



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Official Report

# MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Wednesday 7 January 2015

Session 4

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# Scottish Parliament

Wednesday 7 January 2015

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

## Portfolio Question Time

### Justice and the Law Officers

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

Good afternoon. The first item of business is portfolio questions. To get as many questions in as possible, I would prefer short and succinct questions and answers.

#### HMP Shotts

**1. Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on the chief inspector of prisons for Scotland's recent comments regarding HMP Shotts. (S4O-03851)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Michael Matheson):** The Scottish Government welcomes the publication by Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons of the progress report on HMP Shotts, which is a follow-up to a full inspection report that was published in June 2013.

The chief inspector, David Strang, commented on publication that good progress had been made towards achievement of the 51 recommendations that were made in 2013, noting that 31 recommendations had been fully achieved; that in relation to seven recommendations, meaningful progress was in evidence; and that 12 recommendations are to be addressed.

I am satisfied that, overall, the report is balanced. It records that, while there is a need to ensure that further progress is made, progress is being made in a number of important areas. Overall, the prison runs well and is safe, and there is evidence of positive relationships between staff and prisoners.

**Alex Fergusson:** As I am sure the cabinet secretary is aware, one of the more serious aspects that was identified is that there is a lack of meaningful and productive work for prisoners. Does he accept that the provision of meaningful and productive work is essential to the wellbeing and rehabilitation of prisoners? If he does, will he tell me what steps the Government and the Scottish Prison Service are taking to improve that aspect of rehabilitation at HMP Shotts and, indeed, elsewhere?

**Michael Matheson:** The member raises a good point, because that was one of the key areas that

the chief inspector of prisons identified as requiring further action.

Progress is being made at Shotts to ensure greater provision of purposeful activity. The Scottish Prison Service has carried out a national review of purposeful activity within the prison system, which was commissioned following the results of work undertaken by the Parliament's Justice Committee back in 2013. We expect the findings of the review to be taken forward by the SPS. Following the review, there were some 131 recommendations on improving purposeful activity in the prison estate in Scotland. The Scottish Prison Service is developing an implementation plan to ensure that it takes forward those recommendations.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Question 2, in the name of Mary Fee, has not been lodged. An explanation has been provided that appears to be less than satisfactory.

#### Human Trafficking (Airports)

**3. Adam Ingram (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how the proposals in the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Bill will help deter trafficking through airports. (S4O-03853)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Michael Matheson):** Our bill aims to clarify and strengthen the criminal law by introducing a new single human trafficking offence and by increasing the maximum penalty to life imprisonment. The bill will give Scotland's law enforcement agencies greater tools in their armoury to use in bringing those responsible for the misery of human trafficking to justice, as well as guaranteeing support for victims.

The bill includes provisions for courts to impose new preventative orders, restricting the activities of people convicted or suspected of human trafficking offences, including controls on foreign travel. There are specific proposals in the bill that will allow for the detention of property, including aircraft, owned or possessed by persons arrested on suspicion of a trafficking offence.

The Lord Advocate's recent summit and communiqué on human trafficking acknowledged the need for co-operation between law enforcement agencies across the United Kingdom in responding to this crime. Alongside our bill, we will continue to engage with the UK Government, UK border force and other relevant UK bodies to share intelligence and to disrupt and deter traffickers who seek to cross our borders.

**Adam Ingram:** I thank the minister for the extensive answer. The bill is very welcome indeed and will help to give my constituents the reassurance that we will not tolerate the use of our

airports for this heinous crime. The bill will require the creation of a Scottish human trafficking strategy. How does the Government intend to work with the airports in drafting that strategy to ensure that they are doing all that they can to prevent human trafficking?

**Michael Matheson:** The member raises an important point because, alongside the improvements to the criminal law and the strengthening of the rights of victims, the bill will commit Scottish Government ministers to engage with relevant stakeholders in order to bring forward a trafficking and exploitation strategy for Scotland.

I assure the member of the Government's intention to ensure that, in developing the strategy, we engage with organisations and front-line staff, including those at our airports and ports, so that they have an opportunity to have an input into the development of the strategy and so that the strategy is framed in a way that supports them by ensuring that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to identify the signs of trafficking and prevent traffickers from being able to bring people across our borders.

#### **Handling Offensive Weapons (Custodial Sentences)**

**4. Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government how the length of custodial sentences for handling an offensive weapon has changed during the last 10 years. (S4O-03854)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Michael Matheson):** The average length of custodial sentences for carrying an offensive weapon has increased for 10 years in a row and is now more than three times higher than it was a decade ago. Figures show that the average length of custodial sentences has increased, from 111 days in 2004-05 to 374 days in 2013-14.

**Gil Paterson:** I welcome those figures. Although there has been significant progress, how will the national roll-out of the no knives, better lives programme ensure that we continue to reduce the number of people who carry offensive weapons?

**Michael Matheson:** There are two key aspects to the approach that the Scottish Government has taken in helping to reduce the number of offences involving carrying an offensive weapon. The first is education and diversion activity, which involves educating young people about the risks of carrying a weapon and encouraging them into diversion programmes in order to move them away from any activity that involves carrying offensive weapons. The second aspect of our approach involves taking forward robust measures in our criminal justice system, making sure that we use the law

effectively to take robust criminal action against anyone who is found to be carrying an offensive weapon.

Alongside that, we have been funding the no knives, better lives programme—over the past five years, we have provided £2.5 million to the programme. As of April last year, the programme is available across all local authority areas in Scotland. It is based at YouthLink Scotland and involves a system that targets young people, offering those who live in communities that experience the greatest effects of knife crime the opportunity to participate.

Local authorities invite YouthLink in to roll out the programme in their local areas. I encourage all local authorities to look at the work that YouthLink Scotland is doing in this field and to involve it in their local crime prevention strategies, because the no knives, better lives strategy is worth while and demonstrates that such intervention can make a difference in communities.

#### **Domestic Abuse (South Scotland)**

**5. Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to provide an appropriate legal process for resolving domestic abuse cases in the South Scotland parliamentary region. (S4O-03855)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Michael Matheson):** The Scottish Government is committed to tackling the scourge of domestic violence. That work includes consideration of a new specific domestic abuse offence.

Although overall levels of recorded crime have fallen in recent years, the reporting and prosecution of certain categories of crime, including domestic abuse, have increased. That might be due to victims feeling more confident in reporting those crimes, in the knowledge that our law enforcement agencies will robustly investigate reports and prosecute where sufficient evidence exists. That is good news, as it means that more victims are able to access justice.

In November, the Scottish Government provided new funding of £1.47 million to help justice agencies deal with the efficient processing of summary court cases, including the increasing number of domestic abuse cases that are being heard in court.

**Claudia Beamish:** I welcome the possibility of the creation of a domestic abuse offence later in this parliamentary session.

In view of the unpalatable history of domestic abuse cases in South Scotland, and given the extent of court closures and centralisation, what are the cabinet secretary and the Scottish Government doing to ensure that early

intervention by the courts to protect victims is still happening, and what plans and funding are being put in place to deal with their needs?

**Michael Matheson:** The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service has made it clear that taking forward cases of domestic abuse is seen as a priority, and it has procedures in place for doing that. A range of training programmes have also been put in place for Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service staff, and cases are considered by senior members of staff—once those staff have completed an extensive training programme on domestic abuse—when decisions are made about whether they should proceed to court.

We also have in place a range of measures to ensure that vulnerable witnesses get the right support when they appear in court. One of the benefits of the court changes that are taking place is that in Edinburgh, for example, where more such cases will be heard, there are dedicated victim and witness facilities for those who are vulnerable, which we do not have at some of our smaller courts.

We have put in place a range of measures both within the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service and in our courts to ensure that the right support is available for victims and that they get the right assistance when they appear in court.

The member will know that another aspect of the Scottish Court Service changes is the opportunity for videolinks to be established in remote courts to enable witnesses to give evidence without having to travel to a central point. That, too, could benefit those who are vulnerable when domestic violence happens to be part of the case.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Question 6, in the name of Clare Adamson, has been withdrawn and a satisfactory explanation has been provided.

Question 7 is in the name of Paul Martin, who appears not to be in the chamber. The Presiding Officers would be grateful for an early explanation as to why he is not here.

### **Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (Control Room Reorganisation)**

**8. Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what recent discussions it has had with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service regarding the reorganisation of control room facilities. (S4O-03858)

**The Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs (Paul Wheelhouse):** The Scottish Government has regular meetings with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service at which it receives updates on a range of issues including control rooms. That was one of the issues that

were discussed at my initial meeting with the service before Christmas, and we are meeting again tomorrow.

**Sarah Boyack:** That is excellent timing, minister. I recently met Fire Brigades Union representatives who are seeking reassurance that sufficient staff will be in place to ensure that the migration to a single control room in the east is achieved safely and with minimal disruption both to the provision of services and to the staff involved. I ask the minister to ask questions about that process. There has already been a change in Dumfries, but that is comparatively small in the context of the change that is taking place in the east.

Will the minister also ask questions about the support that is being given to staff—particularly those who will be required to change jobs—other than training in CV writing and interview skills? Many of those people are concerned about losing their uniformed status. I would be grateful if the minister could either address those points today or pick up those issues with the SFRS when he meets it tomorrow.

**Paul Wheelhouse:** I am happy to discuss those issues with the SFRS tomorrow. I note the member's long-standing interest in the issue with regard to Edinburgh and I am happy to take forward those matters and keep in touch with her on them.

### **Human Trafficking**

**9. Christina McKelvie (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to address human trafficking. (S4O-03859)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Michael Matheson):** I recognise Christina McKelvie's long-standing interest in pursuing the issue as one of the co-conveners of the cross-party group on human trafficking.

On 11 December 2014, we introduced the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Bill. If the bill is approved by Parliament, it will clarify and strengthen the law to prosecute and disrupt traffickers. It will also strengthen the rights of victims. That will include giving adult victims of trafficking rights to access immediate support and assistance that are equivalent to those that child victims already have.

The proposals in the bill build on the actions that were taken following the human trafficking summit that was hosted by the Scottish Government in October 2012. The Lord Advocate Frank Mulholland and the Solicitor General Lesley Thomson hosted a further human trafficking summit at the Scottish Parliament on 17 October 2014, which was attended by the heads of

prosecution services from across the United Kingdom and Ireland. It was agreed that prosecutors would work together to share information to ensure that there would be robust and effective prosecutions of those who engage in this heinous crime.

**Christina McKelvie:** I attended the event for prosecutors, and it was heartening to see like-minded people in the room.

The bill includes victim support measures. As the cabinet secretary mentioned, adult victims will be given the same assistance that children already receive. That is extremely important.

The bill also includes a duty to secure such support and assistance, and I hope that the Government will press for that assistance to be provided as soon as possible. That assistance should include the provision of accommodation, because trafficking victims can be left destitute; assistance with day-to-day living; medical advice and treatment; language translation and interpretation services, because it is becoming ever more difficult for people to go and give evidence to the Home Office; counselling; and repatriation and legal advice.

I draw the cabinet secretary's attention to a campaign by the refugee women's strategy group on the fact that victims have to give evidence on some of the horrible things that have happened to them, sometimes in front of their children, and ask the Scottish Government to look at that.

How does the cabinet secretary intend to implement the provision on assistance and give adult and child victims of human trafficking the best support possible?

**Michael Matheson:** Christina McKelvie has raised an extremely important point. The very nature of human trafficking and exploitation is such that it is often hidden. Those individuals who have been trafficked or exploited are often reluctant to come forward and get assistance and support. That is why the provision of support to those who have been trafficked or exploited is a key measure in our bill.

The areas that the member has highlighted are all key areas. For example, if a person has been trafficked or exploited, they might have been completely dependent for their accommodation on the person who was controlling their situation. Once they are no longer in that situation, they might become much more vulnerable and might not have accommodation. Such factors will have to be taken into account when consideration is given to the type of support that will be required for the victims of trafficking, given the complexity of such crime, its controlling nature and its impact on the individuals concerned.

A key part of the work that we will take forward as part of the national strategy that the bill will place a requirement on ministers to develop and to regularly review will be ensuring that we have the right provisions in place to support victims of trafficking effectively when they come forward. The member has raised a number of important points, all of which I will be more than happy to consider as we proceed with the bill and as we begin to develop the national strategy.

### **Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill (Stage 2 Timetable)**

**10. Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government when stage 2 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill will commence. (S4O-03860)

**The Cabinet Secretary for Justice (Michael Matheson):** Lord Bonomy is expected to complete his post-corroboration safeguards review by April this year. The timing of stage 2 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill is a matter for the Parliament, but the Scottish Government does not anticipate that stage 2 will commence until there has been an opportunity to consider Lord Bonomy's recommendations.

**Elaine Murray:** I thank the cabinet secretary for his reply. Given the controversial nature of the discussions around the abolition of the requirement for corroboration, does the Government have any proposals for further public consultation arising from the results of Lord Bonomy's review before stage 2 takes place?

**Michael Matheson:** It is important that we wait to receive the report from Lord Bonomy before looking at the issues that Lord Bonomy and his group have raised. What is contained within that report will then be reflected in the response that the Government makes about the need for any further consultation. At this stage, it is important that we allow Lord Bonomy and the group to complete their work and await the outcome from the report. We will then consider the report in detail and we will respond in due course on what we see as being the most appropriate way forward, which will be dependent upon the recommendations that are contained within the report.

### **Rural Affairs, Food and Environment**

#### **Waste Recycling Plants (Location)**

**1. Hugh Henry (Renfrewshire South) (Lab):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it will take to prevent waste recycling plants being located next to residential areas or town centres. (S4O-03861)



**The Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Aileen McLeod):**

That is a matter for planning authorities. Local development plans should identify appropriate locations for new infrastructure and decisions on planning applications should protect residential amenity.

**Hugh Henry:** That was a slightly disappointing answer.

Two years ago this month, there was a major fire at the waste recycling plant in Johnstone, in my constituency. It resulted in one of the highest turnouts of fire service personnel that had been seen in the west of Scotland for many years. Thankfully, because of the prevailing wind, the fire did little damage to adjacent houses or to Johnstone town centre. However, it resulted in the main railway line to Ayrshire being closed for a number of hours.

I realise that there is little that can be done in terms of retrospective legislation but, frankly, I do not think that it is acceptable to say that it is a matter for the local authorities to address using their existing powers. I am asking the minister to say what the Scottish Government will do, using its powers to legislate and set regulations, to change the regulations and the rules to prevent such plants from being located next to town centres or residential areas in future.

**Aileen McLeod:** The member will appreciate that I am not the minister for planning. Under the Scottish planning policy on the location of waste facilities, local development plans

“should safeguard existing waste management installations and ensure that”

new development

“does not compromise waste handling operations, which may operate 24 hours a day and partly outside buildings.”

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency regulates waste facilities either through a licence under the Waste Management Licensing (Scotland) Regulations 2011 or through a permit that is issued under the Pollution Prevention and Control (Scotland) Regulations 2012. Under section 36(2) of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, SEPA cannot issue a waste management licence for land that does not have planning permission for that use. The licence and PPC permit conditions relate to the management and control systems for the activities that are carried out and the precautions to be taken—for example, the type of waste that is accepted and the storage and treatment processes. Those conditions must be complied with or SEPA will have to take the appropriate enforcement action.

**Air Quality (Central Scotland)**

**2. Richard Lyle (Central Scotland) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to improve air quality in the Central Scotland region. (S4O-03862)

**The Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Aileen McLeod):** Local authorities have the lead responsibility in assessing and promoting air quality. The Scottish Government has supported a number of councils across Central Scotland by providing them with practical and financial assistance in implementing their action plans, continuing to operate a comprehensive network of around 90 air quality monitoring stations and utilising the data to develop and inform policy initiatives.

**Richard Lyle:** Most of the councils in my region regularly publish data on air quality and issue it on their websites. Will the minister encourage all councils to publish all air quality information and to standardise the data that is supplied to members of the public in a format that conveys the information in a manner that is more understandable and that can be easily accessed on individual council websites?

**Aileen McLeod:** I agree that clear information needs to be available to the public to inform people about local air quality. For that reason, in 2007 we established the Scottish air quality website and database. The website allows members of the public to obtain alerts when high pollution episodes are forecast. Through the forthcoming low emissions strategy consultation, we will seek views on potential improvements that can be made to the consistency and clarity of communications regarding air quality, reflecting the potential number of pollutants that might be involved.

**Margaret McCulloch (Central Scotland) (Lab):** It has been more than a year since Friends of the Earth Scotland revealed that 14 of the country's top 20 pollution hotspots for nitrogen dioxide were breaking European Union safety limits, including the Raith interchange in Central Scotland. Does the Scottish Government agree that, to achieve sustainable improvements in air quality, it must not only complete the redevelopment of the Raith interchange to avoid bottlenecks but improve public transport in the region overall through the electrification of Lanarkshire railways and, where necessary, the better regulation of local bus services?

**Aileen McLeod:** The Government is committed to improving air quality across the country. We have seen significant reductions in pollution emissions over recent decades through tighter industrial regulation, improved fuel quality, cleaner vehicles and an increased focus on sustainable

transport. We are meeting domestic and European air quality targets across most of Scotland, although there are still localised hotspots of poorer air quality in a number of urban areas. Scotland's national transport strategy includes among its three strategic outcomes a commitment to improving air quality. Initiatives such as the green bus fund and the plug-in vehicles road map are making a major contribution to improving air quality.

### **Single Use Carrier Bags (Impact of Charging)**

#### **3. James Dornan (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP):**

To ask the Scottish Government what impact the introduction of charges for single use carrier bags has had on the number of bags becoming litter or landfill waste. (S4O-03863)

**The Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Aileen McLeod):** As expected, early reports from some major retailers indicate reductions in bag use of up to 90 per cent since the introduction of the charge. It is encouraging to see that so many shoppers are now in the habit of reusing bags. We expect that those positive early indications will lead to a visible reduction in bag litter on our streets and beaches.

**James Dornan:** I have received a lot of positive feedback from my constituents about the impact of the carrier bag charge and how it has helped to make them more aware of the difference that simple actions can make to the environment. Has the introduction of the charge been as widely welcomed among shoppers in other parts of Scotland?

**Aileen McLeod:** A poll following the introduction of the charge showed that 85 per cent of people agreed that it is a positive step and only 9 per cent disagreed. That has been backed up by comments in the media and online indicating that most people have welcomed this important litter reduction measure and adapted well to it.

### **National Marine Plan**

**4. Colin Beattie (Midlothian North and Musselburgh) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government when it will publish the final version of Scotland's national marine plan. (S4O-03864)

**The Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Aileen McLeod):** The national marine plan was laid before the Scottish Parliament on 11 December 2014. The plan will be adopted and published following parliamentary scrutiny in accordance with schedule 1 to the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010.

**Colin Beattie:** As the minister might know, the popular Fisherrow sands in Musselburgh are in my constituency. What plans are there to enhance recreational beach usage, and what will be done

to ensure clean beaches and acceptable water quality?

**Aileen McLeod:** The national marine plan sets out objectives and policies to support the sustainable growth of marine recreation and tourism in Scotland, including recreational beach activities. The policies also ensure consideration of development impacts on the sector, and the plan sets out requirements to support growth that cover the protection and improvement of access, infrastructure and facilities in addition to the protection and enhancement of the unique natural resources that the sector relies on. The plan's general policies also ensure that measures to address marine litter must be taken to support Scotland's marine litter strategy, and any activity must not result in the deterioration in the level of water quality applied by the water framework directive and other related directives.

**Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):** How will data for the national marine plan be collected from the range of sectors and collated and co-ordinated in an on-going way for the national marine plan interactive? Just as important, how will it be shared with regional marine planners? I appreciate that the cabinet secretary is not here today, and I would respect it if the minister wished to respond later.

**Aileen McLeod:** Given the level of detail that the member has asked for and given that the matter falls within the cabinet secretary's portfolio, I am sure that she will appreciate it if I say to her that, if she were to write to the cabinet secretary, he would be able to give her a more detailed response to her question.

**Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con):** I appreciate that the plan was laid before Parliament in December, but will the minister confirm that it is still open to alteration and reconsideration, if necessary, given that the cabinet secretary is coming before the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee next week and the committee still has to report its findings with regard to the national marine plan?

**Aileen McLeod:** We will be very happy to come back to the member on that question when we have further information.

### **Lima Climate Change Conference (Outcomes)**

**5. Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the outcomes of the recent climate change conference in Lima. (S4O-03865)

**The Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Aileen McLeod):** The Lima call for climate action has kept the international negotiations moving forward, but very

important issues—principally, the overall level of global ambition—have yet to be resolved. Scotland's messages about the need for high ambition and climate justice will continue to be highly relevant in the crucial year ahead if the new climate treaty in Paris in 2015 is to stand a good chance of limiting global temperature rise to no more than 2°C, as the international community has already agreed to do.

**Dennis Robertson:** I thank the minister for her answer, and I welcome her to what is, I think, her first portfolio question time in the chamber.

