

Thursday 10 November 2011

SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Education and Lifelong Learning

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive, assuming student support remained at the same level, what the budget for Clydebank College would be for (a) 2011-12, (b) 2012-13, (c) 2013-14 and (d) 2014-15, expressed in (i) cash and (ii) real terms.

(S4W-03375)

Michael Russell: Matters relating to the funding of individual colleges fall within the responsibility of the Scottish Funding Council. I have asked its Chief Executive to write to the member.

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive how much funding it allocated to Skills Development Scotland for modern apprenticeships in the oil and gas sector in (a) 2008-09, (b) 2009-10 and (c) 2010-11.

(S4W-03397)

Alasdair Allan: The Scottish Government does not hold this information centrally. I will ask the Chief Executive of Skills Development Scotland to write to you.

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive how much funding it has allocated to Skills Development Scotland for modern apprenticeships in the oil and gas sector for 2011-12.

(S4W-03398)

Alasdair Allan: The Scottish Government does not hold this information centrally. I will ask the Chief Executive of Skills Development Scotland to write to you.

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive what action it has taken to address the skills shortage in the oil and gas sector since the publication of the OPITO labour market intelligence survey in March 2011.

(S4W-03401)

Alasdair Allan: Skills is one of the six strategic priorities being addressed by the Oil and Gas Industry Advisory Group co-chaired by the Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism.

The recently established industry led Energy Skills Action Group (ESAG) is developing a cross sectoral approach to addressing the skills needs of the energy sector as a whole. The oil and gas industry is a key priority for the ESAG. OPITO is represented on this group.

Following a request from the ESAG for information on skills needs, the Oil and Gas Industry Advisory Group has agreed to set up a short life working group with a small number of companies from across the industry to focus on increasing the labour supply.

This approach has support from Oil and Gas UK, OPITO, Sub Sea UK, Scottish Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland and the Scottish Government, and will build on the existing activity already taking place to improve the supply of skilled labour for the sector.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive, further to the answer to question S4W-02691 by Angela Constance on 26 September 2011, how many of the people already registered as (a) managers, (b) workers with supervisory responsibilities, (c) practitioners and (d) support workers in adult care home services have attained the level of qualification required.

(S4W-03706)

Angela Constance: This information is not held by the Scottish Executive.

However, as with my response to your question S4W-02691 I will ask the Chief Executive of the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) to respond to your question.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive whether a person working in adult care home services can register with the Scottish Social Services Council but take up to a further three years to attain the level of qualification required.

(S4W-03707)

Angela Constance: Yes.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive whether all adult care home staff must have the level of qualification required for their post at the date of compulsory registration.

(S4W-03708)

Angela Constance: No. Registration must be achieved by the date of compulsory registration. However, a condition would be placed on the registration that the registrant must attain the relevant qualification within a specified period, normally three years.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Executive how much PFI/PPP debt has accrued to each college and how much remains outstanding.

(S4W-03748)

Michael Russell: There were previously three colleges with PFI contracts. Two of these, at West Lothian College and Stirling Further Education Centre (now part of Forth Valley College), have been terminated. The only remaining contract is with North Ayrshire College (now part of James Watt College). Details of the PFI payments made and an estimate of those outstanding is shown in the following table.

College	Amount paid under PFI	Estimated PFI repayments outstanding
James Watt College	£15.6 million	£33.6 million
Forth Valley College	£7.7 million	*
West Lothian College	£14.3 million	*

Note: * These contracts were terminated in January 2011 and April 2007 respectively

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive how many private schools there are.

(S4W-03754)

Michael Russell: There are 103 registered independent schools in Scotland.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive what state assistance private schools receive.

(S4W-03755)

Michael Russell: Independent schools do not receive public funding from the Scottish Government. However, places for musically talented pupils are funded at St Mary's Music School, Edinburgh, through the Aided Places Scheme.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive how many private schools have charitable status.

(S4W-03756)

Michael Russell: There are currently 103 registered independent schools of which 90 are operated by charities.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive what criteria private schools have to meet in order to qualify for charitable status.

(S4W-03757)

Michael Russell: All bodies wishing to qualify for charitable status must pass the ‘charity test’ as set out in the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005:

The body must have only charitable purposes. The 2005 Act recognises 15 purposes as charitable, and

The body must, or in the case of an applicant intend to, provide public benefit. When considering the public benefit aspect of the charity test, the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) must consider whether any condition on accessing the benefit – including any fee is charged – is unduly restrictive.

