and have had to save for months to take their family on holiday.

There is also a wider picture, and APD not only harms families but carriers, airports and general business. Edinburgh airport, which is in my constituency, will have lost about 1 million passengers by 2016 thanks to high APD rates. That is not the only example of Scottish airports suffering—Aberdeen, Prestwick and Glasgow airports are experiencing knock-on effects.

Patrick Harvie: Colin Keir mentioned Aberdeen airport. Will he explain why it reported just this month its busiest October for five years? It has reported a year-on-year increase in passenger sales of 11.3 per cent.

Colin Keir: I do not have that number on me, so I cannot give Patrick Harvie a definitive answer. However, I am pretty sure that one of my colleagues could answer his point. I hope that he will take my apologies for that.

Whichever way we look at it, there is a lost opportunity for economic development in many ways. It beggars belief that George Osborne and Danny Alexander do not see the revenue benefits as well as the possible capital spending benefits and the benefits to the wider economy of having another 1 million passengers at Edinburgh airport.

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): Will the member give way?

Colin Keir: I have already given way.

It is disappointing that the Tories and the Liberal Democrats do not accept in their amendments that the problem is UK-wide. Responsibility for APD is devolved to Northern Ireland, so why not Scotland? We are debating the subject here because the Westminster coalition is ignoring pleas for help from the industry. It would be good to know what lobbying the Tories and the Liberals are doing in London.

As the minister said, competitiveness is the key in the airline industry, and APD affects low-cost airlines in particular. A high level of air passenger duty could make the difference to profitability, which could mean the loss of a route and, in some cases, jobs.

In many countries in Europe, such as the Netherlands, the problems of an air tax were found early. The tax lasted only a year in the Netherlands, after Schiphol airport passenger numbers dropped significantly. After an 8 per cent reduction in passenger numbers in Ireland, the ticket tax was dropped from €10 to €3.

At the cross-party group's meeting, Roddie MacPhee of Barrhead Travel informed us that he had found that some of his customers had changed their travel habits. Customers—particularly those who were making international connections—were choosing to fly from Dublin, Schiphol or Frankfurt airport, just to avoid paying the UK's ridiculously high APD.

I suspect that, in the medium and long term, we in Scotland will be better off concentrating on and encouraging more direct flights where possible and probably using hubs other than Heathrow, particularly if APD remains high and other hubs such as Schiphol, Frankfurt, Dubai and Istanbul continue to make their customer improvements, which might make them more attractive hub destinations. Scottish passengers should not be financially penalised for where they live.

It is clear that APD influences carriers in other ways. In its report in August, the House of Commons all-party parliamentary aviation group pointed out that

"It is a matter of public record that Continental Airlines ... would have abandoned flights from Belfast to the US if the level of APD were not reduced".

Aviation plays a major part in the Scottish economy, and thousands are employed directly and indirectly by the sector. Edinburgh is a city that is and will be the driver of the Scottish economy, regardless of the result in 2014. As a country that is on the edge of Europe, we require the incentives to compete not just on a local scale

but on an international scale, and civil passenger aviation is a key industry that we need to succeed.

Air passenger duty is a major hindrance to improvement, and it denies travellers from our part of this island and others a fair deal. If Westminster cannot fix it, we should be given the tools so that we can do it. I support the motion.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I should have said earlier that speeches are to be of six minutes and that time is quite tight.

15:13

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab): The debate can be divided into two parts. The first issue is whether air passenger duty should be devolved and the second issue is what we should do with such a tax when it is devolved.

On the first point, I am clear that—along with all my Labour colleagues—I support the devolution of air passenger duty. I welcomed the Calman commission's proposal of that, and I regret that the UK Labour Government did not take it on board. To be fair to that Government, it had concerns about state aid rules. However, with the devolution of air passenger duty to Northern Ireland, it is clear that there are no European issues and there is no obstacle to devolving the tax. I think that the current UK Government supports that, and I hope that it will do the right thing as soon as possible.

I look forward to the day when we have debates in this Parliament about taxation as well as spending. I hope that many taxes will be devolved to the Parliament as part of enhanced devolution. We should start the debate on air passenger duty today.

As it happens, I started the debate in 1994 because I was lucky enough—if that is the right word—to be involved in scrutinising the Finance Bill that introduced air passenger duty. In preparation for today's debate, I read the speech that I made back then; we had to make rather long speeches in Westminster committees in those days. In summary, we were totally opposed to the introduction of the tax. At that time, we felt that it was one of many tax increases that the Government of the day was proposing, and we also predicted—correctly—that, although the duty was starting at a low level, it would increase significantly over time, which is what has happened.

The main thing that struck me when I looked back at my speech and the speeches of others in the debate was that there was no discussion whatsoever about the environment in relation to the tax. That is perhaps not surprising, because we were not very well educated about climate change in those days. Now, however, we really

have to face up to the environmental dimension of the debate.

The reality is that we must reduce our emissions by 80 per cent, but at the same time there is a massive growth in demand for air transport. Air travel is currently responsible for 5.5 per cent of CO₂ emissions. That figure is predicted to be 15 per cent in 2030, and the Department for Transport in London says that it will be 21 per cent in 2050. Aircraft are also responsible for high-altitude emissions of nitrogen oxides and the formation of cirrus clouds and contrails, so the total climate change effect of all aviation emissions is estimated to be at least two to four times greater than the effect of just the CO₂ emissions. That is a massive contribution to the climate change problem.

Aviation is the most polluting form of transport. It seems that we have a fundamental problem with transport policy as a whole, as we always let the economic considerations trample on the environmental considerations. In any sensible debate on air passenger duty, we must look at both elements.

I accept that the environmental arguments are complex. Air passenger duty is not an ideal tax from an environmental point of view. The Liberal Democrat proposal for taxing planes rather than passengers seems to be a good one, although it ran into some European problems. We would have to discuss what the best form of environmental taxation would be. However, when we have more tax-raising powers in this Parliament we will surely recognise that there must be a shift towards environmental taxation. Air passenger duty may not be an ideal tax, but we must consider the consequences of reducing it greatly with regard to the effect that that would have not just on public revenues but on the environment.

I accept many of the minister's economic arguments, although we must always look at economic evidence with some scepticism, as the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee discovered last year when it was examining the economic arguments for roads expenditure. Willie Rennie said that he read the York Aviation report with a degree of scepticism, and I share some of his feelings. He dealt with some of those issues in his contribution.

I was struck by the fact that, while the York Aviation report said that the amount of revenue from air passenger duty in Scotland would be £320 million this year, I was given a figure of £183 million by the Scottish Parliament information centre. Admittedly, the SPICe figure is for the previous year, but there is a big discrepancy and I believe that there are certain question marks around the report.

We must accept that the issue is complex. There will be economic advantages if we can attract more tourists to Scotland, which is an objective that we all share. At the same time, however, we must not overstate the economic consequences.

All members have received a briefing today from Transform Scotland, which refers to research by the Aviation Environment Federation. I do not have time to read it all out, but I was struck by a quote from someone who is called Sir Brian Donohoe—it is news to me that my colleague Brian Donohoe is a Sir. As a great supporter of aviation and a great opponent of air passenger duty, he said:

“I’ve not had a single person tell me they are not going on holiday because of APD.”

We have to keep those things in perspective.

Finally, we have to consider the loss of tax receipts that would result from lowering the tax. We have a Scottish National Party Government that once again wants Scandinavian levels of public services and American levels of tax. Every tax that is proposed for devolution and every tax that the SNP talks about in the context of independence will apparently be reduced. That will have an opportunity cost in economic as well as environmental terms.

I support the Labour motion, particularly because it supports the devolution of tax. However, we need a mature debate on the issue, which recognises that air passenger duty is complex rather than simple with regard to its environmental and economic aspects.

15:20

Brian Adam (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP): I should say that Aberdeen airport is in my constituency.

We have heard some interesting speeches in the debate so far.

I am a believer in more direct flights from Scotland. I do not know whether other members have tried to do something about that, but I certainly have done. I have encouraged the Japanese Government and Japan’s national carrier to fly direct from Scotland—I do not mind where from. In the context of not just tourism but the great interest in our renewables industry, it is important that there should be direct flights. There is no doubt that direct flights save on environmental costs and challenges.

Members have expressed the view that our proposed approach to APD would cost too much in environmental terms, but that is a fairly extreme position. The UK Government does not pretend

that APD is an environmental tax; APD is a revenue-raising tax.

It is true that the Scottish Government would have to backfill. Malcolm Chisholm made an important point in that regard, and I accept that that is the case. There are lots of inefficiencies in Westminster in relation to which savings could be made, in the Parliament itself—more capital than revenue—and in the House of Lords. Indeed, a range of measures could be used to backfill.

Industry is telling us that we need to take control of air passenger duty. How long will it be before industry tells us that we should take control of more taxes? There is no doubt that industry wants us to take control of APD. I am not just talking about partners and businesses in the aviation industry; Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce is also encouraging us in that regard. Of course, it is music to the ears of nationalists that businesses want us to take control of our own affairs. Businesses see the advantages of our doing so. I hope that, at least in relation to air passenger duty, we can take advantage of doing that now, rather than later.

The increase in APD has a particularly detrimental effect on the Scottish economy. People travel not just for pleasure, important though that is, but for business. It is not just the wealthy who travel; all sorts of people aspire to travel, for a variety of reasons. Attacks on proposals to reduce the tax on the basis that doing so would be environmentally unfriendly, attacks on the hydrocarbon industry and the suggestion that reducing the tax would benefit only the wealthy are absurd. It does environmentalists no credit whatsoever to use any of those three arguments to attack the devolution of the tax.

There is broad support for the idea that aviation tax should be decided by the Scottish Government. That is not the only tax that we should be controlling but I hope that at the conclusion of the debate we can at least have consensus on that point. I will draw my remarks to a close now, which will give other members a bit more time.

15:25

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): There is no doubt that the issue is of importance to the growth and health of the Scottish economy. I have to say that I was a wee bit puzzled by some of Willie Rennie’s remarks because he talked about the SNP priority being shovel-ready projects and then being APD, as though somehow we could not do both at the same time. I am not really sure about the logic of that.

Willie Rennie: Will the member give way?

Kenneth Gibson: I was expecting Willie Rennie to leap up there—I will certainly let him in, but not just yet. I ask him to give me a wee minute. I am not even 30 seconds into my speech yet.

During these very difficult times, international connectivity is key to attracting business and investment to Scotland and to the success of our tourism industry. However, in recent years, the decisions of successive UK Governments to raise air passenger duty by such a huge amount have jeopardised Scotland's place as an internationally connected nation and continue to threaten economic growth and the future viability of many routes from Scotland. I mentioned a couple of those routes earlier in the debate, but there are many routes direct from Scotland that have been lost in recent times—to Porto, Gambia and Malta to name just three. That of course impacts—as the minister said—on employment in Scotland.

The recent York Aviation report on the impact of APD shows the hugely damaging impact that the tax has had on passenger numbers, on the cost of flights for ordinary people and on international connectivity, and the knock-on effect on the wider economy.

As the minister points out in his motion, APD rates for short-haul services since 2007 have increased by around 160 per cent, and by up to 360 per cent for long-haul flights. Therefore, it is no surprise that many companies are reducing the number of flights that they have from Scottish airports.

APD has become a significantly higher proportion of overall fares, rising from 10 to 26 per cent of the overall cost of domestic flights and from 3 to 14 per cent of international flights. As the report makes clear, that has seen the cost of flights for a family holiday to Spain increase by £32 and, for flights to Florida, by £180.

Worryingly—this may be where Mr Rennie wants to come in—the report points out that by 2016 it is estimated there will have been a loss, per year, of 2.1 million passengers to Scotland's main airports, resulting in £210 million less being spent in Scotland every year by tourists. Of course, that impacts on Scottish employment.

Willie Rennie: The issue here is the return on the investment that is made. It is not necessarily the case that we would not get a return on cutting APD—indeed, that is not what I am saying. I am saying that the SNP Government needs to consider the best return and so far—there is some evidence to support this—capital is the best way of investing because that gets the best return. What is Mr Gibson's evidence that cutting APD would give a similar return?

Kenneth Gibson: Analysis has shown that cutting APD would bring another £50 million back

into Scottish business tax revenues. Therefore, although we would lose money from APD, we would get money because more people would be employed, and they would pay taxes and so on. I am quite surprised by Mr Rennie's party because in its submission to Calman it supported devolution. I suppose that this is just another U-turn following the party cuddling up to the Conservatives.

Bizarrely, the UK Government appears to be unique in its dedication to this regressive tax, versions of which have been reduced or abolished across Europe. We have already heard that in the Netherlands the tax was scrapped after only one year following a dramatic 8 per cent downturn in demand at Schiphol. In Ireland, the original €10 rate was reduced to €3 after declines in passenger numbers at Ireland's airports. In Ayrshire, where I am an MSP, Prestwick airport has already lost around 14 per cent of its traffic as a result of APD, according to recent analysis. One would have thought that the UK Government might take similar action to address concerns here in Scotland.

