

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 5 November 2003
(*Afternoon*)

Session 2

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Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 5 November 2003

(Afternoon)

[THE PRESIDING OFFICER *opened the meeting at 14:30*]

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): Good afternoon. Our time for reflection leader today is the Rev Dr David Sinclair, the convener of the Scottish Network for Civilian Peace Service.

The Rev Dr David Sinclair (Scottish Network for Civilian Peace Service): The fifth of November is synonymous with fireworks and bonfires. While it is entirely a good thing that these days we no longer tend to burn human effigies on top of bonfires, the fact that we do not has helped to distance us further from the reason why 5 November is celebrated in this way. It is celebrated, or should be, because the pursuance of a political agenda by violent means was thwarted.

When the World Council of Churches decided that the years 2001 to 2010 should be a decade to overcome violence, it was under no illusion either that violence would, at the end of the decade, be a thing of the past; or that violence was not still seen by many in our world as a legitimate way to pursue political objectives. Rather, the decade is meant to be a way of concentrating minds on the place that violence still has in our politics, our hearts and our minds.

Gunpowder plots are far from being the only kind of violence to which we fall prey. In fact, because they are so obvious, so blatant and so desperate, they are far from being the worst violence that we have to face. They often represent the violence of those who have lost hope, and have no stake or interest in the future.

The violence of the powerful against the powerless seldom needs to be that blatant. The poor in our own country have violence done daily to their chances and their dreams. The poor of the world are ground down by trade rules that favour the rich; the vulnerable of the world are bought, sold and trafficked by those for whom the threat of violence is enough. Those whose schools are closed, houses demolished, crops burned, roads blocked, and movements curfewed, know violence when they see it, and subjugation when they experience it.

Those who put down the gunpowder plot were not themselves averse to a bit of political

violence—they were just better at it. The powerful are always better at violence than are the powerless.

So if you attend a fireworks party this evening, I pray that you do so remembering the futility of violence; remembering its hopeless victims; remembering how they are yet tempted, every now and then, to see an explosion as an answer to their oppression; and remembering the God-given task of politics—to provide a better answer and a better way.

Points of Order

14:33

Mr Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): On a point of order, Presiding Officer, I ask for your guidance on whether there has been a breach of the ministerial code by the Deputy Minister for Finance and Public Services, Tavish Scott, and whether any Executive minister has intimated that they want to make a statement to Parliament on the issue.

In the past 24 hours, Mr Scott has been quoted as saying that the common fisheries policy demonstrably does not work, and has expressed the desire to get rid of it, saying that it has failed and that it must go. That is in direct contrast to a statement made in the chamber by the First Minister on 29 May, which we take to be Executive policy. He said:

“we need to have a common fisheries policy in Europe so that we have a common approach”.

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): What is the point of order Mr Brocklebank?

Mr Brocklebank: I am going on to the point of order. The First Minister also said that

“fish can move from one set of coastal waters into another”—[*Official Report*, 29 May 2003; c 251.]

much in the same way as does Liberal Democrat policy, it would seem. However, we know that the people whom I have mentioned have form on collective Cabinet responsibility.

The point of order is whether the Executive has changed its policy on fishing matters. It seems to me that there is evidence that Mr Scott has breached the ministerial code that says that once a decision has been announced, as it was on 29 May, all ministers are required to abide by it and defend it. Can you confirm who is responsible for determining whether the ministerial code has been breached and whether the minister has been asked to make a statement to the Parliament?

The Presiding Officer: Mr Brocklebank, as you are a relatively new member I should explain that that is not a point of order. What ministers say is not a matter for the chair. There are plenty of other ways for you to address such questions directly to those who are responsible, that is, to the First Minister. If that is what you want to do, I encourage you so to do.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP): On a point of order.

The Presiding Officer: Is it a point of order?

Fergus Ewing: It is two points of order, of which notice was given to your office earlier this

afternoon. In *The Daily Telegraph* today there is a story that the contractors that are responsible for building the new Scottish Parliament have demanded payment in return for appearing before Lord Fraser during his inquiry. Can you indicate—

The Presiding Officer: What is the point of order?

Fergus Ewing: Can you indicate whether there is any truth in that story, indicate which contractors have sought payment, and confirm that it would be outrageous for anyone to seek payment for participating in the inquiry? Is it not a matter of civic duty that all witnesses should participate? Can you confirm that there is no provision in the budget—for which we have responsibility—for any such payment to be made, and nor is there any provision under the contract that the contractors have with the Scottish Parliament that they can invoke to seek any payment or compensation?

The Presiding Officer: Mr Ewing, unlike Mr Brocklebank you have been here for a significant period of time. Matters of civic duty are not points of order for the chair of this Parliament.

I say to members that I am not going to have the first five or six minutes of every Wednesday in this chamber taken up with spurious points of order that are, in fact, political points.

As for remedy, Mr Ewing, you are well aware that you can write to me and that I will respond timeously, or you can address such matters through a question to the Presiding Officer, and again I will answer at the earliest possible opportunity.

Let us get on, but let me be clear—

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP) rose—

The Presiding Officer: Let me be clear that I will not have five minutes taken up at the start with political points on the floor of this chamber. That cuts members' time for debate. Is it a point of order, Mr Sheridan?

Tommy Sheridan: I apologise, Presiding Officer, but it is a matter of urgency that will not come up every Wednesday, because every Wednesday is not 5 November, and the fire services are not demanded more at any other time of year than they are now. Has any approach been made to you, or have you made any approach, regarding an emergency statement on the renegeing of the employers in relation to the fire services dispute? It is a very serious matter. Will a statement be made to this Parliament?

The Presiding Officer: No approach has been made to me.

Transport

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The next item of business is a debate on motion S2M-541, in the name of Nicol Stephen, on Scotland's transport, and three amendments to that motion. I ask those members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons now. I call on Nicol Stephen to speak to and—*[Interruption.]* If Mr Mundell is adjusted, I call on Nicol Stephen to speak to and move the motion.

14:38

The Minister for Transport (Nicol Stephen): This debate comes at an important time, and will help to shape the future of Scottish transport. We have published a major consultation on transport, and this is the Parliament's opportunity to give its views on the crucial issues that are contained in "Scotland's Transport – Proposals for a new approach to transport in Scotland".

A significant consultation process is already under way. For example, during November the four existing regional transport partnerships are holding conferences to discuss how best to deliver transport services in their areas. On 25 November, the Scottish Executive is holding the national transport conference to examine transport at national, regional and local levels. Alongside those events, there is a significant number of workshops and seminars. We are determined to have a full and open consultation, and to deliver real improvements to the transport system—especially the public transport system—in Scotland.

The proposals have grown from two converging factors. First, the Scottish Executive has substantially increased the transport budget, which enables us to deliver many new public transport projects. By 2006, the transport budget will have grown to £1 billion per year and 70 per cent of that expenditure will be on public transport.

Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP): Will the minister give way?

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): Will the minister give way?

Nicol Stephen: I give way to Brian Adam.

Brian Adam: Would the minister care to tell us what proportion of that £1 billion budget is required merely to service the debt that has been incurred by previous Administrations, and how much of it will actually be available for new projects?

Nicol Stephen: It is all available for current revenue and capital projects. The figure that I gave of £1 billion per year is net of the capital charges that relate to prior investment. That is going to be a very significant boost to expenditure

on transport projects—and particularly public transport projects—in Scotland.

Tommy Sheridan: Will the minister give way?

Nicol Stephen: I will give way in a few moments. I would like to make some progress.

I believe that there is a growing consensus that to realise these ambitious proposals and improvements we need a system that will deliver. That is why the consultation paper that we published on 17 September is so vital. It underpins all of the transport projects that we are determined to deliver for the people, businesses and communities of Scotland; projects like the rail links to Glasgow and Edinburgh airports, the Larkhall to Milngavie rail line, the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine rail line and the Borders rail link.

Tommy Sheridan *rose*—

Bill Butler (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab): Will the minister give way?

Nicol Stephen: I will give way first to Bill Butler after which I will shortly give way to Tommy Sheridan.

Bill Butler: Members will be aware that, on Tuesday 28 October, Strathclyde Passenger Transport submitted a crossrail technical feasibility study to the minister. Given the benefits of the proposal, the minister will be aware of the cross-party support for it. What is the minister's view of the proposal? Is he enthusiastic about it?

Nicol Stephen: I am very supportive of the proposal. Clearly, work still requires to be done. The Scottish Executive is fully committed to supporting the development of the feasibility study. I would very much like to see the project happen. It is very important not only in relation to north-south links in Glasgow, but to the whole of the Scottish rail network.

I will now give way to Tommy Sheridan.

Tommy Sheridan: Before the minister leaves the point that he was making about budget allocations, how much of the budget is allocated to road work and how much to rail work? What electrification of railway lines has the Executive carried out since 1999?

Nicol Stephen: I do not know the exact budget allocation to railway work. I could try to give some greater clarity on that in respect of the figure for public transport—the 70 per cent of £1 billion. I think that Tommy Sheridan will see from my speech and from the work that we have been doing that a very significant amount of the extra investment in respect of public transport is in relation to major rail projects.

The balance—the 30 per cent of £1 billion that is not public transport investment—is largely

investment in our road network. That should give an indication of the investment in our roads. I believe that there are some very valuable road projects with which we must still progress—projects that can improve road safety and the environment. We are talking about a growing budget. We are not funding public transport through cuts in other areas of the budget, but rather by significant expansion in the spending on rail, buses, trams and other public transport measures.

In “Scotland’s Transport”, we propose a new executive agency, which we have called transport Scotland, although we have not yet fixed on the final name. The staff of the new agency will report directly to me, as Minister for Transport. The agency will remain accountable to the Parliament for all that it does. The great benefit of the new agency is that it will enable us to assemble a group of people with the skills, relevant experience and professionalism to be able to deliver.

I believe that, until now, we have too often been too focused on roads issues. We will build expertise on public transport—our railways, buses, ferries and trams—and give everything that we do a new focus on delivery. We will add to the range of skills that are available in transport Scotland in order to form a centre of excellence in transport. We will attract professionals with transport skills not only from across Scotland, but from other parts of the United Kingdom and further afield.

Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP): Will the minister give way?

Nicol Stephen: I will give way to Kenny MacAskill, but after that I need to make some progress with my speech. If I do not, I will run rapidly out of time.

Mr MacAskill: Given the emphasis on transport Scotland’s delivery of infrastructure builds, what is the role of Transport Initiatives Edinburgh, compared to that of transport Scotland, with regard to the construction of the rail link to Edinburgh airport?

Nicol Stephen: TIE is an organisation that the City of Edinburgh Council established. I expect TIE and similar organisations to continue to have an important role as we develop the model that is proposed in the consultation document. The proposals that we are discussing will strengthen organisations such as TIE and give them an even more vital role to play.

The new agency will bring not only focus, but the opportunity to attract people for whom achieving good transport is a vocation and who have experience, background and depth of knowledge in transport. We wish to hear views on the precise form and functions of the Scottish transport agency, but I announce today that I am minded to establish a shadow transport agency in 2004.

The second part of our consultation is about the vital role that our 32 local authorities play and about the role of voluntary regional transport partnerships and of the Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority. The key issues are whether we have given councils the right range of powers and responsibilities and whether councils are the right size to tackle the transport issues not only of today, but of the future.

The consultation paper sets out several alternative approaches. I make it clear that we have reached no final decisions on those matters. Views that are expressed today and during the consultation will be influential when we decide the way forward. Much has to be done and our challenge should be to develop a shared vision of the way ahead in a partnership that involves not only political parties, but all the interests that have a vital role to play in Scotland’s transport.

It is certain that our current arrangements can be improved. For example, our smallest council—Clackmannanshire Council—is promoting a major rail project in the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine railway. It is doing extremely well and has introduced the first private bill in the Parliament on such a transport project, but the task is a huge burden for a small authority.

In the west of Scotland, we have arrangements that lead to roads issues being considered separately from public transport issues. Councils in the Strathclyde area are responsible for roads, but not for public transport, and the Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority deals only with public transport, as its name suggests. Strathclyde Passenger Transport works well, and aspects of what it does could produce benefits in other parts of Scotland.

Mr Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Will the minister give way?

Nicol Stephen: I will not; I would like to make progress.

Nevertheless, it would be asking a lot to achieve integrated transport thinking and action throughout Scotland from the current arrangements. There is an opportunity to do things better. Skills, capacity and local involvement are central to the discussion this winter about better transport. As I mentioned, I have been impressed by the way in which SPT works. It is clear that a large organisation that works over a wide area and has staff who are dedicated to the task can deliver good services. No one can fail to be impressed by the subway in Glasgow—its underground system—and by its extensive suburban rail services. Such an approach should be available in other parts of the country.

I hope that councils throughout Scotland will consider whether coming together in new or

strengthened regional transport partnerships would be a better way of serving the transport needs of people in their areas.

Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab): Will the minister give way?

Nicol Stephen: I will not—I must try to make progress because I am behind time on my speech. If I finish my speech with a little time in hand, I will try to give way to Scott Barrie and others.

Larger organisations can tackle bigger projects, as SPT is doing with the Glasgow airport link, the Larkhall to Milngavie railway and its crossrail proposals. A larger organisation can be sensitive to more local needs, as SPT has been with ring 'n' ride in Strathkelvin. However, good as it is, SPT in its current form is not an organisation that can easily deliver integration.

I have also been impressed by the growing strength of the voluntary transport partnerships. Regardless of what they may do in the future, they have already produced centres of vision and, in some cases, delivered successful action. Today, I am announcing my intention to allocate new funding for public transport projects. The funding will be directed by the voluntary transport partnerships in consultation with their member local authorities. Final details of the mechanism will be discussed with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the regional transport partnerships themselves. In addition, I will offer SPT additional funding to continue to support its new transport initiatives.

I want to emphasise the importance of sustainable transport. A key element in our strategy of investing more in public transport is to promote cycling, walking and safer routes to schools. Recently, I announced £27 million of new funding to local authorities for 20mph school safety zones. Today, I announce £2.5 million—our largest ever investment—to the cycling charity Sustrans Ltd for upgrading Scotland's national cycle network.

The third part of our consultation is about how new regional transport partnerships should be funded and what powers they should have. If regional transport partnerships are to deliver, they need to be resourced to do the task. Local government finance is currently going through major change. For example, the new prudential regime for local authority capital investment is a major achievement. Similarly, for transport, we should not constrain ourselves to present arrangements if we can see a better way to deliver transport improvements in Scotland. For that reason, the consultation invites views on the current grant-aided expenditure arrangements and how those should operate for regional transport partnerships.

The consultation document also discusses the scope for direct funding of regional transport partnerships by the Scottish transport agency. I know that central funding can be controversial—among members in the chamber and among local authorities—but I can assure members that councils and MSPs from every part of the country and of every political persuasion regularly lobby me for direct Scottish Executive funding for significant transport projects. If direct funding is done well, it could bring real improvements for the significant regional schemes that are currently not funded by the individual authorities.

However, our new approach to transport is not just about building infrastructure. The key is delivery of better services to passengers and to business. That is why we want the agency to make a success of integrated ticketing and to make real progress on quality bus measures. We need to put passengers first. In doing that, the relationship with local authorities will be vital. Our councils are the first port of call for people who want better roads and good public transport, but people fail to understand why arrangements have to change—and sometimes change quite dramatically—when people cross local authority boundaries. We are determined to achieve a greater consistency of approach.

I will soon launch a consultation on concessionary fares. We have already had productive discussions with key stakeholders that will underpin our proposals. Last year, we delivered free off-peak local bus travel for older people and for people with disabilities. We will extend that to make the scheme operate Scotland-wide. We will also progressively introduce a scheme of national bus, rail and ferry concessionary travel for young people. Initially, that will be for all young people who are in full-time education and training. That will not be cheap. In 2003-04, we are putting over £100 million into concessionary travel. I believe that everyone in the chamber will support that investment.

Indeed, transport as a whole is not cheap. We have recognised the need to invest and we are now delivering. The projects are large—some of them will take considerable time—but they are now coming through.

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab): Will the minister give way?

Nicol Stephen: I am probably in my final minute.

The Presiding Officer: The minister is in his final minute.

Nicol Stephen: I am sorry, but perhaps I will be able to give way to Cathie Craigie during my summing-up speech. The same applies to some of the other members whose interventions I have been unable to take.

The bills for reopening the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine line and the Borders railway are already before the Parliament. The cost of those two schemes alone is likely to be over £150 million. By Christmas, we expect the bill that will enable the construction of the first tram lines in Edinburgh to be before the Parliament. We are putting aside £375 million for that investment. By March, the Larkhall to Milngavie railway will be under construction; it will cost more than £30 million. The bills for the Edinburgh and Glasgow airport links will be in the Parliament in 2005; those two schemes will cost more than £600 million.

Overall, as I have said, our transport budget will grow to £1 billion per year. Our proposals for change are intended to ensure that the money is used wisely and spent effectively to deliver good transport infrastructure and services. I do not underestimate the scale of the challenge, but I am determined to deliver.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises the importance of the Scottish Executive's proposals for improving transport in Scotland as set out in *A Partnership for a Better Scotland*, in particular its intention to set up a transport agency to secure delivery of the Executive's major investment programme to expand transport infrastructure and services across Scotland and to improve the integration of these services, the proposals to enhance the schemes of concessionary fares to benefit elderly and disabled people and the proposals to enhance the ability of local government to serve the travelling public through stronger regional transport partnerships, which should contribute to an effective transport system, central to a thriving economy and strong communities.

14:55

Mr Kenny MacAskill (Lothians) (SNP): As the Rev David Sinclair and others have said, today is 5 November. We may have felt entitled to hear and see some fireworks, but instead we have been delivered a damp squib. Never mind gunpowder, treason and plot, it would be worth while if the Executive could have a rocket applied to it.

When I first saw the motion, I thought that it was sanctimonious twaddle. Now that I have listened to the minister speak for 17 minutes, I have not changed my view. Indeed, I have a great deal of sympathy with some of the points that Mr Mundell makes in his amendment. What we have heard is retreaded announcements—there are no new funds and no new powers. As Mr Mundell mentions in his amendment, the concentration has been, as at the outset, on rhetoric rather than on action. What we need is delivery, not debate.

Mike Rumbles (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): Will the member take an intervention?

Mr MacAskill: Not at the moment.

The wording of the Executive's motion is difficult to disagree with, but that is because it is inane and woolly. However, this is an Executive debate—this is our national Parliament and the Executive is our Government. We are entitled to expect better than a debate that we could hear in a student union at Teviot Row or anywhere else.

We are in a situation akin to that in "Groundhog Day", because there is nothing new. Apart from a nomenclature change, as one document is substituted for another, nothing that Mr Stephen has said was not to some extent said by Ms Boyack back in 1999. Since then, there has been a plethora of documents and further consultation documents. However, we are not in the first year of the first term of an Administration; the Executive is now in its fifth year and we are entitled to expect better. The criteria for examining its policies and coming to a judgment on them now have to be different.

What does the woolly and inane motion—which would be difficult to disagree with, were it not for the fact that we are a national Parliament and not a student union—say? It states that we should agree that the Parliament

"recognises the importance of ... proposals ... in *A Partnership for a Better Scotland*".

As I said, that is not the first document—it is not even the second document. The tragedy is that freight and people do not move on a plethora of documents or consultation programmes; they move on roads and rail. That is where the Executive has singularly failed to deliver after four years. We hear promises about what might come, but we are still waiting even for the public inquiry to proceed on the M74 north extension.

The Minister for Transport apparently met Mr Darling earlier in the week, but we still do not have a firm commitment on when the construction work at Waverley station will begin. We do not know whether the state-of-the-art station that we are entitled to expect for our capital city in the 21st century will be built or, perhaps most important, who will pick up the tab for it. We heard not one word on that—and so on and so forth in relation to other matters that have been talked about but that the Executive is still failing to deliver.

Cathie Craigie: Mr MacAskill said that we need delivery rather than debate. The SNP manifesto for the Scottish Parliament elections this year stated that the SNP would implement the Scottish Executive's road plan. How does he explain the action of members of his party who seek the Parliament's support to delay the implementation of the Executive's plans for the upgrading of the A80?