In addition, the constitution of the body must not allow it to distribute, at any time, its assets for a purpose which is not charitable.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive what information it has on the financial benefit that private schools accrue from their charitable status.

(S4W-03758)

Michael Russell: This information is not held centrally. All charities may qualify for UK charitable tax relief under section 505 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988. Taxation is a matter reserved to the UK Government and the decision for charitable tax relief rests with the Commissioners of HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

Charities registered with OSCR, occupying property used “wholly or mainly for charitable purposes”, may be entitled to 80% mandatory rates relief from their local authority. It is up to each local authority to determine whether a property is being used for such purposes.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Executive how long it would take to migrate the data from Glow to a replacement system.

(S4W-03759)

Michael Russell: The exact solution and functionality of the next generation of Glow, to be in place for September 2012, is currently being finalised. This will inform the content migration strategy and the related timescales.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Executive what its contingency plan is if the data from Glow is not fully migrated to another system when the contract with RM comes to an end.

(S4W-03760)

Michael Russell: The programme structure to manage the migration from the existing to a new solution takes into account the need for contingency planning. The contract for the current Glow includes a schedule that deals specifically with termination of the contract and migration of the data. We are working with the contractor to ensure a smooth transition according to the terms of the contract.

The education community, including local authority directors of education, will be kept informed of migration activities and contingency planning.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Executive what research it is undertaking into the procurement of a new IT system to replace Glow.

(S4W-03761)

Michael Russell: The Scottish Government has engaged widely to ensure that development of the next generation of Glow produces the best possible outcomes for Scotland's learners. This has included extensive engagement with the industry, representative bodies and learning communities, practitioners, parents and young people, through surveys and online discussions and culminated in the recent national ICT in Education summit held on 17 October.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Executive what it is doing to ensure a successful transition to a replacement system for Glow.

(S4W-03762)

Michael Russell: The Scottish Government and Education Scotland are working together on the next generation of Glow. A programme has been established and this is being informed by ongoing engagement with the education community.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Executive what representations it has received from teachers' organisations concerning the proposed replacement of Glow.

(S4W-03763)

Michael Russell: The Scottish Government has not received specific representations from teachers' organisations, however the education community including individual teachers, representative groups and teaching unions have been kept informed of the planned approach to the delivery of the next generation of Glow and encouraged to contribute to the ongoing discussion. The collated feedback from all engagement activities including that from individual teachers is informing the development of the next generation of Glow.

Finance and Sustainable Growth

Michael McMahon (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive when the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth last met COSLA.

(S4O-0355)

John Swinney: I met COSLA yesterday as part of an ongoing series of discussions in relation to the 2012-15 local government finance settlements.

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive what plans it has to review the legislation regarding dangerous and defective buildings.

(S4O-0356)

Aileen Campbell: A review is currently underway to improve the cost recovery powers for local authorities dealing with dangerous and defective buildings.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Executive how it ensures that local communities are fully consulted in the planning process.

(S4O-0357)

Aileen Campbell: The 2006 Planning Act and associated secondary legislation provide enhanced opportunities for communities and other stakeholders to get involved in the planning system.

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive how much funding has been drawn down by successful applicants for Wave and Tidal Energy: Research, Development and Demonstration Support, and how many jobs it supports.

(S4W-03393)

Fergus Ewing: The projects that have secured funding through the Wave and Tidal Energy: Research, Development and Demonstration Support (WATERS) programme have to date drawn down £795,000.

The data collected as part of the project assessment process highlighted that the successful bids would support 261 jobs relating to research, development and commercialisation activities.

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive when it expects the planned improvements to the A737 at the Head Street and Barrmill Road junctions in Beith and the Den realignment outside Dalry to be completed.

(S4W-03394)

Keith Brown: The Head Street scheme has completed the statutory process; the Den realignment scheme is currently in preparation and construction of both schemes is dependent on the availability of funding and the competing priorities of other schemes on the network.

At Barrmill Road the A737 Road Safety Route Action Plan is on-going. It will propose measures aimed at reducing the number of injury accidents. Some of the early identified outcomes from the bend assessment section of this Road Safety Route Action Plan will be implemented during December 2011.

