



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Official Report

# MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 13 November 2013

Session 4

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## Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 13 November 2013

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

### Portfolio Question Time

#### Infrastructure, Investment and Cities

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** Good afternoon. The first item of business is portfolio questions. Question 1 is from Baroness Goldie. We are glad to see you back in your rightful place.

#### High-speed Rail

**1. Annabel Goldie (West Scotland) (Con):** Thank you, Presiding Officer. To ask the Scottish Government what funding strategy it has to facilitate a high-speed rail link between Scotland and London. (S4O-02562)

**The Minister for Transport and Veterans (Keith Brown):** The funding strategy for high-speed rail will be determined following the output of the joint study between Transport Scotland, the Department for Transport and HS2 Ltd announced on 1 November 2013. That study should identify options for high-speed rail to Scotland, and associated high-level costs.

**Annabel Goldie:** I am aware that the Scottish Government has given significant support to the scheme. I, of course, disagree with the Government's policy of independence, which I hope that the electorate will reject whole-heartedly at next year's referendum. Nonetheless, if independence happens, how will the high-speed rail link be funded between a separate Scottish Government and the United Kingdom Government? Who will pay for what?

**Keith Brown:** It is essential for the study to happen first, because it will give us an idea of the potential routes and therefore the potential costs. We have accepted from the very start that Scotland has a contribution to make towards the funding of this vital infrastructure project. Some estimates—not ours—have put the cost at around £8 billion or £9 billion. We accept the fact that we have to make that contribution.

It seems to me that it is perfectly possible for other countries in Europe to have high-speed rail links between different countries and to overcome such issues.

I should say that perhaps a bigger obstacle is the statement from the UK Government that Scotland is not top of its "to-do list". I know that the baroness is spending more time in Westminster,

so perhaps she could say to Alistair Carmichael that it really should be top of his to-do list. The UK Government now has to come out explicitly in support of high-speed rail going all the way from London to Scotland. That would take the whole process further forward.

#### Scottish Futures Trust (Meetings)

**2. John Scott (Ayr) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government when it last met representatives of the Scottish Futures Trust. (S4O-02563)

**The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities (Nicola Sturgeon):** The Scottish Government meets regularly with the Scottish Futures Trust to discuss matters of mutual interest.

**John Scott:** The Scottish Futures Trust recently revealed to the Finance Committee that of the 49 non-profit-distributing projects only four are actually under construction. Will the cabinet secretary tell us when the remaining 45 NPD projects will be started and, if possible, the timescale in which all will be completed?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** As the member will be aware, we report regularly and publicly on these matters. I am happy to send John Scott personally a list of all the projects and the estimated timescale for them. I point out to him that, right now, four projects totalling around £270 million are under construction, including the City of Glasgow College and Inverness College. Another £500 million-worth of projects are expected to start construction before the end of this financial year. Those include Kilmarnock campus and the M8, M73 and M74 motorway improvements. Almost £2 billion-worth of projects are currently in procurement or have entered development through hub. The NHS Lothian Edinburgh royal hospital for sick children and the Aberdeen western peripheral route project are examples of that. As a result of the NPD programme, we are seeing real progress on a number of very high-value and very important projects.

I remind the member of the context of the NPD programme. We embarked upon the programme to try to deal with the fact that the United Kingdom Government was cutting our traditional core capital budget by 26 per cent. That is the context. We are making good progress and I would hope that all members of the Parliament would get behind it.

**James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Lab):** The Scottish Futures Trust claims to have delivered benefits of £132 million. I am interested in whether those are cash benefits or paper savings. Were the savings delivered from specific previously allocated budget

lines in the 2012-13 budget? If so, where were they reallocated to?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** I refer James Kelly to the SFT's benefit statement for 2012-13, which was published on 13 August. It showed that the SFT had delivered £132 million of net future benefits and savings during 2012-13. Added to those in the three previous years, that means that the SFT has now achieved a total of £503 million of savings and benefits.

I advise James Kelly to have a careful look at the benefit statement. If, having done so, he has particular additional questions, he can direct them to me or the SFT and we would be happy to answer them.

The SFT is a success story. It helps to ensure that major projects of economic and social benefit are delivered in Scotland and that the impact of the budget cut to which I referred in response to John Scott does not hold up procurement and construction. I would have thought that members across the chamber would welcome that.

**Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** Will the cabinet secretary confirm that the £503 million that the Scottish Futures Trust has saved will be reinvested in capital projects? Will she also confirm that the savings made by the non-profit-distributing model stand in stark contrast to the ridiculously profligate public-private partnerships that the unionist parties imposed on us before?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** Kenny Gibson is absolutely right. NPD is a system that allows us to make progress with those very important projects cost effectively and with value to taxpayers. That stands in stark contrast to some of the projects under the private finance initiative and PPP—*[Interruption.]*

**The Presiding Officer:** Order.

**Nicola Sturgeon:** Under PFI and PPP, there are examples of hospital projects for which the taxpayer will pay many times the value of the asset that is being delivered.

I accept that many things divide us in the Parliament but I would have thought that even the grudging members of the Labour Party would be able to accept a system that allows us to get on and build hospitals, schools, roads and colleges. When they find it within themselves to do so, I will be the first to praise them for it.

### Tay Estuary Rail Service

**3. Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress is being made on the Tay estuary rail service. (S40-02564)

**The Minister for Transport and Veterans (Keith Brown):** Elements of the Tay estuary rail study have already been delivered as part of the December 2011 and December 2012 timetables. Further service enhancements developed in partnership with Tayside and central Scotland transport partnership, the rail industry and Transport Scotland will be introduced from 8 December 2013.

**Jenny Marra:** Will the minister give me an indication of the timetable for completing the service and the Government's financial commitment to it over the budget? As he knows, with all the waterfront development in Dundee, it is an important development for commuters and visitors to the city.

**Keith Brown:** I agree with Jenny Marra that it is an important development—not only because of the waterfront developments that are taking place. However, I am not sure which of the services she is referring to when she asks about completion. We have already introduced five new services between Glasgow and Aberdeen, along with additional calls at Broughty Ferry and Perth. We have also announced the works that will be undertaken at Gleneagles station in time for the Ryder cup—we will have more to say on that this week—and the member herself has mentioned the work to which we have contributed on Dundee railway station, which is a fantastic development.

If Jenny Marra is specific about which service she is referring to, I will be more than happy to come back with a detailed response on it.

**Christian Allard (North East Scotland) (SNP):** The minister will be aware that work is starting on the £14 million rebuild of Dundee station. Following Jenny Marra's question, will the minister join me in welcoming the investment from Dundee City Council and the Scottish Government as part of the £1 billion waterfront regeneration that the Scottish National Party is delivering?

**Keith Brown:** I am happy to welcome Dundee City Council's investment to rebuild Dundee station as part of the waterfront development and, of course, the investment by the Scottish Government, which is quite substantial.

Many of us who are familiar with Dundee station—as I am from my time in Dundee as a student—know that it was time for it to be upgraded and updated. We are all well aware of the other work that is going on round about the station. It really is transforming Dundee.

I should also mention that it will be possible to use the future Scottish stations fund, which will come in with the new franchise, to fund further improvements to station buildings and facilities in future years.

### **Glasgow to Edinburgh via Airdrie Rail Passenger Numbers**

#### **4. John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):**

To ask the Scottish Government how many passengers there have been on the Glasgow to Edinburgh line via Airdrie since it reopened. (S4O-02565)

**The Minister for Transport and Veterans (Keith Brown):** As the Glasgow to Edinburgh line via Airdrie forms part of a longer route originating west of Glasgow in Helensburgh, passenger counts on the route include those stations as well. Therefore, to give an accurate answer to John Mason's question on passenger numbers between Glasgow and Edinburgh specifically, we would need to disaggregate the passenger journeys from stations on the Helensburgh and Balloch services to Edinburgh.

I would be happy to write to him with that information once that exercise has been completed. However, I can add that the Helensburgh and Balloch to Edinburgh route has had passenger growth of just under 22 per cent since the Airdrie to Bathgate line opened.

**John Mason:** I thank the Presiding Officer for the chance to ask a question for the first time in one and a half years and I thank the minister for his reply. Does the minister agree that projections of usage have tended to be on the cautious side? Figures such as the 22 per cent increase suggest that people might have been pessimistic, which might have discouraged other developments.

**The Presiding Officer:** Questions are allocated by ballot. I will have no whining from John Mason; it took me two years to get a question when I was a back bencher.

**Keith Brown:** John Mason's question was well worth waiting for and he makes a good point. It has been said a number of times that actual patronage tends to exceed what is forecast before improvements are undertaken, although the reverse has been true. Patronage has been substantially lower in some instances, on which I am happy to provide the member with information. However, in my constituency, the Stirling-Alloa-Kinross line was forecast to carry 80,000 passengers, whereas the actual figure is more than 400,000.

Transport Scotland undertook research with the Department for Transport to examine forecast versus actual demand at newly opened stations and its report found no evidence of systematic forecast bias in either direction. The patronage forecasts in the business case for the Airdrie to Bathgate line were based on the best information that was available at the time.

**Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab):** I look forward to the work being done by the minister. Will that work include identifying the number of passengers who have been diverted off the Glasgow to Edinburgh main line through Falkirk High by the Glasgow to Edinburgh line via Airdrie, to reduce a lot of the congestion that passengers on the main line experience?

**Keith Brown:** If the member puts his request in writing, I will be happy to get the information that he seeks. The point that I made in response to John Mason is that the Airdrie to Bathgate line is not isolated from others; it originates in another place, so we have to disaggregate the figures. If Mark Griffin wants to follow up his request, I will be happy for it to be included in the work that is being done.

### **Urban Drainage Infrastructure Improvements**

**5. Jayne Baxter (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what recent discussions it has had with Scottish Water and other bodies about improvements to drainage infrastructure in urban areas. (S4O-02566)

**The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities (Nicola Sturgeon):** The Government has regular discussions with Scottish Water and its regulators about improvements to drainage infrastructure as part of the delivery of the current investment programme for 2010 to 2015 and that which is planned for 2015 to 2021. I met Scottish Water's chair and its chief executive just this morning, when I officially opened its new head office.

As part of the current investment programme, Scottish Water is undertaking studies in six urban areas, together with local authorities, to better understand surface water drainage and interactions with the sewerage system. Information from those studies is informing investment priorities for 2015 to 2021.

Members will be aware that Scottish Water is in the Parliament today with an exhibition in the members' lobby. I urge anybody with an interest or a constituency issue to take advantage of the opportunity to discuss those matters with Scottish Water.

**Jayne Baxter:** Many of my constituents in Mid Scotland and Fife have been affected by localised flooding, which is often due to culverts or drains being blocked or in poor condition. I am aware of the complexities of ownership that can arise when a drain or culvert is in poor condition. The costs of resolving a problem often fall on individual property owners until liability can be established. Will the cabinet secretary look into simplifying

ways to resolve disputes over such infrastructure problems?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** I am more than happy to look into any suggestion that the member wants to make. If she writes to me about particular constituency cases, I will be happy to look at them. I also encourage her to take the opportunity of Scottish Water's presence to discuss the issues with it.

Many of our cities and towns suffer from regular flooding, much of which is the result of our sewerage system being unable to cope with the increasing occurrence of short, high-intensity storms. Before customers' and taxpayers' money is invested, it is really important that we understand the reasons for that flooding. That is why I referred to studies in my previous answer.

Jayne Baxter is right to say that complexities in relation to ownership and liability often arise in such cases, but Scottish Water is focused on doing what it can and needs to do to resolve the problems when they occur. As I said, I am sure that it would benefit the member and her constituents if she took the opportunity to speak to Scottish Water, which has an exhibition outside the chamber now.

### Community Transport

**6. Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with the Community Transport Association and what assistance it can provide to this sector, in light of the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee's report on community transport. (S40-02567)

**The Minister for Transport and Veterans (Keith Brown):** Transport Scotland officials recently met the Community Transport Association's director for Scotland to discuss the committee's report. The committee undertook an excellent investigation and made a number of recommendations, not least to the Government.

In light of those discussions and the committee's recommendations, Transport Scotland has increased its funding to the Community Transport Association from 1 November and will commission research into the wider benefits of community transport.

In addition, £1 million will be made available in 2013-14 from Transport Scotland and Scottish Government third sector budgets to help community transport providers to purchase new vehicles.

Officials are also considering, with stakeholders, options for addressing other concerns raised by

the committee, including training costs for minibus drivers.

**Maureen Watt:** I thank the minister for his comprehensive reply.

Will he advise me how the money for buses will be allocated, by whom, and what groups will be eligible to apply? Also, is that substantial sum for just one year or can the same sum be found over a number of years? Buses get old over a number of years.

**Keith Brown:** The people who are best placed to allocate that money are people involved in the sector. The community transport vehicle fund will be jointly administered by CTA Scotland and the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations and will be allocated by a board agreed by those bodies and the Scottish Government. It will be open to community transport groups in Scotland that are looking for funding for vehicles. It is a one-off fund for now, but I expect it to provide valuable insights into the sector's needs, which we can use to develop future support as finances permit.

Details of the scheme are being finalised and we envisage it being open for applications by the end of the month.

### Highlands and Islands (Infrastructure and Capital Investment)

**7. Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what recent discussions it has had with Highland Council about the infrastructure and capital investment required to meet the needs of communities in the Highlands and Islands. (S40-02568)

**The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities (Nicola Sturgeon):** Ministers and officials regularly meet representatives of councils, including Highland Council, to discuss a range of issues.

On-going engagement with Highland Council takes place through activities such as the convention of the Highlands and Islands, whose aim is to strengthen alignment between the Scottish Government and member organisations. The most recent meeting took place on 28 October and the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth, the Minister for Local Government and Planning and the Minister for Youth Employment were all in attendance.

**Rhoda Grant:** The cabinet secretary will be aware that planning consent for Kishorn port development is progressing. Has she had any discussions with Highland Council about the improvements to transport infrastructure that



would ensure that we maximise the potential of that strategic development?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** Obviously, I am aware of the development to which Rhoda Grant refers. I am more than happy to write to her in detail about any discussions that the Scottish Government has had in order to ensure that, through transport links or whatever, the potential of that development is being maximised. I would be more than happy to discuss the issue with her in light of that correspondence.

### Scottish Futures Trust (Investment)

**8. Willie Rennie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD):** To ask the Scottish Government what steps the Scottish Futures Trust has taken to ensure that non-profit-distributing model investment achieves forecast levels. (S4O-02569)

**The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities (Nicola Sturgeon):** The Scottish Futures Trust works in partnership with each of the individual procuring authorities to support progress of NPD projects.

**Willie Rennie:** The cabinet secretary earlier listed lots of projects that she expected to start, but we have been expecting those projects to start for what seems like a lifetime. The NPD programme was originally intended to provide a massive stimulus to the economy. Does she believe that the programme has achieved that objective when we needed it most?

**Nicola Sturgeon:** The NPD programme was designed to mitigate the cuts to our capital budget first planned by Labour and then implemented by the Tory-Liberal Democrat coalition Government at Westminster. There is irony in the extreme in a member of the Liberal Democrats coming here to moan about an NPD programme that was necessitated by the cuts that his colleagues imposed on this Parliament's budget.

It is no secret that it has taken longer than anticipated for some of the projects to reach procurement and construction. Willie Rennie and other members will be aware of some of the reasons for the variance against original profile. For example, some NPD projects—Inverness College is an example—are being delivered at less cost than envisaged, thus providing better value for money for the taxpayer, which I hope Willie Rennie supports.

It is also taking some local authorities and health boards longer than anticipated to scope and design schools and community health projects, identify sites and consult the public—all things that are very important in getting projects in the right place and under construction.

Notwithstanding that, I will repeat what I said earlier. Four projects worth £270 million are in construction; another £500 million-worth of projects will begin construction before the end of the financial year; and almost £2 billion-worth of projects are in procurement or have entered development through hub. Those are good news stories and they are all happening in spite of the capital cuts that have been imposed by Willie Rennie's colleagues.

## Culture and External Affairs

### Commonwealth Games (Promotion of Culture)

**1. Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government how it will promote the culture of greater Glasgow and West Scotland before and during the 2014 Commonwealth Games. (S4O-02572)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop):** The Glasgow 2014 cultural programme plays a central role in Scotland's hosting of the Commonwealth games. There are two elements: the Scotland-wide culture 2014 programme, which will feature events, exhibitions and performances throughout Scotland before, during and immediately following the games, and festival 2014, which is the Glasgow-based games-time celebration. The diverse programme features many projects that will showcase the rich heritage and culture of different parts of Scotland, including greater Glasgow and West Scotland.

**Mary Fee:** I look forward to seeing the culture and history of areas such as my own—Renfrewshire—being promoted, as it was during the successful recent Mod in Paisley. What dialogue—if any—has the minister had with Renfrewshire Council and other councils in West Scotland to promote those areas of cultural significance?

**Fiona Hyslop:** I regularly meet various council representatives. Only on Monday, I spoke at a conference that was hosted by VOCAL, which represents council officials from all over Scotland.

With regard to programming, Creative Scotland is leading on the culture 2014 aspects, and Glasgow Life is involved in wider activities that will be based in Glasgow.

In Renfrewshire, one of the most exciting programmes—the generation programme—is part of the landmark series of exhibitions celebrating 25 years of contemporary art in Scotland. Paisley art gallery and museum will look at hosting an exhibition of emerging artists, including Roddy Buchanan and Jackie Donachie. The programme focuses on the contemporary aspects of

Renfrewshire's rich heritage that will be shown as part of the celebrations.

### Chinese Teachers (Visas)

**2. Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with the United Kingdom Government on the decision to refuse visas for Chinese teachers working in Scotland through the Confucius hubs system. (S4O-02573)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop):** The First Minister wrote to Theresa May on 1 November to express dismay at the decision to refuse visas and request that it be reversed. On 6 November, the Home Secretary replied to the First Minister to say that she has decided to "exercise" her

"discretion and grant all five of the individuals an extension of leave outside the rules for a further 12 months".

However, she stated that she considers that to be an exception, and that she has no intention of changing the Government-authorised exchange programme.

I have written to the Prime Minister today about the need for the visas to enable Chinese teachers from Tianjin to stay here for up to two years. In that way, our pupils and the teachers could derive maximum benefits from their experience.

In failing to make those changes, the United Kingdom Government will seriously damage a successful Confucius Institute programme that operates across 17 local authorities. The Prime Minister has the opportunity to instruct a change of policy before his recently announced visit to China this December.

**Christina McKelvie:** I commend to the cabinet secretary the work of the Confucius hub at Hamilton grammar school, and I welcome the successful efforts of this Government to secure the reversal of the UK Government's initial decision.

Does the cabinet secretary agree that this Home Office fiasco, along with all the other ones that we have to put up with in Scotland, underlines precisely why this Parliament should have control of immigration policy as it affects Scotland?

**Fiona Hyslop:** The Confucius hubs in 13 classrooms across Scotland are really important in the teaching of Mandarin Chinese. I encourage the Home Office to make a change in its policy; it is in the Prime Minister's interests that he do so before his visit to China.

On the wider issue of migration, Scotland has a large established migrant community. We welcome the contribution that new Scots are

making to our economy and society. We know from recent reports that the vast majority are making a positive contribution to our economy, and we reject the negative rhetoric about migrants that we sometimes hear from the UK Government.

With regard to having more powers in immigration, under independence we will have a controlled immigration system that meets our social, economic and democratic needs, and which will put Scotland and its needs at the forefront of policy making in that area.

### US Ambassador to the United Kingdom (Discussions)

**3. Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it had with the new US ambassador to the United Kingdom on his recent visit to the Parliament. (S4O-02574)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop):** The First Minister and I met Ambassador Barzun during his recent visit to Scotland. The United States is a key market from which to secure inward investment, for increasing Scottish exports and for attracting tourists. We are committed to the continued growth and deepening of relations with our American partners.