Mr MacAskill: I think that Cathie Craigie would be better addressing such a question to members of the Executive. Apparently Mr Scott is not in the chamber to explain how he can have a different view on the common fisheries policy from that of everyone else in the Executive. That is part of politics, but perhaps when someone is a Government minister they should judge themselves by different criteria. Apparently Mr Scott is going to go down the same path that Mr Watson went down.

The Executive must deliver. The motion states that the Executive's intention is

"to set up a transport agency to secure delivery of the Executive's major investment programme to expand transport infrastructure".

To what agency does that refer? We are told that it is transport Scotland. What will its powers be with regard to rail, air and maritime matters? Apparently, a consultation document has been issued in which we are all invited—the great and good within and without the chamber—to send in answers on a postcard to Victoria Quay, as the Executive does not know what the situation is and hopes to learn something from other people.

The Executive talks about delivering major infrastructure programmes. Who will be in charge of Waverley? Will transport Scotland, the Strategic Rail Authority, Network Rail, the City of Edinburgh Council, the Scottish Executive or Transport Initiatives Edinburgh be in charge? We do not know who is in charge and the tragedy is that the minister does not know either.

The real problem is that the minister does not know who is delivering which projects. He has had a meeting with the Secretary of State for Transport and the Secretary of State for Scotland, but he cannot even make an announcement on any of the major rail projects. He has singularly failed to achieve any gains or wins or to get any dosh for Scotland.

Nicol Stephen: The member is more than half way through his speech and we have heard his usual diatribe. I wonder whether he will, at some point shortly in his performance, deal with what the SNP would do in respect of action, policies and investment. One way in which an Opposition can influence the Government is by having proposals of its own.

Mr MacAskill: Everybody in politics is aware that the Executive is judged differently from those who are not in the Executive. The Executive has had four years. We are here to discuss what the Executive has done in four years and where it is going in the next four years. As I said, the tragedy is that we are waiting and the Executive has suggested that we should send in answers on a postcard to Victoria Quay.

The motion mentions

"the proposals to enhance the schemes of concessionary fares to benefit elderly and disabled people".

The Labour party ran into the election saying that the scheme was wonderful, which is why Labour should get people's votes—it must be said that credit was claimed for Labour and not for the Liberal Democrats. Now we are told that the scheme needs to be enhanced. Is it true, then, that the scheme was not so wonderful? Again, there was a postcode lottery whereby Strathclyde had a wonderful scheme, but the scheme in Clackmannan was pretty poor. If one was fortunate enough to live in Campbeltown, one could travel to Girvan, but if one lived in certain other areas, one could not even get access to, for example, the city of Edinburgh or beyond.

We were then told that we needed transport Scotland to deliver the scheme. Lo and behold—Wales already has a full concessionary fares scheme. There is no authority called transport Wales and the Assembly does not even have the powers of a Parliament, yet Wales can deliver. That leaves me with a conundrum. Is the Welsh Executive more able than the Scottish Lib-Lab Executive, or is the latter less competent than the Welsh Executive? I am not sure.

The motion also mentions

"the proposals to enhance the ability of local government to serve the travelling public".

That has apparently fallen on deaf ears with SPT. Whatever the minister might say, SPT is certainly not satisfied; indeed, it is most unhappy. If the minister has not accessed the briefing that was e-mailed to all MSPs, I suggest that he do so, as SPT is deeply worried. We should not undermine SPT, but seek to build on such arrangements for other areas.

The Executive is failing to deliver in terms of the motion. What about my amendment? It must be recognised that we have cause for concern. In four years, we have seen no massive construction—indeed, we have seen no construction at all. The number of miles of track that have been built is de minimis.

The amendment mentions the new agency. We accept in theory that there should be a new agency but, in practice, if the agency does not have control over rail in particular, it will be neutered from the start. If it does not have control over aviation and maritime policy, perhaps the minister will tell us whether it will be able to deal with problems that might arise in the Highlands and Islands when new criteria relating to security are introduced in April 2004. Will that be a matter for the big boys down at the Department for Transport while the wee boys at Victoria Quay will not be able to touch or even consider matters?

Unless the agency has powers over maritime matters, rail and aviation, there will not be an integrated or holistic policy.

There must transparency, accountability and direction. Currently, the Strategic Rail Authority basically has carte blanche to do what it wants to do. That is why the minister has been humiliated—to put it mildly—on several occasions when the SRA and Network Rail have blandly made pronouncements that have had catastrophic effects for passengers in Scotland and for freight. The minister has simply had to accept decisions. Unless we get control of the SRA's powers, we will not be able to progress matters. The same applies in other areas. We require powers across the board.

We must not undermine SPT. People in many areas have looked at SPT and wished that it could have been replicated in their area. We should be not levelling down, but levelling out, by giving powers to the likes of the south-east Scotland transport partnership, the north-east Scotland transport partnership and the Highlands and Islands strategic transport partnership, and by providing them with the funding mechanisms that will allow them to deliver what people in the west of Scotland have been fortunate enough to take for granted for almost a generation.

We need to match our European competitors, because that is where this country is failing and where the Executive is fundamentally letting us down. The minister talked about proposals for a tram scheme, for which £375 million has been promised. However, we know that that money is not index linked. The scheme will not be able to afford to build lines 2 or 3, even if line 1 goes ahead. The Republic of Ireland has just shown its ambition by starting work to deliver a metro system, which will be the biggest single item of expenditure in the history of the Irish Republic. However, the Executive is talking about seeking to upgrade a concessionary fares scheme—perhaps we will have a wee bypass here or add a rail line there. Unlike us, the Irish Republic thinks big and acts big.

Until the Executive is prepared to take responsibility, Scotland will be left second rate and unable to compete with its European competitors. That is why I move amendment S2M-541.4, to leave out from “and the proposals” to end and insert:

“; notes with concern the underperformance of the Executive on major transport schemes to date; notes that for the new agency to be successful there must be transparency, accountability and direction for Scotland on all aspects of transport policy whether road, rail, marine or air, and recognises that the new agency should be strategic and should not undermine the role and function of Strathclyde Passenger Transport nor any future statutory regional transport authority elsewhere in Scotland and that

the performance of the agency should be monitored to ensure that it delivers improvements to allow Scotland's transport system to match those of its European competitors.”

15:06

David Mundell (South of Scotland) (Con): In the transport debates that have been held in the Parliament over the past four and a half years, the Scottish Executive has offered many panaceas to solve Scotland's transport needs. We were offered the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001, with its quality contracts and quality partnerships, which would deliver a new age of bus travel. Alas, no such contracts or partnerships have been entered into. Then we were told that the change from Railtrack to Network Rail would resolve our rail problems. Recently, we have been told that the re-awarding of the ScotRail franchise will solve all our transport difficulties. Of course, since Miss Boyack's time, we have gone from having a goal of a 10-year transport plan to the transport report and the daily press releases that characterised the dying days of Mr Gray's regime.

The present minister is also keen on the press release. No doubt today's press release will show him on a bike making his announcement about cycling. However, the Scottish Executive's cycling strategy typifies its lack of an integrated approach to transport. The Executive is keen to establish cycle ways. One of the longest in Scotland is in my region, but of course the Executive provides no money whatever to maintain it. The cycle way is not brushed, so cyclists use the road. That typifies the Executive's approach to transport, alternative or otherwise.

During the time that the Executive has been in power—and I know from comments from Liberal Democrats that everything that happened between 1997 and 1999 is the Labour party's fault and they bear no responsibility for it—

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): On the question of faults, will the member apologise to the chamber and to the people of Scotland for the unmitigated disaster of rail privatisation?

David Mundell: No, I will not. I know how seriously Mr Sheridan's party takes transport, because, as I recollect, Miss Kane has attended only one meeting of the Local Government and Transport Committee. That, rather than Mr Sheridan's headline-grabbing comments, shows how seriously his party takes those issues.

For the average person in Scotland who travels by rail, bus or car, transport has simply not improved in real terms. Journeys are taking longer and they are more uncomfortable and frustrating. Congestion, which affects us all in our major towns and cities and on our inadequate road and rail

networks, is increasing, although one would not know that from Scottish Executive-speak, where transport is now one of the top, top, top priorities.

We concede, at least, that the Executive recognised after three and a half years that transport infrastructure is of pivotal importance to the economy and, indeed, to the country's social well-being. In popular parlance, however, although the Executive talks the talk, it does not walk the walk. I concede that it has a walking strategy, but—I say this for Mr Ballance's benefit—we will probably soon have a walking review group, followed by a review of the review group and a walking stakeholders forum.

The problems with transport in Scotland are a lack of clarity in decision making, a lack of clear identification of projects that are being supported—with the not unrealistic hope for start and completion dates—and a lack of committed funds to deliver those projects.

There can be no better example than the Borders rail link which, as usual, the minister referred to in very careful terms. That approach follows a pattern that members saw during the previous session of Parliament in relation to Waverley station and the Aberdeen western relief road. There are lots of words of support, and there are even announcements and seedcorn funding, but where is the commitment to providing real cash?

Nicol Stephen: Can David Mundell tell us which investments in the railway network during the Conservative years he is proud of?

David Mundell: What I can tell the minister—I am sure that Executive research will back this up—is that, under the two previous Conservative Governments, more rail lines were laid in the United Kingdom and in Scotland than have been laid under the present Government, under which none have been laid. Moreover, stations were opened—

Nicol Stephen: Where? Name them.

David Mundell: One is Milliken Park station, just outside Paisley—the minister should ask Ms Alexander where that is. The difference is that the Conservative Governments delivered, whereas the Executive sets up quangos to give itself excuses for not delivering.

Jeremy Purvis (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD): Will the member give way?

David Mundell: Perhaps I will in a moment.

I would be interested to hear the minister state the Executive's financial commitment to the Borders rail link. Time after time, the Parliament has heard that we will get support to construct it. However, we have not heard where the money will

come from or whether the Executive will commit the significant funds that are required for the project. The minister could tell us today that the Executive will definitely do that. He need tell us not how much that will cost—as he carefully did not do in his speech—just that the Executive will commit the money to it.

However, I do not think that the minister will do so. He wants Mr Purvis, Mr Robson and others to be able to continue issuing press releases saying that they are absolutely committed to the Borders rail link, but he will not admit that the decision on whether the railway goes ahead is a political one and that that political decision has not been made because there is absolutely no commitment to it. If he admitted that, there would be fewer photo opportunities and press releases and a lot fewer Liberal Democrat votes in the Borders.

Jeremy Purvis: For clarification, can David Mundell remind members which of the many secretaries of state for Scotland during the Conservative years said to any Borders MP that they supported the Borders railway?

David Mundell: The Conservative position on the Borders rail link is quite clear, unlike the Executive's double-talk, which involves no money but plenty of press releases.

The flaw in the minister's approach is that he is unwilling to take the responsibility that he has clearly been given—otherwise, why do we have a Minister for Transport in Scotland? Although I concede that he is on only half the pay of his Cabinet colleagues, surely he should be doing a full-time job and not asking some quango to do it instead. In his ministerial role, he has the scope to bang heads together in local government and other organisations, to set the strategic framework and to ensure delivery. It is not the lack of a transport authority that will hold up the Borders rail link or the Aberdeen western peripheral route; it is the lack of a clear commitment to provide Government funding.

A transport authority will not resolve the issues around Waverley station, which is, as Mr MacAskill said, the project that is most vital to increasing capacity on our railways. I do not agree with a lot of what is said in the Friends of the Earth briefing for the debate, but I agree with the sentiment that the most significant effect on transport in Scotland will be made not by the establishment of a new agency, but by the reorganisation of the way in which the minister and his department carry out their work.

The minister has announced plans for consultation. However, that will not be much of a consultation, as he also announced that he is already minded to set up a shadow organisation. The transport authority is a done deal and when

Gordon Brown's purse-strings get a little tighter—as they will in the years ahead—the authority will be made the scapegoat for the failure to deliver.

Rather than set up another quango, let us finally see some action. Before we start to discuss peripheral issues, let us see the detailed programme costed, the money committed and the start and completion dates that we have called for on so many occasions delivered.

Labour has had six and a half years to deliver and the Liberal Democrats, in coalition with Labour in Scotland, have had four and a half years. The minister says that he is going to deliver; he should now start doing it.

I move amendment S2M-541.1, to leave out from "recognises" to end and insert:

"regrets that the Scottish Executive's transport policies continue to be driven by spin, the need for press releases and photo opportunities and a determination to introduce road tolls; notes the Scottish Executive's continuing failure to make any firm financial commitments to significant infrastructure projects, such as the Borders rail link and addressing missing strategic links in the road network; believes that there is no evidence that the introduction of further bureaucracy and delays to decision-making, as represented by the proposed transport agency, will improve infrastructure or services, and calls upon the Executive to produce detailed and costed measures with start and completion dates for the major transport infrastructure programmes that the Scottish economy and local communities need in the 21st century."

15:15

Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green): The Executive says much that we welcome, but its spending is aimed overwhelmingly at making the most mobile members of society slightly more mobile. If we want to stimulate the Scottish economy, the key is to target investment at those who are least mobile, to enable them to be included in society.

My amendment concerns encouraging healthy transport and creating an effective public transport system. It states that we should not concentrate on road and air travel, which are the most socially divisive and polluting means of travel. That is the substantial issue in the debate, not whether the Executive needs to create an arm's-length transport agency to blame for its failures to deliver infrastructure. The debate is about providing more buses, not more roads.

Brian Adam: Does the member recognise that the Government has done a certain amount of work on cycle ways and pathways only because that is easy to do? Such work requires hundreds of thousands of pounds rather than hundreds of millions of pounds. Does he accept that that investment is controversial? For example, a cycleway was installed in Dyce for hundreds of thousands of pounds, but nobody uses it.

Similarly, no one uses the pathway that has been installed on the A9. Does the member accept that such schemes do not always deliver?

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh): I think that you have made your point, Mr Adam.

Chris Ballance: I will come to cycling in a moment, if the member will wait for me. First, I want to talk about walking, which is the second most common form of transport in terms of the number of trips made, yet the minister barely mentioned it in his speech. Half of all trips are shorter than 2 miles. Those trips are prime candidates for walking and cycling, but our towns are laid out for motorists. Part of the problem is that everything that we do caters for motorists and everything is geared towards motoring. If the Executive were serious about healthy transport initiatives, it would put initiatives for pedestrians and cyclists first and not, as Brian Adam said, see them as a cheap afterthought to road-building programmes.

Alex Fergusson (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con): Given that the member is a constituent of mine in Galloway and Upper Nithsdale, does he accept that, if a person walks 2 miles away from most of the villages and communities in my constituency, the only place that they will be close to is the place that they have just left? Does he agree that, in my constituency and in rural Scotland as a whole, a properly maintained roads infrastructure is vital, as it allows people to get to work in a way that public transport cannot deliver?

Chris Ballance: Public transport can do much to deliver in rural areas. Many of Alex Fergusson's constituents will have contacted him about the fact that people in small rural towns who have no work have no hope of getting work without decent public transport. That is a real issue. Public transport and walking are key issues in rural areas. Walking might not necessarily get one from one town to another 10 miles away to work, but it is a key activity that provides enjoyment, exercise and a way of socialising. We must create roads that it is possible to walk alongside. We should not have narrow country roads on which heavy agricultural lorries can endanger the lives of anyone who dares to walk down them, which is the case in much of Galloway.

Last year in Scotland, 400 children were injured while walking to and from school. For what other activity would such statistics be an acceptable price to pay? Where is the spending commitment to give every child in Scotland a safe route to school? There are some 3,000 schools in Scotland and safe routes to school cost a maximum of £30,000 each. That means that £90 million is needed to create a safe route to school for every child in the land. That sum is almost as much as

what 1 mile of the proposed M74 extension will cost. The figures that have been announced so far are simply inadequate.

Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD): Is the member aware of the additional resources that the Scottish Executive has committed to local authorities this year to fund 20mph zones outside all schools as part of the efforts to improve safety and provide safer routes to school?

Chris Ballance: As I just said, that funding is not sufficient.

Where has the expenditure gone so far? This year's Conservative election manifesto congratulated the Lib-Lab pact on reinstating the Conservative roads programme. The Executive is like a tired old drug addict. It knows that road building solves nothing in the long term and does more harm than good—it knows that it is time to stop the failed policies of the 1960s and, as the minister has said, to build fewer roads—but it keeps on saying, "Just this one last road and then I'll stop. Just the M74 and then I'll stop. Just the Aberdeen western peripheral route and then I'll stop." The road building goes on.

Aviation is universally accepted as being the most polluting, noisiest and least sustainable form of transport, yet it is the only mode of transport that depends on tax-free fuel. It damages the environment and disrupts the lives of people who live near airports. It is socially exclusive. Not only does aviation pay no tax on its fuel, but it gets a £7 million subsidy each year from the public purse.

The route development fund has been a disaster. Designed to bring tourists into Scotland regardless of the environmental costs, it seems to do the opposite. We believe that it causes more Scots to holiday abroad—partly at the taxpayer's expense—than foreigners to holiday here. Last week, the Executive publicly admitted that the Barcelona route does just that. The fund is expensive, counterproductive, environmentally destructive and may be challenged as being illegal. Will the minister admit that the fund has failed and should be abolished? Why are we using our tax revenues to subsidise pollution? We should be taxing pollution, not subsidising it.

We need an effective bus system. Scotland has the lowest rate of public investment in buses in Europe. We need buses that meet trains and trains that run on time. We need buses that respond to local people's needs and, for the rural areas, we need more community transport initiatives. The minister has said much about public transport, but we wait for him to deliver spending commitments that match his words.

I move amendment S2M-541.2, to leave out from "recognises" to end and insert:

"notes with concern the Scottish Executive's proposals for improving transport in Scotland, as set out in *A Partnership for a Better Scotland*, in particular its failure to give sufficient support for healthy transport initiatives such as walking and cycling; further notes that the finance put aside so far overwhelmingly relates to encouraging road and air transport, the most polluting forms of transport, and, while welcoming any extension of concessionary fares, regrets the failure to promote an effective public transport system in Scotland."

15:23

Bristow Muldoon (Livingston) (Lab): I must remark on the depressingly negative speeches made by the front-bench spokespeople for the SNP and the Tories.

For the benefit of David Mundell, I say that the Tories opened one successful railway line: the Edinburgh to Bathgate line. The only pity was that West Lothian had to become an economic desert with over 20 per cent unemployment before the Tories decided to invest in that line. We do not want to go through that experience again.

Kenny MacAskill's speech was simply a reprise of the debate that was conducted recently in the *Holyrood* magazine. Kenny MacAskill seems to think that all the transport systems will start working properly as soon as we can slap a saltire on to the side of them. He should raise his game and start thinking about how we can improve the transport systems using the powers that we have rather than simply reprise the old constitutional arguments. The SNP's leadership battle is over for the time being—he can save his constitutional arguments for the next time there is a leadership battle and he decides to put himself forward.

Mr MacAskill: What powers does the Scottish Executive have to give direction to the SRA, given that that was part of the McLeish settlement? What powers do we have to make the SRA accountable to the Scottish Parliament? Does the member agree that the absence of those powers means that the SRA is unaccountable and could not be guided by the minister even if he so desired?

Bristow Muldoon: As Kenny MacAskill knows fine well, the United Kingdom Government has the primary responsibility for liaising with the SRA. However, the SRA meets the minister regularly and works in partnership with him to move projects forward. Recently, in discussions with the SRA, the minister was successful in achieving a number of capacity improvements to rail lines across Scotland. I do not know why Kenny MacAskill is so concerned about control and does not see the value of co-operation and partnership between various bodies in the UK.

David Mundell's commitment to the Borders rail link would be a lot more meaningful if he could

also explain to us whether, under their new leader, the Conservatives will stick to their tax-cutting policies, and from where they intend to cut expenditure to be able to cut taxes.

I will move on to the Executive's policy and I will cover a number of different areas: the priorities that the Executive has set out; the need for better integration; the need to extend the concessionary fares scheme; and the justification for the proposed strategic transport agency.

