

Thursday 17 July 2014

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

Communities

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether letters of comfort have been provided to local authorities regarding discretionary housing payments to fully mitigate the so-called bedroom tax.

(S4W-21835)

Margaret Burgess: A letter to all local authorities was issued jointly from the UK and Scottish Governments on 25 June 2014. A copy of that letter was shared with the Welfare Reform Committee and can be found at:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/67206.aspx>.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government when it expects to have the power to vary the cap for discretionary housing payments.

(S4W-21836)

Margaret Burgess: The draft timetable for the Section 63 order which will transfer the cap-setting power to Scottish Ministers has been shared with the Welfare Reform Committee, and is available on the Scottish Parliament website at:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/63916.aspx>

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with (a) COSLA and (b) the UK Government about the power to vary the cap on discretionary housing payments.

(S4W-21837)

Margaret Burgess: The Deputy First Minister met with the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Scotland on 8 May 2014 to agree the plan for the Section 63 order that will transfer the power to vary the cap on Discretionary Housing Payments. They have subsequently discussed progress on a number of occasions. Scottish Government officials are engaged on an on-going basis with representatives of COSLA and the Scotland Office.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether tenants are receiving a full discretionary housing payment to mitigate the so-called bedroom tax.

(S4W-21838)

Margaret Burgess: The administration of discretionary housing payments (DHPs) is the responsibility of individual local authorities. The Scottish Government expects everyone who is affected by the bedroom tax and who applies for a DHP, to receive one. Local authorities have been allocated sufficient funds for full bedroom tax mitigation in 2014-15, and the UK Government has confirmed that local authorities are able to incur expenditure in excess of the current cap in anticipation of the transfer of powers and the subsequent lifting of the cap by Scottish Ministers.

Health and Social Care

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government how many full-time equivalent heart failure specialist nurses there have been in each year since 2007, broken down by NHS board.

(S4W-21904)

Michael Matheson: Information on numbers of qualified nurses, which increased in this government by 4%, or by 1654.4 whole-time equivalent (WTE) to 42,680.6 WTE, is available via ISD Scotland.

Due to the multidisciplinary nature of the role, a qualified nurse may work in more than one specific speciality, only one of which is recorded by ISD Scotland for each nurse.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government when it last carried out a national audit of heart failure services and whether it will publish the findings.

(S4W-21907)

Michael Matheson: Healthcare Improvement Scotland published the *Heart Disease Services: Take Heart – A National Overview* in September 2011. This publication covers heart failure and the development and subsequent implementation of a Heart Failure Care Bundle. This is an integral part of the current acute care work stream of the Scottish Patient Safety Programme.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will publish details of its most recent cost-benefit analysis of the early diagnosis and treatment of heart failure and the savings in social care that could arise.

(S4W-21911)

Michael Matheson: This information is not held by the Scottish Government.

Jim Hume (South Scotland) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government what role it considers practice-based evidence for psychological therapies can play in the production of Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN) clinical guidelines.

(S4W-21976)

Michael Matheson: The Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN) would consider evidence for psychological therapies, where relevant, in the production of any particular guideline based on the scope of the guideline and discussions with the multi-disciplinary guideline development group.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Scottish Green Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether it is aware of Imperial Tobacco's Smoke Spots campaign and whether it has had correspondence with local authorities or other organisations regarding whether it breaches the provisions of the Tobacco Advertising and Promotions Act 2002.

(S4W-21989)

Michael Matheson: We have been made aware of the Smoke Spots campaign. The Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland (SCOTSS) and Glasgow City Council Trading Standards are also aware of the campaign.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Scottish Green Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether it has had discussions with the UK Government regarding the legality of Imperial Tobacco's Smoke Spots campaign.

(S4W-21991)

Michael Matheson: We are in contact with colleagues in Department of Health about a range of issues. They are aware of the Smoke Spots campaign.

Learning and Justice

Fiona McLeod (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government what support it provides to dyslexic (a) pupils and (b) students who are sitting exams.

(S4W-22010)

Alasdair Allan: With regards to pupils with dyslexia, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) operates a needs-based policy in relation to assessment. Schools identify any assessment arrangements a dyslexic candidate may require. Those most commonly provided for dyslexic candidates in SQA external examinations include extra time, a human reader/scribe, digital question papers or the use of appropriate information and communications technology equipment.

The Scottish Government funds CALL (Communication, Access, Literacy and Learning) Scotland at the University of Edinburgh to lead the development and provision of assistive and communication technology for pupils with disabilities and additional support needs in Scotland. As part of this work, CALL and SQA have developed digital question papers and these have been available for students with additional support needs, including dyslexia, since 2008.

In addition, the Scottish Government has funded the licensing and distribution of "Heather" and "Stuart" which are high quality computer voices with Scottish accents. These can be downloaded from CALL Scotland's website and installed on school computers free of charge.

All Scottish Higher Education Institutions have specialist dyslexia or disability advisers who can organise individualised support for students with dyslexia, including assessment of their needs, provision of appropriate resources and examination arrangements.

Strategy and External Affairs

Jim Hume (South Scotland) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government when it will next meet the Consul General of China and whether it will raise at the meeting concerns about the annual Yulin dog-meat festival in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region.