We have heard some good speeches this afternoon, but I was disappointed with Alex Johnstone's. I do not think that he addressed any of the key points in what was a very defensive speech. In their UK budget last year, the Tories said that they were going to review APD in Scotland but they have not done that, although they have devolved APD to Northern Ireland. The Tories need to have a coherent position on APD in Scotland, whether it is the Ruth Davidson position or the position that Alex Johnstone tried to cobble together earlier this afternoon. A paper from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs announcing changes to APD stated that the Government's policy objective was

“stimulating and rebalancing the Northern Ireland economy.”

However, it does not seem at all keen to do that here.

The Scottish Government realises that a one-size-fits-all approach to APD does not work. Indeed, the York Aviation report points out that there are significant impacts on UK airports outside London, where the market is smaller and remains less resilient. Surely, if APD can be devolved to Northern Ireland, it can be devolved to Scotland. Discussions are going on about devolving it to Wales.

Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member is in his last minute—it is up to him.

Kenneth Gibson: I am in my last minute, unfortunately.

The Scottish Chambers of Commerce has stated:

"If Scotland is to maintain a competitive position and attract tourism and investment to our nation, the Scottish Government will require a greater variety of policy and fiscal tools at its disposal."

It is very important that APD be devolved.

With the Ryder cup and Commonwealth games coming to Scotland in the next few years, we have a unique opportunity to showcase ourselves to the world and to reap the benefits of that for many years. However, in order to do so we need to ensure that Scotland is open for business, well connected and ready to welcome people from all over.

In my last 30 seconds, I will touch on a different point. We should think not just about APD but about the holiday supplement rip-off for Scottish tourists who go abroad to common destinations. In the First Choice brochure for next year, the Glasgow to Dalaman flight has a holiday supplement of an extra £200 per head. The Thomson flight from Glasgow to Majorca has a £225 per head supplement, whereas the flight from Belfast has a supplement of £165 per head. The Sky Tours flight from Glasgow to Costa Blanca has a supplement of £215 per head, and the Simply Travel flight from Edinburgh to Corfu has a supplement of £165 per head. Scots are being ripped off, and not just through APD.

15:32

Helen Eadie (Cowdenbeath) (Lab): In my opinion, the case for the devolution of air passenger duty has widespread, if not unanimous, support in Scotland, with ministers, Scottish airports, airlines and business leaders all campaigning against the APD increases announced by the UK Government in March. The Scottish Labour Party also supports the case for devolving APD, which is why I am happy to support the amendment in the name of Richard Baker.

The ability to set air passenger duty rates for long-haul flights has already been devolved to Northern Ireland. I ask Alex Fergusson—I beg your pardon, I mean Alex Johnstone; it was a Freudian slip. I ask Alex Johnstone whether the Tories are saying that they will treat Scotland less favourably than Northern Ireland. Any family will know that we should not treat one person in the family any differently from another, and we are a family in the UK—just do not treat us differently.

Alex Johnstone: I do not like to rub it in, but the tax was an invention of Labour in government and Labour was responsible for doubling it in 2007, which took it to the high levels that we have seen

in recent years. Why have Labour members changed their minds now?

Helen Eadie: I think that Malcolm Chisholm has answered some of those points. People are allowed to change their minds in a democracy.

Among the handful of countries that have air passenger duty, the UK has the highest in the world. The latest increase is twice the rate of inflation, and more increases are coming down the line next year. We already have energy increases and transport increases—this UK Government knows no end to the ways in which it can punish its people.

The route development fund that was created by Lord Jack McConnell was an excellent initiative in helping passengers from Scotland to take direct flights instead of having to travel via the main hubs in the south. It was a huge disappointment when the EU state aid rules prevented such a splendid initiative, but perhaps the minister will have some creative discussions and collaboration with the EU. I feel almost certain that there must be some way of getting around that. Perhaps he can impress on the EU the difference that the fund could make to people. The travelling public welcomed the chance to avoid such heavily congested airports and cut their journey times significantly.

I say to Alex Johnstone that there is no case for a third runway at Heathrow. The economy in the south-east of the UK has been overheating for far too long. It is time that we had a fairer distribution of investment across the UK, as well as across Scotland.

I like nothing better than being able to fly direct to eastern Europe in the summer. I disagree with Patrick Harvie about direct flights, because in the winter I must change at Heathrow, Gatwick or Luton, which inevitably involves the cost of an overnight stay in a hotel, on top of a ticket that is already more expensive. In the past year or so, Jet2.com has introduced a new direct route from Edinburgh to Budapest. As parliamentarians, we must work assiduously, at every opportunity, with the airlines, with other countries and with any partners who want to help the airline industry to develop better travel opportunities for our constituents. I have ideas of my own in that regard.

George Osborne has been accused by a senior Tory back bencher of making air travel a preserve of the rich through the tax on plane tickets. In a recent debate in the Commons, senior back-bench Tories said that it was not the first time that senior ministers, including the Chancellor of the Exchequer, had been accused of being out of touch with the problems that ordinary families face or embarrassed by the high cost of transport. As

others have said, further planned rises in the tax before 2016 would mean that a family of four would have to pay £500 in tax to fly economy class to Australia, whereas in 2005 the same family would have paid £80.

From George Osborne's point of view, APD is a marvellous tax, because it costs nothing to collect, as the airlines must collect it for the Government, and it is unavoidable. Half the people who pay it are foreigners who do not vote here. From a Government's point of view, it is the best tax that has ever been invented.

Keith Brown: I very much welcome what I believe to be Helen Eadie's sincere support for the devolution of APD, but her reference to the Labour amendment is perhaps a bit misguided, because it would take out my proposal to devolve the tax now, replacing it with a requirement for two reviews—one by Labour's devolution commission and the other by the UK Government. We need action on the issue now. Does Helen Eadie support that?

Helen Eadie: The bottom line is that we support the devolution of APD; there is no doubt about that. Why does Alex Johnstone differ from Ruth Davidson on the issue? I simply cannot understand why that is the case.

The fact that most airlines are members of the emission trading scheme is a positive from the perspective of environmentalist arguments. Securing more direct flights will also help to reduce CO₂ emissions. I reiterate my point about a third runway at Heathrow, which would be no help at all in that regard.

We should note the work that is being done in Wales. The National Assembly for Wales said that it should be given the opportunity to scrap APD on long-haul flights from the country. The report of the Silk commission was welcomed in Wales, particularly the recommendation that responsibility for long-haul APD should be devolved to Wales.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must conclude.

Helen Eadie: The comment was made that

"The ability to control long-haul APD rates is just one tool in the armoury".

I had much more to say, but in line with the Presiding Officer's request, I will finish there.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I apologise for the tightness of time. George Adam and Kevin Stewart will have six minutes. At that point, we will have to reduce speeches to five minutes.

15:38

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): Like Brian Adam, I must declare an interest, because Glasgow airport is in Paisley—although, ironically, it is not in the Paisley constituency.

Glasgow airport is an important part of the economy of Paisley and Renfrewshire. I agree with Brian Adam and others who said that the most important thing is to have more direct flights to airports such as Glasgow airport. I was disappointed that although Virgin Atlantic secured the Heathrow slots for flights to Aberdeen and Edinburgh, it could not secure the slots that BMI had for flights to Glasgow, because it had dropped those flights only six months previously.

In my view, air passenger duty is another Westminster tax that attacks business in Scotland. Mr Johnstone said that the devolution of APD had a superficial appeal, but that he could not see the benefits that that would bring.

I come from an area with a large airport that is a major employer, so the issue is jobs and the future of the area's economy. Working-class people in Paisley try to get jobs at Glasgow airport, Renfrewshire Council or Chivas Regal, which are the three biggest employers in the area; anything involving those employers is therefore a major issue for local people. Further, a third of all Scotland's exports go through Renfrewshire, so transportation is a major issue for the local economy.

The cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on aviation, which is ably chaired by Colin Keir, discussed the York Aviation report at a recent meeting. I was surprised by how senior the industry people who attended the meeting were, with people from British Airways and other companies flying up for it. The gentleman next to me was from British Airways, and he said that he was there because the Scottish Parliament was the only Parliament in the United Kingdom that was seriously discussing APD and wanting to discuss it with the industry.

Willie Rennie: Were the industry representatives able to give the member any advice about how to make up for the revenue that would be lost if APD was reduced?

George Adam: The industry representative to whom I referred was looking at ways in which to grow his business and ensure that the economy of places such as Paisley could grow. He and I were more interested in the future and ensuring that we can move forward.

As Colin Keir said, the York Aviation report said that before 2007 a family of four travelling to Spain in economy class paid £20 in APD but that today or next year they will pay £52 in APD. That has

huge consequences for a holiday airport such as Glasgow airport, and it also makes it less competitive as an airport for the business market. One of the tourism industry representatives said during our discussion at the cross-party group that some companies were putting flights through Northern Ireland because that was a lot cheaper and more beneficial for them and for the passengers. That people in the industry are taking such action must have worrying consequences for us in Scotland.

Another major problem that affects Glasgow airport is that APD has a greater effect on low-cost airlines because their business model means that APD makes up a greater proportion of their fares. That is another way in which Glasgow airport suffers at the hands of Westminster. Let me give an example. EasyJet is a major user of Glasgow airport and a major part of its business. It recently sponsored the Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce annual business awards—the ROCCOs—and it wants to be involved in the local economy. It was also represented at the recent cross-party group meeting. We must ensure that we do not get into a situation in which such companies struggle because of APD. However, such a possibility does not stop Westminster. Oh no—Scotland suffers, but Westminster continues with APD.

Despite Westminster's continued disregard for Scottish tourism, the sector continues to grow. It is an important sector for Scotland that we must build on. Tourism employs 200,000 people in 15,000 businesses in Scotland. Scotland took around 22.3 per cent of the UK's total tourism spend in 2011, although it has only 8.4 per cent of the UK's population. When we go out and sell Scotland abroad, we must ensure that we make it easier not only for companies to come to Scotland but for people to come here and see us, despite the obvious economic challenges that exist not just in Scotland but all over the world.

Mr Baker and Mr Rennie said that APD on its own is not the be-all and end-all, and I agree with that. For me, the issue is about our having full power over the economic levers and a basket of economic solutions. The devolution to Northern Ireland of APD for long-haul flights shows what can be done with increased financial responsibility. What could we do with more powers? As Brian Adam quite rightly asked, will we have business leaders coming to this Parliament to demand that we have full economic powers in Scotland? That is not as daft an idea as it sounds, because they keep asking for more economic powers for the Scottish Government for its proposals for Scottish business.

PO, our airports are an important part of Scotland's economy, not only as gateways to

other destinations but as employers that work in our communities to ensure that they give something back. We need the Scottish Parliament to have powers over APD because we need to ensure that the aviation industry in Scotland thrives. This is another example of why Scotland's Parliament needs the full range of economic levers to support our economy, because some chancellor in Westminster has no interest in investing in Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind members to avoid using nicknames in the chamber. [*Laughter.*]

At this stage of the debate, and as notified, speeches will be of five minutes.

15:44

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): Thank you, Presiding Officer. I will stick to five minutes because many colleagues have gone over ground that I was going to cover. Some members are much more expert on some of these issues than I am, including my colleague Brian Adam, who has had a close working relationship with Aberdeen airport over many a year, and Mark McDonald, who was on the Aberdeen airport consultative committee.

I had the great pleasure of having Derek Provan, the managing director of Aberdeen airport, on the board of the north east of Scotland transport partnership—NESTRANS—when I was chair. He is a man who is always worth listening to and he always bases everything that he says on fact. Of the York Aviation report, he said:

"This report shows, quite simply, that APD is damaging Scotland. It is damaging our economy, our tourism potential and our ability as a nation to bounce back from the recession. It limits our opportunities for growth in the employment market, costing as much as £50 million in the process.

At Aberdeen Airport we run a real risk of losing around 200,000 passengers by 2016 through this damaging tax. Each recent increase in APD has had a dramatic impact upon what we, as airports, have achieved and could have achieved without APD. It is imperative that the UK government undertake a detailed and comprehensive review into APD with the utmost urgency, and at the very least freeze APD whilst that is taking place."

Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce said:

"We would welcome APD devolution if it enabled a reduction in costs for businesses in the region"—

I believe that it can.

"Devolution of APD would allow the Scottish Government to work more closely with Scottish airports to devise a Scotland-focused package aimed at boosting international routes, while at the same time securing the continuation of lifeline routes."

Those are the views of some of the people of the north-east of Scotland. I am sure that many members from that region hear about the day-to-day difficulties that folks experience in trying to get to certain places. They are very much of the opinion that we need many more direct routes from Scotland to the rest of the world.

More direct flights are absolutely vital to ensure that the powerhouse economy of the north-east of Scotland continues to thrive. I am not arguing here and now for every one of those direct international routes to be from Aberdeen airport—I am quite happy to share with Glasgow and Edinburgh. We find that folk are willing to take the train to leave from Glasgow, Edinburgh or even Prestwick to get to their destination, but if they cannot do it from those airports, they take a flight to a hub airport before flying onward to their destination. My colleague Kenneth Gibson pointed out that we know for a fact that that increases the carbon footprint dramatically.

In proposals similar to those that we have seen from the Calman commission, the Silk commission, which reported the other day, said that APD should be devolved to Wales. There is no argument that says that it should not.

