

Thursday 5 September 2013

## SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

### Enterprise and Environment

**Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (Scottish National Party):** To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to ensure that people in Aberdeenshire West will have access to high-speed broadband by 2020.

(S4O-02350)

**Nicola Sturgeon:** The Scottish Government's Step Change programme, building upon commercial deployment by BT and other operators, will bring next generation broadband to at least 85% of premises in Scotland by 2015 and 95% by 2017.

The Scottish Government and its partners are investing over £280 million in the programme to achieve this commitment, and this includes a £16 million contribution from Aberdeenshire Council to deliver broadband to some of the hardest to reach areas in the region.

Overall coverage of fibre broadband in Aberdeenshire is expected to exceed 89% as a direct result of the programme, compared to only around 25% if left to commercial rollout alone.

### Governance and Communities

**Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Government, in light of reports that the building of new houses is at its lowest for 65 years, what action it is taking to stimulate the housebuilding sector.

(S4O-02349)

**Margaret Burgess:** We are under no illusion that these remain very challenging times for the house building industry. But this government is doing all it can to support the housing industry's recovery, boost supply and create jobs. Our housing investment programmes are designed to maximise the combined impact on both the provision of affordable housing and the house building industry.

We will deliver at least 30,000 affordable homes during this parliament which includes the homes delivered through the National Housing Trust initiative. This government is also working actively with the house building industry and funders, for example with Homes for Scotland on the House building Infrastructure Loan Fund and the MI New Home mortgage indemnity scheme.

We have also committed £120 million over the next two years to support a new shared-equity scheme to help first time buyers and those looking to move to buy a new home. This decisive action will not only meet the needs of people across Scotland but also deliver vital support for construction and house building companies throughout Scotland.

**Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Government what discussion it had with officials from Dumfries and Galloway Council prior to the council's application under the Bellwin Scheme to cover additional expenditure incurred by the snowstorms of March 2013.

(S4W-16909)

**John Swinney:** My officials discussed the terms and conditions of the Bellwin Scheme with council officials in the immediate aftermath of the snowstorms in late March 2013.

This included an email dated 27 March 2013 to the Council's Head of Finance confirming that I had triggered the scheme and providing the web links to the Bellwin Scheme guidance, claim process and the claim forms. The email also included a reminder of the timescales for making any claim.

**Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Government which elements of Dumfries and Galloway Council's claim under the Bellwin Scheme to cover additional expenditure incurred by the snowstorms of March 2013 were deemed ineligible for assistance because they were not (a) incurred as a result of providing relief or carrying out works to safeguard life or property or prevent suffering or severe inconvenience, (b) of a revenue nature, (c) net of any

receivable income from other sources, (d) of an uninsurable nature and (e) incurred within a two month period from the date of the incident and what the total financial value was of these elements.

**(S4W-16910)**

**John Swinney:** Dumfries and Galloway's claim under the Bellwin scheme following the severe winter weather in late March 2013 was submitted in two parts. The second part of the claim amounted to over £794,000 for repairing the damage caused to the roads by the severe snow storms. This part of the claim was ruled out because the expenditure was to be incurred outwith the two month period following the incident. The council, in submitting the claim accepted that this part of the claim was outwith the two month period.

This left the first part of the claim which amounted to almost £965,000 of which around £650,000 was in respect of the immediate snow clearing and providing an emergency response following the incident. Unfortunately, this did not breach the council's published Bellwin threshold of £679,994 that they are expected to budget for (0.2% of their net revenue budget) to cope with emergency situations. The remainder of the first part of the claim (almost £315,000) was in respect of work on drainage, fencing, dyking, hedging, resurfacing, surface dressing and verge repair, none of which would fall under the eligible costs of the scheme as it was not work to safeguard life or property in the immediate aftermath of an emergency situation.

### **Learning and Justice**

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Scottish Green Party):** To ask the Scottish Government whether an independent Scotland would have the technical capability to protect internet traffic from surveillance by UK intelligence agencies.

**(S4W-16474)**

**Kenny MacAskill:** An independent Scotland will work in very close collaboration with the remaining UK and with wider international partners on security and intelligence matters: it is in everyone's interests to keep our islands secure. This will be done within a strict legal framework set by the Scottish Parliament.

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Scottish Green Party):** To ask the Scottish Government whether internet (a) infrastructure and (b) surveillance will be addressed in the white paper on independence.

**(S4W-16475)**

**Kenny MacAskill:** The main legislation relating to surveillance of internet and other communications is the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 which currently makes provision for the acquisition of communications data and the authorisation of lawful interception of communications. This legislation would continue to operate in an independent Scotland at the point of independence. Any changes would be the responsibility of a future Scottish Government.

The Scottish Government will publish its detailed white paper with positive proposals on the opportunities and gains of independence in the autumn. Material on the referendum and the Scottish Government's proposals for an independent Scotland can be found at: [www.scotreferendum.com](http://www.scotreferendum.com) including published papers and speeches. This site will be regularly updated with additional material including the Scottish Government's white paper in the run up to the referendum.

**Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Scottish Green Party):** To ask the Scottish Government how many high-capacity cables taking internet traffic in and out of Scotland do so without passing through other parts of the UK.

**(S4W-16476)**

**Kenny MacAskill:** Other than those shared with the rest of the UK. Scotland has fibre optic cables running to Norway, North America via Iceland, and North America via the Faroe Islands.

**Graeme Pearson (South Scotland) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Government how often Police Scotland gathers key performance indicators (KPI) from each divisional command; what each KPI is, and how they are analysed.

**(S4W-16752)**

**Kenny MacAskill:** Police Scotland collect and analyse a range of management information. The information requested is an operational matter for Police Scotland and is not held centrally by the Scottish Government.

#### **Transport Scotland**

**Colin Keir (Edinburgh Western) (Scottish National Party):** To ask the Scottish Government what assessment Transport Scotland has made of medium and long-term traffic volumes at the M8/M9 interchange at Newbridge.

**(S4O-02351)**

**Keith Brown:** The Strategic Transport Project Review assessed the future performance of the transport network across Scotland.

In the Newbridge area we are delivering the Queensferry Crossing (including a bus lane on the M9) and the Edinburgh to Glasgow Rail Improvement Programme and work is also underway to identify the optimum deployment of managed motorway technologies on the most congested parts of the Scottish Trunk Road network, including the M8 and A720.

We are also working with local authorities to deliver further public transport improvements at the Newbridge roundabout.