



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Official Report

# MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 23 January 2013

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# Scottish Parliament

*Wednesday 23 January 2013*

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

## Portfolio Question Time

### Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):** Good afternoon. The first item of business is portfolio questions on finance, employment and sustainable growth. As ever, if questions are short and succinct and we have answers to match, we may get through everyone.

#### George Square (Redevelopment)

**1. Sandra White (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on concerns regarding Glasgow City Council's plans for the redevelopment of George Square. (S4O-01709)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney):** The Scottish Government has agreed the business case for the overall tax increment financing scheme for the Buchanan quarter, which includes improvements to George Square. However, the precise detail of those improvements is a matter for Glasgow City Council.

**Sandra White:** I can only echo what the people of Glasgow are saying: the whole sad episode has been an absolute shambles from start to finish. The cabinet secretary may be aware that £90,000 has already been spent, the cost is rising and people are most concerned. If the cabinet secretary or the Scottish Government is going to meet Glasgow City Council and Councillor Gordon Matheson—whose idea this was—could the cabinet secretary please keep the Parliament and the people of Glasgow informed of any updates, as that has not happened? Do not keep the people of Glasgow in the dark.

**John Swinney:** The TIF project comprises a range of public infrastructure projects in Glasgow's Buchanan quarter, including improvements to George Square, the pedestrianisation of Dundas Lane, city centre connectivity, the reconfiguration of Queen Street station's entrance and an enhanced Royal concert hall. The proposals that Glasgow City Council is now considering are for what has been described as a "substantial facelift" of George Square. The Scottish Government looks forward to discussing the change in the project's direction with Glasgow City Council in order to

understand the implications for the total cost of the project. If there are any relevant issues that relate to the tax increment financing element of the proposals, Parliament will, of course, be kept up to date on those issues.

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** The cabinet secretary knows that I have some problems with the notion of tax increment financing in this case, but if the council had wanted to proceed with a kind of Disneyland George Square on the scale of the proposals that have come forward in the past few weeks, would it not have made sense for it to have brought that forward when the TIF scheme was initially mooted, so that there could have been public, media and, indeed, parliamentary scrutiny of the proposals rather than the last-minute rush that we have seen in the past few weeks, which has led to a bit of a fiasco outcome?

**John Swinney:** It is important that we separate two elements, and I was anxious to do that in my answer to Sandra White's question. The TIF scheme essentially involves the construction of a vehicle to enable public sector resources to be used to leverage private sector investment. That is a good way to proceed to maximise the investment impact for the city of Glasgow and some of the detailed components of the proposals. It is good practice with any detailed components of the type in question—such as the redevelopment of George Square or the Queen Street station entrance or whatever—to have adequate, full, proper and meaningful public consultation on the contents of the proposals. That will be an essential element in taking forward all of the projects. However, it is important that we distinguish between the TIF scheme and the specific proposals on the ground, which are unreservedly a matter for Glasgow City Council.

**Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Lab):** I am unclear about whether or not members of the Scottish Parliament who have campaigned for improvement in George Square now support that. I recall that the group leader of the Scottish National Party in Glasgow argued that George Square needed a substantial facelift, not just a revamp. I presume that he now takes the opposite view.

Is the minister saying that the changes that have now been proposed are unlikely to have any impact on the TIF agreement that the Deputy First Minister has already agreed with Glasgow City Council? Does he agree that the priority of all parties should be to move on with improvements to George Square—for Glaswegians and to make it a fitting place to welcome our visitors in 2014?

**John Swinney:** I am not a member of Glasgow City Council and, just for the record, I point out that, impressive though the surroundings of Glasgow city chambers are, I have no aspirations to be a member of that council. Many of the issues

that Mr Smith raises should have been bandied around in the precincts of Glasgow city chambers, in much more elegant surroundings than those in which we debate in the parliamentary chamber.

As I said in my original answer to Sandra White, we look forward to discussions with the city council to understand the implications for the overall TIF scheme of the change of direction on the redevelopment of George Square. As I have stressed in my answers, the TIF scheme and the specific proposals on the ground are two different elements of debate. We look forward to working with the city council to maximise the effectiveness of the TIF scheme to leverage investment into the city. Obviously, it is up to the city council to make progress on the different projects and to consult effectively with members of the public about those issues.

### **Employment (Rural Areas)**

**2. Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to protect and increase employment in rural areas. (S4O-01710)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney):** We are investing significant sums of money in rural areas, including around £455 million of direct support annually to farmers and crofters across Scotland and £214 million of Scotland rural development programme funding for farming, businesses and communities in rural areas. Those sums go a long way towards safeguarding in the order of 68,000 jobs in agriculture and in rural businesses across Scotland. In the sea fisheries and aquaculture sectors, using the European fisheries fund, the Government is awarding funding of more than £66 million to 677 projects, which has generated about £150 million-worth of investment.

**Graeme Dey:** An SRDP grant of just £56,000 will allow the Building Workshop—a rurally based architectural company in my constituency that is run by a young husband and wife team—to open its first bespoke office later this year and to double its existing workforce. Will the Scottish Government continue to think smart about how it protects and enhances employment opportunities in rural areas and consider the suggestion by the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee in its draft budget report that we should allow youngsters who are seeking modern apprenticeships in rural skills to work for a range of businesses throughout the term of the apprenticeship so that they might be better placed to obtain year-round employment?

**John Swinney:** I think that I am familiar with the business to which Mr Dey refers, as it is based in the area that I used to represent before the

boundary changes in 2011. I am glad to hear about the progress that the company is making. The suggestion from the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee is worthy of further consideration, so I will ensure that the Minister for Youth Employment, who has heard Mr Dey's points, examines the issue in detail. It is essential that we find innovative ways of strengthening the skills base and the employment opportunity base in rural Scotland. If we need to deploy a certain amount of flexibility to enable that, we should very much be open to that possibility.

### **Bannockburn Celebrations**

**3. Stewart Maxwell (West Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what preparations it has made for the Bannockburn celebrations during homecoming 2014. (S4O-01711)

**The Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism (Fergus Ewing):** A range of partners are working together on a programme to mark the 700th anniversary of the battle of Bannockburn. The battle of Bannockburn re-enactment weekend over 28 to 30 June will be a centrepiece of the homecoming Scotland 2014 celebrations and a highlight of the Stirling 2014 programme. It will include the largest battle re-enactment ever hosted at the memorial battlefield, a tented clan village, weaponry and falconry displays and a clan parade.

**Stewart Maxwell:** I pay tribute to the work of Strathleven Artizans in promoting the story of Robert the Bruce and his connections to Dumbarton. I am sure that the minister will agree that the story of Robert the Bruce has tremendous potential to generate tourism opportunities in a variety of areas in Scotland. Therefore, what plans does the Government have to promote other sites of interest that are associated with Robert the Bruce, particularly in the Dumbarton area?

**Fergus Ewing:** Stewart Maxwell is entirely correct. For many of us, especially on these benches, Robert the Bruce is a national hero. I hope that that applies to members on all the benches in this Parliament. Although Robert the Bruce won Scotland's independence before the invention of political parties, I suspect that he was politically ecumenical, because he simply believed in his country of Scotland.

We are keen to do everything that we can to commemorate Robert the Bruce and his achievements for Scotland. I am keen to work with the member and all members of all parties to secure that objective.

**Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** The Standing Council of Scottish Chiefs has said that the Bannockburn re-enactment will not be enough to bring the diaspora back to Scotland. In

light of that, what is the minister's plan C for homecoming 2014?

**Fergus Ewing:** I had the pleasure of meeting a number—I do not know what the collective noun is—of clan chiefs at Castle Leod just before the turn of the year. I look forward to further engagement with several more of them in early course. We work closely with the clan chiefs. We recognise that, generally speaking, clan gatherings take place on a quinquennial basis and that they have a great deal to offer Scotland.

We should not be unduly pessimistic about the success of the events next year. I am heartened by the lesson of homecoming 2009. The number of visitors who came to Scotland as a result of that initiative, and the revenue from that initiative, vastly exceeded our targets. In that sense, it was a great success.

#### Unemployment (Glasgow Provan)

**4. Paul Martin (Glasgow Provan) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to tackle unemployment in the Glasgow Provan constituency. (S4O-01712)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney):** The Scottish Government is investing heavily to support the job prospects of people in Glasgow. For example, for the period June 2011 to June 2013, we have awarded £7.58 million of European social fund and £616,000 of European regional development fund to Glasgow's community planning partnership. That money will be used to help around 10,500 people to move towards work and to create more than 1,300 jobs.

Last year, we awarded Glasgow an extra £3.37 million to tackle the challenge of youth employment.

Meanwhile, we are working hard to promote the city's economic growth. Since 2010, businesses in Glasgow North and Glasgow East have accepted offers of regional selective assistance totalling £2.4 million. Those offers are in respect of projects that are expected to create or safeguard 240 jobs.

**Paul Martin:** The minister will be aware of a number of schemes throughout Scotland that are designed to regenerate derelict land and at the same time create employment. Would he agree to meet me to discuss how we could take forward such a scheme in the Easterhouse area of my constituency?

**John Swinney:** I would be delighted to meet Mr Martin on that issue. The Government's focus is about working collaboratively with a range of players to try to bring together creative thinking to find new ways of enabling sites to be brought into use, to leverage in investment and to remove any

obstacles to that investment taking place. I will happily arrange to see Mr Martin, and any colleagues he may wish to bring with him, to discuss those issues.

#### Unemployment (Lothian)

**5. Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to tackle unemployment in Lothian. (S4O-01713)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney):** The Scottish Government is taking forward a range of initiatives to support employment in the Lothian region. Over the course of the current European funding programme, more than £12 million has been received by City of Edinburgh Council, Midlothian Council and West Lothian Council to improve the skills of the unemployed, the lowest paid and the socially deprived.

Since April 2010, regional selective assistance offers totalling £2.8 million have been accepted by businesses in the Lothians. Those offers are in respect of projects expected to create or safeguard 313 jobs. The Lothians are also benefiting from our on-going commitment to deliver 25,000 modern apprenticeship starts for each year of this session of Parliament. In total, we have put in place support for 46,500 training opportunities this year.

**Sarah Boyack:** There have already been high-profile casualties in the retail sector this year, with Jessops, HMV and Blockbuster entering administration. Among those three chains, there are 15 stores in Edinburgh alone, of which seven have been confirmed for closure. Will the minister give an update on what action the Scottish Government is taking to support workers at those stores, who are at risk of losing their jobs? Will he provide further information on news that the restructuring specialist Hilco has bought HMV's debt and the impact that that might have on the future of that retailer?

**John Swinney:** Of course, in any circumstance in which individuals are either in danger of losing employment or have lost employment, they will have access to the partnership action for continuing employment support scheme, which is working in all parts of the country. That will be available to the individuals who are affected by any of those redundancy programmes or closures.

Obviously a range of support is offered by the Scottish Government and by our partners at local level in the short term in terms of getting people back into employment. Then, of course, there are the Department for Work and Pensions programmes, which kick in if individuals have been unemployed for longer than a nine-month period.

In addition, the Government will be prepared to discuss, through the work that is being undertaken by Malcolm Fraser on the review of town centres, how we adapt to what are clearly quite significantly changing shopping patterns by members of the public, who are—to a greater extent—using online shopping opportunities along with a combination of traditional shopping opportunities. We need to consider with Malcolm Fraser how our town centres and our retail environment respond to some of that changing consumer behaviour in order to ensure that we have vibrant town centres, which is an aspiration that we all share.

### **Unemployment Levels (Reductions in 2013)**

**6. Michael McMahon (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what reductions it expects in unemployment levels during 2013. (S4O-01714)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney):** This morning, it was reported that unemployment in Scotland has fallen by 14,000 over the three-month period from September to November 2012. Youth unemployment, also part of those numbers, saw the largest drop since the data series began in 2006 and is at the lowest level since the period from March to May 2011.

Unemployment remains too high, but this is the second month in succession in which we have seen significant progress, with Scotland recording lower youth unemployment, higher youth employment and lower youth inactivity than the rest of the United Kingdom. Our aim for 2013 is to use every power at our disposal to continue that trend and to make real progress in reducing total and, specifically, youth unemployment.

**Michael McMahon:** I thank the cabinet secretary for his answer. The reduction in the latest unemployment figures is welcome, but does the cabinet secretary agree with the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, which pointed out that there are underlying issues that must be addressed by actions to stimulate the economy?

Is the cabinet secretary concerned, for example, that companies such as Amazon, which employed large numbers of seasonal staff in the run-up to Christmas, have been reported as retaining relatively few people on a permanent basis. Given that the Scottish Government provided financial assistance to Amazon, can anything be done in such circumstances to seek agreement from companies that are in receipt of such Government funding to commit to retaining staff and to recruiting employees, particularly from the far too large pool of 90,000 under-25s who appear to have been dumped on the dole, with little prospect of employment at this time?

**John Swinney:** I very much agree with the points that Mr McMahon articulates from the Scottish Chambers of Commerce. There are, of course, underlying issues that need to be confronted and I have made no secret of the fact that I believe that there is a strong role for Government in leading a dynamic programme of capital investment and a programme of investment in skills and training to support economic recovery. We will continue to articulate that point.

The Government is interested in maximising employment within Scotland. We talk regularly to employers about opportunities to do so. Any employer that is in receipt of any form of regional selective assistance is required to conform entirely to the requirements and the constraints of the RSA offer that is made. The Government monitors that regularly, as I have reported to the Parliament.

We will certainly work with employers to maximise the employment opportunities that exist for people within Scotland.

**Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab):** One of the welcome announcements in the September budget statement was the announcement of a weighed subsidy programme. Is the cabinet secretary able to give us any further details on how that programme will work to counteract unemployment? If not, can he tell us when those details will be forthcoming?

**John Swinney:** The Government is finalising the details that will be available on the employer recruitment initiative. As I indicated, it will be focused on the small and medium-sized enterprises sector to provide practical assistance to enable small and medium-sized employers to take on additional staff. That has very much been the aspiration of organisations that represent small businesses, such as the Federation of Small Businesses and the Scottish Chambers of Commerce, as we just discussed. The details of that programme will be announced shortly, and I look forward to seeing the positive impact that it will have on the labour market in Scotland.

### **Oil and Gas Revenue**

**7. Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP):** I offer you, Presiding Officer, and members an apology, as I will have to leave after my question.

To ask the Scottish Government how important North Sea oil and gas revenue is to the Scottish economy and how important it would be in an independent Scotland. (S4O-01715)

**The Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism (Fergus Ewing):** The oil and gas sector is one of Scotland's great success stories. In addition to supporting almost 200,000 jobs across

Scotland, the industry generated more than £10 billion tax revenue last year.

Up to 24 billion barrels of oil and gas remain in the North Sea, with a potential wholesale value of £1.5 trillion. It is therefore clear that the industry will remain a key part of the Scottish economy for decades to come.

**Dennis Robertson:** In the same vein, how important is our renewables sector to Scotland's economy and how important would it be to an independent Scotland?

**Fergus Ewing:** The renewables sector is extremely important to the Scottish economy. It supports around 11,000 jobs in this country. Over the past year, it has received £1 billion of investment. Projected investment in our renewables sector over the coming years is in the order of £9 billion. Those are gigantic numbers.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Could you be briefer, minister?

**Fergus Ewing:** Those numbers reflect the fact that the industry will be extremely important to the Scottish economy for many years to come.

#### **Moray Council (Financial Assistance for Storm Damage)**

**8. Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what financial assistance it will provide to Moray Council for the storm damage to Lossiemouth and Kingston. (S4O-01716)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney):** Following the severe weather in December, I agreed to activate the Bellwin scheme, which provides additional revenue support to affected councils to assist with the immediate and unforeseen costs of dealing with the aftermath of emergency incidents. We will consider all eligible expenditure under the scheme when formal claims have been received from the affected councils, including Moray Council.

In addition, Marine Scotland has been in discussions with the private operators of Lossiemouth harbour in respect of the storm damage to the harbour walls and quayside and the wider removal of debris from the harbour. Confirmation to proceed with works costing £23,000 has been given under the emergency harbours grant scheme for fisheries harbours.

**Mary Scanlon:** The minister will know that, during the storms last month, significant damage was caused to the sea wall at Lossiemouth and remedial repairs have been done. At Kingston, homes that had been protected by the shingle bank saw that buffer from the sea reduced by hundreds of tonnes of shingle.

My understanding is that the Bellwin scheme provides limited financial support for councils only for the immediate aftermath of an emergency, but not for the repairs that are now required at Lossiemouth and the significant investment that is required at Kingston. Given that it does not appear that the Bellwin scheme would assist Moray Council and that the council's grant-aided expenditure for coastal protection is less than £50,000—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Question, please.

**Mary Scanlon:** What changes to the scheme or additional financial support will the Government offer to assist Moray Council in reinstating protection for Lossiemouth and Kingston?

**John Swinney:** Mary Scanlon's description of the Bellwin scheme is correct. It is a discretionary scheme that addresses revenue costs only to repair damage to bring facilities up to a previous standard. If additional work is required for any betterment, that would be capital expenditure, which is not eligible under the scheme. That has been the case for some time.

There is, of course, an element of insurable activity on certain aspects of the harbour infrastructure that would have to be tested. However, we have made it clear to the relevant authorities that the Government will engage in constructive discussion about how we resolve any outstanding issues if the Bellwin formula or the insurable activity do not adequately deal with the issues at stake.

I point out to Mary Scanlon that significant allocations of Government grant have been made to support flood prevention schemes—albeit inland schemes—in Moray, particularly around Elgin and Forres and previously in Rothes. We are willing to discuss the issues with the local authority.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I remind members of the need for brief and relevant questions and answers.

#### **Department for Work and Pensions (Work Programme)**

**9. George Adam (Paisley) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what impact the Department for Work and Pensions work programme is having on unemployment in Scotland. (S4O-01717)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney):** The latest statistics that the Department for Work and Pensions has released show that fewer than one in 10 people who started the work programme in June 2011 gained sustained employment within a year. As I have said in other answers, the labour market statistics

that were released today show that unemployment in Scotland fell by 14,000 over the quarter and that the youth unemployment rate has had the largest annual drop since 2006—it is now at its lowest since March to May 2011.

**George Adam:** Like many other MSPs, I have had constituents come to my office to express deep concerns about the work programme. Has the cabinet secretary discussed the programme with the DWP and the outcomes that it may or may not be delivering for Scotland?

**John Swinney:** We have had regular discussions with the DWP about the work programme. It is important to see that as part of the range of steps that are available to encourage people back into employment.

One mechanism that we have in order to ensure that all the initiatives are compatible is the Scottish employability forum, which will meet on 31 January. It is a joint forum that is chaired by me, the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities spokesperson on the issue, who is Councillor Harry McGuigan. The forum is designed to ensure that all our interventions—whether they are by the DWP, the Scottish Government or local authorities—are focused and support individuals to get into employment. That is the essential requirement of all such schemes.

#### **Scottish Enterprise (Meetings)**

**10. Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government when the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth last met the chief executive of Scottish Enterprise and what issues were discussed. (S4O-01718)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney):** I last met the chief executive and other members of the board of Scottish Enterprise on 16 January to discuss a range of issues that are important to the delivery of the Scottish Government's economic strategy.