We know now that in January 2013 Northern Ireland will reduce the duty on long-haul flights from there to zero. I can see a situation in which a number of international carriers will move to Belfast. We will see an increase in the number of short-haul flights from Scotland to Belfast, to take advantage of those new routes. I do not want that to happen. I have no problem whatsoever with the people of the north of Ireland—not at all. I want to see their economy thrive, but I want us to have the economic advantages that we should have.

That is why I believe that it is vital that we take control over this tax as soon as we possibly can. I hope that all the other taxes will follow with the full powers of an independent Parliament.

15:49

Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab): Good afternoon. I am pleased to have the opportunity to take part in this debate, particularly as I have campaigned for Pakistan International Airlines direct flights between the twin cities of Glasgow and Lahore. Air passenger duty for that route would now be £65 for an economy passenger, which is an increase of more than 8 per cent in the past year. I am convinced that there is sufficient demand for the Glasgow to Lahore route, and there is certainly spare capacity at Glasgow airport, but the recent above-inflation increases on already high aviation taxation make it hard to encourage airlines to invest in Scotland. It is important that we take steps to address that issue.

The Scottish air route development fund was one of the great success stories of the previous Labour-led Administration in the Scottish Parliament. An independent study in 2009 by the transport consultancy Scott Murray put the total net economic benefits to Scotland of the Scottish air route development fund at over £450 million over a 10-year period, including nearly £35 million of benefits from the setting up of the Glasgow to Dubai link. There were real benefits. The fund grew tourism, sustained businesses and created jobs. Therefore, it was very disappointing that the first act of the incoming Government in 2007 was to scrap that fund.

The Government could do more to overcome the obstacles. It has been in power for the past five years, and there is still little sign of any progress in that direction. Surely there are ways to meet the European Commission's concerns. The Scottish Labour Party proposed an air route marketing fund, and I would be delighted if the Government took up that idea.

Glasgow Chamber of Commerce's top priority for air is not air passenger duty, but route development activity. It argues that, to increase both the number of direct flights and access to major air hubs, Glasgow needs international promotion. That in turn would grow both inward and outward travel markets. I agree with Glasgow Chamber of Commerce that air passenger duty is only one part of the jigsaw, and again encourage the Scottish Government to engage positively with the European Commission to bring forward proposals to develop more direct air routes from Scotland, particularly to developing markets.

It is not only about our air links; we also need infrastructure. During my term in Glasgow City Council, I promoted the Glasgow airport rail link. It is critical that, if we are to become a successful partner on the world economic stage, we need a proper infrastructure that supports our airports and air links. That in turn will increase our productivity and employment opportunities and, more important, business opportunities.

We need to encourage businesses to look at Scotland as a destination. It is very good for us to say that we are open for business, but we need to have the tools for people to come in and do that business.

I recall a particular incident in which an Australian businessman came to Scotland to develop and build a hotel in Glasgow. The first thing that he complained about was the transport from the airport to the city. That disappointed me, as I had gone to a lot of trouble to encourage him to come and take up a project and develop it in Glasgow. It disappointed me that he opened his remarks not with the words, "How are you, Mr Malik?" but with, "That's a terrible situation you've

got here. You can't even get to the city from the airport." I remarked to myself that there were quite a few ways of getting there, but nevertheless, the point was made.

It has always remained in the back of my mind that such issues are important. Scotland's infrastructure and our air links are important, and the duty and the increased levels of duty that have been proposed are unrealistic. We are already isolated from the rest of Europe. We need to be able to control the cost of people coming to and going from Scotland. One of the biggest challenges for us is that the aviation companies need to have a free hand in competing fairly and reasonably across Europe. Therefore, I suggest that the minister should bring forward proposals on how he will address the issue with the European Union to try to assist us in overcoming those difficulties.

15:55

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): It is just over a year since Northern Ireland gained devolved control over aspects of air passenger duty so that it is no longer subject to Westminster's hikes.

Incidentally, the example that was given by Hanzala Malik illustrates perfectly one of the irrationalities of the current scheme. Flights to Lahore are in band B of APD, but flights to India are in band C. Perhaps Lahore could become a hub because, provided that people stop for 24 hours in Lahore, they do not have to pay APD on their flight to India. That is just one of the many irrationalities that exist in the current scheme.

Glasgow, Aberdeen and Edinburgh airports have described APD as a "significant barrier" and an "increasing burden" and they would welcome its devolution. The then Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment, Alex Neil, stated:

"APD was a contributory factor in the demise of Glasgow Prestwick's link with Stansted Airport."

We are definitely suffering indeed.

Lower air passenger duties can correlate with benefit to the environment, because direct flights not only give us more efficient travel, less hassle and increased tourism but reduce the environmental impact. Given that the environment has featured in this debate, let me talk about some of the positive things that full devolution of APD powers could do for us.

First, we could reduce APD for flights that are towed out from the terminal to the departure point. That would require some capital investment, but it would reduce fuel for short-haul flights by between 5 and 10 per cent.

Let us see reduced APD for turboprop flights. For anyone who thinks that a bit irrational, I should say that the shortest scheduled service between Scotland and London happens to be a turboprop flight—on short flights, there is no time disadvantage. That saves between 25 and 40 per cent fuel and, because the turboprops fly at a lower level, the radiative forcing is reduced.

Patrick Harvie: Will the member take an intervention?

Stewart Stevenson: I really will not have time.

Let us reduce APD for flights that burn low-sulphur kerosene. At the moment, the marine and aviation industries are the only ones to use fuels that are still 3 per cent sulphur, whereas the fuel for our cars is now down to 0.5 per cent sulphur. That would reduce SO₂ emissions and have significant environmental impacts.

We heard a little bit about biofuels. If we move to a position in which we are able to use hydrogen fuel, which can be produced 100 per cent from renewable energy, that would more or less eliminate the CO₂ emissions from aviation in the longer term. Would it not be good, through APD, to be able to encourage aviation operators to start to move in that direction via biofuels?

We could use some of the receipts from APD to invest in longer runways. Longer runways mean that the plane needs less power for take-off and landing, which are the very significant parts of a flight. One reason why Aberdeen's figures have gone up is that the runway has been extended by around 100m. For example, the Azerbaijan Airlines flight from Aberdeen to Baku, which could previously take only 40 passengers, can now fill the plane because the runway has been lengthened.

Let us look at the environmental advantages that would arise if, instead of transporting people from Edinburgh to Manchester airport, the railway line transported people from Manchester to Edinburgh airport because Edinburgh had a competitive advantage from lower APD. If there was more choice at Edinburgh airport, people would travel more directly, and that would be helpful.

If we had the full powers of an independent country, we could look at aircraft routing. We are congested in central Scotland. We have a one-way system for Edinburgh and Glasgow airports, which means that aircraft on their way out have to travel west across towards Prestwick and then down to Dean Cross in the lake district. We could consider that.

Let us think about allowing single-engine instrument flights, as the whole of Scandinavia does and which reduces emissions. Let us look at

whether we could have precision global positioning system approaches, which reduce the approach time and flying time.

There are so many things that we could do with APD and with the normal powers of an independent country.

16:00

Annabelle Ewing (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): I am pleased to speak in the debate. As we have heard, short-haul rates of APD have increased by about 160 per cent since 2007, with long-haul rates having increased spectacularly, by up to 360 per cent in the same period. As we have also heard, it is estimated that such exorbitant rises in APD are having a particularly detrimental effect on the Scottish economy, through a significant loss of passengers and therefore a drop in visitor spend. Astonishingly, it is estimated that, in 2007 alone, about 1.2 million passengers appear to have been lost. The forecast is particularly gloomy, with the expectation that about 2.1 million passengers will be lost year by year by 2016, with a consequential drop in spend in Scotland of £210 million per year.

I submit that that is simply not acceptable, particularly for our excellent tourism industry, which, despite the difficult financial climate, had further growth last year of about 9 per cent.

Alison Johnstone: Has the member considered the loss of income from Scottish tourists who travel abroad and the resulting impact on the health of the domestic tourism industry? A study in 2006 by the University of Oxford's climate change group found that, for every £1 spent by an overseas resident in the UK, a UK resident visiting overseas spends £2.32. Has any research been done on the fact that there might be a net negative effect on the tourism industry in this country?

Annabelle Ewing: It might be better to pose the question about whether studies have been done to the Scottish Government or to SPICe. However, on the member's fundamental thesis, I am not in the business of preventing Scots from travelling abroad, and I very much welcome visits to Scotland. If both happen together, our tourism sector will grow.

Why is it necessary for Scotland to be subject to the most expensive aviation duty in Europe and how can that possibly help our tourism industry? As the minister Fergus Ewing rightly said—he also happens to be my brother, so this is perhaps one of the odd occasions on which I will say that—it must be borne in mind that other countries in Europe face similar difficult challenges and financial outlooks, but nonetheless they operate with a much less onerous aviation duty regime.

Surely, at the minimum, the UK Government in London should halt any further increases in order to provide respite to the sector and to passengers and businesses. However, in the longer term, it would be entirely preferable for the Parliament to take decisions on APD, just as Northern Ireland, as we have heard, can now take decisions with respect to APD, at least on long-haul flights, as a result of the power being devolved by the UK chancellor in London in the 2012 budget.

As Kevin Stewart rightly said, the Northern Ireland Executive has seized the opportunity and has decided to reduce APD on long-haul flights to zero from January next year. Imagine what a boon it would be for the tourism sector in Scotland if we, too, could take such a decision.

As we have heard this afternoon, the devolution of APD to the Parliament is supported across the sector. Kenneth Gibson quoted from the Scottish Chambers of Commerce. The Scottish Council for Development and Industry also supports it. We also have the support of Scotland's major airports.

The Calman commission supported the devolution of APD, as did the Liberal Democrats' home rule commission. Of course, the problem with those commissions is that they support it but not, it seems, now. They do not want it to happen now, but they at least indicate some support.

I am happy to have had the opportunity to support the Government's motion. The sooner we have control over APD, the better. Of course, that holds true for all the other economic levers of a normal, independent country.

16:05

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to speak in the debate and, like my colleagues in the Labour Party, agree that air passenger duty should be devolved to the Parliament, as it has been devolved to Stormont.

Although I agree with much of what the Government's motion says about how the duty has increased since 2007 under Labour and Tories and the impact that that has had on families, I am concerned that it makes no mention of climate change. I wonder whether that might have something to do with the fact that the Government has failed to hit its widely heralded climate change targets.

I agree that the duty should be frozen while it is reviewed and, I hope, devolved. I am interested in how the level of APD would be determined and whether the SNP Government would lower the rate, which would conflict with its climate change targets.

As the Labour amendment—which I am glad to support—points out, Scots who use hubs such as

Heathrow currently pay APD twice. That is unfair on Scots, who are hard pressed to afford family holidays, and backs up the amendment's point that the Scottish Government should work with airports and airlines to explore further incentives and create new routes that remove the need to go to Heathrow in the first place.

My constituents in West Scotland are not short of airport choices. However, in some cases, they are left with no choice but to use Heathrow or Manchester airport because of the limited long-haul flights that are available from Glasgow, Prestwick or Edinburgh, which is easily accessible from my region.

I am disappointed that the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities refused to reassess the tax increment financing project at Glasgow airport, which would have created around 3,000 jobs and increased the renewable energy manufacturing sector there and throughout Renfrewshire. The refusal to consider the project is another blow to the local economy.

George Adam: Is Mary Fee aware that the same businesses and individuals met the Deputy First Minister to consider other ways in which we can take business forward in the area?

Mary Fee: I thank Mr Adam for that intervention, but I am disappointed. The project would have brought a considerable number of jobs and huge economic benefits to my area. The jobs at Doosan, which were much heralded in the Parliament by the First Minister, were lost. That was another huge economic blow to my area. The refusal also goes against the Government's plans to create a greener Scotland.

Only last week, Glasgow airport announced that passenger numbers for October had increased by 4.6 per cent compared with the same period in 2011. As the airport acknowledges, that increase is due in part to football fans travelling abroad. It also shows that APD does not deter people from flying. Overall passenger numbers have increased every quarter in recent years, so we must be careful about calling for the duty to be lowered or criticising the current levels when the current rate does not discourage flying.

Some use the statistics from the report on the increases since 2007 to their own advantage, but the restructuring of the duty in 2007 must be welcomed, as it recognised the different impacts that different lengths of flight have on the environment. A greater balance is needed between aviation taxation that limits CO₂ emissions on the one hand, and inward investment and tourism on the other.

Given that Scotland and its economy are often reliant on tourism, we need to get the APD levels

right so that people are encouraged to come to Scotland and Scots are encouraged to holiday at home. That said, we must also remember that, as highlighted in the York Aviation report, airports are a massive employer in Scotland, hence the need for a balance—a balance that must be addressed in any business impact assessment on the future of APD.

There appears to be general consensus in the motion and the amendments and in the chamber that APD should be devolved. That would be another step in strengthening devolution and the tax powers of this Parliament.

16:10

Mark McDonald (North East Scotland) (SNP):

As mentioned by my colleague Kevin Stewart, I served as a member of the Aberdeen airport consultative committee when I represented the Dyce, Bucksburn and Danestone ward in Aberdeen City Council, which is where Aberdeen airport is located.

York Aviation's report outlines the impact of air passenger duty rises. Indeed, the report clearly distinguishes between the impact of APD rises on short-haul travel and that on long-haul travel. That is important in the context of debate about short-haul flights versus direct flights.