**Colin Beattie:** Does the cabinet secretary agree with me that maintaining strong external relations is fundamental to the success of an independent Scotland?

**Fiona Hyslop:** Yes, I do. We have a platform of effective external relations now that could, with independence, be expanded and extended to pursue a distinctive position and to develop and design an approach to world affairs that reflects Scotland's specific values and interests.

### Creative Scotland (Meetings)

**4. John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government when it last met Creative Scotland. (S4O-02575)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop):** I last met Creative Scotland formally on 10 October as part of a meeting here at Parliament to discuss Dundee's bid to become the United Kingdom's city of culture 2017. On Friday, I met the chief executive Janet Archer when we launched "Time To Shine", which is Scotland's first ever arts strategy for young people, at Edinburgh's Festival theatre's new studio facility.

**John Wilson:** Can the cabinet secretary outline what educational outreach programmes have been introduced in Central Scotland in recent years by Scottish arts organisations?

**Fiona Hyslop:** The programmes have been many and varied. John Wilson may be familiar with Cumbernauld theatre, which provides an extensive range of educational programmes and is funded and supported as an organisation by Creative Scotland. The youth music initiative, which is a very successful programme, works across the region that John Wilson represents.

I can also tell John Wilson that the five national performing companies have educational activities in all of Scotland's local authority areas—the information that I have is that there were 97 different educational activities in North Lanarkshire and 19 in South Lanarkshire. In addition, National Museums Scotland works with the national museum of rural life in East Kilbride and with, for example, secondary 3 and 4 pupils on physics.

### Scottish Ten (Eastern Qing Tombs)

**5. Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how the Scottish Ten project is using the latest laser technology to examine data from the eastern Qing tombs in China. (S4O-02576)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop):** The Scottish Ten team used a range of digital technologies to capture the Xiaoling and Jingling tombs in 3D. The data processing is still in progress. However, the First Minister has just personally handed over the first data to the Chinese State Administration of Cultural Heritage, which will receive an accurate 3D survey data set for the tombs when the project is completed. That is one of several strands of work that emanated from the signing by the First Minister of a cultural memorandum of understanding with the Chinese Government in December 2011.

The team will also produce an animated 3D fly-through digital model, which can be used for interpretation and remote access purposes by the Chinese Government and the management of the eastern Qing tombs. A fundamental condition of the international Scottish Ten project is that all data and intellectual property rights are handed over to the international partner. That means that the Chinese State Administration for Cultural Heritage can use the data to inform conservation and management strategies going forward, as well as for interpretation, education and virtual tourism.

**Kenneth Gibson:** I thank the cabinet secretary for her detailed reply. Scientific and education links between Scotland and China are obviously very important as we seek to deepen the relationship between our two nations. Can the cabinet secretary give Parliament further examples of such co-operation?

**Fiona Hyslop:** There are several examples. On culture, I am delighted to share with Parliament that the new international exhibition that was launched to showcase the development of the cities of Edinburgh and Nanjing—which was formerly the capital of China—and is entitled “A Tale of Two Cities”, includes archives, artworks and interactive digital material and is now receiving 20,000 visitors a day. That is a great tribute in particular to the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, which has worked in connection with the Nanjing museum. That is a very good example indeed.

An example in science is that Heriot-Watt University was recently recognised as the fifth Confucius Institute in Scotland—I discussed the issues regarding teacher visas in an earlier question. Heriot-Watt University is also working with the China University of Petroleum, which is a teaching and research university in east China that focuses on engineering and is an important scientific base for petroleum and petrochemical industries.

Those two examples show the importance of those discussions and of joint working so that we can learn from each other in the important areas of culture and science.

### Rural Theatres

**6. Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what support is available to keep rural theatres open as accessible cultural hubs. (S4O-02577)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop):** The Scottish Government makes available support for rural theatres through funding from Creative Scotland. Its arts programming guidelines state that it is keen to support activity in geographic areas and communities where there is currently more limited cultural provision and that it will give priority to applications that support that. Through Creative Scotland, we have supported programmes in rural theatres from the Isle of Eigg to the Scottish Borders.

**Dennis Robertson:** Does the cabinet secretary agree that theatres such as the Woodend Barn in Banchory and the Aboyne theatre are excellent examples of local theatres embracing culture in their communities? Will she commend the work that they will continue to do for the rest of this year and in 2014?

**Fiona Hyslop:** In learning about the member's constituency, I was intrigued to hear about the Woodend Barn, which is a good example of the sort of venue that we want to support. It has received funding from Creative Scotland of more

than £100,000 over the past two years, with more due over the next two years.

I understand that a range of activity, from classical music to wood engraving, takes place at the centre, and I put on record my recognition for the committed board, volunteers and staff. I understand that the centre is having an atomic Doric festival towards the end of November. I am intrigued to find out what that involves and to hear about its success once it is complete.

#### **President of Turkey's Visit to Scotland**

##### **7. John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind):**

To ask the Scottish Government what the outcomes were of the President of Turkey's recent visit to Scotland. (S4O-02578)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop):** I welcomed the President of Turkey on his arrival in Scotland, as I have done with other heads of state.

The President was in Scotland to attend the British-Turkish social forum, which promotes bilateral relationships between the United Kingdom and Turkey in business, politics, research and the arts. The meeting was organised by the British Academy, not the Scottish Government.

The visit provided the opportunity for a discussion of trade opportunities in particular. The opening of a Turkish consulate in Edinburgh will be a positive step in developing our relations with Turkey, as is the growing popularity of the direct Edinburgh to Istanbul flights.

**John Finnie:** I thank the cabinet secretary for that reply and particularly for the information regarding the consulate.

Two days ago, Turkey's supreme court of appeals upheld the convictions of 11 public officials following the death in custody of Engin Çeber in 2008. Amnesty has reported on the flawed investigations into abuses related to the Gezi park protests; the need to establish a truly effective and independent police complaints mechanism; and on-going concerns about the treatment of the Kurdish minority and about the rights of lesbian and gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people, and women and girls. Will the Scottish Government highlight Amnesty's concerns at a future meeting with the Turkish Government?

**Fiona Hyslop:** We always take the appropriate opportunities to raise human rights issues.

The European Union agreed to restart Turkey's membership application on 5 November. As part of the negotiations on accession, Turkey must demonstrate that it has abided by the Copenhagen membership criteria, which include free and fair

democratic elections, respect for the rule of law and protection of national minorities. Furthermore, Turkey must show that it has fully implemented the European convention on human rights, to which it has been a signatory since 1954.

Previous negotiations on accession have had a positive impact on Turkey's human rights record. We support Turkey's application for membership. That process is the appropriate way to acknowledge the issues and improve the system, which Turkey has been striving to do, as its record since 2001 shows. The current application process is an opportunity to reinforce those measures.

#### **Aberdeen (New Performance Venue)**

##### **8. Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland)**

**(Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will support the development of a major new performance venue in the city as part of a new Aberdeen exhibition and conference centre. (S4O-02579)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop):** The Aberdeen exhibition and conference centre is a valuable asset to the Scottish economy that adds significantly to Scotland's capacity to attract and host international conferences. If approached, I am sure that Scottish Enterprise would be pleased to discuss Aberdeen City Council's proposal. The council has made no direct contact with my portfolio area with regards to a new performance venue in the city.

In recent years, our national agency Scottish Enterprise has supported a range of major infrastructure investments to maximise the economic return for Scotland. A recent example is the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre, which now has the Hydro, providing Scotland with a state-of-the-art 12,000-spectator arena, as well as a purpose-built exhibition centre, conference centre and auditorium, all on one site.

As members know, 2014 will be an incredible year for Scotland. I am sure that members will want to take the opportunity to welcome the recent news that the 2014 MTV European music awards will be coming to Glasgow and the Hydro.

**Lewis Macdonald:** I welcome the cabinet secretary's positive tone. I wonder whether she recalls that during the previous parliamentary session Scottish Enterprise offered grants and loans to conference centres in Glasgow and Edinburgh, which in both cases were worth many millions of pounds, but failed to provide comparable support to the conference centre in Aberdeen.

If the cabinet secretary agrees—as I think that she does—that Aberdeen's exciting new centre is vital for both staging major performances in the

city and hosting events such as the offshore Europe and all-energy conferences, which would not in any likelihood be staged in any other Scottish city, will she today offer the Scottish Government's enthusiastic endorsement of Aberdeen's ambitious approach to the centre?

**Fiona Hyslop:** Scotland is the perfect stage for entertainment provision and lots of events, and venues can also host a number of conferences. Increasingly, such conferences provide great revenue for the cities concerned.

As I stated in my initial reply, the issue is really for Scottish Enterprise, and I encourage Aberdeen City Council to engage with it in talks and discussions to explore all options. I think that perhaps that is the answer that Lewis Macdonald seeks.

#### **The Maid of the Loch (Assistance)**

**9. Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what assistance it can provide from the culture and external affairs budget to the paddle steamer, the Maid of the Loch, so that it can sail again on Loch Lomond. (S4O-02580)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop):** Officials from the Scottish Government's tourism division, Scottish Enterprise and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority met members of the trust on Tuesday 12 November to discuss what further assistance and advice can be offered.

As I have made clear, we have used the culture budget to protect front-line cultural provision and funding for artists, which makes responding to in-year requests difficult, especially as in this case state aid issues need to be considered.

**Jackie Baillie:** I thank the cabinet secretary for what I thought was getting to be a positive response. If she cannot manage anything this year, I am happy to wait until next year.

The cabinet secretary will be aware that the Maid of the Loch's owners started an appeal earlier this year to try to get the Maid to sail again on Loch Lomond. It is without doubt an iconic heritage attraction that will help position not just Loch Lomond but Scotland as an international destination.

I am aware of yesterday's meeting, but I wonder whether I could press the cabinet secretary just a little bit more to talk about what support can be offered. Indeed, I invite her out to the constituency to see the progress on the Maid.

**Fiona Hyslop:** Jackie Baillie is nothing if not diligent in pressing the case for the Maid of the Loch. She also knows that I have visited her constituency on a number of occasions.

I understand that at yesterday's meeting a report was given on the appeal. I encourage people to support the appeal, as the Maid of the Loch is an important part of our heritage.

I understand that some of the plans that were discussed yesterday were longer term. Perhaps as part of that longer-term planning some presentations could be made regarding what funds could be provided: the Heritage Lottery Fund is an avenue that the trust would want to pursue. I am sure that we will return to the issue in the future.

#### **Creative Arts (Dumfries and Galloway)**

**10. Aileen McLeod (South Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to support the creative arts in Dumfries and Galloway. (S4O-02581)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs (Fiona Hyslop):** Creative Scotland, Scotland's national agency for the promotion of the arts, has established a formal place partnership with Dumfries and Galloway. It was fitting that earlier this year—2013, the year of natural Scotland—I formally launched that place partnership in New Galloway, an area of outstanding natural beauty. I also had the pleasure of launching the environmental arts festival Scotland 2013, a flagship of the place partnership, which has been very successful.

**Aileen McLeod:** The cabinet secretary will be aware of long-standing ambitions in Kirkcudbright to create an art gallery of national significance. Dumfries and Galloway Council agreed recently to support the community's plans and commit money into the project. Will the cabinet secretary undertake to meet members of Kirkcudbright Community Trust and me with a view to establishing how the Government might be able to support the community's ambitions?

**Fiona Hyslop:** Kirkcudbright has a rich history as an artists colony for the Glasgow boys and the Scottish colourists, and today it is a vibrant hub that attracts many artists.

Government support and funding for local museums and galleries is administered by Museums Galleries Scotland, which I encourage Kirkcudbright Community Trust to meet in the first instance to discuss how best its ambitions can be supported. As the national development body, Museums Galleries Scotland is best placed to advise on the way forward, in line with its national strategy. I would be interested to know how things develop, but I suggest that that would be the appropriate first step.

## Electricity Market Reform

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The next item of business is a statement by Fergus Ewing. The minister will take questions at the end of his statement, so there should be no interventions or interruptions.

14:40

**The Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism (Fergus Ewing):** The recent United Kingdom Government amendment to its Energy Bill 2012-13 to 2013-14, debated in the House of Lords last week, will remove the Scottish Parliament's power and discretion over the renewables obligation in Scotland.

The Scottish Parliament has twice expressed support for the underlying principles of electricity market reform if it remains consistent with Scotland's existing policies and priorities. However, EMR risks failing in its objectives. That has serious repercussions for our existing generation and security of supply in Scotland, as well as for our renewables potential and ambitions.

The UK's amendment to the Energy Bill, and its new power to close the RO in Scotland, is a cause for serious concern. Successive Scottish Governments and Parliaments have used these devolved powers to advance renewable generation across Scotland. The proposed removal of Parliament's discretion has caused consternation among stakeholders. The amendment cut through a live Scottish Government consultation. Decisions on issues such as grace periods—the flexibility beyond 2017 for stations that experience delays, a matter of huge importance to offshore and marine projects—will be taken out of Scotland's hands. I have written to Ed Davey seeking justification for his decision to neither consult nor seek the Scottish Parliament's agreement to that move.

I also share the concerns expressed by the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets and the National Grid about the risks to security of supply. Electricity margins could drop to as little as 2 per cent by 2015-16, which is a huge challenge to security of supply. The margin is the difference between the aggregate capacity to generate electricity and the peak demand. The equivalent Scottish margin is 20 per cent but, in the medium term, we, too, could be at risk. Some think that Ofgem's assessment is optimistic and that there should be a full-scale independent audit of capacity margins and security of supply.

Scotland exports around a quarter of its output, helping keep the lights on across the UK. Longannet, Scotland's largest power station, for example, could feasibly meet a quarter of our

annual electricity demand. Longannet needs significant investment. Ofgem's transmission charging review and the design of EMR's capacity mechanism are key factors.

The UK Government's locational pricing methodology and EMR will impact on Longannet. The uncertainty also means that we have the ridiculous situation at Peterhead where the station has de-rated from 1,800 to just 400MW. Meanwhile, there are no plans to develop the new gas station at Cockenzie, which was consented to two years ago, due to UK energy policy confusion and uncertainties.

Our thermal generation must be cleaner, and it can be, but those stations will power Scotland while new technologies are developed, balancing the grid and seeing the UK through this period of investment hiatus. The UK Government must ensure that EMR's capacity mechanism takes into account Scotland's role in providing secure supplies of power across the UK.

The UK's proposals for offshore renewables are sorely limited, with forecasts for 8GW of offshore wind, a level which jeopardises Scottish round 3 and Scottish territorial waters projects. That should be compared with Scotland's higher renewables obligation certificate—ROC—bands for floating offshore wind. That support is unmatched by the UK just as its proposals for hydro degradation jeopardise small schemes across Scotland.

Hydro matters in Scotland. That is why we used our discretion to maintain higher support for hydro under the RO than there has been in the UK. SSE plc confirmed that its £30 million project at Glasa was explicitly linked to the Scottish Government's decision. Meanwhile, our intergovernmental work on support for island renewables shows that Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles could provide up to 5 per cent of total Great Britain electricity demand by 2030. However, the current UK Government proposals fall short of what is required to deliver that potential.

The contrast with the UK Government's support for imported nuclear technology could not be clearer. Consumers will pay up to £1,000 million each year for 35 years, which is more than twice the period of 15 years that is available for renewables technologies. That contract will give new nuclear electricity double the current wholesale price for electricity.

Carbon capture and storage is another concern. Peterhead power station and the captain clean energy proposal in Grangemouth are excellent candidates for support, but Professor Stuart Haszeldine spoke recently of the "anger and depression" that are felt by the sector at the UK Government's lack of progress.

Those factors create risks. Renewables fabrication at Nigg, Methil and elsewhere, research in Orkney, the export of machines that have been invented in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness, and community ownership and benefit across Scotland can still move forward, but only if the right decisions are made.

Costs remain a vital issue, quite rightly. Investment in new technologies comes at a price. Of course, offshore technologies and CCS have huge economic potential for Scotland and the UK, unlike nuclear, which is all cost and little benefit.

Costs and benefits matter, particularly in the light of gas and electricity price increases. The Department of Energy and Climate Change's own research shows that renewables can deliver smaller bills in future than can the status quo, which is a point that seems to have got lost amid the UK Government's confused claims about green levies and costs.

The Scottish Government takes the interests of vulnerable consumers extremely seriously. I have written to and spoken with the energy companies to seek transparency and a commitment to protect people who are in need. We maintained the warm homes programme, even as it was abandoned south of the border.

The Deputy First Minister has outlined how an independent Government will ensure that the costs of vital energy efficiency measures are met centrally, rather than by consumers. That will cut consumers' energy bills by approximately £70 a year. In our view, that is a fairer system.

This Parliament has supported the EMR process, but that support has been based on our achieving an outcome that is consistent with Scottish policy priorities and ambitions. Such an outcome now looks at best uncertain. The removal of Scottish parliamentary discretion in the matter of the RO is troubling and demands an explanation.

The chamber should also understand the threats that EMR poses to Scotland's renewables ambitions and to our established position as a provider of secure energy supplies. The Scottish Government agreed to maintain a common energy market in 2011, and the chamber has twice supported the process of EMR. I can update Parliament because, in the past few hours, I have received a reply from Ed Davey. It is remarkable what a parliamentary statement can elicit. At least in tone, if not in substance, Mr Davey responds to some of our concerns. If that signals a change in approach, we will be the first to welcome that.

However, as things stand, the concerns that I have set out remain. Should they be fully addressed, we will remain willing to sign a memorandum of understanding with DECC that

gives form to our joint commitments, but we will not do that at the risk of leaving Scottish consumers as vulnerable to power shortages in the future as consumers south of the border are to the power shortages that they already face over the next two years.

**The Presiding Officer:** The minister will now take questions on the issues raised in his statement. I intend to allow around 20 minutes for questions, after which we will move on to the next item of business.

**Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab):** I thank the minister for his statement and for advance sight of it.

The minister is absolutely right to emphasise the importance to Scotland of electricity market reform, which relates to the crucial importance of a single integrated British electricity market to this country and its future. Although Scotland has less than a tenth of the population of the UK, its renewables industry benefits from more than a third of the subsidies for renewable energy, which are paid for by consumers throughout the UK.

For the sake of security of supply and our capacity to continue to export power—both of which have been mentioned by the minister—as well as the development of an industry on which the Scottish Government has largely bet our industrial future, we cannot afford to jeopardise that single integrated market.

The minister is right that the UK Government must ensure that EMR takes account of Scotland's role in providing secure electricity supplies and I believe that he is also right to say that this last-minute Lords amendment was no way to go about doing that. However, I am not sure that a public and parliamentary row between the two Governments is all that helpful either. I am extremely glad to hear that Mr Ewing and Mr Davey are talking again, and I ask the minister to explain to the chamber the action that he plans to take following that contact to get past this situation, reach an agreement on EMR and protect the single electricity market that the industry wants and which this country needs.

**Fergus Ewing:** Iain Gray is absolutely right to highlight the challenge of security of supply. The first obligation of energy policy is to avoid power disconnections. However, as Ofgem, the National Grid and many other expert commentators have made clear, England faces very real risks of brownouts—or intermittent power supply—and even blackouts as soon as two years from now. We are extremely keen to avoid that situation and, indeed, the thermal generation capacity at Longannet, Peterhead and our two nuclear power stations is significant enough to supply that power. It is essential that we address the problem of

security of supply, which is why I have suggested that an independent audit be considered for these matters.

As for Iain Gray's final question, I hope that it will be recognised that I have sought to have—and indeed have had—a constructive relationship with UK Government ministers. We want to continue that relationship, but it is right that we set down markers with regard to very serious concerns that we have heard not only from the renewables sector but from the thermal generation sector, where stations such as Longannet are seriously concerned about the various threats to their continued operation in accordance with their ambitions.

