

Wednesday 4 December 2013

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

Enterprise and Environment

Hugh Henry (Renfrewshire South) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what guarantees it can give that the cost of postal services to and from a Scotland separated from the rest of the UK will not have an adverse impact on rural development.

(S4O-2666)

Richard Lochhead: Given the threat to postal services is a result of being under Westminster control, as we have set out in the white paper, this Scottish Government plans to bring the Royal Mail back into public ownership in an independent Scotland. With independence, the regulation of mail in Scotland will give the Scottish Parliament powers to address the way the market functions and deliver fair prices for Scotland, including rural communities and businesses. We will also maintain the inherited level of the universal service obligation, which is of vital importance to rural communities. We have already shown that we are committed to delivering a fair service to our rural areas through launching a statement of principles for parcel deliveries last week, which followed on two successful summits about the issues.

Jim Hume (South Scotland) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government what information it has on the other forms of income that crofters have, broken down by age group.

(S4W-18455)

Paul Wheelhouse: The income of individual crofters will vary widely between crofters and may derive from a number of diverse sources. The Scottish Government does not collect details of private income.

However, the Scottish Government does hold information in relation to direct payments made under the Common Agricultural Policy. The most recent analysis undertaken in 2011 indicated that 8,100 of businesses operating agricultural holdings wholly located within the crofting counties (both crofts and non-crofts) received £116 million in single farm payments during that year. This averaged around £14,450 per business operating agricultural holdings in that area.

In addition to single farm payments, figures from 2012 indicate that some £33.4 million of Scottish rural development programme support was provided within the crofting counties. Amongst other things, this was spent on agri-environment measures, forestry, and other business developments.

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Scottish Green Party): To ask the Scottish Government what information it holds (a) on the health of mountain hare populations and (b) that is relevant to assessing whether mountain hare are in a favourable conservation status.

(S4W-18470)

Paul Wheelhouse: The National Gamebag Census data for mountain hare compiled by the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust shows no significant trend in the data between 1961 and 2009, despite marked cyclical fluctuations which are known to exist in around half of mountain hare populations.

A questionnaire survey commissioned by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) in 2006-07 (SNH Commissioned Report 278) concluded that there was no evidence of an overall change in the distribution of mountain hares when compared to a similar study in mid 1990s. However, there may have been localised declines and possibly extinctions, undetectable at the 10km scale at which the data were collected and analysed.

The findings of this report provide SNH with an impression of the overall range of the species and some information on the numbers controlled, but SNH need more detailed information on hare abundance before it can be in a position to make a reliable assessment of the impact that culling is having on the population as a whole. To this end, SNH commissioned a study in 2008 into developing improved monitoring methods (Commissioned Report 444), but unfortunately, due to two severe

winters hampering the fieldwork, the results did not provide SNH with the statistical relationship needed to progress this work. SNH therefore propose to develop a further programme of research, with the intention to commencing further fieldwork later in 2014. The exact detail of this work programme is still to be agreed.

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Scottish Green Party): To ask the Scottish Government what conservation action is planned to protect mountain hare populations.

(S4W-18471)

Paul Wheelhouse: In order to properly inform licence applications and to have a better understanding of the effects of culling on hare populations, a cost-effective and easily-applied method of reliably estimating hare numbers is required. This is the immediate priority and, once developed, will enable better monitoring schemes to be developed, and provision of information on population status will be improved also. Such data would then be used to inform future management decisions concerning the species, as necessary.

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Scottish Green Party): To ask the Scottish Government how it controls the culling of mountain hare.

(S4W-18474)

Paul Wheelhouse: Mountain hare are protected by a close season during which no culling can be carried out by any method except under licence granted by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). Mountain hare are also covered by Regulation 41 of The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 which prohibits the use of certain methods of taking or killing wild animals, including the use of traps which are non-selective according to their principle or their condition of use. The use of such traps can be licensed by SNH. The use of such traps is not permissible under the terms of a general licence but can be licenced by SNH.

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether the Scottish Environment Protection Agency plans to (a) collect and (b) publish data on (i) salmon mortalities and (ii) sea lice infestations at salmon farms.

