

Wednesday 18 September 2013

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

Enterprise and Environment

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what discussions it has had with the UK Government to seek an alteration to EU trade agreements relating to consumption-based carbon emissions in order to align the cost of imports with their full carbon cost with the aim of incentivising local production.

(S4W-17034)

Paul Wheelhouse: The Scottish Government has not had any discussions with the UK Government regarding an alteration to EU trade agreements relating to consumption-based carbon emissions. However, the Scottish Government is aware of the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) publication, *Reducing the UK's carbon footprint and managing competitiveness risks* published in April 2013. This report concluded that border carbon adjustments were not an alternative to a global deal on reducing global emissions, but may have value as a transitional resource if a deal continues to prove elusive. The CCC indicated resource efficiency measures and sustainable consumption could help reduce the UK's carbon footprint.

Scotland is committed to working to meeting its emissions reduction targets, cut waste and use resources more efficiently. For instance, Scotland's Zero Waste Plan, including our new waste regulations, will help to reduce Scotland's global emissions footprint through greater prevention, reuse and recycling of materials whilst also reducing Scotland's reliance on the world's limited supply of primary resources. Scotland is also investing significant resources in encouraging more sustainable lifestyles through the Greener Together campaign and the Climate Challenge Fund supporting households and communities to reduce their emissions and make the transition to low carbon living.

Finance

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S4W-16190 by John Swinney on 26 July 2013, how much of the money allocated for 2012-13 each project spent.

Holding answer issued: 26 August 2013

(S4W-16538)

John Swinney: The provisional outturn figures for each project to 31 March 2013 is provided in the following table.

The main change from forecast spend was for renewable energy projects, as discussed with the Finance Committee at the 2012-13 Spring Budget Revision on 13 March 2013 and confirmed in subsequent correspondence on 3 April 2013. Much of the funding allocated for the Renewable Energy Investment Fund for 2012-13 could not be committed within that year, due to a lack of projects at the right stage for investment, and will be made available in future years instead.

Project	Projected Outturn £million
Section A: Low Carbon Investment/Renewables	
Transport Scotland: Green Bus Fund	1.8
Regeneration: Rutherglen Low Carbon Zone (RCLZ)	0.8
Highlands and Islands Enterprise: Arnish Plant and Estate Improvements	1.1
Renewable Projects	1.5
TOTAL for section A	5.2

Section B: Housing and Regeneration	
Housing: Priority investments within Local Authority Strategic Housing Investment Plans - bring forward 300 homes	15
Housing year 2012-13 only: Priority investments within Local Authority Strategic Housing Investment Plans - further 350 homes in addition to those from accelerating budget above	20
Govanhill - Empty Homes Purchase	0.5
Govanhill - Backcourt Improvements	0
Accelerated programme of developments in Riverside Inverclyde Urban Regeneration Company	2.4
Regeneration: High-growth pre-let office, Bridgeton 1,800 square meters.	0.5
TOTAL for section B	38.4

Section C: Infrastructure and Investment	
Health: Maintenance to ensure assets are safe, effective and patient centred - accelerated spend	15
Highlands and Islands Enterprise: Inverness Campus	6
Scottish Funding Council: West Highland College, Fort William – infrastructure expansion	0.2
Transport Scotland: Kennacraig, Kintyre, Phase 2 – causeway ¹	1.3
Transport Scotland: A75 Hardgrove to Kinmount	0.9
TOTAL for section C	23.4

Section D: Enterprise	
Highlands and Islands Enterprise: Forres Enterprise Park – Extension of Roads	1.4
Highlands and Islands Enterprise: Forres Enterprise Park – Provide 2 Units	0.6
Highlands and Islands Enterprise: Building Development within Forres Enterprise zone	2.7
TOTAL for section D	4.7

Section E: Investment in Tourism – our Year of Natural Scotland	
Forestry Commission Scotland - upgrade of visitor facilities at David Marshall Lodge, Aberfoyle	4.3
Rural: National Parks - visitor facility improvements within the National Parks	1.8
Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh - commence replacement of the Garden's ageing glasshouses	1.5
Forestry Commission Scotland - upgrade of visitor facilities at Queen's View Perthshire ²	0.3
TOTAL for section E	4.3