(S4W-21839)

Fiona Hyslop: There are currently no plans to meet with the Chinese Consul General, Mr Pan, however, the Scottish Government is aware of animal welfare concerns surrounding certain practices in China, including the Yulin festival practiced by those that believe that eating dog meat on midsummers day brings health benefits.

It is important to note that the Scottish Government takes the welfare of all animals very seriously and routinely feeds into deliberations on animal welfare at both the EU and OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health) level via Defra. However, when dealing with another countries practices, there must always be an element of caution in making judgements about the customs in other countries and sensitivity in bringing about change. It is evident from media stories on this topic that there is an increasing proportion of the population within China that no longer support the practice of eating dog meat. The most appropriate way for external parties to improve dog welfare in China is to work with sympathetic organisations within China to help bring about further change. This is a strategy used by many Scottish and UK animal welfare charities with international concerns and indeed by the Jeanne Marchig International Centre for Animal Welfare Education, established at the University of Edinburgh's Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies in 2011, which is closely partnered with a number of international animal welfare charities and veterinary organisations.

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government how much it will cost Serco NorthLink to charter the MV Hildasay from 2012 to 2018.

(S4W-21984)

Keith Brown: Under the terms of the charter agreement between Serco NorthLink and Seatruck the cost to Serco NorthLink of chartering the MV Hildasay is commercially confidential.

Transport Scotland

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S4W-21604 by Keith Brown on 18 June 2014, when it will (a) complete and (b) publish its review of the EU aviation guidelines.

(S4W-21872)

Keith Brown: Our review of the new EU Aviation Guidelines is an internal consideration of the opportunities and impacts that they represent for the Scottish Government.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S4W-21607 by Keith Brown on 18 June 2014, when it (a) last met and (b) will next meet stakeholders to discuss the possibility of establishing an air route development fund.

(S4W-21874)

Keith Brown: The Scottish Government regularly discusses route development with stakeholders including airlines and Scotland's airports. Discussions are ongoing in respect of various new route opportunities to enhance Scotland's international connectivity and increase inbound tourism. These discussions include support for route development but have not covered the establishment of an air route development fund.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S4W-21603 by Keith Brown on 18 June 2014, for what reason it has not commissioned such a review.

(S4W-21876)

Keith Brown: We have reviewed the new aviation guidelines and are aware of both the constraints and the opportunities they represent. No further review is required.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S4W-21605 by Keith Brown on 18 June 2014, whether it will publish its submission of (a) 7 June 2011 and (b) 3 October 2013.

(S4W-21877)

Keith Brown: The Scottish Government's submission of 7 June 2011 can be viewed at: http://ec.europa.eu/competition/consultations/2011_aviation_guidelines/scotland_en.pdf

The Scottish Government's submission of 3 October 2013 is available from the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (Bib. Number 56026).

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what recent meetings ministers have had with the EU regarding the possibility of establishing an air route development fund.

(S4W-21879)

Keith Brown: None.

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government, what discussions it has had with Caledonian MacBrayne regarding the rates of pay for ratings on the MS Clipper Ranger.

(S4W-21981)

Keith Brown: Transport Scotland has had regular discussions with CalMac Ferries and Serco NorthLink Ferries about pay levels for employees of SeaTruck since this was first highlighted as an issue by both operators.

We have made it clear, to both CalMac Ferries and Serco NorthLink Ferries, that we expect them to offer to pay for increases to be made to the wage levels of these crew members, backdated to the start of the charter agreements these companies have with Seatruck. However, we understand that Seatruck has still to agree to this offer.

CalMac Ferries and Serco NorthLink are actively pursuing a solution in the interests of the seafarers concerned.

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government when Caledonian MacBrayne chartered the MS Clipper Ranger; when the charter will end, and what the cost has been.

(S4W-21982)

Keith Brown: The charter agreement entered into by Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd commenced on 19 September 2013 and is due to end in November 2014. The cost of chartering the vessel is commercially confidential.

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government how much it cost David MacBrayne Ltd to charter the MV Hildasay from 2006 to 2012.

(S4W-21983)

Keith Brown: The MV Hildasay was chartered by David MacBrayne Ltd from 20 January 2010 until 30 June 2012. The cost of chartering the vessel is commercially confidential under the terms of the agreement signed by David MacBrayne Ltd.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government during which month it expects the Forth Replacement Crossing will be open.

(S4W-22011)

Keith Brown: The Forth Replacement Crossing remains on schedule to be open by December 2016.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether all aspects of the Forth Replacement Crossing are on schedule.

(S4W-22012)

Keith Brown: All aspects of the Forth Replacement Crossing are on schedule to be completed by December 2016.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether the works on the road network (a) north and (b) south of the river related to the Forth Replacement Crossing are on schedule.

(S4W-22013)

Keith Brown: I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-22012 on 17 July 2014. 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>.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether there are areas of work related to the Forth Replacement Crossing that are not on schedule.

(S4W-22015)

Keith Brown: I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-22012 on 17 July 2014. 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>.

The following question received a holding answer:

S4W-21834