(S4W-18521)

Paul Wheelhouse: The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) collects and publishes data on mortalities as part of the agency's contribution to the Scotland's Aquaculture Database <http://aquaculture.scotland.gov.uk>. This web-based resource provides detailed information on fish farms from datasets held by Marine Scotland, the Food Standards Agency (Scotland), The Crown Estate as well as SEPA.

SEPA collects such mortality data to assist in fulfilling duties under the Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011. SEPA places limits on the maximum biomass of fish that can be held at marine cage fish farms to ensure that polluting potential does not exceed the environmental capacity. Data on fish mortality is useful in gauging compliance with licences issued under the regulations.

SEPA does not collect or publish data on sea louse infestations at salmon farms. This issue relates to fish health and as such is, instead, handled by Marine Scotland's Fish Health Inspectorate.

Governance and Communities

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Scottish Green Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether it considers the use of "letters of comfort" by local planning authorities to be appropriate where they allow the continued operation of an opencast coal mine where it has become apparent that environmental restoration, required as mitigation in the environmental impact assessment at the time of consent, will no longer be delivered, and what the reason is for its position on this matter.

(S4W-18480)

Derek Mackay: The Scottish Government expects planning authorities to ensure that mitigation measures required by a planning permission are implemented.

A planning authority may routinely discuss with operators, licensees, landowners and regulators the recommencement of opencast coal operations to facilitate restoration, requiring written confirmation of the planning authority's position on certain matters.

Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Scottish Green Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether the cost of infraction proceedings would fall to a local planning authority where these were the result of a failure to adequately implement planning controls, and what the reason is for its position on this matter.

(S4W-18481)

Derek Mackay: The UK Government is responsible for responding to infringement proceedings for a breach of EU law by any public authority in the UK and for paying any financial penalties imposed in that respect. Where proceedings relate to a devolved matter, the financial penalties may be passed on to the Scottish Government under the Concordat on Co-ordination of EU Policy.

Part 2 of the Localism Act 2011 enables a Minister of the Crown to make an order to require a public authority to make payments towards a financial penalty imposed by the Court of Justice of the European Union through the making of an order designating the authority as being responsible in respect of that particular breach. No such order has yet been made in respect of a Scottish local authority.

To date, the Court of Justice of the European Union has not imposed any financial penalty against the United Kingdom under the Treaty of the European Union.

Health and Social Care

Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether it expects local authorities to consult stakeholders when developing local autism strategies; when the strategies will be (a) finalised and (b) implemented; whether they should cover (i) children's, (ii) adult and (iii) older people's services, and whether they will be placed in the public domain.

(S4W-18527)

Michael Matheson: The Scottish Government expects local authorities to consult fully with stakeholders in the development of local autism strategies and action plans. Local authorities have been asked to submit their local action plans to the Scottish Government by the end of November 2013 and implemented thereafter.

The Scottish Strategy for Autism is aimed at the whole life journey and to improving access to integrated service provision across the whole lifespan to address the multi-dimensional aspects of autism, and local autism strategies should reflect this, taking account of local needs.

The Scottish Government will publish all local authority strategies and action plans on the Scottish Strategy for Autism website www.autismstrategyscotland.org.uk

Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government what options are available to stakeholders if a local authority fails to develop a local autism strategy that covers (a) children's, (b) adult or (c) older people's services.

(S4W-18531)

Michael Matheson: The joint Scottish Government-COSLA Scottish Autism Strategy focuses on the whole life journey and so local authorities will want to consider where there may be gaps in local services across this journey and focus their strategy appropriately.

Recognising that it is often not possible to satisfy all stakeholders, there are systems in place locally to deal with any concerns, both informally through discussion with officers and/or more formally through elected representatives.

Individuals may challenge their local politicians regarding policy direction. In terms of implementation, services are covered by local authority complaints procedures and issues can be escalated to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman if a satisfactory solution has not been reached.

Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government how local authorities are to account for their use of the funding awarded to them to develop local autism strategies.