Section F: Protecting our Cultural Assets/Investing in Tourism	
Historic Scotland – Lews Castle development ³	1.4
Historic Scotland - essential maintenance of heritage assets	0.6
National Records of Scotland - Thomas Thomson House - urgent roof repairs	0.9

Section F: Protecting our Cultural Assets/Investing in Tourism	
National Library of Scotland – internal and external fabric maintenance of city centre estate (George IV Bridge and Baden Powell House) ⁴	0.2
National Galleries of Scotland – Energy saving maintenance project at the National Gallery ⁵	0.5
Creative Scotland capital grants programme for local and regional cultural projects across Scotland	1
TOTAL for section F	4.6
Total for all sections	80.6

Jackson Carlaw (West Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government how much it spent on (a) government procurement cards and (b) travel and subsistence charge cards in (i) 2010-11, (ii) 2011-12 and (iii) 2012-13.

(S4W-17059)

John Swinney: Total expenditure on government procurement cards and travel and subsistence charge cards for the financial years 2010-11, 2011-12 and 2012-13 is published on the Scottish Government web site:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/Information/expenditure/GPC>.

Governance and Communities

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what recent assessment it has made of the cost of private rented accommodation in Aberdeen.

(S4W-16976)

Margaret Burgess: I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-13021 on 5 March 2013. 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>.

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government how many people live in overcrowded dwellings in (a) Aberdeen and (b) Aberdeenshire.

(S4W-16977)

Margaret Burgess: The Scottish House Condition Survey (2009-11 combined) estimates that; around 1% of dwellings (or 1,000 households) in Aberdeen City are overcrowded, compared to, around 3% of dwellings (or 3,000 households) in Aberdeenshire. The proportion of overcrowded dwellings in Scotland as a whole is approximately 3%.

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what progress is being made in addressing the availability of affordable housing in rural areas.

(S4W-16978)

Margaret Burgess: We are investing over £970 million in affordable housing over the three year period to March 2015. The introduction last year of a three year resource planning approach to March 2015, will enable councils to exercise their strategic role more flexibly, which includes the provision of affordable housing in rural areas. We have recognised the challenges associated with developing in rural locations by providing higher subsidy levels to allow registered social landlords to develop in some of our most remote and rural areas. In addition to this we continue to work with stakeholders in the development of innovative funding partnerships and where possible will provide targeted investment to tackle the provision of affordable housing in rural areas.

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government how much it has spent on tackling child poverty in Fife in each year since 2007, broken down by parliamentary constituency, and how this compares with the rest of the country.

(S4W-17003)

Margaret Burgess: The Scottish Government takes a national approach to tackling child poverty, with action at a local level being the responsibility of the local authority. It is therefore not possible to provide figures at that level. In terms of overall government spending, I would refer the member to the following link for further information:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/17534.aspx>.

In the spring we will publish a revised child poverty strategy, building on our commitment to do all we can to maximise household incomes and improve children's wellbeing and life chances. We will work with the Ministerial Advisory Group on Child Poverty and other interested parties to ensure that the strategy describes an approach through which we can work together to tackle child poverty in Scotland. Only with access to our own resources and the ability to join up policy across devolved and reserved areas, can we make the substantial difference we need to and tackle child poverty for good.

Jackson Carlaw (West Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government how much it spent on newspapers in (a) 2010-11, (b) 2011-12 and (c) 2012-13.

(S4W-17056)

John Swinney: The Scottish Government operates a central contract for the purchase of newspapers and weekly magazines. The annual spending under this contract for the periods specified was as follows:

Year	Total spend
2010-11	£185,458.67
2011-12	£158,982.38
2012-13	£128,280.32

Jackson Carlaw (West Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government how many cars it has provided for ministerial and associated travel from (a) its car pool and (b) private car hire firms in each of the last three years and at what cost.

(S4W-17060)

John Swinney: The government car service does not hold a breakdown of the number of journeys completed by its car pool and private hire.