Finally, we are extremely keen to ensure a workable system of connecting the islands to the opportunity to participate in Scotland's energy revolution.

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** I thank the minister for advance sight of his statement. With regard to his final point, I welcome the fact that he has now received a constructive response from Ed Davey to his latest letter—although I sense that it rather took the wind out of his sails—and express the wish that the healthy dialogue on energy issues that Scotland's two Governments have had up to now will continue.

What we need in Scotland and across the UK is not only a balanced energy policy but a properly informed debate. I have to say that I was rather confused by the minister's comments on the cost of new nuclear power and the partial picture that he painted. I have with me the draft contract for difference strike prices, which shows that the price per megawatt hour will be £105 to £120 for biomass; £95 for hydro; £125 for large solar photovoltaic; £155 for offshore wind; and £100 for onshore wind. As I am sure the minister well knows, the strike price that has been agreed for the new nuclear station at Hinkley Point is £92.50, which is cheaper than the price for wind, solar, hydro, biomass or tidal and, unlike wind, nuclear has no problems with intermittency or unpredictability. The facts might not fit the minister's narrative, but does he not have a duty to come to the chamber and give us the whole picture, not just the parts that suit him?

**Fergus Ewing:** First of all, as I have said, I am keen to continue to maintain constructive relations with all UK Government ministers. Indeed, that is how I do my job. However, as I have clearly expounded in my statement, my primary duty is to stand up for the Scottish interest.

Let me turn to the nuclear issue, which the majority of Murdo Fraser's comments were about. Sadly, Mr Fraser did not really provide us with the whole story. [*Interruption.*] Mr Fraser should wait a

minute; he will get the rest of the story. Mr Fraser equiparated and compared the headline rates of the proposed CFDs and the price for nuclear, but he left out a few other facts about that. The length of contracts for offshore wind will be 15 years, but the length of the contract for nuclear will be 35 years. [*Interruption.*]

**The Presiding Officer:** Mr Fraser!

**Fergus Ewing:** Mr Fraser may not like that information, but it is information of a factual nature. The contract length that has been agreed between the UK Government and EDF Energy will be 35 years and the contract will be worth an estimated £1,000 million a year. Given that the stations may not be in commission until 2023, that means that UK consumers will subsidise output under the terms of the contract until 2060.

There is another difference: decommissioning costs. Another fact that Mr Fraser chose not to mention is that the existing decommissioning cost of clearing up the UK's nuclear waste legacy at Sellafield has reached £67.5 billion, and there is no idea when the costs will stop increasing.

Finally, the total cost of subsidies to the nuclear industry is not far off from being on a par with the cost of the subsidies for the renewables industry.

We therefore believe that these are not Scotland's priorities. Unlike the Conservatives, we see a different future ahead for Scotland—in renewables—but that future will potentially be placed in jeopardy unless we can continue the dialogue with the UK Government over the crucial coming months in a constructive vein.

**The Presiding Officer:** Many members wish to ask the minister a question. I remind members that they should ask only one question. They should make their questions short, and there should be brief responses. In that way, we will, I hope, get through everybody.

**Christian Allard (North East Scotland) (SNP):** Will the UK electricity market reform allow an adequate subsidy to facilitate the development of offshore floating turbines and other innovative technologies?

**Fergus Ewing:** I certainly hope that it will. Using the powers that we have enjoyed under ROCs, we have set an incentive for floating and innovative offshore wind turbines to enable their test and development. They are particularly suitable for Scottish waters, which are deeper. A floating system, as opposed to systems that have concrete bases or are fixed to the sea bed, has cost benefits in the long term, so it is essential that we continue our work with a number of developers that are close to going ahead with investing in floating and innovative turbines in Scotland. If they do so, one of the benefits will be that places such



as the Kishorn yard can reopen. If they do not, such places are unlikely to reopen. That is why I have pressed the case with the UK Government. I very much hope that we will be able to work together to ensure that that vital nascent technology can receive the support that it needs to contribute to meeting our emissions targets, generate electricity and generate a considerable number of jobs in this country.

**Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab):** Since I met the minister when he opened the new visitor centre at Hunterston, I have never—like Murdo Fraser—been entirely sure of his views on nuclear energy. Today, he seems to have forgotten about Hunterston and Torness, and he has had a go at nuclear. He was the one who made the comparison between the strike prices, which are £92.50 per megawatt hour for nuclear compared with £100 per megawatt hour for onshore wind and £155 per megawatt hour for offshore wind. How does the minister compare the investment lifespans for nuclear and wind farms?

**Fergus Ewing:** The position on nuclear is absolutely clear. We have two existing nuclear power stations, which are generating electricity, and we recognise that they are making a substantial contribution to maintaining security of supply. Electricity needs to come from a variety of sources and, as long as they can be safely operated, they should continue to be operated. Hunterston and Torness were purchased, constructed and erected a long time ago. Mr Macintosh alluded to the fact that I have visited them but, contrary to his statement, I mentioned them earlier as well.

However, the difference with new nuclear power stations is that they involve a massive amount of expenditure. Two nuclear power stations are being constructed in mainland Europe as we speak: the EDF project at Flamanville, whose cost has increased to £8 billion from the original estimate of £3.3 billion—it has more than doubled—and which is four years behind schedule; and Finland's fifth nuclear reactor, which is six years behind schedule and has a cost overrun of up to £3.6 billion. It is sensible to learn from experience, so we should learn that the cost overruns of new nuclear power stations are a strong argument for not adopting them.

**Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP):** Does the minister agree that Longannet power station continues to be of significant importance to Scotland's energy needs? Does he share concerns about the impact here of transmission charges?

**Fergus Ewing:** Yes, I do. I had the pleasure of visiting Longannet a few weeks back. It supports directly 270 jobs and has made a substantial contribution to Scotland's energy needs.

Mr Coffey raised the point of transmission charges. It is estimated that the transmission charges facing Longannet and Scotland are between £20 million and £30 million more each year than for an equivalent power station in the south of England. Plainly, those additional costs are a burden that has to be paid and met, but they point to a discriminatory charging system across the UK that makes it extremely difficult for companies to replace existing thermogeneration or, indeed, extend its life while we transition to a low-carbon method of generating our electricity needs.

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD):** I thank the minister for early sight of his statement, but I am disappointed at his decision to depart from his usual consensual approach and treat us to a bit of a rant. He argues rightly for the renewables sector's need to have certainty and early warning, but he seems to have been happy to delay making clear his intentions on RO closure, despite knowing the timetable for the passage of the UK Energy Bill. Does he not accept that that will strike many in the sector as odd and suggest that he has been happy to say one thing in private and another in public? In a genuine attempt to encourage Mr Ewing back into more familiar, consensual waters, I assure him of my support for an early meeting with DECC to consider the outcome of the consultation on island renewables.

**Fergus Ewing:** That was a mixed and varied couple of questions. However, I can assure all members that I have made those points over a long period with DECC and set out Scotland's particular case, not least our support for Scottish islands' renewables as a top priority for the Scottish Government. I have welcomed on many occasions the fact that Ed Davey has had a consultation on an island strike price. However, the problem about that is that many of the consultees have indicated very clearly that one strike price for three islands will not form the basis of connections to all three island groups. Indeed, that is not surprising, because the Baringa and TNEI report, which was published this year and which was sought by both Mr Davey and me to prove the need for the island connections, found that each of the island groups requires individual strike prices. That is a clear illustration of what is at stake here.

Mr McArthur will know far more about the island that he represents than I do. However, are we going to see the islands of Scotland connected, or are we not? We have a shared objective, but it is essential that the method that the UK Government introduces will be capable of delivering that objective. It is absolutely right that I come here and set out concerns, of which Mr McArthur will be aware and which many in industry and representatives of his area have expressed, in the

hope that we can move from where we are at the moment to a set of proposals that will secure the objectives that Mr McArthur rightly points out we broadly share.

**Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** The minister will be aware that the European Marine Energy Centre on Orkney was at least 10 years ahead of the rest of the world in wave and tidal energy research. Is he concerned that that 10-year lead may be lost as those technologies approach commercialisation and need clear subsidy and clear support?

**Fergus Ewing:** There is a lack of certainty at the moment as to the incentive to be provided for the future of both wave and tidal energy. Just last week, I attended an expert group in Edinburgh in relation to these matters. I entirely agree that there is a will across both the UK and Scottish Governments to support wave and tidal energy. I know that Greg Barker is committed to that, and I will say so. However, the question is not whether there is a will and a shared objective but whether the specific proposals that will be made will be sufficient, and the delay in the consideration of specific measures for wave and tidal in the islands is not necessarily helpful to securing that outcome.

**Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab):** In the light of the minister's statement, can he confirm his Government's continuing support for the European offshore wind deployment centre in Aberdeen bay, which has attracted European Union funding? What constructive discussions has he had with UK ministers about the contributions of both offshore wind and offshore carbon storage to the future role of Aberdeen and the north-east as a global centre of excellence in offshore energy?

**Fergus Ewing:** As a matter of form and with some hesitancy, I think that I should refrain from commenting in direct response to that question, given that the matter is sub judice in the courts in Edinburgh today, but I will write to Mr Macdonald on those matters.

**Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP):** I have correspondence from the Deputy Prime Minister that says that there will be no subsidies for nuclear energy. Will the minister comment on the impact of the recently announced contracts for difference strike price, which includes insurance as well as decommissioning, for the proposed Hinkley Point nuclear facility, and its potential effect on investment plans for alternative and cheaper renewable sources of energy?

**Fergus Ewing:** Mr Brodie raises a good point. The CFD that the UK Government has offered for Hinkley Point is, broadly speaking, twice as much as the wholesale electricity price. It is not clear what specific account has been taken of huge

decommissioning costs in respect of the property. Mr Brodie is also right to say that the subsidy applies not just to the CFD but to other financial obligations. The UK is committing taxpayers to a massive subsidy from about 2023 to about 2060. This is an enormous subsidy and it has completely changed the dynamic of the equation.

In the meantime, the real concerns are about security of electricity supply in the UK. It seems to me that we must collectively give much more thought to that, and an independent audit would be the right first step.

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green):** Turning to the House of Lords amendment that prompted the statement, is it not clear from the utter lack of informed debate among members of that chamber on the impact that the amendment would have in Scotland that the House of Lords has once again shown itself to be an unelected, antique and often semi-conscious chamber that is simply not fit to scrutinise legislation as it impacts on this country?

**The Presiding Officer:** Minister, I will go on to Stuart McMillan as that was not about issues that were raised in the statement.

**Fergus Ewing:** I will work with commoners or anybody else to deliver the renewables ambitions for Scotland.

**Stuart McMillan (West Scotland) (SNP):** Does the minister agree that there is an important constitutional issue here, as Westminster is looking to take back from the Scottish ministers and the Scottish Parliament powers over the renewables obligation? What does that say about the veracity of the no campaign when it talks about providing more powers to Scotland?

**Fergus Ewing:** What we found disappointing was that the decision was taken without any prior consultation with the Scottish Parliament. That is, by any view, at odds with the rhetoric and the promises that are being made in relation to another debate that is going on at the moment.

**The Presiding Officer:** Before we move on to the next item of business, and while members are still in the chamber, I say that when we have a statement, questions are supposed to relate to the statement that the minister has just made and should not include issues that are not relevant to the statement.

**Patrick Harvie:** On a point of order, Presiding Officer. I am grateful to you for raising the issue. Can you explain whether a direct reference to process in the House of Lords is excluded from the issues about which members were allowed to question the minister? The matter was referred to in paragraph 1 of the minister's statement.

**The Presiding Officer:** I have made my point, Mr Harvie. I was not directly referring to you, although you identify yourself in that regard. Other members raised issues that were not in the statement. All I ask is that in future when there is a statement we do not waste time raising issues that are not in the statement.

## Modernising Scotland's Transport Infrastructure

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-08270, in the name of Keith Brown, on modernising Scotland's transport infrastructure: meeting the challenges of the 21st century.

15:10

**The Minister for Transport and Veterans (Keith Brown):** This Government's investment since 2007 in modernising our transport infrastructure is transforming our strategic transport networks. I have said before, and I say again, that there was underinvestment in Scotland's transport infrastructure for decades. We have to try to make up for the lack of investment in previous decades, at a time of unparalleled budgetary constraint.

In just six years, 23 major improvements have been made to our motorways and trunk roads across the length and breadth of the country. Some 26.5 route miles of new railway have been built and six new stations have opened, the most recent being Conon Bridge, in February. In addition, our investment in the strategic networks will ultimately support the low-carbon agenda, by providing efficient links for public transport and the new generation of low-carbon vehicles, which will help to remove traffic from local roads, improving conditions for active travel and encouraging modal shift.

On active travel, we have added 215 miles to the network since 2007. The network contributes £71 million to the Scottish economy in health savings and reduces greenhouse gas emissions by 115,000 tonnes a year.

**Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):** It is acknowledged that air pollution shortens lives, and transport is a major contributor to air pollution. In the context of climate change and air pollution, what is the Scottish Government doing to encourage local authorities to set up low-emission zones? I apologise if you were intending to raise the issue in your speech, minister.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):** I remind members to speak through the chair.

**Keith Brown:** I will come back to that point. I was talking about the general area when I said that our action on the transport network helps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 115,000 tonnes. In addition, for example, we have worked with Glasgow City Council on low-carbon hybrid buses and on the potential for retrofitting buses to reduce harmful emissions. Glasgow and Edinburgh both have issues with air quality.

In this financial year, 2013-14, we are giving Sustrans £10 million for community links and national cycle network routes. Over the next two years, we will increase that by £20 million, adding to the £58 million that has been spent in this spending review period.

The elements that I talked about represent a total investment in completed schemes of more than £2 billion. However, that is not the limit of our ambition. As I speak, one of the biggest investment programmes in recent times is well under way, with more than £4 billion of work under construction or in procurement. That includes the Queensferry crossing, which is the largest transport infrastructure project in more than a generation. The work is creating thousands of jobs for the hard-pressed construction industry and is building the platform that Scotland needs if it is to compete in the 21st century and secure long-term sustainable growth.

Our transport networks are vital to our economy and to bringing together all communities across the country. We are the first Government to have committed to linking all our cities by dual carriageway—a standard that is pretty much taken for granted in many modern developed countries but was apparently not accepted in this country in previous decades. Our plans to dual the A9 between Perth and Inverness and the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen represent an investment programme to 2030 of some £6 billion.

On our rail networks, we have a £5 billion investment programme to 2019. That huge sum includes more than £3 billion capital investment in the rail infrastructure. We are undertaking investment to support the operation and maintenance of the existing tracks and to support substantial enhancements between Edinburgh and Glasgow, between Aberdeen and Inverness, and on the Highland main line.

Together, those investments in road and rail will better connect our cities and help to create growth and jobs across the country.

**Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD):** The minister mentioned the £3 billion that is being invested in rail through the capital investment programme. How much of that budget is for rail between Edinburgh and Glasgow?

**Keith Brown:** The budget for the Edinburgh to Glasgow improvement programme is currently about £650 million, although we want to do some additional work on the programme that might take it over that figure. Other work will also be on-going between Edinburgh and Glasgow. Tavish Scott's question hints at the amendment that he proposed in relation to further work between Edinburgh and Glasgow on, for example, the high-speed line. However, we are of the view that the

improvements that we are making to lines north of Edinburgh and Glasgow will benefit from EGIP freeing up capacity for points north and that high-speed rail will benefit the whole of Scotland if it comes to Scotland from London, as we think it should.

The completed projects are expected to generate billions of pounds in benefits over the next 30 years through better journey times and reliability, improved safety, reductions in emissions and better choice, all of which will improve the quality of life of people who live and work in Scotland. Businesses will reap the benefits, too, through reduced operating costs and improved access to key housing and employment sites.

We can see the benefits now. The Airdrie to Bathgate rail link and the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine line are giving people more choice in using the train rather than the car, and patronage is running well above the levels that were initially predicted. The Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine line, which was projected to carry around 80,000 passengers a year, carried more than 400,000 passengers in its first year.

Roads are also a fundamental part of transport infrastructure—they help public transport and active travel, too—and the new M74 through Glasgow is cutting journey times by more than 15 minutes. Claudia Beamish asked about air quality. Previously, in the mornings and afternoons, people could be stopped for long periods at the Kingston bridge, but they now have far better journey times and a far smoother journey. Air quality is improved by our having made that investment, so it has been important for the environment as well, and the project provided a much-needed catalyst for the regeneration of the east end of Glasgow.

The Government's infrastructure investment plan sets out our investment priorities for the future. In the short term, it is stimulating the economy and boosting the construction sector. Construction Scotland says that, for every £1 that is spent on construction output, a further £2.94 is generated in the economy. The largest of the current projects is the Queensferry crossing, which has been under construction—under the water, in many places—for more than two years and is under budget and on programme. That project not only is providing a vital future crossing across the Forth, but currently employs around 850 people on site, with 365 Scottish businesses having benefited from the project. Between them those businesses have been awarded orders worth about £143 million to date—money that is going straight back into the Scottish economy. Moreover, the latest projections put the cost of the project at around two thirds of its original budget, which was

between £1.75 billion and £2.3 billion. The current estimated cost is around £1.4 billion.

We shared the frustrations of people in the Aberdeen area that were caused by the legal challenges to the Aberdeen western peripheral route, but both that project and the Balmedie to Tippetty project are now out to tender, with construction on programme to start in the autumn next year. When it is completed, that project will bring significant benefits to the north-east, including around £6 billion of additional income and more than 14,000 jobs over the 30 years after it opens.

**Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab):** I agree with the minister, and I welcome the importance that he places on the AWPR. However, I ask him again about the junction of the A90 and the A96 at the Haudagain roundabout—a project that he has endorsed for the Scottish Government to undertake. I have not heard any good reason why that project cannot be brought forward soon. Is he prepared to reconsider the matter?

**Keith Brown:** Rather than give the member a good reason, I suggest that he read the report that was produced by the engineers. That report said that the project would be best done after we have completed the AWPR, not just for engineering reasons but because of the enormous disruption that would be caused by undertaking the work on the Haudagain roundabout just now. My opinion has not changed and I have ensured that the local council is aware of that.

**Mark McDonald (North East Scotland) (SNP):** Does the minister agree that Lewis Macdonald should listen to the Labour leader of Aberdeen City Council, who has accepted the Scottish Government's timescale for the project, and that when Lewis Macdonald was the minister with responsibility for transport in the Scottish Executive he did nothing to advance the Haudagain roundabout?

**Keith Brown:** Many of the projects that I have mentioned were insufficiently progressed under previous Administrations.

However, I am keen to encourage people to move from road to rail as we move on from the AWPR to the Borders rail project. Passenger journeys on our railways are up 30 per cent to around 83.3 million since the start of the franchise in 2004, and that is driving the need for investment in capacity and opportunities to improve the frequency of services. The Borders railway is the longest new domestic railway to be constructed in Britain for more than 100 years. That project will strengthen local communities across the Scottish Borders by reintroducing a fast and efficient rail link with seven new stations.

I mentioned EGIP. It will also transform our railway network. Passengers will benefit from improvements in service choice and faster journey times on modern, attractive, more energy-efficient trains as well as fully refurbished stations at Glasgow Queen Street and Haymarket, where the £27 million upgrade will open to passengers next month. The first phase of EGIP electrification—the £80 million electrification of the Glasgow to Cumbernauld lines—will be delivered in time for the 2014 Commonwealth games, helping people to get to the venues.

**James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Lab):** I note that the minister is near the end of his speech and there has been little mention of buses. Are the buses not running this afternoon?

**Keith Brown:** If James Kelly had been listening earlier, he would have heard that I mentioned buses at the start of my speech.