Scotland leads the way in the international community with its ambitious climate change targets. Can the minister give us some assurance that the Government remains committed to achieving those targets and to setting an example for the rest of the world?

**Aileen McLeod:** The Government remains extremely committed to the targets. Indeed, as was set out in the programme for government last November, the Scottish Government will continue to lead work to support the delivery and achievement of our world-leading Scottish climate change targets. The Cabinet sub-committee on climate change, which has been established, will ensure that the climate change policy is given the highest priority in all Government objectives. In fact, the sub-committee is meeting again tomorrow.

**Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** I, too, welcome the minister to her new post. Although we are very proud of our targets in Scotland, the Scottish Government has failed to meet them in the first three years. It is important not only that we talk the talk but that we walk the walk, so what new initiatives will the minister be launching over the next 12 months and will any of them require cross-party support? Just before Christmas, the First Minister said that the Opposition parties were not supportive enough; well, if we know what policies are being brought forward, we can talk about them.

**Aileen McLeod:** As I said in my previous answer, the Cabinet sub-committee on climate change is meeting tomorrow to discuss a range of issues around climate change objectives in the Government.

We are taking a number of steps to ensure that Scotland remains on track to meet its climate change ambitions. We intend that the report on proposals and policies 2 will be delivered in full. Where policies and proposals are not being delivered, we will seek to bring forward new policies to achieve the same, if not a greater, level of emissions abatement.

Preparatory work for producing the next RPP, which is due for publication in 2016, has already

commenced, and we aim to lay RPP3 as soon as reasonably practicable. In addition, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and Economy has agreed to fund a new macroeconomic model to help in preparing RPP3.

### Clyde 2020

**6. Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):** To ask the Scottish Government what progress it is making toward implementing the Clyde 2020 proposals. (S4O-03866)

**The Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Aileen McLeod):** Following the Clyde 2020 summit in April last year, Marine Scotland, with support from the Firth of Clyde forum, has continued to engage with those stakeholders who have an interest in the Clyde.

The outputs of those discussions will form the basis of the Clyde 2020 action plan, and the governance arrangements are currently being developed. The action plan will help to better co-ordinate existing work and underpin action to contribute to a better and healthier Clyde. We are working towards publication of the action plan early this year.

**Kenneth Gibson:** I welcome the Clyde 2020 process and the south Arran marine protected area in my constituency.

When Parliament debated Scotland's inshore fisheries last April, members on all sides of the chamber sought a regulating order for the Clyde as proposed by the Sustainable Inshore Fisheries Trust to boost the Clyde's environment and economy and to help to meet the Clyde 2020 targets.

At that time, the cabinet secretary said that he was looking forward to receiving an application for that regulating order, which I understand will be lodged this quarter. Does the Government support the use of such regulating orders to deliver local control over fisheries in general or only in specific circumstances?

**Aileen McLeod:** The Scottish Government is aware that the Sustainable Inshore Fisheries Trust is currently consulting locally on plans for a regulating order for the Clyde. We are not aware of the trust's detailed plans, and we have not yet received an application. When and if an application is received, Marine Scotland will consult on and assess it before any decision is made on whether to support it.

Regulating orders are also subject to parliamentary approval, and they are but one of the mechanisms that are available to manage our inshore fisheries in Scotland.

## Flooding Infrastructure (Perth and Kinross)

### 7. Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):

To ask the Scottish Government what assessment it has made of the flooding infrastructure in Perth and Kinross. (S4O-03867)

**The Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Aileen McLeod):** In 2007, all the existing flood defences in Scotland were assessed as part of the establishment of the Scottish Government's flood defence asset database. Since then, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency has undertaken a new national flood risk assessment, the outputs from which were approved by ministers on 22 December 2011.

The national flood risk assessment pulls together all the latest information relating to the sources and impacts of flooding and, for the first time ever, we now have a national picture of flood risk throughout Scotland. That is a major step forward in our understanding of flood risk, and it is a key milestone towards Scotland being able to target efforts to plan and invest in reducing impacts in areas that are most vulnerable to flooding. Ultimately, it will help Scotland become more resilient to the impacts of flooding.

**Liz Smith:** The minister will be aware that, in 2012, the Water of Ruchill in Comrie flooded very badly, causing thousands of pounds of damage and causing people to be homeless for a period. The minister will also be aware of an audit report that found that, although Perth and Kinross Council should check flood situations monthly, in the previous three years such checks had happened only yearly. That is simply not good enough. What information has the Scottish Government got from local authorities with regard to ensuring that flood-prone areas are checked frequently?

**Aileen McLeod:** Flood protection schemes are primarily a matter for local authorities. I understand the residents' frustrations about the time that it has taken to implement measures to protect Comrie from future flooding. However, it is also important to ensure that the right measures are put in place, and that can take time.

Perth and Kinross Council received funding for a scheme at Almondbank during the previous round of funding applications, but it was not in a position to apply for funding for Comrie as it did not have an approved scheme with all the appropriate statutory consents in place. The council is investigating the options for a flood protection scheme for Comrie, but I understand that that is in the very early stages and the implementation of any scheme may be a number of years away.

## Active Travel

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

The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-11980, in the name of Derek Mackay, on active travel. We are extraordinarily tight for time today, so times will be adhered to, please.

14:41

### The Minister for Transport and Islands (Derek Mackay):

I am delighted to be here for my first Government-led debate as Minister for Transport and Islands. I welcome David Stewart to his position in the Labour Party group. We have worked together well in the past, including when the Government supported his bill. Maybe that consensual and constructive approach is one that we can take forward in the transport and islands agenda.

On a wider note, that offer of consensus and a constructive approach is, of course, made to all parties. There is a great deal of agreement and consensus on the vision of the Scotland that we would like in terms of transport and active travel.

The purpose of the motion is to celebrate and share the success of active travel projects in Scotland since the establishment of the Scottish Parliament, and to take stock and consider further actions, so I will be keen to hear all members' views. On that note, I say that I intend to accept the Labour amendment as a reasonable contribution to the debate.

I want to celebrate and build on the projects that are making a difference to participation in active travel. Although we have some way to go in the general population, young people are leading the way. For example, a survey showed that more than 50 per cent of schoolchildren travel actively to school.

It is fitting that in this year, which is the 20th anniversary of the national cycle network, we recognise the efforts of all partners and commit to working together to continue to promote active travel. I look forward to hearing from Sustrans about the celebrations that it is planning for the national cycle network anniversary and I hope to take part in some of them.

As the motion says, we have made progress since 1999. We now have the "Cycling Action Plan for Scotland 2013"—the second such plan—which outlines 19 actions that will help us to achieve our shared vision of 10 per cent of everyday journeys being made by bike by 2020. We also have our first ever national walking strategy, "Let's Get Scotland Walking". The Paths for All Partnership is leading on development of the action plan for the strategy, which will be launched in spring 2015. It

will include actions that will be aimed at improving walking environments to help to increase levels of functional walking.

Most recently, we published our active travel vision, which sets out what Scotland will look like in 2030 if more people choose walking and cycling as their everyday forms of travel for shorter journeys.

We also have “National Planning Framework 3”, which includes plans for a national long-distance walking and cycling network and plans to implement the town centre action plan through the charrette programme, which will complement the community links programme that is run by Sustrans. I am keen to ensure that the planning system makes all the right connections. Members will pardon the pun. That is something that I pursued when I was the planning minister, and I intend to meet my former planning officials again to continue that work.

I thank all the stakeholders who contributed to all the documents and strategies that provide us with the vision and action points. I look forward to working in the future with all stakeholders on delivering them.

This year sees the largest-ever Scottish Government investment—almost £40 million—in cycling and walking. Members should bear in mind that much of that investment is matched by partners. For example, through the community links programme of £19 million, Sustrans generated some £25 million in match funding in 2014-15.

**Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP):** I am grateful to the minister for outlining the important investment that has been made in active travel. I ask him to help me to clear up a matter. One of my constituents is concerned that in November Nick Clegg announced £214 million of additional cycling investment in England. Will the minister tell me whether that was new money with Barnett consequential or was money taken from other areas of the transport budget and reannounced?

**Derek Mackay:** I have already found how complex the budget lines are in the transport portfolio, partly because different portfolios contribute to active travel and cycling. That is one of the reasons why I will accept the Labour amendment, to give further clarity to spending on active travel, which is the right thing to do. New funding announcements have been additional money allocated to the tasks. I hope that that reassures Bruce Crawford and his constituents.

On an additional £10 million, there is an issue around financial transactions, which is not the first place we would want to go for £5 million to fund capital improvements, but we have—do we not?—to be creative, with Westminster making such

drastic reductions to our capital budget. If that £5 million of financial transactions money cannot be spent on cycling, here is the commitment that has already been made and will be delivered: we will find that resource from elsewhere in the transport budget to ensure that we fulfil the commitment that we have made publicly. We will find new ways of working to innovate in, and to support, active travel. I hope that that answers the question.

On that note, we need to continue with the partnership approach of taking shared responsibility for cycling and active travel. I will also harness the energy that exists among my local government colleagues.

There will be further announcements on funding. I have written to Spokes—the Lothian cycle campaign group—to confirm the 2015-16 budget for cycling and walking. The moneys that have been announced will support improved infrastructure, and projects to support behaviour change, which is essential if we are to make the transformation that has been outlined.

The message that cycling and walking benefit all of us is firmly out there. A raft of projects are being delivered and there is a range of funding sources to support them. Our message is clear: by choosing active travel, people cut the carbon emissions and pollution that are caused by short car journeys; by building high-quality cycle routes and paths, we are helping schoolchildren to walk, scoot and cycle safely to school, thereby cutting the congestion that the school run causes; and by supporting behaviour change projects, we are encouraging more people to cycle and walk to work, college, university, the shops and appointments, which is good for our health and should be part of our daily routines.

I will focus on projects that the Scottish Government has supported and that have made a difference. As I said, active travel should be part of our everyday life from the earliest years, so I will start with children in schools. Since 1999, cycle training at schools throughout Scotland has changed significantly. The cycling proficiency test is now called bikeability Scotland, and 38 per cent of primary schools now offer bikeability Scotland on-road cycle training. That is up from 32 per cent just three years ago.

**Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):** What plans are there to make much higher the percentage of on-road cycling, through bikeability Scotland, among primary pupils? As a former primary school teacher, I believe that that is very important. I apologise if the minister was going to go on to discuss that.

**Derek Mackay:** Claudia Beamish is absolutely right. The level of on-road cycling is not to our

satisfaction, and on that and many other action points we want to do more, with our partners. I will be able to cover a great many points in the action plan, and I will talk about progress and what else we want to do when the next monitoring report is published—I understand that the update will come before the relevant committee in February. At that point I will be able to flesh out the detail about progress that is being made on increasing the percentage that Claudia Beamish asked about.

At schools where Sustrans I bike project officers are helping to deliver cycling activities, there has been an average increase of 7 per cent in the number of pupils who cycle. The rate has increased in particular among young girls, which is important if the practice is to be sustained when pupils go on to secondary school.

There are cycle-friendly schools and numerous safer routes to school projects. A new pilot project called school cycle camps was run last autumn. Aimed at 16-year-olds, the programme funded one-week residential cycling courses, at which volunteers learned basic bike mechanics and were accredited with cycle-training assistant certificates, which will enable them to go on and train their fellow students. Cycling Scotland received applications for the project from a number of schools that want to promote cycling. We will continue to support that work. The project receives funding from the environment budget, which illustrates the points that the issue cuts across portfolios and that projects are not necessarily funded from the transport budget.

Cycling Scotland is also working with students in five further and higher education campuses to encourage more active travel in and around universities and colleges. Grants are available for events, signage, cycle hire and cycle parking. I look forward to the extension of such facilities in the near future.

Towns and cities throughout Scotland will see investment in community links projects and cycle-friendly communities awards. This year alone, 180 community links projects are being administered by Sustrans, in partnership with some 40 organisations—mostly local authorities and regional transport partnerships.

Nearly £500,000 has been awarded to 66 grass-roots community groups through the cycle friendly and sustainable communities fund, which was set up during the last spending review.

On a larger scale, in September last year 10,000 people took part in Scotland's biggest cycle ride, cycling from Glasgow to Edinburgh and in Aberdeen. They raised more than £110,000 for the STV appeal. I have been warned that an invitation to take part in the next event will go to all members.

Although many of the projects that I have mentioned are oriented towards cycling, walking and multimodal journeys also benefit. Community links projects create shared-use paths, which benefit walkers and people who depend on motorised wheelchairs to get around.

We cannot talk about active travel without talking about road safety. As ministers have said many times, one death on Scotland's roads is one too many. We will do all that we can do to reduce road casualty figures, in line with our road safety framework and the targets in the framework document.

With that in mind, we have developed and will imminently publish further guidance on 20mph limits and zones, in partnership with the Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland. The guidance will provide greater clarity for local authorities on the options that are available when they are considering the introduction of 20mph speed limits, which help to protect pedestrians and cyclists.

Members will be aware of the term "presumed liability"—or "strict liability"—which some organisations are advocating. As the Scottish Government has said, there is a continuing debate in that regard. I expect that the matter will be discussed at the next meeting of the cross-party group on cycling, which I hope to attend. The Scottish Government's position has not changed; if there is evidence that the introduction of some form of strict liability will make active travel safer, we will of course look at it.

I am running out of time. When he was transport minister, the Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities made great progress in promoting cycling in the context of rail travel and ensuring that the new rail franchise will create many opportunities for cycling—that is a feature of the new contract.

It is appropriate to acknowledge the importance of the legacy of the 2014 Commonwealth games for active travel as part of an active Scotland. I am sure that we all agree that team Scotland's athletes' inspirational performances during last summer's games will leave a fitting legacy to encourage more people throughout the country into more active lifestyles. The local approach is essential in that regard. I am sure that we are all committed to ensuring that Scottish people who might have been inspired by watching team Scotland bring in a record-breaking haul of medals have the opportunity to take their first steps towards healthier living.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** You need to draw to a close.

**Derek Mackay:** There are a great deal of projects going on; I could have gone on to talk about many more of them.

In conclusion, the language in the Labour amendment is not right—there has not been stagnation in participation in active travel. However, there is much more to do, so let us work together to support active travel.

I move,

That the Parliament recognises the success of active travel programmes in enabling more people to be active more often, with record levels of investment in active travel; celebrates the 20th anniversary of the National Cycle Network; welcomes the publication of the second *Cycling Action Plan for Scotland* and the first National Walking Strategy; acknowledges the cross-party commitment to promoting active travel and progress made by the Scottish Government since 1999, alongside external partners, in laying the foundations for a more active and healthier nation, and commits to working together to realise the active travel vision, which outlines how Scotland will look in 2030 if more people are walking and cycling.

14:55

**David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** I could be wrong, but I suspect that consensus will rule supreme this afternoon. Of course, Opposition members from across the chamber will endeavour to keep the minister on his toes. Nevertheless, I thank the minister for his kind remarks at the start of his speech.

To continue that theme of consensus, Scottish Labour will support the Government motion and the Green amendment. However, we will be asking searching questions about the active travel budget.

I will focus on the why question in my contribution. On a simplistic level, what are the benefits of active travel? What does the evidence say? I will touch on, as the minister has, road safety, which will lead me on to questions about design in our cities and towns. I will finish on budgetary issues.

We on this side of the chamber are keen supporters of active travel. Labour wants to encourage walking and cycling. We want to promote a culture of active travel more generally. What are the benefits of active travel? The minister touched on them: it has wide-ranging personal health benefits, it is environmentally friendly, and it is a very low-cost or free means of transport.

King's College London has recently completed a wide-ranging study on the health benefits of cycling. Professor Norman Lazarus was quoted in Tuesday's *Press and Journal*:

"Cycling not only keeps you mentally alert, but requires the vigorous use of many of the body's key systems, such as your muscles, heart and lungs which you need for

maintaining health and for reducing the risks associated with numerous diseases."

The study examined 122 fit amateur cyclists aged between 55 to 79. It concluded that many were physically and biologically younger than most people of the same age.

There has also been recent academic research into the health benefits of walking by C3 Collaborating for Health. It argues that walking has clear benefits for physical and mental health. However, between 1989 and 2004, the number of children walking or cycling to school fell from 62 to 50 per cent in the United Kingdom as a whole. Parental fear of children being involved in road accidents or general child protection concerns could have contributed to that fall in numbers.

Physical barriers may be a greater problem for the elderly, for people with disabilities and for parents with young children. What helps? The improvement of infrastructure helps, such as implementing footpaths and seating areas, highlighting the social aspects of walking, and the use of tools such as smartphones and route planners that provide safe, reliable information for those wishing to make healthy lifestyle changes.

Collaborating for Health concludes that active transport is associated with a reduction in the risk of cardiovascular disease, obesity and higher blood pressure.

There is excellent best practice. For example, the walking tube map in London shows the number of steps it takes to walk between each station. On my first outing as Labour's transport representative, I have a suggestion: why do we not develop a similar map for the Scottish Parliament? We could have a walking route from each member's office to all the committee rooms along with the number of steps each journey takes. Perhaps that could be a job for the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body.

**Nigel Don (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP):** I wonder whether we should ensure that members get a choice about which floor their office is on in the MSP block. Some of us would choose to be at the top; others might not.

**David Stewart:** I do not know whether the member wants me to nominate members who should be on the top floor, but I will certainly have a look at his suggestion.

We also need to look carefully at road safety. What does the evidence tell us about trends in road safety for pedestrians? Since 2008, pedestrian casualties have fallen by a quarter, but it is worrying that fatalities have increased by a third. The majority of the casualties occurred in built-up areas where the speed limits are up to 40mph. The majority occur in the winter and in the

evening. At weekends, the casualty peak times for adults were between midnight and 2am.

Very concerning for me as a road safety campaigner was the number of pedestrian casualties, more than a quarter of whom were aged under 16. In 2012, 60 per cent of the casualties were male. The UK Department for Transport figures show that the annual pedestrian KSI—killed or seriously injured—figure for the UK has been rising recently. Using those statistics, the DFT concludes that walking is more dangerous than travelling in a car.

There are solutions, of course. I do not have time to talk about the graduate driving approach, in which I am actively interested. We need to develop road safety education in schools, safe walkways for schools and better designed walkways in towns, cities and rural areas.

What are the environmental benefits of increasing active travel? My colleague Claudia Beamish will go into a lot more detail about that in her contribution, but we clearly need a modal shift if we are going to reach our 2020 target on emissions.

The Scottish Government included active travel as one of the means by which to reach our 2020 target on lower emissions. Substituting short carbon-polluting car journeys with walking or cycling is a relatively easy early gain. It is also important to note that it would have a knock-on effect on air pollution, to which are attributed more than 2,000 deaths a year in Scotland.

It is important that we look not just at the numbers but at the human stories of how bad air quality can have a detrimental effect on people's quality of life. We should think of the small child who has asthma walking to school while inhaling emissions from the exhausts of the cars of their schoolmates' parents. Safety at the school gates would be greatly improved if more people made the trip on foot or by bike. I know that it is not possible for everyone to leave the car at home, especially in remote and rural areas, but we do need a change in culture and mindset. Active travel is good for a healthier life balance and the environment.

I will also briefly touch on how active travel can have positive effects on the economy and personal finances. It is interesting to note that, according to the national household survey, 22 per cent of households earning less than £10,000 a year use walking as the main method of transport while only 8 per cent of households whose earnings exceed £40,000 do so. Car ownership has been steadily increasing but 30 per cent of households still do not have access to a car; many of those are low-income households.

Many people without cars rely on active travel methods to get to work or school, but they are faced with unnecessary obstacles and dangers such as badly lit walkways and cycle paths. That means that not all spending on active travel benefits all members of society; it particularly benefits those who do not have the option of travelling by car.

The Scottish Government vision for 2030 has an ambitious plan to increase active travel by 20 per cent and a target of 10 per cent for all journeys to be made by bike by the year 2020. We share that ambition. Is the minister confident that those targets can be met? What obstacles need to be overcome?

The figures on walking illustrate that little has changed since 1999, which means that there is a slight downward trajectory. There is clearly a bit of room for improvement here. The figures for cycling show a similar trend. We need to encourage people from all walks of life and of all ages to regard cycling as a reliable and safe means of transport. We have to ensure that young children get the opportunity to learn how to cycle in a safe and encouraging environment so that cycling becomes part of their lives as adults. We have already heard from Claudia Beamish about the importance of bikeability Scotland and having on-road experience.

I recall Merkinch school in Inverness in 1965 where I got the cycling proficiency certificate. I assure Alex Johnstone that that is not my only certificate—I am working on that.

It is clear that we need to do a lot more work to create a nation of walkers and cyclists. We need investment to ensure that people feel confident and able to leave their car behind for a pair of shoes or a bike. We also need to improve road safety, which is why I welcome the Scottish Government commitment to increase the active travel budget in 2015-16 and the cabinet secretary's commitment to an additional £10 million investment in cycling and walking infrastructure. Those are good headline figures and I welcome what the Government has put forward, but we need more than that. Currently, there is little information on where exactly the money will be spent and how much will go directly to improving infrastructure. I would be grateful if, in his winding-up, the minister would give us a bit more detail.