**Duncan McNeil:** I recognise that, on his visit to Inverclyde, the cabinet secretary recognised the significant potential for cruise liner business there and in the rest of Scotland. The Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism has also said encouraging words about cruise liners.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr McNeil, I need a question.

**Duncan McNeil:** The potential at Inverclyde needs to be extended and maximised. Given the support of the cabinet secretary and the minister, have they taken the time to impress on Scottish Enterprise's chief executive the importance of the

project in Inverclyde? Will the cabinet secretary give us an update on that?

**John Swinney:** I stress to Mr McNeil that the topic of cruise business did not come up in my conversation last week. However, as he will recall, Scottish Enterprise representatives accompanied me on my visit to Inverclyde.

The Government and Scottish Enterprise are working together closely on the encouragement and development of cruise liner activity, to ensure that it is maximised across Scotland. I acknowledge the significance of the opportunities at Inverclyde.

I am sure that what we have heard about obstacles being put in the way of that activity by the United Kingdom Border Agency is as much of a concern to Mr McNeil as it is to me. I look forward to pursuing some of the issues, to maximise our opportunity to attract many cruise liners to Scotland, so that their visitors can appreciate the strength of Scotland, particularly in this year of natural Scotland.

#### **Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority (Capital Allocation)**

**11. Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what capital allocation has been made to Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority as part of the 2013-14 shovel-ready construction and maintenance projects. (S4O-01719)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney):** In 2013-14, £290,000 of shovel-ready capital investment has been allocated to Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority. That will help to fund a range of projects that are aimed at facilitating improvements to visitor infrastructure and buildings and the development of community projects.

Those funds are in addition to £1 million that was allocated for the next financial year, following the spending review. The Government also allocated £1.1 million of shovel-ready capital investment in 2012-13, which was announced in June 2012, and £0.29 million of capital investment in 2012-13, which was announced in December. Capital investment is part of the Scottish Government's continuing effort to support growth in the Scottish economy.

**Bruce Crawford:** Does the cabinet secretary agree that if the Parliament accepted the Labour Party's budget proposals, which were put forward yesterday, all of that 2013-14 money would be lost to the park? Does he agree that, in this year of natural Scotland, that would be an utter disgrace and very unhelpful to the park economy?

**John Swinney:** The point that Mr Crawford makes is very relevant to the budget debate that we held yesterday. The argument that the Labour Party advanced was that we should take the capital consequentials that I allocated in December to projects such as the one in Mr Crawford's constituency and apply them to other projects. The key point here is that the money cannot be spent twice. It can only be spent once when it is capital; it cannot be double promised or multiple promised by people. [*Interruption.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr Macintosh.

**John Swinney:** The Government has set out its choices. If other people want to change those choices, they have to argue for that and take the consequences.

**Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer, can I confirm that this is questions to the finance minister and not questions to the shadow finance minister? I am not entirely sure how Mr Swinney can answer—incorrectly—on behalf of the Labour Party if we are not—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr Macintosh, that is not a point of order. We move on to question 12 from John Wilson.

### Employment Initiatives

**12. John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what employment initiatives it provides to tackle unemployment among people aged 24 and over. (S4O-01720)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney):** Since the start of 2007, more than half of those accessing European social fund employability support across Scotland have been over the age of 25. The projects address the challenge of improving the skills of the unemployed, the lowest paid and the socially deprived while contributing to Scotland's future economic growth. To date, £63.684 million of ESF grant has been allocated in priority 5 and £32.34 million of that funding has been allocated to 16 community planning partnerships in some of the most deprived areas of Scotland.

From April, we will introduce a new employability fund that will be aimed at further supporting local areas to provide targeted interventions for those who are out of work. As with the current training for work programme, the fund will be open to people aged 18 and over.

**John Wilson:** Although I welcome the unemployment figures that were released today, in November 2012, according to Office for National Statistics figures for claimant unemployment by age, in South Lanarkshire the claimant count

stood at 75 per cent for those aged 25 and over. Will the cabinet secretary expand on the issues that will be raised through the employability fund to get those aged over 24 into sustainable employment?

**John Swinney:** The employability fund will focus on exactly the point that Mr Wilson raises; it will focus on ensuring that we support individuals back into the labour market. At present, anyone over 18 who has been unemployed for 13 weeks or more can access a wide range of opportunities through training for work. That will be incorporated into the employability fund, which will seek to help local areas to respond even more flexibly to labour market demand in their localities.

### Social Impact Bonds

**13. Jayne Baxter (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what consideration it has given to the use of social impact bonds. (S4O-01721)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney):** This is the first occasion on which I have had a chance to welcome Jayne Baxter to the Parliament. I do so, and I wish her well in her tenure in Parliament.

The Scottish Government is working with a range of stakeholders to develop and consider how best to test innovative approaches to planning, delivering and funding public services. Social impact bonds are being considered as part of that work.

**Jayne Baxter:** I thank the cabinet secretary for that answer. I am pleased to hear that he is aware of the potential benefits of social impact bonds, but I am disappointed that pilot projects have not yet been identified. Earlier this month, I was pleased to visit the YMCA's living balance project in Perth, which, over three years, is helping 300 young people into employment or training using a social impact bond model. It is one of only six projects in the United Kingdom to do so. Given the success of that project, will the minister commit to identifying the social impact bond pilot projects as soon as possible?

**John Swinney:** I am familiar with the project that Jayne Baxter refers to at the YMCA in Perth and I understand its impact. We have taken forward a range of ventures that are operating in similar territory, principally around public social partnerships.

Some very interesting work has emerged as a result of the reducing reoffending change fund, which has been at the heart of the Government's preventative spend agenda in the criminal justice area. We will continue to develop such models and remain very open to the issue of social impact

bonds. Although a certain amount of observation will be required to assure us that they represent a strong model for development, I am encouraged by what I have seen from public social partnerships, which operate in the same territory as social impact bonds.

### **Business Start-ups**

**14. Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to encourage new business start-ups. (S4O-01722)

**The Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism (Fergus Ewing):** The Scottish Government recognises the vital role that new businesses play in contributing to sustainable economic growth and is committed to maintaining a supportive environment to encourage new start-ups and help them grow. Key measures include support from the business gateway, which last year helped more than 11,000 businesses start up; the small business bonus scheme, which benefits more than 89,000 business properties; and steps to reduce unnecessary burdens on small businesses and to make it easier for them to access public sector contracts.

**Alex Fergusson:** I am grateful for the minister's response, but I must question the effectiveness of the Government's policies. I note that in the third quarter of last year business start-ups fell by 16 per cent and that that had been the third quarter in a row in which there was a fall in Scotland. Given that I am sure the minister agrees that economic recovery depends to a large extent on new business start-ups, what further steps is the Scottish Government considering to reverse the current trend?

**Fergus Ewing:** I think that Mr Fergusson and I agree that these are tough economic times, but I know of a number of great successes in Dumfries and Galloway. Indeed, I have had the pleasure of visiting that part of the world in the south of Scotland on many occasions and have seen considerable success in businesses.

I also know that more than 4,000 businesses in Dumfries and Galloway are benefiting from the small business bonus scheme, which can result in savings of up to £4,500 per property and which benefits the smallest business in the land. As in the Highland area, small businesses are far more important to Dumfries and Galloway than they are to many city economies. Lots of good things are happening, but if the member has any particular suggestions or measures that he believes we should introduce I am more than happy to meet and discuss them with him.

That said, I am comforted by the fact that VAT registrations, for example, increased by 19.5 per

cent in Scotland between 2002 and 2011, a higher percentage than in the United Kingdom as a whole. If the member so wishes, I am as always happy to meet him and discuss how we can work constructively across the parties to tackle these important issues together.

### **Shovel-ready Projects**

**15. Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress it has made towards implementing the shovel-ready projects announced in December 2012. (S4O-01723)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney):** The construction and maintenance projects that we announced in December as part of a £205 million capital funding package are now being taken forward by the relevant portfolios.

**Clare Adamson:** I congratulate the cabinet secretary on securing £205 million-worth of additional Scottish construction projects, albeit in the context of an initial 33 per cent cut in the capital budget. How will the Central Scotland region benefit from the funding announcement and how might Scotland have proceeded differently with the full fiscal powers of independence?

**John Swinney:** As Clare Adamson is correct to point out, the Government has maintained a very clear and strong emphasis on the importance of capital investment, and I am glad that we were able to make some progress in persuading the United Kingdom Government to change tack from the vicious reduction in capital expenditure that it had imposed on Scotland.

In response to Clare Adamson's question, I can say that a number of projects will go forward in the Central Scotland region. For example, there are maintenance projects for the sheriff courts in Airdrie, Falkirk and Hamilton; the supply of affordable and social rented housing will be increased; health boards in Forth valley and Lanarkshire will benefit from the on-going maintenance programme, particularly the focus on improving the fabric of Monklands hospital—which might interest you, Presiding Officer; and trunk road resurfacing schemes will be carried out on the A726 near East Kilbride. There is a variety of other measures, including the allocation of resources to local government to assist its capital infrastructure, and cycling infrastructure projects with active travel access to stations on the Airdrie to Bathgate line will also be taken forward.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Can we have a brief question 16 from Colin Beattie, and a brief answer, please?

## Bank of Scotland Survey of Purchasing Managers

**16. Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on the results of the Bank of Scotland's December 2012 survey of purchasing managers. (S4O-01724)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth (John Swinney):** The Scottish Government welcomes the findings of December's Bank of Scotland purchasing managers index, which shows a third consecutive month of expansion in private sector activity in Scotland and the strongest monthly improvement since June.

**Colin Beattie:** I was pleased with the news of positive growth to start the new year.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Question, please.

**Colin Beattie:** Does the cabinet secretary agree that, despite the negativity of the no campaign's rhetoric on an independent Scottish economy, companies are still actively investing in Scotland?

**John Swinney:** There is significant evidence to support Mr Beattie's point, whether it comes from Statoil, Dana Petroleum, Global Energy Group, Plexus or Vector Aerospace. Of course, that was before we realised that the United Kingdom economy would be plunged into five years of uncertainty in the debate about a European Union referendum, courtesy of the United Kingdom Government—[*Interruption.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order.

**John Swinney:** All the scaremongering about the independence referendum will disappear, now that the UK Government has taken the course of action that it has taken.

## Fuel Poverty

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

The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-05424, in the name of Margaret Burgess, on tackling fuel poverty.

14:41

**The Minister for Housing and Welfare (Margaret Burgess):** I welcome the opportunity to reconfirm to the Parliament the Scottish Government's commitment to tackling fuel poverty. The most recent fuel poverty figures for Scotland, which were published in December 2012, show that Scottish Government action is mitigating swingeing fuel price increases. Despite punishing 14 per cent increases in autumn 2011, improved household energy efficiency prevented 35,000 households from falling into fuel poverty.

However, it gives me little comfort that 684,000 Scottish households were in fuel poverty in October 2011. Without improvements in the energy efficiency of homes and a small increase in household income, many thousands more households would be in fuel poverty. The statistics show that income growth brought fuel poverty down by 2.2 per cent and that energy efficiency improvements brought it down by 1.5 per cent. However, the increase in fuel prices put fuel poverty up by 4.7 per cent, which cancelled out much of what we had achieved.

Our target to eradicate fuel poverty as far as is reasonably practicable by 2016 remains challenging, given that it is predicted that energy prices will continue to rise. However, we will not shy away from striving to make energy bills more affordable. Nor will we redefine fuel poverty, as Westminster seeks to do, by reclassifying poor households as too poor to be fuel poor.

I spoke to a constituent, the week before last. She is in her 70s and she worked all her life from the age of 15. She has a small pension from her work and a state pension; her total income is just under £200 a week. She is struggling to make ends meet. The fuel company asked her to increase her direct debit, but she is currently spending 17.8 per cent of her income on fuel. That is simply not acceptable in 21st century Scotland. My constituent's experience starkly illustrates why the Parliament needs the powers to tackle a situation that is a disgrace in an energy-rich nation such as ours.

In autumn, all the large energy suppliers announced price increases of between 7 and 10.8 per cent. The Deputy First Minister is meeting each supplier to express concern about energy price rises, press for action to protect vulnerable

consumers and secure suppliers' commitment to investing in Scotland's national retrofit programme.

Specifically, we are asking the energy companies to commit at least a pro rata share of energy company obligation targets for Scotland, based on their market share; to tell us what further steps they intend to take to assist vulnerable households; to automatically switch vulnerable customers to the lowest tariff; to implement as soon as possible the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets retail market review proposals that were published in October; and to continue funding for energy best deal plus roll-out throughout Scotland.

Tomorrow, I will host a summit in Scotland jointly with Ed Davey, Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, and Michael Moore to seek further solutions from the big energy companies. I am sure that the Parliament will support me in urging them to do more for struggling families in Scotland.

However, the most sustainable way in which to tackle fuel poverty is by raising the energy efficiency of homes, thus providing greater comfort and lower bills.

**Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP):** Is the minister aware that there are older people who are being cold called by companies that are not approved installers of the Scottish Government's insulation schemes, which exist across the country? What more can the Scottish Government do to publicise the Energy Saving Trust's advice helpline so that older people in particular can receive free, expert and impartial advice?

**Margaret Burgess:** I thank the member for that question, which concerns a matter that I have already taken up with the Energy Saving Trust and officials. There is a real concern that vulnerable people are losing out because they are being cold called; they are frightened and do not trust who calls them. We are looking at how we can ensure that we get the message through to such people. For example, trusted intermediaries or organisations can be used, or someone whom a vulnerable person knows and can trust, so that they know that what they are being offered is genuine. We certainly do not want anyone to lose out simply because they are afraid to take up what has been offered. The cold calling causes me some concern in that regard, so I have been looking at it.

We announced last month that there would be £27 million for national retrofit pilots to transform more than 2,200 older, colder properties across Scotland. Scottish Government investment of £3.5 million will lever in a further £13 million from major utility companies. The projects will also support an estimated 150 jobs across Scotland.

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** I have spent quite some time over many years trying to persuade the Government to adopt a national approach to retrofitting the housing stock for energy efficiency. When will the national retrofit programme be truly national, instead of our seeing pilot after pilot? We have been looking at pilots for years.

**Margaret Burgess:** We introduced the pilots because of the Department of Energy and Climate Change's delays in telling us how the energy company obligation will work and how to leverage in the money. What we have done through the pilots is a step forward. However, we hope that we will have the arrangements with DECC soon. Part of tomorrow's discussion will be about how we can get that moving. We are not holding back the arrangements; they are being held back by DECC and the United Kingdom Government.

The national retrofit programme will have an initial focus on areas of fuel poverty and related deprivation across Scotland. It will be delivered by local authorities because they are best placed to direct such schemes, given their knowledge of the communities that are in greatest need. The programme will prioritise fuel-poor areas and cover the whole of Scotland in around 10 years.

**Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab):** Does the minister agree with the Energy Saving Trust's view that, although there is a need for the national retrofit programme, there is also a need for a successor to the energy action programme so that vulnerable people in communities that are not part of the retrofit programme do not have to wait for significantly long periods for their needs to be met?

**Margaret Burgess:** I was coming to that point on the next page of my speech. We are aware of the Energy Saving Trust's view in that regard. The Government and I are keen to ensure that people do not lose out in the way described, so we are actively looking at a programme for vulnerable groups who do not fit into the national retrofit scheme. We have taken that on board and we have consulted the Energy Saving Trust, which is happy with what we are doing.

The majority of the Scottish Government's fuel poverty budget goes to the energy assistance package, which Elaine Murray just mentioned, and most of the money allocated to that is used to fund central heating and insulation measures for households at risk of fuel poverty. The EAP was designed to integrate with the previous carbon emission reduction targets, which have now been replaced by the energy company obligation. Elaine Murray asked us to ensure that vulnerable people do not lose out and we will do that.

From April, the Scottish Government's energy assistance package will be superseded by the national retrofit programme, which is designed to get the most for Scotland out of the energy company obligation. The majority of the £65 million fuel poverty budget for 2013-14 will go to local authority area-based schemes.

The Scottish Government is committed to continuing to provide the home energy Scotland hotline and the energy advice, tariff and benefits checking that form stages 1 and 2 of the energy assistance package. The home energy Scotland hotline will integrate with the national retrofit programme. It will provide a route into the support for vulnerable households that are outside area-based schemes, as well as directing households within the areas served by local authority schemes to those schemes. As I said, we have not made a final decision on the best means of providing support to vulnerable households.

There are a number of issues around rural areas. A number of funds can support the development of renewable options for individuals and communities in off-gas areas. They include the warm homes fund, the community and renewable energy scheme and the home renewables loan scheme. Those schemes are designed to fit with the United Kingdom financial framework for supporting domestic renewable energy and are aimed at supporting a range of applicants, including individuals, community groups, rural businesses and registered social landlords.

We proposed a community-based approach to tackling fuel poverty in our 2011 manifesto, which earmarked £50 million over the course of this parliamentary session for a warm homes fund to promote district heating and renewables options. The first project, which is supported by the warm homes fund, is at West Whitlawburn, in Cambuslang, which I hope to visit soon. The project is expected to become operational in July 2013. We have other schemes in the pipeline that we hope to announce shortly. RSLs will use the income received from the UK schemes to promote renewable energy to improve the energy efficiency of housing and give people warmer homes.

District heating networks can provide low-cost heat to households, particularly in multistorey blocks and off-gas-grid areas. Heat networks mean that we can use heat more efficiently from a range of sources such as gas-fired combined heat and power plants, renewables, and heat recovery from industrial processes.

Fuel poverty is a blight on our country. This Scottish Government will continue to urge the UK Government, which has responsibility for this area, to do more to drive down energy costs and ensure that our households are better protected.

However, members of this Parliament—and the people of Scotland—can be assured that their Scottish Government has done and will continue to do all that it can within our existing powers to tackle the scourge of fuel poverty.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises the Scottish Government's efforts in tackling fuel poverty; welcomes the continued investment in energy efficiency and fuel poverty and the contrast with the UK Government's cutting of its fuel poverty budget and withdrawal of any taxpayer-funded support from April 2013; recognises the early indications from the National Retrofit Programme "go-early" pilots that energy companies view Scotland as an attractive place to invest; notes the economic benefits of such programmes and the contribution that they make to reducing carbon emissions; supports the Scottish Government's call on the UK Government to tackle the energy market to provide a better deal for consumers, and notes with concern the expected impact on household incomes arising from the UK Government's welfare reform plans, which it believes will lead to an increase in inequality.

14:53

**Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab):**

The recent severe weather conditions and freezing temperatures remind us of the acute need to tackle fuel poverty in Scotland. We live in a time of increasing fuel bills and fuel poverty, and still too many of our homes are poorly insulated. Nearly one in three households in Scotland lives in fuel poverty and behind that sad statistic are families, particularly those on the lowest incomes, who are simply unable to afford to heat their homes properly.

Too many of our older people are left to choose between heating and eating. From my time working at Help the Aged, I am acutely aware of the impact of fuel poverty on our older people and the all-too-high levels of excess winter deaths in Scotland.

The scale of the challenge is clear and it is right to ask if enough is being done to tackle it. Of course, the backdrop of UK Government policy is not helpful to the work that is done in Scotland to address fuel poverty. We readily acknowledge the impact that welfare reform proposals will have on the poorest households and the need for far more robust regulation of the energy industry to curb energy companies hiking prices for customers while increasing their profits.