(S4W-18532)

Michael Matheson: Funding of £1.2 million has been allocated to local authorities for the development of local autism strategies and associated action plans which will be published on the Scottish Autism Strategy website.

Learning and Justice

Stuart McMillan (West Scotland) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government when it last met representatives of the Prison Officers' Association.

(S4O-2675)

Kenny MacAskill: I last had the pleasure of meeting with the representatives of the Prison Officers' Association (Scotland) when I addressed their annual conference at the MacDonald Cardrona Hotel, Peebles on 31 October 2013.

Jayne Baxter (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government how it works with Police Scotland to ensure that police officers in Fife are deployed in frontline positions in the community and not elsewhere.

(S4O-2676)

Kenny MacAskill: The deployment of police officers is an operational matter for Police Scotland, however the Scottish Government is fully committed to maintaining a visible police presence through our manifesto commitment to keep 1,000 extra police officers on the beat.

The chief constable has also publicly stated his commitment to a visible police presence and this was reiterated at the Justice Committee on 29 October 2013 where chief constable Sir Stephen House stated, 'we want police officers out on the streets and responding operationally to the public'. Right now in Scotland we have 17,313 police officers active under the command of the Chief Constable of Scotland.

The new model of policing in Scotland was commended last week by Lord Stevens in his report on policing in England and Wales. He said that policing in Scotland has become 'both more national and more local at the same time', with local policing responding to local priorities whilst at the same time having access to national specialist resources when required.

Mary Scanlon (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what information it has on how many pupils have studied for highers online in each of the last five years.

Holding answer issued: 27 November 2013

(S4W-18318)

Michael Russell: This information is not held centrally.

Heriot-Watt University provides interactive online learning resources for Scottish Qualifications Authority courses to Scottish secondary schools through the SCHOLAR programme. Currently, SCHOLAR offer provision at higher and advanced higher level covering science, technology, engineering and maths subjects, business subjects and languages, with Intermediate 2 resources for maths and mandarin. Each of the 32 local authorities in Scotland has now signed three year contracts with SCHOLAR from August 2013.

As announced by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning on 25 September 2013, the Scottish Government is funding the enhancement of SCHOLAR materials, in line with Curriculum for Excellence.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what safeguards are in place to ensure that the so-called independence packs compiled by Education Scotland will not lead to the politicisation of the classroom.

Holding answer issued: 27 November 2013

(S4W-18334)

Michael Russell: Education Scotland is not producing packs on the referendum to be sent to schools. Education Scotland is producing resources to assist practitioners in the teaching of political literacy. Learning about political literacy is an entitlement for children and young people. Curriculum for Excellence briefing paper 14 explains that successful learners should be able to make reasoned evaluations. Confident individuals need to develop and communicate their own beliefs and views of the world. Responsible citizens should be able to make informed choices and decisions, whilst effective contributors will apply critical thinking in new contexts.

The briefing paper describes a number of activities which would support the teaching of political literacy, including discussions and debates. Examples of good practice in these and other areas are available on the political literacy section of the Education Scotland website to support practitioners in their delivery.

Linda Fabiani (East Kilbride) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government how many people have sought protection each year under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, broken down by (a) age and (b) gender, and what proportion of cases have led to the court (i) awarding damages, (ii) granting an interdict or interim interdict and (iii) issuing a non-harassment order.

Holding answer issued: 3 December 2013

(S4W-18425)

Roseanna Cunningham: The available information is given in the following table.

Cases initiated and disposed for Non-harassment Orders - Protection from Harassment Act 1997 s8:

Financial Year	Initiated	Disposed	Granted
2011-12	13	4	2
2010-11	3	1	0
2009-10	4	3	3
2008-09	4	8	3

This data relates to non-harassment orders raised in the civil courts under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 s8. This act was amended by the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2011 which came into effect in July 2011. It is possible that this has led to the rise in the number of non-harassment orders initiated in 2011-12.

These statistics relate to the "principal crave" only. An individual case can involve a number of different case types. The case type which is listed first on the writ/summons is normally known as the "principal crave". More information about this, and other explanations about the data, can be found in sections 11-13 of the latest publication, which can be accessed at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/12/9263>.