Tommy Sheridan: Will Bristow Muldoon give way?

Bristow Muldoon: I would rather make some progress at the moment, but I might give way later on.

The Executive's proposals on its major transport priorities have grown up over the Parliament's first few years. It is important to realise that they cannot be delivered overnight and that they need time to be planned. We also need time to build consensus on the priorities—and there is consensus among the political parties on many of the priorities, in spite of the negative speeches that we have heard so far in the debate, some of which I have mentioned. Credit for that consensus must go to Nicol Stephen's predecessors as transport minister—Sarah Boyack, Wendy Alexander and Iain Gray—and to the minister himself since he took the post up after this year's elections. The rail links to the airports are broadly supported and will make a major contribution to integrating the airports into our transport system. The projects to reopen rail lines, such as the Airdrie to Bathgate link in my area and the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine line, and to construct the Larkhall to Milngavie line all have broad political support. We should acknowledge where there is agreement in the Parliament.

Another major priority for the Executive is to redevelop Waverley station. I realise that the scale of the project and where the resources will come from need to be defined finally, but I accept that the Executive has a commitment to delivering that project. The Executive also supports the proposed tram network in Edinburgh. I noted Kenny MacAskill's comments about Dublin's proposed tram network, but he failed to credit the fact that the Executive committed, I think, £375 million towards the development of Edinburgh's tram system in the years ahead.

On completing central Scotland's motorway network, it is outrageous that the two major cities in Scotland—Edinburgh and Glasgow—do not have a proper, functioning motorway end to end. The Executive has made a commitment on completing that, and major improvements on the A8 section, which will dramatically improve the existing road even before we get to full motorway status, are already under way.

Another issue on which major progress has been made is the agreement with ScotRail to introduce new rolling stock, which will start to arrive shortly and will create extra capacity on many of the most congested rail lines in Scotland.

To move our transport systems forward, we need to make far better progress on integration. One of the major failings is the way in which the railways are not properly integrated with the bus network. One of the big opportunities that we have as part of the ScotRail franchise development in the next year or so is to ensure that, whoever the operator is, we achieve full integration of buses with the railway. There is nothing more frustrating for train passengers than to arrive at a train station and see the bus that would have taken them home just pulling away because it is running to its timetable.

Tommy Sheridan: Does Bristow Muldoon agree that it would be useful to have some integration within the railway industry so that maintenance, operation, investment and strategic planning are all integrated? Does he also agree that railway services are worse now than they were before privatisation?

Bristow Muldoon: I am not sure that a simple answer can be given to that, as there are pluses and minuses. However, I would not have privatised the railway industry and I agree with Tommy Sheridan's earlier comment that the privatisation that the Tories implemented was an unmitigated disaster. However, major progress has been made on reintegrating the network through the introduction of Network Rail and the fact that Network Rail is starting to take a lot of its maintenance back in house. The strategic transport agency for Scotland, which the minister proposes, will make further progress in that regard once it is established.

I welcome the Executive's commitment to developing the concessionary fares schemes further by extending the Scotland-wide scheme for older people and introducing one for young people who are in full-time education or training.

I will talk finally about the rationale for the strategic transport agency. In the past, many plans for improving transport systems have taken too long to implement. Perhaps the Executive does not have all the in-house expertise—especially regarding railways—to progress schemes as fast as it might. The strategic transport agency can be a vehicle for bringing expertise from the rail industry into a public sector agency to drive forward many of the initiatives that we are discussing, so that those are not left to regional partnerships established on a voluntary basis, such as the partnership to promote the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine line or the partnership that will be needed to promote the Airdrie to Bathgate line.

The strategic transport agency can start to play that role.

The agency can also advance concessionary travel schemes. Instead of having 16 different negotiations with the different bus companies, one agency will negotiate a fair price to achieve the Executive's aims and to recompense the bus industry properly.

One of the biggest frustrations that I regularly hear expressed to me by local government is that it does not yet feel that it can properly influence the bus industry. In my view, local government has not yet explored the full potential of the provisions in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 concerning quality bus contracts and partnerships. The strategic transport agency can start to provide some of the expertise that local government and regional partnerships require to deliver those.

The plans to improve Scotland's transport system have been put in place. The Executive has also put in place the resources that are needed for the years ahead. However, it is essential that we start to make faster progress on the delivery of improvements. The strategic transport agency will play a major role in speeding up delivery, so I urge members to support the motion in the name of the minister.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We move to the open part of the debate. I ask members to stick strictly to the six-minute limit. I will call as many as possible of the 11 members whose names appear on my screen.

15:31

Tommy Sheridan (Glasgow) (SSP): I intend to support the Scottish Green Party amendment. It is a pity that the amendment lodged by the Scottish Socialist Party was not accepted, because vision, radical thought and strategic investment are lacking from this debate and from the Executive.

The Executive is in hock to the very powerful roads lobby in this country. The Executive is able to spend more than £1 billion a year on roads investment, but during its first four years it was unable to introduce a tram scheme in either Glasgow or Edinburgh. The minister tells us that, if we are lucky, those schemes should be in place by 2007. That is a pathetically unambitious record. As a modern country with six cities, we should be able to report that tram networks have been established in all our cities, instead of having to wait so long for such networks to be developed in only two of them. In a modern country such as Scotland, we should have a transport network of which we can be proud and that is up with the best in Europe.

Earlier, I asked the minister what progress had been made on delivering the commitment in the

1999 Liberal manifesto, which the Executive took on, to electrify the rail network in Scotland. He did not answer the question, because since 1999 the Executive has not electrified any of the rail network in Scotland. We have the lowest proportion of electrification of the network in the whole of Europe. That is the lack of ambition that is evident in the Executive.

If we are to move away from the current sardine-tin anarchy on the railways, we need a radical solution that takes control of the copious amounts of public money that are available. Instead of being invested in improving our public railway network, that money is being used to prop up the private train-operating companies. In the past six years, £9.97 billion of taxpayers' money has been directed as public subsidy into the pockets of the 25 train-operating companies in the UK. Over the same period, the same 25 companies reported profits of £7.4 billion. We are pouring good public money into the pockets of the rail fat cats. We must put a stop to that.

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): I share many of the member's concerns, but I note that he said that he supported the Green party amendment and I want to press him on how far he supports the Green party on, for instance, its suggested reduction in reliance on air transport. Given that there are public subsidies for airlines, which are particularly important for Glasgow, how far is he going in supporting the Green party?

Tommy Sheridan: If the Executive is prepared to invest properly in rail, ferry and improved bus transport, we can reduce the reliance on air transport. It is a fact of life that air transport is the most polluting form of transport; it is not something that we should promote if we really want to have a sustainable environment. We in the socialist group believe that we should be ambitious enough to recognise that with our £2 billion share of Tom Winsor the rail regulator's recommended expenditure of £29 billion on the railway network over the next 10 years, our £1.8 billion share of the Strategic Rail Authority's expenditure, and the £500 million of public money that we would divert from the most expensive and unwanted extension of motorway in the whole of Europe, we could create a wholly publicly owned railway company that would be responsible for freight and passenger lines. It would involve the railway users, the railway unions and the Executive representing Scotland as a whole in a dynamic investment that would be responsive to Scotland's need for a 21st century network of rail and bus transport.

The Peterhead fish market is the largest white-fish market in the whole of Europe, but it does not have a freight line. The south-west of Scotland is the most forested part of Scotland and timber from there will be ready to be removed in the next 10 to

15 years, but we do not have a freight line to transport it so it will have to be transported by road. Why do we not have before us today the plans for investment in such new freight lines, which are much required?

The Minister for Transport might recall that there has been some public support for freight lines. He might recall the support of £10 million of public money for the new freight terminal for BP at Grangemouth. In the same year in which that company reported profits of £11 billion it got £10 million of public subsidy. For goodness' sake, is it not about time that we used our own public money for an agency owned by us, instead of pouring those resources into the pockets of the private profiteers?

That is the type of vision that we need in order to create a 21st century rail network that will be a vision across the whole of Europe and which will develop travel links from central Scotland to anywhere in Scotland within 60 to 90 minutes. That would be possible if the Executive had the radical vision and the ability to realise that only when we own and control the network will we be able to deliver that level of improvement.

15:38

Michael McMahon (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab): In the four years since I became an MSP, two issues have risen steadily in importance in my constituency. One is the problem of antisocial behaviour and the other is transport. I am glad that the Scottish Executive has increased its efforts to tackle both issues.

The Executive's commitment to delivering an integrated transport system for Scotland is progressing through its increased investment and balanced thinking and planning. I particularly welcome the Executive's transport priorities in Lanarkshire, such as the construction of the Larkhall to Milngavie line, which will be of great benefit to my constituency as it will provide an enhanced link from Hamilton to other parts of the county, although I remain sceptical about the ability of current proposals to address the problems at either end of the Bellshill bypass at the Raith and Shawhead interchanges.

I welcome the initiatives to extend concessionary fare schemes for older people and people with disabilities and the scheme to introduce concessionary travel for young people on bus, rail and ferry links. Those measures reflect a Labour-led Executive committed to a mission of social justice and a sustainable development strategy for Scotland.

Because Labour recognises that a strong economy relies fundamentally on our transport infrastructure, I take the opportunity to draw to the Executive's attention an impending problem, which

could impact negatively on Scotland's economy if it is left unaddressed. From March 2005 mobile workers in the road transport sector will benefit from the 48-hour week contained in the provisions of the working time directive, which are to be extended to cover sectors that were previously excluded, such as road haulage.

However, the implementation of the road transport directive has massive implications for Scotland's economy. There will be an impact not only on the road haulage industry but on our manufacturing base. Scotland has 9.8 per cent of operators' licences for running heavy trucks in the UK but, as far as I am aware, there has not yet been any specific research to assess the impact of the new directive on Scotland's economy. There has been UK research, but an extra and separate factor must be considered for Scotland. Scotland's distance from its marketplace means that drivers must travel further and journeys to delivery destinations therefore take longer. Although I welcome measures that the European Commission has taken to improve road safety and to protect further the health, safety and welfare of workers in road transport, the directive may seriously undermine Scotland's ability to compete in the road haulage industry. It may have a negative knock-on effect on our manufacturing base if the Scottish Executive does not develop a strategy for assisting the industry.

Working time for mobile workers covers the time devoted to all road transport activities—including driving, loading and unloading, assisting passengers to board or to disembark, cleaning and technical maintenance. It also includes time during which workers must be at their work station, ready to take up normal work. That will include, for example, periods spent waiting for unloading when that duration is not known in advance. A great deal of planning, preparation and change will need to be managed. There will be huge costs and operational implications, which will have to be considered now. UK research estimates that at least 60,000 additional drivers will be required, because drivers' average working hours currently exceed the limit of 48 hours. That figure for additional drivers assumes that demand will not increase. The upside is that employers will have to employ more drivers to cover the hours that their existing drivers will no longer be permitted to work. The downside is that the UK and Scotland already have a severe shortage of drivers.

The introduction of night work restrictions means that a shift to day work is likely. That, in turn, may impact on road traffic congestion. That is likely to decrease average road speed by 5 per cent between 2002 and 2010, resulting in a fall in vehicle productivity. That, and other factors such as the need to increase hourly pay for drivers to compensate for cuts in their working hours—let

alone the need to recruit new drivers—will entail massive costs for the industry. As far as I am aware, the industry is more than happy to meet those costs because they will apply across the board—in other words, because there will be a level playing field. That is not the difficulty. However, the directive has practical implications. The effects on an industry in which the average profit margins are between 1 per cent and 3 per cent are obvious.

I welcome much that the minister has said this afternoon, but I call on the Scottish Executive to assess the impact of the working time directive on Scottish road haulage and on our manufacturing industry, and to assess the implications for Scotland's economy and on our ability to compete, within the restrictions, as costs increase. We have to develop an integrated transport strategy for Scotland, but we require transport companies to remain in existence if that strategy is to work.

15:43

Ms Sandra White (Glasgow) (SNP): I want to concentrate on one particular area—Strathclyde Passenger Transport. The minister has praised SPT and I am sure that Malcolm Reid and Alistair Watson will be very pleased to hear that praise. It will be news to them.

I want to emphasise a point made in our amendment to the Executive's motion—that the new agency

“should not undermine the role and function of Strathclyde Passenger Transport”.

I mention that because I want to pick up on a point in the minister's speech. He said that SPT in its current form cannot deliver. In his summing up, I would like the minister to explain that statement and to answer this question: does the Government intend to abolish SPT?

I have not always praised SPT—in fact, if any criticism was being made, I was probably the first to make it. However, when praise is deserved, I will praise. The great strength of SPT is that it is locally driven and not centralised; I think that the minister mentioned that in his speech. If SPT is centralised, I and others believe that less focus will be put on local issues. SPT and the new agency will not be able to concentrate on areas, or put in the time and expertise, in the way that SPT can at the moment. As other members have mentioned, a lack of sufficient powers is also a weakness, not just for SPT but for other transport authority areas. I would like SPT and other regional transport authorities to be given more powers and to be driven more locally, because that would allow them to do a much better job.

The deregulation of the bus network must be reviewed urgently, through consultation or

whatever, because it has caused heartache and has been a disaster for the general public and SPT, which is the first port of call for people who make complaints. It is a travesty of justice that bus companies can withdraw bus services without any explanation. We must examine that.

In Glasgow, for example, 56 per cent of households do not have access to cars, so public transport is vital in providing people with access to different areas, which they need for going to the doctor and so on. I agree with what the minister said about the need for joined-up thinking, but I wonder whether the new agency will be able to deliver on that. SPT has a good track record in that regard and I do not see why it should not have more powers to carry on that work.

SPT and I have concerns about what will happen to rail powers if the new agency comes on board and SPT is diluted or abolished. The creation of the new agency would certainly remove the west of Scotland's input into rail strategy. Most of the powers of procurement would be given to the Strategic Rail Authority, which is based in London. I know how much bother I and others have had for asking for funding for the crossrail system, for example, which has been debated since the day I came into the Parliament. There have been about 10 motions on that subject, but we still do not see any funds being provided. I worry that that is what will happen if the new agency goes ahead.

The minister said that central funding was a very controversial system; it certainly is, especially since local government reorganisation in 1996. SPT and others have said that not only is central funding a controversial and convoluted system, it is highly unfair. I will quote a couple of figures that I have cited before in written questions. In 2002-03, West Midlands Passenger Transport Authority, which has 2.5 million passengers, was given consent to borrow £50 million, whereas SPT, which has 2.2 million passengers, was given consent to borrow only £28 million. I could go on providing figures, but I do not want to use up my speech in that way; I can send the minister the relevant papers.

If the proposed new agency comes about and SPT still exists, will that give the Parliament and SPT more powers, both in relation to crossrail and to borrowing more money, which would help to give us a better system? I ask the minister to answer that in his summing up.

15:48

Mr Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab): There is no doubt that the Scottish Executive is investing massively in Scotland's transport infrastructure. The fact that the issue is

being prioritised is made evident by the spending allocations—the transport budget will rise by more than 50 per cent in the next three years, to reach almost £1 billion by 2006.

I will focus on how vital that investment is to enable Scotland to be a driver of economic growth and to help to empower people from poor backgrounds and in remote communities. It is crucial that that investment work in such areas throughout Scotland, particularly in the north-east, where progress on transport projects—both those that are proposed and those that are in place—will be vital to growing the region's economy and where continued investment is required to meet the needs of people in rural areas. That might be an argument for basing the new transport agency in the north-east; wherever it is based, it will have a huge job of work to do. It will have to persuade businesses, commuters and passengers quickly that it is not just another body that makes decisions on transport services.

I welcome the proposal on the new transport agency as a move that can foster more integrated development of services and a better balance between transport modes. Given the levels of investment that I have mentioned, it is right to create a body that will take a strategic, long-term approach.

I am also encouraged that the minister stated that the new agency will work closely with the existing regional transport partnerships. He will be aware of the work that the north-east transport partnership—NESTRANS—has done, which is a good example of the success that those partnerships have had. Such experience and success should be drawn on and built on.

Rural areas of Scotland require continued extra investment in transport links, which are lifelines for isolated communities. That is a big issue for many communities in the north-east. Through the rural transport fund there has been a welcome £1.75 million investment in community transport initiatives and improvements to local bus services in the region. The Executive must ensure that such investment is effectively targeted to meet local needs.

One of the key points about that investment is that it will improve access to public transport for particular groups of people. The free bus schemes for older people and people with disabilities are already a success. I am sure that all members have received representations from older people who want the national scheme to come on stream as soon as possible.

Also welcome, although not mentioned in the Executive's motion, is the commitment to introduce a national concessionary scheme for young people. We are all aware of the financial problems that young people increasingly have to

face. I was pleased to hear from the minister that consultation on such a scheme will start soon.

Transport as an impetus for economic growth is where opportunities have already been secured for the north-east through the Executive's investment and the work of groups such as NESTRANS, and where there are also challenges ahead. The construction of the western peripheral route will be crucial to business throughout the north-east. I welcome the commitment to the route that was made in the partnership agreement and I hope that the proposed new agency will help to ensure that speedy progress is made on its construction and that it is completed on time.

Chris Ballance: Is the member prepared to say how the construction of the Aberdeen western peripheral route will help to promote social inclusion and help those who have no mobility or no job to get around?

Mr Baker: Anything that will encourage business and jobs, as that road will do, will help to promote social inclusion. The western peripheral route will have a role to play in other issues such as congestion in Aberdeen city centre, which causes pollution problems. There are many ways in which the route will be an advantage to the area. I agree with Mr Mundell that we want progress.

The partnership agreement also outlines continued Executive support for the feasibility study into the Aberdeen crossrail project. I hope that it is not too long before we can make real progress on that scheme and address the concerns about the frequency of trains on the Aberdeen to Inverness route, which is vital to enable the scheme to go ahead.

Brian Adam: Does the member share my disappointment that there has been neither an announcement on SRA money for the Aberdeen to Inverness route, nor an announcement from the minister on his discussions about that earlier this week with his colleague Mr Darling?

Mr Baker: The consensus in Aberdeen will be that the discussions have been fruitful and we are hoping for good news, whenever it comes.

Another challenge is to ensure that Aberdeen can share in the success of the increase in air travel. We hear about the welcome commitments to new rail links for Edinburgh and Glasgow airports, but Aberdeen still needs an adequate bus link between the airport and the city centre. I use that as an example of the fact that we should take an holistic approach when dealing with such issues.

Of course, investment in transport infrastructure in one part of Scotland can benefit other parts of the country. Improved services on the east coast rail line are as important to Aberdeen and Dundee

as they are to Edinburgh. I hope that the Executive will work in partnership with the UK Government to ensure that the necessary improvements are made to Waverley station, because they could benefit all Scotland. That much-needed proposal will be key in complementing the upgrades to the east coast line that the SRA outlined in its 10-year plan.

The economic case for the western peripheral route was well made in the Scottish transport appraisal guidance appraisal of the scheme as well as by local and national business organisations. I am sure that similar economic benefits will come from the introduction of the Aberdeen crossrail. Those are examples of how investment in transport in the north-east can make a positive difference to the Scottish economy. As we see the Scottish economy beginning to turn a corner in terms of gross domestic product, the impact of such investment will be vital. Investment in transport for economic growth, as well as to contribute to social justice, is the right goal. In supporting the Executive's motion, I hope that the proposed new agency will be an effective body and will ensure that the Executive delivers on its goals.

15:54

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): In speaking in today's debate, I support David Mundell's amendment and raise a constituency issue that is vital to economic development and growth especially in my Ayr constituency, but also in the west of Scotland generally. That issue is the development of capacity on the Ayr to Glasgow rail route and the threat to that vital arterial route that has been made by the SRA's consultation on the draft specification of network outputs strategy.

Regrettably, far from reassuring rail users and business in the west of Scotland, the consultation has alarmed them by raising the spectre of diminished investment in that vital route. No less an august body than the Scottish Council for Development and Industry—and the Minister for Transport himself—pointed out that the Strathclyde Passenger Transport network is the second biggest in the UK, and that parts of it are as intensively used as the so-called mainline routes. Indeed, in its response to the consultation, the SCDI sought assurance that the SRA will not relegate the ScotRail network to rural or secondary status for maintenance priorities. I whole-heartedly agree with that.