Energy companies have an important role to play—a point that I will return to—but, nevertheless, the Scottish Government also has substantial capacity to take action on fuel poverty. Therefore, it is right to focus on what can be done now through this Parliament. We have already heard today that it is a scandal that, in energy-rich Scotland, we have fuel poverty. That is, of course, true. However, we believe that it is a scandal that

anyone in the UK—and, indeed, beyond—should live in fuel poverty. We want the UK Government to take a different course, but it is also incumbent on the Scottish Government, particularly given that it aspires to further powers, to use those powers that it already has to their full extent to tackle fuel poverty in Scotland.

Although we undoubtedly support some actions that ministers have taken, including the principles of the national retrofit programme, we believe that further action is required, given the context of rising fuel poverty. We are not alone in believing that, as members will see from the excellent briefings that we received ahead of today's debate. Some of the issues that I wish to speak about have also been highlighted by Energy Action Scotland, WWF Scotland, the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations and others.

As I have stated, we support the proposal for a national retrofit programme for many of the reasons that Patrick Harvie highlighted in his intervention. We see many benefits to the scheme, not only because it will improve the energy efficiency of more of our housing stock but because it will support jobs in our construction sector in these tough times for our economy.

Improving our poor housing stock has long been a priority for the Labour Party. We believe that more energy-efficient homes and reducing energy usage must be the key goals in tackling fuel poverty and, in doing so, contributing to the goal of reducing carbon emissions. That is why we have made housing the key priority in our budget proposal. We believe that our proposal will result in not only more affordable homes, but homes that are built to a higher standard of energy efficiency. Our proposal would also allow greater investment in retrofit schemes. Our priority for housing is why we supported a green new deal at the last election to insulate some 10,000 homes.

Of course it is right that we welcome the retrofit programme that ministers have introduced, but more action is required. Only last September, the Scottish Government's approach was described as "inadequate" by the expert on fuel poverty, Dr Brenda Boardman. Although the Scottish Government's budget for fuel poverty is stable in the current spending review, three years ago the budget was subject to a two-thirds cut, which has been a costly mistake.

Many members will be looking forward to the Energy Action Scotland Burns supper. I am told that Burns once wrote to his publisher that he had three guineas to carry out his work as an exciseman when it really required five. Ministers find themselves in a similar situation with their plans for addressing fuel poverty, given the funds available. We must have clarity about funding. We know that, of the Scottish Government's £200

million budget for energy efficiency and tackling fuel poverty, almost two thirds will come from the energy companies—

**Margaret Burgess:** That is a good thing.

**Richard Baker:** That should indeed be a good thing, as the minister has chosen to say from a sedentary position, but that is why we call on ministers to provide an update to Parliament on the progress of negotiations with the industry to secure those funds. If the minister wishes to provide that update now, that would be very welcome. If those funds are not secured, clearly that will raise significant question marks over the delivery of the strategy. We must hope that energy companies will recognise their responsibilities to contribute to the work on fuel poverty when they are in dialogue with ministers on the issue.

It is also welcome that Scottish Government funding has been provided for the go-early projects, which have had significant take-up among local authorities. However, I would like more information from ministers on what private investment has been secured for those schemes. I understand that the minister gave a figure in her speech, but it would be good to know whether that figure refers to what has actually been secured. That may well be an indicator of what funds can be levered into the national strategy.

There are questions about when the rules on the operation of the green deal—for example, on the occupancy assessment that will be required—will be concluded in Scotland. It would be good to hear from the minister about what progress has been made on that.

Although we welcome the national retrofit programme, I am conscious of the advice of Energy Action Scotland, which argues that, while the retrofit scheme will be important, there will remain a need for a programme similar to the energy assistance package to ensure that the most vulnerable households who live outside the retrofit programme zones will not need to wait years for help. I welcome the assurance that the minister gave to Dr Murray on the continuing eligibility for assistance of those who are currently eligible under that scheme.

Those general points reinforce the importance of ministers producing further details on how the national retrofit programme will be rolled out. We want more avenues for tackling fuel poverty to be explored, including looking at initiatives such as the collective purchase of energy by communities to bring down costs and further pioneering schemes such as the provision of community heat networks in Aberdeen, to which the minister referred.

In 2001, the Parliament made a commitment to abolish fuel poverty by 2016, and the Scottish

Government has rightly and consistently said that it will abide by that commitment. Indeed, earlier this month in response to a question from me, the Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities described that as not only as a statutory, but a moral, duty. Given that we have high levels of fuel poverty, which in the past year have unfortunately increased, it is right to ask what assessment ministers have made of their ability to reach the target that is now only three years away. Are ministers confident that their current plans are adequate to meet the target? Will they set milestones in a detailed published plan? Without that, the commitment will be no more than words. I am sure that no-one wants that; rather, they want a clear plan setting out what will be achieved and when.

The scale of the challenge on fuel poverty is clear, but the costs of not meeting that challenge are heavy indeed and are paid by the most vulnerable in our society. However, we have not only the power to deal with the issue, but the wealth of expertise and commitment from many charities and individuals working in the field who are passionate about tackling fuel poverty. They often meet and work with us here and, for those of us that work with them, that passion is very clear. I hope that the Scottish Government will give them the support that they deserve in carrying out that vital work; indeed, the energy companies should support them, too. However, it is clear from those who work day in, day out to tackle fuel poverty that a clearer lead is required from ministers: that is what our amendment calls for.

I move amendment S4M-05424.2, to leave out from first “the Scottish Government’s” to end and insert:

“that the most recent figures available show that 1 in 3 households in Scotland are living in fuel poverty and that fuel poverty in Scotland has increased; notes that, of the £200 million budget that the Scottish Government states that it has set for energy efficiency and tackling fuel poverty, almost two thirds is to come from energy companies and, therefore, calls on the Scottish Ministers to provide an update on the progress of negotiations with the industry to secure these funds; recognises the role that the energy industry has in addressing fuel poverty and notes that Scottish Labour has called for comprehensive reform of the regulation of the UK energy market; recognises that the impact of the UK Government’s proposals on welfare reform will increase the importance of Scottish Government action on fuel poverty; notes the recent comments of the Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities at a meeting of the Parliament on 9 January 2013 that the Scottish Government remains committed to its statutory obligations to eradicate fuel poverty as far as reasonably practicable by 2016, and considers that the Scottish Government should bring forward an assessment of how it will fulfil this obligation, including milestones in a detailed published plan.”

15:02

**Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):** With increasing domestic energy costs, fuel poverty is never far from the top of the political agenda—and rightly so.

It is invidious that households on modest incomes see such a high proportion of their available budget spent on heating their homes. Regrettably—some might say predictably—the Scottish Government’s motion, which seeks to address the issue, is a bit simplistic and predictable. A call on the UK Government to tackle the energy market demonstrates that there is no subject, however serious, on which the Scottish Government will not deploy its usual mantra of, “It’s all the fault of Westminster.” That must be particularly galling to hear for those who struggle to pay their bills, when every major wind farm development that the Scottish Government falls over itself to support means that greater levels of subsidies are paid for by the very consumers who face the choice of whether to heat or eat.

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

**Alex Johnstone:** Not at this stage.

The Scottish Government’s motion makes reference to the national retrofit programme. I whole-heartedly support the NRP but, in reality, I am concerned that it will not go far enough and, as ever, will be overly cautious in its approach.

The solution to reducing fuel poverty in Scotland lies not with jingoistic political slogans and ministerial foot stamping, but with a two-pronged approach that more fully utilises insulation systems and takes a fresh look at the area of microrenewables. Of course, attempts have been made over the years to make housing more energy self-sufficient, often with success, but those have invariably come at substantially higher costs.

Having looked closely at how the technology has been developed and utilised in many European countries, as well as places such as China and Japan, I am aware that the construction costs for homes that incorporate the comprehensive insulation and microrenewable technology that will free people from the burden of fuel poverty can now be comparable with the costs for their more traditional counterparts.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Will the member take an intervention now?

**Alex Johnstone:** If Stewart Stevenson insists.

**Stewart Stevenson:** I am delighted to hear the member talk about renewables, but is he aware that between 80 and 90 per cent of recent rises in

domestic energy bills are attributable to an increase in the price of oil, which, of course, means increased tax take for the Government? Would Mr Johnstone like that tax take, and all the tax from oil, to come here so that we can spend it on fuel poverty?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I will compensate you for taking that intervention, Mr Johnstone.

**Alex Johnstone:** I hate to imagine what the tax take would need to be to finance the independent Scotland that the gentleman seems so keen to create.

I believe that the most positive and effective course of action now would be to look at the work that is being done in this field in the UK and abroad, and to fully embrace the technology that will deliver the kind of results for households and the environment that we all want to see. I urge the Scottish Government to take a bolder approach. I genuinely believe that even if we do not address the issue of fuel prices, using less fuel is a way to cut costs.

Looking at the responsibilities of Westminster, I see that the coalition Government is committed to tackling fuel poverty and supporting low-income and vulnerable consumers to heat their homes at an affordable cost.

**Jamie Hepburn (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP):** Will the member take an intervention?

**Alex Johnstone:** No, thank you.

In this Parliament, we regularly address the issue of fuel poverty, which falls within the ambit of the Scottish Government's responsibilities, yet action is being taken at Westminster level that is extremely helpful. We have already heard the minister address some of those measures.

The green deal and the energy company obligation will be the flagship policies for improving the energy efficiency of the nation's housing stock. ECO and the green deal that will run alongside it will have the twin objectives of helping to reduce carbon emissions and tackling fuel poverty. ECO requires energy suppliers to help households to access more expensive insulation measures such as solid wall and hard-to-treat cavity wall insulation through the green deal, and to provide measures that will help low-income and vulnerable households to reduce the costs of staying warm and healthy. Through ECO, around £540 million will be spent annually at a UK level, and we need to ensure that Scotland gets its fair share of that spending.

The community energy saving programme is targeted at the lowest 15 per cent of areas by income in Scotland and the lowest 10 per cent in England. The programme, which is designed to

deliver comprehensive energy-efficiency retrofits on a street-by-street basis, is expected to deliver permanent fuel bill savings of up to £300 a year per household. By June 2012, 36 such schemes in Glasgow had been submitted to Ofgem for approval; unfortunately, I cannot provide an up-to-date figure. Under the super-priority group of the carbon emissions reduction target, some 600,000 low-income households across the UK will be helped. Again, we must ensure that Scotland benefits appropriately from that programme.

In addition, the Government will continue to provide pensioner households with the regular cold weather payments.

I turn to the position of the Scottish Government and its relationship with Westminster. If we are to achieve our objectives, it is vital that Scotland's two Governments work together side by side, rather than competing with each other to achieve objectives that do not warm a single house. I am heartened by the fact that, this week, meetings will take place between the minister and representatives of the Westminster Government. I give her my full encouragement to take the opportunity to create some harmony, as well as some warmth for the people in Scotland who need it.

I move amendment S4M-05424.3, to leave out from first "recognises" to end and insert:

"expresses concern at the high levels of fuel poverty in Scotland, which, according to Energy Action Scotland, now affects 900,000 households; calls on the Scottish Government to provide greater clarity on its current budgetary commitment on fuel poverty and energy efficiency measures; commends the UK Government for the action that it is taking to reduce consumer bills through the UK Energy Bill and various energy efficiency measures, such as the Green Deal; urges the Scottish Government to fully detail its proposals for the National Retrofit Programme; condemns what it considers to be a paucity of ambition from the Scottish Government, which has seen it fail to fully engage with the micro-renewables sector; notes that Poland and other countries are now constructing social housing heated entirely by micro-renewables, and calls on the Scottish Government to review its energy policy, which, through its over-reliance on large-scale wind farms, is a major contributory factor in escalating domestic energy costs."

15:09

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** I certainly welcome this latest debate on fuel poverty, although I regret the way in which the Government and the minister have chosen to frame it.

Just as there has been an enduring consensus across the political parties over successive Governments and sessions of Parliament on the commitment to eradicate fuel poverty, there has been a recognition that, if that is to be achieved,

both Scotland's Governments must play a full and collaborative part.

There may be disagreements about methods or the pace at which change happens, but that is natural on the basis of healthy debate. However, it is disingenuous for Margaret Burgess to try to characterise the situation as one in which the Scottish Government is doing everything that it can but is being thwarted by its counterpart in Westminster. Such a distortion of the facts carries with it a number of risks.

First, there is a danger that Scottish National Party ministers will start to believe their own spin, which will make it all the more difficult to persuade them that there are areas in which the Scottish Government needs to do more. The briefings from Energy Action Scotland, Citizens Advice Scotland, the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations and others make it clear that such areas exist, not least in terms of the resources that are being committed. That point was acknowledged by the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee in its report on the Government's budget, and I will return to it later.

The other danger, of course, is that such partisan misrepresentation does nothing to aid co-operation and collaboration between both Governments on this vital issue. It might be that, like many of her colleagues, Margaret Burgess is entirely relaxed about that prospect, but it illustrates the problem of having ministers who are so obsessed with the 2014 referendum and the powers that they do not have that, as Richard Baker suggested, they pass up the opportunities to use to full effect the ones that they do have.

Whatever the case, with Energy Action Scotland estimating that up to 40 per cent of households in Scotland might be living in fuel poverty, the challenge that faces all of us in meeting our shared objective of eradicating this scourge on our society is enormous and getting more urgent by the day. That is all the more reason to try to maintain the political consensus and joint commitment that has existed to date.

In that spirit, let me be clear that I accept that there are aspects of the UK Government policy that need more work. As my amendment suggests, I have no doubt that the green deal, the energy company obligation, the Energy Bill and so on all have the potential to deliver significant benefits, not just as part of a process of decarbonising our economy but specifically with regard to addressing fuel poverty. Nevertheless, I am also conscious that we need to learn lessons from the past and ensure that those initiatives offer opportunities to all our citizens and communities.

An example of that is ECO, which could see £100 million invested in Scotland this year and an

estimated £120 million in future years. That investment is hugely welcome, but it is fair to say that, in rural and island areas such as the ones that I represent, there are questions about how effective that mechanism will be at channelling funds into those communities. That is a real concern.

As the minister knows, after the Western Isles, Orkney has the highest level of fuel poverty anywhere in the country. The reasons for that are obvious—the homes are harder to heat, the winters are longer and harsher, and we are off the gas grid. Yet, as Calor Gas points out,

“fuel poverty schemes often fail to address the fuel disadvantage of off-grid or rural homes.”

It is all the more essential, then, that programmes, whether they emanate from the UK Government or the Scottish Government or are taken forward by energy companies, are structured in ways that make them accessible to all. Those points were made to David Sigsworth, the chair of the minister's advisory committee on fuel poverty, when he visited Orkney last summer. He saw at first hand some of the innovative work that is being done in Orkney in tailoring insulation and other energy-efficient solutions to meet the specific needs of islanders. He was also left in no doubt about the scale of the challenges that remain.

**Annabelle Ewing (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** The member referred to the fact that Orkney is off the gas grid and to the hardship that faces struggling pensioners, in particular, with their sky-high fuel bills. Can he therefore explain why, last September, his Government in Westminster talked out the private member's bill of Mike Weir MP, which would have dealt with the issue at least partially by allowing the payments of the winter fuel allowance to be brought forward to a point at which it is cheaper for the pensioners to buy fuel?

**Liam McArthur:** The reasons for that are not necessarily ones that I am privy to. Nevertheless, it was interesting that the member's colleague, Stewart Stevenson, vaunted the soaring price of oil as the means by which the SNP would set up its oil fund, which would exist to buttress infrastructure development and, now, to pay for fuel poverty measures. The SNP's panacea for fuel poverty is sky-high oil prices.

**Stewart Stevenson:** The member is misrepresenting me. Will he give way?

**Liam McArthur:** I would encourage—

**Stewart Stevenson:** Come on.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Stewart Stevenson:** He named me.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr Stevenson. Order.

**Liam McArthur:** I encourage the minister to look again at supporting efforts in Orkney to harness more of the excellent renewable resources that we have in the islands to provide lower-cost electricity to fuel-poor households. At present, much of that resource is being constrained, off the grid, or pumped straight into the ground. Surely there is an opportunity for some joined-up thinking to allow Orkney and communities elsewhere in Scotland to derive more benefits from our assets. In the past, ministers have been reluctant to promote the idea of local councils or other community bodies taking on more of a role in energy supply, but that issue is worthy of further consideration.

I firmly believe that the Scottish Government has taken the issue of fuel poverty seriously. The development of many schemes that were initiated under the previous Scottish Executive has been sensible and effective, and I welcome the retrofit programme. However, the challenges in continuing to make progress are all too evident. In a sense, we have dealt with the low-hanging fruit, and what follows will be more tricky and costly. The Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee puts the bill at around £200 million a year; Energy Action Scotland insists that it is likely to be nearer £300 million. It has also made the point that the funding should be secure and over and above what the energy companies invest.

The minister will point to the £200 million in the budget, but that is almost certainly insufficient. She ignores the fact that the Government has made political choices about how it chooses to spend money. Since taking office, ministers have repeatedly refused to engage in discussions about how significant resources that are spent on Scottish Water might be better deployed while public control is retained over Scottish Water. That missed opportunity is directly affecting ministers' ability to fund measures to combat fuel poverty.

The minister is correct to say that the number of households in fuel poverty at the start of the 21st century in Scotland, which is an energy-rich country, is scandalous. Tackling that will require collective effort, innovative approaches and significant resources. It does not need ministers relegating the issue below their obsession with the referendum and picking fights rather than working on solutions with Westminster.

I have pleasure in moving my somewhat lengthy amendment: I move amendment S4M-05424.1, to leave out from "the contrast" to end and insert:

"recognises the early indications from the National Retrofit Programme 'go-early' pilots that energy companies view Scotland as an attractive place to invest; further welcomes UK Government schemes to improve energy

efficiency and tackle fuel poverty that will help households in Scotland, in particular the innovative Green Deal, which will launch in January 2013, under which individuals and businesses will be able to implement energy efficiency improvements to their properties paid for through savings on their energy bills, and the £1.3 billion Energy Company Obligation (ECO) that targets support at households in fuel poverty and those with hard-to-insulate homes; believes that as the ECO is taken forward, ministers should ensure that the obligation provides support for remote and rural communities with high rates of fuel poverty and higher costs; congratulates the UK coalition government on its decision to permanently increase the cold weather payment from £8.50 per week to £25 per week; recognises that action to reduce reliance on fossil fuels is required to tackle rising energy bills and welcomes the significant sums invested in the Scottish renewables industry in recent years, with around 11,000 jobs in Scotland now directly related to the renewables sector; further welcomes the UK Energy Bill, which is designed to ensure that there is a competitive market of diverse suppliers and energy sources in which consumers can obtain the best possible deal; supports the UK coalition government's efforts to simplify tariffs to ensure that consumers are on the lowest tariff appropriate to their circumstances but, nevertheless, remains concerned that many customers find themselves subject to large increases in their energy bills, above the headline figure announced by energy companies; believes that, in order to meet the target to end fuel poverty by 2016, both governments must work together constructively in the best interests of Scotland's people, and calls on the Scottish Government to work with the Treasury in order to unlock funds from Scottish Water to increase significantly its home insulation programme, which will reduce Scotland's carbon footprint, cut family heating bills and generate thousands of green jobs across the country."

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We now move to the open debate. Speeches should be six minutes, please.