The report also focuses on the impact of APD rises on individual airports. Aberdeen airport, which is in my region, sustains the third-largest loss of passengers

"at around 200,000 passengers per annum by 2016."

Patrick Harvie talked about the busiest October on record. Undoubtedly, there will be individual months when specific events taking place in the north-east encourage greater throughput of passengers, but it is worth looking at that figure as representing the overall picture. Indeed, the briefing provided by the Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce said:

"Air travel is particularly crucial to this part of Scotland because we are so geographically distant from London and from Europe's key cities".

When an area is—as Aberdeen is—an extremely important part of the UK, Scottish and European economies, it is important to have some quick and readily available links in order to maintain a competitive edge.

It is worth noting that, since January, aviation has been included in the European Union emission trading scheme, which will play its own part in relation to the climate change agenda. It is also worth commenting that one reason for using APD is to encourage planes to be filled up, because that is perhaps not happening at the moment. Indeed, WWF is encouraging airlines to

fill planes and to use more efficient aircraft, a point that my colleague Stewart Stevenson highlighted. Ways are being looked at to incentivise more environmentally friendly forms of air travel, including the use of taxation levers in order to encourage that.

We have heard the old refrain that APD is just a tax that we want to cut, but the obvious and important point to remember is that air passenger duty is not, by any stretch of the imagination, a progressive form of taxation. Regardless of one's income level, one pays the same air passenger duty. All that that does is to put pressure on those on lower and middle incomes who may choose, as is their right, to use aviation as a means of transportation. It may be that some members want to see air travel once again become the preserve of the wealthy. That is fine if that is their position, but they should at least be honest about their intention.

It does not behove any of us to exclude large numbers of Scottish society from accessing air travel for whatever reason, whether business or, indeed, pleasure. I take Alison Johnstone's point about the comparative spend analysis. I am a great fan of the staycation and I encourage people who live in Scotland to holiday here. However, at the same time, we must respect that people will want to choose, on occasion, to holiday overseas, and we should not put unnecessary impediments in the way of them making that choice. What we should do is to look at ways in which we can incentivise environmentally conscious and friendly means of transportation in the aviation industry.

I will always be willing to talk to members and to discuss with them how to operate incentivisation, but I absolutely disagree that we should hit people with sticks and expect them to modify their behaviour. That does not positively encourage behaviour modification; all that that does is make people resent the behaviour changes that they are faced with.

It is worth noting that VAT is levied on top of air passenger duty. The notion of levying a tax on a tax is born of a uniquely UK Government perspective. That is relevant to the issues that we are discussing.

I believe that the devolution of air passenger duty to the Scottish Parliament is essential. Alex Johnstone says that there is no guarantee that the duty would not rise. To him I say that the Government has set out its policy position and other parties can set out their policy positions. However, I also believe that, whatever decisions are taken, we would be in a position to decide air passenger duty based on the needs of Scotland. That is the underlying principle.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott): We now move to winding-up speeches. I call Patrick Harvie, to be followed by Willie Rennie.

16:15

Patrick Harvie: Malcolm Chisholm correctly separated out two issues: one concerns whether the tax or duty should be devolved and the other is about what to do with that power. I would like to reassure Brian Adam, who argued that it was absurd for environmentalists to raise a climate change argument against the devolution of this tax that that is not what I did. I used a climate change argument against relentless aviation growth. It would be absurd for an environmentalist not to make such an argument. In fact, it is absurd for any member who voted for the 2050 climate change targets not to make such an argument.

Whether we leave this power in the hands of a UK Government that wishes to see relentless aviation growth or a Scottish Government that wishes to see relentless aviation growth, I will still argue for a different aviation policy.

Hanzala Malik: I draw the member's attention to the reality in life, which is that, when people travel long haul, they have to go via routes in the UK, which means additional flights, which contributes more to pollution. When we encourage long-haul flights from Scotland, we are helping to reduce that.

Patrick Harvie: Alex Johnstone articulated the ambiguity of that environmental argument in his opening speech.

I have been quite astonished by the number of members who do not seem to understand that there are such things as trains to London or Manchester, which allow people to change to an aeroplane.

Earlier, Kenneth Gibson had some fun at my expense—very much his style—by pointing out that, yes, I have, on occasion, used a plane. To be sure, if I were standing here arguing for the mothballing of the aviation industry and for the runways to be dug up for cabbages, I would be a hypocrite. However, I argue not that we should abolish aviation but that we have to use it less than we do now, instead of having relentless growth.

Like Kenneth Gibson, I have taken a decision that issues such as international development are a legitimate use of aviation, so I have flown to take part in conferences, just as he flew to Mexico to take part in the world AIDS conference—I very much supported his attendance of that conference, which was funded by the same organisation that has funded me. However, when I have been able to make a choice about how to

travel—for example, when I have travelled to Copenhagen or The Hague—I have gone by train, which is entirely achievable on a continent such as ours. Similarly, when I went to the United States, I thought long and hard about the choices and made a decision that I would compromise by flying one way and spending 11 days, and a great deal of my own money, coming back by cargo ship.

I know that not everyone is in a position to make those choices, but we have to consider circumstances in which aviation is a necessary choice and those in which it can be replaced by an alternative.

Kevin Stewart: Unfortunately, I would not have the choice of some of the options that Mr Harvie has mentioned.

Surely he finds it a little bizarre that, under the current UK system, the APD rates for short-haul travel have increased by 160 per cent but those for long-haul have increased by between 225 per cent and 360 per cent.

Mr Harvie has used long-haul flights and sees them as being more environmentally friendly. Why would he allow the UK Government to create the situation that I describe? Why would he not encourage more long-haul flights from Scotland?

Patrick Harvie: That is certainly not the argument that I made, and my amendment does not endorse the specific formulation of APD. It talks about how APD should be used to restrain growth.

Alison Johnstone mentioned the tourism deficit. The Government's figures, which were calculated in 2005, showed a deficit of £17 billion across the UK. That is the difference between the amount that incoming tourists spend here and outgoing tourists spend when they go on holiday. The vast majority of the money that is spent in the Scottish tourism industry comes from domestic tourism. We should be seeking to grow that.

I will also mention the argument that the aviation industry is suffering from incredibly high taxes. Aviation actually receives a vast tax discount from the current regime. It is the only mode of transport that does not pay fuel duty, and it does not pay VAT on the full cost of tickets. The tax discounts that the aviation industry is enjoying amount to more than £10 billion a year, compared with other transport modes.

Mark McDonald: Will the member take an intervention?

Patrick Harvie: I am afraid that I do not have time.

In closing, I will mention one or two statistics that have not been mentioned. The concentration in the atmosphere of the main greenhouse gas,

carbon dioxide, has continued to increase from a pre-industrial level of 278ppm to more than 391ppm in 2012. That is a higher concentration than there has been at any time during the past 15 million years. Astonishingly, some members appear to think that the next quarter's gross domestic product figures are more important than such a statistic.

Anyone who voted for the 2050 climate change targets and who is remotely interested in handing on an economy that is viable, let alone flourishing and successful, to the parliamentarians who will take their seats in this chamber in 2050 must focus on that long-term challenge to the viability of human civilization. Sacrificing that for short-term economic gain will be worth nothing in the long run.

16:21

Willie Rennie: At times, today's debate has been like a parliamentary edition of the BBC "Holiday" programme. Helen Eadie told us about her trips to eastern Europe—perhaps she could enlighten us a bit more in the future—and Kenneth Gibson talked about all the flights that he has been dreaming about, including to Cuba, I suspect.

The debate has been quite useful, but it has looked at only one part of the equation. Whenever the Parliament makes choices, it needs to consider everything in the round, including what Patrick Harvie passionately described in terms of the climate change targets. We need to consider that because we sit here and make bold claims about climate change legislation, but do we follow it through when it comes to making decisions on individual projects and spending areas? We fall short on many of those occasions. I share Patrick Harvie's passion. I do not always agree with the extreme measures that he might take, but I believe that climate change is such a serious issue that we need to consider it in today's debate.

The substance of the motion is actually rather timid and cowardly. It looks at the 2.1 million passengers that, it claims, have been lost to Scotland's airports, but only proposes to remedy that loss by 300,000 by freezing APD levels. At no point during the debate has any single member, in response to me or any other member, spelled out how that will be paid for. As I have already said, if APD is frozen, it will cost £90 million per year. Where will that come from? That is what we need to consider. If we are going to go further, as Kevin Stewart and Annabelle Ewing and others suggested, and take APD for long-haul flights down to zero, that will be an additional cost in order to compete—as those members say—with Northern Ireland.

Annabelle Ewing: Will the member give way?

Willie Rennie: Not just now.

We need to consider such issues in the round. We cannot simply proclaim the benefits of one half of the equation, and not live up to our responsibilities in the Parliament to spell out how we are going to pay for it.

Many members have called for the devolution of APD, and I support that, because it would allow us to do some of the things that we would like to try, as Stewart Stevenson pointed out in a very informative way. We could take practical measures and have a much more precise APD scheme that would cover Scotland's special needs. Stewart Stevenson's contribution to the debate was very good.

Kenny Gibson must have been dreaming, because I said that we were in favour of devolving APD.

Brian Adam described the powers that we in the Parliament need to make decisions. However, when the Government has been given the opportunity to do something about flights to the islands through the air discount scheme, it has failed miserably.

The Government needs to think again. If it is to have APD powers, it needs to think about using them properly.

Keith Brown: Will the member take an intervention?

Willie Rennie: Not just now.

The Government should not use the issue just as a tool to make the case for independence. We need to consider the matter on its merits and not in that wider debate.

We need to consider the environment. I do not think that a single SNP member—apart from Stewart Stevenson—referred to the environment; I apologise if I have omitted someone. However, several members—including Sandra White, Michael Matheson, Joe FitzPatrick, Jamie Hepburn, Stuart McMillan and Bob Doris—signed a motion in 2007 that talked about tackling aircraft emissions and supported air passenger duty. I do not know whether those members have changed their minds and regret their initial decision, or whether they find it difficult to live up to the consequences of what they claimed to support.

The central issue is that we need to consider everything in the round. Of course the Treasury should look at the matter.

Helen Eadie: It is nonsense to suggest that there were not a number of members who spoke about environmental issues. The fact that we spoke about cutting the number of journeys to Heathrow, Gatwick and Luton indicates clearly that we are concerned about the environment. I could

go on, but I will not, as that would take up Willie Rennie's time.

Willie Rennie: I always feel suitably chided by Helen Eadie. She is of course right: she referred to environmental issues, and I apologise profusely for making such a claim about her. However, the emphasis in many speeches was on passenger numbers and increasing the number of flights and was not on the environment—the focus was in the wrong place.

That is not to say that we should not encourage the provision of direct flights, which are more environmentally sustainable. However, the emissions from flights are considerable. We need to consider that if we are to achieve our climate change ambitions, as Patrick Harvie says.

As a member of the cross-party group on Pakistan, I support Hanzala Malik's ambition for direct flights to Lahore, which are important because a big community here needs easy access to Pakistan. That is an example of a decision that we need to take, but simply saying that we need to cut the duty—in some cases to zero—is wrong. Let us consider such things in the round, not in isolation, and let us do so carefully, because the issue is not as straightforward as many members would like to think.

16:28

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Con): We have had a useful debate in which interesting and valid speeches have come from all parts of the chamber. There have been areas of broad—if not unanimous—agreement and areas of broad disagreement.

One area of broad agreement—with one or two exceptions—was on the fact that the current APD regime has caused enormous difficulties. The level and size of the difficulties might be in some dispute, but it is clear enough—to me, anyway—that the regime causes difficulties. We have heard from many members about the increases in APD for short and long-haul flights, and it is fair to say that the APD level is high in comparison with previous levels and with the rest of Europe.

The numbers might be disputed, but passengers probably have been lost. Although overall increases have occurred, opportunities have been lost in relation to passengers and visitor spend. As the York Aviation paper outlines, the risk is that that will happen towards 2016.

To a degree, APD hits businesses, tourism and hard-pressed families. In the past couple of years, the voices have grown louder and more coherent and have pulled together a bit more, culminating in the York Aviation report.

The question then becomes what we do with regard to APD, about which there is probably less agreement in the chamber than there are difficulties caused. Should APD be devolved, cut or scrapped? What can we do to best help businesses, tourism and families in Scotland, while considering everything—as Willie Rennie said—in the round?

We have heard a number of demands from the Scottish Government for powers that it does not currently have. However, there has been disappointment about its use of the powers that it does have. Alex Johnstone and Hanzala Malik made that point and the Conservative and Labour Party amendments mention it too, with regard to the air route development fund.

Keith Brown: I am sure that Gavin Brown was just about to reveal what the Tory position is. Can he clarify whether his party's position is that of its past leader, Annabel Goldie, who supported devolution under the Calman commission; that of its current leader, Ruth Davidson, who appears to support abolition; or perhaps that of its future leader, Alex Johnstone? Can he explain what Alex Johnstone's position actually is?

Gavin Brown: I suppose I should thank the minister for that intervention.

The party's position is pretty clear. Our leader, Ruth Davidson, has gone directly to the highest levels of the UK Government to make the pitch on behalf of the tourism industry, Scottish business and families in Scotland that APD is, in the current circumstances, hurting Scotland.