However, more important is the impact that the potential downgrading of the Ayr to Glasgow route could have on other business in Ayrshire. I refer specifically to the growth prospects for tourism and freight in and around Prestwick airport. Currently, 30 per cent of Prestwick's almost 2 million

passengers a year use the rail connection, which is 600,000 people. By 2008, Prestwick airport managing director Tom Wilson believes that the airport could be throughputting up to 6 million passengers a year. If the proportion of 30 per cent remains the same, 1.8 million people will use the rail connection, which is an increase of 1.2 million in five years.

At the moment, the trains on the route are running almost to capacity. They cannot absorb that extra number of passengers from a single source without increases in the number and speed of trains. In addition, the growth in commuter traffic to Glasgow from Ayrshire and Renfrewshire means that longer trains and longer platforms are needed. It is self-evident that reduced or static investment by the SRA cannot deliver the increased capacity that is required.

Mr Stewart Maxwell (West of Scotland) (SNP):

I whole-heartedly agree with John Scott's comments on the possibility of the SRA's cutting or downgrading the routes in the west of Scotland, in particular the one to which John Scott referred in his constituency of Ayr. Does he agree that it is vital that this Parliament takes control of the SRA in Scotland, so that it is not left to the SRA in London to determine the future of rail links in Scotland?

John Scott: No, I cannot agree with that.

Even though the Ayr to Glasgow route is not an intercity route, to classify it in the specification as "Other Secondary" is simply not realistic. At the very least, it must be classified as "Main Secondary" to ensure that the railway plays a full part in the sustainable, effective and integrated transport system of the west of Scotland.

I know that the minister has listened patiently to me on this subject before, and I welcome his robust submission to the SRA consultation, but it is not just the growth in passenger numbers that makes the upgrading of the Ayr to Glasgow line so essential. Coal movements from Hunterston to the east coast put pressure on the Ayr to Glasgow line as well. That increased and increasing traffic is a matter of great concern to my constituents. The network capacity between Kilwinning and Glasgow needs to be increased to allow direct routing of freight from Hunterston to the east, particularly in the light of the possible siting of a freight hub at Hunterston. Heavily laden coal wagons thundering late at night through residential areas in Troon, Prestwick and Newton-on-Ayr in my constituency are less than welcome. That is why more investment, rather than less, is essential to keep disturbance to a minimum.

I record my approval of and enthusiasm for the reopening of the Stirling-Alloa-Kinross line, which will have a hugely beneficial effect on

reducing coal-wagon movements in south Ayrshire. That development cannot come quickly enough.

Dr Sylvia Jackson (Stirling) (Lab): Will the member give way?

John Scott: I do not want to, because I am afraid that I will run out of time.

The minister can see that I want the best for the route in Ayrshire, which is why I have also spoken to the Secretary of State for Transport, Alistair Darling, to impress on him the need for more investment in our railway. In particular, I asked him—and I ask the Minister for Transport now—to use his influence to re-lay the fourth track between Paisley Gilmour Street and Glasgow Central. That additional track is vital to allow slow and fast routes to the Ayrshire coast to be developed. Undoubtedly, that will be essential if and when a rail link is created to Glasgow airport. In addition, the £38 million Glasgow crossrail development is vital to linking up the west coast and central Scotland networks. That also must be pursued with vigour.

In conclusion, I can only re-emphasise the vital importance of the Ayr to Glasgow link and links to the central belt. I urge the minister to continue to fight for the best deal possible, not just for the Ayr to Glasgow line but also for the SPT network as a whole. That network is universally acknowledged as the most heavily used commuter network outside London.

16:00

Iain Smith (North East Fife) (LD): I start by echoing Bristow Muldoon's disappointment about the contributions to today's debate from the front benches of the Opposition parties. The debate has been rather sad. One would have thought that the one issue on which members of the Scottish Parliament could unite and work together constructively is how we take forward the needs of our transport industry and Scotland's transport requirements. All of us would seem to have the same basic objectives. The Greens might have different objectives, but most members share the objective of having a reliable, affordable, regular, safe and comfortable transport network that takes account of the environmental consequences.

Tommy Sheridan: I apologise for making an intervention early in Iain Smith's contribution but, on the point about creating that sort of network, was it wrong of the member's party to support rail privatisation?

Iain Smith: I do not think that our party has ever supported rail privatisation. Tommy Sheridan is mixing us up with the Tories.

Tommy Sheridan: The member voted for it.

Iain Smith: I did not vote for rail privatisation. The Tories made a botched job of it. The Liberal Democrats do not support that botched job. We are interested in investment in and improvements to the rail network. That is what the Executive will deliver.

I will not take lessons on transport from a party that does not even bother to turn up to the committee that is considering the transport budget. The Scottish Socialist Party does not turn up at committee, but it comes to the chamber and criticises the transport budget. The SSP had its opportunity within the committee system. If Tommy Sheridan's party is not willing to work in the Parliament, we should not listen to what he has to say when he grandstands in the chamber.

The transport debate is central to the delivery of the Scottish Executive's key policies for the economy and the environment. That is why we are having the debate today, which I hope will be constructive. Obviously, transport is important to the environment in terms of the targets for reducing CO₂ emissions and other environmental issues, including road safety. It is also vital to our economy, to ensure that our enterprise can thrive and that our tourism industry, which is essential to many parts of Scotland, including my constituency, can thrive. Transport is also crucial to the social inclusion agenda. It is not possible to have social inclusion if people cannot access services and get to jobs, hospitals, colleges and sports facilities. If people cannot do that, they are excluded from society. That applies to rural and urban areas. Transport is vital to tackling exclusion.

I do not think that any member in the chamber will dispute the fact that there have been years of underinvestment in our transport network, starting with the Tories.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): We have been underinvesting in transport for hundreds of years.

Iain Smith: Indeed—possibly for hundreds of years.

Murdo Fraser: That would include Liberal Governments.

Iain Smith: Indeed. But at least Liberal Governments built railways.

It is not possible, as the rail regulator seems to suggest, to cut rail maintenance and save money in the long term; maintenance costs money, through more costly repairs at a later date or through the costs at the time to those who are affected by the reductions in the speed at which trains can travel.

We must spend money on renewal and on new investment in our rail network. I am delighted that we have a partnership agreement that is

committed to significant investment in our transport network. We are committed to new rolling stock, which is already on its way to Scotland; the lengthening of platforms, to ensure that we can start to deal with some of the congestion and overcrowding on our rail network; the Stirling-Alloa-Kinross rail line; the Airdrie to Bathgate line; the Larkhall to Milngavie line; the Edinburgh tram network; and the Borders rail link.

I am sorry to have to say this to David Mundell, but I am not sure which word in the phrase

“Supporting construction of the Borders Rail Line”

he does not understand.

David Mundell: On that point, will Iain Smith encourage the minister to set out, either when he sums up or in writing, how much money he will provide for the construction of the Borders rail link? In his opening speech, the minister told the chamber how much the link will cost, but he did not tell us how much he will contribute to it.

Iain Smith: I know that Nicol Stephen is a very generous man, but I am not expecting him to pay for the Borders rail line himself.

Let us hear what the Conservatives said in their 2003 manifesto. It committed them to funding a series of road projects, but not a penny was committed to funding rail projects. The Conservatives need not talk to me about funding. I have read the manifesto and I repeat that not a penny was committed to funding of the rail network.

Murdo Fraser: Turn the page and read on.

Iain Smith: I have read the whole lot. Frankly, it is not worth reading.

The Liberal Democrats and Labour in the partnership Executive are committed to those important investments and to links to Glasgow and Edinburgh airports. The crucial element in all of that is the redevelopment of Waverley station—it is vital to have that in hand. We must also start to look ahead. We must start to examine whether Laurencekirk station can be reopened and, for the longer term, we must consider a St Andrews rail link and new stations or reopening stations in places in my constituency such as Newburgh and Wormit, which would also benefit Levenmouth in my constituency.

We must start to ask some of the key future transport questions, such as how we move more freight off our roads and on to other transport modes, such as ferries and rail. We must consider seriously the consequences of a freight terminal at Hunterston. We must examine our policy on aviation links. It is more environmentally friendly for me to fly direct to Barcelona from Scotland rather than to fly Barcelona via London, which

does not strike me as being an environmentally friendly route. There are many such questions.

Closer to home, the newspapers have talked about a third Forth crossing. We should consider whether that could be a public transport crossing and could be developed as an extension of the Edinburgh tram network into Fife, to assist us and perhaps to give us something back from charging for using roads into Edinburgh.

There are many questions that the Parliament should debate constructively. It is sad that we have had an unconstructive debate today. We should move forward. The Liberal Democrat-Labour Executive will deliver on transport and I have confidence that the minister will deliver.

16:06

Christine Grahame (South of Scotland) (SNP): I am sure that the minister is familiar with “Have I Got News For You” and the round of the quiz that involves specialist publications. I will give the minister some quotations on his transport consultation and we will see whether he can tell us what magazine they come from. The first quotation is:

“The paper is like re-arranging the deckchairs on the Titanic. It is full of contradictions—making it difficult to see how things will be improved.”

The second quotation is—

Nicol Stephen: Will the member give way?

Christine Grahame: I want to read out all the quotations before the minister tells me the publication.

Nicol Stephen: I know the answer.

Christine Grahame: An answer now would spoil things. I will give way to the minister later.

The second quotation is:

“Ministers have concluded that the establishment of such an agency is not up for consultation. This is despite there being little more to justify it in the paper than that it is easy to set up and there are already a dozen other such agencies in Scotland.”

I know that the minister is desperate to tell me the answer, so the last quotation is:

“Given the new agency is not up for debate, more detailed thought might have been expected on the most suitable powers for it.”

Nicol Stephen: The publication is from the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

Christine Grahame: Good. Well done. At least the minister takes the trouble to read such publications. The serious point is that the headline in COSLA’s publication says “Transport Plans on the Road to Nowhere”. That is COSLA’s overview, and much of the responsibility for transport lies with local authorities.

Paragraph 23 of the Executive's consultation document, "Scotland's Transport – Proposals for a new approach to transport in Scotland", says:

"Although last in the list of desirable qualities",

integration, social justice and sustainable development

"are absolutely key."

Paragraph 24 of the document says:

"Transport has to be developed on a sustainable basis, taking resource use and energy consumption as key indicators of progress."

I expect a specific answer—as usual—from the minister to my parliamentary question about those paragraphs and about

"how tests for resource use and energy consumption as key indicators of progress in the development of transport on a sustainable basis ... are being applied with regard to the"

so-called

"business case for ... the Borders railway",

because I suspect that those tests are not being applied.

When I asked whether the business-case test for the Borders railway had been applied to any current ScotRail projects, the minister answered:

"In most cases investment in the ScotRail routes was made many decades ago. It is not possible to determine how such investments would perform under current appraisal techniques."—[*Official Report, Written Answers*, 9 October 2003.]

I bet that no routes, or at the most one—the link between Edinburgh and Glasgow—would pass the test. The minister is asking a line that passes all the tests for integration, social justice and sustainable development to meet a business-case test to which the Executive's document does not refer.

Funding has been referred to a few times.

Iain Smith: Will the member give way?

Christine Grahame: I will give way later.

It is clear that the only funding that is in place for the Borders railway is the £15 million from the three relevant councils, to which the bill that will be introduced on the railway will refer. The Scottish Executive must provide £110 million. We have had weasel words and the Executive can play with words as it will. All that the Executive has ever said is that it will support the construction of the Borders railway, whereas it has said that it will construct other lines. No minister uses words casually. Those words are an out for not funding the line.

There is also £4 million to come from the Strategic Rail Authority—

Nicol Stephen rose—

Christine Grahame: If the minister is going to tell me that the Executive will provide the £110 million, I will listen. Otherwise, I do not really want to hear what he has to say, because he will just say nothing yet again.

Will the minister now commit £110 million?

Nicol Stephen: Why does Christine Grahame seem so determined to talk down the prospects of building the Borders rail link? We are determined to deliver the link, but Christine Grahame does nothing but snipe and talk down the efforts that are being made by not only the Executive but the local councils that are involved and a huge number of local people. All of us support the Borders rail link.

Christine Grahame: If the minister has one thing, it is nerve. I was a key person in the petition coming to the Parliament and in ensuring that the Public Petitions Committee went down to the Borders. I got the committee on the road and I followed the petition to every parliamentary committee to which it was referred. All that I am saying is that the minister should put his money where his mouth is. Let us hear a commitment to £110 million. We do not even have the £4 million from the Strategic Rail Authority.

On the subject of the SRA, when one tries to ask questions about the amount of money that Scotland puts into the pot, one cannot get an answer. When one asks how much money Scotland gets out of the pot, one cannot get an answer, because the SRA does not produce Scotland-only figures. Money can be spent on Docklands and on Railtrack in the south of England, but there is not one bit of affirmation about getting £110 million for a line that is essential to an economy.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Trish Godman): You have one minute.

Christine Grahame: In that one minute, let me simply say this about buses. I can tell Chris Ballance that he would need a bike in the Borders because, all over the place, bus services are falling. The Peebles bus service keeps going because the town's common-good fund underwrites it. Wee communities fight lock, stock and barrel to keep their bus services. It costs about £7 to get a return from Peebles to Gala—for one day's journey. That is costly.

The minister and others might want people to get on their bikes—which sounds like Tebbit long ago—but it is far too far to cycle from Galashiels to Edinburgh. For a distance of 35 miles, we need a railway line, not a cycle track.

16:12

Pauline McNeill (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab): Mr Sheridan was quite right to point out that the Tories gave us rail privatisation, but they also gave us bus deregulation. I want to talk about the revolution that is needed in our approach to the bus industry. In the west of Scotland, 800,000 people use our buses each day. It is a sad fact that 94 per cent of that bus mileage is commercially operated and 6 per cent—the routes that really cannot make a profit—is subsidised. My speech will be exclusively about the bus industry, because I believe that bus services should be a higher priority for the Executive. The lack of bus services in the poorest communities has been a failure of bus deregulation.

We need a more statutory framework to deal with some of the failings in our bus services. In many ways, bus services are worse off than rail services, because rail services at least have timetables and required levels of investment. Such investment is not necessarily required of the bus industry. I will not make any cheap points against the bus operators, as I recognise that they are commercially operated companies that are doing what they were set up to do under deregulation. In many ways, the bus operators have been quite responsive to some of the suggestions that I have put to them, but the Parliament needs to note that our bus industry operates in a commercial framework that provides few ways in which to address the issue of how services should be delivered to communities.

The issue has been drawn to my attention by the situation in my constituency—I know that members could probably recount their own stories—that I have come up against time and again. In Townhead, a variation in the bus route has taken away from more vulnerable people the ability to get on the bus. As a result, they are now physically unable to go where they want to go. In Anderston, we have a high number of sheltered housing complexes for people who are immobile. When their bus route was varied from St Vincent Street to Sauchiehall Street just one street away—I am sure that all members have heard of it—that made it impossible for hundreds of people, because of the modes that they use to get around, to walk from where they live to the bus stop.

For the same reason—that, as a vulnerable community, we are deprived by the lack of such services—I have been successful in campaigning to get First Glasgow Ltd to reinstate a route. In Glasgow, 59 per cent of people do not have access to a car and therefore rely heavily on buses.

The situation must change. The Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 has been mentioned. Under that act, quality partnerships and quality contracts

were to be the mechanisms by which we got better bus services. The Executive states in the partnership document that it wants to increase the number of quality partnerships and quality contracts; I have to say to the Minister for Transport that, given that there are currently none, it is not difficult to see how the Executive could claim that it could double its commitment. Members can do the maths themselves. There has not been much progress on the matter in the past two years. We must make the sums add up a bit better.

I press the minister to address the issue of what we are going to do. The Executive is committed to integration, but how can we possibly achieve integration between buses and trains when, in some cases, the commercial operators of buses see trains as their direct competitors? SPT can give examples of where its attempts to integrate services have failed because of that issue, which stands in the way of an integrated transport system.

The withdrawal of bus services is a serious issue. I am sure that we could all recount stories from areas throughout Scotland where the withdrawal of a bus service is fundamental to people's lives. There must be a statutory framework to prevent such withdrawals of bus services from happening. I am considering introducing a member's bill on two aspects of the matter, the first of which is that the withdrawal of a bus service should be subject to consultation. If a company wants to put on a bus service, it must apply to the traffic commissioner and it can put on the service after three months. However, if a company wants to withdraw a bus service, it can do so without consulting anybody, no matter what impact that withdrawal will have on the community. The second aspect, which Iain Smith mentioned, is services to hospitals and clinics. We must look at the statutory framework to ensure that that is incorporated into the legislation.

In my final minute, I will address three matters. The minister must ensure that he carries the people of the west of Scotland with him on the possible abolition of the Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive and its replacement by a new transport agency. Without the people's commitment to that transport agency, I do not think that it could happen.

The issue of crossrail is vital for Glasgow politicians. My colleague Bill Butler has been vocal and effective in pressing the Executive to make progress on the matter. I am pleased to see that progress is being made, but I am sure that the minister will not have heard the last of me, or any other Glasgow politician, pressing for more progress from the Executive. I hope that the message is clear: we want to be able to proceed in

Glasgow where we have the investment. We certainly would not want to be held back by any kind of joint commitment.

We need assurances that the minister is talking directly to the SRA about its announcement on rail maintenance, because without that commitment we cannot make our rail service as efficient as it should be.

16:18

Alex Fergusson (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con): I will, if I may, use this opportunity to draw attention to a continuing and growing transport problem within my constituency of Galloway and Upper Nithsdale. The problem is of specific interest to other constituencies and regions such as the Borders, South and East Ayrshire and Argyll, where the level of afforestation is highest.

In short, and this is vital—as Tommy Sheridan hinted—given the vast increase in mature timber that will be available in Scotland over the next few years, significant tonnages of mature timber are being effectively landlocked and prevented from gaining access to the marketplace because local authorities are unable to deal with the extra financial burden that this stage of forestry industry development is heaping on their shoulders.

An example is that Dumfries and Galloway Council have placed a temporary closure order on the U111 road at a place called Polbae, near Newton Stewart, and have landlocked a significant amount of mature timber. Every time that the temporary closure order runs out, the council slaps on another one. The last attempt was appealed—an appeal that both I and my predecessor Alasdair Morgan supported. The Scottish Executive, to its credit, appointed a reporter and an inquiry was duly held. The reporter found in favour of the appeal and against the actions of the council, yet the council will not lift the order and the timber remains stranded, rendering significant investment of private and public money completely wasted.

When I raised that issue at a members' business debate when the Parliament met in Aberdeen nearly 18 months ago, the Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development spoke positively of the possibility of a strategic forestry transport fund. Despite occasional warm words on that subject since then, the unacceptable situation that I have described remains. I ask the minister to address that issue in summing up.

I welcome any effort to improve the integration of public transport in my constituency. Currently, residents of Twynholm village who wish to travel east to Castle Douglas or Dumfries must get on a bus and travel 15 to 20 minutes west to Gatehouse of Fleet, change bus, retrace their

tracks—which obviously takes another 15 or 20 minutes—and pass within a quarter of a mile of where they started before heading in an eastwardly direction. Chris Ballance would probably suggest that they could walk the quarter of a mile, but there is no bus stop to which they can walk. The system is as unintegrated as possible. Any claim by the Executive that it is improving its public transport strategy is clearly in tatters while such situations exist.

No public transport system can replace the car in constituencies such as mine. For more than four years, the Executive has promised improvements to the A75, the A76 and the A77, but not even a kerbstone has been realigned on the A75. I do not have to remind the minister that that road is a trans-European network route, which most long-range hauliers who are making to Stranraer for what is still the premier crossing to Northern Ireland now consider to be more of a joke than a trunk road.

I will try to leave the Presiding Officer with time in hand. In conclusion, therefore, I ask the minister to answer some questions in his summing up. What will the Executive do to improve the disastrous situation facing the forestry industry in relation to timber transportation? How will the Executive improve the shambolic state of its integrated public transport strategy in the most rural areas of Scotland? When will the first meaningful improvement to the trunk roads in my constituency take place? Will the minister simply leave things to the new, all-singing, all-dancing transport agency as a vehicle to blame for the Executive's failures?