The campaign group Spokes has highlighted its concerns that only half the £10 million additional funding will go on improving infrastructure. It is also concerned that the ring-fenced budget that has been given to our local authorities for cycling and walking routes is being cut from £8.2 million to £8 million in the current budget, which could have dramatic effects on local authorities' abilities to



improve cycling and walking. We know that there are funding pressures for local government, but I flag up that there is best practice on promoting cycling and walking, with the Labour-led City of Edinburgh Council being a prime example in that regard.

I welcome this debate and stress Scottish Labour's strong support for active travel. We believe that making walking and cycling more accessible will make a substantial contribution to addressing the physical health and mental health problems in Scotland. We welcome assurances from the minister that funding is available to meet the ambitions of the various strategy documents, such as those for the cycling action plan, active travel and the national walking strategy. As Lao Tzu said,

"The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

I move amendment S4M-11980.1, to insert at end:

“; acknowledges that the number of people participating in active travel has remained relatively stagnant and more needs to be done to increase the number of people cycling and walking as a normal means of transport through improving infrastructure, promotion activities and road safety, and calls on the Scottish Government to set out how the active travel budget for 2015-16 will be spent, in particular the proportion that will be allocated to cycling and walking infrastructure”.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** Thank you for sticking to your time. I now call Alison Johnstone—up to six minutes, please.

15:05

**Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green):** The beginning of a new year is a good time to have this important debate. Someone wrote on Twitter, in a new year's resolution sort of way, that this year they would like to save money, lose weight, improve their health and fitness, get to work on time and enjoy the scenery. Then they kind of scored that out and wrote, "I'm going to get cycling." Walking clearly offers similar benefits.

A Government that is serious about spending money wisely on outcomes such as vastly improving national health and wellbeing, not to mention boosting the economy, should invest properly in walking and cycling. Since I led the Parliament's first debate on cycling in 2012, it has become clear that there is an increasing number of positive local stories around infrastructure, more training, the lowering of speed limits and the introduction of 20mph zones in some of our towns and cities. However, the situation is still too patchy.

I am pleased to be able to work on a cross-party basis with my colleagues in the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on cycling. Co-

conveners Jim Eadie and Claudia Beamish always input very positively, as do the many external organisations that attend the group and make it the success that it is.

I was really pleased to attend a meeting in Parliament at which we heard from Søren Rasmussen, an architect and member of the cycling embassy of Denmark, who told us that although investment in cycling in Copenhagen was initially driven by a need to address pollution and congestion, the number 1 reason that people in Copenhagen gave for cycling was convenience and speed—it got them quickly to where they wanted to get. His slides of cycling Copenhagen style were inspirational, with 40 per cent of folk cycling to work, school, university and college, and no Lycra or hi-vis gear in sight—it is not needed, because a critical mass of cyclists is highly visible. Who can miss that endless flow of bikes, with people pedalling at a conversational speed and arriving to start their day only slightly more rosy-cheeked than if they had walked?

For now, such numbers remain a vision for Scotland, but it is essential that we have a really clear commitment to a target of 10 per cent of all journeys being made by bike by 2020. We should keep the language clear: if 10 per cent is a target, we should call it a target.

As we have heard already, we are in the legacy period following last summer's very successful Commonwealth games. We know that it is really hard to find research that shows a meaningful legacy and real change following global games. Too often after the games have left town, after people have been inspired by watching the world's greatest athletes in action and after an initial boost in participation, there has been little or no sustained increase in physical activity among the general population. Investing properly in cycling and walking now would help to ensure that Glasgow bucks that trend. As we know, physical activity can help to improve so many health problems, from dementia to diabetes, and from fatigue to the risk of hip fractures. A Canadian academic has confirmed that the best-preserved 65-year-old can outperform a sedentary 25-year-old.

However, becoming and remaining physically active is a quality-of-life issue. As we begin to fully understand the economic, health and societal impacts of our changing population demographic, that becomes important information. Our population is ageing, and people need to do so in an active and energising way that helps to prevent and delay many of the chronic conditions that blight too many lives. It is really important that the Scottish Government sustains a clear upward trend in investment in active travel. Relying on consequentials, welcome though they are, does

not demonstrate the leadership that we need on the issue. The increase in investment in previous years got us close to 2 per cent of transport spending, and I urge the Government not only to maintain that but to surpass it and not to cut investment.

The City of Edinburgh Council leads the local authority commuter cycle rates race. It has done so with a clear commitment to increase spending on active travel by 1 per cent each year until it has reached 10 per cent of the transport budget.

Governing is, of course, about choices. As yet, no Scottish Government—indeed, no Government in Scotland—has made walking and cycling a priority. The level of investment says it all: it is 1 and a bit per cent of the transport budget—a budget that has increased massively in the past four years. The new transport minister could be the person to change that.

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):** Does the member accept that it is not just about money; it is also about changing attitudes?

**Alison Johnstone:** Absolutely, but we have spent a lot of money on changing attitudes. We need to have the infrastructure that will allow parents and others to feel that they want children to walk and cycle on safe roads.

The Paths for All Partnership has called for a champion for the cause. The minister could be the Government's cycling and walking champion.

Spokes has rightly questioned the clarity of the financial transactions that are involved in investing in cycling and walking infrastructure. Transform Scotland, too, speaks of the continued opaqueness of the Scottish budget. Why is it so complicated? I ask the Government to make it as transparent as possible and to be really proud of the investment. It can have a single budget line or two for "Walking infrastructure" and "Cycling infrastructure". As advocated by the Scottish Green Party and 110 transport, medical and other professional bodies, including the Association of Directors of Public Health, the Institute of Highway Engineers and the British Heart Foundation, at the end of the line can be a figure that is 10 per cent of the transport budget.

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

**Alison Johnstone:** I will indeed, Presiding Officer.

The Paths for All Partnership is right to point out in its briefing that active travel schemes clearly deliver better value for money than most traditional transport schemes. It is also right to say that it is time to fund what the policies say. So why the ongoing reluctance?

I look forward to hearing colleagues' speeches.

I move amendment S4M-11980.2, to insert at end:

“; reaffirms the Scottish Government's target of 10% of journeys to be made by bike by 2020; notes the estimate by Spokes that active travel funding in the 2015-16 draft budget is lower than in the previous year; calls on the Scottish Government to reverse this cut and substantially increase funding for active travel; notes the ongoing debate and research into the introduction of presumed liability in relation to road accidents, and urges local authorities to meet growing demand for high-quality walking and cycling infrastructure, extend 20mph speed limits in built-up areas and provide walking and cycling training opportunities to every child in Scotland”.

15:11

**Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con):** I fear that the debate will be somewhat repetitive.

We hear a great deal in the Parliament about the increasing levels of obesity in Scotland; the health demands of our rapidly growing elderly population; the persistent health inequalities in our society; and the serious health risks of an inactive lifestyle. The latter are indeed stark, as statistics show that seven deaths occur every day in Scotland due to inactivity. Many of them are premature. There is therefore a huge benefit to be had from getting people out of their cars and on to their feet or their bikes. All the problems that I have just mentioned can be helped by increasing the level of our activity as a nation.

Walking has no personal financial cost. It is the most common physical activity and it has many proven health benefits, as we have heard. It helps to maintain bone density; it can reduce the severity of dementia; it reduces cardiovascular diseases by up to 30 per cent; it reduces the risk of some cancers; and it helps to alleviate depression and high blood pressure. Indeed, it has been shown to cut overall mortality rates by up to 20 per cent. Given that obesity is currently estimated to cost the national health service more than £300 million a year, we can judge the significant financial benefits to be gained from improving our national health by increasing our physical activity.

In a country in which more than a third of women and nearly a quarter of men do not have a driving licence and 22 per cent of households with an income of less than £10,000 a year use walking as their main mode of transport, policies to support walking will disproportionately support low-income households. That has to be a good thing. The more people use active travel, the more they are likely to walk for pleasure and recreation. With fewer cars on local roads, routes to school and local facilities will become safer for all age groups—especially for children—and older people

will be able to feel more in touch with their communities.

Active travel encourages access to shops and services in local centres and so helps to support local economies. As we know, it also serves to cut carbon emissions and other pollution in our communities. Surely that is an all-round win-win situation.

So far, I have mentioned the benefits only of walking, because that is what I personally relate to most, but cycling, too, has enormous health and social benefits, of course.

What I have said so far is well known to policy makers. During the Scottish Parliament's existence, successive Governments and all parties have been committed to promoting active travel as a measure to develop a more active and healthier population. Various strategies have been put in place to try to achieve that ambition. As the motion states, the national cycle network has been in place for 20 years. The first cycling action plan for Scotland was published in 2010 and was refreshed in 2013, and last year saw the launch of the first national walking strategy as part of the legacy of the Commonwealth games. The active travel vision for 2030 has been articulated. It shows how Scotland will look by then if more people in Scotland are walking and cycling on a regular basis instead of using powered transport.

How close are we to achieving that ambitious vision? Sadly, not very, if we look at current trends as laid out in the briefing sent to us by Living Streets and Paths for All. The Government's national performance indicator on increasing the proportion of journeys to work that are made by public or active transport has decreased from 31.2 to 30.7 per cent. In 2013, only 23 per cent of such journeys were made on foot, even though half of all of them were of less than 3km.

The number of children walking to school is stuck at about 50 per cent, with 20 per cent of morning peak traffic still taking children to school, although most primary school children live less than 1.5 miles from their school. I can of course understand parents' fear of traffic when their children want to walk or cycle to school, but the more cars are used for school transport, the busier the traffic will be, especially in an area with rapidly increasing housing development, as there is where I live.

Sadly, commuter cycling rates remain very low. The rate in Aberdeen, for example, has increased by only 1 per cent since 1999 to 3 per cent last year, which is nowhere near the Government's 10 per cent cycle share target for 2020. As we know, Edinburgh is doing better at 6.6 per cent, following specific financial investment, but it is still well behind the target, too.

Funding is clearly an issue for walking and cycling if the Government's vision is to come near achievement. Local authorities receive Government funding for the development of pedestrian infrastructure, but details of how that money is spent are not available, because it is generally counted as expenditure on roads. Government money is also used for a wide range of sustainable travel initiatives, such as car clubs and cycling infrastructure projects, so it is hard to establish what the Government spends on walking.

Revenue and capital funding for cycling comes from the Scottish Government and local authorities—revenue funding comes under a number of budget headings—and there is a lack of clarity about where it is spent, which hinders efforts to deliver the Government's goals. I believe that the cycling, walking and safer streets fund, which is a key source of finance for local authorities to implement active travel and infrastructure projects and is allocated to councils on a per capita basis, has been decreased from £8.2 million last year to £8 million.

**Derek Mackay:** What is the Conservatives' funding position on sustainable and active travel and specifically on cycling, as that relates to local government?

**Nanette Milne:** This must be sorted out between the Government and local authorities.

**Derek Mackay:** So the Conservatives do not have a position.

**Nanette Milne:** Just take what I have said. Funding needs to be sorted out between national and local government. It needs to be reliable and consistent if making progress towards the 2030 vision is to be realistic.

Much good work has been done in the lifetime of the Scottish Parliament, but a great deal more will be necessary to achieve the active nation that is not only desirable but necessary. We totally support the Government's ambition and we will continue to support sensible measures to help to realise its active travel vision for 2030.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We move to the open debate. We are tight for time.

15:18

**Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP):** I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in the debate. If I may, I will confine my remarks to cycling.

In April 2012, I had the privilege—along with Alison Johnstone and Sarah Boyack—of addressing 3,000 cyclists who had come from all over Scotland to ride en masse from the Meadows to the Scottish Parliament. That was a mass

movement—people of all ages and from all backgrounds came together to make their voice heard and to demand that our roads be made safer and more accessible for cyclists. They set up their own campaign group, they wrote a manifesto, they used social media and they called for action so that Scotland could become a cycle-friendly nation.

That was the first-ever pedal on Parliament event, which has now become an annual fixture in the political and cycling calendars. It has been addressed in subsequent years by the then Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Paul Wheelhouse, and the then transport minister, Keith Brown, as well as being supported by MSPs from across the chamber. I am delighted that cycling has moved from being the subject of protest outside the Parliament to being the subject of debate, in Government time, in the chamber this afternoon.

Many people cycle to work or to their place of study. They derive health benefits from that form of active travel and end up saving the NHS money by living healthy and active lives, as we heard from Dave Stewart and Nanette Milne. The environment benefits, too, from lower levels of carbon emissions. That is a genuine win-win—a win for the cyclist and a win for the wider community.

Pound for pound, investment in cycling provides huge gains compared to investment in other modes of transport. We need to raise the status of cycling and promote the benefits for individuals and society as a whole; we need to build on the investment in cycling infrastructure in rural and urban Scotland and sustain it year on year; and we need to encourage the consideration of cyclists' needs in all aspects of transport planning and transport management.

In Edinburgh, we have one of the highest rates of cycling in the country and we have a council that is providing leadership. Edinburgh has responded to the demand from local people for more investment by committing 7 per cent of its transport budget to projects that are designed for pedestrians and cyclists. We have a local transport champion for cycling in Councillor Adam McVey, who has worked hard to make a real difference. We have seen a number of investments in cycling such as the new bike corridor from the city centre to the University of Edinburgh's King's Buildings in my constituency, although many people would prefer that that was a properly segregated cycle route rather than being on road. We have also seen the resurfacing of North Meadow Walk cycle path, which was made possible by the allocation of £4 million of funding for shovel-ready projects that followed the meeting that I secured with the then Cabinet Secretary for

Finance, John Swinney. We also look forward to the dedicated cycle path on Leith Walk, which will link with the wider cycle network. The City of Edinburgh Council has piloted 20mph zones and has rolled them out in residential areas. I therefore welcome what the minister said about the guidance that is to come.

Many more people would cycle if the roads were safer—there are many people who want to cycle but feel that the roads are not yet safe enough. Therefore, the safer that we make our roads, the more people we will get out of their cars and on to their bikes. We need to make our roads safer, less congested and healthier for the next generation.

I am pleased to have played my part in moving cycling up the political and policy agenda as a co-convenor of the cross-party group on cycling, along with my fellow co-conveners, Alison Johnstone and Claudia Beamish. We have become our own version of the three amigos, whose sole reward is to ensure that justice is done for the cycling community, before riding—this time by bicycle—into the sunset. To quote Lucky Day, Steve Martin's character in the film:

"What we're talking about is money, real money, Amigo money. No dough, no show."

That takes me neatly to the subject of the Barnett consequential. Before Christmas, during questions on the local government finance statement, I called on the Deputy First Minister to match the City of Edinburgh Council's commitment to allocate 7 per cent of its transport budget to active travel and to allocate some of the funds that are coming to Scotland under the Barnett formula to cycling. I was pleased that the Deputy First Minister acknowledged the role that cycling can have in meeting the Government's ambitious targets, and I look forward to meeting him to discuss the issue in the near future.

Many of my constituents have urged me to press the Government to do more, and I reiterate their calls today. However, one constituent stands out. On his blog, "Uncle Kempez's Edinburgh Blog", he said that he had had a dream, and that he hoped that I could make it come true. He set out a vision of a greener, happier and healthier Scotland as a result of sustained investment in cycling infrastructure. It is one thing for politicians to be held to account for the promises that they make at election time, but I thought that asking me to make his dream come true was perhaps too much to ask, even of the MSP for Edinburgh Southern. This was an awesome matter—perhaps a matter for the Minister for Transport and Islands, Derek Mackay. Then I thought that, no, this must be an issue for the Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities, Keith Brown—after all, my colleague Christina McKelvie tells me that he spends his days making her

dreams come true. Finally, though, I decided that the only person who can make my constituent's dream come true is the Deputy First Minister, so I say to him that he should put all other considerations to one side and make the dreams of myself and my constituents come true by allocating some of the additional funding that is coming to Scotland via the Barnett formula to investment in cycling infrastructure.

There are thousands of cyclists in Scotland—men, women and children—and they are looking to this Parliament for leadership. Cycling offers the people of Scotland a great deal: improvements to health through exercise; less pollution and fewer carbon emissions; and a sustainable mode of transport and recreation. I hope that this Parliament will take the opportunity today and in the months ahead to define the kind of Scotland that we want to see: a cycle-friendly nation of which we can all be proud.

15:24

**Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Lab):** This is one of those follow-that-speech moments—I will choose not to try to do that, for obvious reasons.

This has been a good debate. I welcome the Minister for Transport and Islands to his new job. I want to focus on three things: our overall approach; the distinctive roles that central Government and local government can play; and the money, which Jim Eadie has just said that we should focus on.

There is clear cross-party support for doing more on walking and cycling and on active travel; the bit that we are not so good at is joining up the dots between walking and cycling, between walking and buses, between walking and trains and between cycling and trains. I would add to that list other types of transport, as well. The trunk road network must be linked into our cycling ambitions because, over time, more people are commuting longer distances. Also, the statistics on cycling accidents show that, although many accidents happen in our urban areas—junctions are a key danger for cyclists, as are being overtaken and being crossed by lorries or buses—our rural roads network is where many fatalities happen. They are roads where drivers do not expect to see cyclists—narrow roads and roads with lots of corners or hills. Therefore, although local authorities are crucial, if we are to have an overall approach to active travel, every level of government must be signed up to it.

David Stewart's speech was fantastic in how it addressed walking, and Nanette Milne's comments on health were absolutely right. The fact that the British Medical Association has lobbied us today about the issue emphasises the

case that several colleagues have made about the importance of active travel to our long-term health. Waking up to BBC Radio Scotland this week, I heard the statistic that people in their mid-50s and upwards who cycle regularly have a better biological and physical state than people who do not cycle. This is an issue not just for young people, but for every age category. We often focus on young people, and it is true that, if the right habits are not encouraged at the start, people will not have good habits in the future, but we must take a whole-population, whole-country approach to the issue.

The policy is absolutely crucial, there is cross-party support and work needs to be done at both central and local levels with both levels of government playing their part. However, at the end of the day, the political will must translate into money. The first budget that the first transport minister in the Scottish Executive had was under £300 million; the cabinet secretary now has a budget of £2 billion. If we track across the figure for walking and cycling—it does not go up from 1999 because the major investment happened not in the first year but in the years thereafter—we see that the investment in cycling and walking has in no way kept pace with investment in trunk roads, railways, ferries, air transport or buses. Because cycling investment involves a lot of small projects, it is much harder to get the big political hit and the big shift behind it; therefore, across the chamber, we must agree that we are going to do that. I am afraid to say that that means all of us piling into the transport minister, saying that we need to do more and being prepared to support him when he starts to put more money in.

At the final First Minister's question time before the recess, the First Minister accused Opposition parties of not being supportive enough on climate change when controversial issues are raised. Do walking and cycling have to be seen as controversial? They involve the investment of relatively small amounts of money, they are incredibly local and they provide very good public health benefits. They are also good for the economy. We do not say enough about the fact that the promotion of cycling and walking is also good for the economy.

For me, it must be about infrastructure; exhorting people is not enough. Sometimes, a small number of people might feel guilty or decide that their health might be better if they get on their bike, but the truth is that most people want safer environments. If people are to be comfortable walking or cycling, we must make the built environment better. Alex Neil has just called in planning applications to build 1,200 houses in Edinburgh for determination by the Scottish Government. I will want to know, before those planning applications are approved in detail, that

they include excellent cycling and walking routes that link those developments back into the city. We need to ensure that every new development—whether it is for housing, business or education—has the right level of investment in cycling and active travel, which means networking into the rest of the town, the city or the village.

Jim Eadie was absolutely right to praise what Edinburgh is doing. The radical roll-out of 20mph zones—in some streets, people would do well to get up to 20mph—will, in principle, promote the ambition to get many people cycling. However, it needs to be followed up with the creation of dedicated cycle routes, which is something that the Parliament needs to turn its mind to. If cars can park in the cycle lanes on the roads, they are only part-time cycle routes, not full-time cycle routes. That poses a challenge across the country.

We need sustained investment, and we need a higher level of investment. The commitment by the City of Edinburgh Council to spend 7 per cent of the city's transport budget on cycling is excellent, but that ambition needs to be shared across the country and the Scottish Government needs to do more to lead the way. It needs to provide the greater clarity that Spokes has asked for so that we can track the money. That is absolutely essential. The next time that the minister holds a debate on active travel, I hope that the motion will be less self-congratulatory and will offer a bit more on what we can all do to meet the challenge.

15:30

**Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP):** I congratulate the minister on his appointment to the most exciting—in the Chinese sense—portfolio in the Government. I will continue to get out my prayer mat on a weekly basis to pray that all the snow that falls over the winter will do so at no lower a level than 1,500 feet, thus ensuring the satisfaction of skiers and the clear roads that will enable the transport minister to sleep at night.