David McLetchie (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Executive, further to the answer to question S4W-02894 by John Swinney on 20 October 2011, whether, on the basis of the information provided, it considers a figure of 40,000 to be an accurate estimate of the number of jobs created as a result of the introduction of the small business bonus scheme.

(S4W-03527)

John Swinney: Further to my earlier answer to question S4W-02894, I can confirm that official statistics published on 27 October 2011 show the number of recipients of the Small Business Bonus Scheme (SBBS) has increased to 85,199 properties. This represents two out of five commercial premises in Scotland.

While it is difficult to estimate precise numbers, the Scottish Government estimates that the SBBS has sustained many thousands of jobs in small and medium sized enterprises across Scotland.

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive how many households would be in fuel poverty if the energy performance of all homes were raised to Energy Performance Certificate rating (a) A, (b) B, (c) C, (d) D, (e) E and (f) F, income levels remained the same and fuel prices (i) remained constant, (ii) increased by 13%, (iii) increased by 19% and (iv) increased by 52%, also expressed as a percentage of all households.

(S4W-03589)

Alex Neil: The information requested is not currently available.

The Scottish Government is working closely with the Fuel Poverty Forum to scope out the analytical requirements that can be delivered in support of the fuel poverty review.

Jenny Marra (North East Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive how many domestic properties can reach or exceed an Energy Performance Certificate rating (a) A, (b) B, (c) C, (d) D, (e) E and (f) F, also expressed as a percentage of all properties.

(S4W-03593)

Alex Neil: An exact measure of the data requested is not currently available. However the following table which was published in March 2011 in a document entitled "Impacts of Options for regulating energy efficiency standards in the domestic sector" provides some broad information on the proportion of existing stock (not new buildings) in each Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) band which could reach the bottom of a target band. It does not fully replicate the method used to identify an EPC band and therefore is approximate and further work would be required to confirm these results. This is especially true for the higher bandings. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/03/22092740/0>

Proportions of stock currently in EPC bands and which could meet or exceed a target band.

EPC Rating	Proportion Of Existing Stock Currently Achieving EPC Rating	Proportion Of Existing Stock Which Could Reach Or Exceed EPC Rating
A	0%	0%
B	1%	32%
C	22%	83%
D	46%	97%
E	24%	99%
F	5%	100%
G	1%	100%

Source: Data source is SHCS (2006-08).

Note: The third column is sensitive to the range of measures considered and as these were limited should be considered conservative.

Michael McMahon (Uddingston and Bellshill) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it has estimated the extra cost to local authorities of administering and collecting the proposed public health levy.

(S4W-03777)

John Swinney: I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-03471 on 27 October 2011. All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the parliament's website, the search facility for which can be found at:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx>.

Health and Wellbeing

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Executive when the updated UK influenza pandemic preparedness strategy will be published.

(S4W-03944)

Nicola Sturgeon: The UK Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Strategy 2011 will be published today.

This is a pan-UK Strategy, developed by and published in the names of the four UK administrations.

It takes on board lessons learned from the 2009 H1N1 ("swine flu") pandemic and responses to the consultation on the draft document.

Copies of the strategy and the summary of responses to the consultation on the document are available in the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (Bib. numbers 53363 and 53364).

Justice

David McLetchie (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it remains its policy not to reduce the number of emergency fire control rooms.

(S4O-0337)

Roseanna Cunningham: Decisions about the future of control rooms should only be taken after further progress has been made towards the creation of a single fire and rescue service.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Scottish Green Party): To ask the Scottish Executive what action it is taking to increase reporting of homophobic and transphobic hate crime.

(S4W-03525)

Kenny MacAskill: There are a range of actions that have been and that are being taken forward.

I attended the launch of the ACPOS Hate Crime Guidance Manual. This manual was launched by ACPOS in September 2010 and provides operational guidance to the police service on all aspects of dealing with hate crime. The manual has also highlighted the importance and raised awareness of hate crime and encourages reporting of all types of hate crime.

I also delivered a speech at a vigil organised by the NUS Scotland LGBT Campaign on 28 October 2011. The vigil was to mark International Day Against Hate Crime.

We supported an application from the University of Stirling to the Royal Society of Edinburgh to fund a series of seminars to improve understanding of what drives race and hate crimes. Those seminars are now underway.

We are also working with the police service through the Scottish Policing Performance Development Group to broaden the data currently reported on hate crime.