16:22

Robert Brown (Glasgow) (LD): Unlike my colleague Iain Smith, I think that the debate has been reasonable once we got past the opening Opposition speakers. There have been a number of good speeches.

Nicol Stephen set the proper tone when he opened the debate. Over the past few years, there has been a groundswell of change in transport. It is not too much to say that transport policy lies at the meeting point of many interests. Fast, accessible, affordable and efficient transport for people and goods makes the wheels of the economy roll. The need for good public transport—particularly rail transport—is a major environmental issue in itself and the form and availability of transport is key to the planning of urban areas, shopping complexes and hospital configurations. The school run has been touched on—it is said to account for 20 per cent of peak-hour road traffic.

For a long time, there was a public and Government mindset that was based on the

glamour of new motorways, the decline of the railways with the Beeching cuts and the elimination—despite continental experience that suggested the contrary—of the remaining tram and trolley bus systems in the United Kingdom. Such things were taken as the way in which things were going. Huge opportunities to put rail developments at the heart of new urban developments were lost—Braehead is only one of the most recent examples.

Undoubtedly, the machinery of government has now been reversed. The current partnership agreement, which will bring spend on public transport up to 70 per cent of the total transport spend and many billions of pounds for transport infrastructure spend, is the result. There is a key emphasis on delivery. The key challenge is to get hold of enough capital to ensure that the railway engineering resource is there to deliver, and to clear away the planning and design impedimenta in order to make things happen.

I want to consider two or three particular areas. Like others, I have felt hugely frustrated over the past four years by the endless cycle of consultation papers, feasibility studies, engineering studies and strategies that have dogged the proposed Glasgow airport rail link, the Glasgow crossrail project and similar projects. However, I think that we have come through that period and now know where we are going with many projects, and that projects will be delivered. We hope that the minister will be able to announce in the next few weeks that the Glasgow crossrail project will definitely go ahead and that there is not just a commitment to the principle.

Glasgow and Edinburgh are crucial to the rail network in Scotland because they are hubs, but Glasgow transport projects have to involve too many agencies—SPT, Glasgow City Council and probably other local councils, Network Rail, ScotRail, the SRA and sometimes others. The proposed agency, transport Scotland, is part of the Executive's answer to that. Clearly, the agency could be a helpful driver, provided that it is set up properly. However, the last thing on earth that we want is major bureaucratic upheaval. The minister's aim of assembling a group of people with key skills and establishing a centre of excellence is encouraging, as were his warm words on SPT. However, I urge the minister to work through the SPTE, rather than abolish it. It is important that transport decisions are made with local context and priorities in mind. The SPTE needs wider powers, as Sandra White mentioned, over buses and possibly over car parks and freight, if it is to do its job properly. The minister must also address the low historic capital base of SPT and the outstanding debt from the 1976 underground modernisation. Those are important issues around making delivery more effective.

In passing, I urge the minister to consider establishing transport Scotland in Cambuslang or Rutherglen, both of which face the loss of many hundreds of jobs, directly and indirectly, from the proposed closure of Hoover plants. The area has a railway tradition and it is readily accessible to the rest of the network. It is worth saying that Lanarkshire is the one area that has not benefited at all from the various job dispersals to different parts of Scotland that have occurred. Lanarkshire, particularly the Rutherglen and Cambuslang area, would benefit from my suggestion and I want to put the idea into the minister's mind.

In my final few moments, I will say a little about value. One of the paradoxes of our current system of public resource planning is that the increased value that is created by the community, particularly in the region of new railway stations, goes into the pockets of private individuals and developers. Furthermore, the public purse has to pay more to buy back the land that is required for those developments. We must establish mechanisms to tap into that added value as part of the funding packages. I do not know whether the answer is site value rating—an old Liberal policy—or perhaps a tax on change of planning use, but it would certainly be helpful to encourage local authorities and transport bodies to accumulate a suitable land bank and to stop the sale of assets in that regard. I leave that point with the minister in this interesting and important debate.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Mr Swinburne, I can give you a tight two minutes.

16:27

John Swinburne (Central Scotland) (SSCUP): I welcome the opportunity to highlight the transport problems that senior citizens in Scotland experience. The elderly do not seek priority in transport; they simply hope that the Executive will finally deliver on its pre-election promises and that senior citizens in Scotland will obtain free off-peak travel. That includes ferry travel—I believe that the minister is talking about introducing free ferry travel for schoolchildren, but elderly people, too, should be entitled to travel to the mainland free of charge.

In the five years between 1995 and 2000, local government expenditure on concessionary fares fell by 7 per cent, despite a growth in the pensioner population and a rise in operator costs. That underinvestment and the subsequent rundown continued when Gordon Brown decided that the Labour Government would stick to Tory spending levels. As a result, there are some shocking statistics—for example, only 16 per cent of Scotland's bus fleet has low-level floors and 12 per cent of the country's public buses and coaches have no disabled access whatever.

By the way, will senior citizens be involved in the new quango that the minister is putting together? Senior citizens use public transport more than most.

More needs to be done to understand fully and to assess older people's mobility needs so that the transport planning process caters better for their needs. Future strategy must focus more on users and their concerns about safety, accessibility, reliability and affordability. Local authorities must receive sufficient funding to allow them to provide their part of a nationwide concessionary travel scheme. It is important for that scheme to include buses, trains and ferries, with no cross-boundary problems such as occur at present—bus passes may be used in Edinburgh, East Lothian and Midlothian, but they are not accepted in West Lothian.

I think that I have made most of the points that I wanted to put across. Thank you for giving me a couple of minutes, Presiding Officer.

16:30

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Sustainable transport campaigners in Scotland have grown sadly accustomed to continual disappointment at the Executive's apparent double-think over sustainability and transport, as in many other policy areas. The minister's recognition that the Scottish Executive has been too focused on roads is a welcome admission of failure on sustainability, but it comes a bit late following the £1 billion spend on road building.

Perhaps the minister will now embrace sustainability, and the economic, social justice and environmental factors that it defines, by not trying to treble Scotland's air traffic, which expands at the rate that it does only because of access to tax-free fuel. Never mind the principle that the polluter pays—here, the polluter gets a tax break.

Brian Adam: Will the member dissociate himself and his colleagues from the comment that was made by one of the Greens in the London Assembly that there should be a minimum £150 air charge?

Patrick Harvie: I have not had the opportunity to discuss that with my colleagues in London, but I would welcome that chance.

In recognising the fact that the cost of private car use has held steady overall, in real terms, for the past 30 years, while public transport—on which most households in Glasgow rely—has got steadily more expensive, the Executive could make a further commitment to sustainability. That trend must be reversed. Also, the Executive must refuse to accept the suggestion that car use and civil aviation must grow and grow. Those are the

two fastest-growing sources of CO₂ emissions in the country, and the Executive's ambition to create a 40 per cent increase in road traffic in Glasgow will mean disaster for Glaswegians and the rest of the planet's inhabitants.

I will be glad to welcome a new commitment, if it is to come, to embracing sustainability in the Executive's transport policy—even if the ministers will not look at me while I am speaking. The Scottish Executive could demonstrate that commitment by showing the same urgency in expanding concessionary and free travel schemes that it shows in relation to proposals for putting electronic tags on children; by reversing the trend of providing cheap road and air travel; by investing not only in big-budget mega-projects, but—as Pauline McNeill said—in bus services, as our European neighbours do; and by prioritising and funding urban planning and design policies that will make our towns and cities safe and pleasant environments in which to walk and cycle.

Even Brian Adam suggested that the Executive has much to boast about concerning its development of cycling routes. However, rather than give glowing praise for a limited number of specific routes, I ask the Executive to focus on the daily concerns that cyclists cope with on our roads throughout the country. I want the Executive to tackle congestion, lane priorities, dedicated signalling and other measures as a matter of course, not just on a limited number of routes. Until we see that new sustainable approach, I will still have to reply to letters and e-mails from disgruntled cycle commuters who are trying to get into Glasgow city centre in a nightmarish winter rush hour—or at any other time—and taking their lives in their hands. Although there have been some signs of progress, there is still a feeling in Scottish Executive documents that cycling is a pastime—a hobbyist's weekend excursion that takes place at least a train ride from the city.

Other commitments that we could see from the Executive include a social justice audit of all transport funding and the Executive throwing its weight more fully and comprehensively behind Glasgow's crossrail scheme and projects like it. Most important—I have mentioned this before in the chamber and members will be bored of it, but I will not stop mentioning it—the Executive should swallow its pride and accept the fact that the £500 million M74 northern extension project is a scandalous policy to pursue. It is in direct conflict with the interests of Glasgow's southsiders; it is defended by arbitrary job creation statistics; it will increase road traffic and pollution; and it will degrade the environment locally and globally. It must be scrapped. Iain Smith's call for the Greens to be more constructive in this transport debate can elicit only one response—it depends on what is being constructed. If the Liberal Democrats want

to feel more comfortable in their green threads, they should join me in opposing that appalling urban motorway project.

Many members have talked about integration, regulation, strategic planning and investment. All those measures are important, but, to be frank, I do not care whether the Scottish Executive delivers them under the present arrangements or through a new agency; I care about putting sustainability at the heart of transport policy. If the Executive is willing to do that, it will receive my enthusiastic support, but I will not hold my breath.

16:35

Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab): As is usual with transport issues, the debate has been wide ranging. Some members highlighted local issues, while others highlighted more national concerns. David Mundell finished his speech by saying that it is about time that the Executive started delivering transport improvements but—at least in my constituency of Dunfermline West—the benefit of the Scottish Executive's past and proposed investment in transport infrastructure is extensive. We have seen the establishment of the international ferry link from Rosyth to Zeebrugge. In the west of my constituency, at Kincardine, an eastern link road is being constructed which will, once completed, relieve the village of 40 per cent of the traffic that passes through it at present. The Executive has also approved the bridge design for the new bridge at Kincardine. In passing, I congratulate the Executive on choosing the design that was not the cheapest available but which was better and more aesthetically pleasing than the others.

Richard Baker highlighted the benefits of the Aberdeen western relief road, which shows that not all road building is bad, as some members have suggested. Members must reflect carefully on which projects have been given the go-ahead and which ones have not. They should realise that in condemning road building, they might condemn many constituents to misery, traffic congestion and pollution.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): To return briefly to bridges, I note that the proposed transport agency will have responsibility for overseeing the four tolled bridges in Scotland. Given that the minister is undertaking a review of those bridges, does the member agree that, if the tolls are removed from the Skye bridge, there will be no supportable or logical reason for them not to be removed from the Erskine bridge, the Forth road bridge and the Tay bridge?

Scott Barrie: I thank Ms Baillie—I am smirking because I wondered what she was going to say. As someone who lives and works in Fife, I support

any initiative that would relieve Fife of the tolling on its north and south shores.

In my constituency, we will also see the reopening of the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine rail link. Although there are concerns about that, particularly from owners of properties that were built subsequent to the closure of the line, most people in Stirling, Clackmannanshire and west Fife think that the reopening of the line is a positive measure.

Dr Jackson: Will the member take an intervention?

Scott Barrie: If it is very quick.

Dr Jackson: It is. There are concerns at Causewayhead in my constituency of Stirling about the number and timing of freight trains that will run on that line. I see that Bill Butler, who is a member of the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine Railway and Linked Improvements Bill Committee, is here and I hope that he will take those concerns on board.

Scott Barrie: I am sure that Bill Butler and the other members of the committee will take that point on board.

The opening of the Airdrie to Bathgate link and the construction of the Larkhall to Milngavie line will, equally, benefit the communities in those areas. I have highlighted developments in my community, but they are reflected throughout Scotland. Of course members feel that some local projects should be prioritised over others, but to listen to some of the speeches this afternoon, one might be fooled into thinking that nothing has been done in the past four years and that nothing is proposed for the next four years. Not for the first time, Kenny MacAskill castigated the Executive for a lack of vision. Vision is important, but it is also important to temper vision with a view of what is beneficial. Too often, people want an initiative that will benefit them personally, whether or not it will provide value for money or have the desired benefit for the wider community.

Pauline McNeill and Sandra White highlighted the issue of bus operators who withdraw services arbitrarily. Pauline was right to mention the pitfalls of bus deregulation and the effect that it has had on many communities. It seems that the powers in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 that relate to quality partnerships have not been utilised. If those powers are deemed to be insufficient, they must be revisited; if they are deemed to be sufficient, local authorities and bus operators must be encouraged to utilise them for the benefit of ordinary travelling people.

Iain Smith mentioned the redevelopment of Waverley station, which is an important project, not only for the suburban routes in Edinburgh, but

because Waverley is a principal mainline station. I press the minister to do whatever he can to ensure that that project is kept on track and is given the priority that it requires.

Earlier, the Greens and the SSP talked about the low cost of air transport as if, somehow, that was necessarily a bad thing. I hope that they were not suggesting that ordinary people should be denied the right to holiday in the sun and that doing so should, once again, become the privilege of the rich, as it was in the past.

There will always be a robust debate about transport developments, but we must get the debate into perspective. We should highlight what needs to be done but we must also acknowledge that improvements have taken place and are taking place.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Murdo Fraser, you have five tight minutes.

16:40

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): In my five tight minutes, I would like to concentrate on the impact that transport has on our economic performance. We all know about the dismal levels of economic growth in Scotland; the situation in relation to manufacturing is particularly severe, with our manufacturing sector having been in recession for several quarters and our performance against the rest of the UK being particularly poor.

Scottish business starts at a disadvantage because of our distance from our markets in the rest of the UK and in Europe. Transport infrastructure is therefore especially important to Scottish business. Certain goods, particularly those produced in bulk, can be moved by rail. In that regard, it is pleasing to note—Mr Sheridan might be interested to learn this—that use by freight of the railways has increased by 50 per cent since rail privatisation. However, for the great majority of businesses, travel by rail is inappropriate because of their distance from a railway. Those businesses rely on a good roads network. When we talk about transport infrastructure from a business point of view, we have to put the emphasis on road construction.

The previous Conservative Government had an excellent record on improvement of Scotland's road network. We made the A90 dual carriageway from Edinburgh to Aberdeen, we completed the M74 motorway, we dualled sections of the A1, dualled the A9 between Stirling and Perth and did more besides. The programme was of considerable benefit to the Scottish economy in allowing goods and people to move around. The result was that economic growth in Scotland outstripped that in the rest of the UK in the early 1990s.

However, the election of a Labour Government in 1997 and the subsequent moratorium on road projects set our road-building programme back many years. I should point out that the Conservative Government did not need a transport authority to do the job; it simply did it.

Mr MacAskill: Does the member accept that, under the Conservative Administration, the motorway and trunk-road network south of the border was completed, which is why the new roads that are being built are entirely novel? Does he further accept that, despite his congratulatory words about the Tory Government, significant parts of Scotland have no trunk roads, never mind motorways?

Murdo Fraser: I am delighted that Mr MacAskill has welcomed the previous Conservative Government's investment in transport and I am sure that he is well aware of what was achieved in Scotland.

Scotland's transport was underfunded by some £90 million between 1997 and 2004 in comparison with England. No new trunk roads were constructed in Scotland between 2001 and 2003 despite motor vehicle traffic in that period increasing by 2 billion vehicle kilometres. The results of that are congestion on Scottish roads and the impeding of people's ability to travel and move goods around. The Scottish economy can well do without that burden.

Bristow Muldoon: Will the member give way?

Murdo Fraser: I am sorry, but I am running out of time.

On previous occasions, I have called for the dualling of the A9 trunk road between Perth and Inverness. The economy of Inverness continues to grow rapidly with a consequent increase in traffic levels on the A9, which is that city's connection with the central belt. We all know about the high accident rate on the A9; much of it is caused by the design of that road, with its long sweeping curves and its switches from dual to single carriageway and back again. Both from an economic point of view and a road-safety point of view, there is a strong case for further investment in the A9 upgrades. Although the Executive is investing some money in that regard, which I have welcomed, upgrading is being conducted on a piecemeal basis. Unless we have a clear commitment to dualling the A9, even in the long term, the economy of Perthshire and the Highlands will continue to be disadvantaged.

I believe that there is also an argument for the creation of rest areas on the A9 to help reduce accidents. I raised this issue with the former minister with responsibility for roads and I

understand that the A9 safety group will consider the issue. I have yet to hear any conclusions from that group so I would be interested to hear from the minister whether it has yet reached any.

The Executive talks a good game when it comes to transport but, to be frank, its record over the past four years and the two years of the Labour Administration before that does not bear that talk out. We must acknowledge the vital requirement for an excellent transport infrastructure if we are to turn around our dismal economic performance. That means that there must be investment in new road building in particular, and that the Executive needs a clear commitment to road programmes with detailed start and completion dates so that we all know where we stand.

I support the amendment in David Mundell's name.

16:45

Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP): We have heard some interesting speeches today. I found it particularly intriguing that in Tommy Sheridan's workers' paradise, there are no cheap flights to Benidorm for the workers, but there might be some expensive ones to Cuba. That would be alright for the champagne socialists, but not for the generality.

Tommy Sheridan: That is a cheap one. It is below Brian Adam.

Brian Adam: It might be a cheap one, but Tommy Sheridan would not give many people access to cheap flights.

Tommy Sheridan: What does Brian Adam think is the appropriate price for airline tickets?

Mr MacAskill: Market forces.

Brian Adam: As my colleague Mr MacAskill said, market forces will determine that. There has been significant growth in direct flights from Scotland to many parts of Europe in particular, which is something I want to increase because it gives people the opportunity to come here and to go elsewhere. It is also more environmentally friendly than the standard jump to London or any of its peripheral airports and then on to somewhere else.

Chris Ballance: Will Brian Adam give way?

Brian Adam: No thank you.

I am disappointed that the route development fund, which we have not perhaps discussed as much as we should have done, seems to be an Edinburgh airport route development fund. It is particularly disappointing that the minister, who represents Aberdeen, has failed to encourage BAA to develop any new routes out of Aberdeen

airport supported by that fund, or any other initiatives along those lines. Even Inverness airport has managed to get a new international route—very welcome it is too. Perhaps the minister should be a little more active in encouraging what is supposed to be Scotland's route development fund to become that so that more than one airport receives the benefit.

Iain Smith appealed for consensus. Perhaps I can give him some grounds for the consensus that he seeks. In the past few days, the minister appears to have briefed the newspapers that he would like to take control of the rail infrastructure away from the SRA and Network Rail. If that is actually the case—we did not hear about it today, although it has appeared in certain newspapers in Scotland within the past week or so—I would welcome it. That is the kind of consensus that we want to build. We want to build on the Parliament's powers, not for its own sake or for any constitutional reason, but for the practical reason that we have no influence over the SRA. We cannot, and the minister cannot—

Iain Smith: Will Brian Adam give way?

Brian Adam: No thank you. The minister cannot direct what the SRA—

Iain Smith: Will Brian Adam give way?

Brian Adam: No thank you.

The minister cannot direct what the SRA is going to do and, as a consequence, we cannot make changes to the crossrail arrangements that we want to make without using the Executive's money. We should have our share of the SRA's money, but there is no evidence that we are getting that. The SRA seems to be secretive about its accounts and does not appear to be willing to share—

Iain Smith: Will Brian Adam give way?

Brian Adam: No thank you. Mr Smith should stop trying.

We cannot get access to that information, and if we are to have the crossrail, which is central to the modern transport system that NESTRANS wants for Aberdeen, we will have to get more money from the Executive, the local authorities and the SRA to make it happen. If we are to have the improvements to the Aberdeen-Inverness line that the SRA said at one point it would make, but has now reneged on, we will have to make them ourselves.

If the minister really wants such powers, it is certain that he will have support from the Scottish National Party, if not from some of his colleagues, judging by the number of times that Mr Smith wanted to intervene.

Iain Smith: Will Brian Adam give way?

Brian Adam: No thank you.

Strathclyde Passenger Transport is a welcome existing part of our transport infrastructure. The minister has praised SPT, but he has not removed the threat to it in his on-going consultation exercises. I welcome Sandra White's comments on that.