It is interesting and revealing to look at the motion and the amendments. The Government motion makes three references to cycling and two references to walking. In its amendment, the Labour Party has achieved a perfect 50:50 balance. The Greens seem to be a bit obsessed about this strange cycling thing—their amendment contains five references to cycling and only one to walking. I am here to redress the balance a little, because I am not the committed cyclist that some other members are.

So far today, I have done 7,500 steps. My walk from here to the railway station tonight will complete the 10,000 steps target. Yesterday, I did 15,000 steps. That adds up to only about 15 miles a week. Although that sounds quite decent, my

nephew, who used to be a world-class orienteer, used to cover 160 miles a week as part of his training schedule, so I could go a bit further.

At the risk of being characterised as a grumpy old man, I suggest that much of the debate has focused on entirely the wrong thing—investment in infrastructure. That is nothing to do with the subject under discussion. Ministers love investment in infrastructure—they will go off and spend every £1 that we can give them on infrastructure, because they love to go and open things or be photographed beside a new bit of cycle track, at a new bike hire station or putting a new name on a train—but the reality is that we have to change what goes on in people's minds.

If we were to think about buying shoes that were suitable for walking for a million people in Scotland, how much would that cost? It would cost less than the annual active travel budget. In health terms and in improving people's engagement in active travel, would that deliver a greater benefit than spending any money on cycling? I say that to provoke, not because I am realistically proposing that we decommit on cycling. I just want us to think about what £1 that is spent on something actually buys in public policy terms; £1 that is spent on walking buys a heck of a lot more than £1 that is spent on almost anything else in the area of active travel, and I would like to see us do something about that.

Walking can be a rather flexible thing. There is a guy in my constituency—I normally see him outside my constituency—whom I keep meaning to somehow stop so that I can find out who he is and what he does. He roller-skates on the main road. He uses roller-skating as a means of transport—I have seen him do 10 miles on roller skates. Perhaps we should equip people not just with walking shoes, but with roller skates, because roller-skating is a good, healthy form of exercise, too. I have heard no mention of the provision of roller skates for the population of Scotland. Perhaps we should think about that.

In such debates, we must challenge the norms. As members, let us look in the mirror. How many of us came to the Parliament in a taxi?

**Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab):** Will the member take a brief intervention on the subject of roller skates?

**Stewart Stevenson:** If Mary Fee knows more about roller skates than I do, which will not be hard, I most certainly will.

**Mary Fee:** My point may help to illustrate the debate. In a previous life, I worked for one of our largest retailers and when they were rolling out the opening of the massive superstores, they gave some of the staff at the checkouts roller skates so that they could manoeuvre their way around the

stores a bit more easily. That might be something that we should be talking to our retail friends about a bit more.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):** I remind members that we are very short of time.

**Stewart Stevenson:** I am simultaneously keeping a very close eye on my watch and on your steely gaze, Presiding Officer.

Nanette Milne gave us great heart that if we engage in this exercise thing, everything that we do will improve our lives. I have the feeling that I might have the grave misfortune, if I continue my present level of exercise—because I do not use a taxi—to live to 150, but that is okay.

I have genuinely looked at cycling; I was on the point of going ahead with it until my wife saw what I was looking at on the internet. I was looking at monocycles because they are quite easy to carry around, they are quite cheap and they are easy to maintain. I thought that it would scare the heck out of people at the Parliament if they saw me on my monocycle.

We have a clear choice about where to spend money. I genuinely say to the minister that yes, we have to invest in infrastructure and we should continue to do that but we really have to invest in changing the hearts and minds of the people of Scotland. Almost everybody has the equipment to engage in walking and they have it right now. It will be raining heavily when Parliament finishes its day's business, but I still want to see all the members here walking to Waverley if that is where they are going.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We are incredibly tight for time, so if members could take less than six minutes for their speeches, that would be helpful.

15:36

**Tavish Scott (Shetland Islands) (LD):** I welcome Derek Mackay to his new position as transport minister. I also welcome him as islands minister, and I might try to bring more of a rural and islands perspective to this thoughtful debate, because that may be an issue that has not yet been brought to the fore.

It strikes me that there are a number of former transport ministers in the chamber; I think that we would all say to the new minister that the cycling lobby is about the most powerful lobby out there. We think that the roads lobby is hard and that the rail lobby has a lot to say, but as Alison Johnstone might also know, the cycling lobby is both vigorous and determined and provides an intellectually coherent argument such as does not always—dare I say it?—come from some other lobbying organisations.

Alison Johnstone challenged the new minister to be a champion for cycling. I recall Sarah Boyack cycling to Cabinet meetings in Bute house back in the first parliamentary session, so perhaps I can encourage Derek Mackay to get on his bike and cycle—in the nicest possible way, of course, and not in that Tebbit way that we might remember from a previous life. Indeed, he could walk everywhere as well, as Stewart Stevenson encouraged him to do. There is quite a lot of potential for leadership in this area. There is for all ministers, but this minister, with this portfolio, can probably show more than can be shown anywhere else.

The timing of the debate has been mentioned by others. It is a bit intriguing to be discussing cycling and walking when there will not be many school kids cycling home in Shetland tonight because the weather forecast for the next couple of days—as the minister will know from his resilience responsibilities—is absolutely terrible, which will allow me to escape on a plane tomorrow night, otherwise I will not get home until Sunday. The point about that is that, as members from Edinburgh—Jim Eadie in particular—have pointed out, it is easier to devise a policy agenda that logically fits into cities and urban areas than it is to devise one for rural areas. That is why rural councils that have achieved so much in teaching in schools what we used to call cycling proficiency, are to be commended. Some of the numbers in the briefing papers for the debate are particularly to be supported, where rural local authorities have invested considerable time and effort in ensuring that teaching of cycling skills is available in primary schools to pupils at a young age.

Nanette Milne mentioned obesity figures. I found some today that were, I think, published by the Scottish Parliament information centre. We can bandy figures about, but the information that I was given suggests that obesity costs the economy in excess of £4 billion a year, which is an enormous amount. It would be interesting to see how the economists get to an amount of that scale. Whatever the amount is, there is a challenge for any Government. It is certainly a challenge for the minister, with one in three of our children being at risk of being overweight or obese, and it being thought that one in three adults is obese. That, if nothing else—along with the economic impact that others have mentioned—supports the contention that the economy benefits from realistic and sustained investment in active travel. In fairness to the minister, I accept that he made that point in his opening remarks.

I turn to another action that the minister might take in the cross-portfolio meetings that I used to love so when I was in the Government. Many a day was wasted in them—I thought that I would never get those days back; I never did—although I

am sure that they are much better now. In those meetings, I encourage the minister to take on the challenge of improving physical education in schools, in which respect our education ministers have a big role. I do not want to start bandying about all the statistics about PE in schools, but there is a healthy debate on that. It strikes me that that factor is very much linked to the active nation that the minister is trying to create.

The minister encouraged us to mention projects that work, so I will bring two to his attention. The first is the Shetland Community Bike Project, which is a really great initiative that takes people who are having a tough time in life and society and puts them to work on basic things including maintaining bikes, putting them back together and making them available for sale in Shetland. The project works with Skills Development Scotland's youth employer of the month programme and ensures that there are employment and volunteering opportunities for young people who face barriers to work. That kind of social enterprise is a great resource for my constituency, and I am sure that similar projects exist in many other parts of the country. It provides many positive outcomes, and not just for the people who are involved in the project. I have personally donated a bunch of my kids' bikes to the project, which did a great job in patching up those decrepit machines and selling them on, and I am not the only dad in Shetland who has done that.

The other project that I want to bring to Parliament's attention is the Shetland on wheels project, which simply aims to promote active travel and to ensure that there are opportunities for children and young people to learn about bike handling, bike maintenance and road-safety skills. One colleague—I think that it was Stewart Stevenson—talked about road safety and the wider arguments on that.

As I mentioned at the outset of my speech, many campaign organisations lobby hard on the issue. The minister will have read all the briefings, just as the rest of us have. From all the briefings for the debate, the one figure that seems to me to be important to bear in mind is from Ramblers Scotland, which simply observed that

“Since 50% of all journeys in Scotland under 5km are undertaken by driving”,

there is much scope for improving the amount of cycling and walking.

15:42

**Joan McAlpine (South Scotland) (SNP):** My daughter recently moved to the Netherlands, and I visited her there in October. It was a complete revelation. As we know from the briefings, 27 per cent of journeys in the Netherlands are made by

bike—although when I was there it felt like a lot more because I was in Delft, which is the town that pioneered Holland's active travel culture. I immediately noticed that it was much quieter and there were more people out and about, because cycling means more walking because there are fewer cars to put people off.

One of the most extraordinary sights was when I got off the train at The Hague, which is one of the biggest cities. There is a football-pitch sized space for bikes, with thousands upon thousands of bikes. My daughter lives in a modern block of flats in the suburbs of Delft, where there are no parking spaces reserved for residents but there is a huge communal shed for bikes. I know that it is hard to believe from looking at me, but on the first day we took a 20km round-trip by bike to the neighbouring town. For most of the journey, which was through the green belt, we were on a two-way cycle path that had nothing to do with the roads.

Sarah Boyack mentioned the dangers to cyclists on rural roads, but in the Netherlands there are no cyclists on those kind of roads, because there are dedicated bike routes between towns. Every major road has a two-way cycle lane with a barrier and crossing places for bikes, just like those for pedestrians. People do not need to stay on those segregated lanes for long, because there is a massive complex of urban cycle routes to get them from A to B far more pleasantly. When cyclists need to share the road with cars, as in the narrow streets of historic town centres, the cars creep along and are few and far between. I later discovered that those are designated home zones that have a 7kph speed limit, where cars have to yield to bikes and pedestrians.

When I came back from Holland and wrote with the zeal of the converted about my experience, so to speak, I had two reactions—one from the cycling lobby, who demanded that we introduce presumed liability right away and become like Holland, and the other from the petrolheads, who argued that the Dutch cycle more because the country is flat, that they are historically more inclined to cycle and that such an approach would just never work here. After much thought, I believe that until we have segregated cycle areas and a more comprehensive system of cycle-only routes, presumed liability will not work here. In Holland, a motorist would need to be pretty reckless to hit a cyclist, because the twain seldom meet and, unlike motorists in this country, drivers on Holland's big roads do not need to worry about cyclists weaving in and out of traffic. Moreover, cyclists in Holland are policed more. They get on-the-spot fines if they do not have lights or bells or if they are on a road that is reserved for cars.

The petrolhead argument—that the Dutch are somehow genetically programmed to cycle more—



does not hold any water, either. In fact, it is completely untrue. Holland is flat, but it has other topographical challenges, and the infrastructure has to be designed around the water and waterways that are everywhere.

If we look at the history of this topic in Holland, we see that before world war two, the bicycle was the main mode of transport in the UK and Holland—we need only think of pictures of district nurses and postmen cycling around our country. After the war, both countries saw rapid development of urban areas, new housing and, indeed, the rise of the motor car. The situation was worse in Holland than it was here, because after the war the Dutch had quite a lot of wealth from their natural gas. When the number of children who were being killed on the roads in Holland rose to twice that in the UK, it triggered change, and the 1960s saw the rise of a mass movement called “Stop de kindermoord”—or stop child murder—which got its name from the headline of an article that was written by a journalist whose child had been killed. The movement immediately caught the imagination of the Government, which for the next 50 years designed towns and infrastructure around cycling and walking.

We have a huge amount of catching up to do, but we have been left with huge challenges. I agree with Alison Johnstone: my experience in Holland tells me that we need to invest in infrastructure, but we have to deal with the reality of a 26 per cent cut in Scotland’s infrastructure budget. Of course, we could reallocate money from the roads budget, but I think that we as politicians would have face up to the reality of such a move. How would our constituents react if we told them that we were going to stop filling in potholes and instead start building segregated cycle lanes? It would be a brave politician who did that—

**Derek Mackay:** Will Joan McAlpine give way?

**Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):** Here is a brave politician.

**Joan McAlpine:** I give way to a brave politician.

**Derek Mackay:** I just want to make the point that cyclists, too, use roads, which means that spending on roads is not necessarily a bad thing for cycling in general.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I have miraculously found a little bit of time, Ms McAlpine, so I can reimburse you slightly.

**Joan McAlpine:** Thank you very much, Presiding Officer.

I agree with the minister, but I do not think that we have invested in the kind of segregated infrastructure that would make me feel safe cycling in this country, or which would encourage me to

send my children to school on bicycles, if I still had school-age children. I am afraid that I just would not do it unless they were completely segregated from traffic, and that is where I perhaps part company with those who say that training people to cycle more and getting more cyclists on the road will result in a magical transformation. There will be no such transformation; I believe that what we need is investment in infrastructure.

It might well take a brave politician to get on his or her bike and ensure that Scotland goes Dutch. Perhaps we have such a politician in front of us. I certainly hope so.

15:48

**Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab):** I start with the call to ensure that active travel makes a robust contribution to our climate change targets. The step change to a low-carbon economy is a challenge for all political parties and involves long-term planning beyond each political cycle. Indeed, “Low Carbon Scotland: Meeting our Emissions Reduction Targets 2013-2027—The Second Report on Proposals and Policies” focuses our minds on the longer term, and I believe that we must all work to ensure that proposals become policies in order to meet future annual and long-term targets.

Given that transport contributes a large bulk of our greenhouse gas emissions—the figure was 21 per cent in 2012—active travel must make a significant difference in future years, although we must also ensure that we meet the active travel target of 10 per cent of journeys being made by bicycle by 2020. That partly comes down to political support for a change in behaviour, as we have heard from members today. However, such a change cannot happen unless the right circumstances are created by a robust range of initiatives that build on the work that the Scottish Government, local government, non-governmental organisations and voluntary groups have already done. We have heard about many such initiatives in today’s debate, and in the range of excellent briefings that members have received.

A significant move forward will come not just from developing primary school on-road cycling education through bikeability Scotland, or from providing on-road segregated cycle lanes, or from implementing changes to civil law to protect cyclists better. It will come from all those things—working together, if I may say so.

I will focus on cycling in particular because I am, as are Alison Johnstone and Jim Eadie, a co-convenor of the cross-party group on cycling. I am, however, starting to feel that there should be a cross-party group for walking, among the large number of CPGs.

Active travel offers a significant opportunity for trans-departmental financial commitments, which are vital, as we have heard from members today. The complexities of that opportunity are better known to members of the Government than they are to a shadow minister. However, who would pass up the chance to enable people of all ages to cycle in reasonable safety, which helps them to get fit or keep fit, helps to give them a sense of wellbeing from being outside in fresh air, and helps them to get home, or to work or school, or to cycle for leisure with no—or at least many fewer—car queues and less air pollution on their journeys? Transport, environment, health, education, local government, justice and planning all have something to contribute, and I am pleased to hear that the new minister will liaise with the planning department in that spirit.

As a rural dweller, I want to say something specific about rural cycling. Three years ago, I went to a Lothians cycling breakfast—I was walking, at that point—at the city chambers in Edinburgh. As the only member of my party who was there, I was asked to say something. Feeling slightly panicked because I had walked rather than cycled, and feeling, as a rural cyclist, outnumbered 100 to one by urban cyclists, I said that I thought that rural cycling is important too, and somebody clapped. Sarah Boyack has called for a whole-country approach, which is vital.

Since that event, I have heard a lot about good rural cycling initiatives, not least the joining up of the national walking and cycling networks, which is one of the 13 infrastructure projects in national planning framework 3.

I will give two quick examples. South Lanarkshire's local transport strategy has committed funding to cycling on a phased basis year by year to add links to the network and to support other cycling commitments. Clackmannanshire Council has created its first cycle-friendly road, with 40mph limits and signs that say, "Cycle Friendly Road—Please drive with care." Perhaps the minister can say more about rural cycling commitments in his closing remarks.

As a rural dweller, I had never cycled in any city until about a year ago, and I was very trepidatious. My cycling buddy—I highly recommend having one—helped me to make a start. I got off at Tollcross to walk, and still do, but I cycle along the Union canal—I have not yet fallen in—under the bridges and across the Meadows.

When I have moaned about how unsafe and unprotected I still feel, despite my helmet and new yellow cycling rain gear, so many people have said to me that there is a different cycling culture in other European countries. However, that culture had to start somehow in Holland in order to reach the critical mass, as we heard from Joan McAlpine

and other members. So many people in Holland cycle at least some of the time that they might as car users have understanding that means that they respect cyclists more.

In my office I have a photo of a mass lie-in by cyclists in the mid-1970s in an Amsterdam square. Of course, I am not advocating stopping traffic and having a mass lie-in—the pedal on Parliament campaign is sending a clear message in Scotland. However, cyclists need to feel safer, especially in a family setting, if they are going to take to the roads and make Scotland a cycling nation.

I have noted ScotRail's efforts as described in its briefing with regard to taking cycles on trains. However, I hope that the new Abellio contract will include far greater provision for bikes on trains, which would aid tourism and commuting in the Borders, and that it will be a shining example.

Finally, I want to say something about the road share campaign for presumed liability. Strict liability has existed in France since the 1960s. At the pedal on Parliament event last year I made a commitment to raise the issue with Scottish Labour, and I have done so with vigour. I will continue to do so, and I look forward to the road share group's European research results, which I hope will build on what some people regard as the incomplete Scottish Government findings.

That might be a way forward that members on all sides of the chamber could look at, but only as part of a range of cycling initiatives that will make us a cycle nation. There is much in active travel to celebrate already, but without the funding for that range of initiatives across the country, we will not all be able to cycle safely.

15:55

**Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** I am pleased to speak in this debate, not least because its importance is reinforced by the number of organisations that have sent us briefings. The briefings all seem to have one thing in common. They all support and indeed commend the Scottish Government's cycling action plan, they all support the first national walking strategy and they all support the Government's aims of improving health and wellbeing and reducing carbon emissions through increasing active travel.

The second cycling action plan introduces a target of 10 per cent of everyday journeys being made by bicycle by 2020. It is a fact that is perhaps inconvenient for Opposition parties that this Government has a habit of delivering on its targets. I am also pleased to see that the proportion of adults who meet the recommended physical activity levels increased from 62 per cent in 2012 to 64 per cent in 2013 and that the proportion of children who meet the

recommendation of at least 60 minutes of exercise per day rose from 71 per cent in 2008 to 75 per cent in 2013. Those are real achievements.

It is also an impressive achievement that the Government is able to commit significant funding for active travel initiatives and infrastructure against the terrible background of the austerity that we face, with a 26 per cent cut to our capital budget.

There are some arguments that more should be spent on infrastructure and less on promotional initiatives. However, active travel is at least as much about changing our sedentary culture and attitudes as it is about providing infrastructure, as my colleague Stewart Stevenson noted.

**Alison Johnstone:** Surely the member recognises that, although promoting the benefits of active travel is clearly important, if we have a campaign such as give me cycle space but parents do not feel that the cycle space exists for their children to cycle safely on the roads or indeed that they can walk safely to school, that money will be wasted. It will not have the impact that we would wish.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I can reimburse you for the intervention, Mr MacKenzie.

**Mike MacKenzie:** I invite the member to get out to some of the wonderful cycling routes across the Highlands and Islands that I will speak about later.

There are some arguments that much more should be spent on all aspects of active travel but, as always, those who suggest that never say where the corresponding cuts ought to be made. I note that, as we approach the UK general election, both the main UK parties are promising even more austerity and even deeper cuts. In all our debates here in this Parliament, it is impossible to ignore that fact.

However, I agree that more can and should be done to facilitate active travel. I am pleased that national planning framework 3 commits to a national walking and cycling network and I am delighted by the success of walking routes such as the west Highland way and the Kintyre way. I am also enormously impressed by the Sustrans network in the Highlands, which stretches all the way from Kintyre to Inverness and beyond. I suggest to Alison Johnstone that she comes to visit the Highlands and brings her bike.

Recreational active travel is especially important in the Highlands and Islands, all the more so as the distances that are involved in travelling to work or school in rural areas are often too great for active travel to form an important part of everyday travel as it does in urban areas. In the not too distant past in the area that I live in, active travel was often about getting off the bus when it came

to a very steep hill, and sometimes helping to push it up the hill. Active travel was sometimes about helping to row a ferry boat when the engine broke down, as it used to do quite frequently. Active travel in the Highlands and Islands is often a different thing from active travel in urban areas.

On the subject of planning, I feel that much more can be done at the local level. I was glad to hear Sarah Boyack touch on that. Local planning authorities need to consider active travel carefully as they work on local development plans. That requires a fundamental change in mindset and culture. For many years, we have followed a model of development that is highly dependent on the car. Within a couple of generations, we have gone from a society that walked to work, the shops, the pub and nearly everywhere to one that demands that we travel much longer distances. In the course of that, we have lost much of the dynamic of our local communities, of our town centres and of our cohesiveness as a society.

We must take a long-term view and see whether we can put right some of the mistakes of the past. I suggest evolution rather than revolution, because that is the only realistic way we can do that.