15:16

**Jamie Hepburn (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP):** I fear that Liam McArthur somewhat wittingly misrepresented the position of my colleague Stewart Stevenson, who reasonably tried to make the point that, if Scotland had access to its own natural resources, we could utilise them for the benefit of the people of Scotland and invest the money in tackling fuel poverty rather than squandering it on an austerity agenda, as the UK Government is doing. Part of Mr McArthur's solution is not only that we should not control Scotland's oil but that we should not even control Scotland's water. He needs to rise to the occasion rather better.

I welcome this debate. I use the word "welcome" advisedly, of course. I welcome the debate as the subject is an important one that we should be debating, but we would all rather not be having the debate. We are having it only because we have a problem with fuel poverty. It is a disgrace that Scotland, as an energy-rich country, has fuel poverty. I think that that was commented on earlier in a disparaging manner. We have debated the issue in the past.

Homes for Scotland has pointed out that one problem that is exacerbating fuel poverty is the significant increase in energy bills. It has made the point that,

"With energy bills having rocketed by 91% since 2006, fuel poverty now affects 684,000 Scottish households."

The minister mentioned that figure. Indeed, Energy Action Scotland has said that, once more up-to-date figures are looked at, the figure could be higher than that. It is therefore clear that we have a problem.

How does that problem manifest itself? What does it lead to? As I said in a previous debate on fuel poverty,

"Professor Hills, who is director of the centre for analysis of social exclusion at the London School of Economics, has argued that fuel poverty poses serious public health and environmental problems. According to the Office for National Statistics, there are some 27,000 extra deaths in the UK each winter compared to other times of year. That figure is worse than the figures for Finland, Sweden and Norway, all of which have severe winters more regularly than these islands do."

Professor Hills also pointed out

"that, in about half of cases in which a death was attributed to lower-than-average indoor temperatures, there were economic reasons."—[*Official Report*, 26 October 2011; c 2758.]

Those reasons exacerbated the problem. It is therefore clear that the problem is a serious one.

I turn to the amendments. We have heard the call for increased funding, but we must recognise what the Scottish Government is doing. It is committed to investing some £200 million between 2012 and 2014 to deal with the issue. The Labour amendment says again, somewhat disparagingly, that some of the money might come from energy companies. Given that we live in an age in which the average dual fuel bill is a four-figure sum, it would be scandalous if those companies were not contributing to tackling the problem.

**Richard Baker:** Will the member take an intervention?

**Jamie Hepburn:** I will gladly give way to Mr Baker.

**Richard Baker:** I am not sure why SNP members are misinterpreting our position. We have said that the energy companies' commitment should be welcomed and that it is important that the money should be secured. However, we want to know how far the Scottish Government has gone in the dialogue with the energy companies to ensure that the two thirds of the £200 million that they are to contribute has been secured.

**Jamie Hepburn:** My reference was to Mr Baker's amendment, in which he almost blithely says:

"of the £200 million budget that the Scottish Government states that it has set for energy efficiency and tackling fuel poverty, almost two thirds is to come from energy companies".

Frankly, what is the problem? I point out that that is in line with a recommendation of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, which asked for a combined budget of at least £200 million between Government and energy company obligations. The Scottish Government has risen to that challenge.

I welcome the retrofit programme, as it is right to consolidate efforts and to attempt to improve existing homes, make them more energy efficient and reduce fuel poverty. I see that the existing homes alliance Scotland briefing for the debate states that it welcomes that approach.

Other briefings from housing sector organisations have offered suggestions to the Scottish Government. I do not necessarily support those suggestions, but they are at least worthy of exploration. Homes for Scotland suggests developing a retrofit reward solution, through which home builders would

"have the option of either complying with new Standards or continuing building to current 2010 Standards and making a financial contribution to a retrofit fund".

That is an interesting suggestion that is worth exploring, although I am unclear as to whether it would be effective.

The Scottish Federation of Housing Associations calls for the utilisation of European money to fund improvements. Again, I am not entirely sure of the merits of that approach, but at least the federation is offering suggestions. I am sure that the Scottish Government will respond to it.

In the background is the UK Government's approach to welfare reform. I am on the Welfare Reform Committee, which just yesterday heard evidence about how that reform will push a large number of people further into poverty. Against the trend of increased energy costs, welfare reform will make tackling fuel poverty ever more difficult. In the past, when progress has been made on tackling fuel poverty, price increases have served to wipe that out. If the UK Government suppresses people's incomes through welfare reform, that will serve only to make it ever more difficult to tackle fuel poverty.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):** You might wish to draw to a close, please.

**Jamie Hepburn:** The background of the UK Government's welfare reform agenda belies Alex Johnstone's suggestion that the UK Government is working towards tackling fuel poverty.

I look forward to hearing the minister's closing speech.

15:23

**Margaret McCulloch (Central Scotland (Lab)):** Earlier this week, energy bill revolution, a campaign of more than 100 businesses, charities and activists, issued an open letter to the Prime Minister to warn of the “national disgrace” that is fuel poverty. The campaign estimates that 6 million families are living in fuel poverty today and that, rather than coming down, the figure is actually going up and will reach 9 million by 2016. The campaign claims that Government schemes are simply not enough at a time of economic difficulty and rising energy prices. My concern is that many of the criticisms that the campaign has levelled at the UK Government are also relevant in Scotland.

The Scottish fuel poverty forum says that three main factors determine levels of fuel poverty: the energy efficiency of homes; energy prices; and household income. Too many people in Scotland today live in cold homes with their bills going up faster than their incomes. It is perhaps useful to reflect on how the combination of those factors can shape the experiences and daily lives of people who are already struggling.

In these troubled times, in which we are much more aware of climate change than ever before, we all ration our energy usage, but stories about pensioners on fixed incomes or families struggling to get by who are switching off—not because they want to keep their bills down, but because they have to do so—are challenging and troubling.

We should not tolerate an injustice that can leave people on low incomes in cold, damp houses, unable to pay their bills and afraid to use their heating and appliances. No citizen of our country should ever be forced to choose between heating and eating, especially during spells of cold weather such as the conditions that we are experiencing this week. There is consensus about the nature of fuel poverty but, as we have been hearing, there is still debate about how we prioritise solutions.

The Government’s motion refers to retrofitting of homes—a point supported by the existing homes alliance—so that we can raise energy-efficiency standards in existing homes as well as in new-build developments. In the budget debate yesterday, we heard the case for allocating, in full, the capital spending consequentials arising from the autumn statement towards housing. Boosting investment in housing would not only help to get the construction sector moving and bring down waiting lists; spending extra cash on retrofitting would make our existing housing stock more sustainable and would help to liberate some of Scotland’s many hard-pressed families from the injustice of fuel poverty.

The UK Government has to be challenged as well. The Prime Minister and the energy secretary have to show that they are serious about reform of the energy market. The disconnect and distrust between energy companies and their customers have never been greater. Without a radical overhaul of the energy market, the gulf will grow wider.

Some of my Labour colleagues in the UK Parliament have suggested that, if we are to restore confidence in energy markets, Ofgem should be replaced with a newer, tougher regulator—a watchdog with real teeth and the bite to match. Where it has been established that energy companies have abused their position in the market, the regulator should be able to do more than dish out a slap on the wrist. It should be able to force price cuts for bill payers and it should be prepared to shine a light on the practices of energy companies and act as a strong advocate for consumers.

Other solutions are being developed commercially, which could have a bearing on fuel poverty and energy consumption in years to come. I recently attended an open day and innovation fair at ID Systems in Central Scotland. It brought together companies from throughout the water industry, the oil and gas sector and manufacturing. I saw a demonstration for Umax, which is a liquid additive to central heating systems that changes the property of water to keep boilers from running too often and lowers fuel use. It was a simple demonstration but the lesson that I took from it is that, with some creativity and innovation, we can find new solutions as we grapple with complex problems.

Innovation and enterprise might not fall within the purview of the housing minister but she may wish to speak to some of her colleagues in other departments to ensure that the Government is following the good work of Scotland’s innovators and entrepreneurs, especially given the impetus to find products that make energy more affordable.

If household income is a key determinant of whether a family will experience fuel poverty, welfare cuts—which hit those in work as well as those who are out of work—almost certainly guarantee that levels of fuel poverty in Scotland will rise. In that context, the role of the Scottish Government becomes all the more important in ensuring that welfare rights advice and the energy assistance package are well used and properly promoted to those most in need.

Fuel poverty has been with us in Scotland for too long, and I fear that it will be with us for some time to come. Both of Scotland’s Parliaments share a genuine concern about fuel poverty, but my appeal to Government today is that it should

recognise its shared responsibility for finding a sustainable way forward.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I welcome to the gallery the High Commissioner of the Republic of Malawi, His Excellency Bernard H Sande. *[Applause.]*

Our next speaker is Annabelle Ewing. You have six minutes.

15:29

**Annabelle Ewing (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP):** I thank all of the many organisations that have been in touch with us, providing their views on the important issues that we are discussing today and supplying us with figures that should leave no one in any doubt that fuel poverty is a real and present danger in our society today.

In the latest published figures on fuel poverty, some 29 per cent of households were found to be fuel poor. As we have heard this afternoon, projections have been made by Energy Action Scotland, for example, that, taking into account fuel price rises since 2011, the total may be closer to some 900,000 households. That means that about 40 per cent of households in Scotland are in fuel poverty.

We have been given a pretty clear picture of how bad the situation is, and I hope and believe that there is no member of this Parliament who does not recognise that. Certainly, on the SNP benches there are no illusions whatsoever as to the scale of the problem, but of course the job at hand is to ensure that the right decisions are taken to tackle the problem, to reverse the trend that we see and to meet the targets that have been set for ending fuel poverty.

The minister clearly laid out in her opening remarks what the Scottish Government has done and is continuing to do for households in fuel poverty. The minister also highlighted how much worse the situation would be were it not for the Scottish Government's firm commitment to tackling fuel poverty, given the impact of so many factors over which the Scottish Government and the Parliament sadly have no power, and the inaction of the Westminster Government, which does have the power.

It might be instructive in that vein to look at what the other parties in the chamber have to offer us. It is interesting to compare and contrast the Tory and Lib Dem amendments, particularly the attitudes on renewables—although I see that our Lib Dem colleague is temporarily outwith the chamber. While the Tories attack the Scottish Government for what they call an

“over-reliance on large-scale wind farms”,

which the Tories then go on to assert is a

“major contributory factor in escalating domestic energy costs”,

the Lib Dem amendment

“recognises that action to reduce reliance on fossil fuels is required to tackle rising energy bills and welcomes the significant sums invested in the Scottish renewables industry in recent years, with around 11,000 jobs in Scotland now directly related to the renewables sector”.

**Jamie Hepburn:** Does the member not also think that it is somewhat ironic that the Tories, in slamming wind farms, failed to mention that two of their members are trying to sell land on which wind farms can be built?

**Annabelle Ewing:** There are many things about the Tories and their policies that raise intrinsic issues and contradictions.

When we talk about the Tories and the Lib Dems pulling in opposite directions, it perhaps explains why the UK economy is in such a mess, given the different perspectives of the UK Tory-Liberal coalition Government partners.

The Tories are calling on the Scottish Government to review its energy policy. I call on them to take a look at the Scotland Act 1998, schedule 5, head D on energy. What do we see? We see that it is a reserved power to the Westminster Government and that Scotland's hands are tied.

The Lib Dem amendment, despite the promising passage that I quoted earlier, spends most of its time calling on the Scottish Government to play cheerleader to a Westminster Government that is not even supported by the people of Scotland. The Lib Dems talk of protecting consumers and ensuring competition in the energy marketplace. Again, we should look at the Scotland Act 1998, schedule 5, heads C3 on competition and C7 on consumer protection. Again, those are reserved powers and Scotland's hands are tied.

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I am grateful to the member for giving way. On the point about constitutional power over energy policy, does she not accept that the banding for renewable energy is in fact a devolved matter, as indeed is the whole question of planning for development? There is a whole range of powers within the gift of the Scottish Government that it could use if it wished to.

**Annabelle Ewing:** I do not know whether the Tories are trying to suggest that energy policy is not set in concrete terms by the UK Government at the present time. If Murdo Fraser is trying to suggest that, he is certainly rewriting history as we speak.

I now turn to the Labour Party's amendment. It

"recognises the role that the energy industry has in addressing fuel poverty"

and it goes on to recognise the need for

"reform of the regulation of the UK energy market".

As a member of the Welfare Reform Committee, I am particularly pleased to note that it has chosen to highlight

"the impact of the UK Government's proposals on welfare reform"

but, once again, we are back to the Scotland Act 1998, schedule 5. This time it is head F on social security. What do we see? We see that it, too, is a reserved power and that Scotland's hands are tied.

The broader context of the debate is all about the scandal of fuel poverty in the midst of energy plenty. It is about the disgrace of so many being left to freeze in a country that has around 25 per cent of Europe's potential offshore wind and tidal energy, a 10th of Europe's wave power potential and something in the region of 24 billion barrels of oil still sitting under the North Sea.

We live in what should be the sixth richest country by Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development rankings and still we have citizens who cannot afford to heat their homes properly. The members from the Labour, Lib Dem and Conservative parties—the anti-independence parties—sneer at what this Government is doing within the limited powers and constrained budget that it has. They fret at the possibility of this Parliament's practical impotence in the face of a problem of such scale but, at the same time, outside these walls they stand shoulder to shoulder with one another to defend the constitutional arrangements that allow the situation to happen.

I welcome all that the Scottish Government is managing to do at present, but I say roll on 2014, when I am confident that we will win the powers of a normal nation and make Scotland a powerhouse—a nation blazing a trail for renewable energies, building a fairer and more equal society, and banishing fuel poverty for good.

15:35

**Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab):** I join members in welcoming the fuel poverty debate.

Fuel poverty continues to burden far too many households in my region and throughout Scotland. As we have heard, the Scottish Government has made a crystal-clear pledge to abolish it by 2016. Although I am sure that that ambition is shared across the chamber, it appears that progress is not sufficient to make it reality. In fact, the most recent figures show that fuel poverty is not being

ended but is increasing. More and more people are struggling to pay their energy bills.

We have heard a number of statistics this afternoon. It is extremely worrying that Energy Action Scotland estimates that around 900,000 households—nearly a million—are affected by fuel poverty. That is not progress. More must be done, as the severity of the situation is clear.

It is widely accepted that there are three main factors in creating fuel poverty: energy prices, household income and energy efficiency in homes. Many speakers have rightly pointed to energy prices as a significant contributing factor to increasing fuel poverty. Energy prices, which are already unacceptably high, continue to rise while incomes stall. Vulnerable customers who are in need of protection continue to be ripped off while energy companies record huge profits.

In November last year, Scottish Gas announced a 6 per cent increase in energy prices. At the same time, its parent company, Centrica, posted profits of £1.4 billion. Scottish Gas is not the only culprit: all the major energy providers announced price rises this winter for UK customers, with the big six announcing rises ranging from 6 per cent to 11 per cent over the past few months. Citizens Advice Scotland backs that up in a survey that has already been mentioned. It shows that energy bills have doubled in the past eight years and are set to increase further.

I recently spoke to a constituent in Paisley who was told that, because of his postcode, he would have to pay £150 to have a pre-paid meter removed from his house. How will people who are already struggling to pay their energy bills be able to get out of the poverty trap if the costs and the postcode discrimination are not addressed?

Energy giants should not be able to get away with inflation-busting price rises when they are already making massive profits. There is no doubt that the energy market is in need of overhaul. I want vulnerable customers to be protected and savings to be passed on to consumers.

I agree with my Labour colleagues at Westminster that we need to consider setting up a new, strengthened energy regulator. However, we also need to consider new and innovative ways of helping people with their bills.

The Labour Party is taking positive steps by launching a switch together campaign to drive down energy costs through signing up thousands of people to switch suppliers collectively and force better deals. That is a practical suggestion that I hope local authorities, housing associations and the Scottish Government will consider and support.

There is no doubting the impact of hikes in energy prices on households throughout Scotland. However, the Scottish Government can do more to help the families who are forced to choose between heating and eating.

Two years ago, the Government cut spending on fuel poverty, and families are feeling the impact of that today. The Government has at its disposal powers and resources that it must start using. It has powers and resources to improve the energy efficiency of our homes. For example, yesterday, in the budget debate, we argued that additional investment in housing could not only increase the number of warm and energy-efficient homes but provide an expanded retrofit programme to improve the energy efficiency of existing houses. That, in turn, could create jobs and apprenticeship opportunities, which are even more important because we know that household income is a key part of fuel poverty.

Figures from the Department of Energy and Climate Change show that the proportion of households that are in fuel poverty is considerably higher in Scotland than in England. The Scottish Government needs to tell us exactly how it will address that.

I know that the Government has a desire to secure £200 million to invest in tackling fuel poverty, but there are a number of questions—not just from me but from organisations such as Energy Action Scotland—that need to be answered about that. I understand that almost two thirds of the required £200 million is to come from the fuel companies, as has been mentioned. I ask again how much of that has been delivered. Can we have an assurance that the money will be passed on to customers through savings on their bills?

We need to support community groups that are working on fuel poverty. With my colleague Mary Fee MSP and Jim Sheridan MP, I took the opportunity last weekend to visit the local energy action plan—LEAP—project in Bridge of Weir in Renfrewshire.

LEAP provides free local services to communities in Renfrewshire. It helps residents to save energy and money by providing free and impartial advice on insulation, draught proofing, heating, grants and subsidies. It was great to meet some of the dedicated volunteers and see the positive work that they are doing to reduce people's utility bills. Such initiatives make a difference to communities and I would like the Scottish Government to support the roll-out of more such projects urgently across Scotland, so that households in my region and across Scotland can benefit from those excellent services.

Vulnerable and low-income families cannot wait years to get help to alleviate the misery of fuel poverty. Instead of seeing significant progress, we are seeing an increase in the number of households that are in fuel poverty. The Scottish Government pledged to abolish fuel poverty by 2016. There is no doubt that rising energy prices make that target more challenging, but ministers can and must do more. That is the least that families and households deserve.

15:41

**John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP):** I congratulate the minister on the motion. I believe that the Scottish Government is attempting to develop a holistic approach to tackling fuel poverty.

I welcome the opportunity to have the debate, although fuel poverty and its consequences should have been consigned to the dustbin of history. Poverty and fuel poverty have been around for a long time, and the complexities of this aspect of poverty are, shamefully, still embedded in all too many of our communities.

Since the mid-1980s, progress to tackle poverty has relied on few mechanisms. The hope has usually been that economic growth would trickle down to the poorest in society or that the increasing dynamic of welfare-to-work programmes would by itself solve working-age poverty, without any meaningful change in the incomes of those who remained out of work.

It needs to be recognised that household budgets have been and are under severe strain. From 2006 to 2011, electricity bills increased by 54.9 per cent and gas prices increased by 80 per cent. That has resulted in many people having to make tough decisions about how they spend their money in these most difficult times.

Fuel poverty is an important issue—even more so when we consider that the aim was to eradicate it by 2016. When that target was set, nobody expected rising prices and falling earnings, which have drawn more households into fuel poverty.

In relation to fuel poverty, one strength of policy in the recent past has been the acknowledgement that poverty is multifaceted. The emphasis on social exclusion is welcome, but that agenda was nothing new to some of us—especially those who have worked on the issues for a number of decades.