If we are seriously to address issues such as sustainability, we must recognise that there are significant disparities between urban and rural areas. As long as people choose to live in rural areas and to commute, we will have to find means of transporting them. In Aberdeenshire, whose population is almost identical to that of Aberdeen city, there are 80,000 jobs, compared with close to 170,000 jobs in Aberdeen. It is fairly obvious where people go for their jobs, so we must get them there sensibly. That may not be sustainable, but I would welcome a proper, integrated, modern transport system that addresses Aberdeen's transport problems. Welcome as the western peripheral route is, we need to have crossrail and all the other parts of the system. I look forward to the minister's being able to give us positive news on that in his summing up.

I would also welcome the conversion of the Executive on the concessionary fares schemes. However, today we have heard no target date for their implementation.

I am disappointed that today's debate did not address any specific matters. We heard a number of small announcements from the minister, but I wonder whether this debate is the best use of our parliamentary time. As has happened so often since the beginning of the session, we are dealing not with new matters, but with a certain amount of puff.

16:51

Nicol Stephen: This has been a good-natured debate—at times. However, I turn first to Kenny MacAskill. He alleged that we were taking a student-union-style approach, but his own student-union-style speech began with a heavily pre-prepared reference to Guy Fawkes—in my view, with about the same amount of success as Guy Fawkes had. He had plenty of attack, but no action. That is where the SNP falls down and fails hugely in relation to transport initiatives. We heard plenty about the devolution settlement, but nothing about delivery.

Brian Adam: Will the minister give way?

Nicol Stephen: Not yet.

Of course, we welcome Kenny MacAskill's support—which he indicated in his speech, if one listened carefully—for the new transport agency and for virtually every one of the £3 billion-worth of

investment projects to which we are committed over the next 10 years. However, listening to Kenny MacAskill one would have thought that the only key to improved transport in Scotland was a reopening of the devolution settlement and a change in the powers that are available to the Parliament and to the Executive.

Brian Adam: Will the minister give way?

Nicol Stephen: I will not.

David Mundell gave a Tory pro-cycling speech. Not since Norman Tebbit has so much been said so eloquently on the topic of biking. In another heavily pre-prepared speech, he said that there was not enough investment in cycling, although I had just announced the largest single investment ever in Scotland. Sustrans will receive £2.5 million to do exactly what David Mundell called for—to maintain and upgrade the national cycle network.

Cathie Craigie: The minister has raised the issue of investment and delivery, so perhaps I can take him away from cycling just for a minute. I know that the minister is aware of the importance of the A80 to the people of Cumbernauld and Kilsyth and of the chronic congestion in that area. Can he advise us when he will publish the orders relating to the A80 and when the Parliament will see them? Can he assure me that residents in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth who have objections to the Executive's proposals will have the opportunity to raise those fully at a public inquiry?

Nicol Stephen: The orders will be made soon. I assure Cathie Craigie that objectors and others will have an opportunity to express their views for and against the proposed scheme and to make the case for alternative proposals.

On roads—I am glad that Cathie Craigie provided that link—the lie to all that David Mundell said so eloquently on Conservative pro-public transport and pro-cycling policies came with the eloquence of Murdo Fraser. He can correct me if I am wrong, but he gave total passionate focus in his speech to roads, roads and roads.

On the Borders rail link, there were several interjections by David Mundell and Christine Grahame. Funding is available; we are supporting and will support the Borders rail link. I continue to be staggered by the way in which David Mundell and Christine Grahame talk down and attack the scheme that the Executive is supporting. The acid test is that the Executive is getting on with it and is helping to deliver the Borders rail link.

Chris Ballance said some considered and reasonable things in his speech. I appreciate the fact that air travel has significant environmental impacts, which must be tackled. However, I ask Chris Ballance and his Green party colleagues whether that means that they never use planes

and whether they want air travel to be constrained when it is one of the greatest inventions of the past 100 years and something that can still benefit Scotland significantly. Which of the direct flights to Scotland, which the Executive has supported, would Chris Ballance and his colleagues cut or delete? Which of the other international routes between Scotland and other destinations would he seek to delete?

Chris Ballance: Will the minister give way?

Nicol Stephen: No, I do not have time; I have about 73 questions to respond to in my summing up.

Tommy Sheridan: What about rail electrification? The minister has not answered that question.

Nicol Stephen: I will come to Tommy Sheridan shortly.

I believe that the route development fund has been a significant success for Scotland. Bristow Muldoon mentioned the scale of consensus that exists on transport issues. Hard though it is to break though Kenny MacAskill's well-worked disguise on those issues, I believe that there is considerable agreement on the major transport improvements that the Executive is driving forward. One of the key points—other members raised this and I agree with them—is the pace at which we can drive forward investment and improvements. We need to set clear targets and stay with them.

Tommy Sheridan has a clear vision in relation to all these issues. It is to renationalise—back to the future with Tommy Sheridan. The bottomless pit of Government expenditure is yesterday's failure, not tomorrow's answer. Tommy Sheridan's tin of fantasy policies packed like sardines is one of the things that hold Scotland back. I do not believe that he will convince many of those who really know and care about delivering real-world improvements in Scottish transport that nationalisation is the answer to all these issues. I was interested in Tommy Sheridan's powerful message in relation to flights, as well as that of the Green party. However, I wonder about the solidity and consistency of his typically moderate position on air travel. There are not many trains, buses or trams that will get him to Cuba.

Tommy Sheridan: Yes, but wait until we are in control.

Nicol Stephen: At the moment I do not think that even Caledonian MacBrayne is proposing an Oban to Havana route. I look forward to giving Tommy Sheridan the private opportunity to assess the Glasgow to Cuba air route when we get the call for support from the route development fund.

I cannot answer all of Sandra White's questions, but I want to dispel the notion that the consultation

is in any way a threat to SPT. I have had positive discussions with SPT. There might be changes in the structure of how we deliver transport, in particular locally and regionally, but the changes will be positive and I hope that I have gone out of my way today to emphasise that we intend to build on the strengths of the SPT.

I thank Richard Baker for highlighting the success of NESTRANS. One of the reasons for the consultation document and the proposals that it contains is the success of NESTRANS and other regional transport partnerships. I emphasise my own commitment to the Aberdeen crossrail project and my determination to move it forward.

I am rapidly running out of time, but I want to mention the important point raised by Pauline McNeill. I agree with Pauline that the bus still tends to be the cinderella of public transport. Encouragingly, we are at last, after decades of decline, seeing growth in the number of bus passengers. Improvements in services will be achieved far more effectively through growth in passenger numbers than simply through regulation. Pauline raised other serious issues that will have to be considered. As for rail maintenance problems and the SRA, I assure her that I am in direct contact with the SRA and that the Executive shares her concerns.

There were many more questions that I would have answered, but time is against us. I conclude by saying that the Executive is passionate about expanding its investment in transport and passionate about increasing investment. In particular, there will be a 70 per cent increase in our spend on public transport over a three-year period. A new ScotRail franchise, new trains, platform lengthening, new rail lines, better concessionary fares—all of those are very important. Our commitment is high: I hope that we can work in consensus, but our greatest commitment is to drive forward with these changes and to ensure that they happen.

Business Motion

17:01

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The next item of business is consideration of business motion S2M-554, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Wednesday 12 November 2003

2.30 pm Time for Reflection
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Ministerial Statement
followed by Debate on Justice 1 Committee's 3rd Report 2003—Inquiry into Alternatives to Custody
followed by Business Motion
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Thursday 13 November 2003

9.30 am Executive Debate on Reforming Child Protection in Scotland
 12 noon First Minister's Question Time
 2.30pm Question Time
 3.10pm Executive Debate on Celebrating 150 Years of Public Libraries in Scotland
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Wednesday 19 November 2003

2.30 pm Time for Reflection
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
followed by Stage 1 Debate on the Vulnerable Witnesses (Scotland) Bill
followed by Financial Resolution in respect of the Vulnerable Witnesses (Scotland) Bill
followed by Business Motion
followed by Parliamentary Bureau Motions
 5.00 pm Decision Time
followed by Members' Business

Thursday 20 November 2003

9.30 am Scottish Socialist Party Business
 12 noon First Minister's Question Time
 2.30 pm Question Time

3.10 pm

followed by

Executive Business

Motion on Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill—UK Legislation

followed by

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm

Decision Time

followed by

Members' Business.—[Patricia Ferguson.]

Motion agreed to.

Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:02

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): The next item of business is consideration of four Parliamentary Bureau motions. Motions S2M-545 to S2M-548, in the name of Patricia Ferguson on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, are on the designation of lead committees.

Motions moved,

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 1 Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the draft Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 Amendment (Scotland) Order 2003.

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 2 Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the Scottish Legal Aid Board (Employment of Solicitors to Provide Criminal Legal Assistance) Amendment Regulations 2003 (SSI 2003/511).

That the Parliament agrees that the Education Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Bill and that the Equal Opportunities Committee be designated as secondary committee at Stage 1.

That the Parliament agrees that the Communities Committee be designated as lead committee and that the Justice 2 Committee and Local Government and Transport Committee be designated as secondary committees in consideration of the Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1.—[*Patricia Ferguson.*]

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

Decision Time

17:03

The Presiding Officer (Mr George Reid): There are eight questions to be put tonight. Before we commence consideration of today's questions, I point out that, in relation to the debate on Scotland's transport, if amendment S2M-541.1, in the name of David Mundell, is agreed to, amendment S2M-541.2, in the name of Chris Ballance, falls.

The first question is, that amendment S2M-541.4, in the name of Kenny MacAskill, which seeks to amend motion S2M-541, in the name of Nicol Stephen, on Scotland's transport, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Mr Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

AGAINST

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Baker, Mr Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)

Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Etrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)

Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 38, Against 77, Abstentions 2.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The second question is, that amendment S2M-541.1, in the name of David Mundell, which seeks to amend motion S2M-541, in the name of Nicol Stephen, on Scotland's transport, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

AGAINST

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Baker, Mr Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)

Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Gibson, Mr Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)

Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 15, Against 78, Abstentions 25.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The third question is, that amendment S2M-541.2, in the name of Chris Ballance, which seeks to amend motion S2M-541, in the name of Nicol Stephen, on Scotland's transport, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)

AGAINST

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Mr Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Gibson, Mr Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)

Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

ABSTENTIONS

Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 18, Against 98, Abstentions 2.

Amendment disagreed to.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S2M-541, in the name of Nicol Stephen, on Scotland's transport, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

Members: No.

The Presiding Officer: There will be a division.

FOR

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)
 Baker, Mr Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Barrie, Scott (Dunfermline West) (Lab)
 Boyack, Sarah (Edinburgh Central) (Lab)
 Brankin, Rhona (Midlothian) (Lab)
 Brown, Robert (Glasgow) (LD)
 Butler, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (Lab)
 Canavan, Dennis (Falkirk West)
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab)
 Craigie, Cathie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab)
 Curran, Ms Margaret (Glasgow Baillieston) (Lab)
 Deacon, Susan (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)
 Eadie, Helen (Dunfermline East) (Lab)
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill) (Lab)
 Finnie, Ross (West of Scotland) (LD)
 Gillon, Karen (Clydesdale) (Lab)
 Glen, Marlyn (North East Scotland) (Lab)
 Godman, Trish (West Renfrewshire) (Lab)
 Gorrie, Donald (Central Scotland) (LD)
 Henry, Hugh (Paisley South) (Lab)
 Home Robertson, Mr John (East Lothian) (Lab)
 Hughes, Janis (Glasgow Rutherglen) (Lab)
 Jackson, Dr Sylvia (Stirling) (Lab)
 Jackson, Gordon (Glasgow Govan) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Cathy (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (Lab)
 Jamieson, Margaret (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab)
 Kerr, Mr Andy (East Kilbride) (Lab)
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)
 Livingstone, Marilyn (Kirkcaldy) (Lab)
 Lyon, George (Argyll and Bute) (LD)
 Macdonald, Lewis (Aberdeen Central) (Lab)
 Macintosh, Mr Kenneth (Eastwood) (Lab)
 Maclean, Kate (Dundee West) (Lab)
 Macmillan, Maureen (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Springburn) (Lab)
 May, Christine (Central Fife) (Lab)
 McAveety, Mr Frank (Glasgow Shettleston) (Lab)
 McCabe, Mr Tom (Hamilton South) (Lab)
 McConnell, Mr Jack (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)
 McMahon, Michael (Hamilton North and Bellshill) (Lab)
 McNeil, Mr Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)
 McNeill, Pauline (Glasgow Kelvin) (Lab)
 McNulty, Des (Clydebank and Milngavie) (Lab)
 Morrison, Mr Alasdair (Western Isles) (Lab)
 Muldoon, Bristow (Livingston) (Lab)
 Mulligan, Mrs Mary (Linlithgow) (Lab)
 Munro, John Farquhar (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD)
 Murray, Dr Elaine (Dumfries) (Lab)
 Oldfather, Irene (Cunninghame South) (Lab)
 Peacock, Peter (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)
 Peattie, Cathy (Falkirk East) (Lab)

Pringle, Mike (Edinburgh South) (LD)
 Purvis, Jeremy (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) (LD)
 Radcliffe, Nora (Gordon) (LD)
 Robson, Euan (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (LD)
 Rumbles, Mike (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD)
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland) (LD)
 Smith, Iain (North East Fife) (LD)
 Smith, Margaret (Edinburgh West) (LD)
 Stephen, Nicol (Aberdeen South) (LD)
 Stone, Mr Jamie (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)
 Swinburne, John (Central Scotland) (SSCUP)
 Turner, Dr Jean (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Ind)
 Wallace, Mr Jim (Orkney) (LD)
 Watson, Mike (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)
 Whitefield, Karen (Airdrie and Shotts) (Lab)
 Wilson, Allan (Cunninghame North) (Lab)

AGAINST

Aitken, Bill (Glasgow) (Con)
 Baird, Shiona (North East Scotland) (Green)
 Ballance, Chris (South of Scotland) (Green)
 Ballard, Mark (Lothians) (Green)
 Brocklebank, Mr Ted (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Byrne, Ms Rosemary (South of Scotland) (SSP)
 Curran, Frances (West of Scotland) (SSP)
 Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James (Lothians) (Con)
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and Upper Nithsdale) (Con)
 Fox, Colin (Lothians) (SSP)
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Gallie, Phil (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Harper, Robin (Lothians) (Green)
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Kane, Rosie (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Leckie, Carolyn (Central Scotland) (SSP)
 McGrigor, Mr Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Milne, Mrs Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)
 Monteith, Mr Brian (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)
 Mundell, David (South of Scotland) (Con)
 Ruskell, Mr Mark (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)
 Scott, Eleanor (Highlands and Islands) (Green)
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)
 Sheridan, Tommy (Glasgow) (SSP)
 Tosh, Murray (West of Scotland) (Con)

ABSTENTIONS

Adam, Brian (Aberdeen North) (SNP)
 Crawford, Bruce (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perth) (SNP)
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber) (SNP)
 Ewing, Mrs Margaret (Moray) (SNP)
 Gibson, Mr Rob (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Grahame, Christine (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Hyslop, Fiona (Lothians) (SNP)
 Ingram, Mr Adam (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Lochhead, Richard (North East Scotland) (SNP)
 MacAskill, Mr Kenny (Lothians) (SNP)
 Martin, Campbell (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Marwick, Tricia (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)
 Mather, Jim (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)
 Maxwell, Mr Stewart (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 McFee, Mr Bruce (West of Scotland) (SNP)
 Morgan, Alasdair (South of Scotland) (SNP)
 Neil, Alex (Central Scotland) (SNP)
 Robison, Shona (Dundee East) (SNP)
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banff and Buchan) (SNP)
 Swinney, Mr John (North Tayside) (SNP)
 Welsh, Mr Andrew (Angus) (SNP)
 White, Ms Sandra (Glasgow) (SNP)

The Presiding Officer: The result of the division is: For 67, Against 28, Abstentions 23.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament recognises the importance of the Scottish Executive's proposals for improving transport in Scotland as set out in *A Partnership for a Better Scotland*, in particular its intention to set up a transport agency to secure delivery of the Executive's major investment programme to expand transport infrastructure and services across Scotland and to improve the integration of these services, the proposals to enhance the schemes of concessionary fares to benefit elderly and disabled people and the proposals to enhance the ability of local government to serve the travelling public through stronger regional transport partnerships, which should contribute to an effective transport system, central to a thriving economy and strong communities.

The Presiding Officer: The fifth question is, that motion S2M-545, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on the designation of a lead committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 1 Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the draft Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 Amendment (Scotland) Order 2003.

The Presiding Officer: The sixth question is, that motion S2M-546, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on the designation of a lead committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the Justice 2 Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the Scottish Legal Aid Board (Employment of Solicitors to Provide Criminal Legal Assistance) Amendment Regulations 2003 (SSI 2003/511).

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S2M-547, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on the designation of a lead committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the Education Committee be designated as lead committee in consideration of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Bill and that the Equal Opportunities Committee be designated as secondary committee at Stage 1.

The Presiding Officer: The eighth and final question is, that motion S2M-548, in the name of Patricia Ferguson, on the designation of a lead committee, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

That the Parliament agrees that the Communities Committee be designated as lead committee and that the Justice 2 Committee and Local Government and Transport Committee be designated as secondary committees in consideration of the Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1.

Nuclear Submarines (Dumping)

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Murray Tosh):

The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S2M-313, in the name of Bruce Crawford, on the proposed dumping of nuclear submarines in Scotland. The debate will be concluded without any question being put. I invite members who wish to speak in the debate to press their request-to-speak buttons now and I ask those members who are leaving to do so as quickly as possible, using all the available exits.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament rejects any proposal by Her Majesty's Government to dispose of nuclear waste from nuclear submarines in Scotland and opposes, in particular, any plans to cut up and store in Scotland any of the redundant nuclear submarines currently held at Rosyth or those that will become redundant in future.

17:09

Bruce Crawford (Mid Scotland and Fife)

(SNP): As a result of the powers that the Scottish Executive has through the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and the planning powers that are available to local authorities, the issues that we are debating this evening are not wholly reserved. In any case, the people of Scotland rightly expect that their Parliament will express a view on issues of importance to Scotland, whether or not they are reserved.

There are approximately 360 nuclear-powered submarines in the world today. Russia has 48, the United States of America has 72 and there are numerous other countries with such submarines. Many of those countries are struggling to get to grips with how to dispose of them. I am concerned that whatever site deals with the United Kingdom's redundant submarines, it has the potential to become a world dump for that type of work.

The UK has 27 submarines. Approval was given in 2001 for three submarines to be built and three more are planned, subject to ministerial approval. Under current known plans, therefore, the UK will have 33 submarines. Seven are currently afloat at Rosyth and four at Devonport. Afloat storage uses the structure of the submarine and its reactor compartment to contain the radioactive waste and to shield radiation.

Prior to 1998, the Ministry of Defence's policy was to maintain its submarines and store them afloat for up to 30 years, with the capacity to go well beyond that if required. Incredibly, however, the MOD failed to recognise that by 2012 there would be no space left to store submarines afloat. In addition, there is continuing uncertainty because the establishment of a national waste repository is no closer. The best estimate is that it will be created in 2040.

Those factors, together with criticism from the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee that the MOD had no policy, led in 1998 to ministerial approval for finding an alternative to the afloat storage strategy. Thus was born project ISOLUS—interim storage of laid-up submarines. It beggars belief that the UK commissioned its first nuclear-powered submarine in 1960, but it took another 38 years for the authorities to start looking for a method to dispose of them.

When those submarines, which weigh about 8,000 tonnes, are no longer useful their highly radioactive fuel is removed and transported to Sellafield. The highly radioactive reactor compartment is left behind. That compartment is approximately the size of two double-decker buses, has a diameter of 10m and weighs about 750 tonnes. The MOD proposes to award a contract for storage of the reactor compartments for a period of 30 years. Of the four bids that have been tabled, three have direct implications for Scotland—for Rosyth in particular—and potential implications for Coulport and Dounreay. Frankly, the fourth bid is so vague that it is impossible to ascertain whether it would have any implications for Scotland.