We are making progress on the outcomes of active travel, in terms of health and wellbeing outcomes and environmental targets. Some of those targets will not be met in a linear fashion with steady progress year on year. Often, progress happens in leaps and jumps. For example, electric vehicles are about to breach the technological threshold that will revolutionise and decarbonise much of our transport. I expect that, when that happens, it will happen much more quickly than we might imagine.

There is no magic bullet for achieving the many desirable outcomes of active travel. In fact, the multifaceted approach that the Government is following across a range of portfolios is paying off and will continue to do so.

16:01

**Cara Hilton (Dunfermline) (Lab):** I am pleased to speak in the debate on becoming an active nation. Not only is increasing rates of walking and cycling good for our health and wellbeing, it should help Scotland to achieve its ambitious targets on air pollution and carbon emissions.

However, there are still many barriers to becoming an active nation, which colleagues have mentioned and which we need to address. The reality is that most journeys are still made by car. Many families have busy lives and simply do not have the time to walk from A to B. As a society, we work the longest hours in Europe and many families have complicated childcare arrangements to juggle. To be fair, our weather can also be a

factor and can put some people off active travel. Active travel can often seem too complicated or, indeed, too dangerous an option. In some areas, there are simply no safe paths or cycle routes.

Scotland is still a long way from becoming an active nation. We lag far behind our colleagues throughout Europe on active travel so, if we are to achieve the 2030 vision to which we all aspire, it will take a lot more than warm words. Across the chamber, we are all united in wanting to make the active nation a reality, but active travel must be given greater priority and be properly funded. We need much more action to encourage behaviour change and healthier lifestyles if we are to make walking and cycling realistic options for everyone.

**Derek Mackay:** I ask Cara Hilton the same question that I asked the Conservatives. If Labour's position is that active travel is not properly funded, at what level should it be funded?

**Cara Hilton:** The issue that my constituents are raising is that the Scottish Government has the power to fund active travel now. Derek Mackay should use that power to make a difference now.

Although we all aspire to be an active nation, Scotland faces an ever-growing obesity problem. It is an epidemic that costs our NHS £300 million a year and costs society and our economy much more in sickness absence.

According to NHS Fife, one primary 1 child in five in my constituency is overweight or obese. A staggering one adult in three in west Fife is obese. However, only a third of adults do 30 minutes of physical exercise a day and we have a generation of children who increasingly spend more time playing on their Xbox or PlayStation than out on their bikes. It is a screen-based lifestyle in which the average child spends two and a half hours a day watching television and, according to one briefing that I received, 20 hours a week online.

In its excellent briefing, Living Streets highlights the loss of freedom that that has produced for our children who, within three generations, have gone from being able to roam freely for 1.5km around their homes to being limited to only 0.25km. They often do not get out of their parents' sight and are driven elsewhere by their parents to ride their bikes rather than riding around the estates where they live. I am sure that I am not alone in remembering that, when I was a child, I used to be out all day on my bike with my friends. We would come home only when we were hungry or when it got dark.

This morning on the train, I read a report by the National Trust, "Natural Childhood". I urge members to have a look at the report, which warns that if we do not take action to reverse the inactive, indoor lifestyles that too many children lead,

"we risk storing up social, medical and environmental problems for the future."

Walking or cycling to school, work or the shops is one of the easiest ways to achieve the recommended physical activity levels for any age. We are making progress, but more steps need to be taken to make walking and cycling a safer and easier option for everyone.

Many schools in my constituency are doing brilliant work to promote active travel. In particular, Carnegie primary school launched its active travel plan in June and is doing a brilliant job at encouraging mums, dads and children to walk, cycle or scoot to school.

Across Scotland, local authorities are taking positive steps, despite facing budget challenges, to invest in active travel so that it becomes a reality and not just a vision. For example, Fife Council is taking huge steps forward to create a cycling kingdom, with major programmes planned across the region to increase the number of cyclists and achieve the 2020 target.

In Dunfermline, Fife Council is investing £2.2 million in new and improved cycle routes, including a proper traffic-free route to link Rosyth railway station with Dunfermline city centre. Through the Lyne Burn corridor project, a new cycleway and footpath will connect the eastern expansion with the town centre, and improvements to Dunfermline's existing cycleways will make cycling to work and school, and for sport and leisure, an easier, safer and more attractive option. There will also be free cycle training for children and adults of all ages, with cycle instructors in every school in Dunfermline. There will even be free bike repair and maintenance courses. Dunfermline's ambition is to become a cycling city, and I look forward to it being realised.

However, more needs to be done. Many of my constituents commute to Edinburgh every day for work and a big concern that they have raised with me is that the new, flagship Halbeath park-and-ride facility is very difficult for pedestrians and cyclists to access safely. There is simply no safe way for local residents to get there other than by car or bus. More action is needed to make our transport hubs accessible, and to make leaving the car at home an option for commuters.

I look forward to the Scottish Government taking further action to improve our cycling and walking infrastructure. The constituents who contacted me in advance of the debate are looking for genuine investment, not warm words. The Scottish Government has the power and resources to act, and my constituents want to see concrete steps to make the active nation vision a reality.

In its briefing for today's debate, Living Streets estimates that delivering active travel provides £8

of benefit for every £1 that is spent. Investment delivers rewards for our nation's future health, for our quality of life and for the very air that we breathe. It might even help us to achieve our missed climate change targets, too.

It is time to be more ambitious. It is time to give priority to active travel. Scottish Labour will continue to hold the Government to account, to ensure that its vision becomes a reality and that we become the active nation that we all want Scotland to be.

16:07

**John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP):**

This is one of those subjects in relation to which I am committed to the concept but have a few feelings of guilt along the way. Perhaps I should start by confessing that I have a car and do not enjoy cycling. However, I like walking; I will focus on that.

Today's debate is not about public transport, because sitting in a bus or on a train is no more active than sitting in a car. However, it is almost inevitable that the use of public transport promotes a more active lifestyle. If I travel to the Parliament by train, my journey involves around 45 minutes of walking, as opposed to no walking if I come by car. As well as being better for the environment, public transport is generally better for our health.

However, public transport needs to be available within walking distance of our homes. I fear that that has not always been the case in new housing developments. There are good examples, which we should note, such as Broomhouse, in my constituency, where the First Minister lives. She is within walking distance of Baillieston station, on the newly electrified Whifflet line. I know that she has travelled that way in the past, although I am not sure how often she manages to do so at the moment.

It has been suggested that a key to more active travel is to spend more of the total budget and the transport budget on infrastructure for walking and cycling. That is only partly true. It is encouraging to see more cycle racks at railway stations and elsewhere, and cycle rental schemes such as in Glasgow seem to be having a positive effect in their early days. I fully support dedicated cycle lanes and other ways of helping cyclists to get priority or at least some protection in relation to other road users.

Similarly, pedestrians can be helped in various ways. For example, they can be made to feel safer with more white street lighting. Glasgow City Council was introducing such lighting, but the work seems to have stalled recently. A particular bugbear of mine is how long pedestrians must wait to get a shot at crossing the road at traffic lights

when road vehicles seem to get repeated turns first. However, the fact remains that many of us could be walking on perfectly good pavements in well-lit areas but are not doing so. Clearly, there is more to the matter than the physical infrastructure. We also need a change in attitudes.

I have neighbours who see me leaving the car at home and seem puzzled about why I prefer to use the train or bus. There seems to be an assumption, at least among some people, that it is a sign of your success to use a car rather than to walk or use public transport. We have all heard of people walking several miles to get to a food bank. That separate issue needs to be dealt with. However, in some people's minds walking seems to be linked with failure, whereas driving to a supermarket is seen as a sign of success.

I have forgotten the name of a film that I saw a few years ago, but one of the scenes has stuck in my mind. Two guys were travelling on a bus with huge windows. One says to the other, "The reason they make the windows so big is so they can see us poor people using the bus and laugh at us." The suggestion was that travelling by public transport means failure and travelling by car means success. I am not sure how we change such deeply rooted attitudes, but change them we must, even if it takes time.

Members may have seen a report in today's *Evening Times* about the GoWell research programme. GoWell has produced an 88-page report focusing on Glasgow's east end. It suggests that walking is one of the best ways of increasing activity levels. It makes the point that

"Walking costs nothing, can be part of a daily routine, requires little extra time, and can be accomplished by people in even quite poor health."

However, it says that only 52 per cent of respondents

"felt safe walking alone in their local area after dark ( ... as opposed to 61% in Glasgow overall or 68% across Scotland)"

and that vacant and derelict land puts people off walking.

On cycling, there is a positive note. In the east end, 5 per cent of folk use cycling as their main means of travel to work, which is better than the 2 per cent across the rest of the city. However, GoWell considers that the focus on cycling is less applicable than walking, appealing more to men than to women, and a bike is a considerable expense for a low-income household.

The report mentions that

"less glamorous, day to day matters that contribute to a safe and attractive environment"

are important. Those include

“street cleaning, lighting ... and ensuring cycle paths and pavements are unobstructed and safe to cycle on.”

It is encouraging that the GoWell schools survey found that walking or hiking for exercise was commonly listed as a weekend activity for S1 pupils. However, that was more the case for pupils in more affluent areas and much less so for boys from more disadvantaged areas. My view on that is that we still have a problem with territorialism, especially in the east end of Glasgow. A fair number of boys are unwilling to leave their own immediate area, especially on foot, for fear of being set on if they walk through someone else's territory.

I want to pay tribute to Tom Weir. He made walking in Scotland's hills and countryside popular for many of us, and perhaps especially for those from a working-class background. It is fitting that a statue was recently erected in his memory.

I know that I benefit hugely from walking and not just physically. In fact, the physical-mental division is somewhat artificial, as I think Richard Simpson mentioned in yesterday's mental health debate. Were I asked to sit down and relax, I could not do it. However, if I go out walking for the day, I can relax. I can also think things through and reflect as I walk. Additionally, people feel more part of a place when they walk in it, as opposed to being cocooned in a car, bus or train.

I highly recommend active travel and especially walking. Perhaps I am challenged to be a bit more active by today's debate.

16:14

**Alex Rowley (Cowdenbeath) (Lab):** I, too, congratulate the minister on his new role. I look forward to working with him.

This has been an interesting debate. I was thinking to myself that, if we could get fit simply by having strategies, we would be a fairly fit nation. We have a lot of national strategies for cycling and walking, and I am sure that we would find lots more sitting out there at local level were we to take local authorities' strategies into account. That should tell us that bringing about change is not as easy as having strategies and that we need to do a lot more.

The minister highlighted a number of projects, and I want to call attention to a business in my constituency, Dave's Bike Shed. On the website, Dave says:

“I don't see bikes just as toys or leisure sports equipment, I see cycling as a way ahead from where we are now with expensive transport costs, chaos and congestion.”

I also read a recent Fife Council paper that says:

“The case for being physically active is strong, with”

a direct correlation

“between physical activity and the risk of ... heart disease and stroke. Physical inactivity is the fourth leading cause of death worldwide.”

That highlights why we need to take a more cohesive approach to how we move forward with cycling and walking.

Alison Johnstone made a point about infrastructure. Joan McAlpine said that she would be concerned for her family if they were to go cycling and that we need more investment. That is right. Sarah Boyack talked about the transport budget and about how investment in the infrastructure for cycling and walking has not kept up with the level of investment more generally. That needs to be looked at. If we are serious about more people being physically active and about coming anywhere near to delivering on the strategies, we need more investment.

Fife Council says:

“Physical activity impacts positively on our mental health and wellbeing and promotes community cohesion and sustainable development ... through active travel such as cycling”

and walking. The paper goes on to talk about how we need to

“Ensure a shared focus across organisations and services on achieving increases in physical activity”.

I suggest that that type of partnership has also to exist between the Scottish Government and local government, and it has to be taken out into communities. Fife Council goes on to talk about how enabling

“local communities, organisations and services to better understand what makes a difference in terms of increasing physical activity”

is really important, as is supporting

“services and organisations to work together within communities to do things differently in order to increase physical activity.”

At a time when major cuts are being made to local authority budgets and, as the minister will point out to me, the Scottish Government budget has been reduced, we need to look at all the available resources. Some of the projects that I have seen have been able to pull down money from elsewhere to match fund the money that is available. We need to look at how we can focus on that and do it better.

We also need to look right across the public sector at the community planning partnerships and how they focus on the issue. For example, NHS staff should be able to highlight the importance of physical activity for patients in hospitals and in primary care; I assume that they do so in many

cases. We need community-wide physical activity programmes in multiple settings and sectors, ensuring that communities are involved in the design and delivery of a range of programmes and activities. There are walking and cycling clubs out there. The strategies need to be understood as part of the community planning partnership in health and wellbeing and they need to be at the core.

As a priority, we also need to ensure that effective consultation takes place with individuals and groups on the development of programmes and activities to address health inequalities in deprived areas. John Mason rightly mentioned the Highlands and Tom Weir, but it is very difficult for those on low incomes to go and stay in the Highlands and enjoy the scenery and the walking there, because it can be quite expensive.

We therefore need to look at the issue of access. For example, Dave's Bike Shed, which I mentioned earlier, can build bikes and offer support. I am aware of other projects in Fife that allow people to get second-hand bikes. We want to overcome inequality and poverty, but it can cost people to be active. It might not cost them to go out walking, but it can certainly cost them to be active.

We must be able to evaluate the strategies for active travel. If we are spending a lot of resources to try to drive forward active travel, do we know what is successful? Are we evaluating what is successful and what more we can do? The minister said that we need to do much more, and I appreciate that honesty. He is, after all, the minister who can bring forward further investment, which we clearly need.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I must ask you to close, please.

**Alex Rowley:** The minister can jump up and down and ask what other parties would do, but it is the Scottish National Party that is in government. If we are to deliver through partnership, we will need further investment to make that work.

16:21

**Richard Lyle (Central Scotland) (SNP):** Over the past year, Scotland has hosted two great sporting events that were watched by billions across the globe. Those events showcased the best of Scotland and what we have to offer. However, beyond that, we as a nation must ensure that there is a positive, long-lasting legacy from those events.

Part of that legacy must be that the people of Scotland become more active in order to tackle the various health problems affecting the country. Physical inactivity results in around 2,500

premature deaths in Scotland each year, which amounts to seven deaths a day and costs the NHS around £91 million annually. Being physically active can help prevent and treat more than 20 chronic diseases, which in turn can help alleviate some of the pressure on our NHS.

It has been estimated that by getting Scotland more active we would increase average life expectancy by more than a year, based on our current levels of activity. We need to take advantage of the once-in-a-generation opportunity from the Commonwealth games and the Ryder cup here and now, and in the future. Together, we can achieve lasting change by increasing the number of people choosing to travel actively across all communities as part of their everyday lives, whether that means getting to work, picking up shopping or visiting friends. By creating communities where active travel is popular, we will produce many favourable outcomes for the people of Scotland, including better health, safer communities and increased economic activity.

Unfortunately, we cannot achieve that overnight, and it will require many sectors to work together—for example, planning, regeneration, economic development, transport and education. As well as that, the Government is—I am sure—aiming to increase investment in active travel despite the overall capital budget being decreased by 26 per cent. That means that partnership will be even more important, with the Government working with a wide range of partners from local authorities, the NHS, local businesses and volunteers in order to achieve a lasting, positive legacy of active travel in Scotland.

One way in which the Government, in partnership with other bodies, is helping the promotion of active travel is through its vision in the document "A More Active Scotland—Building a Legacy from the Commonwealth Games", which outlines that five years on from the 2014 Commonwealth games there will be more workplaces with established active travel plans. Further, it is hoped that in 10 years' time active travel will be the norm for all short journeys to and from work. With the partners working together, a long-term vision for Scotland will see communities shaped around people and walking and cycling being the most popular choices for shorter everyday journeys.

More people are taking up active cycling, but travelling by foot, cycle or a personal mobility aid should be a realistic option for all local journeys. I found it very surprising to learn that one in every three car journeys that are made in Scotland is under 2 miles and that almost a quarter are 1 mile or less. Is that because we nip down to our local shop by car? Why do we not just walk?

The fact is that short journeys cause more pollution. Active travel must be seen as a healthier and safer alternative. Increased support for it will lead to a reduction in carbon emissions and other pollution across Scotland. That will result directly from more people choosing to walk and cycle in their everyday lives.

I am sure that the Government is committed to promoting low-carbon transport as part of its climate change agenda. That is one way in which we can all help.

In the Central Scotland region, which I represent, we have many great outdoor spaces and parks. On the point that Mr Rowley made about how much it costs to go somewhere, it really does not cost a person anything to walk in their local park.

Strathclyde park hosted not only the Commonwealth games triathlon event, but the first event of the entire games. That was rightly so. The park is a fantastic place for leisure, from cycling to running, jogging and walking. It is a perfect example of Scotland's many outdoor spaces, and we should be encouraging people to enjoy it. People can take a leisurely walk around its circumference—I found it astounding to learn that it is nearly 6 miles in length. Swans and geese can be seen on the loch, and people can watch sailing boats on the waterfront. Various excellent facilities are provided in the park by North Lanarkshire Leisure, and Scotland's national theme park—M&Ds—is located by the loch. Many play and picnic areas are provided for families and children to enjoy.

If we can promote the concept of active travel, we will be well on our way down the road to meeting the Government's objectives, such as better health and safer travel for everyone. That in turn will promote healthier life choices, treat and prevent diseases, and reduce health inequalities.

Scotland is a country that is well provided for in its natural beauty and activity. It has many beautiful sights and beautiful places in which to walk and cycle. From the west Highland way to the Clyde walkway, there is no shortage of places to go to. We need to get off our couches and enjoy all of what Scotland has to offer. So what are we waiting for? As Sir Chris Hoy said in a recent advert: get on your bike and enjoy Scotland's rich outdoors.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** We now turn to the closing speeches, which I would expect all members who have participated in the debate to be back in the chamber for.

16:27

**Alison Johnstone:** I have thoroughly enjoyed the debate. It is a good start to the new year that we are debating the important subject of active travel in Government time.

I would like to focus first on Jim Eadie's contribution, although I will leave some parts of it for him. He eloquently described pedal on Parliament. I hope that the new transport minister can attend this year's pedal on Parliament event, which will take place on the grass just outside the Parliament building on 25 April. I know that all the cyclists and pedestrians who attend that event, which calls on the Government to show leadership and to invest in active travel, would warmly welcome him there.

The people who attend pedal on Parliament are of all ages and from all walks of life. They clearly demonstrate that cycling and walking are not minority recreational issues, but are sensible and supportable means of transport. However, they are means of transport that remain overlooked and underfunded.

Nanette Milne pointed out that almost 40 per cent of women in Scotland do not have a driving licence and that one in four men does not have one. Many Scots cannot afford to or do not want to have to run a car. Therefore, investing in walking and cycling really is investing in a just transport system.

The motion paints a very rosy picture, as the percentage of active travel journeys has stagnated, too many pedestrians and cyclists have lost their lives or been injured on our roads, and progress towards the CAPS target of 10 per cent of journeys cycled by 2020 is practically non-existent.

Transform Scotland has demonstrated that walking rates in Scotland have flatlined. The rate was 13.2 per cent in both 2001-02 and 2012-13. Not much progress has been made a decade on, although things are better in some of the cities. Dundee and Glasgow have particular challenges in catching up. Cycling rates in this country remain very low, with the exception of those in Edinburgh.

Transform Scotland says:

"We welcome the Scottish Government's decision in this debate to draw attention to recent advances in active travel policy."

Paths for All's principal call is to put into practice what policies already say. I think that there is a consensus in the chamber, among non-governmental organisations and among all the campaigning organisations and individuals that we want to get on with investing in active travel.

Sarah Boyack was right to note that small projects often have greater benefits for local economies than large projects do. Cycle routes can boost profits for small, local companies that might not have the means to deal with national or international procurement.



We have spent a great deal of money on behaviour change. I assure members that those who attend pedal on Parliament are well aware of the campaigns and the advertising message. Those people want to get on their bikes and get on their feet, and they want to use safe cycle paths and safe roads. We need to start looking at exemplar segregated projects.

When the cross-party group on cycling hosted Mr Rasmussen from the cycling embassy of Denmark, we asked him what one thing he would do—

**Mike MacKenzie** *rose*—

**Alison Johnstone:** I will not give way at the moment, thank you.

We asked Mr Rasmussen what one thing he would do in Scotland. He said that he would invest in one exemplar project, which would have a notable impact. Governments and local government would then be convinced that such investment is a sensible thing to do.

I am not sure that I agree entirely with Stewart Stevenson's speech. Ministers in particular like to invest in some forms of infrastructure more than others. Expenditure on motorways and trunk roads has increased by 36 per cent and the transport budget has increased, but no similar increase has taken place in investment in active travel budgets for infrastructure.

**Stewart Stevenson:** Does the member recognise that, for about £3 million a year, one member of staff could be put in each council to encourage the conversion to active travel? Moray Council has one such member of staff, which is an exemplar achievement. This is much more about people than projects.