We intend to hold a one day event either later this year or early next year which will be designed to build on the findings of the Equality and Human Rights Commission's research report on the "Rehabilitation of Hate Crime Offenders". We hope that by bringing together policy makers, academics and service providers from across the criminal justice sector, the foundations can be laid for the design of a new rehabilitative programme for hate crime offenders in Scotland.

All of the above actions demonstrate our efforts to help to increase awareness and encourage reporting of hate crime.

Private Office

Margaret McDougall (West Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive what the cost is of answering a parliamentary question.

(S4W-03716)

Brian Adam: The average cost to the Scottish Government of answering a parliamentary question is £98.51.

Further details can be found in the most recent (2008) Study into the average cost of answering Scottish Government Parliamentary Questions, copies of which are available in the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (Bib. number 46897).

Rural Affairs and the Environment

Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Executive what discussions it has had with the Health and Safety Executive and National Farmers Union Scotland with regard to reducing workplace fatality rates in agriculture.

(S4O-0336)

Richard Lochhead: The Scottish Government is committed to a significant reduction in the rate of fatalities amongst Scotland's farming communities. Scottish Government officials met recently with the Health and Safety Executive and the Scottish Centre for Healthy Working Lives.

This meeting identified ways in which government farm inspectors could further support and enhance the safety message to protect our rural communities.

Furthermore, I specifically raised the issue of safety at the National Farmers' Union Scotland AGM earlier this year. Improving safety is a key issue for this Government, and for Scotland's farmers and farm workers.

Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive when the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 will be commenced in full.

(S4W-03738)

Stewart Stevenson: It is planned that all the provisions of the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 will be in force in January 2013.

Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive when section 13 of the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 will be commenced.

(S4W-03739)

Stewart Stevenson: It is planned that section 13 of the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) 2011 will be commenced in January 2012. The coming into force of new sections 11A, 11D and 11E in sub-section 13(3) will require a lead-in time for snaring operators to have an opportunity to complete the snare training course. It is planned that the new sections referred to above will come into force in January 2013.

Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive which animal welfare body is providing input to the training courses on snaring practice that will be a legal requirement for snare users to complete under the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011.

(S4W-03740)

Stewart Stevenson: The Scottish Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals has provided input into the content of the snaring training course.

Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive whether the organisations chosen to run the training courses on snaring practice to allow snare users to comply with the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 have been accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service.

(S4W-03741)

Stewart Stevenson: The British Association for Shooting and Conservation, the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust and the Scottish Gamekeepers Association are considered by the Scottish Government to have the necessary knowledge and expertise in a Scottish context to carry out training in the setting of snares. It has not been necessary to seek additional accreditation by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service.

Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive under what circumstances it would be possible for a public body to give consent for an activity, project or plan that would damage or destroy a natural feature for which a site of special scientific interest has been notified.

(S4W-03803)

Stewart Stevenson: Scottish Planning Policy provides that development that affects a SSSI should only be permitted where it will not adversely affect the integrity of the area or the qualities for which it has been designated, or when any such adverse effects are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of national importance. The circumstances are unique to each case and may only be considered on a case by case basis.

Sections 12 to 15 of the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 apply to the exercise of functions and operations by public bodies and consent by certain regulatory authorities which might damage a natural feature or features for which a SSSI has been notified. Further information is provided in the act's explanatory notes which are available via the following web address:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2004/6/notes/contents?view=plain>.

Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive what action it would expect to be taken by a public body, under section 12 of the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, that gives consent for an activity, project or plan that damages or destroys a natural feature for which a site of special scientific interest has been notified and what guidance it has published on providing compensation in fulfilment of this duty.

(S4W-03804)

Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive how it would calculate the extent of compensation required if it, or another public body, gave consent for an activity, project or plan that damaged or destroyed a natural feature for which a site of special scientific interest had been notified.

(S4W-03805)

Stewart Stevenson: Section 12 of the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004 applies to the exercise by a public body or office holder of any function on, or so far as affecting, any land which is or forms part of a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Action taken in accordance with the duty provided by section 12 is for relevant public bodies or office-holders to consider on a case by case basis. The Scottish Government has not published any specific guidance on this duty. Further information on section 12 is available in the Explanatory Notes which accompany the act.

The following questions received holding answers:

S4W-03368
S4W-03620
S4W-03637
S4W-03641