Buses also run on roads, and investment in roads is related to that in buses. That is one of the reasons why we are investing in that infrastructure. We do not have complete motorway between our two major cities, but that will now change with the M8 Baillieston to Newhouse upgrade. That project will further improve connections and, along with the recent M74 and M80 upgrades, complete some of the long-standing gaps in central Scotland's motorway network.

In terms of jobs, the M8 project will be of a similar scale to the M74 completion, which directly supported 900 construction jobs at its peak, with the large majority of the workers coming from the local area, including a number of modern apprentices. I met many of those apprentices during the construction of the project.

That investment serves a critical purpose during these difficult financial times, but continued investment is still needed. Therefore, it is right that we are planning further transport projects now, laying foundations so that we can build on them tomorrow. We all know that rail lines and roads are not built overnight. We need to do in-depth planning to ensure that we deliver the right scheme at the right price and keep impacts on communities, businesses and the environment to an absolute minimum.

I will say a word on keeping costs down. I once met a previous transport minister from the Parliament in Waverley station. He commended the Government on having brought some of those projects in on price and on time and said, "You must have to meet with these people every week." That is exactly what we do. I was appalled to hear in the debate on high-speed rail in the House of Commons that the United Kingdom Government anticipated a six-monthly report—in fact, it ruled

out a six-monthly report, preferring annual reports. It really is necessary to keep on top of such projects.

We make no apologies for taking the necessary time early on. We need to get it right—it would be a false economy to do anything else. Too often, other public infrastructure projects have been rushed and not properly planned, which has resulted in delays and cost overruns when they get to construction. Our track record speaks for itself: the £690 million M74 was completed ahead of time and under budget and the £320 million M80 upgrade was on time and on budget.

We intend to continue to apply that robust approach to future projects, such as the A9. We have set a demanding programme to have the 80 miles of dualling on the A9 completed by 2025 and we are on track. Last month, draft orders were published for the first stretch between Kincaig and Dalraddy, and orders for the Luncarty to Birnam section will come forward early next year.

We are the first Government to commit to full dualling of the A9 between Perth and Inverness. Estimated at around £3 billion, it represents the biggest transport infrastructure project, by cost, in Scotland's history. To go back to the point that Tavish Scott raised, the cost of the project is in excess of the combined cost of the Forth replacement crossing, the M74 and the Borders rail project.

Earlier this year, I announced our outline strategy for the A96 dualling programme between Inverness and Aberdeen by 2030. That identified design and development work to be progressed over the next few years. I was in Nairn on Monday at the public information exhibitions.

In my closing speech, I will speak about high-speed rail as well, but I underline the ambition that we have for the future. We have an unparalleled record of successfully delivering critical and complex projects.

I commend the motion, and I move,

That the Parliament welcomes the record levels of investment being made by the Scottish Government on major transport projects, with over £4 billion of work under construction or in procurement, including the Queensferry Crossing, Borders Railway and the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route, and future plans for the dualling of the A9 and A96 and developing the National Cycle Network, and agrees that these projects are vital to transform Scotland's strategic transport networks and stimulate the economy now, securing long-term sustainable growth and providing a modern and efficient transport system fit for the 21st century, giving people a choice and helping secure a low-carbon economy.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** As members might have noticed, we are short of time in the debate.

15:24

**Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab):** The debate is important and timely, given the level of discussion and the lobbying and campaigning by transport organisations and individuals who have an interest in transport infrastructure. Many of them have expressed concerns about delays, project cuts and an absence of transport infrastructure planning. I hope that the proposed cross-party group on rail will be a vehicle for people to put their transport expertise to good use by informing decision makers.

The first thing that struck me when I saw the Scottish Government's motion was the absence of any reference to buses. The minister mentioned them, but that was only because of interventions by two of my colleagues. The vast majority of public transport journeys are by bus, yet the Government's support for bus services has been frozen at £53.8 million for the next three years, which is a real-terms cut.

Bus operators' costs are going up. Where people can get on a bus, fares are rising, too. Across Scotland, the picture is one of service reduction and withdrawal, closed bus depots and isolated communities.

**Keith Brown:** Given what Mark Griffin says, does he propose increased expenditure on buses? If so, will he propose that during the budget process?

**Mark Griffin:** I will come on to a positive suggestion for how the Government can improve bus services across Scotland. I genuinely hope that the minister will take it up.

Time and again—in surgeries, on doorsteps and at a packed public meeting in Cumbernauld in the summer—people tell me that they believe that bus companies are operating in the interests not of the public but of directors and shareholders. Public opinion in my region is that buses are not operating in the spirit of providing a public transport service and I am sure that similar representations have been made to other members in their constituencies and regions.

**Mark McDonald:** Does the member share my disappointment that, when the SNP group on Aberdeen City Council proposed a publicly funded bus company in the city of Aberdeen, the Labour-led administration rejected that out of hand?

**Mark Griffin:** Similarly, I hope that Mark McDonald will support Iain Gray's proposed bus re-regulation bill. That would provide a solution for commuters in Aberdeen that would overcome the issues.

If buses are an issue, as Mark McDonald pointed out, I am genuinely surprised that the Government's motion does not mention buses. I

hope that the minister will clarify how the Government does or does not value buses as part of Scotland's transport infrastructure.

One constructive thing that the minister could do is commit the Government to taking on Iain Gray's proposed member's bill on bus regulation.

**Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP):** Will the member give way?

**Mark Griffin:** I have taken a number of interventions and I would like to make a bit of progress.

Iain Gray's bill would give transport authorities much more power over how bus services are run and would include a new franchising power to tender contracts for profitable and non-profitable routes together, without seeking ministers' consent or having to demonstrate market failure.

Bus operators are cherry picking the most profitable routes and cutting quality and customer service to reduce costs, while abandoning smaller and more remote communities. Instead, we could have a strategic transport plan in regions across Scotland, to ensure that our bus network is fully integrated with other modes of transport such as rail and with park-and-ride and cycling facilities and to ensure that we have a sustainable service that connects our communities to employment and leisure opportunities.

We know that the Scottish National Party used to support re-regulation of the bus market, and it is not too late to revisit that. I again ask the Government to get round the table with members who have an interest in the bus market and particularly in re-regulation to see what can be delivered.

I repeat that I am surprised that the motion did not mention buses, but I am not so surprised that other aspects of transport infrastructure were excluded from it. Our amendment speaks about having transport infrastructure that is fit for the 21st century and about the challenges that we face in achieving that. I have mentioned bus re-regulation, so we can look at the next challenge that the amendment mentions, which is

"reducing journey times, increasing capacity and increasing the frequency of rail journeys between Scotland's cities".

That challenge is partly addressed by the Edinburgh to Glasgow improvement programme—or at least, it would have been, if the original project had gone ahead. The project has been slashed—or phased, in civil service speak—and a lot of its benefits have been lost. Passenger capacity may be increasing but the increased frequency of services and the promised journey time reductions certainly will not be achieved. Parts of the project that would have increased

capacity in the network have been dropped, such as the Garngad chord or the Croy turnback facility.

The Dalmeny chord has also been cut, which means that instead of trains being able to bypass the Winchburgh tunnel during electrification works, they will be diverted via Dalmeny, increasing journey times and pushing people from rail to road. That will cause timetabling issues for services to and from Fife and will cost taxpayers an estimated £10 million in compensation payments to the franchise holder—and that is only if Transport Scotland's initial estimate of 44 days of disruption turns out to be correct.

Questions remain over the cost benefit analysis of the revised Edinburgh to Glasgow improvement programme. In Audit Scotland's recent report, "Scotland's key transport infrastructure projects", it asked how ministers were able to approve changes to the scope and cost of the project without an updated and approved outline business case. In that report, Audit Scotland says that Transport Scotland expected to have a full business case prepared and completed by May 2013. Perhaps the minister can tell the chamber where Transport Scotland is with that business case and whether members will be allowed to access that document to scrutinise the decision making around the project changes.

Another challenge that we face in building a transport network fit for the 21st century is how we connect our major airports to our city centres and how the lack of foresight, planning and plain common sense by this Government has made that task harder. We heard last week about how the Scottish Government was a partner in a study into the options for linking Glasgow airport to the city centre by public transport. One of those options was a rail link, and we know that there is interest in the private sector in developing that rail link and that the Government is aware of that interest since it has been working jointly with the interested party on the airport access strategy document.

Yet, while working with that interested party, this same Government chose to sell off the land that would make that project possible. We are now being told that the Glasgow airport rail link is "ill-conceived"—a dramatic shift in policy from the Government that previously described it as desirable but not affordable.

I hope that the Scottish Government does not continue with that policy and will work with the promoter of the new GARL project to remove any barriers that might remain, without taking any liability on the public purse, which, until just over a week ago, was the Government's main objection.

On this side of the chamber, we will continue to challenge the Government on transport infrastructure, as we have done in our

amendment. We will push to ensure that the Government shows the ambition that we really need in order to develop a transport network fit for the 21st century—one that serves our communities, joins up our cities and connects city centres to strategic airports, while improving connectivity, increasing active travel and reducing our carbon emissions.

I move S4M-08270.1, to leave out from “welcomes” to end and insert:

“recognises the work required in the transport sector and the need for a fully developed infrastructure investment plan with defined project timescales to meet the challenges of the 21st century and believes that these challenges include re-regulating the bus market to better serve the travelling public, reducing journey times, increasing capacity and increasing the frequency of rail journeys between Scotland’s cities, improving public transport links between Scotland’s city centres and airports, improving connectivity, including by road, and increasing the opportunities for active travel to stimulate the economy now, securing long-term sustainable growth and providing a modern and efficient transport system, giving people a choice and helping secure a low-carbon economy.”

15:33

**Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):**

It remains an eternal source of embarrassment to the politicians who were responsible that between 1997 and 2007 there was a hiatus in construction on our trunk road network. It was not an accident; it was a deliberate act of policy. First a Labour Government and then a coalition Government, here in the Scottish Parliament, decided to prioritise other things.

The road-building programme, which had seen substantial developments on our trunk road network, waited for 10 years. When the current Government came to power, first as a minority back in 2007, it was that Government that put roads back on the agenda. For that reason, I have told the minister many times that there is little that I can criticise about his road-building programme and I will rightfully continue to praise that change in policy. However, that alone does not constitute the modernising of Scotland’s transport infrastructure for the 21st century. There is still much that we have to discuss and agree on.

Looking at the road-building programme, I still believe that there is one glaring omission from the priorities that the Government has identified. Although linking Scotland’s cities with dual carriageways or motorways is important, the priority should be to ensure that we complete our connections to the rest of the United Kingdom. Despite the differences of opinion on either side of the border, it should be a priority for our Government—and for our transport minister, by forging links with his counterpart south of the border—to see that the A1 is upgraded to become

part of an east coast motorway network. Edinburgh and the east of Scotland have a great deal to gain from being linked to the north-east of England.

Similarly, this Government has failed to address the issue of accident blackspots, which are always on the minds of members of the Scottish Parliament. It remains a surprise to me that this Government and this minister will not act to deal with the problem surrounding the junction of the A90 and A937 at Laurencekirk. The pronouncements from Transport Scotland in recent months only make me think that there are none so blind as those who will not see.

Among the Government’s other priorities that the minister mentioned in his opening speech, there is of course the issue of buses, which was raised by the Labour Party. I have supported the changes that been made to the bus service operators grant, as I believe that they are constructive and positive. However, they are underfunded, and many of the problems that are described by the Labour Party and used as an excuse for re-regulation are in fact caused by changes in the funding level.

That brings me to the Labour Party’s amendment, which lists wholesome projects and priorities that we should all consider in the longer term. However, the determination to pursue the concept of centralised planning and the re-regulation of our bus industry are enough to frighten off a poor innocent Tory like me. I believe that we should work constructively with the bus companies here in Scotland. We should face the fact that it was deregulation that created the business opportunity for companies such as Stagecoach and First Group—two of the biggest transport groups in Europe—to get in there and become the successful businesses that they are. Let us praise those companies and not make the mistake of condemning them by attacking the regulatory system—or the lack of it, as is currently the case.

I am worried that the motion before us is not a plan for modernising our transport infrastructure in its entirety. As I state in my amendment, it gives the lie to the idea put about by John Swinney and others that there is a huge lack in capital investment. In these difficult times it seems rather clear that the Government, since it chooses to mention £4 billion of expenditure in its motion, is able to find investment resources for priorities when those come along.

The other great project that has been discussed across Britain as a whole is high-speed rail. Many members in the chamber, including some in the Government, have bought into the idea of a high-speed rail network. We have reached a critical phase in the project and, if it is to go ahead, we



must now understand how it will develop, what it might cost and how that cost will be broken down between Scotland and England in future.

If the minister gets his way, and Scotland becomes an independent country, I cannot see why a UK Government would wish to extend the high-speed rail network any further north than Manchester or Leeds. We need some explanation of how Scotland, if it becomes an independent country, will benefit from that beyond simply being able to access that rail network by train.

If this Government believes that high-speed rail can come to central Scotland and deliver benefits to places such as Aberdeen and Inverness, we need some explanation of how it will pay its share, because there has never been a project that looks more like one for the United Kingdom.

I move amendment S4M-08270.3, to insert at end:

“; recognises that this level of investment shows that Scottish Government assertions about the lack of a significant capital budget are unfounded, and welcomes the UK Government’s commitment to modernising transport as evidenced by the commitment to delivering high speed rail.”

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** In moving to the open debate, I advise members that we are extremely short of time. Therefore, although it was indicated that speeches would be of six minutes, if members could take around five minutes, I might be able to call all those who have indicated that they want to take part in the debate. Otherwise, I am afraid that I will not be able to call everyone.

15:39

**Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP):** I am of course delighted to support the motion.

I listened to Alex Johnstone, who is such a nice fellow, but in reading his amendment I am reminded of the adage that, once one gets rid of objectivity, sense and clarity, the rest is a piece of cake. His amendment’s invocation, as he has just expounded, that

“this level of investment shows that Scottish Government assertions about the lack of a significant capital budget are unfounded”

suggests that he has amnesia, given that we also need to spend on other areas such as health and education. His amendment also welcomes

“the UK Government’s commitment to modernising transport as evidenced by the commitment to delivering high speed rail”,

but that welcome will be understood only by those who live in Leeds or south of Leeds. Regarding his statement about who pays for HS2, does he not think that Scotland already pays a disproportionate part of its taxes to the UK revenue? However, I welcome the efforts that have been made by the

Minister for Transport and Veterans to take HS2 beyond Leeds and Manchester to Scotland.

It is easy to applaud the minister because he is our minister, but I applaud him not for that reason but because he has done what is generally widely accepted as a great job of carving, from a minimal capital resource budget, some project deliverables across that spectrum of reduced spend. Those projects include the Queensferry crossing, which, incidentally, was endorsed by Audit Scotland as being of sound management, on target and on budget. That tells me that he has achieved that success only through good and sound management, involvement and practice.

I will turn, if I may, to some of the achievements and opportunities in the south of Scotland. First, the Borders railway project, which the minister mentioned, will lead to the reopening of the Waverley line, which from 1849 onwards ran from Edinburgh through the Borders and was later extended to Carlisle. Following the Beeching report, the line was axed along with many others in 1969 and its reopening was not even considered for some 30 years. I pay tribute to the previous Scottish Government and the Campaign for Borders Rail, which ensured that this rural Borders phoenix would rise again.

The re-establishment of that important rail link will open up and reconnect the Borders communities with each other and with the nation’s capital and, in so doing, will make its contribution to climate change targets. In addition, the Borders rail link will deliver the £33 million of economic benefits that will flow from its construction and, more important, open up the Borders to deliver many more social, economic and environmental benefits. Who knows whether, with more control over our own spending in the years to come, the extension of that line to Carlisle, perhaps with spurs to Stranraer, will fully open up the south-west and restore the line to what it once was? I will also say in passing that, in my dealings with Network Rail and ScotRail, I have been very impressed by their professionalism.

As well as our rail strategy, the futuristic connectivity of our airports, ports, rails and roads will drive our sustainable development so that we meet our economic growth targets as we go forward. Of course I applaud the decision to buy Prestwick airport, but it is not just about that airport and its confidence in supporting other airports on maintenance, repair, overhaul and cargo. Going forward into the 21st century, we need Prestwick airport to be part of an aviation framework in which, colluding with our island airports, it can provide worldwide direct flights and communications to and from Scotland. Who knows whether, with its unique runway capabilities, Prestwick airport could see future intergalactic and

space flights? Of course, that is a matter for current and on-going conversations.

A much more immediate possibility is that we could link all our transport infrastructure with our tourism and export possibilities. For example, it is unacceptable that Scotland hosts 50 cruise ships per year, whereas Copenhagen hosts 500. Development of our ports is critical and I would like to see, for example, deep dredging of Troon and Ayr harbours, which could be developed in partnership with my favourite airport, which I mentioned. The same could apply to Edinburgh airport and Leith or Cocksbridge, for example.

Additionally and briefly, pulling exports from the north of England for worldwide distribution from east and west of Scotland ports and airports would at one stroke reduce carbon emissions, costs and time and expand our huge export capabilities. An integrated and efficient physical connectivity related to our broadband ambitions can, and will, make us truly fit for the 21st century.

15:45

**Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab):** In meeting the transport challenges of the 21st century, the question is always this: which ones should we meet first? Connectivity for the Aberdeen city region should be a fairly high priority for Governments in Edinburgh and London, because few places contribute more per head of population to either the Scottish or UK economies. Aberdeen City Council is the first council to raise more for the Scottish Government in business rates than it receives in Government grants. The oil and gas industry, which is largely based in the north-east, contributes a quarter of all corporation taxes in the UK and accounts for billions of pounds in export earnings. Barriers to economic growth in Aberdeen are bad news for the whole country, so reducing those barriers should be a top priority for government at every level.

Three weeks ago, we learned an uncomfortable truth about the potential economic impact of HS2, which is a major project that has cross-party support here and at Westminster. The UK Government asked KPMG to calculate the impact of HS2 on city regions across the country, including those that would lose out as a result of other regions becoming better connected with London and each other by high-speed rail. KPMG concluded that the Aberdeen city region could be the hardest hit in the UK, with economic output reduced by as much as £220 million a year.

However, HS2 does not have to be bad news for Aberdeen, any more than for Scotland as a whole. The Scottish and UK Governments can do things to mitigate the displacement effect—which will apply not just to Aberdeen but to other places

in the country, including Bristol and Cambridge—by ensuring that Aberdeen becomes better connected to London and to the northern end of the high-speed network.

**Maureen Watt:** Does Lewis Macdonald concede that the KPMG study was probably a desktop exercise that did not take into account the oil and gas sector in Aberdeen and the north-east?

**Lewis Macdonald:** I have looked closely at the methodology—or at as much as has been published, which is very little. It is important to remind Maureen Watt that the second-largest concentration of oil and gas jobs in the UK is not in Shetland or the Moray Firth but in greater London, so we should not assume that oil and gas jobs cannot be displaced to elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Top of the list of mitigating measures that the Scottish Government should take is a cut in journey times on the intercity routes between Aberdeen and the central belt. Ministers identified how to do that in the strategic transport projects review in 2008: by removing the one short stretch of single track at Montrose and building a new line from Inverkeithing to Halbeath, with the ultimate aim of linking the Aberdeen to Edinburgh and Aberdeen to Glasgow lines at Perth. Those options were flagged up, but they have not been given the green light. As long ago as the then Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee's consideration of national planning framework 2 in 2009, I raised the absence of the Halbeath project from the framework, but there is still no firm commitment from the Government to those projects as we move towards NPF3.

Top of the list for the UK Government—and of vital importance to the Scottish economy—is that it maintain and strengthen air links between Aberdeen and London. HS2 will make many domestic air routes redundant, not just between London and other English cities, but perhaps ultimately between London and Glasgow and Edinburgh. However, high-speed rail can never substitute for air travel between the north of Scotland and London, simply because of the sheer distance that is involved. More passengers fly from Aberdeen to Heathrow every year than to the hub airports at Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Paris, Copenhagen and Dublin put together. Heathrow is by far the most important destination for the Aberdeen economy, which is why the north-east of Scotland transport partnership—Nestrans—has this week called for guaranteed access for Aberdeen flights to landing slots at Heathrow, and for such slots to be written into any future development there.