Ruth Davidson has taken a different route from what is often called megaphone diplomacy, which can sometimes be equally effective, but on that point her route could turn out to be effective. Who knows what will happen in the autumn statement and beyond? I am not qualified to give any guarantees in that regard, but the approach of going directly to the UK Government is useful and worth while, and I hope that it will be effective.

Fergus Ewing: I appreciate much of what Gavin Brown says and the tone in which he says it. Perhaps he can explain one thing for me. Do the Scottish Conservatives believe that, at the very least, there should be a freeze in APD?

Gavin Brown: I think that Alex Johnstone presented our case pretty well. Our objective is for passengers to pay as little as possible. We do not wish passengers to pay any more than they have to, but we must take cognisance of the realities that face the UK Government and the Treasury at present. The UK Government hears demands week in, week out, not just from the SNP as a party, but from the Scottish Government as a whole.

I will give members a couple of examples from the past few weeks. We have heard demands from the Scottish Government that fuel duty must not go up; that VAT in general should be reduced; and that VAT should be substantially reduced for the entire hospitality industry, and for any building work, repairs and maintenance. The Scottish Government also wants a huge increase in capital spending for its shovel-ready projects, and higher pensions. We have a huge list from the Scottish Government of areas in which it wants greater spending or reduced taxes, but the reality is that the UK Government must balance the books. The Scottish Government never says which of those areas are its priorities—it simply has a shopping list of items for which it does not have to take responsibility.

Kevin Stewart: Will the member give way?

Mark McDonald: Will the member give way?

Gavin Brown: I am in my last minute, so I will not take any more interventions.

We have not heard today from the Scottish Government what it would do with APD if it was to be devolved. Would it scrap APD in its entirety, to which Kenneth Gibson alluded, simply reduce it, or increase it?

The Scottish Government's track record on taxation for business was great on the small business bonus scheme, but pitiful on the retail levy and the son of the retail levy, and even more pitiful on empty property rates. It has a very mixed track record in that regard.

Why does the Scottish Government not tell us why it has not done more in relation to the air route development fund—which involves a power that it already has—and show its intention of genuinely doing something for Scottish business and industry? It will then be taken more seriously with regard to the powers that it does not have.

16:34

Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab): The debate was stimulated by the publication at the end of last month of the York Aviation report on the impact of air passenger duty on Scotland.

There has been disagreement about the robustness of some of the figures in the report. Like other members, I have doubts about some of them. However, some aspects of the report are clearly correct. It is correct to say that the UK is out of step with much of the rest of Europe and that that has a negative impact on the parts of the economy that rely on access to air services.

Long-haul travel, in particular, has been penalised. Hanzala Malik talked about the 8 per cent increase in APD on the route between

Glasgow and Lahore. Rates on long-haul flights have increased by 225 to 360 per cent since 2007. It is unfortunate that that differential encourages short-haul flights to hubs in places where APD is lower or non-existent, to connect with long-haul flights. That has a negative impact on carbon emissions reduction, because shorter flights generate proportionately greater emissions, as members have said.

Edinburgh and Glasgow rely on air services to connect with the finance and business sectors, and Aberdeen relies on air services to connect with the energy sector.

I have been present for the entire debate and I heard a number of members, including Hanzala Malik, Mary Fee, Helen Eadie, Stewart Stevenson and Kevin Stewart, talk about environmental considerations. Indeed, Kevin Stewart made a good point about the possibility of passengers taking short-haul flights to Northern Ireland to access long-haul flights, which will have a negative impact on emissions, given the effect of landing and taking off on short runways. That was an important point.

There is evidence that passengers are not flying, but the idea that a person would take a train from London to Aberdeen to do business is not realistic. People will not do that; they will either pay the extra duty and fly or find somewhere less expensive to do their business—and they might still fly there. That is a problem.

As Brian Adam said, the UK Government has more or less admitted that APD is a revenue-raising tax rather than a carbon-reducing tax. APD raises a lot of money. As Helen Eadie pointed out, it is a good tax, in the sense that it is an exported tax, because people in other countries pay much of it. A tax is always more popular if other people are paying it.

Tourism will be affected, because passengers who fly into and out of the UK will be affected. It has been argued that higher duties might encourage UK residents to holiday at home. However, the issue is not just the cost of the flight but the cost of the holiday. Holidaying in the United Kingdom tends to be more expensive, which encourages people to go elsewhere.

APD was restructured in 2009 and went from two to four bands, with two charges in each band: a full rate for premium-class passengers and a reduced rate for economy-class passengers. There have been a variety of increases across the four bands since then, which demonstrates that there is the opportunity for flexibility in the application of APD. We could take advantage of such opportunities if the tax were devolved. There needs to be further discussion about how we would deal with APD.

Richard Baker reminded us of the double whammy whereby a passenger who travels from a regional airport to one of the London airports and then changes airlines has to pay APD twice. That is unfair.

I think that it was Colin Keir who made the point that APD was reduced in Northern Ireland about a year ago, with all long-haul flights now taxed in band A, which has helped to retain the direct flight to New York. The power to change APD rates has therefore benefited one part of the United Kingdom. We do not want to have every tax power, but we would like to have flexibility in Scotland to make such decisions.

The Silk commission on devolution in Wales, whose report was published yesterday, recommended that APD be devolved to the National Assembly for Wales

“for direct long haul flights initially”,

and that consideration be given to the devolution of all rates for APD.

Keith Brown: The issue has been considered by one devolution commission. Does Elaine Murray think that it should go to another commission and that there should be a further review by the UK Government prior to devolution of APD, or does she support devolution of the tax now?

Elaine Murray: We have established the case for APD to be devolved but it is important to look at devolution in the round. We are undertaking a devolution commission that will look at all forms of taxation. I have suggestions about other taxes that could be devolved to the Scottish Parliament, but they are not currently part of the Labour policy and that is what we are refining in advance of the independence revolution—devolution—[*Laughter.*] Sorry, I mean in advance of the independence referendum. That will allow us to present alternatives to people in Scotland.

The Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats are right that we need to look at the financial consequences. If the York Aviation report is correct, revenue from APD in Scotland would be something like £433 million in 2016-17. That implies that APD currently raises about £322 million—I do not know whether that is correct.

The Silk commission suggests that in Wales there would be a fixed reduction to the block grant, to be agreed between the Welsh and UK Governments. Presumably, a similar arrangement would be reached for the devolution of APD to the Scottish Government. Therefore, if we wish to reduce APD or if we want to make changes to it, we need to consider how that would be funded—we cannot run away from that. Clearly, if there was such an arrangement with the UK Government,

there would be an immediate reduction in the block grant and we would have to consider that.

Fergus Ewing: I am supportive of the thrust of Elaine Murray's argument. Does she agree that if we had the power to reduce APD in Scotland, we would have a competitive advantage that would better enable us to win long-haul flights to places such as China?

Elaine Murray: There is an argument that reducing APD would eventually benefit the economy but it is a bit like the arguments around decreasing corporation tax. If the money was taken off the block grant, we would immediately have to deal with that reduction, and there would be an immediate impact on public spending. Eventually, we might get the money back if the economy grows but we would have to make that reduction in spending straight away—that is what we have to face. It is a difficult issue.

Fergus Ewing: We would get the revenue straight away.

Elaine Murray: The Scottish Government would not necessarily get it straight away—it would have to grow the economy first. The Scottish Government is not going to grow the economy in an instant, but it would have to find cuts to make to public services in an instant.

We also probably dispute the contention in the motion that the devolution of APD is the only solution. Richard Baker and others spoke about the late lamented route development fund and others have spoken about other interventions such as marketing initiatives—Hanzala Malik told us about the Glasgow initiatives. Mary Fee made an important point about the need to take a balanced approach. We need to look at the impact on carbon emissions and we need to look at how we would manage the reduction in spending—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The member might wish to draw to a close.

Elaine Murray: We need to treat the proposal with caution.

Stewart Stevenson made a lot of good suggestions, which I thought concurred a lot with the part of our amendment that deals with the need to work with airlines in order to reduce carbon emissions.

16:43

The Minister for Transport and Veterans (Keith Brown): It has been, as has been mentioned already, a fairly constructive debate with a lot of good ideas and obviously some different points of view. To pick out some things that I took note of, Colin Keir successfully put his finger on the real issue here, which is jobs. That

was sometimes forgotten in some of the other discussions—jobs are absolutely essential. Colin Keir was also right to report back on what was an excellent inaugural meeting of the cross-party group on aviation, where we had a high level of representation.

Malcolm Chisholm gave a thoughtful speech, as ever. He was right to say that the alleged environmental benefits of the tax are substantially overplayed. In fact, there are very few people—apart, perhaps, from Patrick Harvie—who would actually claim it to be an environmentally friendly tax at this stage. It is very much a tax grab by the—

Patrick Harvie: Like one of his back-bench colleagues, the minister slightly misrepresented what I said. What I said in my amendment and in my speech is that the objective that we should set when we look at financial measures and other measures in relation to aviation is to restrain relentless growth. Can the minister tell us how unending aviation growth is compatible with the climate change objectives?

Keith Brown: That is not quite what Patrick Harvie said earlier. He said that he saw APD as a means of restricting further aviation growth. He did not say whether he would support further increases in APD, which is the logical next step of his particular case. He also did not address the point—which several members made—that that works against the environment in a number of ways. For example, the industry is telling us that people are going to Dublin and Schiphol to make long-haul flights that they could make from Scotland, thereby increasing the harm caused to the environment. He never addressed that in his speech.

The other key point was made by Brian Adam, who said that this has to happen now. That is the whole point—this has to happen now. People have different views on the York Aviation report, but it points out the impact that the increase in APD is having on the economy now. We are well past the stage of further commissions and reviews; we must see some action taken now.

Mary Fee made a thoughtful speech. I did not agree with much of it, but a lot of thought was put into it.

Annabelle Ewing made the point that there have been endless commissions but no substantial action has been taken.

Kenny Gibson pointed out the confusion that exists in the Conservative ranks. We heard it first from Alex Johnstone and, unfortunately, we did not hear any further clarity from Gavin Brown.

Gavin Brown: Will the minister give way?

Keith Brown: I will make a further point and then take an intervention from the member.

Hanzala Malik talked about action that can be taken now, and I understand his point. I have spoken to Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, which has made suggestions about what we can do to replace the route development fund. Like some of what members have suggested, that could be done if enough effort were applied to it. I have taken that approach. Nobody has yet been able to say how we could replicate much of what that fund did, but there are things that can be done, such as marketing, which Hanzala Malik mentioned. We are doing that—that is happening just now—and we will shortly undertake further work with the European Commission to expand that as far as we can. Work is on-going in relation to that.

Gavin Brown: The minister sought clarity. Were APD to be devolved swiftly, what exactly would the Government do with APD? Would it scrap it or cut it? Can he give us specific, detailed proposals for what the Scottish Government would do?

Keith Brown: What we have revealed is the fig leaf behind which the Tories are taking no action at all. They should devolve APD first and let the Parliament decide. The Parliament must make its own decisions.

I accept Willie Rennie's point that there is an opportunity cost. If we spend money on not raising APD, we will have to find it from somewhere else—I accept that. However, the basic point is that this Parliament must have that power in the first place, and Willie Rennie's party is using that as a fig leaf in not giving us that power.

The Conservative position was not only uncomfortable for them but unfortunate, because there was a real chance, at the outset of the debate, to have the Parliament speak with a fairly united voice, reflecting the cross-party group that Colin Keir chaired, at which the whole industry—people who would not normally be in the same room together, such as Ryanair, British Airways and easyJet—said with one voice that action must be taken on this. The Tories have squandered that.

Alex Johnstone: Will the minister take an intervention?

Keith Brown: No, I have taken enough so far, and the member would not take any interventions from SNP members—as happens in most debates these days.

The Tories must agree their position. Is it Ruth Davidson's position, that APD should be scrapped? Is it Annabel Goldie's position, that APD should be devolved? What is the position? There is no clarity on the Conservative position. Is it something to do with the fact that on aeroplanes,

unlike on trains, people are not allowed to sit in first class when they have paid for only a second-class ticket? I am not sure. There was a chance for the Conservatives to show support.

On the Liberal Democrats' position, accusing our motion of being timid when they propose no action and have nothing to say in support of their previous position of devolution—by that I mean devolution now, not further excuses for not taking action—is the essence of timidity, but that is the position that Willie Rennie adopted. Given that they have Danny Alexander at the centre of the Treasury, we would have expected a great deal more from the Liberal Democrats than earnest reasons for not taking any action at all.

Willie Rennie: Will the minister take an intervention?

Keith Brown: Despite the fact that Willie Rennie would not take an intervention from me, I will take one from him.

Willie Rennie: I apologise to the minister for not letting him in, like Helen Eadie. Does he support taking APD levels back to 2007 levels, or will he stop complaining about the 2 million lost passengers?

Keith Brown: I am certainly not going to stop complaining about lost passengers and lost benefit to the Scottish economy. Our consistent position has been that we believe that APD should be devolved. We have also made it clear that we want the powers not for the sake of it, but to improve the economic lot of people in Scotland. Perhaps they can deduce from that what we intend to do with APD.