The following table details the combined total number of journeys completed by both the government car service car pool and private hire firms, with the associated costs for the last three years:

Year	Total number of journeys	Cost of Government car service	Cost of private hire	Total cost
2010 - 11	8,159	£ 928,957	£ 46,081	£ 974,678
2011 - 12	9,201	£ 975,130	£ 99,584	£ 1,074,714
2012 - 13	10,389	£ 1,045,252	£ 159,612	£ 1,204,864

Health and Social Care

Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government which accident and emergency units have consultant cover for at least 18 hours every day.

(S4W-16796)

Alex Neil: This information is not held centrally.

As the member will be aware work is currently being undertaken by health boards to address issues around unscheduled care.

As part of the National Unscheduled Care Improvement Programme a significant amount of work is being undertaken by boards around unscheduled care pathways to ensure access to a senior decision maker is available at all stages of the emergency care pathway.

Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government which accident and emergency units have (a) community psychiatric and (b) mental health nurses to help patients with (i) mental health problems and (ii) alcohol or drug issues.

(S4W-16797)

Alex Neil: This information is not held centrally.

Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government which accident and emergency units have social work attachments that assess access to emergency community social care.

(S4W-16798)

Alex Neil: This information is not held centrally.

As the member will be aware work is currently being undertaken by health boards to address issues around unscheduled care. Within the National Unscheduled Care Improvement Programme a significant amount of work is being undertaken by boards around unscheduled care pathways to ensure suitable assessment is available at the appropriate stage in the patient journey.

Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what recent changes there have been to the costs of indemnity for out-of-hours work levied on GPs, and what steps it is taking to ensure that this does not impact on the input of GPs in remote and rural communities.

(S4W-16799)

Alex Neil: General practices are contracted to provide general medical services by their local health board and not the Scottish Government. It is a condition of that contract that the contractor shall at all times hold adequate insurance against liability arising from negligent performance of clinical services under the contract.

GPs who work in the out of hours service are either directly employed, so will have crown indemnity via the health boards Clinical Negligence and Other Risks Indemnity Scheme arrangements, or are "sessional" i.e. GPs paid a sessional rate for the shifts that they work. This latter group of GPs will not be regarded as employed and will need to use their own indemnity cover with a Medical Defense Union (which they need for their everyday practice anyway).

Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government which accident and emergency units have specialist geriatric teams that assess patients' suitability for same-day discharge.

(S4W-16816)

Alex Neil: The information is not held centrally.

As the member will be aware work is currently being undertaken by health boards to address issues around unscheduled care.

The work of the National Unscheduled Care Improvement Programme will include a significant amount of work around unscheduled care pathways, particularly with regards to frail elderly patients to ensure suitable assessment is provided at the appropriate stage in the patient journey.

Stuart McMillan (West Scotland) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government what information it has on the impact of welfare reforms introduced on 1 April 2013 on the number of people in Scotland attending GPs.

(S4W-16841)

Alex Neil: The Scottish Government is aware that GPs are reporting that they are seeing a significant rise in requests connected to welfare reforms and appreciate the challenges facing GPs in trying to do the best for their patients while coping with a growing demand for evidence for benefits appeals.

GPs have many other competing priorities and completing paperwork in connection with benefit assessments cannot and should not be prioritised ahead of the immediate clinical needs of patients.

The Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing has recommended to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions that urgent research is undertaken on the demands that welfare benefit reform is placing on primary care.

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government when it will roll out NHS health board elections across the country and, if there are no plans to do so, whether the board in NHS (a) Fife and (b) Dumfries and Galloway will continue to be elected as set out by the Health Boards (Membership and Elections) (Scotland) Act 2009.

(S4W-16842)

Alex Neil: The Scottish Government published the independent evaluation on health board elections and alternative pilots and lodged it in the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe) on 20 December 2012. This can also be found at the following link:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/12/8580/downloads>.

This issue remains under consideration and the final position will be confirmed in due course.

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what ongoing research programmes have received funding of more than £500,000 from the Chief Scientist Office since 2009.

(S4W-16862)

Alex Neil: Research programmes are usually defined as a series of research projects linked through a single offer of grant funding. The following ongoing research programmes have received funding since 1 January 2009:-

Applied Research Programme Grant: "Living well with multiple morbidity; the development and evaluation of a primary care-based complex intervention to support patients with multiple morbidities." Value of grant £828,153.