It is clear that cut up and storage in Scotland is highly likely as a result of the ISOLUS project. That fear is given even greater significance as a result of the findings of the consultation process, which state in relation to storage in Scotland:

"some stakeholders at some point suggested Scotland as containing the best sites, in line with the argument that wastes should be stored remotely. For many, Scotland appears as containing large unpopulated areas which would be the most remote in Britain."

Those are the very same arguments that saw the creation of Dounreay, the siting of Trident on the Clyde and the hunt by Nirex for a nuclear waste disposal site in Scotland during the 1970s.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): On the point of remoteness, one of the flaws in some of the proposals before us is that the decommissioning will take place on a separate site to storage and there is a huge risk attached to transporting waste through what is, to all intents and purposes, urban Scotland. Does the member agree that minimising any potential risk is the name of the game?

Bruce Crawford: That is important. I will come to that point when I talk about Devonport later.

Those arguments are the same as those that were used to make Scotland the graveyard of a lot of nuclear waste. They are obviously going to be the same arguments that are used for those submarines to come here unless the Parliament and the Scottish Executive state loudly and clearly that they say no to Scotland's being used as a nuclear dump.

Where should those nuclear-powered submarines find their final resting place? I now come to address Jackie Baillie's point.

In June 1993, Malcolm Rifkind, the then Tory Secretary of State for Defence, awarded all future work on nuclear sub refitting to Devonport. Additionally, at that time, as part of the dockyard sale agreement, it was clearly stipulated that Rosyth was precluded from having any further submarines berth there until after it had ceased nuclear refitting work in 2000. That dockyard sale agreement was the only obstacle that prevented even more nuclear hulks being stored at Rosyth.

Clearly, there exists compelling evidence—contractual and financial—that the UK Government's first choice for all submarine work is Devonport. To the extent that the dockyard sale agreement protected Devonport from competition from Rosyth, it is clear that Devonport is the Government's choice. If it was good enough in 1993 for Devonport to get all the benefits, why should the Scotland of today be expected to bear all the risks?

I have questions for the minister. First, does he acknowledge the potential conflict in a Government policy that promotes Rosyth as an entry point for tourists from continental Europe, while it is being considered as a graveyard for nuclear-powered submarines?

Secondly, does he support the view that Devonport should deal with the nuclear hulks, and that the seven submarines that are currently at Rosyth should be moved to Devonport for final disposal? There are no safety concerns with that proposal. Because of the withdrawal of the Nigg option today, Devonport Management Ltd has accepted that it can move the submarines from Rosyth to Devonport safely. That is where those submarines should go. I hope that the minister shares that view.

Thirdly, will the minister consider using all the powers that are available to him through SEPA? SEPA has extensive powers in this area because it can be involved in the planning process. The disposal facility will need a waste management licence under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, and the management and disposal of any radioactive waste that arises will require separate authorisation under the Radioactive Substances Act 1993. Will the minister consider using the powers that are available to him through SEPA, and the planning powers of councils, to block any sites in Scotland from being associated with work on those submarines?

Scotland expects the minister to do what is right. Devonport got the jobs. Scotland cannot be expected to take the deadly nuclear inheritance for the next 100,000 years.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have a long list of members who wish to speak in the debate. The minister has indicated his ability to remain for an extended debate. I will work out later by how much we might need to extend the debate, but I ask members who speak now to observe the four-minute limit quite strictly.

17:18

Scott Barrie (Dunfermline West) (Lab): In bringing this motion to the Parliament, Bruce Crawford issued a press release a couple of weeks ago that criticised me and other members for not signing the motion, by which he implied that I support the proposal to cut up submarines and use interim storage at Rosyth. Actually, nothing could be further from the truth. If he had worded the motion in a different and more accurate way, perhaps he would have attracted more support for it. Members support the sentiments behind it, but we have to sign what is on paper, and what is on paper is not what Bruce Crawford is actually saying.

The fact is that the wording of the motion is simply false. That is why I refused to sign it and, I assume, why others did the same. It is simply not true that there is a

"proposal by Her Majesty's Government to dispose of nuclear waste from nuclear submarines in Scotland".

On 11 September, the Ministry of Defence announced that it is to consult publicly on proposals that it has received from the industry for the decommissioning of the redundant submarines. That is the current situation, and we should be clear about that.

Bruce Crawford: Will the member give way?

Scott Barrie: No—just wait.

Bruce Crawford highlighted the fact that seven nuclear submarines are stored afloat at Rosyth. My colleague Rachel Squire, the member of Parliament for Dunfermline West, has been assiduous—as one would expect—in trying to find a solution to the issue of nuclear subs at Rosyth. She worked assiduously before and, in particular, has worked assiduously since, Rosyth dockyard came within the boundaries of the Dunfermline West constituency.

On 1 September I was interviewed on "Good Morning Scotland"—I did a number of interviews—about the subject, before Bruce Crawford lodged his motion, because I knew that we were about to go to public consultation. Like him, I was concerned that that might be the thin end of the wedge, and that other nuclear submarines in the UK fleet and—more important—in other international fleets might be attracted to Rosyth if the option that was proposed by Babcock

Engineering Services Ltd at Rosyth went ahead. I raised the fact that we were to go to consultation at the time and if that had been contained in the motion—rather than the sentiment that the motion contains—I would have supported it.

The issue before us is difficult. Bruce Crawford rightly said that we need to go back to the situation in 1998. However, it is even more damning that originally, when the nuclear submarines were first commissioned, it was intended to dispose of them simply by filling them with concrete and dumping them in a trench in the Atlantic ocean. That proposal is even more unacceptable. As Bruce Crawford highlighted, it shows some of the lack of forethought about what we would do with those nuclear submarines when they came to the end of their life. The difficulty that we are now faced with is that, although we were not the generation that commissioned the submarines, we are the generation that has inherited the problem of what to do with them.

I agree that the issue is difficult. I cannot imagine that any community would readily welcome nuclear waste. That said, it would appear that some parts of the UK live more easily with the notion than others. Some members in the chamber represent constituencies where there are nuclear power stations and where local people appear to be able to accept those power stations more readily than other communities, were nuclear power stations to be proposed for their areas.

The main fact that we must bear in mind is that we are at the beginning of a three-year public consultation process. People are right to participate in that process, and I encourage people to do so. On Friday evening, Rachel Squire held a meeting in Rosyth at which a councillor from the same party as Bruce Crawford made her views very clear about where she stood on the issue. Rather than indulge in gesture politics, we should encourage people to make their views clear. We should not be alarmist by suggesting that something is definitely going to happen when we are in the process of a public consultation.

17:22

George Lyon (Argyll and Bute) (LD): First, I pay tribute to Bruce Crawford for raising the subject in the Parliament. As he clearly outlined in his speech, although responsibility for the issue lies at Westminster, decisions will be taken in Scotland that will have a crucial impact on the final decision.

Two of the original five proposals would have affected my constituency of Argyll and Bute. The first, which was probably of greatest concern to the majority of constituents in the south of the constituency, was the proposal by Sir Robert

McAlpine Ltd to cut up nuclear submarines and store the nuclear reactors on the site of the former oil fabrication yard at Ardyne point.

Scott Barrie made the fair point that we are only at the consultation stage and that we have three years in which to make our views known and to try to head off some of the proposals. If the McAlpine proposal had gone ahead, it would have had a devastating impact on the environment surrounding Ardyne. It would also have had a fundamental impact on the tourism prospects of an area that has striven over the past number of years to turn around its image as the good old doon-the-watter place to go. Because of its lovely scenery and so forth, the area—including the resorts of Rothesay and Dunoon—is now seen as an upmarket and much more attractive place to travel to. Real worries were expressed about the impact of the McAlpine proposal, including the impact on the agenda of turning around people's perception of the area. The local community was genuinely up in arms against the proposal. Thankfully, the company realised how untenable its proposal was and has now withdrawn it. I want to put on public record my thanks to the company for taking that decision. It was a sensible decision that recognised the real hostility that there was locally to the proposal.

Argyll and Bute is still left with the Babcock proposal to store intermediate-level waste at Coulport. Although Coulport is not in my constituency, many of my constituents in the Cowal area live just across the water from Coulport. There are real concerns about the storage of nuclear waste on that site.

As I said, the local community opposes the proposal on the same grounds as the original proposal for Ardyne point was opposed—for economic reasons, because of the environmental impact on the area and because it would create the perception that we have a nuclear dump on our doorstep. Of course, Coulport is on the edge of Scotland's first national park—it is straight across the water from the park. It would be contradictory to introduce materials that have such a reputation with the public on the doorstep of Scotland's first national park. That would be an illogical decision.

I have outlined the local community's concern, which was my main reason for speaking, but I draw the minister's attention to the process. Lancaster University undertook the initial focus group work in Oban, which is 90 miles away from the two proposed sites. Someone, somewhere went far wrong if they thought that that represented sounding out local opinion. That exercise was similar to sounding out local opinion in Edinburgh about Coulport and Ardyne, so something went wildly wrong.

Will the minister clarify whether the Babcock proposals for Coulport are exempt from the planning process? If so, how do objectors feed their views into the final decision-making process? I accept that consultations are being undertaken but, eventually, the Crown will take decisions, if Crown immunity applies.

Does the Coulport site require Scottish Environment Protection Agency discharge consents? If so, does Crown immunity affect that? My last comment relates to the concern that Jackie Baillie expressed about transporting waste through urban Scotland from the east to the west, which is a big issue.

17:26

Mr Ted Brocklebank (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): On Monday, I visited Glenrothes College in central Fife, which has 1,300 full-time students and more than 8,000 part-time students. The principal emphasised the extent of the brain drain of young people from Fife. The college in Kirkcaldy and Lauder College in Dunfermline face similar problems as qualified engineers and highly skilled graduates vote with their feet and turn their backs on Fife.

The dilemma that the kingdom's excellent colleges face in the current economic slump is about what they should train their students to do in any future economic upturn. Before anybody leaps to their feet to ask whether I suggest that unemployed young Fifers should be trained to remove nuclear reactors from submarines, I will give the short answer that I do not know what they should be trained to do, but somebody, somewhere must eventually process nuclear waste.

Scott Barrie: Is the member aware that trade unions at Rosyth estimate that if the work under discussion went there, the net import of jobs would be only 50? That would hardly resolve the region's unemployment problem.

Mr Brocklebank: I would not suggest for a minute that the area's unemployment problem would be solved, but that is not the figure that I received from Babcock only yesterday, which talked about between 150 and 200 highly skilled engineering jobs.

The grim alternative to somebody dealing with nuclear waste is shown by the swelling armada of rusting, leaking nuclear submarines in the ports of the Kola peninsula in north-west Russia. The mothballed subs in the Kola peninsula represent the greatest latent potential on the planet for a catastrophic release of radioactivity. Russia simply does not have adequate technical provision for the long-term storage of nuclear waste. At least we in the United Kingdom are discussing the eventual

siting of a long-term storage facility, which, I add immediately, is not intended for Rosyth.

As we have heard, seven nuclear submarines are floating at Rosyth. Their fuel has been removed and taken to Sellafield, but the compartments that contain the reactors have not been touched. The MOD tells us that they are in a safe situation. In partnership with Motherwell Bridge Ltd, Babcock plans to strip out the reactors, break them down—that depends on the radioactive waste that is emitted—and eventually store the radioactive material temporarily, possibly at Coulport or Sellafield. I am informed that there is no intention of storing the material at Rosyth, even in the short term.

Bruce Crawford: Whether that material is stored at Rosyth or Coulport, does the member accept that the short-term period that Babcock talks about relates to 2040 at the earliest?

Mr Brocklebank: That may be the case, but the information that I have is that the material will be removed as soon as possible.

Babcock could deactivate all 27 submarines at Rosyth. Alternatively, the material could be removed elsewhere and transported to Rosyth, although I know that there are difficulties with that. However, the real problem is that Fife's industrial base is nowhere near strong enough for us to be likely to abandon any prospective source of jobs.

Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): Will the member give way?

Mr Brocklebank: No. I have no time left.

It is understandable that people go into instinctive denial whenever the dreaded words "nuclear waste" are mentioned, but it is not enough simply to adopt the nimby attitude that it is up to somebody else to solve the problem of decaying time bombs that mothballed nuclear submarines represent. No nukes may be good news, but it will not make them go away.

Obviously, full consultation is essential. I gather that such consultation will take place in Dunfermline on 2 December. I do not know whether Babcock's disposal strategy is the right one—we will hear more about that—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must close now.

Mr Brocklebank: I am winding up now.

However, I am not sure that we should throw up our hands in horror and declare that, as far as processing waste is concerned, Fife and Scotland should be nuke-free zones. I am not sure that that is morally, legally or—ultimately—economically sustainable.

17:31

Jim Mather (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):

We must recognise that the cross-party opposition to the proposals to decommission nuclear submarines in Scotland is already bearing fruit both at Ardyne point and Nigg. It is good news that those places have been removed from the list of potential sites, but as has been mentioned already tonight, there are also proposals for other Scottish sites, including Cowlport, Rosyth and Dounreay. Those proposals are equally unacceptable and must be rejected and opposed by all possible means.

Surely it is now time to challenge the hard-wired tendency of the MOD and UK Government automatically to locate the dirty and dangerous projects and the damaging and experimental work in Scotland while locating most of the lucrative long-term projects in the south. Surely the decommissioning would be more appropriate for yards such as Devonport, which is working on the current generation of submarines and has the full array of technology and safety factors to undertake such work.

We must look to the future. It is important that the Parliament put down a marker for the companies that have declared an interest in carrying out such work in Scotland, so that they pay the closest attention to the opinion of the Parliament. That opinion is hard-wired and closely connected to the strong feelings of the communities in which it is proposed that the decommissioning should take place. Although the prospect of extra jobs from long-term salvage contracts is superficially attractive, the prospect of dealing with nuclear material is much less so. We should therefore put down a marker so that the prospect of dealing with the Parliament and the local communities that it represents is seen as deeply unattractive by any firm that seeks to locate decommissioning work in Scotland.

We are already building an impressive track record. As I mentioned at the start, the people of Cowal and Bute have reacted strongly against the proposed use of Ardyne point. Sir Robert McAlpine Ltd has already withdrawn its declared interest in the site. Equally, the people of the Cromarty firth have reacted strongly against the proposed use of Nigg and the DML consortium has withdrawn its declared interest in that site.

In addition, it has been pointed out that we do not yet have an official national strategy for the long-term storage of nuclear waste material. I suggest that any location that volunteers to take on the handling and storing of submarine-derived nuclear waste might discover that it sent the wrong signal to a grateful MOD and nuclear power-generating industry.

The process for selecting the site for a national nuclear waste repository is on-going and a list of possible sites is due to be published early in 2004. The suggestion is that the final decision will be taken by 2007. The waste has been accumulating at various places around the UK in above-ground storage facilities for many years while an acceptable final solution for storage has been investigated. The various sites around Scotland feature prominently, so it is possible that we could see ourselves being self-selected for that. We are critically aware of that.

We also need to put down a marker about the issue because the proposals could damage our potential in other areas, such as decommissioning oil rigs or involvement in the growing demand for construction of renewable energy projects. Most important, the proposals would undermine the pristine quality of our overall environment in Scotland. They would undermine our reputation as a nation that has a quality natural environment and an assiduous approach to keeping it that way. Our environment is key—along with renewables, broadband and the safety and security that we enjoy—in attracting long-term investment to help our economy to recover.

We must therefore continue to make Scotland synonymous with a pristine environment for the sake of new jobs in the new economy, for tourism, for our food industry and especially for our fishing and aquaculture industries, which would be even more vulnerable if we were to accept the proposed decommissioning here in Scotland. That is why we must support the motion.

17:35

Maureen Macmillan (Highlands and Islands)

(Lab): I welcome the debate and congratulate Bruce Crawford on instigating it, although I am sorry that he has tried to turn it into one of those poor-old-Scotland debates, because I do not think that that is relevant. This is a UK issue and it is to do with finding a proper solution to the storage of nuclear waste.

As someone who lives in the Cromarty firth area I was, of course, greatly relieved when I read in the press this morning that Nigg was no longer being considered as a site for dismantling the Rosyth-based submarines. The proposal came out of the blue and it raised fears of an environmental blight on the Moray firth that could affect tourism and agriculture. It was also feared that the Cromarty firth would miss out on potential engineering contracts for the oil and renewables industries if this contract was accepted.

We are famous in the Moray firth for building rigs, jackets and platforms for the oil industry. We want to become famous for building the new

generation of wind turbines and for the engineering associated with wave and tidal power. A strong perception was that the owners of the Nigg yard, which has the largest dry dock in Europe, were bypassing the chance to bid for energy-related work because they had their eye on the submarine contract. Now that DML has withdrawn from the tendering process, I hope to see it make strenuous efforts to secure other engineering work for the area.

There was virtually unanimous opposition to the proposal in the Cromarty firth area. I pay tribute to the strong line that Highland Council took on the matter. Jamie Stone and I met the Ross and Cromarty area committee two days ago. We pledged our support in opposing the nuclear submarine decommissioning and in promoting the Cromarty firth's potential for renewables engineering. From our discussions with the council, we are aware of its worries about the Vulcan naval reactor test site at Dounreay being used as some sort of national repository.

My relief at the escape of one part of the Highlands and Islands is tempered by the threat still posed to the Clyde and the concern about where the waste from the decommissioned submarines will be stored. I fear that wherever that waste is stored will become the de facto national repository. Other members have made that point. Some of the signals seem to be that Coulport or the Vulcan site at Dounreay are possible sites. If members examine the details of the bids, they will see that DML proposes storage at the national repository, as does McAlpine. Of course, there is as yet no national repository and I do not believe that there should be one. Nuclear waste should be stored where it is produced. I do not want nuclear waste to be trucked around the country.

When Nirex brought its proposals for a national repository to the Highlands about 10 years ago—it was talking about a hole as big as the Channel tunnel being dug in the north Highlands—we were totally opposed to it. I pay tribute to the late Elspeth Reid, a geologist and a very close friend of mine, who in her book "Rock Solid" demolished Nirex's case for an underground storage facility in the Highlands. We do not want to have to fight that battle all over again. I do not want to see nuclear waste from submarines being used as the thin end of the wedge to create a national repository for nuclear waste in the Highlands or elsewhere. That is the most concerning aspect of the proposals and I hope that the Executive will have something to say on the issue.

17:39

Mr Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): I congratulate Bruce Crawford on bringing this vital issue to the Parliament tonight.

Decommissioning of nuclear submarines is a problem, however and wherever we do it. It is a problem not only for us, but for our children and for our children's children.

We must state now in this Parliament that we do not want any more nuclear submarines. They are a monstrous part of last century's history. In a globalised world and in a political context in which a craft knife can have more political power than a nuclear submarine, there is no place for nuclear submarines in our modern navies.

I am aware of much of the bitter history that surrounds Rosyth and the failed promises of construction jobs, but I am concerned that the current consultation is a sham. Once again the carrot of jobs is being dangled in west Fife but, this time, the carrot is rotten and unpalatable, as all the options relate to cutting up submarines' sealed reactor compartments. The options are flawed because cutting up such compartments will expose workers who work on the decommissioning to radiation and will release radiation into the environment at a time when, under the OSPAR convention, we are trying to reduce radioactive emissions to zero by 2020. They also compromise future options that might be available for proper disposal of radioactive waste in sealed reactor compartments in, say, 60 years' time.

Cutting up is an unacceptable option. The option is unacceptable for the United States Government, which is not pursuing it. Cutting up creates most profits for companies that are involved in it, but there are unacceptable risks to the environment and human health. I call on the Executive to rule out issuing consents for any options that are currently on the table that involve cutting up reactor compartments. We need a new consultation that is based only on options that minimise risks to the environment and to human health.

What should those options involve? First, we should minimise the movement of the submarines in question, as we have already seen a redundant Russian submarine sink while it was being moved from one yard to another. That means that submarines should not be towed out of Rosyth and that no more submarines should be towed in from Russia—Ted Brocklebank seemed to suggest that they should be—or from Devonport.