It is open to the UK Government to protect those slots, especially given that the European Union is currently reviewing its landing slots regulations.

Under current rules, that would not be possible in the event of Scottish independence, since Aberdeen and London Heathrow would then be in separate countries, but it is in the UK's interests as well as in Scotland's interests to protect Aberdeen's international competitiveness.

If the Scottish ministers want to help Aberdeen's economy, there are things that they can do with the powers that they already have. They could confirm that expansion of Aberdeen harbour is a national priority by giving a fair wind to those plans—the TV celebrities at the Crown and Anchor would expect no less—and they could help to fund a feasibility study into a light rail link from Aberdeen international airport to the city centre, as the city council has invited it to do. If ministers were to look again at the Scottish transport appraisal guidance report on the Haudagain roundabout they would find that there is no reason not to progress with it.

Their taking those steps and mitigating the impact of HS2 would show that ministers understand that Aberdeen's transport needs go beyond the western peripheral route and that investment in Aberdeen's transport infrastructure is not an optional extra but is essential to the future success of Scotland as a whole.

15:50

**Fiona McLeod (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP):** It is interesting that in this debate on transport infrastructure for the 21st century, so far almost everybody has referred to motorised transport, although I note that in his opening remarks the minister talked about the money that is going to the national cycle network. I want to talk about delivering safe streets for cyclists and pedestrians, because I believe that that is intrinsic to our 21st century transport infrastructure.

The issue is about shared space for different modes of transport, equality of access to that space and prioritising who gets that access. I want to be very clear in this short speech that to talk about cycling and walking as modes of transport is not to be fanciful—this is not Fiona going back to her hippie roots—but to be incredibly practical.

Among other things, this is about climate change, which the minister talked about in his opening remarks, and in order to address climate change we need to effect behaviour change and bring about modal shift. It used to be that talking about modal shift meant talking about getting out of cars and on to the bus or the train, but increasingly we need to talk about getting out of motorised transport and on to your feet or bike.

A big behaviour change or shift that we have to make is to convince the public that they have a false sense of security if they think that when they

are in their car they are safer than they are on a bike or out walking. That is especially the case when asking parents to get their kids to walk or cycle to school.

How do we make the change so that people understand that shared space equals safe space for all the users of an area? I am very proud of two of my parliamentary colleagues, Sandra White and Dennis Robertson, with their proposed members' bills on responsible parking and use of blue badges. They are getting us to think about how we all share and use the space of the streets in which we live.

I want to talk about something much bolder and broader in my constituency: a huge attitude shift. In Bishopbriggs there is a strong lobby of people who want Bishopbriggs to be the first 20mph town in Scotland—not a zone or limited area, but a 20mph town. Some fantastic campaigners are working on that.

In the chamber I have often referred to East Dunbartonshire's Cycle Co-operative, which has achieved the amazing figure of 20 per cent of primary school pupils cycling to school every day. That is quite something to have achieved—and that is without a 20mph town. ED's Cycle Co-operative is talking about how to get the parents of the other 80 per cent to believe that it is safe to let their children walk or cycle to school.

I am absolutely delighted that ED's Cycle Co-operative has just received from the climate challenge fund £160,000 to go towards a project called good moves Bishopbriggs. The Cycle Co-operative is a group of people who know what they are doing and are already effecting change. However, they have been defeated in their attempt to get 20mph as the limit throughout Bishopbriggs. I have to get a bit technical here, Presiding Officer, members and minister.

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

**Fiona McLeod:** It is fair to say that the guidance for setting 20mph limits can be confusing and requires much cross-referencing across a number of documents and traffic regulations. In 55 seconds I could not possibly list all the pieces of legislation that must be looked at. However, it comes down to focusing on whether physical or psychological calming measures are necessary in order to have 20mph zones.

Paragraph 5 of Scottish Executive development department's "SEDD circular no 6/2001: 20MPH speed limits" states:

"It is for local traffic authorities to decide on the number and type of measures which should be employed in each particular case."

The problem in Bishopbriggs is that we cannot, even with all those different pieces of legislation, convince East Dunbartonshire Council to do that. It keeps on saying that it is not possible and that the regulations do not allow it to take that action. However, the “Cycling Action Plan for Scotland 2013” clearly says that we want more 20mph zones. In Bishopbriggs, we want a 20mph town. I therefore ask the minister whether the regulations could be simplified and the guidance made clearer so that we can stop buck-passing and achieve that modal shift to safe shared space.

15:55

**Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD):** I make the point to Alex Johnstone that when Sarah Boyack became the first transport minister under devolution, she did not inherit a transport policy, but a roads policy. Such was the nature of policy at the time; previous London Governments with responsibility for transport policy left only a roads policy to this Parliament.

I am still supportive of Governments that move to much more balanced spending in order to address—as Fiona McLeod has just rightly recognised—the importance of other forms of transport, including cycling and using our feet, but principally bus and rail. I do not think that that is a wrong approach. I disagree quite profoundly with Alex Johnstone and the Tories on the matter, as I have since 1999, when Murray Tosh was the Conservatives’ transport spokesperson.

Keith Brown has got the matter broadly right. I hope that he realises that we all have greater challenges to face when organisations such as Transform Scotland write, as it has for the debate—I am putting a quotation to him just as I had them put to me when I was a minister—to say that the

“Government’s own transport indicators demonstrate that its policies have failed to move people on to public transport, failed to reduce congestion and led to an increase in climate emissions.”

Any Government’s objective must be to look at the balance of spending between road and rail—or “motorised transport”, as some members have called it—and to consider how to best to achieve the greatest impact in moving the greatest number of citizens in the ways in which they want to be moved.

I have some sympathy for the minister on bus re-regulation, not least because—Lewis Macdonald will remember this well—I resisted it when I was in government, which did not make me particularly popular among the Labour group. However, I was an awful lot more unpopular with the SNP because it was Glasgow members

including Sandra White and Nicola Sturgeon who were leading the charge on bus re-regulation.

It is, of course, for the minister to sort out his policy and for his Government to decide what it wants to do on Iain Gray’s bill. However, there may be some merit in some of his proposals. I therefore suggest that the bill should get the proper parliamentary hearing that such a measure, which is aimed at addressing a fundamental issue, deserves. That would, at least, recognise the nature of the particular problem.

I will not and do not accept that we have a year-zero approach to what happened before 2007. The Larkhall to Milngavie rail line opened in 2005. It was the first line to open in 25 years, which is a considerable tribute to the promoters and all who were involved. However, it is not fair to say—I do not suppose Keith Brown really believes this, but we have to do politics—that nothing happened on rail before 2007. A lot of good projects came forward, and that is a good example of a project that happened.

**Keith Brown:** That is not my position. I made the point that there had been a lack of investment for many decades, but there were undoubtedly initiatives. When I was at Clackmannanshire Council, we proposed the Stirling-Alloa-Kincardine rail link, which I acknowledge was supported by the Scottish Executive of the time.

**Tavish Scott:** I will try to keep the consensual tone going by saying that I accept that. I want to make particular mention of the organisations, including Keith Brown’s council at that time, that played an important part in moving that project forward.

I have two points to make around journey times, which a number of members have mentioned. It is the fundamental issue that the minister will have to address when he looks at the new approach to tendering for the ScotRail franchise that Transport Scotland announced just the other day, with the short list for those who will bid to run our rail services. Journey times are fundamental to helping the competitiveness of rail in comparison with road. We all have our own examples. In the context of Aberdeen and the north-east, Lewis Macdonald rightly mentioned a road that—like the A9—I drive along a lot. At the moment, travelling by rail from Inverness to Edinburgh or Inverness to Glasgow is not competitive with travel by car or by bus. I put my son on the bus between Edinburgh and Inverness a lot. I believe that, when it comes to future investment, a close look has to be taken not just at capacity on rail routes, but at journey times. I encourage the minister to think about that issue and to address it through his budget.

Infrastructure investment is not just about dualling major pieces of trunk road infrastructure,

much as I appreciate that politically that is a highly attractive thing to do. If we do not cut journey times by rail between our major cities, the balance of spending will not matter, because we will not encourage the shift away from road that most members hope people will make by giving them the option of using extremely good public transport systems to get them from, for example, Aberdeen to Edinburgh.

16:01

**Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP):** We have had an interesting whirlwind tour of Scotland's transport infrastructure, with Lewis Macdonald talking about the Haudagain roundabout, Fiona McLeod proposing that Bishopbriggs be a 20mph town, Chic Brodie—in an interesting and memorable contribution—discussing intergalactic travel and Tavish Scott giving us a valuable history lesson, in which he told us about significant transport decisions since the inception of devolution. And they say that transport infrastructure is boring.

We all realise that transport is vital for the functioning of Scotland's economy and for connecting communities across the country, but there is always a debate to be had about how we balance competing transport priorities within the budget that is available. There is no doubt that if Scotland is to cement its future as a modern sustainable economy and society, we must ensure that we have an integrated transport network that is truly fit for purpose—one that will allow us to maximise Scotland's opportunities for commerce, leisure and tourism, and to unlock our full potential. Most of all—as we have heard—such investment is essential to our transition to a low-carbon economy.

As we have also heard, a well-functioning transport infrastructure can bring about modal shift, as we move from the car to alternative forms of transport—whether to active travel such as walking and cycling, to public transport such as green buses and rail, or to other forms of sustainable transport, including electric cars and car-share schemes.

Securing a transport infrastructure that is fit for purpose requires not only focus and insight to meet the challenges head on, but the vision to look ahead at our future needs, and the discipline to manage effectively the decisions that we must make. The Minister for Transport and Veterans has certainly risen to the challenge. The Queensferry crossing is a major capital investment, but it is necessary to safeguard a vital connection in Scotland's transport network. The project is currently under budget and on programme. That crossing will bring additional economic benefit of around £6 billion, and it is

reassuring that the project's management has been commended by Audit Scotland. The existing Forth road bridge will continue to operate, but as a corridor for use by cyclists, pedestrians and public transport. That is the good example that we wish to set, but it is not the only such example.

We have heard about the Scottish Government's commitment to inject £3 billion into Scotland's railways in the next five-year period. In addition to £3 billion investment in rail infrastructure, there will be an additional £1 billion of Government-backed industry investment in strategic network enhancements and further funding of £1 billion over five years for ScotRail's Caledonian sleeper service. There will be more rigorous standards for train performance and a dedicated franchise to secure the future of the sleeper service.

Network Rail will be required to oversee delivery of the Edinburgh to Glasgow improvement programme, the reopening of the Borders railway, the first phase of improvements along the Aberdeen to Inverness corridor, phase 2 of improvements to the Highland main line, and the development of a rolling programme of electrification following the completion of EGIP. I defy anyone to suggest that that is anything other than significant infrastructure investment in our railways.

That investment forms part of the largest and most substantial transport investment programme that Scotland has ever seen, and the Scottish Government deserves credit for it, but the goal that we must work towards is to secure a fully integrated transport network. That means improving connections across the country and ensuring that the rail timetable is synchronised with local buses and ferries, and that the necessary infrastructure is in place to connect train and cycle journeys.

I agree whole-heartedly with my colleague Fiona McLeod that cycling is neither an afterthought nor an add-on, but should be an integral part of our transport strategy. In advance of the debate, the city cycling Edinburgh forum and Spokes highlighted the importance of cycling as a mode of local transport as well as its being a means of achieving our shared objectives on congestion, carbon emissions and public health. That is why the Scottish cycle network is so important and why we need to learn lessons from not only other European countries and cities but from our English neighbours as they embark on construction of urban cycle networks in their cities.

I liked Fiona McLeod's idea of a 20mph town, which echoes the call from Spokes for at least one cycle-friendly town or city in each Scottish local authority area. I am glad that the City of Edinburgh Council has made good on its pledge and

commitment to use 5 per cent of its transport budget to fund active travel; that will rise to 6 per cent and even higher over the coming years. I am also glad that the Government has released £3.9 million of investment for shovel-ready projects for cycling and that £300,000 of that money has already been spent on resurfacing North Meadow Walk for the benefit of my constituents and those in the neighbouring Edinburgh Central constituency. I am delighted with the additional £20 million over two years and the leveraging in of additional local authority funding to bring that figure to £35 million.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):** I would be grateful if you could close now, Mr Eadie.

**Jim Eadie:** A focus on integrated infrastructure and sustainable travel will help Scotland to achieve the sustainable transport future that I believe everyone in the chamber wishes to see.

16:06

**Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Lab):** I am grateful for Jim Eadie's excellent and thoughtful speech because I sometimes worry for the Scottish Government and its need not just to suppress all criticism but to constantly seek praise, even if today that praise is just from its own back benchers and, I believe, Alex Johnstone. Patting oneself on the back for roads that have not yet been built strikes me as odd when surely it is the Parliament's job to scrutinise the Government's decisions and question their value for money and their benefit to Scotland.

This could—or even should be—a consensual debate. After all, Labour and the SNP share a Keynesian approach to the economy in their keenness to invest in infrastructure projects and a rejection of the Conservative-led UK Government's approach that has kept us in the doldrums for four years. However, once we move beyond the macroeconomy or strategic level, serious questions that the Scottish Government needs to answer about the detail of its infrastructure programme start to arise.

The minister might not recognise the hollow ring to his motion, but there is no shortage of other—dare I say—more objective observers offering a more balanced perspective. For example, the Queensferry crossing received overwhelming support from this Parliament—and, indeed, still has that support—but as the Jimmy Reid Foundation, the Community trade union, the Scottish Trades Union Congress and others have pointed out, should we not be concerned at the manner in which the contracts for steel, cement and construction went abroad rather than to local companies? It is right to highlight the Borders

railway but surely in a debate on Scotland's transport infrastructure it would simply be wrong not to talk about the strategic importance of rail links to our main airports.

Concerns and questions about whether projects are on time or on budget are being raised not just by Opposition parties. The Auditor General, who recently reported on our key transport infrastructure projects, has said:

“The Scottish Government considers”

its spending on five key infrastructure projects

“affordable in the long term, but it has not fully demonstrated the reliability of its analysis in this area.”

She also said:

“Reporting of the building cost estimates for three projects has also been incomplete or inconsistently presented”

and

“the timescale for ... completion”

of the Edinburgh to Glasgow improvement programme

“has increased by over two years”.

Finally, she pointed out:

“for the Borders Railway and EGIP projects, Transport Scotland did not ensure that business cases were complete and up to date at all stages. Consequently, at certain decision points, it had not fully demonstrated the viability, value for money and affordability of the projects.”

Such observations hardly fill one with confidence in this Administration's competence; indeed, that worry was compounded when the permanent secretary—the Scottish Government's chief civil servant—had to apologise to the Parliament's Public Audit Committee for failing to disclose half a billion pounds that this Government is spending on these very projects.

By the way, the permanent secretary's excuse was that the Scottish Government's figures did not include the costs of purchasing the land necessary for the infrastructure projects to go ahead. This Administration seems to have a very strange attitude to land purchases. As we know from the Glasgow airport rail link, it is happy to pay hundreds of thousands—if not millions—of pounds to buy land, but it thinks nothing of scrapping whole projects and then selling the land off for the tiniest fraction of its cost. Now we know that it does not want even to declare those purchases to the Parliament's Public Audit Committee. We do not have to wonder why.

The minister seems to think that we should simply applaud his list of as yet unbuilt roads, but when we look in more detail at the transport infrastructure projects, rather than being reassured we see that the Government's lack of

transparency on costs and its failure to provide information on affordability raises even more questions.

The motion refers to more than £4 billion-worth of work, but the Auditor General for Scotland estimated that the SNP Administration is committing us to £7.5 billion of spending over the next 30 years from the five big transport projects alone. She further highlighted that, for four of those revenue-financed projects, more than £5 billion of the estimated committed costs have not been reported publicly by the Scottish Government.

Instead, we are supposed to be reassured by the finance secretary's intention, which was outlined in admittedly slightly more detail in this year's budget statement, to limit future revenue-financed investment—that is private finance initiative, public-private partnership or non-profit-distributing projects for the rest of us—to less than 5 per cent of its expected future annual budget.

The Scottish Government has not told us, for example, why it set the level at 5 per cent. We know that repayments will be from the resource budget alone, but in calculating the 5 per cent cap the capital budget is also included, as are the non-cash departmental expenditure limit and the local government allocation, despite the fact that the local government share of future revenue commitments is excluded. That is some way to calculate 5 per cent.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I thank the member for sticking to his time.

16:11

**Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP):** The KPMG Scotland business instinct survey has shown that the energy, tourism, and food and drink sectors will contribute the most positive impact to the Scottish economy in the next 10 years. That does not just mean in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen; it means across the country. Indeed, I am looking for an all-Scotland policy, and I want to look at some of the issues that the Government is raising positively to help us to have that all-Scotland policy, and to raise other matters of some concern.

Of course people need to have transport choices, but the choice is not necessarily to go faster; it can be about reliability and recognising that distance is one of the issues that we have to deal with. Indeed, if something is going to be sustainable in the future, it must be low carbon. The approach has to include trains, for example, rather than encouraging people to travel long journeys by road.

On roads and dualling the A9 south of Inverness, can the minister give us an idea of how the interim process involving the average speed cameras will work, given that average speeds will be higher than they are on the A77? People are looking for some help on that to understand how it will work.

Looking further north to my constituency, we can see that various climate change issues crop up. Extreme flooding has led to the need for a £1 million 30-week project on the A9 at the Portgower mill culvert bridge, beside the house of a friend of mine, Margot Macgregor, who has a massive building site outside her windows—it makes a change from the water from the burn being up to her kitchen window and frightening the life out of her. That extra piece of work is necessary. There are no other easy routes to the north. The A9 is the main road, and without it there are massive detours. We are therefore very pleased that such £1 million projects, which have to be slotted in, have been slotted in. That is welcome.

After 40 years of talking about the Berriedale braes on the A9 into Caithness—that section of road is perhaps the only alpine section of trunk road in Scotland, and it is very difficult to deal with—we have made progress through the stages in the past three years, with the help of the local estate. It came up with a simple plan that did not involve a massive flyover, which we could not afford. It has worked with the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, the Scottish Government, the Highlands and Islands transport partnership and Highland Council to get to the stage of the technical survey. That is being done now, and I hope that that will deliver a shovel-ready project in the near future. Those things help long communication lines in Scotland to get access to the main road networks, and it is important to see them as things that need to happen soon.

I will briefly mention rail services in the time that I have left. We are glad that Conon Bridge station is opening, but we could have other stations on the north line. We need better rolling stock and for long journeys we need access to the electric sockets that the electric trains in the Glasgow and west of Scotland area have so that we can plug in our computers and get proper broadband. It is appallingly difficult to get any kind of broadband on the journey between Perth and Inverness or on journeys further north.

The potential for freight traffic on rail is exemplified by the whisky trains that are now going to go south from Elgin via Aberdeen. Every time that one of those trains goes it will mean that 29 lorries will be taken off the A9, which is a great innovation. However, the freight facilities grants

must be rolled out to other things. As Direct Rail Services is moving nuclear waste by rail, let us hope that we can get the rolling stock to bring things up to Caithness on the return journey.

On air travel, I am very concerned about Flybe's cuts in the number of its staff. We are at the end of the line in the north, so the regional airlines that provide lifeline services to Wick airport in my constituency and to the islands are an important part of our infrastructure. We would like the minister to take great care to ensure that the services continue. I heard a correspondent on the radio talking about some services having public service obligations, but very few of those lifeline services have public service obligations. It is important that we get such things lined up if we are to see integrated transport to the far north in the future.