It is worth observing that utility companies are distrusted more than banks in the minds of consumers such as small businesses. An ingenious Britain survey said that just 28 per cent of firms trust their energy supplier, whereas a third trust banks.

The *Which?* report “The Imbalance of Power” revealed that consumers face an increase of as much as 17 per cent in electricity prices. Only one in 10 could spot the cheapest deal, which highlighted how confusing the market is. When the Consumers Association showed people simplified energy tariffs in the style of petrol forecourt displays and asked them which was the cheapest, the number who could spot the answer shot up to nine out of 10. It is clear that something must change.

Given the diverse nature of fuel poverty, the policy mix needs to be flexible in its approach to tackling it. As a society, we have to understand and tackle the problems of fuel poverty. We must take every step that is possible within the powers of the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament to eradicate this blight in Scotland, and we must urge the UK Government to raise its game in dealing with some of the root causes of poverty.

I welcome the motion that we are debating today and indeed the long-standing commitment to the principle of poverty proofing policy. Although the initiatives to retrofit and improve insulation standards in homes have to be welcomed, we also have to ensure that fuel prices do not continue to outstrip the financial benefits to households of mitigation measures that are put in place to alleviate fuel poverty.

I have no doubt that fuel poverty will continue to be a major concern to all in the Parliament. I look forward to the minister providing regular updates on how the programme to tackle fuel poverty over the coming period, particularly up to 2016, will benefit the people of Scotland. We should all be concerned when, in this day and age and particularly at this time of year, many people, and particularly pensioners, face the real hazard of having to decide whether to heat their homes or to feed themselves. As other members have said, the situation that we face is one that we should not be facing in the 21st century. The more measures that we can put in place to eradicate fuel poverty, the better. We must give families in Scotland security and ensure that they do not have to live in the desperate situation of having to decide whether to heat their homes, feed themselves or clothe their children.

Clearly, the issue should concern everyone in the Parliament and outside it. I look forward to the continuing work by all the agencies and organisations, and work both inside the Parliament and outside it. We must work together to ensure that we can truly eradicate fuel poverty in Scotland and also move towards eradicating poverty.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We have a small amount of time in hand, so if members

modestly wish to take a little longer, that would be welcome.

15:47

**Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP):** I welcome this debate on what is an important and challenging issue, and I am pleased to speak in it. This is a debate that affects every household in Scotland and it is only right that, as parliamentarians, we challenge the issues surrounding it. Most colleagues will be aware of the challenges that their constituents face with rising fuel costs and increasing prices across all walks of daily life. I know only too well, through surgeries and through letters, emails and phone calls that I have received at my office, the desperate situations in which many of my constituents have found themselves. I am sure that I speak for most members in that regard.

As we all know, winter is when most people use the greatest amount of fuel to heat their homes. With rising prices and the threat of cuts hanging over many people's heads, decisions have to be made when it comes to how people look after their families. Too often in the Parliament and beyond it, the example is given of old-age pensioners sitting in their homes having to decide whether to put the fire on to warm themselves against the freezing conditions of winter or to buy food to avoid starvation. John Wilson highlighted that situation. I know that it sounds like an exaggeration, but it is a fact that older people sometimes starve themselves to death.

That is an everyday choice for many people. It is a choice about the best way in which to least damage their health. That situation continues to be played out across our country, in homes and kitchens, among both families and single occupants. In a modern, developed, energy-rich country such as Scotland, it is a disgrace that that story is becoming even more commonplace rather than being a rarity.

Despite the confines of the current devolved settlement, I applaud the Scottish Government for the measures that it has adopted in an attempt to counter the worst effects of the current situation with the limited powers that are available to it. Of course, its efforts are undermined not only by the fact that it does not have all the powers that it needs but by the detrimental impact of the Westminster Government's kamikaze approach to welfare reform, which will only put more households into fuel poverty.

Figures released by the Scottish Government in December 2012 showed that, in 2011, 684,000 households—or 28.9 per cent of our people—were classed as fuel poor. Energy Action Scotland estimates that, over the course of 2012, that figure

will increase to more than 900,000 households or 40 per cent because of fuel prices and other financial pressures on household budgets. Those staggering figures will put more pressure on the national health service, local government services and the whole economy. Given that the whole of society will be affected by the rising number of people living in fuel poverty, we have an obligation to do as much as we can to alleviate the problem.

In addition to the rise in fuel costs, there is another burden on people who live in houses with poor energy efficiency. After all, it does not matter how much heating a house might have; if it has poor insulation or an outdated boiler, most of the warmth will be lost. That is why I am pleased that the Scottish Government is working with energy companies to identify £200 million a year for the development of the national retrofit programme, as outlined in the draft budget.

However, that is not enough. More pressure must be put on energy companies to provide a better deal for consumers. The quest for profits at the expense of pushing people into fuel poverty is nothing short of a disgrace and I join the Scottish Government's call for the UK Government to intervene and ensure that the market provides better for people.

We on this side believe that independence and the choices that it will bring can make the difference on these matters, and it will be a strong part of the offer that we intend to make to the Scottish people in the referendum. Given that this is all happening under the union, the challenge for unionists—indeed, their duty—is to explain how they intend to change these matters and end the misery. In my view, we will be able to truly tackle this kind of poverty only when the Scottish Government has full powers over our natural resources.

Given my age, I was disturbed to hear the member from the northern isles talking about the worst aspects of fuel poverty and saying that, as far as he was concerned, the impacts were felt worst in his area. I thought about the oil that sloshes about the northern isles and was reminded of the potato famine and the fact that food was being sent away from Ireland while tens of thousands of people—indeed, a million of them—were starving to death. Despite having all this energy, we have this member telling us exactly what is happening on his patch. I find it disgraceful that that sort of rhetoric is being heard in this chamber; we need to change these things and the responsibility to do so is on all of us, unionist or otherwise. We live in a very rich country and it is time that we took action to change this situation. Mr McArthur should not be coming to the chamber and explaining these things to us;

he should be explaining them to his constituents. It is just not good enough.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** At which point, Mr Paterson, I suggest that you draw to a close.

**Gil Paterson:** Thank you, Presiding Officer.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I appreciate that.

15:54

**Anne McTaggart (Glasgow) (Lab):** The current economic reality of low wages and high unemployment has led to some of the most difficult years in living memory for thousands of Scottish families. That, coupled with the rising costs of energy, has resulted in an increase in Scots suffering fuel poverty, as we heard. Every day, people are forced to make a choice between putting food on the table and heating their homes.

We live in one of the richest nations and it should be unthinkable that so many of our constituents struggle to keep their families warm during the cold winter months, yet 684,000 Scottish people are currently suffering fuel poverty and allotting more than 10 per cent of their household income to meeting the inflated demands of the big six energy firms that operate in the UK.

The Scottish average for the proportion of income that is spent on energy has reached 14 per cent, which is tragic when we consider that the Scottish Government pledged to eradicate fuel poverty by 2016. I accept that rapidly increasing energy costs have had a significant impact on the achievability of the target. However, the Government has yet to show how it intends to abolish fuel poverty, given that fuel poverty rose last year and the situation shows no sign of improving in the immediate future.

The Government's decision to slash a budget that was specifically intended to address fuel poverty in Scotland has meant that thousands of the most vulnerable people in our communities are unable to heat their homes throughout winter. The Government chose to reduce the financial allocation for fuel poverty initiatives by more than £14 million last year. That had a direct impact on, for example, citizens advice bureaux, which have been inundated with requests for assistance with rising energy costs, mostly from young single women who live in rented housing.

The Government needs to deliver on the promises that it makes to the people of Scotland. It should come clean on why it chose to diminish the support that is offered to individuals who, tragically, are all too often forced to make a choice between heating and eating. The resources that are provided to the vulnerable people in our

communities who suffer fuel poverty should come in a variety of forms, including advice on how to save money on their energy bills throughout the year.

A few months ago, I arranged an event to bring together a number of energy advice services and communities in Glasgow. The event was arranged with the Glasgow home energy advice team—G-HEAT—which was established to provide independent advice on energy-related issues to home owners and tenants, with the aim of reducing consumption and costs.

Such positive action is necessary in the campaign against fuel poverty and empowers people to take action against the multinational energy companies that have exploited our communities for too long. However, such an approach will be effective only with continuing and genuine support from the Government, which has yet to explain its decision to cut the fund that was intended to tackle the growing and serious issue of fuel poverty.

I hope that we can achieve the target to eradicate fuel poverty by 2016, but it is increasingly clear that the action that is required if we are to do so has not yet been taken. That means that hundreds of thousands of Scots continue to suffer from the disgraceful and exploitative business practices of the big six energy firms in the UK.

15:58

**Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP):** I apologise to members, because I will leave after my speech. I will read subsequent speeches in the *Official Report* with interest.

I welcome this important debate, which is timely as the chill hand of winter clasps us to its icy bosom for the first time this year and the reality of heating costs is hitting many homes very hard.

I listened with interest to a number of things that Liam McArthur had to say. He criticised us for suggesting that we were being thwarted by Westminster. I want to expand a little bit on his intervention on my colleague Annabelle Ewing in relation to Mike Weir's proposed bill, which would in fact have cost nothing, as it would merely have advanced payments within the financial year. However, his bill was not given the slightest serious consideration at Westminster and was simply talked out.

For those who heat their homes by gas or electricity and have the energy conveniently delivered automatically by the national grid, the need to pre-plan and pre-pay for their energy use is largely absent. However, many of my constituents and many of those of other members

are based in a rural location and are dependent on fuel that they have to order and have delivered—fuel that they have to pay for before use. They would have found advance payment of the benefit a modest but much-valued piece of support that Westminster could have provided at zero cost. It would have involved not new expenditure but simply retiming.

Domestic oil is the main rural energy source, and it cannot readily be bought in dribs and drabs.

**Liam McArthur:** I certainly do not disagree with anything that Stewart Stevenson has said. However, does he welcome the move to put in place permanently an increase from £8.50 to £25 for the winter fuel payment, rather than wait for the payment to be triggered by a drop in temperatures or, indeed, a calculation of the wind-chill factor?

**Stewart Stevenson:** Of course I do. However, given that it generally takes a four-figure sum to top up an oil fuel tank and that there is a delay of four weeks during the cycle of rising prices that we always see as winter approaches, the increase that the member referred to would not match the increase in price that is created when people are unable to buy early, when the prices are low.

That is why it is such a disgrace that Westminster did not even consider the substantive issues in Mike Weir's bill. It would have been fair enough if Westminster had analysed it and found it impractical. I would have been disappointed by that, but the process would have been just and fair. However, talking out bills on matters that are important to people in rural Cornwall, rural Wales and many parts of Scotland is simply an abrogation of democratic accountability and responsibility.

Of course, for my constituents, insult is added to injury when they see the flares of the St Fergus gas terminal, from where on many days the majority of the UK's gas comes to the beach. Few of my rural constituents have access to that gas through the mains.

Before there is a vote on our having the full powers of a normal nation in 2014, what should we focus on? I very much welcome the substantial sum of £250 million that has been allocated to fuel poverty and energy efficiency by the Government in the current spending period. I will focus on fuel efficiency and energy efficiency in particular—partly because of the policy reach that is associated with the area, because in addressing fuel poverty, we also address employment and climate change. In relation to climate change, consuming less energy is closely associated with emitting less in the way of dangerous greenhouse gases. Substantial progress towards greening our energy consumption in buildings is welcome, and we must keep up the pressure on that. However,

most energy still has a substantial fossil fuel element, so the message “burn less, emit less” continues to be relevant.

Energy efficiency almost always starts with simple, modestly priced adaptations of existing buildings. Home insulation is one adaptation that is particularly effective in reducing energy consumption. This is the first winter that we have had 600mm of insulation in the loft at our house—up from 200mm last winter. We have already seen a 40 per cent reduction in the consumption of oil that we burn in our boiler. Such reductions will be replicated by other people. That is kind to the climate and brilliant for the wallet. Insulation interventions also create jobs that are largely local, which keeps money in our own economy and boosts employment that is generally accessible to a wide range of unemployed people. It is therefore a win-win-win agenda.

We have heard a number of speeches in this debate, on which I will make brief comment, if I am permitted to do so.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You are in your last minute.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Murdo Fraser said that we have planning control over energy. We certainly have administrative devolution, in sections 36 and 37 of the Electricity Act 1989, but we have no legislative competence to go with that.

One of the things that I was most pleased about as a minister was an early action to get Lynne Sullivan to chair a report into our buildings and how we could make them carbon efficient. We continue to inherit the benefits of having taken that action.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Please draw to a close.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Like Richard Baker, I am looking forward to the Energy Action Scotland Burns supper. I am certainly preparing my contribution—I do not know whether Richard Baker is speaking as well.

We have more consensus than the plethora of amendments might immediately suggest. I hope that we can unite around the Government's objectives, which I believe offer a sensible, practical, affordable and ultimately effective way forward for those in fuel poverty.

16:06

**Liam McArthur:** Like Stewart Stevenson, I start with an apology, as I was absent from the chamber earlier. When you pointed out that the High Commissioner for Malawi was in the gallery, Presiding Officer, I recalled that I had missed a

meeting with him at lunch time, so I took the opportunity to nip out to meet him.

I agree with Stewart Stevenson: despite some of the language around the debate, I detect that the consensus that I referred to in my opening speech remains and that there are areas on which the Parliament can collectively move forward.

However, as I said at the very start of my speech, I have concerns about the way in which the Government has approached the debate, which I think set the tone for many SNP members' speeches. I make an exception for John Wilson: although his remarks were as passionate as those of any of his colleagues, they were more balanced.

It is entirely appropriate for SNP members—indeed, for any member—to raise questions and concerns about what the UK Government is or is not doing to combat fuel poverty. UK ministers have a key role in making important judgments about how legislation, spending and overall policy are framed, and their decisions must be informed by the perspective that we can bring in representing a wide range of communities across Scotland and other key stakeholders. Interestingly, Fergus Ewing goes to great lengths to insist that the overall UK energy market would not change greatly with separation—although he is playing to a different audience.

However, the claim in Margaret Burgess's motion—that the UK Government's support for fuel poverty measures is retreating—is nonsense. Winter fuel payments are being increased permanently from £8.50 to £25, and I am sure that that will be welcomed by Annabel Goldie—sorry; I mean Annabelle Ewing. I made the same mistake that Alison Johnstone made last week—I do apologise. I am also sure that that increase will be welcomed by Annabelle Ewing's colleague, Mike Weir.

The ECO-funded affordable warmth scheme will operate UK-wide—unlike its predecessor, which applied south of the border only, it will include Scotland. The scheme will deliver up to £350 million per year.

**Jamie Hepburn:** The welfare reforms are taking place against that backdrop. Changes to tax credits will leave some 100,000 households in Scotland worse off by £700 a year on average, and the bedroom tax will leave 100,000 households worse off by £600 a year on average—that is even before we consider the changes to child benefit. Can Liam McArthur honestly say that those families will find it easier to meet the cost of their fuel bills?

**Liam McArthur:** It is interesting that Jamie Hepburn's intervention reveals absolutely nothing about the SNP's approach to welfare reform. I

perfectly understand that difficult decisions will be made that will impact on households across country. Nevertheless, there is no information from the SNP about how it would simplify the reform package and deliver it in a way that would not impact on households. There is a risk that SNP ministers will send out such a jaundiced view of other initiatives that people in Scotland are discouraged from applying to schemes such as the ECO scheme and the green deal that could benefit them. Certainly, Scottish ministers regularly use a similar argument when they are faced with questions about their own schemes and programmes.

The minister must accept that it is right for Opposition members, and in fact their duty—not to mention that of her own back benchers—to highlight where they believe that the Scottish Government needs to up its game. That is not sneering or scaremongering, nor is it hypocrisy on the part of Opposition members. If anything, we are taking the First Minister at his word when he said that he did not have “a monopoly on wisdom”, even if the notion that his would be a majority Government with a minority ego stretched credibility rather too far.

I am not saying that Scottish ministers have been sitting on their hands. I do not believe for a second that Margaret Burgess takes the issue of fuel poverty anything other than extremely seriously, but she must recognise that there are areas where the Government can do more. I touched on a couple of examples of that in my earlier speech, although I was drowned out by the howls of outrage on the SNP benches at my suggestion that part of the SNP’s solution to fuel poverty is sky-high oil prices in an independent Scotland.

An example that I mentioned earlier is that of establishing how local communities can harness their renewable energy resources to provide lower-cost electricity to those in fuel poverty. Examples of such schemes already exist in Orkney, and I see no reason why communities in other parts of the country should not be helped to do likewise. Another example that I touched on earlier relates to the overall level of funding to support action to tackle fuel poverty. Energy Action Scotland estimates that the funding needs to be increased by around £300 million a year. That will require ministers to be more open to the ways in which funding can be found—in that regard, I offered the example of Scottish Water.

However, I did not give sufficient attention earlier to the work being done on fuel poverty by Citizens Advice Scotland. Its recent energy report demonstrates just how active citizens advice bureau advisers have been in providing invaluable support to some of the most vulnerable people in

our communities. It is estimated that CAB advisers dealt with almost 7,500 people, and their advice helped to secure well over £200,000 of financial gain for clients by ensuring that people claimed support under the warm homes discount, received the best available tariff or accessed free insulation and discounted central heating. Such advice is exceptionally valuable and demonstrates the fact that more can be done to get maximum value from existing initiatives, whether those have been put in place by the UK Government, the Scottish Government or local authorities, or, indeed, are run by the energy companies themselves.

Of course, much more needs to be done, as members across the chamber have accepted. There is an issue of particular note in relation to tariffs and charges. I welcome moves to simplify the bewildering array of tariffs, which often offers customers a very false sense of choice. I can also see merit in requiring energy companies to put their customers on the best available tariff, although that will need to take account of the way in which people use energy, as the superficially cheapest tariff may not always best meet a person’s needs.

As Margaret McCulloch, Anne McTaggart, John Wilson and many others observed, energy companies have some way to go to rebuild trust among their customers. Many reasons for that have been cited, as members outlined. For my own part, over recent months I have been struck by the number of complaints from constituents in Orkney who have expressed real anger that their fuel bills have risen considerably higher than the headline rise that the energy companies announced last autumn. That does nothing for consumer confidence in how energy companies operate; it does even less for our efforts to combat fuel poverty.

The minister mentioned that she is due to meet Ed Davey and Michael Moore in the near future—

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You should be drawing to a close, please.

**Liam McArthur:** I certainly encourage the minister to take up that issue with her UK counterparts. I have also taken it up with Ofgem.

Jamie Hepburn was right that it is highly regrettable that we need to have this debate. I agree with all members who have said that the levels of fuel poverty are scandalous. However, tackling them will require a collaborative effort north and south of the border, innovative solutions and significantly more resources.

16:13

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** It is clear from the debate that we have a

substantial and rising problem with fuel poverty across Scotland. In December, the Scottish Government released the latest fuel poverty figures, which are from 2011. At that stage, the number of fuel-poor households was 684,000—nearly 29 per cent of the total. However, as we heard during the debate, Energy Action Scotland estimates that the current figure is closer to 900,000, which would be 40 per cent of the total. The problem is huge, and it is growing. We should not forget that the Scottish Government has a target to eliminate fuel poverty in its entirety, in so far as is reasonably practicable, by November 2016, which is less than four years away. One does not need to be Einstein to work out that, in the current circumstances, that is a very ambitious target.