There was a great deal that I welcome in the speeches from Labour members. However, Richard Baker's amendment has the unfortunate effect of deleting the reference to devolving APD to Scotland, despite the statements of some Labour members. It mentions a further devolution commission—we have already had a devolution commission—and talks about going back to the UK Government for a further review. Twice in 14 months, the UK Government has stated its intention to review the position. First, the coalition Government said that it would review APD in relation to Scotland. Now, its position is to review it in relation to the rest of the UK.

I remind members that the Calman commission, to which the three unionist parties subscribed, made the point that devolution of APD to Scotland was not only a good thing, but would be especially necessary if APD were devolved to Northern Ireland, which has now happened.

Malcolm Chisholm: Our amendment is as clear as day, because it says

"believes that devolution of APD to Scotland should form part of"

a review of APD, along with other measures by the UK Government. The position is absolutely clear.

Keith Brown: The Labour amendment does not say that. It talks about

"immediate action to resolve the anomaly"

that has been talked about, whereby APD is paid twice. It says that

"the Calman Commission on Scottish Devolution recommended that APD should be devolved and that the Scotland Bill Committee found a strong case for devolving APD and that this will inform the work of the Devolution Commission".

It goes on to say that there should be

"an immediate wider review of APD by the UK Government".

How many reviews do we need? Jobs are being lost now.

Richard Baker: Will the minister take an intervention?

Keith Brown: No, I have taken enough interventions already.

It is worth saying that in the UK, as several members indicated, the maximum rate of aviation tax for any class is €226. The next highest level that is charged is €42, by Germany. The level that the UK levies is more than five times the second-highest level in Europe. The comparison was made with Ireland, which is often derided by some members. The rate that it charges is €3. Given the amount that the UK levies, on top of the cost of air fares, does anyone seriously believe that we are not bleeding business to Ireland?

APD will have an impact on a family of four or five who want to go on a family holiday to somewhere such as Florida; it will make them decide not to make that journey or to make another journey instead. If it results in them taking a staycation, we can get a benefit from that, but we should not pretend that the punitive rates of APD in Scotland are not having an impact. The situation is worse in Scotland than it is in other parts of the UK, for reasons that a number of members have outlined.

Regrettably, the York Aviation report has been undermined by thread pulling. We are talking about serious people who are involved in business. Fergus Ewing and I have spoken to each of the airport managers and to most of the airlines. I do not deny that there is an element of self-interest on their part in having APD addressed, but the self-interest of the airlines and the airports coincides with our interest of increasing the economic benefit to the people of Scotland from the use of our airports.

The York Aviation report is a serious report that makes a serious case. The point was made to us that the Scottish airports and others could not get a hearing or a rational answer from the Treasury, despite all their efforts, and they were stunned by the appalling lack of access. That was commented on in a meeting that was attended by a number of members, including John Scott. Mention was made of how much access and support they had received not just from the Scottish Government, but from members of other parties who would be willing to support them.

There is a chance for us to unite on the issue and to make a positive difference for the people of Scotland. I am very pleased that, despite the fact that I feel unable to accept Richard Baker's amendment for the reasons that I have mentioned, the Labour group will, I think, support the motion. I urge others to do the same. That way, we can speak with a united voice, which is extremely important.

Standing Orders (Rule Changes) (Public Bodies Act 2011)

Ministerial Appointments (Code of Practice)

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is consideration of two motions in the name of Dave Thompson: S4M-04830, on the Public Bodies Act 2011 orders, standing order rule changes; and S4M-04832, on the consultation on the code of practice for ministerial appointments to public bodies. Mr Thompson, I would appreciate it if you would speak to and move both motions. I can give you until 5 o'clock to do so.

16:53

Dave Thompson (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP): Thank you, Presiding Officer.

The Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee is recommending standing order changes that will establish a procedure for Parliament to consent to orders under the United Kingdom Public Bodies Act 2011 that affect devolved interests. The 2011 act gives UK ministers the authority to abolish, merge or transfer the functions of certain public bodies. The act is largely enabling legislation, with any changes to public bodies taking place via secondary legislation and orders being brought forward at Westminster. However, any orders that are within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament require to be consented to by this Parliament.

Interim arrangements have been in place since last year and the procedure used has been based on that for legislative consent motions. First, the Scottish Government lays a memorandum that gives its views on the order, with that memorandum being accompanied by a copy of the order, plus relevant accompanying documents; secondly, a lead committee and the Subordinate Legislation Committee consider the memorandum and report on it to the Parliament; and, finally, the Parliament has to debate an LCM-style motion and vote on whether to give its consent to the order.

Over the past year, the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee has taken the opportunity to consider how well those interim arrangements have worked in practice, and we have concluded that the arrangements have provided an effective model for scrutiny of the orders. In each case, the relevant subject committee and the Subordinate Legislation Committee have scrutinised the order and

reported on it to the Parliament, which has then taken a decision, informed by the scrutiny, on whether to consent to the order.

We therefore propose that those arrangements should form the basis of new standing orders. The main change being proposed by the committee is a new chapter of standing orders—chapter 9BA—covering the procedure for consenting to 2011 act orders. That largely mirrors the legislative consent motion procedure set out in chapter 9B, with appropriate modifications. The remit of the Subordinate Legislation Committee in rule 6.11 is also being amended to allow it to consider the orders. In addition, there are several consequential changes from the new procedure, including changes to rule 5.4 on the business programme and rule 5.9 on the *Business Bulletin*. The motion in my name invites Parliament to note the committee's report and agree that the changes to standing orders are made with effect from 21 November 2012.

I will move on to deal with the Public Appointments Commissioner for Scotland consultation. The commissioner issued a consultation on 30 August 2012 on revisions to the code of practice for ministerial appointments to public bodies in Scotland. The purpose of the code of practice is to provide a framework that enables Scottish ministers to attract and appoint the most able people in a manner that meets the requirements of the Public Appointments and Public Bodies etc (Scotland) Act 2003. The consultation aims to establish whether there is scope to make improvements to the code itself or to the guidance issued by the Public Appointments Commissioner.

The current code of practice was made in April 2011 and came into effect only in September 2011. The Public Appointments Commissioner's reasons for reviewing the code just one year on are, first—

The Presiding Officer: Excuse me, Mr Thompson, there is just far too much chattering in the chamber. I ask members to have the courtesy to listen to Mr Thompson.

Dave Thompson: Thank you, Presiding Officer.

The first reason for reviewing the code is to ensure that the code is operating on the basis of effectiveness, efficiency and economy; secondly, it is to ensure that regulation under the code is proportionate; and, finally, it is that the code acts as a real aid to ministers in ensuring that appointments are made openly, fairly and with due regard to equal opportunity requirements.

A number of issues were raised during the committee's evidence session with the commissioner, including feedback received on the operation of the current code; the format of

application forms; the variation in length of recruitment exercises; the effectiveness of the current reappointment process; and the role of the public appointments assessors. The commissioner has indicated that he is likely to propose specific revisions to the code of practice early in 2013. In the light of that, the committee has agreed simply to note the current consultation in the meantime. The motion in my name therefore invites Parliament to note the committee's report on the consultation on the code of practice for ministerial appointments to public bodies in Scotland.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee's 6th Report 2012 (Session 4), *Public Bodies Act orders - Standing Order rule changes* (SP Paper 198), and agrees that the changes to Standing Orders set out in the annexe of the report be made with effect from 21 November 2012.

That the Parliament notes the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee's 7th Report 2012 (Session 4), *Consultation on the Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies in Scotland* (SP Paper 210).

[*Applause.*]

The Presiding Officer: That is a well-deserved round of applause. [*Laughter.*] The questions on both motions will be put at decision time.

Committee of the Regions (Membership)

16:59

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is consideration of motion S4M-04879, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on Convention of Scottish Local Authorities membership of the Committee of the Regions.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament notes that, following the 2012 Scottish local government elections, the representation from local government to the Committee of the Regions will be Councillors Corrie McChord and Tony Buchanan as full members and Councillors Graham Garvie and Barbara Grant as alternate members for the remainder of the current Committee of the Regions mandate to the end of 2014.—[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

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

Decision Time

17:00

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): There are eight questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S4M-04784.3, in the name of Richard Baker, which seeks to amend motion S4M-04874, in the name of Keith Brown, on air passenger duty, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)

Against

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
 Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)

Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 McGregor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 31, Against 69, Abstentions 13.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S4M-04784.2, in the name of Alex Johnstone, which seeks to amend motion S4M-04874, in the name of Keith Brown, on air passenger duty, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

Against

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
Eadie, Helen (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)

Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)
McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 13, Against 100, Abstentions 0.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: In relation to the debate on air passenger duty, I remind members that if the amendment in the name of Willie Rennie is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Patrick Harvie falls.

The next question is, that amendment S4M-04784.4, in the name of Willie Rennie, which seeks to amend motion S4M-04874, in the name of Keith Brown, on air passenger duty, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)

Against

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
Eadie, Helen (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)

MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)
McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

Abstentions

Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 4, Against 96, Abstentions 13.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that amendment S4M-04784.1, in the name of Patrick Harvie, which seeks to amend motion S4M-04874, in the name of Keith Brown, on air passenger duty, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)
Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
Eadie, Helen (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)

MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)
McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)
Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

ABSTENTIONS

Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 2, Against 110, Abstentions 1.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-04874, in the name of Keith Brown, on air passenger duty, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

For

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)
Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)
Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)

Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

AGAINST

Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)
 McGregor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 93, Against 19, Abstentions 1.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament notes with concern the recent report by York Aviation on behalf of Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow airports regarding the impact in Scotland of rises in the UK Government's air passenger duty (APD); particularly notes that rates for short-haul services have increased by around 160% since 2007, with long-haul rates increasing by up to 360% over the same period and further increases planned, at a time when Scotland and the rest of the UK have been experiencing one of the worst recessions in living memory; further notes that APD is the most expensive aviation duty in Europe and that increases in rates since 2007 and those projected through to 2016 are estimated to result in a loss of 2.1 million passengers to Scotland's main airports per year and that, as a consequence, by 2016 £210 million less will be spent in Scotland per year by inbound visitors; also notes that direct flights are more environmentally efficient than the multi-stop journeys via overseas hub airports that APD currently incentivises; believes that the only way to properly support the ambitions of Scotland's aviation industry, the needs of passengers and the growth of Scotland's economy is for

APD to be devolved to Scotland, as has happened in large measure in Northern Ireland, and that this should take place as soon as possible, and further believes that, as a measure to provide some immediate respite to the aviation industry, passengers and businesses, the UK Government should announce a freeze in APD levels.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-04830, in the name of Dave Thompson, on behalf of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, on Public Bodies Act 2011 orders—standing order rule changes, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament notes the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee's 6th Report 2012 (Session 4), *Public Bodies Act orders - Standing Order rule changes* (SP Paper 198), and agrees that the changes to Standing Orders set out in the annexe of the report be made with effect from 21 November 2012.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-04832, in the name of Dave Thompson, on behalf of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, on consultation on the code of practice for ministerial appointments to public bodies in Scotland, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament notes the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee's 7th Report 2012 (Session 4), *Consultation on the Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies in Scotland* (SP Paper 210).

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-04879, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on Convention of Scottish Local Authorities membership of the Committee of the Regions, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament notes that, following the 2012 Scottish local government elections, the representation from local government to the Committee of the Regions will be Councillors Corrie McChord and Tony Buchanan as full members and Councillors Graham Garvie and Barbara Grant as alternate members for the remainder of the current Committee of the Regions mandate to the end of 2014.

The Presiding Officer: That concludes decision time.

Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S4M-04027, in the name of Jim Eadie, on caring for and curing boys and men with Duchenne muscular dystrophy. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament commends the work of Action Duchenne in supporting boys and men across the Lothians and the United Kingdom who are living with Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD), which affects one in every 3,500 male births in the UK; welcomes what is considered groundbreaking research such as the AAV U7 trial being conducted at Royal Holloway College, University of London, into potentially highly effective "exon skipping" treatment for the currently incurable muscle-wasting disease; recognises that DMD is caused by a genetic variation in the dystrophin gene and can result in boys affected requiring a wheelchair by the ages of 8 to 11; notes that the current research is expected by Action Duchenne to produce the first wave of genetic medicines by 2014, with the potential to benefit at least 14% of patients, and has the potential to realise even more successful treatments in the future; believes that a simplified means of clinical trials for genetic medicines should be explored to promote further research, and looks forward to continued work toward improvements in the care and treatment of the boys and men living with DMD and the ultimate goal of an effective cure.

17:08

Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP):

Parents are not meant to outlive their children. It is impossible to imagine what it must be like for any parent to contemplate living longer than their child, but that is the exactly the position that tens of families across the country face.

I am grateful to my colleagues in all parties—45 of whom have signed the motion—for allowing this debate on Duchenne muscular dystrophy to take place.

Duchenne, which is a currently incurable muscle-wasting disease, affects one in every 3,500 male births in the United Kingdom. The condition, which is devastating and is the most common form of muscular dystrophy, mostly affects boys whose bodies do not produce dystrophin, which is a protein that helps to protect muscle. Without it, the muscles weaken, break down and are replaced by fibrous tissue. The first symptoms appear between the ages of one and three, and they usually result in the boys who are affected requiring a wheelchair by the age of eight to 11. Those who are affected may eventually need spinal rods to keep upright. By the time the person is 30, Duchenne is life threatening, as their heart and lungs are affected. In the most severe cases, people need respirators to breathe.