The number of ordinary and summary cause cases disposed of may be an underestimate. In addition, around a fifth of ordinary cause cases are sisted (suspended).

Cases may be initiated and disposed in different years, so the statistics for initiated and disposed for a particular year do not necessarily represent the same cases. Data prior to 2008-09 is not available. The data in the table above relate to the number cases and may not necessarily equal the number of people seeking an order.

Information on the age or sex of the people involved is not held centrally. The data held on damages and interdicts does not specifically identify cases relating to protection from harassment.

Strategy and External Affairs

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what plans it has to announce in the spring budget revision an increase in its planned expenditure for the independence referendum.

Holding answer issued: 19 November 2013

(S4W-18087)

John Swinney: The total cost is estimated to be around £13.7 million with £800,000 of that being spent this year, and the rest spent in 2014-15. There has been no change to the cost of the referendum.

The financial memorandum which was published alongside the Scottish Independence Referendum Bill showed that the cost of delivering the referendum would be around £13.3 million. Costs incurred under the Scottish Independence Referendum (Franchise) Act 2013 are likely to be around £440,000.

The £800,000 estimated to be spent in 2013-14 will fund preparatory costs for the referendum, including costs incurred under the Scottish Independence Referendum (Franchise) Act 2013 to ensure that 16 and 17 year olds will be able to register to vote in the referendum, early expenditure by the chief counting officer that will not be covered by the Fees and Charges Order, and preparatory work by the Electoral Commission on public awareness. The remaining expenditure will fall in 2014-15, and will cover the cost of running and regulating the referendum.

There are no plans for any further adjustment in the spring budget revision. The adjustment in the autumn budget revision provides all the necessary funding for 2013-14.

The summary of proposed changes on page 68 of the autumn budget revision supporting document adopts the standard wording for a budget transfer of below £1 million. *The Budget Analysis* on page 68 details the budget lines within the Parliamentary Business and Government Strategy programme and is transparent in detailing the £800,000 deployment to the Referendum on Scottish Independence budget line.

The Scottish budget will benefit from additional loan interest payments from Scottish Water over and above interest receipts set out in the 2013-14 Budget Act. The autumn budget revision provides for £800,000 of this additional income to be transferred to fund referendum costs. Investment funding provided to Scottish Water from the Scottish Government is unaffected. Budget transfers of this nature are an integral part of the budget revision process and support robust financial management to enable the Scottish Government to maximise the available budget.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government on what items the £800,000 expenditure for the independence referendum, as set out in its 2013-14 autumn budget revision, will be spent.

(S4W-18088)

John Swinney: I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-18087 on 4 December 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>.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government how much of the £800,000 expenditure for the independence referendum, as set out in its 2013-14 autumn budget revision, (a) has been spent and (b) it is contractually committed to spend.

(S4W-18089)

John Swinney: I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-18087 on 4 December 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>.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government for what reason the £800,000 expenditure for the independence referendum, as set out in its 2013-14 autumn budget revision, is not shown in the summary of proposed changes at page 68 of the document.

(S4W-18090)

John Swinney: I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-18087 on 4 December 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>.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government how much of the £800,000 expenditure for the independence referendum, as set out in its 2013-14 autumn budget revision, is being financed through a transfer of funds from Scottish Water.

(S4W-18091)

John Swinney: I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-18087 on 4 December 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>.

Clare Adamson (Central Scotland) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government what information it can provide regarding the Minister for External Affairs and International Development's recent visit to India and Pakistan.

(S4W-18684)

Humza Yousaf: I travelled to Delhi and Mumbai from 11-16 October 2013, where I undertook an intensive programme of meetings and engagements to strengthen business, education, cultural, tourism and government ties with India.

Key engagements included welcoming the Queen's baton to India on the first leg of its journey round the Commonwealth and hosting a business roundtable with key Indian investors to discuss opportunities for future partnerships between India and Scotland.