Applied Research Programme Grant: "Data-driven improvement in primary care: integrating better quality measures and better information technology with aligned incentives and support for change." Value of grant £974,645.

Applied Research Programme Grant: "Telemetric supported self-monitoring of long-term conditions." Value of grant £986,816.

Applied Research Programme Grant: "Pharmacovigilance for children: Signal generation from linked NHS administrative data." Value of grant £987,540.

Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government how many farmers have been diagnosed with a malignant melanoma in each year since 1999, broken down by NHS board.

(S4W-16985)

Alex Neil: Data on incidence rates for cancer diagnosis is not recorded by occupation and therefore, data on melanoma among agricultural workers in Scotland is not available.

General population based statistics for skin cancer are available from the NHS Information Services Division at:

<http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Cancer/Cancer-Statistics/Skin/>

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government how many (a) diagnoses of and (b) deaths from cervical cancer there have been in each of the last five years, also broken down by NHS board.

(S4W-16992)

Alex Neil: Cervical cancer incidence and mortality data is published by ISD Scotland at: <http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Cancer/Cancer-Statistics/Female-Genital-Organ>

The number of a) new diagnoses (incidence) of and b) deaths from cervical cancer for 2007 to 2011 by NHS board are shown in Tables 1 and 2;

Table 1: The number of new diagnoses (incidence) of cervical cancer from 2007 to 2011 by NHS board:

NHS Board	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Ayrshire and Arran	23	24	27	26	21
Borders	4	8	2	7	7
Dumfries and Galloway	7	10	8	4	10
Fife	20	18	20	19	23
Forth Valley	10	20	18	15	13
Grampian	27	21	26	32	32
Greater Glasgow and Clyde	76	77	75	90	62
Highland	19	26	14	19	22
Lanarkshire	34	30	56	46	32
Lothian	51	48	53	39	59
Orkney	0	1	1	2	3
Shetland	0	2	1	2	0
Tayside	21	29	27	30	29
Western Isles	1	0	0	1	0
Scotland	293	314	328	332	313

Table 2: The number of deaths from cervical cancer from 2007 to 2011 by NHS board:

NHS Board	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Ayrshire and Arran	11	8	7	8	13
Borders	1	4	3	8	1
Dumfries and Galloway	3	3	6	5	3
Fife	10	8	11	9	5
Forth Valley	5	3	2	2	8
Grampian	11	3	9	5	5
Greater Glasgow and Clyde	19	27	26	20	22
Highland	9	8	7	4	13
Lanarkshire	20	9	9	18	14
Lothian	9	18	19	13	15

NHS Board	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Orkney	0	0	1	0	0
Shetland	0	0	1	0	0
Tayside	7	11	6	7	9
Western Isles	0	0	0	0	0
Scotland	105	102	107	99	108

Cervical cancer (cancer of the cervix uteri) is defined as C53 in the International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Edition.

Deaths data are provided by year of death registration.

Deaths data are provided by the National Records for Scotland (NRS).

Source: ISD Scotland

Learning and Justice

Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether local authorities are required to ensure the provision of appropriate advocacy for looked-after children when discussing their ongoing care.

(S4W-16794)

Aileen Campbell: There is no legal requirement on local authorities to ensure the provision of advocacy for all looked after children. However, as corporate parents, local authorities should ensure that looked after children, young people and care leavers are able to have their say and their views acted on wherever possible.

The Getting it right for every child approach to improving wellbeing of all children and young people recognises the central importance of involving them in decisions which affect their lives. It also recognises that sometimes children and young people will require support if their views and opinions are to be shared, including through the provision of advocacy. Work is on-going to implement Getting it right for every child in every local authority across Scotland and we have been consulting on principles and standards which should apply whenever children require advocacy support.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to increase the levels of prospective adopters; what funding it has provided to (a) charitable and (b) independent adoption providers in each year since 2008-09, broken down by organisation, and what the eligibility criteria were.

(S4W-16817)

Aileen Campbell: The Scottish Government has been working with all key organisations in the sector including local authorities, voluntary adoption agencies and other adoption services providers to improve the adoption services in Scotland and extend the reach of voluntary adoption agencies and their capacity to meet demand including the establishment of the National Adoption Register.