**Alison Johnstone:** This is about people, but we also need to have the infrastructure on the ground to make it safe for people to travel by bike and on foot to work and to places of education.

Let us not forget the economic benefits of cycling in parts of the world where cycle paths have been introduced. Dunedin in Florida was a stagnating little town with a 35 per cent shopfront vacancy rate. After investment was made in the Pinellas trail, shopfront vacancies are now non-existent—there is 100 per cent shopfront occupancy. That investment has had a massive impact on the local economy. That is because it is understood, and plenty of research has shown, that cyclists spend more in the local economy than those who drive by do.

It is fair to say that, if local authorities follow the Government's lead, we will not reach the 10 per cent target by 2020, but we need to do that. I welcome the minister's openness to looking again at research into presumed or stricter liability, and I

support Cycle Law Scotland's call for a commitment to that as part of a package of measures to boost cycle safety. Joan McAlpine is right that safety is frequently mentioned when people explain why they do not cycle.

As a politician, I would be more than happy to call for a redirection of spending from trunk roads to active travel projects. We must also get to grips with our road maintenance backlog. Our roads are unsafe for drivers and cyclists; potholes are a problem regardless of the vehicle that we are in.

I believe that we can achieve transformational change with the political will. I repeat that I would like to work on a cross-party basis with all who are serious about grasping the many opportunities that investing in cycling and walking brings.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I note that Sarah Boyack, who has been mentioned, does not—unfortunately—appear to be in the chamber. I take the opportunity to remind members that they must be in the chamber for closing speeches if they participated in the debate.

16:34

**Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):** This has been an excellent debate in which we have worked our way through a great deal of policy. It has had much to commend it.

The Conservatives are committed to the principle of active travel. As Tavish Scott said, it was a 1980s Conservative minister—Norman Tebbit—who first encouraged people to get on their bikes.

In Scotland today, many of us walk—and many more should walk, because we have wonderful countryside. Nevertheless, the topography and the climate of some areas of Scotland are, perhaps, less conducive to cycling. Although cycling up a steep hill in the pouring rain into the teeth of a gale might be an excellent metaphor for my job of promoting Conservative policy in the Scottish Parliament, it is perhaps not the way that most of us would like to arrive at work in the morning.

However, there is a serious matter to be discussed. We have heard many people mention issues that are key to cycling and walking. Of course, the health benefits have been highlighted by many speakers, including my colleague Nanette Milne. The fact is that those of us who take a more active part in transporting ourselves around the country, even for short periods in the day, benefit in health terms from that little bit of extra activity. Those who are less able—some who are, perhaps, leading a less fit lifestyle—will be much healthier if they can spend half an hour a day taking some active exercise, whether on foot or on a bicycle.

There is, of course, an issue of education here. It is important that we understand that there are people out there who use the roads in such a way as to antagonise other road users. My experience is with cyclists, but that is not always the case. As a pedestrian, I was once almost knocked on my back by a cyclist on the road outside this very Parliament. As a driver, I am entertained by some of the antics that some rather irresponsible cyclists are willing to become involved in when they are out on our roads, particularly in denser traffic. It is important that we emphasise the need to educate cyclists and have them behave more responsibly. In that vein, I congratulate Aberdeenshire Council on the exceptional effort that it is making in schools to promote the education of young cyclists and make them more responsible on the roads.

**Claudia Beamish:** Does the member agree that it would be good to educate the odd motorist as well?

**Alex Johnstone:** I would argue that we have a training and testing system in place for motorists and that that should take into account the issues that we are discussing, but that many of our cyclists have received little or no training.

Of course, even with regard to those who have had training, the safety issue is one that we must take extremely seriously. I am fully supportive of moves to increase the number of 20mph zones in our towns and cities. It is, however, concerning that—I believe—there was a vote in Edinburgh today in favour of bringing in a blanket 20mph limit across the city. I am not convinced that that kind of action puts suitable emphasis on the key areas in which we must maintain lower speed limits, and I feel that complacency itself might result in less safety in some important areas.

The one area that has been discussed today that I feel I must address specifically is that of budget. I am fully aware that budgets are tight. However, I commend the Scottish Government for the work that it has done to ensure that funding has been made available for active travel. In fact, I can give a guarantee that although there could be many reasons why I could find myself voting against the budget this year, it will not be because of what the Scottish Government has done in relation to active travel, which I support.

Of course, there are those in the chamber who would like much more money to be spent in this area. One of the few reasons why I will be unable to vote in favour of the Green amendment tonight—I will abstain—is that it does not give a timescale for some of its commitments. I support the demands that are made for funds to be returned to the active travel budget and increased over the years, but the lack of a timescale means that I cannot support that concept—I cannot make that demand in the current budget period.

As we consider the priorities that the Government has identified, we must recognise the importance of local government taking its share of the responsibility. As many have said, it is important that local government accepts that responsibility, ensures that money that is allocated by the Scottish Government for active travel is used for that purpose, and makes contributions where it can to improve the infrastructure and support that walking and cycling receive.

Many members have talked about the need for separate infrastructure so that cyclists can be kept away from busy traffic. That would be a vital step forward if the budget could be found in subsequent years to achieve that. I am interested in the suggestion that some exemplar demonstration project could be brought forward.

The Conservative Party remains committed to active travel, is supportive of the Government's position and will support the Labour Party's amendment. We will abstain in the vote on the Green amendment because, although it has much to commend it, it is not quite what we are able to support tonight.

16:40

**Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab):** I welcome Derek Mackay to his new role as the transport minister and look forward to working with him.

Scottish Labour supports Scotland's becoming an active nation. We want to see a healthier population, a healthier climate and a healthier country overall. The motion is non-contentious and we support it, although some questions remain over the funding of walking and cycling, which is why we lodged our small amendment. I am happy to hear that the Government will support it, and I am happy to work with the Government to get a bit more clarity on budgeting and funding. We also support the Green Party's amendment, which reiterates our call for clearer funding, and we note its reference to the debate on presumed liability, which we would be happy to engage in further.

I thank the organisations that submitted briefings for today's debate. Although they all encourage and give support to active travel, they raise some concerns around funding, planning and leadership. Actions speak louder than words, and for active travel to become a realistic prospect and a priority for the Scottish Government, it must be supported by the funding that is required, which must be presented in a clear and open manner.

**Derek Mackay:** Is the member aware that the Scottish Government is responsible for only 6 per cent of the road network, with local government being responsible for the rest, meaning that it is equally important that Labour-led councils and

other councils contribute substantially to this shared agenda?

**Mary Fee:** I agree with the minister that it is a shared agenda.

With that honest critique in mind, and as the new Scottish Labour shadow cabinet secretary for infrastructure, I make the following promise to the Government. When our paths align—the pun is intended—Scottish Labour will commit to working with the Scottish Government and other parties in the chamber on infrastructure areas such as active travel. However, neither I nor my colleagues on the Labour benches will hold back when questions must be asked and when decisions need to be challenged.

I thank the transport minister for his opening remarks. I hope that, in closing the debate, either he or the Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities will respond in kind to the remarks that have been made by Labour members this afternoon.

In opening the debate for Labour, my colleague David Stewart predicted that it would be a consensual debate and, indeed, it has been. We recognise that the current funding pressures on local authorities, which the minister highlighted, will impact on active travel decisions at a local level. Having spoken with many colleagues in local government, I acknowledge and have concerns about the pressures that are being placed on them to protect the most vital public services, such as social work and schools, above the interests of the active travel programme and agenda. However, that does not mean that councils are not focusing on active travel, as the Labour-led City of Edinburgh Council has shown. It has committed 7 per cent of its transport budget for the current financial year to cycling, and it has higher levels of cycling and walking than any other local authority in Scotland.

I always enjoy Jim Eadie's speeches, and I would single out his speech this afternoon. I will not comment on his remark about making dreams come true because I am not doing that today, but he will be happy to know that, following his comment about the three amigos, I now have a mental image of the three amigos cycling off into the distance.

Sarah Boyack spoke about finances and budgets, and Nanette Milne rightly raised the issue of the health benefits of active travel.

To Stewart Stevenson and John Mason, I say this: I, too, am a walker. I have always been a walker. My father was a walker and I regularly—at least once a week—went walking with him. His two favourite expressions were, "It's only another couple of miles," and, "You've not broken sweat; you're not walking fast enough." My father's walks

were roughly 15 miles long, so they were not a gentle stroll for me.

Members have been positive and supportive in their contributions. It is rare for us to have a debate in which every member agrees with the Government's vision. The long-term vision for active travel in Scotland is an ambitious one, but I would like more direction to be provided on how we achieve the goal. In its written submission to the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee on the draft budget for 2015-16, Sustrans Scotland said that the cycling action plan for Scotland's

"vision of 10% of everyday trips by bike by 2020 is challenging but not impossible with will at all levels underpinned by financial commitment."

The last two words of that quote are the most important.

Sustrans also pointed out that positive policies such as the CAPS and the national walking strategy have had limited success in increasing active travel. Research shows that the number of people who participate in active travel has remained stagnant for a number of years, and that the average number of walking trips and total distances have been on a downward trend since 2001-02. That might have something to do with perceptions of safety, and we need to look into that.

David Stewart rightly picked up on the fact that road safety is a key barrier to encouraging more walking. The Government rightly recognises that road safety is such a barrier in the "Designing Streets" document, which puts pedestrians at the heart of street planning. One death on our roads is one too many, and we will work with the Government to tackle fatalities on Scotland's streets and roads.

We would welcome any measure to get more children cycling. We know that schools have a major role to play in that. I invite the minister to say what assistance is provided for schools in some of Scotland's poorest communities, where the luxury of purchasing bikes might not be at the top of parents' wish lists. Cycling Scotland reports that 38 per cent of primary schools now offer bikeability Scotland on-road cycle training, which is an increase on the 32 per cent that offered it three years ago. That is to be welcomed. To go back to affordability, we know that the best-performing councils—councils such as East Renfrewshire Council, Aberdeenshire Council and Shetland Islands Council—do not experience the same levels of child poverty that other local authorities, especially those in the central belt, experience.

My colleague Claudia Beamish rightly pointed out the impact that transport has on our

greenhouse gas emissions—it accounted for 21 per cent of them in 2012. Active travel can make a significant difference in that regard but, as she also pointed out, we need a robust range of initiatives if change is to happen.

The barriers to increased walking activity are acknowledged in the national walking strategy. Polling by Ipsos MORI last year revealed that there are four perceived barriers to higher levels of walking activity: weather, health, time and distance. However, I point out that, regardless of whether someone goes for a stroll, a strut, a saunter or a run, they are doing more for Scotland's performance than they might think.

I repeat the promise that I made earlier. When Scottish Labour can support the Scottish Government, we will. When we disagree, we will put forward our arguments to explain our position. I look forward to working with, and taking part in future debates with, the cabinet secretary and the minister.

16:48

**Derek Mackay:** It has been an incredibly constructive debate in which a number of very valid points have been made. I welcome Mary Fee and Dave Stewart to their new posts.

On the point about budgets, I have agreed to support the Labour amendment. Parliament will vote on it and if it is agreed to, we will publish the relevant information. I hope that that will be helpful. However, I again make the point that contributions to active travel come from many more budgets than those for which the Scottish Government is responsible. Information on the money that the Scottish Government provides tells only one part of the story, but it is a story that I am more than happy to tell so that we can challenge others to realise the vision, on which there is great consensus. We have moved beyond debating why active travel is important to debating what we are doing about it. That is the critical issue that we have debated this afternoon.

I was looking for gems—for new ideas—and some have come out of the debate and the questions that have been posed, which I will take forward. I will not be able to cover all the points substantially, but I mention Alison Johnstone's key point about the expert's answer to the question, "What would you do if you could do one thing in Scotland?" Forgive me—I did not get the expert's name. The answer was to have one project as an exemplar, to show what can be done. I am very sympathetic to that idea, because I think that it will help us with the critical mass point. We will be able to show the difference that can be made and use that to encourage other parts of the country.

In credit and in fairness to the City of Edinburgh Council, there are great projects in the Labour-led authority. By the way, the SNP is part of that administration and, as I understand it, an SNP councillor is the cycling tsar or champion. I just throw that point in. There is an exemplar project that the Scottish Government is supporting but I absolutely agree that some exemplar projects will showcase what we can do on active travel. It is partly about budgets, partly about investment and partly about culture change. Many members rightly said that it is about all of those together.

Announcements have been made by the Government on investment in Sustrans, Cycling Scotland, the smarter choices, smarter places programme, and the financial transactions that we will try to make work. If they do not, we will supplement them, as we have committed to do. There is also money for cycling, walking and safer streets as well as a settlement to local government.

There are a range of funds outwith the transport portfolio as well, such as the climate change fund, which can support the kind of projects that we want to support. To return to Alison Johnstone's point about the situation being patchy, it will be if we believe in localism, which allows local partnerships and local councils to come up with schemes that are right for them while making sure that we have the connections across the country—hence NPF3, the national planning policy, and the cycling strategy.

**Alison Johnstone:** The minister will be aware that some local authorities spend none of their own finance on such projects. When a Government is spending less than 2 per cent on active travel, it perhaps does not send a positive, optimistic message to local authorities that it is an important issue for investment.

**Derek Mackay:** As Alison Johnstone knows, we are not a centralising Government, so I will not tell local authorities how to run their budgets. However, when I attend the ministerial summit that my predecessor created, and long before it in all the engagement that I have with local authorities, I will challenge local authorities on how they are supporting the agenda because it is a shared vision, therefore there is a shared approach to how we take it forward. Road maintenance is another example that Alison Johnstone mentioned, and maintaining the roads is important for cycling and for other forms of active travel.

The funding regime is complicated but I will put energy into realising the vision rather than into accountancy exercises. However, if people want further transparency, the Government will welcome that because the headline manifesto commitment will be met. In 2011-12, 1.8 per cent of the total transport budget was spent on

sustainable and active travel and that will rise to 2.5 per cent in 2015-16 under current spending allocation plans.

There is much more to do. Some members have criticised the self-congratulatory nature of the motion. I thought that it was a generous and modest motion, in that it thanks every Government since 1999, not just the current Government. I have even praised the Labour Party, which is absolutely correct, as well as external partners and others, because this is about partnership work, while recognising that the strategies have to be delivered through investment, new ideas and the kind of commitment that has been outlined and fuelled by all members in the debate.

The reason there is some difficulty with the investment that is called for by the Greens is around the phrase "substantially increase funding". I will always support more investment into sustainable and active travel. That is why I tried to probe any member who mentioned it about what the appropriate level is and what investment is sought in order to have a clearer understanding of that in addition to what the Government has committed to.

The issue of road safety came up. There will be further campaigns on road safety, such as the give me cycle space campaign. There will be a range of campaigns to try to address that issue.

On trains and the integration of public transport with active travel, I reassure Claudia Beamish, who specifically asked about the new franchise, that, for cyclists, Abellio ScotRail will build on the success of the Stirling Cycle Hub and will deliver more than 5,000 cycle spaces at stations across the rail network, 3,500 of which will be in place within the first three years of the franchise. Of course, both ScotRail and Caledonian sleeper services will continue to carry cycles free of charge. There will be more information and more capacity, which is to be welcomed, as it will assist with the multimodal shift that has been suggested.

On David Stewart's point about best practice, I will of course pick up as much of that as I can and it will feature in the monitoring report that is due for February.

On 20mph zones, advice to local authorities from Government is as imminent as it can be. I hope that it will assist local authorities that want to take forward that agenda.

Stewart Stevenson was correct to make a point about rebalancing the debate towards walking, as important as cycling is.

I enjoyed Jim Eadie's story about his constituent who dreams about him. Members who have just arrived in the chamber should ask questions about

that later, but the point was about behaviour change in relation to active travel.

Tavish Scott was right to identify that the cycling lobby is very proactive. I welcome that and I welcome its ideas on how we take forward the agenda. I actually visited the Shetland Community Bike Project when I was in my previous ministerial post. It is an excellent example of bringing together social inclusion and public transport. I commend Shetland for its level of pupil education on cycling, which is second to none despite the constraints that are presented on the islands.

The point about tackling childhood obesity is of course important.

**Claudia Beamish:** Will the minister comment broadly on rural cycling commitments from the Scottish Government, as I requested in my speech? That would be helpful.

**Derek Mackay:** That helps me to make the point that I have made to a number of members. Because of the nature of the road network in Scotland, the Scottish Government is responsible for just 6 per cent of it. However, the shared responsibility for active travel is all-encompassing. Therefore, we will ensure that transport and active travel feature in our relationship with community planning, which will be led by my colleague Marco Biagi, and in our relationship with local authorities and transport partnerships. I will take seriously my responsibility to support active travel in all areas, including urban, rural and island authorities, and to ensure that we work together to deliver the vision.

Delivering that vision, which has commanded so much consensus today, is about delivering on infrastructure, behaviour, culture and good ideas. I am convinced that, if we can continue the approach that we have embarked on today, we will be able to deliver on that vision of a healthier and greener culture and a culture change that supports the right transport options and the ones that are good for individuals and communities, and for Scotland. I look forward to the on-going engagement on active travel. I remind members once more that this is my first debate as transport minister. I hope that the fact that I have started with active travel sends a very strong message to all those in Scotland who are interested in the subject.

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** I did not want to stop you in full flow minister, but I say to members who have just come into the chamber that it is really rude to talk among yourselves and drown out what the minister is saying in his winding-up speech.

**Members:** Hear, hear.

**The Presiding Officer:** I notice that the ones who are applauding are the ones who made all the noise. [*Laughter.*]

## Business Motions

16:59

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-11996, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a revision to the business programme for Thursday 8 January 2015.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees to the following revision to the programme of business for Thursday 8 January 2015—

after

2.30 pm                      Parliamentary Bureau Motions

insert

*followed by*                      Ministerial Statement: Oil and Gas—  
[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next item of business is consideration of business motion S4M-11982, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on behalf of the Parliamentary Bureau, setting out a business programme.

*Motion moved,*

That the Parliament agrees the following programme of business—

Tuesday 13 January 2015

2.00 pm                      Time for Reflection

*followed by*                      Parliamentary Bureau Motions

*followed by*                      Topical Questions (if selected)

*followed by*                      Scottish Government Debate: Protecting  
Public Services

*followed by*                      Business Motions

*followed by*                      Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm                      Decision Time

*followed by*                      Members' Business

Wednesday 14 January 2015

2.00 pm                      Parliamentary Bureau Motions

2.00 pm                      Portfolio Questions  
Health, Wellbeing and Sport

*followed by*                      Scottish Labour Party Business

*followed by*                      Business Motions

*followed by*                      Parliamentary Bureau Motions

5.00 pm                      Decision Time

*followed by*                      Members' Business

Thursday 15 January 2015

11.40 am                      Parliamentary Bureau Motions

11.40 am                      General Questions

12.00 pm First Minister's Questions  
*followed by* Members' Business  
 2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
*followed by* Scottish Government Debate:  
 Commending the People who Keep  
 Scotland Safe in Emergencies  
*followed by* Business Motions  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time

Tuesday 20 January 2015

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 21 January 2015

2.00 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 2.00 pm Portfolio Questions  
 Infrastructure, Investment and Cities;  
 Culture, Europe and External Affairs  
*followed by* Scottish Government Business  
*followed by* Business Motions  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time  
*followed by* Members' Business

Thursday 22 January 2015

11.40 am Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 11.40 am General Questions  
 12.00 pm First Minister's Questions  
*followed by* Members' Business  
 2.30 pm Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
*followed by* Scottish Government Business  
*followed by* Business Motions  
*followed by* Parliamentary Bureau Motions  
 5.00 pm Decision Time—[*Joe FitzPatrick.*]

*Motion agreed to.*

## Parliamentary Bureau Motions

17:00

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** The next item of business is consideration of two Parliamentary Bureau motions. I ask Joe FitzPatrick to move motion S4M-11983, on committee remits, and motion S4M-11984, on substitution on committees.

*Motions moved,*

That the Parliament agrees that the remit of the following committees be amended to—

Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee

To consider and report on the Scottish economy, enterprise, energy, tourism, renewables and other matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and Economy (apart from those covered by the remit of the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee), and matters relating to cities.

Education and Culture Committee

To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning; matters relating to youth employment, skills and employment training, implementation of the recommendations of the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce, Skills Development Scotland and other matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Fair Work, Skills and Training, and matters relating to culture and the arts falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Europe and External Affairs.

Health and Sport Committee

To consider and report on health policy, the NHS in Scotland, sport and other matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport, and measures against child poverty.

Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee

To consider and report on infrastructure, capital investment, transport, Scottish Water and other matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities, and matters relating to housing and digital infrastructure.

Local Government and Regeneration Committee

To consider and report on the financing and delivery of local government and local services, planning, regeneration and other matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights.

Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee

To consider and report on agriculture, fisheries, rural development, climate change, the environment and other matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and Environment.