There are principally two reasons for the increase in fuel poverty. The first is that household incomes are, generally, not increasing; if anything, they are static or in decline due to the economic backdrop. The second reason is that fuel prices and costs have been increasing dramatically.

**Jamie Hepburn:** I will ask Murdo Fraser essentially the same question that I put to Liam McArthur.

Murdo Fraser rightly points out that household incomes have had a tough time over the past few years, but changes are being made through welfare reform and a number of households in Scotland will be affected by changes to tax credits and the introduction of the bedroom tax. Does he accept that those changes will make it harder for people to pay their fuel bills? I would appreciate a yes or no answer, unlike the response provided by Liam McArthur.

**Murdo Fraser:** Whatever—[*Interruption.*]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Can we have a microphone for Mr Fraser, please?

**Murdo Fraser:** I hope that Jamie Hepburn will join me in welcoming the action that the coalition Government is taking to increase the tax breaks for the least well-off in society, who will pay less tax on their income. Of course, as Liam McArthur fairly said, we have heard no alternative to welfare reform from SNP members, and they have proposed no ideas about where the money would come from if savings are not made. Would they borrow more money or would they cut spending elsewhere? We simply do not know.

There has been a rich irony in the debate, with SNP members on the one hand having to rely on high oil prices to fill the fiscal black hole that would exist in an independent Scotland and on the other realising that high oil prices cause fuel poverty. They cannot have it both ways, and they should stop passing the blame on to Westminster.

We cannot have this debate without looking at the cost of energy and the sources of energy. I commend to the chamber the excellent work of the economist Professor Gordon Hughes from the University of Edinburgh, who has looked at the relative costs and different means of producing electricity. It is clear from that work that intermittent wind power carries a high cost—a cost that has to be borne by the consumer.

The Scottish Government's obsession with wind-based energy policy is not only blanketing our countryside with wind turbines, but contributing to fuel poverty. Every electricity bill includes a rapidly increasing levy to pay for the subsidies for wind turbines. Every time we hear someone evangelising on behalf of the wind power industry—we hear that all the time from those on the SNP benches—let us remember that that industry is built on increasing fuel poverty. Every time we hear wind farm developers talking about the sums that they pay out in community benefit, let us remember that every penny of that community benefit is being robbed from the public, many of whom can barely afford to heat their own homes.

The UK Committee on Climate Change looked at the impact on bills in the long term based on different technologies. According to a recent report, electricity costs could go up 68 per cent by 2050 if we rely on gas, and by 210 per cent if we rely on renewables. It goes without saying that there is, of course, an unpredictability to fossil fuel costs, but the United States has seen a substantial fall in the cost of gas, with wholesale prices falling by more than 50 per cent as a result of the exploitation of shale gas and consequent reductions in household bills. Moreover, in the States there has been a reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions because of the displacement of coal as a means of producing electricity. There is a cost to the SNP Government's fixation with wind power policy.

What else can be done to tackle the problem? The UK Government is to be commended for the approach that it has set out in the Energy Bill, which would require energy companies to help customers get on the best energy tariff and to promote energy efficiency through electricity demand reduction. We know that there are far too many different tariffs available and that the picture is far too confused. John Wilson delivered a very good speech in which he highlighted that particular problem. The issue needs to be simplified, and the UK Government's action on that front is welcome. Like Liam McArthur, I welcome that as a major step forward.

The Scottish Government has responsibilities in that area, too. During its evidence-taking sessions on the Scottish Government's draft budget, the

Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee heard that £200 million each year is required to meet the 2016 target. As we have heard, the Scottish Government has allocated £65 million—one third of the required sum—and expects the rest to come from the energy companies. It is unclear to what extent the various measures that the Scottish Government is proposing are being targeted on the fuel poor as opposed to those who simply wish to reduce their fuel bills and improve energy efficiency.

The Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth ducked the issue in his response to the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee's budget report, so we need greater clarity from the Scottish Government about what exactly is on offer.

Much more needs to be done to promote energy efficiency. That is covered in the UK Energy Bill. The cheapest energy of all is that which is not used. A wide range of programmes are currently available to consumers, but the landscape is confused and much more needs to be done to simplify it.

In addition, there is the green council tax discount, which the Scottish Conservatives were instrumental in having introduced, but its take-up rate is woefully low and there is very little public awareness of the scheme. Much more needs to be done to encourage local authorities to make use of it, and to incentivise householders to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

It is simply not good enough for the Scottish Government to give Westminster all the blame for the lack of progress. Through the Energy Bill, Westminster has already signalled that it is taking action in this area. The Scottish Government now needs to pull its weight, end its fixation with wind power, clarify its contribution to fighting poverty and promote energy efficiency. Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, it has a statutory duty to eradicate fuel poverty. It need not think that it will get itself off the hook by trying to blame someone else.

16:21

**Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab):** In his speech, my colleague Richard Baker mentioned that Dr Brenda Boardman had described the Scottish Government's approach to tackling fuel poverty as "inadequate". He was being rather polite, because Dr Boardman actually said that the Scottish Government's approach was "feeble, inadequate and namby-pamby". She advised that what the public needed to know was how much solutions would cost and who would pay for them.

In answer to Dr Boardman, the Scottish Government stated that its budget for tackling fuel

poverty in 2012-13 was £65 million, which represented a substantial increase on the previous year's budget, but as my colleague Anne McTaggart pointed out, it failed to indicate that, in that year, the budget had been cut by a third and that this year's budget is still almost £6 million less than it was in 2010-11.

Although I do not intend to support the amendments of Alex Johnstone and Liam McArthur, I share some of their concerns about the tone and the wording of the Government's motion, which creates the suspicion that the vital issue of fuel poverty—which should be attracting cross-party attention—is instead being used as an argument in the constitutional debate, and that the Government is more interested in complaining about the powers that it does not have than it is in using the powers that it has. That was completely borne out by Annabelle Ewing's speech.

In the context of today's debate, I am not that interested in whether the UK Government is cutting spending on tackling fuel poverty in England. That is not germane to this debate in this Parliament. I am interested in what the Scottish Government intends to do to tackle fuel poverty here in Scotland and how it intends to use the powers that it has at the moment.

**Jamie Hepburn:** Will the member take an intervention on that point?

**Elaine Murray:** No, thank you.

Many members have referred to the fact that 29 per cent of households are fuel poor, but we should not forget that the Scottish Government has missed its first climate change target—emissions from homes are 3 per cent higher than they were in 1990. Therefore, the retrofit programme is welcome and, indeed, vital.

The Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee's report on the draft budget reminded us that, the previous year, stakeholders advised that investment of £200 million would be required if the 2016 target was to be met. They felt that the majority of that sum should come from the public purse.

More recently, Norman Kerr of Energy Action Scotland voiced concern to the committee about the level of expected private sector investment. He did not believe that the budgets—

**Sandra White:** Will the member give way?

**Elaine Murray:** No, I would like to get this finished, please.

**Sandra White rose—**

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The member is not taking an intervention.

**Elaine Murray:** I will not take an intervention at this point; I want to finish this part of the speech, please.

Norman Kerr did not believe that the budgets, as they stood, were secure enough to tackle fuel poverty. He felt that it was “a very big ask” to expect £135 million to come from the energy company obligation every year for the next three or four years. He also said:

“If £200 million had been spent every year for the past six years, we would broadly be on track, but we have not spent anything like that in the past six years. Therefore, the £200 million should actually now be £300 million if we are to gain ground and meet the targets.”—[*Official Report, Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee*, 24 October 2012; c 2079.]

I will now take an intervention from Ms White.

**Sandra White:** I thank Elaine Murray for taking my intervention. She said that we should talk only about Scotland and that to speak about any other part of Britain, and England in particular, was irrelevant. However, Richard Baker said that he was not interested only in Scotland but in England and the rest of Britain. Is that a sign of a Labour split?

**Elaine Murray:** That was a rather feeble intervention.

In any wealthy, first-world country, no one should live in fuel poverty—indeed, no one should live in poverty. My point was that, in a Scottish Government debate about fuel poverty in Scotland, it is not adequate to have a motion that includes a phrase castigating the UK Government’s spending in England. I do not think that that is relevant to what we are talking about.

I join my colleague Neil Bibby in asking the minister whether the investment of £135 million from the energy companies will be achieved this financial year. How confident is she that that and more will be achieved next year?

At the UK level, we have the green deal and the energy company obligation. Labour has been critical of the green deal, which replaces a grant-based scheme with a loan-based scheme. The previous grant-based scheme was not always taken up to the extent expected, and loans are likely to be even less attractive to private individuals, especially at this time.

As Margaret McCulloch said, Labour at Westminster has been pressing the UK Government to better regulate the power companies in order to prevent exorbitant energy price rises.

However, there are some examples of the UK scheme being used effectively.

**Annabelle Ewing:** Will the member give way?

**Elaine Murray:** No, thank you.

Labour-controlled Birmingham City Council—

**Jamie Hepburn:** That is in England.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):** Order.

**Elaine Murray:** This is an example of good practice, which I am sure will be anathema to those guys: not only does it involve Labour but it is in England, so they certainly will not want to hear about it. However, I will explain what is being done in Birmingham.

**Annabelle Ewing:** Will the member give way?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The member is not taking an intervention.

**Elaine Murray:** Birmingham City Council, in partnership with Carillion Energy Services, is using the green deal scheme to secure a £600 million deal to retrofit 60,000 homes, schools and other council properties by 2020. That is a council using its powers. It is not sitting on its hands and saying, “If we had the powers of a small, independent nation, we would be able to do something.” It is using the powers that it has, getting the money in and trying to make a difference to the citizens of Birmingham.

**Annabelle Ewing:** Will the member give way?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The member is not giving way.

**Elaine Murray:** There are other examples of good practice with people taking steps to make a difference. Neil Bibby referred to the switch together campaign, which my colleague, Jenny Marra, has spearheaded in Dundee. It is based on Belgian and Dutch schemes that involve collective bargaining, which is a good trade union concept. Energy price switching began in 2008, and five Belgian provinces now use gas and electricity collective purchasing schemes, to which 850,000 people are signed up. That is something that councils, registered social landlords and the Scottish Government could do here under existing powers.

Liam McArthur mentioned the problems in rural areas. The fuel poverty evidence review pointed out that 47 per cent of households that are off the gas grid are fuel poor, compared to 27 per cent of those that are on the gas grid. I would like to mention a couple of problems from rural areas in my constituency.

One of my constituents, who is 75 years old and disabled, was accepted into stage 4 of the energy assistance package. Unfortunately, he discovered a—probably inadvertent—form of discrimination against people who are off the gas grid when it became apparent that, because his boiler, which

needed to be replaced, was an oil central heating boiler, he would be asked to pay more than £2,000 towards the cost of a new boiler. That was partly because his property was too energy efficient. There are ways in which the current system is working against those in rural areas.

I do not have time to talk about my second example.

This is an extremely important issue. I am disappointed that so many issues to do with the constitution have been dragged into this debate, as they are into every debate that we have in this Parliament at the moment. We should be tactical and concentrate on what we can do now.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You must close.

**Elaine Murray:** We should be learning from the good examples in Birmingham and Belgium, and we should be doing what we can to tackle fuel poverty.

16:29

**Margaret Burgess:** The debate has shown that the issue of fuel poverty is very important and emotive, and that we all feel strongly about it. We have all agreed that fuel poverty is an absolute scourge, that Scotland is an energy-rich nation, and that fuel poverty should simply not be happening here.

I want to pick up on some things that have been said in the debate; I then want to concentrate on a couple of particular issues.

I think that Richard Baker asked how the go-early pilots are going. For £3.5 million of Scottish Government money, the go-early pilots have attracted in a further £13.5 million and £10 million from the local authorities and RSLs. That shows that we are getting more than the 2:1 that we anticipated in the retrofit programme. We therefore believe that we are on target to make the £200 million, as stated.

It has been mentioned a number of times that we should not talk about what the UK Government is doing, because it is doing such marvellous things. The contrast is that the Scottish Government, with the powers that it has, has committed Scottish Government money to the retrofit programme, whereas in England the UK Government has scrapped any support to any energy-efficiency programme from next year. We are getting the story that the UK Government is doing well down south with the money, the ECO and everything else. It is putting nothing into it and is expecting to get a lot back out of it that it cannot say that it will get. We are putting something into the programme. We are running pilots and

showing that the targets that we expect to be met are being met.

**Jamie Hepburn:** Elaine Murray said that it was not germane to talk about what the UK Government is doing, but is not the Barnett formula the reason why it is germane to do so? The UK Government is not spending that money in England, which makes it even more difficult for the Scottish Government to find money to spend here.

**Margaret Burgess:** The member is absolutely right. Fuel poverty is such an important issue and such a priority for me and the Government that we are putting money into addressing it. We have not dropped the money, as Anne McTaggart suggested; rather, we have increased it again. We are spending more in real terms than Labour spent, and we have levered in money.

**Elaine Murray:** Will the minister give way?

**Margaret Burgess:** No. It is my turn. There has been a lot of criticism of the Scottish Government and me in the debate, which I will respond to. That is what I am doing.

I have taken up Richard Baker's point. I absolutely disagree with Anne McTaggart. We talk about what is happening. With the existing programmes, the Scottish Government has put a considerable amount of money into dealing with fuel poverty. We should not forget the things that we have already done. Some 122,000 households have had assistance, 400,000 houses have been insulated, and 382,000 households have received other forms of assistance. We have a national energy scheme that is assisting people.

**Anne McTaggart:** The spend in 2011-12 was £53 million. It was cut from 2010-11, from £67.3 million.

**Margaret Burgess:** We increased our spending to £68 million in this year, and we have levered in more money. That is in our fuel poverty budget. We are also putting money into other energy-efficiency measures, so it is simply not true to say that the Scottish Government is not spending on fuel poverty and fuel poverty measures.

We are supporting families that are struggling. Welfare reform and what the Scottish Government is doing about that have been mentioned a number of times. We have been asked what we are doing with the powers that we have. We have done a lot in welfare reform with those powers. We have the Scottish welfare fund, and we have protected people on council tax benefit. We have the social wage, and we are protecting people with free prescriptions. We are doing a lot for people. We are doing what we can with our powers to ensure that their incomes are not reducing any further.

**Alex Johnstone:** The poor always got free prescriptions. The policy change resulted in the minister and me getting free prescriptions.

**Margaret Burgess:** This debate is about fuel poverty, but I will answer that point. My point is that people who were on the edges or the margins, such as people who were off work, lived only on incapacity benefit and needed several prescriptions a month, had to pay for prescriptions, but they do not now. That is the reality. It is not just about people like the member and me; it is about people who are really struggling on low incomes. Some members should think about that.

The one thing on which I agree with Liam McArthur is that we both feel passionately about fuel poverty. I did not agree with much else that he said, although he made good points about fuel poverty being much higher in rural areas than in some urban areas. We recognise that and we have a number of schemes to help rural areas. The national retrofit programme is being done on a scale, but we recognise that we need to look at ways of protecting rural areas.

**Liam McArthur:** I am grateful to the minister for taking yet another intervention.

I raised the specific issue of considering ways in which community groups or local councils could harness renewable energy resources—which are prevalent in my constituency—as a way of providing cheaper electricity to fuel-poor households. The issue has been raised with the fuel poverty forum. Will the minister take away that suggestion and work with Professor Sigsworth on how it might be delivered?

**Margaret Burgess:** I am willing to consider any ways to reduce energy bills for people anywhere in Scotland, so I will look at that.

We will do all in our power to maximise income and assist households to access lower tariffs and reduce their energy bills. We are also asking the UK Government to do more with the big companies to ensure that prices are better regulated and that people get a better deal on tariffs. Members have mentioned the variety of tariffs. Ofgem has recommended that the number of tariffs be reduced to four, which we support, and we will push Ofgem to get that through as quickly as possible, because lower tariffs are important.

It is important that people understand the tariffs that they are on and what they mean. I recently spoke to a constituent of mine whose fuel provider had explained to her that she could get a better tariff that would be fixed for a year and so would not increase. She went along with that, but she did not understand that, although the price of a unit of fuel would not increase, that did not mean that her direct debit payments would not increase during the year. We must realise that many people do not

understand that. That is a difficulty. We want to ensure that people, particularly vulnerable people, understand their tariffs and know which is the best one for them. That is why we support the roll-out of Citizens Advice Scotland's energy best deal plus programme. We hope to have positive news on that soon, as we are actively talking to Citizens Advice Scotland and fuel suppliers about that.

As I said, we are pressing Ofgem to deliver a simpler, clearer, fairer and more competitive energy market for consumers. We will continue to provide support through the home energy Scotland hotline and through the energy advice and tariff and benefits checking that form stages 1 and 2 of the energy assistance package. Through the benefit checks that are provided by the energy assistance package, we have already saved households more than £5 million, or increased their income by £5 million. That is important and it will continue.

We continue to take advice from the Scottish fuel poverty forum on progress towards the 2016 target and the most effective means of targeting our support.

**Richard Baker:** Will the minister give way?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The minister is concluding.

**Margaret Burgess:** I am about to close, or I would have given way.

We will continue to work closely with the fuel poverty forum on how we can get towards the target. Meeting the target is a challenge but, as I said at the start of the debate, we will not shy away from it. We will take it on because, as we all agree, the issue is important.

Am I running out of time, Presiding Officer?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Could you come to a conclusion, please?

**Margaret Burgess:** We are fully committed to tackling fuel poverty.

I am whipping through the pages of my speech, but I will conclude. Within the powers that we have, we are dealing with the issue that we can deal with, which is energy efficiency. We cannot deal with all the drivers of fuel poverty. We have heard that the two main causes of fuel poverty are the rise in fuel prices and low incomes, but those matters are outwith the Parliament's control. Therefore, the Government is right to say that, if we had full powers, we could work with the companies. We are an energy-rich nation. We should say that independence would be better for the people of Scotland and that they would have better fuel prices.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You must finish now, minister, as we have another debate after this one.

**Margaret Burgess:** We are tackling fuel poverty from every angle possible and we will continue to do so until the battle to end fuel poverty is won.

## **“Review of Cross-Party Groups”**

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-05402, in the name of Dave Thompson, on behalf of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, on the “Review of Cross-Party Groups”. [*Interruption.*] Could I have order in the chamber please, Mr Johnstone?

Mr Thompson, you have a maximum of six minutes.

16:40

**Dave Thompson (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP):** I am pleased to open this debate on the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee’s review of cross-party groups. As CPGs are formed within the context of the changing people, preferences and politics that shape each session of the Parliament, they keep changing. Therefore, with the benefit of three sessions of experience behind us, the committee has set out changes to the CPG system that will take account of that context while maintaining effective CPGs.

Throughout the committee’s consideration, the value of CPGs to MSPs and to organisations and individuals outwith the Parliament was made abundantly clear to us. The changes recommended for the regulation of CPGs are intended to enhance that value.

However, before I describe those changes I wish to place on record the committee’s thanks to those who took the time to provide written submissions and give oral evidence. I also thank the clerks, who looked after us very well during the inquiry. The perspectives and experiences of the witnesses were of great use in informing the committee’s recommendations.

One of the first things that the committee turned its mind to was the definition of the purpose of CPGs. In the revised code, the purpose has been set out simply as follows:

“Cross-Party Groups provide an opportunity for MSPs from across the parties to engage with external stakeholders, primarily to enable the sharing of experiences and information on a particular subject and to raise awareness of issues relevant to MSPs’ parliamentary duties.”