The second principle is that there should not be cutting up. We should consider only cutting out sealed reactor compartments for land-based storage. That would allow us time to assess longer-term storage and disposal options for nuclear submarines.

I say to Bruce Crawford that such principles are backed by Greenpeace and John Large, who, as

many members will know, was the nuclear submarine expert who was decorated by the Russians for raising the Kursk submarine. We cannot afford to get things wrong. The issue is not about maximising economic opportunities; it is about disposing and storing dangerous and redundant equipment that can harm our environment. We must reject the options that are currently on the table and consider only safe and responsible options.

17:42

Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): I, too, congratulate Bruce Crawford on bringing the debate to the chamber.

I was mightily relieved—as I am sure many others were, including Maureen Macmillan and John Farquhar Munro—when the announcement came from Nigg about the voluntary withdrawal from discussions. That announcement is a huge relief to all my constituents. As Maureen Macmillan and other members have said, Highland Council was hugely concerned about the matter and it pressed its case strongly to both of us last Monday.

I want to share with members several things that the Rev Ronnie Johnstone recently said in an address to Wick and Thurso trades council. The Rev Ronnie Johnstone is a minister at Thurso West church and he made some thoughtful remarks. I would never describe him as being anti-nuke, but he said that, in the public's perception, the transportation of large amounts of radioactive parts throughout the country would be a big problem and that people would be worried about the risks. Bruce Crawford mentioned an issue that the Rev Ronnie Johnstone also dealt with. He said that we are still considering what will happen at a United Kingdom level with civil waste and that we still do not know where we are with a UK repository, which means that proposals to store in places such as Dounreay in my constituency would be nothing if not premature, to say the least. He outlined in measured and thoughtful terms the fact that, if we are not careful, we will unwittingly end up with the final repository at Dounreay—Maureen Macmillan echoed that argument. I admire Ronnie Johnstone for putting forward his thoughts.

I believe that, in future, Dounreay should become a world centre of excellence for decommissioning. We should be—and are—linking up the North Highland College and the UHI Millennium Institute with that, to train young people and to send them out to other parts of the world. Why should we not steal a lead in that?

I can assure members that the economy of that part of Caithness is assured for some years to

come, in relation to the spending that is going into the area through decommissioning. It would be easy to scaremonger on the matter, but when I hear as level-headed a man as Ronnie Johnstone voice his considered thoughts to the Wick and Thurso trades council, I say to all members that they should listen carefully.

Of course, defence and atomic energy are reserved matters. However, let us remind ourselves that, on the planning and the environment front, they are certainly matters for this Parliament.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Before I call Mr Gibson, I require to accept a motion without notice to extend the debate by 20 minutes.

Motion moved,

That the Parliament agrees that under Rule 8.14.3 Members' Business on 5 November 2003 be extended until 6.15 pm.—[*Mr Jamie Stone.*]

Motion agreed to.

17:46

Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): The Parliament must have a policy on the extremely serious problems of the potential increase in the nuclear waste that is held in Scotland and the extension of the number of sites on which nuclear waste is held. Those matters might not ultimately be our responsibility, but there must be a Scottish policy and this Parliament is the place where that should be stated. That is particularly the case because we have had plenty of experience of the kind of flawed consultations that took place in the past—over Nirex, for example—and of the many arguments that local people had to prepare in order to counter various proposals. Once again, however, we are in the midst of a flawed consultation. In its statement about the abandonment of the Nigg site, Highland Council points out that the hearings process was

“flawed because standard Cabinet Office guidelines on public consultation had been ignored as there was no consultation document to refer to.”

Frankly, the way in which nuclear issues are handled is a scandal. Ten years ago, when the discussion about a national repository was put off, it was clear that the most favourable geology for a repository was in fact in the Thames estuary, in the area around London, where there are extremely stable shale beds. However, that fact was removed from the debate.

We must recognise that the issue of the storage of nuclear submarines is connected with the issue of the long-term storage of other forms of nuclear waste. A nuclear waste management authority is being set up in Britain to deal with that, so we must ask that, in the consultation, the question of

the submarines is not taken in isolation but is linked with those other matters.

I thank Bruce Crawford for raising the issue about the seven submarines at Rosyth. We must not import nuclear waste to Scotland—including parts of Scotland where there is no such waste at present. We must export the technology that allows the waste to be dealt with wherever it is in the world. It is essential that we use our experience to do so and to help our economy. Our people can help to train others to deal with the mess that has been created by the development of nuclear weapons.

My second point is that the MOD relies heavily on private industry to deal with these problems. It took huge amounts of taxpayers' money to set the industry up and taxpayers ought to have confidence that the public bodies that have responsibility for systems to deal with the waste will not let contracts on the basis of who can make a lot of profit from the business. If one makes profit, one cuts corners. We know from worldwide issues that we must avoid that approach. Ultimately, our interest lies in the country's safety.

The Highlands have a clean image and we should ensure that we do not spread the existing waste around—that is a level-headed approach. We must ensure that the MOD is brought to account by people in this country saying, in the strongest possible terms, that we think that the interim storage of laid-up submarines project—ISOLUS—is flawed, that it must be altered and that the terms of the project must be brought out into the open.

The Government is responsible for our environment and planning conditions and it must take a strong view on the matter. I therefore look forward to hearing what the minister has to say. The country looks to the Scottish Parliament to take the strongest possible view that we should stop nuclear dumping in Scotland.

17:50

Frances Curran (West of Scotland) (SSP): I do not think that any member would argue that the situation in which we find ourselves is not a complete and utter mess. This is only half a debate. If we are to deal with the end product of decommissioning and nuclear waste, we should also be dealing with the other end of the process and what is causing the nuclear waste. Mark Ruskell is the only member who has mentioned the issue of nuclear submarines. We have an accumulating problem. I do not know whether I am going to be around in 2040—I do not think that many members will still be alive in 2040, including the younger members.

Rob Gibson: That is agist.

Frances Curran: We will see who lasts the longest. We will get nae pension, anyway.

We should also be talking about not accumulating the problem. The first thing that we should do is stop commissioning new nuclear submarines. We should not put another three in the pipeline. One of the campaigns that I would like other MSPs to get involved with, outside Faslane, is the campaign to remove nuclear submarines completely from the Clyde.

In an intervention on Bruce Crawford, Jackie Baillie—who is no longer in the chamber—made a point about moving the submarines from Rosyth to Devonport. She asked whether he was worried about transporting nuclear waste through urban areas. I would laugh if the issue was not so serious. She is not in favour of doing that, but we have powers over our roads and nobody on the Labour benches objects to nuclear weapons' being transported by rail and road through urban areas. That is an issue that the Scottish Socialist Party has raised time and again. If that means of transportation is not safe for waste, it is not safe for weapons either. That is an issue that we would like to take up in our campaign.

None of the options is safe. If they were safe, our communities would not be saying, "No on my doorstep," where they might be affected by cancer and radioactivity. None of the options that the private companies are putting forward is safe. I do not agree with Bruce Crawford and I do not like the terms in which the debate has been framed, as a matter of Scotland versus Devonport. No matter where the waste is taken, it will affect people's lives; it will affect their communities and their health, no matter where they live in Britain, Europe or the world. It would be a huge mistake to tow the submarines when they could break up, despite the fact that they are leaking into the water at Rosyth.

Fiona Hyslop (Lothians) (SNP) rose—

Frances Curran: Does Fiona Hyslop think that we should tow them through the water to Devonport while they are leaking?

Fiona Hyslop: Is Frances Curran happy with the fact that these subs are leaking into the—

Frances Curran: No, I am not.

Fiona Hyslop: She just said that, despite the fact—

Frances Curran: Exactly. We have to accept one of the proposals that Mark Ruskell has spoken about, but none of them is safe. Cutting the submarines into little bits is not safe. Pulling them out and putting them into graves in the land is not safe. The Labour and Tory Governments have been prepared to spend billions on the technology to create the submarines in the first place. What we need urgently is an independent, science-

based group—cost should not be a problem and there should be no private contractors—to find the most up-to-date technology and the safest way in which to dispose of the submarines. If the Executive really wants to deal with the problem by having a three-year consultation, that should be carried out immediately. Otherwise, the Executive will have to accept decommissioning on the spot.

I would like the minister to go to Westminster to make these points and to argue the case. He should not just accept that we will have to live with this problem for generations. The Executive should put its money where its mouth is.

17:54

John Farquhar Munro (Ross, Skye and Inverness West) (LD): Members will be aware that one of the chosen sites for the submarine decommissioning was on the border of my constituency of Ross, Skye and Inverness West. However, I was pleased to hear this week that KBR Caledonia Ltd—note how a user-friendly name was picked—and its parent companies have decided to back away from the idea of using Nigg as a place to decommission nuclear submarines. That is good news.

Although Nigg is not in my constituency, the yard there lies less than half a mile across the water from Cromarty, which is in my constituency. From the moment that the decision was taken to consider Nigg as a possible site, I received a fair amount of mail from constituents in the Black Isle and further afield who were concerned and alarmed by the proposals. It is probably fortunate for the company that it withdrew, because if it had taken one look at the reaction of Black Isle residents in the Munlochy genetically modified crops debacle, it would have realised that the reaction to nuclear submarine decommissioning would have been 10 times more vigorous.

We have already had a campaign against nuclear dumping in the Highlands, which was a result of the suggestion by Nirex. At that time, the Government considered sending the UK's radioactive waste north to be stored in every nook and cranny that could be found. The united Highland campaign of the time sent the Government away, as the song says, to think again. For the benefit of generations to come, we must be vigilant and remain united on this important issue.

A big issue has been made of the possible creation of jobs. My area might have been fortunate and got a few jobs in the initial stages of decommissioning, but the end result would have caused extreme damage to our local economy. For instance, I doubt whether cruise liners would have visited the Cromarty firth, as they do at

present, because they would have had to sail within 200m of decommissioned submarines. The proposal might also have affected the perception of agricultural produce from Ross-shire, to say nothing about the effect on the many thousands of tourists who regularly visit the Highlands and Islands.

The argument about jobs can be applied to the rest of Scotland, but it would be better to forgo the few jobs that would be gained through nuclear decommissioning and to ensure that nuclear waste, in any form, is retained where it is produced, using processes similar to those that are currently undertaken at Dounreay. All radioactive waste should be stored on site, carefully monitored and kept in dry storage conditions. I am glad that my party, the Liberal Democrats, at its recent conference backed that view unanimously. I am sure that that view is held by most people in the country.

As everyone knows, the Highlands of Scotland are promoted and accepted as a clean and pristine environment. That environment benefits residents and visitors alike. Let us keep that proud distinction—we have no wish to become the nuclear dump of the western world.

17:58

Tricia Marwick (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP): I congratulate my colleague Bruce Crawford on securing the debate—it is important that the Parliament has a voice on the matter. I invite Scott Barrie to work with Bruce Crawford on any future motions on the subject so that all members can sign them. I do not think that members are a million miles away from one another on this important issue.

As Scott Barrie and George Lyon said, we are at the beginning of a three-year consultation period. However, the problem is that, of the four bids that are on the table, three mention Rosyth and the other one is vague and will almost certainly include Rosyth. We are dealing with a consultation process that already has the end decision in place. That is why we have to be vigilant and why MSPs and the Scottish Executive should make representations to the MOD at the beginning of the consultation period; we must not wait until the end.

One of the reasons why Bruce Crawford used the terms that he did in the motion was recent answers that he had received from Ross Finnie. On 18 September, Bruce Crawford asked the Scottish Executive

“what representations it has made to Her Majesty's Government regarding the consultation process on the interim storage of laid-up submarines.”

Ross Finnie replied:

"Subsequent to the Ministry of Defence's announcement on 11 September, the Executive has been in contact with the UK Government on this matter, and will be actively involved in this consultation process in relation to devolved responsibilities."—[*Official Report, Written Answers*, 18 September 2003; p 664.]

On 9 October, Bruce Crawford asked the Scottish Executive

"what representations it has made to Her Majesty's Government about the decommissioning and storage of nuclear submarines in Scotland."

This time, Ross Finnie replied:

"The Executive has made no such representations to the Ministry of Defence."—[*Official Report*, 9 October 2003; c 2562.]

The problem is that the Executive does not seem to be clear about its position. When the minister sums up, I hope that he will say to us that, if representations have not already been made to the MOD, representations will be made soon and that we will not wait until the end of the consultation process to make our views known. Most of us in the chamber know exactly what will happen at the end of the consultation process: Rosyth will be put forward as the choice of the MOD. We must resist that now.

The Scottish Executive must make it clear to the MOD that it will use all the powers that are available to it under the devolved settlement to ensure that no planning permission is given and that SEPA receives direction in relation to the radioactive waste.

In closing, I will address some comments to Ted Brocklebank, who seemed to suggest that 50 or 150 jobs might be created if the work were to go to Rosyth. I ask him to consider how many thousands of jobs were lost to the Fife economy when the Tories took the work from Rosyth and gave it to Devonport. He should not sit there talking about the carrot of perhaps 150 jobs when a Government of the party of which he is a member was responsible for jobs being lost in the first place.

18:02

The Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development (Allan Wilson): I congratulate Bruce Crawford on securing this debate. He has given us the opportunity to debate an important matter and I welcome the opportunity to clarify some of the issues that have been raised—in particular the one relating to the suggestion that there was any leakage from the submarines. Nothing could be further from the truth. Our environmental regulator regularly monitors radioactivity in the environment and the results of that monitoring are published by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and the Food Standards Agency for anyone to see. We should dispel that myth at the outset.

We need to be clear about the proposals. Scott Barrie accurately distinguished between them in his speech. At this stage, the proposals are not MOD proposals, which some people have suggested they are. They are proposals that have been requested from industry sources to inform MOD decisions about managing radioactive waste from decommissioned nuclear submarines. As has been said, nothing is definite as yet, as is demonstrated by the fact that there have been two changes in the comparatively recent past. Since the process began, one company has withdrawn its proposal and, as Bruce Crawford and others mentioned, a further change was announced today. Following discussions between Devonport Royal Dockyard Ltd and its part-owner, Kellog, Brown & Root Ltd, DRDL has withdrawn its proposal to use the KBR facility at Nigg, to which John Farquhar Munro referred.

The final decision on what to do with waste from the decommissioning of the UK's nuclear submarines is, quite properly, reserved to the UK Government. Nevertheless, as part of the project for the interim storage of laid-up submarines, the Ministry of Defence has commissioned Lancaster University to carry out a wide-ranging public consultation on those proposals. In the context of Rosyth, a focus group was held, I think, only this week.

I acknowledge the level of public interest in the future of redundant submarines. In effect, that is what the debate is about, contrary to what the Green and Scottish Socialist Party members said. I welcome—I presume that all members join me—the public consultation that is under way on the project. Recent research commissioned by the Executive clearly shows that, where matters of radioactive waste management are concerned, local and national stakeholders expect to be involved in the decision-making process and any decision on locating sites for decommissioning redundant nuclear submarines needs to be made after consultation with local people.

The consultation exercise is about raising awareness, engaging with local communities and giving them the opportunity to air their views. That is not an exclusive process; it is—or should be—an inclusive process. It is about public engagement in a matter that I know to be emotive and one on which people properly hold strong views. I therefore support the public consultation process and believe that the consultation's conclusion should—and, I guarantee to members, will—shape future decision making.

Mr Stone: Will the minister tell us what weighting the Scottish Executive might give to the public stance of, for instance, Highland Council on such issues?

Allan Wilson: In the event that all the ifs became reality and a project that lay within the Highland Council area came to fruition, I would expect that the planning process would involve widespread local consultation. However, I will—with your permission, Presiding Officer—come on to the environmental and planning considerations in due course.

The consultation is in any event, as Jamie Stone knows, being run independently of the Executive by Lancaster University; that is properly the case because that properly distances the Executive and the Government from any charge of influencing the process. Meetings are being organised in conjunction with the relevant local authorities—Highland Council will obviously be one of those—and I encourage all interested parties to participate.

We have been asked what representations the Executive has made to the Ministry of Defence about the proposals that industry has made—I think that that was the question that Tricia Marwick asked. As I have made clear, any decision on the preferred option is reserved to the UK Government at Westminster. Nevertheless, we are taking a close interest in the matter, including the consultation process which I have described, and we have engaged with the MOD on the procedural aspects of the consultation to ensure best that the sensitive matters to which members referred are raised at national as well as local levels.

In partnership with the UK Government and the other devolved Administrations, the Executive has started to review the long-term management of high-level and intermediate-level radioactive waste.

Tricia Marwick: Is the minister as concerned as I am that, of the four bids that the Ministry of Defence will consider, three have direct implications for Rosyth and the fourth is so vague that it will almost certainly include Rosyth? At the end of the process, at least one of the bids will have an implication for Scotland. Bearing that in mind, will the minister be a bit more specific about the representations that he is making to the Ministry of Defence?

Allan Wilson: Yes and no. There have been representations at the highest level between the First Minister and the Secretary of State for Defence on the consultation process because that is where we are, and that is as it should be. At this stage it would not be appropriate to make representations on specific proposals, given that they are in a constant state of flux.

We are jointly setting up the committee on radioactive waste management. Mr Finnie will shortly announce the membership of the committee, which will make recommendations to

ministers about management of radioactive waste, including its final disposal. It is important to bear it in mind—as Scott Barrie did—that the ISOLUS project is not about final disposal, but about agreeing long-term storage options that will allow submarine reactor waste to be stored safely until final disposal options have been decided by the Government and the devolved Administrations, through the committee on radioactive waste management process that I have described.

If a site in Scotland is identified as warranting further consideration—as Tricia Marwick suggests may happen—the developer will need to take into account planning and environmental considerations. George Lyon asked about that before he left the chamber. In the first instance, planning permission will be a matter for the planning authority in the area in which the proposal is made—in the case that was mentioned by Jamie Stone, that would be the Highland Council. Planning applications are subject to publicity and consultation requirements. Interested parties would have an opportunity to comment on the proposals before the planning authority made a decision on them. If planning permission were refused, applicants would have a right of appeal to Scottish ministers. Parties who commented on the application during the planning process would have the opportunity to become involved in the appeal process.

Tricia Marwick: As the minister knows, at the moment there is no third-party right of appeal. Any appeal would involve only the applicant and the local authority. The community voice would never be heard.

Allan Wilson: That is not true. As I explained, throughout the process the planning authority would have the opportunity to hear from the local community. As with any other proposal, the planning authority would have to consider whether environmental legislation such as the environmental impact assessment regulations applied. That, too, would allow an opportunity for consultation of local people.

The issue of Crown immunity from planning control was not raised, but the subject will be important in this instance, should the MOD propose to carry out a development itself. Like other Government departments, the MOD has agreed to abide by the administrative arrangements for Crown development, which mirror the requirements of the planning process that I have just outlined.

As I said not long ago in the chamber in answer to a question from Tricia Marwick, the Executive intends to remove Crown immunity from planning control in Scotland. We are utilising the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill that is currently before the Westminster Parliament to do that. As

planning is a devolved matter, the Scottish Parliament's consent to inclusion of the relevant provisions in the Westminster bill will be required. That consent will be sought in the usual way—through a Sewel motion for consideration by the Scottish Parliament. We intend to lodge such a motion later this month.

As well as being subject to planning considerations, any proposal in Scotland will be subject to environmental regulation by the independent regulator, SEPA, to which I have referred. That will happen in one of two ways—either directly, under the terms of authorisation for disposal of radioactive waste that SEPA grants under the Radioactive Substances Act 1993 or, if Crown immunity applies, by letter of agreement requiring similar controls to those that apply under the 1993 act. Both procedures are and will be subject to widespread consultation in the appropriate areas.

Presiding Officer, I thank you for your laxity on the time limits.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I have been able to be lax because Mr Home Robertson withdrew from the debate. However, we are now close to the end of the 20-minute extension.

Allan Wilson: I conclude with the observation that any decision about which option to pursue is reserved to the UK Government. Any proposal that is made after the widespread consultation to which I have referred will be subject to environmental and planning controls. I reassure members that the Executive has made it clear to the Ministry of Defence that it intends to be kept fully informed of all progress on the project.

Meeting closed at 18:15.

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