Welfare Reform Committee

To monitor the implementation of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 as it affects welfare provision in Scotland and to consider relevant Scottish legislation and other consequential arrangements.

That the Parliament agrees that—

Liz Smith be appointed to replace John Lamont as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee; and

John Scott be appointed to replace Jackson Carlaw as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.—[Joe FitzPatrick.]

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

## Decision Time

17:00

**The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick):** There are five questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that amendment S4M-11980.1, in the name of David Stewart, which seeks to amend motion S4M-11980, in the name of Derek Mackay, on active travel, be agreed to.

*Amendment agreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that amendment S4M-11980.2, in the name of Alison Johnstone, which seeks to amend motion S4M-11980, in the name of Derek Mackay, on active travel, 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)  
 Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)  
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)  
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)  
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 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)  
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Rowley, Alex (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (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, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Eadie, Jim (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Annabelle (Mid Scotland and Fife) (SNP)  
 Ewing, Fergus (Inverness and Nairn) (SNP)  
 Fabiani, Linda (East Kilbride) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)  
 Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 McMillan, Stuart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

**Abstentions**

Brown, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)

Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 43, Against 60, Abstentions 11.

*Amendment disagreed to.*

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S4M-11980, in the name of Derek Mackay, as amended, on active travel, 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)  
 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, Gavin (Lothian) (Con)  
 Brown, Keith (Clackmannanshire and Dunblane) (SNP)  
 Burgess, Margaret (Cunninghame South) (SNP)  
 Campbell, Roderick (North East Fife) (SNP)  
 Carlaw, Jackson (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Chisholm, Malcolm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab)  
 Coffey, Willie (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (SNP)  
 Constance, Angela (Almond Valley) (SNP)  
 Crawford, Bruce (Stirling) (SNP)  
 Cunningham, Roseanna (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)  
 Dey, Graeme (Angus South) (SNP)  
 Don, Nigel (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)  
 Doris, Bob (Glasgow) (SNP)  
 Dornan, James (Glasgow Cathcart) (SNP)  
 Dugdale, Kezia (Lothian) (Lab)  
 Eadie, 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)  
 Fergusson, Patricia (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)  
 Fergusson, Alex (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)  
 Findlay, Neil (Lothian) (Lab)  
 FitzPatrick, Joe (Dundee City West) (SNP)  
 Fraser, Murdo (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Gibson, Kenneth (Cunninghame North) (SNP)  
 Gibson, Rob (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)  
 Goldie, Annabel (West Scotland) (Con)  
 Grahame, Christine (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP)  
 Grant, Rhoda (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Gray, Iain (East Lothian) (Lab)  
 Henry, Hugh (Renfrewshire South) (Lab)  
 Hepburn, Jamie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (SNP)  
 Hilton, Cara (Dunfermline) (Lab)  
 Hume, Jim (South Scotland) (LD)  
 Hyslop, Fiona (Linlithgow) (SNP)

Ingram, Adam (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)  
 Johnstone, Alex (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Keir, Colin (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)  
 Kelly, James (Rutherglen) (Lab)  
 Kidd, Bill (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)  
 Lamont, Johann (Glasgow Pollok) (Lab)  
 Lamont, John (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)  
 Lyle, Richard (Central Scotland) (SNP)  
 MacAskill, Kenny (Edinburgh Eastern) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Angus (Falkirk East) (SNP)  
 MacDonald, Gordon (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)  
 Macdonald, Lewis (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
 Mackay, Derek (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP)  
 MacKenzie, Mike (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
 Malik, Hanzala (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Martin, Paul (Glasgow Provan) (Lab)  
 Mason, John (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)  
 Matheson, Michael (Falkirk West) (SNP)  
 Maxwell, Stewart (West Scotland) (SNP)  
 McAlpine, Joan (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McArthur, Liam (Orkney Islands) (LD)  
 McCulloch, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Lab)  
 McDonald, Mark (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP)  
 McDougall, Margaret (West Scotland) (Lab)  
 McInnes, Alison (North East Scotland) (LD)  
 McKelvie, Christina (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Aileen (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 McLeod, Fiona (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP)  
 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)  
 Milne, Nanette (North East Scotland) (Con)  
 Mitchell, Margaret (Central Scotland) (Con)  
 Murray, Elaine (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)  
 Neil, Alex (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)  
 Paterson, Gil (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)  
 Pearson, Graeme (South Scotland) (Lab)  
 Pentland, John (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab)  
 Rennie, Willie (Mid Scotland and Fife) (LD)  
 Robertson, Dennis (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)  
 Robison, Shona (Dundee City East) (SNP)  
 Rowley, Alex (Cowdenbeath) (Lab)  
 Russell, Michael (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)  
 Scanlon, Mary (Highlands and Islands) (Con)  
 Scott, John (Ayr) (Con)  
 Scott, Tavish (Shetland Islands) (LD)  
 Simpson, Dr Richard (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)  
 Smith, Drew (Glasgow) (Lab)  
 Smith, Elaine (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab)  
 Smith, Liz (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)  
 Stevenson, Stewart (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)  
 Stewart, David (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)  
 Stewart, Kevin (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)  
 Thompson, Dave (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) (SNP)  
 Torrance, David (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)  
 Urquhart, Jean (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 Watt, Maureen (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)  
 Wheelhouse, Paul (South Scotland) (SNP)  
 White, Sandra (Glasgow Kelvin) (SNP)  
 Yousaf, Humza (Glasgow) (SNP)

#### Against

Finnie, John (Highlands and Islands) (Ind)  
 Harvie, Patrick (Glasgow) (Green)  
 Johnstone, Alison (Lothian) (Green)

**The Presiding Officer:** The result of the division is: For 111, Against 3, Abstentions 0.

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

That the Parliament recognises the success of active travel programmes in enabling more people to be active more often, with record levels of investment in active travel; celebrates the 20th anniversary of the National Cycle Network; welcomes the publication of the second *Cycling Action Plan for Scotland* and the first National Walking Strategy; acknowledges the cross-party commitment to promoting active travel and progress made by the Scottish Government since 1999, alongside external partners, in laying the foundations for a more active and healthier nation; commits to working together to realise the active travel vision, which outlines how Scotland will look in 2030 if more people are walking and cycling; acknowledges that the number of people participating in active travel has remained relatively stagnant and more needs to be done to increase the number of people cycling and walking as a normal means of transport through improving infrastructure, promotion activities and road safety, and calls on the Scottish Government to set out how the active travel budget for 2015-16 will be spent, in particular the proportion that will be allocated to cycling and walking infrastructure.

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S4M-11983, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on committee remits, be agreed to.

#### *Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament agrees that the remit of the following committees be amended to—

#### Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee

To consider and report on the Scottish economy, enterprise, energy, tourism, renewables and other matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and Economy (apart from those covered by the remit of the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee), and matters relating to cities.

#### Education and Culture Committee

To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning; matters relating to youth employment, skills and employment training, implementation of the recommendations of the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce, Skills Development Scotland and other matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Fair Work, Skills and Training, and matters relating to culture and the arts falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Europe and External Affairs.

#### Health and Sport Committee

To consider and report on health policy, the NHS in Scotland, sport and other matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Sport, and measures against child poverty.

#### Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee

To consider and report on infrastructure, capital investment, transport, Scottish Water and other matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities, and matters relating to housing and digital infrastructure.

#### Local Government and Regeneration Committee

To consider and report on the financing and delivery of local government and local services, planning, regeneration and other matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and

### Pensioners' Rights.

Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee

To consider and report on agriculture, fisheries, rural development, climate change, the environment and other matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and Environment.

Welfare Reform Committee

To monitor the implementation of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 as it affects welfare provision in Scotland and to consider relevant Scottish legislation and other consequential arrangements.

**The Presiding Officer:** The next question is, that motion S4M-11984, in the name of Joe FitzPatrick, on substitution on committees, be agreed to.

*Motion agreed to,*

That the Parliament agrees that—

Liz Smith be appointed to replace John Lamont as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee; and

John Scott be appointed to replace Jackson Carlaw as the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party substitute on the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.

## Health Inequalities (Nursing)

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

The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S4M-11495, in the name of Malcolm Chisholm, on nursing against health inequalities. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

*Motion debated,*

That the Parliament believes that there are growing inequalities in health between the best-off and the worst-off people in the Edinburgh Northern and Leith constituency and across Scotland; notes the view that these need to be tackled as a matter of urgency; welcomes RCN Scotland's initiative, Nursing at the Edge, which was launched on 12 November 2014 and aims to combat health inequalities; acknowledges what it sees as the diversity and depth of the roles that nurses play in reducing such inequalities; notes the calls for shadow health and social care integration boards to support services that reduce inequalities and for them to invest in nursing roles that allow such services to be successful, and further notes the calls for the Scottish Government, NHS boards, local authorities and shadow integration boards to put in place long-term secure funding for services that are designed to reduce health inequalities.

17:04

**Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab):** It is a great privilege to speak today in support of the Royal College of Nursing Scotland's nursing at the edge initiative, first because I have always had the highest regard for the RCN and paid close attention to its work; secondly, because I regard nurses as crucial for their leadership and innovation skills; and thirdly, because there is no more important subject for us to consider in the Parliament than Scotland's unacceptable health inequalities.

It is good timing to hold the debate today, because this week the Health and Sport Committee brought out its report on health inequalities, and yesterday we debated mental health in the chamber, which flagged up such inequalities.

The Health and Sport Committee rightly points out that health inequalities reflect wider inequalities in society. There is no doubt that preventing health inequalities at a population level requires radical action to combat wider societal inequalities. At the same time, however, we simply have to respond—and respond more effectively—to the health inequalities that currently exist. The committee was therefore also right to highlight the role of the health service.

The nursing at the edge initiative is an outstanding example of the health service working collaboratively to reduce health inequalities. The six case studies in the nursing at the edge document "Health inequalities: Time to Change" are truly inspiring demonstrations of what can be

achieved through compassionate care of some of the most vulnerable individuals and communities in Scotland.

It was a great pleasure for me to host a reception for nursing at the edge in December, and to meet and hear from the nurses involved and the people who had been helped. I met a student nurse called Louisa, who writes a brilliant blog on nursing and other matters at RaRaRouge.com. It is worth reading the whole of her blog post on nursing at the edge, but I will quote one little bit from it. She writes:

“‘Nursing At The Edge’ promotes a culture of change and highlights the unique contributions nurses make to our current healthcare context and portrays the benefits of nurse-led initiatives. Our former CNO Ros Moore recently stated that ‘The way forward is by building on our traditions, not relying on them’. I think ‘Nursing At The Edge’ embodies this perfectly.”

We certainly see a powerful culture of innovation in the work of those nurses as they move from traditional settings to the places where vulnerable individuals are to be found. As Hilda Campbell of COPE Scotland put it,

“Too many people think nurses only work in wards but I believe that to make a real difference the streets have to be our wards.”

I will briefly described the six projects that are highlighted in the document. They are demonstration projects in a way—we want them to continue, but we want similar initiatives to be promoted, particularly by the new health and social care partnerships. It is a very good time to debate the subject, as those new bodies are about to start work. They are charged with combating health inequalities, and some of the projects and initiatives that we are considering today are exactly the kind of work that is required from them.

I have already mentioned the work of COPE—which stands for caring over people’s emotions—in Drumchapel. It focuses on mental health, health improvement and wellbeing, and it often helps people who are at the end of their tether. I was struck by the comments from one of the women who were helped. She said:

“It’s great to be somewhere you’re not judged. If it wasn’t here I wouldn’t be here.”

Many individuals who have accessed the service would not have accessed mainstream health services.

The second project is Fife’s alcohol-related brain damage service, which cares for people who do not expect to be cared for. It is worth noting that the service has not only turned round the lives of many individuals but reduced accident and emergency attendances and hospital admissions, which is a matter of great importance in changing the balance of care.

At the reception in December, I met and spoke to Martin Murray, who works at the Inverclyde homelessness centre. He points out that many of those he works with are distrustful of health workers and disengaged from the services, but he is able to refer people to services and build their wellbeing and their sense of self-worth.

I am glad to see that Jess Davidson is in the gallery today. She works with a team to support and care for those who are in custody as part of a service that is based in various police stations in the Lothians and the Borders. She has a passion for delivering care that meets the needs and addresses the situations of those people who are in custody. She believes—and I totally accept what she says—that, without her service, those individuals would not be cared for appropriately at all. She and her colleagues have treated about 8,000 people in the past year, demonstrating the compassionate care that I mentioned.

The one-stop women’s learning centre is an award-winning Perth-based project for women offenders. There, Karen Duncan offers health checks and is a trusted source of help and advice, but she also refers on to other agencies.

The sixth project that is highlighted in the document is a blood-borne virus clinic in Dumfries prison. I am sure that my colleague Elaine Murray, who is beside me, will speak more about that service but, again, far more people use it than would use an equivalent service in a hospital.

As I said, those projects are exemplars. We need to support them, but we also need to learn from them and try to develop other, similar initiatives to combat the unacceptable health inequalities that we see in our communities. They are all examples of services that reach out to people who might otherwise not have a service or not use a service. They are also examples of the more intensive services that are required for those who are most in need.

Now is the time to develop such services, especially as we are at the start of the new health and social care integration partnerships. As I said, they will have a specific responsibility for reducing inequalities, so the Scottish Government must provide them with resources to put these services on a sustainable long-term footing.

One of the main objectives of the campaign is to highlight the inadequacies of short-term funding and the need for sustainable long-term funding for such initiatives to combat health inequalities. We all know that, in the past, they have often operated on the basis of short-term project funding. There is an RCN petition, which I hope members will find and sign, that supports that central objective of sustainable long-term funding.

The integration bodies must also ensure that services that are aimed at reducing health inequalities employ enough nurses, including nurses with relevant experience and expertise, to provide stable, well-staffed and empowered services for the people who use them. Empowering the front-line staff and trusting them to take the initiative and make the decisions is crucial to that.

Finally, there needs to be robust measurement and evaluation of the projects to establish a strong body of evidence. However, I am in no doubt that all the services that are highlighted in nursing at the edge would emerge as successful, invaluable beacons of excellence.

17:12

**Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** I congratulate Malcolm Chisholm on securing this debate on an issue that he is passionate about and continues to champion. Like him, I draw attention to the Health and Sport Committee's report on health inequalities. It is clear that health inequalities are a symptom of our unequal society rather than the cause. The cause is income inequality, which leads to housing inequality and educational inequality. Those things culminate in lack of opportunity, which can be perpetuated through generations. A parent's poverty means that a child is brought up in poverty. We therefore need to tackle the poverty of the parent, especially the mother, in order to break the cycle. The mother's income has the biggest influence on a child's potential future income.

There is no easy fix. That is why the problem has to be tackled across departments and committees, and if we were really committed to tackling it, it would become an issue for every organisation, business and individual in the country. We all lose if someone does not reach their full potential; what they would have contributed to society is lost to us all.

That said, we do have inequalities in healthcare. People from poorer backgrounds do not access health services as quickly as their more affluent neighbours. There is a variety of reasons for that, including the distance from services, the cost of accessing services through the transport system, daily pressures and the fact that fighting for survival often leaves people with little time to take care of themselves, and a lack of expectation of help or indeed entitlement to services and good health.

On the other hand, services are demanded by the more affluent in our society, who are used to accessing services and assistance and know their rights and entitlements to treatment. That means that they are more likely to access health services

while, due to their lifestyle, they enjoy better health. I am not advocating that we ration healthcare for the better-off—only that we put in place strategies that ensure that the less well-off access the same level of care, or more if their health dictates it.

As Malcolm Chisholm mentioned, the RCN is used to dealing with health inequalities. To highlight that work, it has launched its initiative called nursing at the edge, which shows the wonderful work that nurses do to combat health inequalities.

The RCN recently held a reception in the Parliament at which nurses and service users talked about the impact of some of the initiatives. As Malcolm Chisholm said, many, such as COPE, are life saving. It was hard not to be moved by the experience of those benefiting from that nursing support. That was an excellent reception, which brought home to us all the practical support that people get from nurses.

I also agree with the motion that the new health and social care integrated boards need to tackle health inequalities and ensure that health promotion and healthcare resources go where they are most needed. They cannot do it alone. We all must take the issue on board and ensure that we tackle health inequalities. It must become a focus for all Government departments. Only when it does will we see a difference.

I am grateful that, along with the RCN, many voluntary organisations and others recognise the large scale of the problem. They are not put off by it but are determined to deal step by step with the deepening divide of health inequalities and make a real difference to people's lives. We must all strive for the day when health inequalities and their cause no longer exist.

17:16

**Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (SNP):** I congratulate Malcolm Chisholm on securing the debate and commend the work that the RCN and the nursing on the edge project or campaign are doing. The RCN is pursuing a worthy cause in seeking to reduce and, indeed, eradicate health inequalities, which I am sure finds common cause across the chamber.

Malcolm Chisholm made a good point about the work that the Health and Sport Committee did. I was involved early on in its work on health inequalities. Often, when the national health service is presented with an individual, we could say that it is too late in the process. They present when those inequalities have manifested themselves rather than when they could have been tackled appropriately.

However, that is not to say that the health service and health workers do not have a key role to play. I note that the RCN's nursing on the edge website states:

"Actions that are more likely to be effective in mitigating the effects of health inequalities at an individual level may require redesign of public services. They include targeting high-risk individuals, intensive tailored support for those with greatest need, and a focus on early child development."

That is a quotation from "Health Inequalities Policy Review for the Scottish Ministerial Task Force on Health Inequalities", which was published in 2014. Family nurse partnerships will play a key role in that early child development angle.

I also note on the RCN's website what it is asking for with the integration of health and social care, particularly in relation to authority. It says:

"Integration authorities should ensure that nurses, and other professionals, can make swift decisions to help people living in the most deprived circumstances to improve their health and wellbeing. This will mean frontline staff, like nurses, controlling appropriate resources and using efficient, non-bureaucratic referral routes to a wide range of care and support needed by those using their services."

When we take part in debates in the chamber, it is important that we point to good practice that we know, and I will highlight good practice that exists in my constituency. I highlight the work of the Middlefield healthy hoose, which is a nurse practitioner-led service that sees people who live in Middlefield or Cummings Park, which are regeneration communities in Aberdeen.

I am sure that those who came up to campaign during the Donside by-election will be familiar with those communities. I am not sure whether, during his time as Minister for Health and Community Care, Mr Chisholm had the opportunity to visit the healthy hoose facility, but my predecessor, the late Brian Adam, was a keen advocate and champion of it and Michael Matheson, as Minister for Public Health, visited it during the by-election. If the new Minister for Sport and Health Improvement was minded to visit the facility at some stage, he would be most welcome in Aberdeen.

The nurse practitioners at the healthy hoose offer a range of services on a drop-in basis. The approach often reduces the need for individuals to go to general practitioner services. The nurse practitioners can make direct referrals to the appropriate services, and counselling services are also available. The healthy hoose is a strong example of nurses working at the front line and making a noticeable difference to the lives of individuals in some of the poorest communities in Aberdeen.

I must end on a potentially sour note. The Haudagain improvement project will cause a large

amount of dislocation in Middlefield and the healthy hoose's future is uncertain. NHS Grampian has not yet committed to continuing the facility, either in its current location or in a new location, if that is required as a result of the works.

The Middlefield community project has secured the opportunity to establish a new facility at the local community centre. There is an opportunity for NHS Grampian to work in collaboration with Aberdeen City Council to ensure that the healthy hoose can be accommodated there. That would benefit not just the communities that the healthy hoose serves but the people who work there to deliver such a good service.

17:21

**Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab):** I congratulate Malcolm Chisholm on securing this debate on an issue about which I know he cares deeply and to which he brings considerable knowledge.

I thank the RCN and its members for their sterling work to highlight a problem with which we are all too familiar, and for doing so in a practical way and suggesting how change might be achieved. I agree with the motion, which recognises the diversity and depth of the roles that nurses play in reducing inequalities. I also want to acknowledge the GP practices and health centres that are categorised as deep-end practices, which deserve our recognition for the work that they do day in and day out.

The inequalities in health across this country are all too evident from the statistics. The average life expectancy of people in my constituency—Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn—is some eight to 10 years less than that of people in communities a mere mile or two away. People in the communities that I serve are more likely to be diagnosed later in the course of an illness or condition, which means that their prognoses are worse and treatment more difficult. When they ask for help, they do not always have the support that would enable them to take full advantage of the services that are on offer.

There are wonderful projects and initiatives that aim to provide such support and which encourage people to become involved in their communities and have more of a say in their lives and in shaping what happens in their areas.

We need to consider the statutory services too, of course, and that is where the RCN report comes in. In some ways, the ideas that it puts forward seem to be quite obvious, but they require changes to processes that are in many cases long established—as we know, changing long-established practice is never easy. At this stage in the development of shared practice, it is helpful to

read about the RCN's ideas and the case studies that it identified.