It goes on to elaborate on that so that the purpose is clear.

Other changes recommend that details of the planned frequency of meetings and proposed key topics of discussion in the forthcoming year are provided at the point of registration. Annual returns will now ask CPGs to provide details to reflect the breadth of their work in terms of the topics

discussed at each meeting and any reports that may be published by the group.

In addition to knowing what CPGs do, a clear understanding of who supports the work of a CPG is vital in ensuring that CPGs operate in an open and transparent manner. The revised code requires a CPG that receives secretariat support worth more than £500 from an external organisation to register that support, as it is a material benefit.

It should be noted, however, that most of the financial benefits received by CPGs do not amount to vast sums of money—unlike the all-party groups at Westminster. Most registered amounts are less than £1,000, although the largest amount registered this session was £10,000 from Novartis for the CPG on visual impairment. At face value, that is a significant sum. However, on examination it transpired that the bulk of the money was to be used to support the provision of information in alternative formats to suit the needs of visually impaired CPG members. I am sure that members would agree that that is entirely reasonable.

The revised code will introduce a new requirement that external organisations providing secretariat support must agree to provide, if requested by the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, information about clients or donors.

In that respect, it is worth while emphasising that we envisage requests being made only where concerns have been raised about a particular CPG—for example, if a complaint was made to the committee or if the group was failing to provide details of financial assistance.

The committee looked at the period in which CPGs can reregister following an election and decided that it will remain at 90 days. However, that period will no longer include any recess of more than four days, which will end the need to cram meetings in before the summer recess. Reregistration criteria are explicitly stated in the new code and we are seeking to bring consistency into the information that is available about CPG meetings by introducing a single advance notification period of 10 calendar days for all meetings.

There will also be a requirement for CPGs to provide minutes for publication on the Parliament website and—in another change to current practice—groups will now be able to publish draft minutes. That means that anyone who is interested in the work of a group will be able to learn about that work with the minimum of delay.

So far, I have set out the main changes that the committee has proposed, which require more from CPGs. However, the committee report is not all stick and no carrot. We also hope to reduce

bureaucracy in a number of areas, for example, by enabling the submission of documents electronically and by enabling MSPs to delegate permissions to staff members to submit information.

A more clearly defined role for the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee clerks in providing guidance and advice to assist CPGs to comply with the code is also proposed, and the committee itself will take a more active role in considering twice-yearly updates on CPG activities. That will allow the committee to identify and acknowledge good practice and also to deal with any group that is failing to operate effectively.

Taken together, the committee believes that the changes in procedures and practice that have been outlined will enable the cross-party group system to continue to offer value to MSPs, to the Parliament and to organisations and individuals throughout Scotland, while ensuring appropriate monitoring of the system.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee's 9th Report, 2012 (Session 4), *Review of Cross-Party Groups* (SP Paper 227), and agrees that the changes to the Code of Conduct set out in Annexe A of the report be made with effect from 24 January 2013.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Graeme Pearson, with up to four minutes.

16:46

**Graeme Pearson (South Scotland) (Lab):** Thank you, Presiding Officer. I hope that I will not need four minutes.

First, I thank Dave Thompson and his committee for their valuable work reviewing the cross-party group arrangements for the Parliament. As someone who was recently elected to the Parliament, the work and the commitment of cross-party groups are new to me. As convener of the CPG on China, I have come to learn the value of CPGs to the Parliament, to the general public and to those with very specific interests—in my case, interest in China in the round.

The report is right to indicate that we need to take care that CPGs do not become another means for lobbyists to influence the work of the Parliament and to try to gain unfair access to those who have the right to make decisions within this chamber and elsewhere. The report sets out a healthy approach to the relationships that should exist across the Parliamentary groups and their work within the cross-party arrangements.

The request for annual returns from all CPGs is common sense. If the CPGs are to work effectively, one would expect that there would be

an annual report from them, setting out what has been achieved and what the vision is for their future work.

The ability for the Parliament to request specific information about the support that groups receive from the private sector is an important power to offer and the introduction of draft minutes opens up that whole environment to further comments.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Mr Pearson, could I stop you for a moment? Will members who are having conversations please do so outwith the chamber? Thank you. Mr Pearson, please continue.

**Graeme Pearson:** The one observation that I offer from experience is that the complete absence of an ability to fund some measure of small hospitality can be, to some extent, debilitating. Not having the opportunity to give people who come to the Parliament of their own accord in the evenings a cup of tea or coffee and perhaps a biscuit—or some form of refreshment short of luxurious—is debilitating and makes us look, on occasion, a bit cheap-minded. It is a question of courtesy—if we are hosts in this building, we should be able to offer at least some level of hospitality.

I understand the economics of such things and I also understand that, on occasion, that opportunity could be abused. I would like to think, however, that with the proper supervision we could at least begin to offer a measure of hospitality to those who come to the Parliament and, at the same time, conduct our business.

On the whole, as I indicated earlier, the work that Dave Thompson and his committee have done is entirely valuable to the Parliament and keeps us on the right side of integrity as we conduct our business in the chamber and in the environment of the cross-party groups.

16:50

**Fiona McLeod (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP):** I echo the words of the convener and Graeme Pearson.

The cross-party groups are an incredibly important part of the Parliament. They are part of the way that we engage with wider Scotland, transfer knowledge into and out of the Parliament and share knowledge with interest groups to inform MSPs in their parliamentary duties. As such, they are incredibly well respected throughout Scotland and they work very well.

The Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee undertook a review of cross-party groups not because there was a problem with them, but because of the high standard of their work and the high respect in which they are held. We decided to review the

code of conduct so that we could maintain that level of integrity.

The convener has already alluded to some of the revisions to the code of conduct that the committee proposes. One of the important ones about which he talked is section 6.1.1 of the revised code, in which we set out the general purpose of cross-party groups. Some people would ask why that is necessary after all these years—we are in our fourth session of the Parliament—but it is necessary to write down what a cross-party group is for.

Also, at section 6.1.2, we state what cross-party groups are not: they are not official committees of the Parliament. It is important that we lay that down so that people who come to the Parliament and engage with it through the cross-party group mechanism understand the informality of the process.

In section 6.3.2, we talk about the need to outline the issues that the cross-party groups plan to consider over the next year. That is all about engagement with wider civic society and the rest of Scotland. We hope that, if the website says what the cross-party groups hope to consider over the next year, we will garner more information and knowledge through the cross-party groups and that there will be more participation in them.

In the same vein, section 6.4.9 says that the minutes and agendas will all be on the Parliament's website. It seems amazing that we have not done that before now. That is about engagement and transparency.

Section 6.4.5 says that two MSPs must be at a cross-party group meeting to make it quorate. That is an important point. Cross-party groups are cross party. Therefore, cross-party representation must be present for them to be quorate and make decisions on various issues.

I hope that the well-respected cross-party groups will continue to inform and engage outwith and in the Parliament for a long time.

16:53

**Helen Eadie (Cowdenbeath) (Lab):** I am happy to close the debate on behalf of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.

As members will be aware, the vast majority of MSPs who are eligible to be members of cross-party groups are members of cross-party groups. In fact, I think that there may be only one eligible MSP who is not a cross-party group member. I will resist any temptation to name names.

**David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** Name them!

**Helen Eadie:** No names, no pack-drill. If I have learned anything in my life, I have learned to avoid pack-drill.

To me, the fact that the vast majority of MSPs are members of CPGs clearly indicates the interest that will exist across the chamber in the future shape of the cross-party group system.

The committee considers that the changes to the system that it has recommended will be of benefit and believes that they merit the support of members.

In undertaking the review, the committee sought to balance the need for some regulation and bureaucracy with the importance of not creating a system that involves needless burdens.

In making my views known, I agree absolutely with Graeme Pearson's point about hospitality. I took on board his point that there should be an appropriate measure of hospitality; that is not a question of being lavish. On a cold night such as tonight, when we will host events as cross-party group conveners, it would be good to offer a cup of hot tea or coffee or a glass of orange juice.

Fiona McLeod was right to say that cross-party groups are not official committees of the Parliament. Cross-party groups are intended to inform MSPs and provide the opportunity to connect with civic Scotland. It is important to keep that in mind when we have cross-party group meetings. The issue is how we can be best informed in producing motions and other items in the Parliament.

Agreeing to the changes that are set out in the report will be the first step in delivering an effective system. However, as is always the case, the system will need to adapt to new experiences. As the report says, the committee is clear about the importance of developing and sharing best practice and advice. We will explore that with cross-party groups in the remainder of the parliamentary session.

There has been recent interest in cross-party groups, as anyone who read *Scotland on Sunday* a few weekends ago will know. In evidence to the committee, Chris Carman outlined the position of bodies that are similar to cross-party groups in other legislatures, including the United Kingdom Parliament and the European Parliament. In that evidence, Dr Carman—now a professor—identified what he saw as the benefit of the

“Parliament's traditional openness and the amount of information that is available”—[*Official Report, Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee*, 8 May 2012; c 390.]

about cross-party groups. The system that will be put in place through the revised code will allow the Parliament to continue that tradition.

I thank the committee's convener and the clerks for their diligence and I thank colleagues on the committee for all the hard work that has gone into producing the report.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Before we move to the next item of business, I remind members that they should not conduct conversations in the chamber during debates or use mobile devices, unless they are using those devices to participate in a debate.

## **“Review of Section 7 of the Code of Conduct”**

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

The next item of business is consideration of motion S4M-05403, in the name of Dave Thompson, on the “Review of Section 7 of the Code of Conduct”. I call Dave Thompson to speak to and move the motion on behalf of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.

16:57

**Dave Thompson (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP):** The Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee has reviewed section 7 of the code of conduct for members of the Scottish Parliament, which covers general conduct and conduct in the chamber or in committee meetings. The review was to ensure that section 7 remains relevant, appropriate, clear and enforceable.

The code will be shortened and clarified and will now contain a general requirement for members to comply with Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body policies rather than mention policies by name, so that it does not become out of date simply because the name of an SPCB policy has been changed. To aid members, the code will refer to a new library of SPCB policies, which will set out which documents are policies that must be adhered to and which are merely guidance.

The opportunity has also been taken to tidy a number of other provisions in the code. Taken together, the changes will make the code easier to read and understand, more relevant to members and more up to date.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee’s 8th Report, 2012 (Session 4), *Review of Section 7 of the Code of Conduct* (SP Paper 223), and agrees that the changes to the Code of Conduct set out in Annexe A of the report be made with effect from 24 January 2013.

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

## **Public Bodies (Abolition of British Shipbuilders) Order 2013**

16:58

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

The next item of business is consideration of motion S4M-05426, in the name of John Swinney, on the Public Bodies (Abolition of British Shipbuilders) Order 2013.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament consents to the making of the Public Bodies (Abolition of British Shipbuilders) Order 2013, a draft of which was laid before the United Kingdom Parliament on 1 November 2012 and which makes provision that would be within the legislative competence of the Parliament if it were contained within an Act of that Parliament.—[*John Swinney.*]

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

## Point of Order

16:59

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. Before the minister moves the business motion, I will raise a point about the clarity of that motion. I am grateful that the Government has decided to have a ministerial statement on Tuesday next week about the publication of a report that is known as RPP2, which is to contain the policies and proposals that the Government intends to implement to achieve the annual climate change targets in future years.

However, the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 requires two separate reports. One is the RPP2, which relates to future years, and the other is a report that revises the shorter-term actions given that, last year, the Government failed to meet the first annual target under the 2009 act. Section 36 of the act clearly requires a report that revises the current policies and proposals to address the failure to meet that target.

What is the meaning of the title of the ministerial statement to be given next Tuesday? Will both reports be included? Will members be able to question the minister after the statement on both reports rather than just on the one that is named RPP2?

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):** I received notification that the member wished to raise that point. Although it is an important point, it is not a point of order for the chair. However, it is a matter for ministers and I understand that they wish to clarify the matter for the Parliament now.

**The Minister for Parliamentary Business (Joe FitzPatrick):** I am pleased to confirm to the Parliament that the statement next Tuesday will meet both the section 35 and the section 36 requirements of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. I am grateful to Patrick Harvie for giving us notice of his point of order.

## Business Motion

17:01

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-05452, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Tuesday 29 January 2013

2.00 pm	Time for Reflection
<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
<i>followed by</i>	Topical Questions (if selected)
<i>followed by</i>	Ministerial Statement: 2nd Report on Policies and Proposals (RPP2)
<i>followed by</i>	Stage 3 Proceedings: Scottish Civil Justice Council and Criminal Legal Assistance Bill
<i>followed by</i>	Business Motions
<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.30 pm	Decision Time
<i>followed by</i>	Members' Business

Wednesday 30 January 2013

2.00 pm	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
2.00 pm	Portfolio Questions Rural Affairs and the Environment Justice and the Law Officers
<i>followed by</i>	Scottish Labour Party Business
<i>followed by</i>	Business Motions
<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.00 pm	Decision Time
<i>followed by</i>	Members' Business

Thursday 31 January 2013

11.40 am	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
11.40 am	General Questions
12.00 pm	First Minister's Questions
12.30 pm	Members' Business
2.30 pm	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
2.30 pm	Scottish Government Debate: Child Benefit
<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
5.00 pm	Decision Time

Tuesday 5 February 2013

2.00 pm	Time for Reflection
<i>followed by</i>	Parliamentary Bureau Motions
<i>followed by</i>	Topical Questions (if selected)

*followed by* Scottish Government Business  
*followed by* Business Motions  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business  
 Wednesday 6 February 2013  
 2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions  
 Health and Wellbeing  
*followed by* Stage 3 Proceedings: Budget (Scotland)  
 (No.2) Bill  
*followed by* Business Motions  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business  
 Thursday 7 February 2013  
 11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 11.40 am General Questions  
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions  
 12.30 pm Members' Business  
 2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 2.30 pm Scottish Government Business  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time—[Joe FitzPatrick.]

*Motion agreed to.*

## Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:02

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

The next item of business is consideration of four Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Joe FitzPatrick to move motions S4M-05428, S4M-05429 and S4M-05430, on the approval of Scottish statutory instruments, en bloc.

### *Motions moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Public Services Reform (Planning) (Pre-application consultation) (Scotland) Order 2013 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 (Supplementary and Consequential Provisions) Order 2013 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Public Services Reform (Planning) (Local Review Procedure) (Scotland) Order 2013 [draft] be approved.—[Joe FitzPatrick.]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I ask Joe FitzPatrick to move motion S4M-05432, on the establishment of a committee.

### *Motion moved,*

That the Parliament shall establish a committee of the Parliament as follows:

Name of Committee: The National Trust for Scotland (Governance etc.) Bill Committee.

Remit: To consider matters relating to The National Trust for Scotland (Governance etc.) Bill.

Duration: Until the bill is passed, falls or is withdrawn.

Number of members: 4.

Convenership: The Convener will be a member of the Scottish National Party and the Deputy Convener will be a member of the Scottish Labour Party.

Membership: Fiona McLeod, James Dornan, Jayne Baxter and Jamie McGrigor.—[Joe FitzPatrick.]

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The questions on the motions will be put at decision time.

## Decision Time

17:02

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

There are nine questions to be put as a result of today's business. I would therefore appreciate the best of order as I put the questions.

I remind members that, in relation to the debate on tackling fuel poverty, if either the amendment in the name of Richard Baker or the amendment in the name of Alex Johnstone is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Liam McArthur will fall.

The first question is, that amendment S4M-05424.2, in the name of Richard Baker, which seeks to amend motion S4M-05424, in the name of Margaret Burgess, on tackling fuel poverty, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

### **For**

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (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)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)  
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)  
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

### **Against**

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)

Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 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)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)  
 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)  
 Walker, Bill (Dunfermline) (Ind)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

#### Abstentions

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

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 35, Against 84, Abstentions 2.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S4M-05424.3, in the name of Alex Johnstone, which seeks to amend motion S4M-05424, in the name of Margaret Burgess, on tackling fuel poverty, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### For

Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)  
 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)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

#### Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)

Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (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)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 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)  
 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)  
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (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)  
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)

Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 Walker, Bill (Dunfermline) (Ind)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 13, Against 108, Abstentions 0.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S4M-05424.1, in the name of Liam McArthur, which seeks to amend motion S4M-05424, in the name of Margaret Burgess, on tackling fuel poverty, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

**The Deputy 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)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)

**Against**

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)

Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (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)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 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)  
 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)  
 McMahan, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMahan, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 Walker, Bill (Dunfermline) (Ind)

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

#### Abstentions

Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scottish Borderstland 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)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 5, Against 103, Abstentions 13.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S4M-05424, in the name of Margaret Burgess, on tackling fuel poverty, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Adamson, Clare (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunningham 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 (Cunningham North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)

Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McDonald, Mark (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Salmond, Alex (Aberdeenshire East) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 Walker, Bill (Dunfermline) (Ind)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

#### Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Helen (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)  
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)

McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McMahon, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMahon, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)  
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

#### Abstentions

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

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 65, Against 54, Abstentions 2.

#### *Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament recognises the Scottish Government's efforts in tackling fuel poverty; welcomes the continued investment in energy efficiency and fuel poverty and the contrast with the UK Government's cutting of its fuel poverty budget and withdrawal of any taxpayer-funded support from April 2013; recognises the early indications from the National Retrofit Programme "go-early" pilots that energy companies view Scotland as an attractive place to invest; notes the economic benefits of such programmes and the contribution that they make to reducing carbon emissions; supports the Scottish Government's call on the UK Government to tackle the energy market to provide a better deal for consumers, and notes with concern the expected impact on household incomes arising from the UK Government's welfare reform plans, which it believes will lead to an increase in inequality.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S4M-05402, in the name of Dave Thompson, on the "Review of Cross-Party Groups", be agreed to.

#### *Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament notes the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee's 9th Report, 2012 (Session 4), *Review of Cross-Party Groups* (SP Paper 227), and agrees that the changes to the Code of Conduct set out in Annexe A of the report be made with effect from 24 January 2013.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S4M-05403, in the name of Dave Thompson, on the "Review of Section 7 of the Code of Conduct", be agreed to.

#### *Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament notes the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee's 8th Report, 2012 (Session 4), *Review of Section 7 of the Code of Conduct* (SP Paper 223), and agrees that the changes to the Code of Conduct set out in Annexe A of the report be made with effect from 24 January 2013

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S4M-05426, in the name of John Swinney, on the Public Bodies (Abolition of British Shipbuilders) Order 2013, be agreed to. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry—I going to put that question again and this time I ask for silence.

The question is, that motion S4M-05426, in the name of John Swinney, on the Public Bodies (Abolition of British Shipbuilders) Order 2013, be agreed to.

#### *Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament consents to the making of the Public Bodies (Abolition of British Shipbuilders) Order 2013, a draft of which was laid before the United Kingdom Parliament on 1 November 2012 and which makes provision that would be within the legislative competence of the Parliament if it were contained within an Act of that Parliament.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I propose to put a single question on the next three motions. The question is, that motions S4M-05428, S4M-05429 and S4M-05430, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on approval of Scottish statutory instruments, be agreed to.

#### *Motions agreed to,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Public Services Reform (Planning) (Pre-application consultation) (Scotland) Order 2013 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 (Supplementary and Consequential Provisions) Order 2013 [draft] be approved.