Significant business announcements included: an agreement between Scottish technology company Dryden Aqua and Indian firm SVS Aqua to help improve the supply of clean drinking water in arsenic-affected water-stressed regions in India; the construction of a new £6.5 million whisky distillery in Glenrothes, creating 15 jobs and generating a predicted £3.6 million in new exports to India, Africa and the Far East, in a partnership between Indian beverages group Kyndal and John Fergus and Co Ltd; and a distribution agreement between Perthshire-based company this-tel and Indian-based IT company Crane Global Solutions Ltd for its digital pen and associated e-health technology that will initially be sold into the Indian healthcare sector following a successful trial in a cancer hospital in Hyderabad and is expected to generate £4.6 million in exports.

I also undertook a number of media interviews with the leading business and financial newspapers in India in both cities which led to extensive coverage of my visit and helped position Scotland as a business destination for both trade as well as investment.

Building on solid collaboration between India and Scotland in education, I hosted a reception for Indian alumni of Scottish Universities to encourage them to become advocates for Scotland. I also attended a British Council-UKIERI showcase of 42 partnerships between Scotland and Indian educational institutes and witnessed the signing of an agreement between Coatbridge College and the Indian Healthcare Sector Skills Council which will introduce formal regulation of dental nursing to India, alongside National Occupational Standards.

Building Scotland's bi-lateral relationship with the India Government, I held meetings with the equivalent of Permanent Secretaries of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy and the Ministry of Human Resource Development (Education).

Encouraging Indian tourists to visit Scotland, I attended a graduation ceremony for Indian travel agents who had completed Visit Scotland's 'Scotsagent programme'.

Cementing Scotland and India's burgeoning cultural relationship, I announced the line-up of talented Indian musicians who will perform at next year's Celtic Connections. I also highlighted Scotland's influence on the unique restoration of a UNESCO world heritage site during a visit to the Nizamuddin urban renewal initiative in Delhi.

I visited Lahore in Pakistan from 17 to 18 October 2013, the first Scottish Government Ministerial visit to Pakistan. The strategic aim of the visit was to highlight the links between Scotland and Pakistan and to develop a closer bilateral relationship.

I undertook a number of political meetings including with Punjab Chief Minister Sharif, Punjab Governor Sarwar and the Speaker of the Punjab Assembly, to discuss how Scotland and Pakistan can work together to increase links especially in the energy and education sectors.

I attended a ceremony marking the arrival of the Queen's Baton Relay in Pakistan, providing an opportunity to highlight the 2014 Commonwealth Games and the existing links between our two countries. This event was well attended and received wide media coverage.

I met with a delegation from the Christian community to hear first-hand the issues the Christian community is facing in Pakistan and to offer our support to them, in line with work I have been undertaking in Scotland to bring communities together.

In support of our South Asia development programme, I hosted a roundtable with the 6 Scottish charities working in Pakistan. Scottish Government funding of £1,872,989 over the next three years will support projects aiming to improve maternal and new-born health, reduce poverty by increasing income and improving food security, empower women and strengthen climate resilience as well as support sustainable agriculture and livelihood initiatives for vulnerable farmers.

I announced funding of £250,000 to Christian Engineers to promote a project in the Thar Desert to promote clean water and fresh vegetables to communities in the area. I also announced £300,000 for a two year scholarship programme, inspired by Malala Yousafzai's story, for disadvantaged young Pakistani women to go to university.

Building on existing links, I attended a business dinner hosted by Governor Sarwar, with guests including representatives from the education, energy and agricultural sectors. A number of visiting Scottish business people also attended.

I met with Mr Rana Mashood Ahmed Khan, Minister for School Education in the Government of Punjab, and we discussed their plans for a Knowledge Park in Lahore and for other areas of potential collaboration in the agricultural, tourism and sport sectors. We agreed that there could be opportunities for collaboration between Scotland and Pakistan.

This was an important first visit in building our bi-lateral relationship with Pakistan. There is huge potential in a number of areas to build on. The Scottish Government will work with a range of Scottish and Pakistani organisations to identify the key areas in which we can build trade between both countries.