The motion commends the work of Action Duchenne, which is a charity that supports boys and men who live with DMD. As well as paying tribute to Dean Widd, the charity's regional development officer, I give special thanks to my constituent John Miller, advocacy officer for Action Duchenne Scotland, his grandson Lee, aged 14, who has Duchenne, and Lee's dad, Gary, all of whom are in the public gallery this evening. I also thank Lee's mum, Joyce, who is looking after Lee's brothers this evening. John Miller has done a phenomenal amount to raise awareness of the condition while lobbying for DMD to achieve the clinical and political priority that it deserves.

I also pay tribute to the boys and men living with Duchenne, their families and the care support workers and healthcare professionals who are involved in their care. I also record my thanks to the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign for all its work.

I am grateful to Dr Keith Foster of the University of Reading—formerly of Royal Holloway College, University of London—for making me aware of his groundbreaking research

“such as the AAV U7 trial into potentially highly effective ‘exon skipping’ treatment”,

which is highlighted in the motion.

The landscape for the development of gene medicines based on adeno-associated viruses has changed considerably over the past two years. Earlier this month, the European Commission licensed an AAV gene medicine—Glybera—for the first time. Although not in the field of DMD, that is a landmark moment as it defines a clear pathway for AAV-based gene medicines from the research laboratory bench to regulatory approval.

Two life science companies, GlaxoSmithKline and Prosensa, have already started treatment in a phase 3 clinical study in ambulant boys with DMD who have a dystrophin gene mutation amenable to an exon 51 skip—up to 13 per cent of boys with DMD. That randomised, placebo-controlled study has enrolled 180 patients from 18 countries and is currently the most advanced on-going study. I understand that all of the phase 3 clinical trial data are expected to be submitted to the European Medicines Agency—the evaluation agency—by early 2014.

Two further AAV-based research programmes have recently been approved and are recruiting patients for clinical trials that will start early in 2013. One research programme, based in Paris, will try to mask the mutation within the boys' muscle cells. The other research programme, based in the United States, will deliver a truncated DMD mini-gene using AAV into the muscles of DMD patients. In respect of clinical translation, an important point is that parameters to safely deliver

adeno-associated viruses systemically to humans have also recently been defined and approved.

According to Dr Foster,

“Within the field of DMD research, progress has been astounding ... For the first time, I have developed a method to restore a full length DMD gene to muscle using three safe AAVs.”

Dr Foster states that this research is highly significant,

“such that a programme will be applicable for all patients with DMD and is long overdue.”

There is an opportunity for Scotland to be part of that groundbreaking research. High-quality testing relies on clinical trials involving large numbers of patients. For muscular dystrophy, Scotland does not have the patient population required to achieve that on its own, but that does not mean that we cannot or should not contribute to United Kingdom and international research.

Contributing to international research is one of the main functions of the Scottish muscle network, which has been involved in encouraging participation in global trials in a number of ways. The network also promotes the Duchenne registry, which ensures that families can be contacted about trials in which they might participate. There are currently around 70 people on the register.

Such collaborative approaches are where the focus must lie, and that is where the Scottish Government, through the chief scientist office and the health research strategy, has an important role to play. Action Duchenne is contributing £161,000 to support Dr Foster's research at the University of Reading. I would like to see Scotland play its part through co-funding arrangements so that we can support the joint initiative between the University of Reading and the University of Glasgow. Future studies in Glasgow will evaluate improvements to cardiac tissue. A co-funding arrangement would allow greater value and greater resource to be generated by the chief scientist office, working in partnership with medical research charities and potentially other health departments in the UK, to support this pioneering research. That has the potential to deliver the genetic medicines that will benefit boys and men with DMD.

The motion refers to the need to explore a simplified means of clinical trials for genetic medicines. I am delighted that progress is being made through the development of a road map that highlights the checkpoints and blockages that currently exist in the gene medicine developmental pathway for rare diseases so that we can fast-track clinical research programmes while ensuring the first principle of safety.

If we invest in research and improve the means for clinical trials, we will meet the ambition that the First Minister set out when he stated in June 2008:

“We are determined that standards of care and life expectancy match those in other countries.”

The debate is primarily concerned with the breakthrough in research that is giving hope to people with Duchenne and their families, but I will end as I began, by putting the debate into its proper context. My constituent Mark Chapman, who spoke eloquently when lobbying Parliament earlier this year, said:

“As adults we need support with social inclusion, we need access to education and employment, we need equipment such as cough assists and ventilators at point of need, we need access to new drugs and treatment. We have a right to live as best we can, be that independent living or not. We have the right to relationships, sex and our own families should we choose. We demand our right to live life. Dealing with Duchenne should be a big enough fight on its own.”

By supporting the research, the Scottish Government can leverage the value of every Scottish pound that is spent by matching it with research funding from elsewhere in the UK. If we do that, we will be meeting our moral and practical obligations to a group of exceptional and inspirational individuals and their families by finding a cure for this horrendous disease.

17:16

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I will be the first to congratulate Jim Eadie on securing the debate. I acknowledge the work of Action Duchenne in supporting boys and men with Duchenne muscular dystrophy. I am proud to be the convener of the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on muscular dystrophy. We benefit from the experience of people such as John Miller, who as we know is the Scottish advocacy officer for Action Duchenne and who never stops talking about Lee. I associate myself with Jim Eadie's remarks about John's work and the work of his family.

Working with the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign, the cross-party group has spent much of its time focused on what we can do to improve the experience of people with muscular dystrophy. Inevitably, a lot of that has been about services. We have focused on the development of specialist multidisciplinary care, better transition services, better access to physiotherapy, the need for specialist muscle care advisers and the need for health and social care to be better joined up. We produced “The Mackie Report: Access to specialist neuromuscular care and social care in Scotland”, which clearly set out what could be achieved, based on evidence from health and social care professionals and, more important,

from those with muscular dystrophy and their families.

The Scottish Government's response was helpful, although there is a continuing problem with the employment of specialist muscle care advisers. The minister will recall that he gave a hugely welcome commitment to provide three full-time care adviser posts in this financial year. My understanding is that, currently, two advisers are in place, but that someone has yet to be employed for the north of Scotland. There might have been recruitment difficulties, but the minister will know just how important the advisers are to those with muscular dystrophy, as they provide essential care and support. If the minister has time, it would be helpful if he could tell us what action is being taken to ensure that the appointment is made as quickly as possible and that the long-term future of the posts is secure.

I return to Duchenne specifically. The thought that the groundbreaking research that Jim Eadie has highlighted might lead to the production of genetic medicine that will improve the treatment and condition of those with Duchenne's is truly fantastic. I do not pretend to understand what exon skipping is all about or what AAV-based medicine actually does, but what matters is that it will make a huge difference. The lesson for us all is to ensure that we continue to invest in research and to consider the impact of services and how to improve services for those with muscular dystrophy. Like Jim Eadie, I know that Action Duchenne will do just that, as will the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign, which also has an extensive research programme.

I join Jim Eadie in paying tribute to the campaigners, fundraisers and researchers because, without their efforts over the years, many things would have been so much more difficult to achieve. He is absolutely right that we should contribute to international research and participate in global clinical trials. Co-funding of such initiatives working in partnership with others will, undoubtedly, lead to quicker and more significant progress. I, too, recommend that to the Scottish Government.

Jim Eadie and I appear to be mentioning the same people tonight—we are at one on the matter. I recommend that those who have not yet seen Mark Chapman's film watch it. It is called “A Life Worth Living: Pushing the Limits of Duchenne”. I was not able to make the screening in the Parliament in June—indeed, that might even have been its premiere—but I have seen the film since then, and I recommend it to colleagues.

Mark Chapman is not defined by his disability or his condition. Rather, he is a shining example of what it is possible to do and of the richness of life. Therefore, I am very pleased to participate in the

debate and, once again, congratulate Jim Eadie on bringing it to the chamber.

17:20

Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): I confess that my knowledge of Duchenne muscular dystrophy was, until recently, rather sketchy. I suspect that such ignorance of that awful disease is widespread. Given the fact that, as the motion notes,

“one in every 3,500 male births in the UK”

is affected by DMD, that is a regrettable state of affairs.

Awareness of the condition and its devastating consequences for the victims and their families has increased markedly over the past few months in the major population centre in the constituency that I represent, for the most unfortunate of reasons. In Arbroath, we have in our midst one of the most heartbreaking examples of the devastating impact of DMD. The thought of seeing a child or loved one suffer and then die from a degenerative genetic condition is simply too painful for most of us to imagine. However, it has been a reality for Norman and Yvonne Mathieson, along with their daughter Claire, not once but twice, and the pain for the family goes on.

In little more than two years, the Mathiesons have lost two of their three sons to the condition. The remaining son, Daniel—their firstborn—is wheelchair-bound and they recognise that he is living on borrowed time. Daniel and his family have lived with his life-shortening condition for 20 years, and the family has spent the past few months fundraising to grant him his last wish. In 2007, Norman and Yvonne took the entire family to Florida; Daniel wants to return there one more time. The family set about trying to raise the £10,000 that it would take to meet the cost of a 29-day trip to the USA.

I talked to Mr Mathieson yesterday in preparation for the debate, and it emerged that the sum involved has successfully been raised in the space of only 11 weeks. In four weeks' time, the family will head to the sunshine state. I am sure that all members wish the trip to be everything that Daniel and his family would hope for.

Although I am sure that making preparations for the Florida holiday will be uppermost in the family's minds, I am equally sure that they will take an interest in the debate, as they have been actively campaigning to raise awareness of DMD for some time. Back in 2009, they were part of a lobby of Parliament for that purpose, and they tell me that they will return to the Parliament next year to pursue that agenda.

I hope that the staging of the debate—I congratulate my colleague Jim Eadie on securing it—will add momentum to the efforts that are being made not only to raise awareness of DMD but, more important, to develop some form of effective response to the disease.

The campaigning group Action Duchenne argues that a centre of excellence specific to the disease should be created in Scotland. I understand that there are only 150 identified sufferers north of the border and I am not sure whether it would be viable or practical to have such an arrangement with that number. It strikes me that, for geographical reasons and because of the travel challenges that such a set-up might pose some patients and their families, the best solution might be to ensure that the national health service seeks to deliver a quality service at a more localised level.

We must, of course, acknowledge that there are other forms of muscular dystrophy. Any commitment of resources in the direction of a centre of excellence would surely have to take account of that. However, such judgments can be made only on the advice of experts in the field. Although we are less expert, in this debate, we can acknowledge the advances that are being made in genetic medicine and commit ourselves to supporting them.

It seems that we are still nowhere near finding a cure for the disease but, as Jim Eadie highlighted, experimental treatments are being trialled and show promise. The sad reality is that whatever progress is made in that area will come too late for Daniel Mathieson. However, it seems that there is some hope on the horizon for other, much younger DMD sufferers.

I ask the minister to offer us the Government's perspective on the advances that are being made in search of a treatment and to indicate how we might contribute to them, as well as outlining how services in Scotland for people with DMD may develop.

17:24

Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con): Like others, I welcome the debate and congratulate Jim Eadie on bringing this important issue to the chamber. Chronic neuromuscular conditions often feature as a subject matter for members' business debates, but this evening's debate is one of the few to highlight a condition that strikes in childhood and which predominantly affects young boys.

All such conditions have a common thread—they are all relatively rare in population terms, and they tend to be the Cinderellas of the NHS, whose

focus is inevitably on the more common diseases that affect the bulk of the population.

The needs of the groups of people who suffer from such diseases are similar. Many of the diseases are progressive, most are currently incurable, and top-class research is vital if the underlying causes are to be found and treatments and potential cures developed. It is very exciting that such research is now producing results.

The motion sends out a message of hope of a very real health improvement to people who suffer from Duchenne muscular dystrophy, with current research likely to result in the development in the next few years of a series of genetic medicines that have the potential to benefit a proportion of patients and, I hope, with the possibility of more to come in the not-too-distant future.

Such genetic medicines were undreamt of until fairly recently, and they are a significant step forward in the search for an effective cure for such a debilitating condition. I fully support Jim Eadie's plea for Scotland to be part of collaborative clinical trials.

In the meantime, DMD sufferers deserve the best possible care and support and state-of-the-art equipment to help them cope with their disabilities. Advice from specialist nurses and physiotherapists, adaptations to housing on the recommendation of occupational therapists and, in the case of DMD sufferers who also have learning difficulties, the support of specialist teaching staff can all make a tremendous difference to quality of life and can enhance life expectancy.

In preparing for the debate, I read once again the muscular dystrophy campaign's daily living factsheet, produced a few years ago, which made it clear that boys with DMD do best when they are educated in school and that, with careful planning, it is possible to ensure that a child's time at school can enhance his range of experiences and quality of life, and can provide opportunities to enjoy a wide variety of activities and develop friendships. Without that, life for those children would be restricted and isolated.