16:16

**Cameron Buchanan (Lothian) (Con):**

Members have raised a variety of important points, but I will focus my comments on one or two aspects of our future strategy.

The Government's motion is very much focused on the investment that has been made in our transport infrastructure. However, as welcome as that is, it must be matched by a comprehensive and joined-up strategy in order to drive sustainable economic growth, and the strategy must focus on the commuter.

It has been some time since the Scottish Government's previous national transport strategy was launched—I think that it was in 2006—but one of the strategy's key aims was the improvement of journey times and connections. That was welcome, and improvements have undoubtedly been made as a result, but there are clear weaknesses. For example, it has been noted that the Edinburgh gateway tram and rail interchange at Gogar represents a missed opportunity for a park-and-ride facility. Similarly, the newly opened Bathgate to Airdrie rail link has led to a significant increase in traffic at Bathgate train station and, although the station is only three years old, it appears that the parking capacity is insufficient. That just goes to show how important it is to think through all the implications of future infrastructure spending.

I am no great fan of management buzzwords, but nonetheless we need a joined-up approach to transport planning. The approach of improving connections that the existing Government strategy calls for is far too narrow; there is a need for a more comprehensive but individually focused plan. We need to start with the basics and ask: who is travelling? Where are they going? How do they want to get there? What is preventing them from

doing that? How can we make it easier? We need to know not only who uses the train but who is not using it and why. How are they getting to the train station? Are there people who would take their bike if the facilities and bicycle routes were safer?

All those questions need to be asked. The commuter must be at the centre of any joined-up transport strategy, and we must understand the entirety of their journey from door to door and what can be done to make it quicker and easier. I feel that we can make a good deal of easy improvements at relatively low cost; large-scale investment in infrastructure is not the only route to improvement.

Future transport needs, as well as present demands, should also be about shaping policy. Rail Future Scotland is already lobbying for the restoration of double track on heavily used and high-frequency routes such as the recently extended Milngavie line. I was interested in the recent comments of Paul Tetlaw of Transform Scotland, who described the Highland main line as a "slimmed down Victorian railway" and called for the twin tracking of the route and electrification, which I think was a personal commitment of the First Minister at the most recent general election.

Such points raise questions about whether we are future proofing existing infrastructure projects such as the Borders rail link, for which only three stretches are twin tracked. The Campaign for Borders Rail and Transform Scotland have already criticised the proposed construction along the rail line of bridges that are suitable for only a single-track line, rightly questioning the consequences for overall capacity in the future.

We must avoid a situation in which we build infrastructure that is at capacity within a few years and there is then a need for costly expansion and improvement. Obviously, we cannot peer into the future, and we do not have inexhaustible resources, but we must look to deliver the best possible value for the taxpayer, and that will not be achieved by building infrastructure with a limited fit-for-purpose lifespan. In some ways, this is one of the biggest challenges in planning transport infrastructure—to make sure that it will fit our future needs rather than our existing ones.

It is also important to accept that the Scottish Government cannot deliver a comprehensive transport strategy on its own but needs to work with local authorities on planning and delivery. Resources must be directed according to local priorities that are determined by councils, and their use should not be dictated by central Government. In that context, it is important to keep a close eye on what local authorities are doing with the money that is available to them through things such as cycling, walking and safer streets budgets. We must accept that it is for local authorities to decide



where their transport priorities lie, and we must not attempt to pedal in ring fencing by the back door.

That said, I note that cycling is a priority for some local authorities. In Edinburgh, there is a need to make it safer and easier to get around the city, and I welcome the steps that have already been taken. As a keen cyclist—although not so much recently, as members may imagine—I support action in the area. In my extensive travels to Europe on business, I have seen the facilities and initiatives that can be used to encourage safer cycling. I regret to say that, as with so many other forms of physical exercise, they do it with much more style on the continent. The biggest barrier to cycling in Scotland seems to be the perception that it is dangerous, which is almost certainly a result of recent high-profile fatalities. That is why we need to think a good deal more about how we can offer a safe environment for cyclists.

I was interested to note that, last week, London's mayor Boris Johnson launched a new stretch of London's cycle superhighway, which is fully segregated from other traffic. The cycling campaign group Spokes has already called for segregated cycle lanes, and that is one of the ideas that we should be fully considering.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You must draw to a close, please.

**Cameron Buchanan:** We must ensure that the funding that is available is put to the best possible use.

16:21

**Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP):** I am pleased to be speaking towards the end of this debate because, as convener of the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee, it has been interesting for me to hear views from members across the chamber on a matter that occupies much of our time in committee.

What strikes me most about the current Government's infrastructure investment compared with that of previous Governments is that it is for the whole of Scotland. The Government is the first that has as a priority to connect all our cities with dual carriageways, and the effect of that should not be underestimated. It will be a key factor in convincing people that they can still live in rural towns and villages, many of which are not on rail routes, and be able to get access to employment further afield. I am pleased that the projects are progressing well and that, for example, consultation with communities along the A96 is taking place at present.

I have to take issue with those who complain about and oppose the dualling of these roads. I

think that they come to the issue from a central-belt perspective. The central belt is already well served by a network of motorways and dual carriageways. Those who are against improvements to the road network to and in the north and north-east are clearly not subject to the daily frustration that my and other colleagues' constituents face as they try to go about their daily lives. Those who are concerned about air pollution fail to take into account the increase in cars that have very low emissions and, although they are still in their infancy, the number of electric vehicles, which is increasing.

I am pleased that the minister mentioned the AWPR. In a survey by Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce this spring, 87 per cent of respondents identified the AWPR as the key infrastructure investment that will drive economic growth in the region. We have already seen the unlocking of many large-scale developments in the region because of the progress that is, at last, being made on this vital project.

Some of the briefings that we have received for this debate complain that more investment is going into roads than into rail, but transport economists and those who are involved in the rail industry tell us that investment in rail has not been higher in Scotland for years, and that the other parts of the UK are envious of the Scottish Government's commitment to rail.

Spending of £4 billion since 2007 has supported new rail lines, new and better services, new stations and new trains. There were 83 million passenger journeys in Scotland last year, which represents a 33 per cent increase since 2004. Rail freight continues to grow and it is pleasing to see the recent move to rail of that most valuable of freight: whisky from Moray.

I am sure that not many members of the Scottish Parliament, with the exception of Alex Johnstone and the Tories, do not regret the deregulation of bus services, especially when we see how effectively, efficiently and cheaply Lothian buses work in Edinburgh. Would that we could have such a system in Aberdeen. However, Iain Gray and Mark Griffin have yet to say where the money for that would be diverted from.

Members mentioned ports and airports. I share Lewis Macdonald's hope that expansion of the Aberdeen port will be included in future Government plans. Other members and I recently met representatives of the port; the project is exciting.

I appreciated Fiona McLeod's speech. Cycling has a strong lobby in Scotland, but far more people walk, especially women and children. In the Infrastructure and Capital Investment

Committee's deliberations, I ensure that time and consideration are given to safe streets for walking.

Alex Johnstone mentioned high-speed rail, which he believes will be delivered to Scotland only by a Westminster Government. To me, HSR demonstrates most visibly the London and south-east-centric nature of the Westminster Government, which is not concerned about—or listening to what people are saying about—the economic future of the north-east or north-west regions of England, let alone that of Scotland.

Only in an independent Scotland, which has full responsibility for all modes of transport, ports, airports and air passenger duty, will the people of Scotland get the integrated transport infrastructure that they deserve and can fund.

16:27

**Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab):** The Government's motion says that investment in transport projects is

"vital to ... stimulate the economy now, securing long-term sustainable growth and providing a modern and efficient transport system fit for the 21st century".

No one can disagree with that. The primary focus of transport projects should be the provision of greater connectivity and easier journeys for commuters, and the creation of crucial jobs and security for families. The Labour amendment addresses the need for investment and modernisation, to benefit the consumer and the workforce.

Reregulation of the bus industry is necessary to address the challenges of the 21st century. The public want and deserve better buses, which is why I support Iain Gray's proposed bus regulation (Scotland) bill. I am a frequent bus user, so I sympathise with people who depend on buses that rarely turn up on time and are overcrowded and often dirty.

Iain Gray's proposed bill aims to give transport authorities greater power to determine how bus services are run without having to seek ministers' consent. Too often, we hear of a bus service being reduced or withdrawn, however much the community depends on it. If successful routes were tendered with less successful routes, local people could benefit and would not have to fear that they might lose a service.

If members doubt the value of the proposed bill, I urge them to speak to their constituents. During the past few months, that is what I have been doing. I asked people in Renfrewshire for their opinions on the bus services and the better buses bill. Every reply that I received backed the bill and set out people's negative experiences on the buses—and that is in a large urban area, not far

from Glasgow, so I can only imagine the misery that bus services cause for people who live in more rural areas.

The knock-on effects of poor services on health, employment and education are a challenge that remains unmet in the 21st century. Given the Government's ambitious carbon reduction targets, a rigorous national strategy needs to be developed, to get more people out of their cars and on to public transport. However, that can be a realistic goal only when we have a connected public transport system that meets the needs of people in rural and urban areas.

I ask members not only to consider their constituents' concerns about bus services, but to remember that far more bus journeys than train journeys are taken each day, despite the fact that the Government focuses more often on rail.

Scottish Labour's debate last week on the Glasgow airport rail link highlighted why an independent audit is required to investigate the loss of £30 million from the public purse. During the debate, I cited the recent Audit Scotland report "Scotland's key transport infrastructure projects". One of the key recommendations for the Scottish Government is that it should

"refine and develop its plan for scrutinising, challenging and monitoring major investment projects",

which would undoubtedly lead to more accountability and ensure that we would not have a repeat of the waste of taxpayers' money that was caused by the cancellation of GARL.

Over recent years, a number of projects have faced delays and cancellations by the Government, undermining the development of our rail networks. Although the Borders railway project is to be welcomed, it suffered a number of delays and cost increases. That is another example of why Audit Scotland recommended that the Scottish Government should "improve" its "openness and public accountability". However, it was not only the Scottish Government that was under fire from Audit Scotland. Transport Scotland has some recommendations that it needs to take on board, despite its having some

"good corporate governance structure for major investment projects".

I await both Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government meeting the deadline that has been set in the recommendations.

It is only right that, in debating the challenges for our transport system in the 21st century, we remember the wider role that the system plays in all areas of people's lives. From health and education to leisure, business and employment, a well-connected, well-planned network of roads, rail

and buses can make lives simpler and safer for both young and old.

16:31

**John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Ind):** In his opening speech, the minister mentioned the unparalleled budget restraints that have been placed on the Scottish Government. Those restraints are not in dispute, except in the Tory amendment. However, politics is about priorities and competing demands, and it is evident that the motor lobby has a very strong voice that has been listened to.

I am disappointed that there has been no mention of ferries, which are a vital part of our infrastructure. Given the fact that the motion talks about “strategic transport networks”, it is strange that there has been no mention of ferries. There is good news for the Scottish Government in relation to the Raasay ferry, which has an innovative design and was built in Scotland. I would like to see that replicated, with a replacement programme that would put our shipbuilding yards to some constructive use, and an enhanced, less polluting fleet.

I was heartened to hear the minister say that he is keen to encourage people to move from road to rail. Of course, the practicalities of rail travel will shape people’s view on whether it is worth while. I received a detailed email from a constituent who travelled twice on the Inverness to Aberdeen line at the weekend. He outlined the various challenges connected with his journey and said that

“26 got on at Inch, 50 at Inverurie and 15 at Dyce. We became a sardines tin!”

That is good news in that plenty of use is being made of the service, but he had a similar experience on the return journey. That raises the question why, 10 years after we were promised that the short platforms at Elgin and Inch would be lengthened, that has not happened. That is what people are interested in—they want practical opportunities to use rail.

As things stand, it is quicker to use the train than to travel by road between Inverness and Aberdeen. It is, therefore, disappointing that the Scottish Government seems intent on reversing the position with its plans to dual the A96. How does that square with the minister’s assertion that he wants to encourage people to move from road to rail? A cost benefit analysis must be done on that. The phrase “modal shift” is used a lot, not just about freight, but about passengers. What analysis is done? We must make rail an attractive option, and part of doing so will involve considering how it integrates with other policies—not just transport policies, but policies on the

environment and planning. For example, how transport links with developments such as those at Kishorn will be important.

Reference has been made to the briefings that members have received. I will talk about the one from Friends of the Earth Scotland in the context of the damage that air pollution does to health. We all want to encourage more cycling and walking as well as more and better public transport, but those things will require less traffic.

The minister’s mention of retrofitting is welcome. That is a practical example of what we should encourage: inspecting, repairing and replacing in that order, not going straight to replacing.

Unusually for me, I will commend something from the United States. Smart Growth America, which is on the internet—I can show the link to the minister—has carried out research that says:

“Public transportation investments generate 31 percent more jobs per dollar than new construction of roads and bridges, and repair work on roads and bridges generates 16 percent more jobs per dollar than new bridge and road construction.”

The research goes on to say:

“Fixing existing infrastructure produces a higher return on investment than new construction because repair:

- prevents the need for reconstruction later, which costs 4 to 14 times as much;
- saves money by reducing damage from potholes and vibrations;
- Keep existing communities vibrant. Neglecting existing places while building new infrastructure drives growth out, and means the public ends up buying two of everything.”

I do not think that we have the money for “new construction”, so I commend the inspect, repair and replace approach.

Mention has been made of the Borders rail line. It is welcome and a good example of consensus being built. In a previous debate, I also commended the additional Oban to Glasgow rail service, with which there is excellent connectivity.

Members talked about shift, but the shift will require infrastructure. Members also talked about the north rail line. It is now at capacity and I understand that that is why freight now goes east and south, rather than west and south.

Rail and cycle hubs are very important, too, but their design is important. The right design must form part of the franchise so that there are storage areas for cycles and other things. I have been in touch with the minister on those matters.

The national cycle network is very much to be welcomed. I ask the minister for more of that, please.

16:36

**Alex Johnstone:** This has been a good, constructive and wide-ranging debate. It has covered a lot of subjects, although I have been criticised for not covering everything in my opening speech. I will try to cover one or two more points in my closing speech, but it must be said that, in such a debate, we cannot all be expected to cover everything.

The first issue that I will cover is cycling, which is in the Government motion, for which I intend to vote at 5 o'clock tonight. Cycling was covered at some length by my colleague Cameron Buchanan, who highlighted the fact that it has a lot to offer. Fiona McLeod also mentioned it extensively, and I accept what she said. I was interested in her suggestion that she would make Bishopbriggs the first 20mph town in Scotland. I have occasionally driven out of Edinburgh at rush hour, and I think that it has already beaten her on that, as the traffic is significantly slower than 20mph.

I need to cover one or two key issues, and I will dwell on rail for a moment. Scotland's rail industry is becoming more and more important. Even if we ignore rail freight and look simply at the demand that passengers place on our rail services, we realise that demand is rising fast.

It is vital that, as we develop new routes, we ensure that they have the scope to provide services for larger numbers of passengers. Successful new stations and station expansions have resulted in significantly better improvements in passenger numbers than were shown in the business cases. We have scope to do a great deal with a limited resource to encourage rail travel.

We must also do more to cut journey times on the longer routes in Scotland. Passengers from Aberdeen and Inverness remain concerned that nothing is being done to shorten journey times between those cities and the central belt. If we are to take traffic off the roads, that is where the challenge lies. However, the railways themselves—the infrastructure on which the trains run—will be expensive to improve in those areas. There are many proposals that need to be considered and enacted quickly to achieve the objectives that we want.

A public transport idea that has not been touched on, but which has been discussed in committees several times over the years, is a Scotland-wide travel card. I throw that in now to see whether the Government is at the stage of taking that forward. We have spoken before about the possibility of having a card that is roughly equivalent to the Oyster card in London. Technology has been developed for the concessionary fares scheme in Scotland that begins to move us in that direction, but there has

been concern that we are not quite ready to make the leap. We have not discussed the subject for a while. I ask the minister to take the opportunity to tell us whether any progress has been made.

Before we leave rail, I must mention high-speed rail again. I have significant concerns about where the money will come from to bring the benefits of high-speed rail to Scotland and pass them on to cities that are further north. The costs that are involved are likely to be extremely high. It is time that the Government told us exactly what funding mechanism it might choose to provide that level of rail development for its prospective independent Scotland. That might be covered in the independence white paper, although I doubt it. I look forward to hearing more from the Government about how that funding might be dealt with.

**Keith Brown:** We are taking exactly the same approach as the UK Government took, which is to do the work first, then look at the funding once we know what the routes and the project comprise. That seems the sensible way to proceed.

**Alex Johnstone:** It seems a sensible way to proceed, but it does not account for the fact that, if Scotland became independent, responsibility for a significant proportion of that rail network would fall on Scotland, because Scotland would be considered to have accrued the benefit.

We have had light-hearted moments in the debate. Chic Brodie produced the best remark of the debate when he suggested that we might develop intergalactic travel from Prestwick airport. I hope that that is a possibility in the long term, but I also hope that it does not lead to his suggesting that Ayr should be the site for a future Starfleet academy. I assure him that, thanks to the work of the BBC's "Chewin' the Fat" programme, Carnoustie is well ahead on that campaign.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I am overwhelmed. [*Laughter.*]

16:42

**James Kelly (Rutherglen) (Lab):** I welcome the opportunity to close the debate. As Jim Eadie said, transport infrastructure is an important issue. It is not just about how people and groups get from A to B but about how we support our economy and how we tackle and bring down climate change emissions. It feeds into key parts of the Government's programme.

Given that, I was keen to look at the Government's transport strategy, which the Scottish Parliament information centre helpfully provided in the material for debate. When I opened the strategy document, I saw a foreword from the minister and a photograph of him, looking lean and keen. The only problem was that the

minister was Tavish Scott. I thought, “Surely he can’t have joined the SNP.” I then saw that the date on the strategy was 2006, as has been pointed out. That was the last time that a transport strategy was produced. Strategies are not the be-all and end-all, but that is something of a flaw.

The Government has produced countless strategies—recently, we had an afternoon to debate the play strategy, which I am not against. I would have thought that a starting point for today’s debate might have been a proper transport strategy.

**Jim Eadie:** Does Mr Kelly not think that we should give Transport Scotland credit for producing a fairly comprehensive corporate plan up to 2015?

**James Kelly:** Looking at the infrastructure plan, one might think that having 103 transport projects is something to be welcomed. However, if we examine the detail, we see that 68 per cent of those projects have no business case.

That brings me to issues highlighted by Ken Macintosh and Mary Fee, such as Audit Scotland’s report on transport infrastructure projects. Audit Scotland noted that, with the exception of the Forth crossing, the Government had not informed Parliament or the public of the future estimated financial commitment on the main transport projects; indeed, with respect to EGIP and Borders rail, the business cases were not complete or up to date. There are real issues there. As members have enjoyed pointing out, vast sums of public money are committed to those projects, but it appears that we do not have a proper monitoring system in place to see how the money is being spent.

As Cameron Buchanan correctly pointed out, we need a properly thought-through plan that involves the local authorities and assesses what needs to be done and against what timescales it will be achieved.

My colleague Mark Griffin was right to point out the glaring omission of buses from the SNP motion. It would seem that the SNP is not all that keen on buses despite the fact that many journeys in Scotland take place by bus. Many communities that are isolated and not near a rail station really require bus routes.

It is no accident that the SNP does not want to discuss buses because its cuts—

**Mark McDonald:** Why, if Labour is serious about reforming public transport, did James Kelly’s Labour colleagues in Aberdeen vote down the possibility of a publicly owned bus company in the city, building on the model of Lothian Buses, which could have been delivered without the need for any change to legislation?