We have provided funding to BAAF in Scotland, Birthlink and Adoption UK in Scotland, all of which have a charitable status, under the Unified Voluntary Sector Fund (UVSF) from 2008-09 to 2012-13. The amounts of funding and the assessment criteria for UVSF are listed in the following table:

Organisation	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14*
Adoption UK	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000	£2,500
Birthlink	£45,292	£45,292	£45,292	£45,292	£45,292	£3,774.33
BAAF	£71,080	£71,080	£71,080	£71,080	£71,080	£5,923.33

* transitional funding for April 2013 only

Following a review of UVSF, a new funding mechanism was created under the Third Sector Early Intervention Fund (TSEIF) and Strategic Funding Partnership Funding (SFPF). The assessment criteria for these funds are listed in the following tables.

The following funding has been awarded to Adoption UK under TSEIF:

Organisation	2013-14	2014-15
Adoption UK	£44,558.50	£44,558.50

The following funding has been awarded to Birthlink and BAAF under SFPP:

Organisation	2013-14	2014-15
Birthlink	£55,000	£55,000
BAAF	£107,500	£107,500

In addition, the Scottish Government has provided the following grant funding to BAAF in Scotland to operate the National Adoption Register:

Organisation	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
BAAF	£114,218.70	£104,984.20	£100,500

The Scottish Government have also provided grant funding of £10,000 in 2012-13 and £75,000 in 2013-14 to St Andrew's Children Society to expand their adoption services in the North East of Scotland and recruit more prospective adopters in this part of Scotland.

The previously ring-fenced funding for adoption for local authorities that amounted to £2 million was rolled-up into the overall local government finance settlement with effect from 2008-09. From 1 April 2008 there is no longer a separate allocation of funding for adoption but the funding remains within the overall block grant. It is the responsibility of each local authority to allocate the total financial resources available to it on the basis of local needs and priorities having first fulfilled its statutory obligations and the jointly agreed set of national and local priorities including the Scottish Government's key strategic objectives.

The list of detailed eligibility criteria will be sent to the member directly and a copy will be placed in the Scottish Parliament library.

Transport Scotland

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government how much money has been allocated for the (a) maintenance and (b) upgrade of trunk roads in each year since 2007, also broken down by road.

(S4W-16788)

Keith Brown: A copy of a table showing how much money has been spent on the maintenance and upgrade of trunk roads in each complete financial year since 2007, listed by road, has been placed in SPICe, BIB number 55187.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Independent): To ask the Scottish Government whether the proposed improvements to the Highland Main Line will include restoration of the double-track section between Culloden Viaduct and Daviot.

(S4W-16836)

Keith Brown: Network Rail are currently carrying out timetable development work for phase two of the Highland Main Line Improvements project which will help to identify where infrastructure interventions are required. They are expected to deliver a report on the options for this phase of the project by the end of this year.

Phase two of the project will be delivered from 2014 to 2019. Phase one has been completed delivering two extra trains each way per day from December 2011 and journey time improvements of up to 18 minutes on some services as part of the December 2012 timetable.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Independent): To ask the Scottish Government whether the Edinburgh Glasgow Improvement Programme timetable will ensure that fast paths are incorporated for services between Inverness and Edinburgh and Glasgow and that these will be compatible with the new timetable for services north of Perth.

(S4W-16837)

Keith Brown: The Edinburgh Glasgow Improvement Programme timetable is currently under development and will take account of Central Belt and Highland Main Line services including the Inverness to Edinburgh and Glasgow train paths. The timetable development currently underway by the rail industry recognises the importance of delivering fast paths for both routes.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Independent): To ask the Scottish Government whether the timetables for rail services between the north of Perth and Edinburgh and Glasgow will be co-ordinated to optimise journey times.

(S4W-16838)

Keith Brown: Network Rail are currently working on timetable development for phase 2 of the Highland Main Line project which will help to determine where infrastructure interventions are necessary to support an hourly service and achieve the required average journey time reduction of around 10 minutes in both directions between Inverness and Edinburgh/Glasgow (measured against the timetable in place in June 2012 or any improvements introduced between then and 31 March 2014). They are expected to deliver a pre-feasibility report on options later this year.