Many boys with DMD have done very well at school, passing exams and attaining university degrees. Some move on to jobs and many gain enormous pleasure from swimming, reading, painting, playing musical instruments or operating computers. Such achievements are possible only if their talents and abilities are recognised and supported from an early age but, unfortunately, Scotland has been some way behind other countries in that respect. As a result, the choice of school—mainstream or special needs, day or boarding school—is important. The fact that pupils with DMD have different needs should be taken into account when their education is being

planned, although it is reckoned that, with the right planning, most boys can be educated in a local mainstream school.

Planning is also essential to ensure that, as a condition progresses, the necessary facilities, equipment and support are readily available. Regular reviews and assessments are therefore required and, as the children grow, there should be early planning for transition between school and college or university. Moreover, children should not just become the passive recipients of care; they must be allowed to develop independence of thought and given the freedom to make choices.

Social integration is another essential ingredient of a happy, fulfilled life, and ensuring that that takes place will prove to be easier the earlier a child can be integrated into school. They certainly deserve no less.

I recall a debate that was initiated into this matter a few years ago by a former colleague, Sylvia Jackson MSP. At the time, I raised the issue that, by the age of 12, most boys with DMD need to use a powered wheelchair at least some of the time. I ask the minister what progress has been made on wheelchair supply in Scotland and, in particular, in our rural areas, such as Aberdeenshire, which I represent. I hope that the minister will give a commitment in the interests not only of the DMD sufferers for whom I am principally speaking but of the many people with chronic neuromuscular conditions who might need appropriate modern wheelchairs to achieve mobility.

This debate must give real hope for the many people afflicted with DMD, and I look forward to hearing about the future developments in the care and treatment of men and boys who are diagnosed with the condition. Once again, I thank Jim Eadie for sponsoring the debate. I support the motion.

17:29

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): I, too, thank Jim Eadie for bringing this debate to the chamber and giving us the opportunity to discuss this important condition.

Seventy families in Scotland are registered with Action Duchenne, but that does not mean that each family has only one son with Duchenne muscular dystrophy. We know what can cause DMD and we know the symptoms of the disease, but not enough is known about its treatment and cure.

Small steps are being taken, and it is encouraging that new gene therapy techniques such as exon skipping could be on the market in

the UK by 2014. However, that is likely to help only 14 per cent of DMD sufferers. We need to think about different models of care while a cure is found.

Denmark has the same population size and birth incidence of DMD as Scotland, but the difference in the life expectancy of those with DMD is striking. Denmark has twice the number of adult DMD survivors—79 compared with 39 in Scotland. In Scotland, adult patients can live until their early 30s; in Denmark, they can live into their late 30s.

There is no difference between Denmark and Scotland in the treatment that is delivered or the drugs that are available. The difference appears to be down to levels of care. I hope that the Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Bill will help us to make improvements in that regard.

In Denmark, all DMD patients have round-the-clock care, and their houses are adapted to make them suitable. If the house cannot be adapted, the family is moved to a new home.

It would appear that Scotland is lacking in expert care provision for DMD patients. The UK has two centres of excellence in treating DMD: one in Great Ormond Street hospital in London and one in Newcastle. According to Action Duchenne, in the past 18 months it has been found that life expectancy for DMD patients near Newcastle is much better than life expectancy for those in Scotland. DMD patients can experience respiratory problems, motor problems and, in some cases, scoliosis. Those who live near the centres of excellence have the advantage of access to a core team of experts who are on hand to help them.

It is not only in times of crisis that the centre helps. The teams carry out routine check-ups of DMD patients in the surrounding area and monitor their condition. It is worrying that Scottish patients do not have access to the same expertise in their own areas. In Scotland, patients have to wait to weeks and sometimes months to be individually assessed by different doctors.

In Northern Ireland, the recent McCollum report, which was based on NHS data, found that emergency unplanned admissions to hospital of neuromuscular patients, including those with DMD, cost £2.27 million a year. The report states that 40 per cent of that cost could be saved with better monitoring of the condition. Investing in and joining up neuromuscular services would lead to a large overall saving, while also helping those with DMD to live longer and to have a better quality of life.

I feel that it would be to the benefit of all DMD patients if we had a centre of excellence in Scotland—a place that could offer expert care, advice and information.

Once DMD is diagnosed, a comprehensive care plan can be created for the child that details everything from the early years up to the teenage years. It can also be used to liaise with the local authority in order to give maximum support. Even then, however, there is a postcode lottery when it comes to local authority services. Stirling Council provides free hydrotherapy sessions for DMD patients, whereas patients in the Renfrewshire Council area either have to pay or receive their hydrotherapy through private medical care.

Scotland has gaps in its care for DMD patients. Small but important initiatives such as the free provision of hydrotherapy can extend life expectancy, and important research is being carried out to find a cure for DMD. Until a cure is found, however, we need a care model that is structured around the needs of sufferers. That will give patients a better life expectancy and a fighting chance.

17:34

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab): I congratulate Jim Eadie on bringing to the chamber this important and interesting motion, which has a hopeful and encouraging message at its heart.

When confronted with this tragic genetic disease, our first thoughts are for the boys who are affected and their families. I first became aware of the condition when I was approached by my constituent, Eileen McCallum, who some members might know as a well-known actress. She has two grandsons who have Duchenne, and she has campaigned tirelessly for better care and support as well as for funding for research.

As part of that campaign, Eileen went to Denmark to make a film about the superb care that young people receive in that country. We should certainly learn from that—Mary Fee has already referred to that in her speech. She also mentioned the fact that boys in Denmark who are affected live longer into adulthood, and I am sure that we can learn many lessons by looking outwith Scotland.

Having said that, I believe that we should also acknowledge the developments in care and treatment that we have seen over the past few years in Scotland, particularly through the Scottish muscle network, which is one of a large number of managed clinical networks that have greatly improved the standard of treatment and care in Scotland over the past 10 years.

The focus of this evening's debate is on recent developments in gene therapy. I have been aware of gene therapy as an exciting area of medicine for some time, particularly in relation to cancer, but I was not aware of the specific developments in

relation to Duchenne muscular dystrophy until I read Jim Eadie's motion and looked into the background.

The motion highlights the use of the adeno-associated viral vector for gene therapy. The aim is to mask the deleted exon or exons that are a feature of muscular dystrophy to facilitate production of the dystrophin protein. It is really encouraging to read in the motion and some of the background papers that gene therapy is already producing some exciting developments and results. That is why there is such a message of hope in Jim Eadie's motion.

Jim Eadie also made some positive and helpful suggestions about carrying the work forward, and I hope that the minister will respond to them in the winding up speech. We need to pay tribute to the super work of Action Duchenne in the context of the debate. It has been involved in partnership funding on research and, as Jim Eadie has suggested, the Scottish Government should pursue that model.

The largest sums of money for medical research clearly sit with the UK Government and funding councils, but the chief scientist office has a significant budget for research and its current chief scientist, the brilliant Professor Andrew Morris, has a particular interest in the genetics of medicine. I hope that the Scottish Government will respond positively to Jim Eadie's call for the involvement of the Scottish Government and the chief scientist in partnership funding for research.

The other aspect that Jim Eadie referred to was the importance of clinical trials. Again, the motion refers to some new developments that give us encouragement. I hope that the Scottish Government will do all that it can to ensure that those who are affected in Scotland are involved in clinical trials.

Once again, I pay tribute to Jim Eadie for bringing the motion to Parliament, and to Action Duchenne and the many people who work tirelessly for that organisation. That includes John Miller, who is in the public gallery and who prompted me to speak in the debate, for which I thank him.

17:38

The Minister for Public Health (Michael Matheson): Like other members, I begin by congratulating Jim Eadie on securing the time for such an important debate and on the way in which he has raised the issues that he wanted to highlight in the debate and his motion.

I have no doubt that all members who are in the chamber share the same ambition: that a cure for Duchenne muscular dystrophy will be developed.

DMD is a devastating disease that, at any one time, affects around 150 boys and young men in Scotland. Jim Eadie set out the impact that it can have on individuals, and Graeme Dey highlighted the challenges and difficulties that the Mathieson family faced in losing their son James while their son Daniel has the same condition. I wish Daniel well for his trip to Florida in the next few weeks.

However, these are also exciting times in the search for a treatment for Duchenne muscular dystrophy. As Jim Eadie highlighted, it is around 25 years since the genetic variation in the dystrophin gene was identified as being the cause of DMD. Advances in medicine mean that experimental treatments are now being trialled in ways that were unimaginable at that time. For example, DNA patches have been designed to override the genetic variation; they have shown promise in laboratory trials and are currently being tested in clinical trials. They are part of the exon skipping approach to which Jim Eadie referred.

Jim Eadie's motion refers to the AAV-U7 clinical trial that is being conducted by Royal Holloway College, University of London. The basis of the trial is that the DNA patches are packaged into a virus that allows them to be effectively delivered into the patient's cells. That involves very exciting technology that is at the forefront of research into an effective treatment.

It is only right that we record our thanks to those with DMD who are participating in the present trials. Those trials are an essential step in developing a safe and effective treatment, and we must go through a process of evaluating the effectiveness of that type of treatment. It is through the dedication and selflessness of those patients and their families that we will eventually arrive at the point at which—I believe—we will achieve more effective treatment.

A particular challenge in the treatment of DMD is how to protect and restore the function of the heart muscle. I am aware that Dr Keith Foster, who is one of the leaders of the AAV-U7 trial, is developing a research project on that subject with a group of Glasgow cardiologists.

I reassure members that the Scottish Government's chief scientist office is happy to consider co-funding arrangements with leading UK medical charities in particular areas of research. I also reassure members that a large amount of the research that takes place in Scotland involves international collaboration.

I can confirm that officials from the chief scientist office have spoken to Action Duchenne with a view to co-funding such a project. Action Duchenne provides an example of the importance of the charitable sector in the area of medical research. Its role in partnership with the Muscular

Dystrophy Campaign and the Duchenne Family Support Group in establishing the MDEX consortium to develop treatment for DMD is particularly worthy of recognition.

Action Duchenne funds cutting-edge research and has established a registry of DMD patients—to which some members have referred—that plays an essential role in identifying those who are most suitable for particular clinical trials that may be available or are being considered at any given time.

The motion calls for simplified governance for trials of genetic medicines. Ethical oversight of proposals to conduct clinical trials that involve gene therapy is currently a reserved matter. However, the Scottish Government notes that operational responsibility for gene therapy in the form of the gene therapy advisory committee was transferred to the NHS Health Research Authority in December last year, and we are monitoring the effectiveness of that new arrangement.

Clinical trials need to obtain NHS research and development approval. I assure members that we have recently streamlined that process so that it is co-ordinated centrally in Scotland. The streamlined approach means that approval times for multicentre clinical trials in Scotland are among the quickest in Europe, which makes Scotland an attractive place in which to conduct world-leading clinical research.

I assure members that we recognise the importance of ensuring that people with Duchenne muscular dystrophy get access to the care and support that they need.

I highlight the important role of the Scottish muscle network, which Malcolm Chisholm mentioned, in strengthening the specialist neuromuscular centres in Scotland, through a collaborative approach. The network brings together clinicians in various disciplines that contribute to the care of those with muscular dystrophy. It provides on a Scotland-wide basis the multidisciplinary focus that Action Duchenne is looking for, and it gives families a strong voice in the development of services.

I heard what Mary Fee said about the creation of a centre of excellence. In Scotland, our population is dispersed over a much greater area than is the case in England, where populations are much more concentrated. That makes it challenging to provide a single centre of excellence in the way that has been done in England. We regard the muscle network as Scotland's virtual centre of excellence, because it links the five paediatric centres in Scotland that deliver specialist services for those who have any form of muscular dystrophy or neuromuscular disorder. I am sure that members appreciate that it

would be difficult to set up a single centre in Scotland, given the impact that that could have on families, who might have to travel a considerable distance to access such a centre.

The Scottish muscle network has developed multidisciplinary care standards for the management of Duchenne that are based on the care standards of the international network of translational research in Europe: assessment and treatment of neuromuscular diseases, which is known as TREAT-NMD. The implementation of the standards will be key to improving healthcare services for people with Duchenne muscular dystrophy.

We have agreed two years' funding to pilot neuromuscular care advisers posts in the south-east and Tayside, the west of Scotland and the north of Scotland. Two posts are already in place, and we remain committed to posts in all three regions. Jackie Baillie asked about the post in the north of Scotland regional planning area. I advise her that there have been recruitment difficulties, but the north of Scotland has confirmed that it intends to re-advertise the post. We will monitor the situation closely, because we want the care adviser post in the north of Scotland to be filled as soon as possible.

Many people with DMD will benefit from the £16 million that we have invested in the wheelchair and seating service, to support the timely provision of wheelchairs in a personalised way, responding to individuals' needs at an early stage. Nanette Milne expressed concern about the issue. We recently issued a wheelchair and seating services quality improvement framework, to which standards are attached. That approach will bring further improvements for people with neuromuscular conditions.

We have also put £1.5 million towards improving services for people with complex respiratory conditions. That investment will help to recruit new specialists, whether they are consultants, dieticians, physiotherapists, nurses or allied health professionals, so that people can be treated more effectively locally.

Progress has been made, but it is clear that we need to continue to build on that progress to improve services. We remain committed to doing that. I look forward to working with members and the charities and organisations that seek further improvement in Scotland, to ensure that people receive the best quality of service that they can receive in Scotland.

Meeting closed at 17:49.

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