**James Kelly:** The key issue for Mr McDonald—and Ms Watt, who also mentioned buses—is Iain Gray’s bus bill. I would welcome Mr McDonald’s support for that bill, which will make a difference to communities throughout Scotland. The bill will give more power to local authorities such as Aberdeen over routes and bus companies. The minister and Maureen Watt asked how that would be funded. One of the interesting proposals in the bill is the cross-subsidy of routes to support those that are being axed as a result of the lack of funding from the SNP Government.

The SNP Government recently captured £800,000 from Scottish Water in order to publicise the benefits of the white paper. I would rather see money and civil servants being used to help to support bus services in Scotland’s communities than being used in a project that would separate us from the rest of the United Kingdom and—as Alex Johnstone said—put at risk any potential benefits from high-speed rail.

On rail services, we have seen changes to EGIP, including cuts of £350 million, and criticism from Audit Scotland that the timescales have slipped. There is not a proper and detailed plan on how EGIP will—

**Keith Brown:** Does that mean that at budget time the member will come forward with a proposal to spend £1 billion on bus reregulation or to put additional money into EGIP—or is it just talk?

**James Kelly:** I gave some practical suggestions for where the money could be found. The point for the minister is that he needs a proper transport strategy, including for EGIP. It would be useful if he came to the chamber and detailed when each of the phases will be delivered, because that has not happened today.

We need a proper transport strategy—a plan that delivers for all Scotland’s communities and includes all modes of transport, including buses, cycling and ferries.

16:50

**Keith Brown:** I thank all those who have participated in what has generally been quite an interesting—and sometimes even consensual—debate. The major transport projects that I mentioned at the start will play a crucial part in connecting people and businesses throughout Scotland, and they therefore deserve the attention and recognition of Parliament.

Jim Eadie mentioned that transport infrastructure can appear to be boring to some people. I think some members tend to see a transport debate coming and find a way to transport themselves somewhere else; perhaps

that is the object of the intergalactic travel and teleporting that Chic Brodie mentioned.

Transport is important to Scotland's economy and for connecting people in different communities across the country. We are transforming our strategic transport networks to realise the vision of a modern and efficient transport system that is fit for the 21st century. Our transport system connects our cities by fast and safe road and rail networks, and delivers high-quality and complex projects on time and on budget. Since 2007, there have been 23 major improvements to our motorways and trunk roads network.

With regard to buses, it is true to say that we have held substantially to previous investment levels, and certainly to those of previous Administrations. It strikes me that, given the 26 per cent cut to our capital budget—despite what Alex Johnstone's amendment says—and the 11 per cent cut in our resource budget, the fact that we have, by and large, maintained the same level of expenditure on buses through BSOG and the concessionary travel scheme shows a good record of support for buses.

That is even before I mention the green bus and the bus investment initiatives; the Glasgow fastlink; and the £300 million project to upgrade the subway in Glasgow, which does not involve buses but is about providing local transport.

Unlike Tavish Scott, I do not have to worry about my popularity with the Labour group, so I will say one or two things that will not win many friends among its members.

First, we have heard tonight four or five demands from the Labour group, none of which is costed, and none of which Labour will ever propose in a budget, because in order to do so it would have to find money from somewhere else. I think that it was Nye Bevan who said that the language of politics is the language of priorities, and setting priorities is what we have to do. If you want to spend money on something else, you have to say what you will take out and where the money will come from.

I will give members an idea of the scale of the commitments that the Labour Party wants to see. First, it wants the reinstatement of the GARL and EARL projects, and—I think, from what has been said—an additional £350 million for EGIP. It wants lower bus fares, more buses and bus investment, lower ferry fares and more road equivalent tariffs—which, of course, Labour never wanted when it was in government, although the current Government is progressing that. Money has been demanded for additional rail services, more ferries and more routes, and for the air discount scheme. We should not forget the demand for bus reregulation; the best estimate that we can make

on the bare bones of what is there already is that it would cost approximately £1 billion to reregulate bus services in this country.

Everyone knows that there is not the slightest prospect of the Labour Party lodging a single amendment that proposes to do any of those things. That is the extent to which Labour is duping people by saying that it supports those things when it has no intention of putting its money—or taxpayers' money—where its mouth is.

**Mark Griffin:** The minister likes to tell the Labour Party how it should behave in opposition and he talks about it duping people. Perhaps he could look at the manifesto on which his party was elected, which committed to a full Edinburgh to Glasgow improvement programme, and tell us how the Government should fund its own manifesto commitments.

**Keith Brown:** I have said from the start that I cannot help it if the Labour Party chooses not to listen: we will do the full EGIP. Labour did not do it when it was in control, but we will certainly carry out that massive investment in Scotland's central belt.

Of course, we have some idea of where the Labour Party's priorities lie. Its latest proposal is to have trams in Aberdeen, and we have heard that again today; I think that it was described as light rail. That is the Labour Party's priority, which we do not share—

**Lewis Macdonald:** Will the minister give way?

**Keith Brown:** No, I want to make some progress first.

In addition, despite what has been said today, we hear constant doom and gloom from Labour members. Ken Macintosh said that the Government is talking about its projects and praising itself. We are not—we are logging what we have done and what we intend to do. We have heard nothing but negativity in the responses from Ken Macintosh and—to a certain extent—Mary Fee.

All that I am saying is—

**Ken Macintosh:** Will the minister give way?

**Keith Brown:** Not just now.

Given that we are managing to deliver the Forth road crossing, which is the biggest transport project ever undertaken in Scotland, with a saving of about £700 million, one might think that that would merit a passing acknowledgement from the Labour Party, but no. Labour's history of transport projects in previous years was one of constant overruns, failure to complete—in the case of the M74—and delays to completion.

I will give way now.

**Ken Macintosh:** Mr Brown talks about projects as if they were already done. Which of these projects—the Borders railway, the Aberdeen western peripheral route and the dualling of the A9 and A96—has been done?

**Keith Brown:** I do not know whether Ken Macintosh has visited the Borders recently, but if he does so he will see construction across the length of that route, which is something that the Labour Party never achieved during all its time in office.

Lewis Macdonald made some fair points about the need to mitigate the effects of HS2. The best and most effective mitigation for HS2 is HS3, whereby high-speed rail would come to Scotland. I think that Maureen Watt was right to say that the study that was done was pretty flawed in not taking into account oil and gas. With HS3, there would not be a disbenefit to Aberdeen, Dundee or anywhere else in Scotland.

**Lewis Macdonald:** Does the minister accept that, even at the point at which high-speed rail arrives in Glasgow and Edinburgh, the benefits for the north of Scotland will be realised only with investment in the rail infrastructure between the north of Scotland and the central belt?

**Keith Brown:** Both for high-speed rail coming to Scotland and for our Edinburgh to Glasgow improvement programme, we have said that the benefits will come from the capacity that will be released for other routes to the north and south of Scotland. That is a fair point to make.

On Rob Gibson's question about average-speed cameras on the A9, when I visited Thurso and Portgower earlier this week, I saw the work that is being undertaken there and on the Berriedale Braes—there is no other way to get to Thurso. One misconception that appears to exist is that the average-speed cameras will involve a reduction in speed limits, but that will not be the case until we get to the construction part of the project, when limits must be reduced to ensure the safety of those working on the road. The average-speed cameras will come in in the next year, and the final procurement and timescale for that will be published shortly.

Coming back to high-speed rail, I think that Alex Johnstone asked why, post-independence, the UK Government would contribute to the cost of investing in high-speed rail in Scotland. Incredibly, he said at one point that the benefit of high-speed rail coming to Scotland would accrue only to Scotland. That is fundamentally to misunderstand the basis of high-speed rail. Even the UK Government acknowledges that, as well as for London, Manchester and Birmingham, there will be profound business and economic benefits for

the whole of the current UK if we have a high-speed rail link.

Recently, we found out that the UK Government minister's position is that high-speed rail coming to Scotland is

"not top of my to-do list".

That may be the UK Government's position, but surely the Secretary of State for Scotland's role is to put Scotland's case, so it should be at the top of his to-do list. Rather than threatening people with losing shipyard jobs or failing to pass on money for agricultural purposes, his job is to fight for the Scottish interest, so that issue should be at the top of his list.

Bringing HS2 to Scotland is the most profound thing that we can do to connect the railways between Scotland and the rest of the UK. Let us not forget, of course, the extent to which the north-east of England feels let down by the lack of recognition given to the benefits that high-speed rail could bring to that area. Great things could be achieved by high-speed rail. We cannot say exactly what the costs would be, as I said to Annabel Goldie earlier, but we are doing the same as the UK Government did in undertaking a study to show us the routes and the costs involved. We will produce that information. We asked the UK Government to do that two years ago, but it took until last month for it to do that, whereas it should have been produced much earlier.

In conclusion, even if we do not quite have the intergalactic ambitions that Chic Brodie mentioned, we certainly have ambitions. I mentioned the 26.5 miles of new railway that we have built and the six new stations that we have opened. The total investment in completed schemes—to pick up a point that was raised previously—is £2 billion at this stage. We have more than £4 billion of work under construction or in procurement and we are making available £6 million for dualling the A9 between Perth and Inverness and the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen. We are the first Government to commit to dualling both those roads, which should have been done decades ago. The investment of £5 billion going into our railways should give the lie to anyone who says that we are not concentrating on public transport investment.

Together, those investments in road and rail will better connect our cities and help to create growth and jobs across this country. That is the reason why I ask members to support the motion.

## Business Motion

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-08288, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

16:59

**The Minister for Parliamentary Business (Joe FitzPatrick):** Before I move the motion, I confirm for members that I will lodge another motion tomorrow that will remove business from Tuesday 19 November. Tonight's business motion will allow next week's business to take place while respecting members' wishes to attend the funeral of our colleague Helen Eadie.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees

(a) the following programme of business—

Wednesday 20 November 2013

2.00 pm Time for Reflection  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
*followed by* Motion of Condolence, Helen Eadie  
*followed by* Scottish Labour Party Business  
*followed by* Stage 1 Debate: Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Bill  
*followed by* Business Motions  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 8.00 pm Decision Time

Thursday 21 November 2013

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 11.40 am General Questions  
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions  
 12.30 pm Members' Business  
 2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions

Education and Lifelong Learning

*followed by* Preliminary Stage Debate: Burrell Collection (Lending and Borrowing) (Scotland) Bill  
*followed by* Stage 1 Debate: Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill  
*followed by* Financial Resolution: Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill  
*followed by* Business Motions  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 26 November 2013

2.00 pm Time for Reflection

*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
*followed by* Topical Questions (if selected)  
*followed by* Scottish Government Business  
*followed by* Business Motions  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business

Wednesday 27 November 2013

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions  
 Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth  
*followed by* Scottish Government Business  
*followed by* Business Motions  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business

Thursday 28 November 2013

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 11.40 am General Questions  
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions  
 12.30 pm Members' Business  
 2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 2.30 pm Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body Questions  
*followed by* Scottish Government Business  
*followed by* Business Motions  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time

(b) that Rules 2.2.4, 2.2.5(b) and 2.2.5(c) of Standing Orders be suspended for the purpose of allowing the Parliament to meet until 8.00 pm, and Rule 5.6.1(c) of Standing Orders be suspended for the purpose of Members' Business, on Wednesday 20 November 2013.

*Motion agreed to.*



## Parliamentary Bureau Motion

17:00

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The next item of business is consideration of a Parliamentary Bureau motion. I ask Joe FitzPatrick to move motion S4M-08281, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Budget (Scotland) Act 2013 Amendment Order 2013 [draft] be approved.—  
[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

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

## Decision Time

17:00

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** There are four questions to be put as a result of today's business. I remind members that, in relation to today's debate, if the amendment in the name of Mark Griffin is agreed to, the amendment in the name of Alex Johnstone falls.

The first question is, that amendment S4M-08270.1, in the name of Mark Griffin, which seeks to amend motion S4M-08270, in the name of Keith Brown, on modernising Scotland's transport infrastructure, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

### For

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)  
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)  
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 McMahan, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMahan, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)  
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

### Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)

Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

#### Abstentions

Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 38, Against 72, Abstentions 4.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S4M-08270.3, in the name of Alex Johnstone, which seeks to amend motion S4M-08270, in the name of Keith Brown, on modernising Scotland's transport infrastructure, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### For

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

#### Against

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)

Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)  
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 McMahan, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMahan, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

#### Abstentions

Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 15, Against 95, Abstentions 4.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S4M-08270, in the name of Keith Brown, on modernising Scotland's transport infrastructure, be agreed to. Are we agreed?

**Members:** No.

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

#### For

Adam, George (Paisley) (SNP)  
 Allan, Dr Alasdair (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)  
 Allard, Christian (North East Scotland) (SNP)  
 Beattie, Colin (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP)  
 Biagi, Marco (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)  
 Brodie, Chic (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Buchanan, Cameron (Lothian) (Con)  
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Aileen (Clydesdale) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Davidson, Ruth (Glasgow) (Con)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Lochhead, Richard (Moray) (SNP)  
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 McGrigor, Jamie (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)

Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Sturgeon, Nicola (Glasgow Southside) (SNP)  
 Swinney, John (Perthshire North) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Wilson, John (Central Scotland) (SNP)

#### Against

Baillie, Jackie (Dumbarton) (Lab)  
 Baker, Claire (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Baker, Richard (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Baxter, Jayne (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Beamish, Claudia (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Bibby, Neil (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Boyack, Sarah (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Fee, Mary (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 Ferguson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Griffin, Mark (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)  
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Macintosh, Ken (Eastwood) (Lab)  
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Marra, Jenny (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)  
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 McMahan, Michael (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Lab)  
 McMahan, Siobhan (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McNeil, Duncan (Greenock and Inverclyde) (Lab)  
 McTaggart, Anne (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)  
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

#### Abstentions

Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 71, Against 39, Abstentions 4.

*Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament welcomes the record levels of investment being made by the Scottish Government on

major transport projects, with over £4 billion of work under construction or in procurement, including the Queensferry Crossing, Borders Railway and the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route, and future plans for the dualling of the A9 and A96 and developing the National Cycle Network, and agrees that these projects are vital to transform Scotland's strategic transport networks and stimulate the economy now, securing long-term sustainable growth and providing a modern and efficient transport system fit for the 21st century, giving people a choice and helping secure a low-carbon economy.

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S4M-08281, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on approval of a Scottish statutory instrument, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament agrees that the Budget (Scotland) Act 2013 Amendment Order 2013 [draft] be approved.

## National Parks

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

The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S4M-07932, in the name of Claire Baker, on national parks: unfinished business. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

#### *Motion debated,*

That the Parliament welcomes the recent report by the Scottish Campaign for National Parks and the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland, *Unfinished Business: A National Parks Strategy for Scotland*; notes that the report states that "Scotland's landscapes rank amongst the best in the world"; further notes its claim that "there are further areas of outstanding importance for landscape and recreation in Scotland worthy of National Park designation, and that this would best be done in the context of an overall agreed national strategy"; understands that the report identifies seven areas that should be considered for designation as a national park: the Ben Nevis/Glen Coe/Black Mount area, the Cheviot Hills, an area based around Mull, Coll and Tiree, Galloway, Glen Affric, Harris and Wester Ross; believes that, by protecting the environment, attracting tourists and providing social and economic benefits to the communities that they serve and the rest of the country, the national parks at Loch Lomond and the Trossachs and the Cairngorms have proved to be successful in meeting the aims set out by the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, and notes calls for a Scotland-wide debate on the way forward for national parks.

17:06

### **Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab):**

Establishing the national parks was one of the early achievements of the Scottish Parliament. The legislation was steered through by Sarah Boyack, who was then a Labour minister. I am pleased that she is taking part in this evening's debate.

This year is the 10th anniversary of the creation of the two national parks: Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, and the Cairngorms. The path to establishing national parks was long. Cairngorms was first proposed in the 1931 Addison report and it took devolution to deliver the legislation and have Scotland join the global national parks movement.

The 3,500 national parks across the world recognise and protect areas of outstanding natural beauty. They strengthen international reputation and demonstrate a long-term commitment to the natural environment. Indeed, the Scottish model of national parks interests people from all over Europe, as they can see that working in partnership can deliver real change and an important focus on joined-up management across conservation, the visitor experience and rural development.

We know that although Scotland has much to offer—wild mountains, pristine rivers and lochs,

ancient forests, stunning coastlines and islands that are rich with wildlife and history—we also face challenges in protecting and enhancing our biodiversity, getting the right balance between different interests so that the environment is not compromised, and using land, one of Scotland's strongest resources, in a way that works in harmony with communities and supports sustainable development.

I thank those members who supported the motion and enabled the debate to be held. I introduced the debate to help concentrate minds on where we go next. Two parks is surely not the end of the process, and the report, "Unfinished Business: A National Parks Strategy for Scotland", which has been prepared by the Scottish Campaign for National Parks and the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland, gives a strong case for further designation. I thank those organisations for their work in this area. I also thank Ramblers Scotland for the briefing that it prepared for the debate.

Our experience of existing national parks shows that they can bring a wide range of environmental, social and economic benefits. The four aims of national parks, which are established in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, are:

"to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area, to promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area, to promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public, and to promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities."

I recently sat next to Grant Moir, the chief executive of Cairngorms National Park, at a Scottish Council for Development and Industry dinner on the rural economy. I heard about the good work that Cairngorms National Park is doing, as well as some of the unavoidable challenges that it faces as the lead authority for the area.

We can see how national parks can respond positively to some of the key challenges for our rural areas, such as the economy, employment and sustainability. They are a driver for growth: the Cairngorms area has survived the recession well; it has low unemployment, a growing population and good growth. Cairngorms National Park recently launched the make it yours campaign with Cairngorms business partnership, through which businesses will come together to work on an innovative and interesting approach to promote the national park brand.

National parks deliver on nature conservation, and the Cairngorms nature action plan shows the way forward for delivering on the 2020 challenge on biodiversity—and all of us in the chamber know how challenging that will be.

National parks are also a showcase for how sustainable development can be delivered on the ground. If members want to know where they can see cutting edge and innovative solutions that are being developed to take on the tricky issues in rural Scotland they need look only at our national parks.

There is no dispute that the establishment of the parks is a good thing. The question, after 10 years, is what is next. In 2009, the Scottish Government carried out a review of the two existing parks, but the remit was fairly narrow, with a focus on the existing roles and composition. Stage 2 of the review was dropped and the opportunity to have a broader discussion was lost. In addition, although the review proposed the establishment of a national strategy group chaired by ministers, that has not materialised. Perhaps the minister will say whether such a strategy group will be forthcoming and, if so, what the timetable for that will be. I agree that a national group would be helpful and would enable discussion on a forward strategy.

We know that we are in a time of financial constraint and the national parks authorities face a significant cut in next year's and the following year's budget. It therefore might seem unreasonable to call for further national parks, but a strategy group would allow opportunity for future planning, to set the forward path and to be clear on Scotland's aspirations for national parks.

The unfinished business report recommended a list of areas that are believed to be suitable for designation and set out the criteria used to identify the areas. We are some way off reaching an agreement on whether more parks are needed, never mind determining where those parks might be, but some interesting examples are included in the report. Designating the Cheviots would be an extension of the Northumberland national park. The border between Scotland and England runs along the ridge of the Cheviot hills and although the southern flank is in the Northumberland national park, the northern side has limited protection through areas of great landscape value designation. However, it can be argued that the Scotland side is more impressive—such an argument would not be a difficult one for the minister to make. That could be the first cross-border park in the United Kingdom; it has the potential to extend all the benefits of international attraction, tourism and marketing, as well as conservation interests across the border.

The unfinished business report also argues for a coastal marine national park. That was the sense of direction prior to 2007, after which the focus on broader marine issues shifted and led to the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010. In recent evidence to the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and

Environment Committee about climate adaptation, concerns were raised about Scotland's soft coastline and the need for greater strategic support for coastal partnerships. I ask the minister to comment on whether he sees a future for a coastal and marine national park and how that would complement other designations.