The six projects that the RCN describes are all interesting and extremely worth while, but I will focus on the project at the Inverclyde homelessness centre. That is not in my constituency, of course, but the project has relevance for us all. Martin Murray, the nurse who is identified in the report on the project, seems to have a good understanding of the issues that face his homeless patients. On a very real level, he understands that the help that his patients need from him is as much about encouragement and support through the process as it is about providing healthcare in its most straightforward and purest form. I know that Duncan McNeil MSP has met Martin Murray and has a great deal of respect for him and his work.

In the interview that he gave for the report, Martin Murray made an important point when he said that

“being homeless is bad for your health.”

He is right. Poverty, addiction and loneliness are also bad for health, and tackling those issues requires the joined-up approach that Martin Murray and his colleagues in the agencies with which he works provide, to offer dedicated, intensive support when it is needed.

However, the services need to be funded in the long term if they are to be worth while. That is what the RCN advocates, and that is what we must support. We must support the RCN in that vital work not just in debates such as this one—important though it is—but in the policies that we advocate in our political parties and, more crucially, in the budgets that we pass in Parliament.

17:25

**Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Con):** I, too, congratulate Malcolm Chisholm on securing time for this debate, and on bringing such an important issue to the chamber at a crucial time, coinciding as it does with the publication of the Health and Sport Committee's report on health inequalities. A short debate like this can only scratch the surface of such a complex problem, but it shines a light on the major role that the nursing profession can have in moving matters forward.

We will soon have a Health and Sport Committee debate on health inequalities, which will highlight the need, as stressed in the RCN's nursing at the edge initiative, to make significant efforts across several policy areas in order to involve many different agencies in working together, if meaningful progress is to be made on

improving the lives and life expectancy of people who live in our most deprived communities, and to bring their expectations of health and wellbeing more into line with those of people in more affluent parts of the country.

Successive Governments have made many attempts to tackle health inequalities, with public campaigns against issues such as smoking, alcohol and drug misuse, poor diet and lack of exercise, which are all known to lead to health problems. However, the campaigns have, largely, benefited people from more prosperous areas who have paid heed to them. In fact, the campaigns have widened the health gap between those who live in prosperous areas and those who live in areas of significant deprivation.

The problem of health inequalities is extremely complex, as the Health and Sport Committee discovered when taking evidence for its inquiry. It extends far beyond health, with clear linkages between socioeconomic deprivation and poverty, poor health and wellbeing, raised morbidity levels and lower life expectancy. To reduce health inequalities, the primary social and economic causes must be addressed, but that in itself would not be enough to make the required difference.

It is clear that collaboration across many agencies and professions is needed. It is a good time to be moving forward as we progress with implementing recently enacted health and social care integration legislation.

The RCN's nursing at the edge initiative, which was launched last November, with its aim of combating health inequalities, shows in its six case studies how much can be achieved at community and personal levels by health and social agency personnel coming together, forgetting their professional differences, and focusing absolutely on the needs of the people who are seeking help with their multiple problems. The lives of a significant number of people have been transformed by that joint working initiative, and there is an opportunity to learn from the case studies and to help many more individuals to achieve a better and healthier way of life.

I hope that the shadow health and social integration boards will look at the RCN initiative and give consideration to supporting services such as those that are highlighted in the nursing at the edge case studies, and that they will bear in mind the calls for investment in nursing roles that allows such services to succeed, and the merits of—in fact, the need for—long-term secure funding for services that are designed to reduce health inequalities and are proven to be effective. That would require joint action by the Scottish Government, NHS boards, local authorities and the shadow integration boards, but I am certain

that, to achieve a meaningful reduction in health inequalities, such collaboration will be essential.

I look forward to progress being made in the near future, and I commend the RCN for so effectively demonstrating a way forward, and Malcolm Chisholm for bringing the nursing at the edge initiative to Parliament's attention.

17:29

**Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):** I congratulate Malcolm Chisholm on securing the debate. It is right that we pay tribute to the healthcare that is provided by the nursing staff who work in very difficult circumstances in our most disadvantaged communities, in our prisons, with the homeless and with people who have addictions. They truly are at the front line of the battle and the debate about health inequalities.

Health inequality should get us angry. It gets me angry and frustrated that there can be up to a 28-year difference in life expectancy between people who live in affluent communities in Scotland and those who live in communities like the one that I live in. It makes me angry that despite all the reports, warm words and platitudes, there is little real commitment to taking the radical action that is required to close the health and wealth gap that is killing my constituents, members of my family, my neighbours and friends and those of many members.

If someone dies in an accident, there is often an investigation and the authorities take action, but day in and day out, people are dying of poverty and as a result of inequality, yet little major change occurs. We know that, in Scotland, the poorest people are most likely to be affected by poor mental and physical health, to suffer from obesity, to have lower birth weight and poor educational performance, to be victims of violence, to be more likely to go to prison, to have fewer life opportunities and to be unemployed.

Our nurses and community health staff are left to pick up the pieces, but they are working with two hands tied behind their backs. As we read in the book "The Spirit Level", policy makers treat all the things I have mentioned as if they are quite separate from one another, with each needing separate services and remedies. So while police, social workers and nurses are expensive services that help many people, our society simply recreates the problems over and over again and we fail and fail again to address the real issues of deprivation, poverty and inequality.

Contrary to tabloid headlines, health inequality is not caused by the lifestyle choices of the feckless. As the Health and Sport Committee reported earlier this week, experts said that the effect of lifestyle public health campaigns that

encourage people to eat more healthily, give up smoking, exercise more and drink less is to widen inequalities rather than to narrow them. The reality is that health inequality is caused by wealth inequality and it is only by seeking to tackle that inequality seriously that we will see an improvement in the shocking statistics that currently exist in Scotland.

As Dr Gerry McCartney of the Scottish public health observatory said in December:

"Interventions that redistribute income, such as increasing the standard rate of income tax or implementation of a Living Wage are among the most effective interventions for reducing inequalities and improving health."

Of course, he is right.

We will never address health inequality if we cut taxes for the wealthy and benefits for the poor. We will never address the life expectancy difference of almost 30 years between some areas when local government services are being cut and people in the most expensive properties gain and the poorest lose their essential services. We will never address poverty if our biggest fiscal pledge is to cut taxes for corporations at the same time as 400,000 of our citizens earn less than the living wage.

Health inequalities are Scotland's real shame. I pay tribute to our nurses and community health staff and the work that they do day in and day out, but if we do not see whole-Government action and a commitment to addressing such inequality, our nursing staff will forever be treating the symptoms of our society. I pay tribute to the work that they do and I wish them well for the future.

17:33

**Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP):** I praise Malcolm Chisholm for bringing the debate to the chamber this afternoon and the RCN for its nursing at the edge project, which has illustrated some of the huge problems in tackling health inequalities within a deprived environment in Scotland and the huge opportunities and gains that can be made if some of that inspiration is rolled out across our communities.

I should also praise nurses for the difficult jobs that they do every day. My wife has been a nurse for many years, and she leaves me in no doubt about the challenges that face the NHS as well as the fine work that is done on a daily basis.

I might address some of the points that Mr Findlay made in the final minute of his speech if I have time in the final minute of my speech, but I have to say that the first three minutes of his speech was spot on. I want to address some of the issues raised by the RCN—it is important to do



that in the debate—and then I will come back to the more general points later.

The idea about the integration bodies prioritising funding to address health inequalities is absolutely right. It is also fair to point out that Scottish Government budgets, via their allocation to the NHS, local authorities and other bodies, have a variety of indicators that recognise inequality and deprivation. We can maybe have a debate about whether those indicators are sensitive enough or whether they should be tweaked or altered, which would be an honest debate to have. However, we can have such a debate only if we are serious about it. We cannot just say that there should be more money for this or that; we must look at the formulas across local authorities, health boards and voluntary organisations if we are going to have a meaningful debate. I would be absolutely up for that challenge.

Something that resonated with me was the RCN being clear that integration boards should consult nurses and other staff and professionals on the ground and the users of vital services when the boards are deciding what their plans should be to tackle health inequalities. That really chimed with my experience of an organisation that I have visited a number of times in Rutherglen called the Healthy n Happy Community Development Trust, which takes a real community empowerment view of how to improve the health and wellbeing of the community. It does not tell people in the community how they should be happy or healthy but works with them and lets them nurture what works for them.

It is important to say to people that they should not smoke or drink, as those are important brief interventions that do have an effect. However, apart from the effect of tackling income inequality in society, the biggest effect that we can have on health inequalities actually comes from empowering people. I think that linking that to the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill is vitally important, as it shows the possibility of tackling health inequalities in a cross-cutting way across society.

I am sure that if Duncan McNeil speaks in the debate he will talk about inequalities with reference to the inverse care law. When we roll out the proposals in the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill and the funds that will be leveraged in to allow communities to take more control and ownership of their everyday lives, middle-class communities might rally to that cause quicker than working-class communities. Although that cause is important for all our communities, we must ensure that the equivalent of the inverse care law does not happen as an inverse community empowerment law—I think that that is a reasonable point to make.

There is so much else in the RCN report, and I apologise that I cannot mention any more. However, with regard to the Health and Sport Committee report, I note that universalism can increase health inequalities but it improves everyone's health. The Health and Sport Committee was clear that we are wedded to universalism and do not question it. We talked about universalism-max or universalism-plus in terms of having universal programmes and focused uptake for the programmes in our most deprived communities.

In the few seconds that I have left, I have to return to the issue of income inequality. Yes, let us have a decent living wage and minimum wage in this country; yes, let us stop the scourge of welfare reform; and yes, let us not have 100,000 disabled people in Scotland losing over £1,000 a year each because of UK welfare reforms. We do not have the real levers of power to tackle health inequalities across society, but I am committed to the view that, irrespective of the levers of power that we have, we in all parties must do all that we can in this place to tackle health inequalities.

Again, I thank Malcolm Chisholm for bringing the debate to the chamber this evening.

17:37

**Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab):** I, too, congratulate Malcolm Chisholm on bringing the debate to the chamber this evening and on hosting the RCN briefing and reception on the issue on 3 December, which I attended.

At that reception, I was delighted to meet Marie Murray—one of the nurses highlighted in the RCN's nursing at the edge campaign who are working to reduce health inequalities—and her colleagues Dr Gwyneth Jones and Professor Hazel Borland, who is the executive nurse director for NHS Dumfries and Galloway.

Marie Murray is an infectious disease specialist nurse with the local NHS who delivers a regular clinic at HMP Dumfries. The public often have little sympathy for offenders, but it is undeniable that offenders and ex-offenders often suffer particularly poor health for many reasons that include multiple deprivation, literacy problems and social exclusion.

Drug and alcohol abuse and substance abuse lead to crime and, as we all know, they also have important health consequences. The use of intravenous drugs such as heroin and the sharing of needles lead to the development of blood-borne viruses such as HIV and hepatitis C.

Originally, offenders in Dumfries prison who were identified as having blood-borne infectious diseases were taken from prison to Dumfries and

Galloway royal infirmary for appointments, but Marie Murray soon realised that treatment would be less stigmatising and more successful if she travelled to the prison to see the offenders and take part in their treatment. She works there alongside colleagues such as addiction nurse Amanda Allen. Because offenders are in prison for a period of time, the chances of their completing a course of treatment for infection and addressing their underlying problems of addiction are greater, and prison provides an opportunity for them to turn their lives around.

The team also recognises that support after release is important to maintain treatment and prevent relapses into destructive lifestyles. Liaison with voluntary sector organisations, homelessness and benefits services, and social work, criminal justice and drug and alcohol teams to ensure that support continues is coupled with an on-going medical service at the royal infirmary and outreach clinics in Annan and Stranraer to support ex-offenders on release into the community.

The team is also involved in the treatment of people with hepatitis B, which is not curable but can be monitored and managed. That virus is prevalent in Chinese and south Asian communities due to poor infection control in the countries of origin. Marie Murray's team now has a cohort of more than 70 patients across Dumfries and Galloway, who are predominantly from the Chinese community, although her team is working to improve communications with other ethnic minority communities in Dumfries and Galloway who may also be at risk from hep B. When I met Marie and her colleagues last month, it was clear that they are passionate and enthusiastic about their work and supporting their patients. I hope that I will be able to meet the team in Dumfries to learn more about its important work.

Fortunately, the treatments for blood-borne viruses such as hep C and HIV are much improved, but we know that the prison population is significantly at risk. I am aware that the Government will publish the revised sexual health and blood-borne viruses framework this year, and I realise that the refreshed document is still in the early stages of development, but I hope that the Government will carefully consider the suggestion of opt-out testing and screening of prisoners for blood-borne infections such as hep C and HIV at the time when they start their custodial sentences. If those infections are detected at that time, that will enable the sorts of interventions that Marie Murray and her colleagues can put in place.

We need those services in all our prisons. HMP Dumfries and NHS Dumfries and Galloway are trailblazing, but what is being done must be replicated elsewhere across the Scottish prison estate. It is not only a matter of addressing the

offenders' health issues; a range of other interventions and support mechanisms that can accompany medical treatment can also reduce the risk of reoffending. If that benefits ex-offenders, it will also benefit the rest of the community.

**The Deputy Presiding Officer:** I call Duncan McNeil; after him, we will move to the closing speech from the minister.

17:42

**Duncan McNeil (Greenock and Inverclyde (Lab):** Thank you for allowing me to make a short contribution, Presiding Officer.

Nanette Milne and other colleagues from the Health and Sport Committee have spoken. The committee's "Report on Health Inequalities" became public this week. The investigation found that, despite significant investment in tackling health inequalities in Scotland since devolution, the gap between rich and poor remains persistently wide. That has been mentioned many times in the debate. That does not mean that there has been any wilful neglect, but it needs to be recognised that the best of intentions did not get the outcomes that we were looking for.

The committee recognised that the NHS has a clear role to play in tackling health inequalities, but it cannot do that on its own. We need a broader strategy in the Parliament and the Government to get the outcomes that we wanted.

Some of those outcomes are within our gift. Bob Doris talked about that. The benefit cuts that dramatically impact on the poor, low pay, zero-hours contracts and all the things that disempower large groups of our constituents need to be tackled as one. However, the debate on that will come, and I do not intend to dwell on it too much now.

We have produced a report and we look forward to a serious debate in the Parliament. Our committee will challenge other committees to recognise their role in reducing inequalities in education, business and enterprise. Where are their strategies to produce a more equal society in Scotland? If we have a chance to engender that debate and get some thinking across Government and committees in the Parliament, we might get somewhere.

I take the opportunity to put on record my thanks to the project in Inverclyde that has been mentioned. Mark McDonald said that we have a responsibility to identify good projects and where people are doing good and changing people's lives. To identify good work and good people, I put on record my appreciation of the work of Martin Murray.

We look at child poverty and fuel poverty, which are easy issues for us that attract great sympathy in the population. As Martin Murray has said,

“Caring for homeless people is not one of the so-called popular services but it is needed.”

These are our most excluded and most disempowered citizens. He has also said that

“helping people help themselves will benefit the whole of society in the long run.”

I truly believe that, and he is practising that in a poor community. At the Inverclyde centre, he tries to see all those who present themselves and he offers them as much help as he can with any health issues that they might have. We must remember that such people do not have normal access to GPs. Some of them are barred from their GP because of their problems.

Martin Murray and nursing at the edge work with a difficult and excluded group. I wish them well and I wish the project all the success that it deserves. It is doing a wonderful job not just in Inverclyde but across Scotland. All such projects need the commitment to funding that other aspects of the national health service receive. There is no debate about funding for the health service in general—we all agree that it needs more funding and we want to give it more—but, when we talk about delivering very locally for the most difficult and hard-to-reach people, we must ask why there is a debate about long-term funding for such projects when we know all the good that they can do.

17:47

**The Minister for Sport, Health Improvement and Mental Health (Jamie Hepburn):** I join others in congratulating Malcolm Chisholm on securing this members’ business debate. I recognise his commitment to the subject, which members across the chamber share. I thank members for taking part in the debate and I apologise for being unlikely to be able to respond to every point that was made.

I emphasise the Government’s commitment to building a fairer Scotland, continuing to improve Scotland’s health and making every effort to reduce the health gap. Overall, health in Scotland is improving. We should recognise and celebrate the fact that people are living longer and healthier lives. However, I am acutely aware that, despite the efforts of this and previous Administrations to tackle health inequalities, such inequalities remain a blight on our society.

At its root, the issue concerns income inequality. We need a shift in emphasis from dealing with the consequences to tackling the underlying cause—poverty. The focus must be on providing fair

wages, supporting families and improving our physical and social environments. Measures that the Government has taken include paying at least the living wage to all employees of the Government and the NHS. We have also commissioned the Poverty Alliance to promote the living wage in the private sector. Recently, payment of the living wage has been assessed to be one of the most effective interventions to tackle inequalities, and particularly health inequalities.

As we face the United Kingdom Government’s welfare cuts, which some members have mentioned, the Scottish Government is working with its partners to tackle poverty and inequality and to help those who want to work to get into work.

**Neil Findlay:** I am glad that the minister said what he said about wealth inequality. Which Government policies are designed to take money from the wealthiest and put it in the pockets of the poorest?

**Jamie Hepburn:** We have just been through a referendum that could have transferred substantial powers to the Parliament to achieve that end, but—sadly—we did not get the result that I wanted. Our ability to achieve that approach is limited.

I am about to describe some of the action that we are taking in the face of the UK Government’s welfare cuts to put money in the pockets of those who are bearing the brunt of those cuts. We are taking real action in 2015-16.

I can tell Mr Findlay that we are mitigating the welfare reforms that are being imposed by Westminster by providing £104 million via the Scottish welfare fund, the bedroom tax support, the council tax reduction scheme and support for advice services.

The complexity of resolving Scotland’s health inequalities is well understood and was highlighted in the report that was published this week by the Health and Sport Committee, which has been mentioned already. As the committee’s convener, Duncan McNeil, pointed out, the report will be debated in due course, and I look forward to that.

It is also well understood that health inequalities are not a problem only for the NHS, as all parts of Government and the wider public sector have a role to play. As was set out in the programme for government, despite the challenges, we remain determined to address the social inequalities that lead to health inequalities across the country.

I turn to some of the comments that have been made. Neil Findlay quite rightly mentioned the prison environment and Elaine Murray spent a lot of time talking about that. In Scotland, we have a national prisoner healthcare network that reflects

the inequalities agenda in each of its workstreams, particularly in the area of substance misuse but also in relation to mental health and throughcare.

The importance of addressing health inequalities through the integration of adult health and social care is highlighted in Malcolm Chisholm's motion, and he talked about that a great deal. Again, the programme for government emphasises the vital role that health and social care integration will play in delivering our wider vision. The Government is committed to improving public services and delivering the support that Scotland's people value, in line with the best evidence while ensuring that our public services are financially sustainable. Indeed, addressing health inequalities features as a specific outcome for integration—that is set out in regulations. Localities provide a key opportunity to ensure that integrated and strategic planning addresses inequalities and focuses on local priorities, and annual performance reporting by the new integrated partnerships will demonstrate the contribution that they have made locally to reduce health inequalities, using nationally comparable data and locally available information.

Malcolm Chisholm commented on the issue of funding and said that we must provide integration boards with resources to enable them to tackle inequalities. The statutory minimum of services that must be delegated under the regulations will result in a minimum of £7.6 billion being allocated to integration authorities in total across Scotland. In this coming financial year, we will increase the previously announced integration fund from £120 million to £173.5 million, recognising the need for new investment in primary care.

Patricia Ferguson talked about the role of GPs, particularly those who are involved in the general practitioners at the deep end group. I know the group's work very well, having been a member of the Welfare Reform Committee, to which it provided information. The Scottish Government is supporting the piloting of link workers at some of those practices in order to better support patients with mental health issues.

Nurses play a vital role with regard to the subject we are debating tonight. I join others in welcoming the Royal College of Nursing's nursing at the edge initiative. It is a positive and well-received campaign that highlights the key role that nurses play in reducing health inequalities. I would be happy to meet representatives of the RCN to discuss the campaign and its wider work.

As the RCN campaign has highlighted, nurses have a critical role as catalysts for empowering the communities who work with them, enabling them to be involved in decisions that affect their health. Nurses have a critical role to play with regard to meeting our aim of tackling inequalities.

I see that I am running out of time, Presiding Officer.

We will always be open to refining our systems based on the evidence that is before us. That can lead to reducing inequality. Duncan McNeil spoke about a project in his area and Mark McDonald highlighted the example of the Middlefield community project in his constituency, which he invited me to attend. If we can find time to do that, I would be happy to consider a visit.

I welcome the fact that we have had this debate today. I recognise the excellent work that is done by nurses across Scotland, which is highlighted by the nursing at the edge campaign. The Scottish Government will continue to ensure that the integration of health and social care is a reality and transforms how health and social care are delivered in Scotland, and that nursing is at the forefront of tackling health inequalities—I assure members that that is a priority and an absolute commitment for me in my ministerial role.

*Meeting closed at 17:55.*

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