That the Parliament agrees that the Public Services Reform (Planning) (Local Review Procedure) (Scotland) Order 2013 [draft] be approved.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S4M-05432, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on establishment of a committee, be agreed to.

#### *Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament shall establish a committee of the Parliament as follows:

Name of Committee: The National Trust for Scotland (Governance etc.) Bill Committee.

Remit: To consider matters relating to The National Trust for Scotland (Governance etc.) Bill.

Duration: Until the bill is passed, falls or is withdrawn.

Number of members: 4.

Convenership: The Convener will be a member of the Scottish National Party and the Deputy Convener will be a member of the Scottish Labour Party.

Membership: Fiona McLeod, James Dornan, Jayne Baxter and Jamie McGrigor.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** That concludes decision time.

## Leprosy Mission Scotland

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

The final item of business today is a members' business debate on motion S4M-05260, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on the Leprosy Mission Scotland. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament recognises what it considers the vital work being carried out by The Leprosy Mission (TLM) Scotland, based in Stirling, in helping people across the globe with leprosy, a disease that, it understands, affects one person every two minutes, particularly those living in extreme poverty; acknowledges the impact that TLM Scotland is having in the TLM Global Partnership, helping to achieve freedom from stigma and poverty, and hopes that World Leprosy Day 2013 will assist in bringing awareness and increased recognition to this cause.

17:10

**Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP):** I thank the members who signed the motion—a good number did so—and those who will participate in the debate or are here to listen.

I very much welcome Linda Todd and staff and volunteers at the Leprosy Mission Scotland, which is based in my constituency, to this important debate. The staff and the many volunteers at the Stirling office do a remarkable job. During my visits to the premises I have always been hugely impressed by their compassion, commitment and enthusiasm, as I know has Anne McGuire, the local MP. The fantastic work that the organisation carries out is supported by more than 4,000 individuals and 350 churches and groups.

On 27 January, more than 100 countries around the world will mark world leprosy day. World leprosy day falls on the anniversary of the death of Mahatma Gandhi, a human being who showed true compassion for people affected by leprosy worldwide. Gandhi not only preached to people that they should help people afflicted by the disease but was personally involved in the work. This year, world leprosy day celebrates its 59th year.

Meanwhile, the Leprosy Mission Scotland continues to bring healing and justice to people who are affected by the disease in around 30 countries, in Africa, Asia and around the Pacific. It is the biggest and oldest organisation that specialises in the causes and consequences of leprosy worldwide. It is well known and respected by not just local communities but the large, established agencies that work in international development. It currently funds projects in Angola, Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria and South Sudan.

Thank goodness for the Leprosy Mission Scotland's work. The disabilities that leprosy causes affect around 4 million people worldwide and around 10 million people live disadvantaged lives as a result of the disease. Today, between 600 and 700 people will be diagnosed with leprosy—one person every two minutes. However, it is not all bad news. During the past 20 years, more than 14 million people have been cured of leprosy and the disease has been eliminated from 119 countries.

According to the World Health Organization, more than half the newly reported cases are in India, and high levels are still found in Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Sudan, Tanzania and Timor-Leste—I read out the list to show members the scale of the problem.

As we know, leprosy can be permanently cured, through a six to 12-month course of multidrug therapy. Early diagnosis and treatment can prevent the spiral of physical, social and psychological despair that people can find themselves plunged into, but many cases still go undetected each year, particularly for people who live in rural and remote places where even basic healthcare is limited. However, to cure and care for someone with leprosy for a year costs as little as 40p a day or £12 a month.

The Leprosy Mission Scotland works hard to raise the resources to help transform the lives of people affected by leprosy, taking people affected from rejection to acceptance and from poverty to economic independence. It is a truly global fellowship, with the ultimate goal to eradicate the causes and consequences of leprosy.

Linda Todd, chief executive of the Leprosy Mission Scotland, visited South Sudan in September. Shockingly, Linda told me that, if the mission returns to that area of South Sudan, it will be the first organisation to do so. The Leprosy Mission Scotland has rightly made it its aim to return and help the people whom it met.

In 2010, the Leprosy Mission Scotland was awarded three years of funding from the Scottish Government south Asia development programme, totalling more than £199,000. The funding is being used to fund the project in Chittagong in Bangladesh, transforming the lives of the leprosy sufferers in hill districts of Chittagong.

Leprosy is a cruel, cruel disease that affects the poorest in society, particularly women, robbing people of not only their physical health and wellbeing but often of their most basic entitlements. Fear, prejudice and superstition in many communities mean that people affected by

leprosy have to cope with not just the effects of the disease but the stigma attached to it. Stigmatisation and alienation from the families and communities that form the fabric of their lives add to leprosy sufferers' devastation. As a former leprosy sufferer said:

"Leprosy is a ruthless thief, which first turns off all the lights before you notice that there is an intruder. Then in the total blackout it viciously created, it robs you of every single irreplaceable treasure you possess."

On behalf of all my MSP colleagues, I thank from the bottom of my heart the Leprosy Mission Scotland for all its hard work and for helping to remind us that, with the right resources and investments, we can achieve a world without leprosy. It is now up to people like us to respond.

17:17

**Anne McTaggart (Glasgow) (Lab):** First, I give a warm welcome to the Parliament tonight to the Leprosy Mission Scotland, which is based in Stirling. I am delighted to contribute to this debate on the work of charities tackling the disease of leprosy. I thank Bruce Crawford for securing parliamentary time to recognise the importance of world leprosy day, which is to be held on 27 January 2013.

Leprosy is a debilitating disease that affects the lives of millions of people all over the world and devastates families who have no access to the appropriate medical treatment. Developments in modern medicine have allowed sufferers of leprosy to be cured entirely, though tragically the medical resources are too often unavailable in the areas where the disease is most prevalent. Communities across the developing world are hardest hit by leprosy, which is usually a cause of extreme poverty and, if left untreated, can reduce the lifespan of a sufferer by up to 50 per cent.

The Leprosy Mission has worked to tackle the misunderstanding and stigma associated with leprosy and has raised awareness of the plight of millions of people worldwide who continue to suffer from the disease. The world leprosy day event will provide another platform to increase the profile of the disease and potentially secure the kind of resources that would make a difference to those without access to medical treatment or even the knowledge that the disease is curable.

The Leprosy Mission Scotland works internationally across 30 countries from Africa to Asia and in many nations in between, with the goal of eradicating the causes and consequences of leprosy. Volunteers here in Scotland have recognised the devastating effect that the disease continues to have in the 21st century. I am sure that the entire Parliament would join me in recognising the importance of those efforts as part

of the wider action to tackle poverty and disadvantage in developing nations.

The prevalence of leprosy represents more than the disease itself. It highlights the extreme poverty that so many people in developing nations endure, without access to appropriate medical or financial support—even in the most pressing times of need. It is entirely unacceptable that so many individuals should suffer from curable diseases in the 21st century and it is tragic that that suffering is compounded by the misunderstanding and stigma that still surround leprosy worldwide.

Through the proper support and recognition of movements such as the Leprosy Mission Scotland, the international community can make a real impact on that unnecessary suffering. Once again, I commend the efforts of all the activists and volunteers who have raised the profile of the disease, here in Scotland and across the world.

17:20

**Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** I congratulate Bruce Crawford on securing this debate on the terrible disease that is leprosy and the vital work that the Leprosy Mission Scotland is undertaking to tackle the suffering that leprosy causes across the globe.

To many, leprosy is an archaic disease that they may have heard of only through its depiction in popular culture. That portrayal is, of course, completely inaccurate and helps only to entrench the common misconceptions and stigmas that surround the disease, which is sadly still prevalent in the 21st century, as we have heard.

Leprosy has been with us a long time. A recent study reported the discovery of a 4,000-year-old skeleton in India with the hallmark ravages of the disease, which indicates that leprosy was present some 1,500 years further back than was once thought. It is now believed that the disease first appeared in the subcontinent and spread as urbanisation and trade routes grew.

The disease was once prevalent in Scotland and, of course, our very own Robert the Bruce was afflicted by it.

The disease is caused by the mycobacterium *leprae* bacterium, which attacks and destroys nerves, particularly in the peripheries of the body. Lesions on the skin are the main external symptom of the disease and the one with which most people associate leprosy. However, left untreated the disease can cause loss of sight, loss of feeling in the limbs and permanent disability.

Although scientific understanding of the disease has improved and effective treatments have been established, the disease is, sadly, by no means a disease of the past, as we have heard. In 2010,

the WHO reported that over 212,000 new cases of leprosy had been detected. Of those, it is estimated that around half of sufferers developed irreversible deformities and/or disabilities. Failure to treat the disease at an early stage has resulted in millions of people across the world living with the permanent effects of leprosy. The vast majority of those cases are in India and Brazil: two of the world's fastest growing economies, yet countries with deep-seated poverty. Unfortunately, due to the stigma and fear that surround the disease, which Anne McTaggart highlighted, many cases go unreported and it is therefore likely that the true figures are far higher.

Beyond the physical impairments that are caused by leprosy, it is clear that misinformation and superstition have created a disease that is, in effect, a taboo subject for many. In the middle ages, that led to the widespread creation of leper colonies, in which sufferers were segregated from society for fear of contamination. Although leprosy is infectious, 95 per cent of people are naturally immune and, despite misconceptions, the disease is very difficult to contract and cannot be spread by touch. Despite that, it is appalling to note that leper colonies still exist in many countries, with 1,000 estimated to remain in India alone.

We hear heart-breaking stories of family members, young and old, being disowned and cast out of their communities for fear that their condition will bring shame upon the family. Tackling that ignorance and the social segregation that is suffered by those who have ended their battle with the disease is surely as important as enhancing the availability of treatment against the disease.

Although the situation remains very serious, it is encouraging to note that real progress has been made in recent decades. Medical advances in the late 80s and in the 90s found effective vaccines to fight the disease and saw the establishment of multidrug therapy regimens. Those advances have been hugely effective and sufferers are no longer infectious after a matter of days and are free from the disease after a course of drugs that lasts around 12 months.

As a result of international initiatives through the WHO and the United Nations, coupled with scientific advances and the hard work of charitable organisations, 108 of the 122 countries in which the disease was considered endemic in 1985 have now realised the goal of eliminating leprosy. That represents tremendous progress and it is interesting that many of the countries that Bruce Crawford mentioned are those in which conflict prevents leprosy being adequately dealt with.

The work of the Leprosy Mission Scotland and its endeavours to bring about a world free from leprosy have been integral to that success.

Through educating people about what leprosy is and tackling ignorance surrounding what it is not, the work of the Leprosy Mission Scotland continues to help remove the stigma attached to the disease and encourages those affected to seek treatment at the earliest possible opportunity. The Leprosy Mission Scotland's charitable collections and its membership of the Leprosy Mission International have undoubtedly improved the availability of treatment, given that around 22,000 patients affected by leprosy have been treated at Leprosy Mission hospitals and tens of thousands more have been assisted financially. That has made a tremendous impact in combating the disease.

In conclusion, although there is clearly more to be done to eliminate leprosy, I am hugely encouraged that medical advances, improved education and the dedication of charitable organisations such as the Leprosy Mission Scotland will result in leprosy being completely eliminated and consigned to the history books, where it rightly belongs.

17:25

**Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con):** I, too, welcome the debate and congratulate Bruce Crawford on bringing the issue to the chamber this evening.

Even today, for many people leprosy is something associated with biblical times, when it was believed that conditions resulting in disfigurement were afflictions sent by God as punishment for sin. Similarly, people still often associate leprosy with the leper colonies that emerged in the middle ages, when the prevailing thinking was that the condition—which actually covered a multitude of ailments—was highly contagious so it was better to ship people off to remote locations in the mountains or on islands than to risk infection.

Of course, we in Scotland do not talk about leper colonies these days, but it may interest members to know that, as a young medical student nearly 50 years ago, on a public health scholarship to Yugoslavia I visited what was then called the leper hospital in Sarajevo. Thankfully, that was the only time that I have seen patients suffering from the effects of leprosy.

Obviously, what we might term biblical or medieval leprosy is far removed from the modern condition, but leprosy is not yet a disease of the past, as we have heard this evening. What is now known as Hansen's disease still affects the lives of at least 3 million people worldwide. That is probably a very conservative estimate if we consider how difficult it is to obtain accurate and reliable data from some of the less well-developed

countries. The stark fact is that, should this debate last 40 minutes, in that time 20 people will have been diagnosed as suffering from leprosy.

The motion rightly points to the work of the Leprosy Mission Scotland—an organisation with strong Celtic roots stretching back over a century—in tackling the stigma associated with people suffering from leprosy. These days, the term “leper” is rarely used for obvious reasons, given its connotations with outcasts. People suffering from leprosy should never be considered as outcasts. I note that the mission’s delete the L word campaign has gone some way towards persuading broadcasters that “leper” is now regarded as an offensive term.

Breaking the mindset, often fuelled by fear and ignorance, that leprosy sufferers somehow pose a danger to society is at the forefront of the mission’s aims and objectives. The sad fact is that in certain countries obstacles still remain for people diagnosed with the condition: sufferers are unable to use public transport; children are denied their education; splits occur in families if a wife is diagnosed or a child with leprosy is rejected; and employment is hard to find because of a misplaced fear of infection.

The Leprosy Mission Scotland is an organisation dedicated to eradicating the condition in many countries across Africa, south Asia and south-east Asia through various programmes, including treatment and general healthcare, prevention of disability by teaching people self-care and hospital treatment in clean environments where ulcers are treated, surgeries are undertaken and intensive physiotherapy sessions take place. Community rehabilitation is an important aspect, too.

The work of the Leprosy Mission Scotland is driven by Gospel teaching, compassion and prayer. The 4,000 individuals in 350 churches and groups in Scotland who give up their time for efforts to eradicate leprosy are an example to us all of the true meaning of voluntary service.

Although the Leprosy Mission Scotland is based in Stirling, its work is carried out across the country. As a North East Scotland MSP, I was interested to learn of the work of the mission’s Aberdeen area committee. Through coffee mornings and events in local churches, the Aberdeen area has raised more than £60,000 since the late 1990s for leprosy projects across the world, with the most recent work being in Angola.

For this Sunday’s world leprosy day, perhaps the message that we should keep at the forefront of our minds is that leprosy is and remains a 21st century problem.

17:29

**The Minister for External Affairs and International Development (Humza Yousaf):** I am pleased to have the opportunity to close the debate. All the members who spoke—Bruce Crawford, Anne McTaggart, Kenneth Gibson and Nanette Milne—made good speeches. The fundamental core that ran through their speeches is that leprosy is not a disease of the past, but is very much a 21st century problem that we must continue to tackle.

I congratulate Bruce Crawford on getting parliamentary time to debate this important issue. I reiterate his welcome to the Parliament to the staff of the Leprosy Mission Scotland, and I thank them for their incredibly hard work. I am, of course, very happy to support the motion on the work of the Leprosy Mission Scotland and to recognise the importance of world leprosy day in raising awareness of the condition.

At the invitation of the Leprosy Mission Scotland and Bruce Crawford, I had the great pleasure of visiting the Scotland versus poverty exhibition that the organisation hosted in Stirling. In the first few months of my new-ish ministerial role—I do not know whether I am allowed to say that it is new any more, because I have been in it for coming up to six months—I had the pleasure of meeting Linda Todd a number of times. She and her team are to be commended for the passion and determination that they display in helping some of the world’s poorest and most vulnerable people. I hope that she does not mind my saying that she is tenacious in taking the issue forward and ferocious in her determination to do her best for the Leprosy Mission Scotland.

Bruce Crawford referred to the Leprosy Mission Scotland project that is being funded by the Scottish Government. The generating income project in Chittagong has helped to improve the socioeconomic status of marginalised communities, especially those that have been affected by leprosy or disability. The project has created self-help groups and provided loans and training on income-generating activities. It has also raised awareness of leprosy in sessions targeted at local communities, their leaders and relevant members of the Government.

The project has had incredibly significant achievements. To date, it has formed 75 self-help groups involving 603 members, provided income-generating activity for more than 500 group members and training in agricultural methods, and promoted environmentally sustainable practices. The project has also granted small loans to 251 people, built 15 new houses in partnership with the community and held meetings with more than 4,000 participants to raise awareness of disability and human rights issues. Those are huge

achievements. It is important to remember that behind those statistics are real people whose lives have been changed for the better by the project.

Projects of that size may not be able to single-handedly solve an enormous problem such as leprosy, but they have the ability to make a significant improvement for individuals and entire communities. We also have the opportunity to share the learning from such projects and to ensure that they are aligned to broader global efforts to eradicate leprosy. In that sense, the Leprosy Mission Scotland is well placed to influence international efforts in the field as it is part of the global development organisation, the Leprosy Mission.

The Leprosy Mission's noteworthy holistic approach is worth looking at. By recognising that leprosy is a disease that stigmatises—that word was used by all the speakers in the debate—marginalises and impoverishes, the Leprosy Mission considers that the leprosy patient's needs are holistic in the round, not only in relation to their medical needs, but in relation to support for vocational training, rehabilitation and counselling. Such measures help return dignity to a person who is suffering from leprosy. It is important to highlight the important role that non-governmental organisations play in civil society in relation to international development and that that holistic approach would not be adopted by anyone else if they were not there.

Organisations such as the Leprosy Mission Scotland pay a critical role in the fight for global justice. Such NGOs and civil society development agencies are important in a number of ways. Of course, NGOs can be a lot more fleet of foot than Government. Government can often find quick responses difficult, whereas NGOs can be quick to respond to the needs of citizens in partner countries. They often play a role as mediator or facilitator between excluded citizens and their states but, by helping specific individuals or communities, NGOs create bonds of trust and networks of co-operation that often transcend national boundaries.

When I visited the Scotland versus poverty exhibition in Stirling, I saw a number of people from the Leprosy Mission across the world who had come to Scotland—they were very brave to have done so, given that it was towards the end of the year. The fact that they came showed that the network of co-operation truly transcends national boundaries. I believe that it is critical that we support and bolster such links through our approach to international development, rather than try to work around them.

Civil society organisations and NGOs are important in other ways. Those who are motivated by compassion for others—who, of course, include

people of faith—are often moved to consider why things are as they are. As has been mentioned in the debate, people ask why tropical diseases such as leprosy persist when they are curable and manageable. People's motivation to search for the causes of such inequality leads to a lifetime of engagement in development issues and the fight against global injustice. I always say that once someone gets involved in such work, which is about helping others, they find that it is quite an infectious bug—it is extremely difficult to let go. The dedicated team at the Leprosy Mission Scotland have that quality in abundance.

I know that it has been said that there is still much work to be done, but there is cause for optimism, as leprosy can be cured and eradicated. Over the past 10 years, levels of prevalence have fallen by 75 per cent, thanks to the work of many organisations, including the Leprosy Mission. With ultimate success in sight, now is the time to redouble our efforts.

NGOs have a vital role to play, because they tell the world what kind of nation we aspire to be and what kind of country we are. The Leprosy Mission Scotland tells the world that Scotland is a compassionate and caring nation, and one that is ready to help the world's most vulnerable people. I wish the organisation well in its endeavours, and I again thank Bruce Crawford for lodging the motion. The Scottish Government stands behind the continuing global efforts to eradicate leprosy, and we look forward to the day when we can consign world leprosy day to the past.

*Meeting closed at 17:37.*

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