The report also highlights the potential for a national park in Galloway that would encompass the national forest park, which is one of only four dark skies parks in the western world. Other members may want to highlight other areas for discussion.

Next year, we will commemorate the 100th anniversary of the death of John Muir, the central figure in the worldwide national parks movement. Although the debate may move on to what should or could be designated, designation is complex and community consent and support is vital in going forward. The establishment of the boundaries is also complex and, while effective governance and management are essential, they can be tricky to get right. However, this debate is not about the detail; it is, I hope, the start of a debate on how we go forward and positively progress national parks for the future of Scotland.

17:13

**Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP):** I congratulate Claire Baker on securing the debate. Although I supported her motion, she will be aware that I have lodged what I hope she sees as a friendly amendment. I will refer to that later because it is pertinent to the debate.

I share Claire Baker's call for a Scotland-wide debate, beyond these walls and this bubble, with the Scottish public. However, we need to keep within realistic funding packages, as we know that we have tight constraints.

I also share the sentiments in the "Unfinished Business" report that

"Scotland's landscape ranks amongst the best in the world".

Some of that sits right on the Parliament's doorstep. We take Arthur's Seat for granted and, not far flung from here, the Pentland hills have what is called a stunning landscape signature, which lets people know that they are approaching the capital city.

As you are aware, Presiding Officer, my amendment

"notes what it"—

the Parliament—

"considers the important distinction between national and regional parks, such as Pentland Hills"

and

“Clyde Muirshiel”.

The distinction is relevant.

A national park area has substantial protection. There are structured and audited governance arrangements as well as substantial central Government funding, although private funding is levered in.

Sometimes the restrictions are not always popular with the residents, but they should always remember that they are lucky to live in a national park area. It is a privilege to live in an area that is for the use of generations to come.

Regional parks are substantially different from national parks. The first regional parks were set up in the 1960s and the one that I am interested in—the Pentland hills regional park—was established in 1986. Its governance is much looser than that of the national parks. It simply involves a coming together of the local authorities that bound it to fund it in cash or in kind by providing wardens or funding to do the same things that are done in the national parks, such as ensuring that the public can use it responsibly, repairing paths and assisting businesses. Its governance is not really structured and it does not have central Government input—the input comes through local authorities, whose funding is at a pinchpoint.

The problem with the Pentland hills regional park is that when it was set up—which was at the time of regional authorities—the Borders Regional Council and Strathclyde Regional Council areas did not fall within it, with the result that only 43 per cent of the park is protected. I publicise the fact that I intend to lodge a bill to extend the boundary of the regional park to take in the southern part, which would bring in another two local authorities. Before I scare the horses, I make it clear that I am making a distinction between a national park, where planning is rightly regulated, and a regional park, which has very limited protection. I know that some parties in the Pentland hills regional park are frightened of the park becoming a national park in one leap, but the protection that regional park status brings should be there, even though it is less than the protection that national park status brings.

I have no intention of altering the constitution, as such, of the Pentland hills regional park, but I would like the debate about national parks, which Claire Baker has rightly brought to the chamber, to embrace regional parks and, indeed, national areas of scenic beauty. We have a very mixed bag of designations and definitions. If we are to protect Scotland’s landscape, we must bring those together in any debate that we have so that we understand how they interlock and the different functions that they have. We must also talk about

them in language that the public will understand so that we all benefit from the landscape around us, particularly as the built environment encroaches on it more and more.

I congratulate Claire Baker on securing the debate. I hope that she does not mind me introducing the issue of regional parks, because I think that the two types of park are strongly linked, and not many people know about the distinction between regional parks and national parks.

17:17

**Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** I congratulate Claire Baker on securing the debate and welcome the publication by the SCNP and the APRS of their report, “Unfinished Business”.

It is great to be having a members’ business debate on national parks, which were the subject of the first members’ business debate in the new Scottish Parliament in 1999. There had been a long-standing campaign for a national park in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, but there was less of a consensus in the Cairngorms area. In fact, in the early days of the Parliament, some were opposed to a national park in the Cairngorms.

I think that our national parks are one of the success stories of devolution. The legislative process in the House of Lords would have been a huge challenge, so national parks were one of Donald Dewar’s first priorities and the National Parks (Scotland) Bill featured in the first programme for government. Such was the success of our national parks that it led to the inclusion of highland Perthshire in the Cairngorms national park. That was partly a tribute to the success of the work of the Cairngorms National Park Authority and its first chief executive, Jane Hope. I want to pay tribute to the contribution that she made, because as well as leading the park for nearly a decade, she was the lead official on the National Parks (Scotland) Bill team and did an excellent job in that role, too.

As Claire Baker observed, although we had debates on national parks in the previous parliamentary session, the Scottish Government has done no serious work to progress the national parks agenda by making new designations since 2007. As the Cairngorms national park and the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs national park have passed their 10th anniversaries, now is a good time for us to come back to that agenda, look at their successes and learn lessons for the future. We should pick up the agenda that the SCNP and the APRS are arguing for, as it is truly unfinished business. The Ramblers are right to point to the centenary of the birth of John Muir as a good time to kick-start that agenda for the future.

The first two national parks were never meant to be Scotland's only national parks; they were simply our top priorities at the time, from the point of view of effort and funding.

Claire Baker is right that we need a ministerial lead in looking to the future, given the length of the set-up time from thinking about creating a national park to actually designating it. I am sure that there will be competing interests both for and against designations across the country and there is certainly a debate to be had about resources. However, we need to be having that debate now, instead of putting it off to the future.

**The Minister for Environment and Climate Change (Paul Wheelhouse):** I thank Sarah Boyack for taking an intervention and assure that I will not take too much time over it. I simply wonder whether, having recognised the resource issue, she can in the remaining part of her speech say whether we should risk disappointing communities by setting up opportunities only to have them fall because we do not have sufficient resources.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I will give you that time back, Ms Boyack.

**Sarah Boyack:** Thank you very much, Presiding Officer.

That is exactly why we need a ministerial lead. Over the years, there have been many suggestions for different national parks in different parts of the country; indeed, a Scottish Natural Heritage report, for one, made a number of suggestions. Ministers could set the terms and framework of the debate and the various expectations and make clear whether we are looking at on-land parks or the coastal and marine parks that Claire Baker referred to. However, the choice between doing absolutely nothing and waiting for a long time is one that we should not have to make. The integrated planning and management that have been carried out by public bodies and the work with park communities and businesses provide good lessons from which we can learn, and we are missing out by not taking the debate forward.

We should be looking to the future. That is why I support the call for a ministerially led national parks strategy group, which would set a framework for the future and expectations—realistic ones, of course. We should not miss out on the huge benefits of national parks, but that is what is happening at the moment.

Claire Baker made a fascinating suggestion about the Cheviots, for example. There will be arguments for and against proposals but we need to get back to a discussion that is not for the future but for now. For every conflict that has emerged over our two national parks, there has also been a fantastic achievement and we need to bring the

debate into the Parliament and engage third parties and everyone else across the country who has a real interest in the issue. We will always have a limited amount of money but the benefits that the parks bring and the lessons that have been learnt from the first decade present opportunities that we should be seizing in 2014.

17:22

**Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con):** As other members have done, I congratulate Claire Baker on securing the debate.

As a member of the Rural Affairs Committee from 1999, I was involved in Parliament's earliest consideration of national parks and can say without any doubt that the title of Claire Baker's motion—and the report on which it is based—is absolutely correct. "National Parks, Unfinished Business" precisely and directly sums up the current position.

Having been a member of the committee that scrutinised the bill that paved the way for national parks and which was eventually passed, I then had the very considerable honour and great pleasure of convening the committee during the creation of Scotland's two national parks. As I think Claire Baker pointed out, at no time during scrutiny of the legislation or the consequent creation of the Cairngorms and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs national parks was it ever suggested or recommended that they be Scotland's only national parks. As I have said, what we have at the moment is unfinished business.

The enthusiasm and commitment that I witnessed during the passage of the legislation, during which the committee travelled to both proposed parks to take evidence, was, to be frank, awe inspiring. Indeed, so impressed was I at what I saw and heard that I went into the 2003 election pledging that if I won the constituency vote I would campaign for Scotland's third national park to be in Galloway. It is on that topic that I want to focus brief remarks in the remainder of the time that is left to me.

As it happened, I won the election and set about drawing together various potentially interested stakeholders to discuss the prospects for the creation of a Galloway national park. I take no pleasure at all in reporting that the only support that I received was from the Federation of Small Businesses in Dumfries and Galloway. Dumfries and Galloway Council, the Forestry Commission, VisitScotland, Scottish Enterprise Dumfries and Galloway as it was then, Scottish Natural Heritage and others were all at best lukewarm, so it became pretty clear pretty quickly that the prospect was more or less dead in the water.



Hope reared its optimistic head once again when, as has been mentioned, the then Administration took a look at the possibility of creating a marine national park. I believe that there were seven proposed sites for that park, and the Solway Firth proposal—which is in Dumfries and Galloway—was the only one that did not give rise to significant local objections.

Again, I flagged up the potential of the possibility of the creation of a land and marine-based national park, which the Scottish Campaign for National Parks very much supported at the time; indeed, I think that it still does. As has been mentioned, the incoming Administration following the 2007 election ditched the idea of marine national parks and, until now—other than the process that has already been mentioned—not a lot more has been said about national parks of any description.

Members might well ask why on earth I would wish to return to the subject of a possible Galloway national park after two pretty robust rejections. That is because, other than the fact that I am a born optimist, it is extraordinary how attitudes have changed in a decade. Some of the agencies that previously rejected the possibility have very much changed their opinions. It is significant that Dumfries and Galloway Council has, and it has been joined by the increasingly influential Dumfries and Galloway Chamber of Commerce. The idea is still strongly supported by the Federation of Small Businesses as well as many local business associations, community associations and other community bodies to which I have spoken.

Ever since the M74 was built—indeed, I suspect long before that—the people of Dumfries and Galloway have desperately sought something that will get people who are travelling north on the motorway network to turn left at Gretna. I have never changed my original view that a Galloway national park would bring that about. Such a national park is recommended in the excellent report on which this debate is based. I commend both organisations for the report. I whole-heartedly support it, the Galloway national park suggestion and the motion.

17:26

**Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):** I am glad to be here to welcome the publication of the national parks strategy for Scotland. I thank my colleague Claire Baker for securing the debate, which seems timely, and support the remarks by Sarah Boyack and Alex Fergusson, who were members of Parliament at the start of the process and have reflected on that in their speeches.

The words “Unfinished Business” in the report’s title are apt. The report points to the vast network of natural landscapes that should be ideal settings for a number of national parks, although there are currently only two of them out of a designation of 15 across the UK, I understand. The time has come for us to add to those two. Labour introduced the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, and things have moved on since then.

According to the report, the expert recommendation is that the Scottish landscape should be able to support four or five national parks, or perhaps more. It points out that neither of the existing national parks has marine or coastal features, as my colleague Claire Baker stated. I certainly agree with the argument that at least one additional national park should include a suitable area of the Scottish coastline, considering that Scotland has such a rich coastal environment. I would say this as a South Scotland MSP, but perhaps the Solway Firth might be an option.

A marine national park was mooted at stakeholder meetings in Dumfries—one of which I attended—in the third session of the Scottish Parliament. That one meeting demonstrated to me how clearly the model will allow stakeholders including the local authority, inshore fishermen, tourism providers and non-governmental organisations to come together to allow an early resolution of any potential conflicts and to support a sustainable way forward for the precious marine environment and marine biodiversity.

The benefits of increasing the number of national parks cannot be understated. The protection that is granted to such spaces ensures that the natural environment is handled with greater care, which allows biodiversity to develop and provides essential green carbon sinks, which will help to tackle climate change.

Partnership working involving local communities is a fine model of sustainable development in action, and it supports the rural economy in a sustainable way. In the Loch Lomond and Trossachs national park, for example, great efforts have been made to preserve the water vole population, and plans are under way to create the largest native woodland in Scotland.

With regard to climate change, the Cairngorms national park has been running an initiative to encourage local residents to switch to wood as a carbon-neutral fuel source.

As my colleague Claire Baker highlighted, there is the potential for new national parks in the eastern part of my region. I have been made aware by constituents of an interesting proposal relating to the area. The national park strategy was discussed at a public meeting in Yetholm at which John Mayhew, from the Scottish Campaign

for National Parks, and the Association for the Preservation of Rural Scotland raised the idea of a Scottish Cheviots park. Significantly, it was suggested that such a project could be linked, as Claire Baker stressed, to the existing Northumberland national park, which reaches right up to the Scottish border. The proposal makes not only geographic sense but economic sense, as it would create more tourism opportunities in the Borders, provide environmental drivers for biodiversity and make social sense for rural communities. In addition, the proposal would provide the opportunity for good cross-border working.

Again, I congratulate Claire Baker on taking the issue forward, and I hope to hear from the minister about a possible review.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I invite Paul Wheelhouse to respond to the debate. Minister, you have seven minutes.

17:31

**The Minister for Environment and Climate Change (Paul Wheelhouse):** Many interesting and positive comments have been made about national parks in Scotland. I congratulate Claire Baker on bringing the issue to the attention of members today.

Much has been said in the debate about the successes of our two existing national parks, and I fully endorse those remarks. Scotland's national parks are two of our greatest national assets and are very important for Scotland. I fully recognise their success—which was outlined by Claire Baker, Sarah Boyack, Claudia Beamish, Alex Fergusson and Christine Grahame—in protecting species and habitats, promoting tourism, and providing social and economic benefits to the communities that they serve and to the rest of the country.

Recently, I had the pleasure of chairing two meetings with the national parks and their partners to review progress with the latest five-year partnership plans. I was struck by the extent to which both national parks have a broad range of partners in the public, private and third sectors with which they are working to deliver both locally and on a national scale.

I met the Scottish Campaign for National Parks and the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland at the beginning of September to discuss the "Unfinished Business" report. The meeting included Charles Strang of the APRS, who lives in Yetholm in the Scottish Borders and who is particularly passionate about the Cheviots as a candidate for a national park, and Mr Mayhew. We had a candid exchange of views on the report's main recommendations. I welcome the opportunity

provided by Claire Baker's motion to share my views with members today.

First, there is the report's proposition, which is repeated in the motion, that there should be a long-term national strategy for future national parks in Scotland. I fully understand where the SCNP and the APRS are coming from on that. Nearly half of the report sets out the trials and tribulations of the national park movement in Scotland over the past 65 years. As Alex Fergusson noted, the language used in the report—for example, "The Long Struggle" and "Unfinished Business"—says it all: the SCNP and the APRS think that there is a lot of catching up to do, which I acknowledge. That is why they are now calling for a long-term strategy in which at least seven areas of Scotland would be earmarked for future national park status.

There are two main reasons why I cannot agree to such a strategy at this time, the first of which is about resources in the current economic climate. It cannot have escaped the attention of the SCNP and the APRS that these are difficult times and that there are considerable pressures on public finances at present. We have suffered an 11 per cent drop in our resource budget and a 26 per cent cut in capital. As members have acknowledged, we simply do not have the resources at this time for new national park authorities, which would of course require set-up costs and a recurrent cost thereafter.

Secondly, I have said to the SCNP and the APRS that I appreciate that my decision will disappoint them, but I do not think that the suggestion of earmarking areas for possible future national park status is a good one at this time.

**Claire Baker:** I, too, have had meetings with John Mayhew and others who are interested in the issue. My impression was more that they were keen for the debate to be on the table.

On the order of designation for the proposed national parks, the report states:

"We consider that a pragmatic approach should be taken".

I do not get the impression that the SCNP and the APRS are calling for all seven proposed national parks to be designated; I think that they are asking for a decision for the long term and a commitment that there will be future designations, with perhaps some concentration on the order of them.

**Paul Wheelhouse:** Presiding Officer, I look to you for guidance on whether I will get that time back.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You will.

**Paul Wheelhouse:** I understand the member's point, and I will come on to explain the wider strategy.

The report states:

"We consider that a pragmatic approach should be taken to the order in which the above areas"—

the ones that Claire Baker listed—

"are designated, recognising that there will inevitably be wide variations in the rate at which local support grows".

That sounds to me a somewhat unsatisfactory approach. I will explain why, because I appreciate that that might concern the member.

In essence, the approach suggests that areas be identified for possible future designation. The Scottish Government's sense is that there would be a real danger that that would encourage the various communities to engage in a quasi-bidding process to demonstrate support for seeking national park status. I do not think that such a process was envisaged in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000—I acknowledge Sarah Boyack's close involvement in that—and I do not think that it is what members would want, either.

To take such an approach would also be somewhat irresponsible because it would create expectations of designation and would inevitably lead to disappointment for those whose areas were not selected. There was considerable disappointment in Harris, for example, when it was not designated as a national park.

I will now say a little about the Scottish National Party's national park commitment in our 2011 manifesto. I am sure that members are aware of that, although it was not directly raised today. The point that I would like to make is that it is a commitment to engage in discussions with communities and not a commitment to declare a national strategy and let communities respond to that.

It is instructive to consider the experience of Harris. In 2009, the community in Harris voted in favour of pursuing national park status as a means of addressing population decline and a lack of employment. However, the then Minister for Environment made it clear that she would not consider such designation unless the local authority was supportive. In 2010, Western Isles Council conducted a thorough year-long study of all aspects of what was proposed, including for example the role of a Harris national park in relation to planning, but it concluded that a convincing case had not been made for national park status for Harris.

**Christine Grahame:** Will the minister take an intervention?

**Paul Wheelhouse:** I am really short of time, so I will not, unless the Presiding Officer gives me some latitude.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I will allow you extra time if you wish to take the intervention, minister.

**Paul Wheelhouse:** Thank you, Presiding Officer.

**Christine Grahame:** Will the minister or his officials engage with the Pentland hills regional park consultative forum? He will be happy to hear that it is not looking for money. Will he engage with the forum on the way forward to allay its fears about what a regional park means, as opposed to a national park? Will the minister's officials do that if he is too busy?

**Paul Wheelhouse:** As the member knows, I have written to her on the matter. The key issue is really the support of local authorities for the extension to the regional park boundary. It is for the member to make the case to the communities and the local authorities on what is meant by a regional park and a national park. I can certainly confirm that a regional park is a different beast from a national park. We strongly support the work of the Pentland hills regional park and indeed Clyde Muirshiel regional park.

The Scottish Government felt that the best outcome for the Harris community was not necessarily a national park. Highlands and Islands Enterprise has already provided assistance to Harris—for example, support for the £1.2 million Heritage Lottery Fund landscape partnership, and support for the Harris hotel, Hotel Hebrides, Kilda Cruises, the Isle of Harris golf club, fishery piers and the community shop—to deliver the economic benefits that were sought through a designation for Harris.

I am aware that the primary focus of the SCNP and the APRS, in seeking further national park designation, is the protection of the landscape. I recognise the strong calls for that, but it seems to me that they have something different in mind from the model that the Parliament agreed, in which the fourth aim of national parks is to promote sustainable economic development and social development of the area's communities. As members have said, the parks have been achieving that successfully, in balance with the other aims, over the past 10 years.

I fully recognise and welcome the support for the concept of national parks, and I have no doubt that those who work in them and the stakeholders who are involved with them will welcome the Parliament's support today for their work and its recognition of the successes that they have achieved. I acknowledge that they contribute more than £260 million to local economies and attract

more than 5 million visitors a year. They are positive players in our conservation and biodiversity objectives.

Investment in the parks in recent years, including for shovel-ready projects, reflects their economic importance and our continued commitment to enhancing facilities for visitors, supporting green tourism and creating new employment opportunities. At this time, our priority is to make sure that the two national parks are as successful as they can be. We should not risk their financial health by looking at other, additional parks, which would raise expectations among communities only for them to be disappointed at the end of the process.

*Meeting closed at 17:39.*

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