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government when CalMac Ferries Limited's winter 2013 timetable will be published.

(S4W-16944)

Keith Brown: CalMac Ferries Limited's winter timetable for the period 20 October 2013 to 3 April 2014 is available on CalMac's website at the following link:
<http://www.calmac.co.uk/timetables/calmac-winter-timetables.htm>

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what proposals it has received from CalMac Ferries Limited for a two-day-per-week ferry service between Lochboisdale and Mallaig.

(S4W-16945)

Keith Brown: No formal proposals have been received from CalMac Ferries Limited for a two-day-per-week ferry service between Lochboisdale and Mallaig.

Discussions have however taken place in relation to the implementation of the Scottish Ferry Services Ferries Plan, including our commitment to further consider the case for a Mallaig to Lochboisdale service.

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government who the members of the expert ferry group will be.

(S4W-16947)

Keith Brown: Members of the group will be Professor Alf Baird; Michael Craigie, Zetrans; Professor Iain Docherty; Brian Fulton, CalMac; Professor Neil Kay; Gordon MacIannan, SPT; Roy Peterson; Guy Platten, Caledonian Maritime Assets Limited; Ranaid Robertson, HITRANS and Gordon Ross, Western Ferries.

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether the expert ferry group will advise on the provision of new ferry routes.

(S4W-16949)

Keith Brown: The overarching purpose of the expert ferry group includes, when requested, providing Scottish Ministers with considered advice about key ferries related issues in Scotland. It will therefore be for Scottish Ministers to request any advice required. The expert ferry group will also be able to provide advice to ministers on the requirement for wider consultation on any particular issue.

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government who the expert ferry group will meet and when.

(S4W-16950)

Keith Brown: The expert ferry group is due to meet for the first time on 29 October 2013 and will meet with the Minister for Transport and Veterans.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Independent): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on whether accelerating the upgrade of the A9 will lead to a shift from rail to road.

(S4W-16987)

Keith Brown: The *Strategic Transport Projects Review* formed a multi-modal appraisal of the Perth to Inverness corridor and concluded that both road and rail interventions should be taken forward. Our ambitious plans to dual the A9 between Perth and Inverness and upgrade the Highland Mainline by 2025, will help achieve this government's purpose of sustainable economic growth.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Independent): To ask the Scottish Government whether the comment made by the First Minister on 5 August 2008 that "railways must at least compete with the roads" reflects current government policy.

(S4W-16988)

Keith Brown: An efficient and sustainable transport system is one of the key enablers for delivering the government's purpose of increasing sustainable economic growth in a low carbon economy. Since 2007 this government has invested over £2.6 billion in the trunk road network and over £4 billion in rail and a number of vital projects are planned or in construction which will bring a range of benefits to our economy.

In this context, the recommended interventions within the *Strategic Transport Projects Review* have assisted ministers in developing the Infrastructure Investment Plan which will help towards creating a more successful country through increasing sustainable economic growth and making a significant contribution to the National Transport Strategy. These interventions include fourteen relating to rail and eight relating to roads.

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Independent): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will be a condition of the next rail franchise for the operator to improve rolling stock and, if so, what impact it expects this to have on journey times.

(S4W-16989)

Keith Brown: The selection criteria for the next ScotRail franchisee, creates an incentive for journey time improvements across the Scottish Rail network.

The selection criteria will also encourage improvements to rolling stock quality and journey time on the Scottish inter-city routes from the Central Belt to Inverness and to Aberdeen.

The next ScotRail franchisee is required to procure new electric rolling stock for the electrified Edinburgh to Glasgow route which must be capable of reducing the journey time for the fastest journey to 42 minutes. The Caledonian Sleeper franchisee must introduce significantly improved rolling stock.

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether the traffic lights at the Longman roundabout in Inverness are permanent and, if not, when they will be removed.

(S4W-17018)

Keith Brown: The traffic lights installed at Longman roundabout to improve traffic flows at peak times are permanent and there are no plans to remove them.

The following questions received holding answers:

S4W-16783

S4W-16785

S4W-16787