



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT

Tuesday 26 March 2013

Session 4

© Parliamentary copyright. Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body

Information on the Scottish Parliament's copyright policy can be found on the website - www.scottish.parliament.uk or by contacting Public Information on 0131 348 5000

Tuesday 26 March 2013

CONTENTS

	Col.
TIME FOR REFLECTION	18199
TOPICAL QUESTION TIME	18201
Severe Weather.....	18201
College Waiting Lists (Audit)	18205
FORTH ROAD BRIDGE BILL: STAGE 1	18210
<i>Motion moved—[Keith Brown].</i>	
The Minister for Transport and Veterans (Keith Brown).....	18210
Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP).....	18214
Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)	18216
Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con)	18219
Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP).....	18221
David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab).....	18222
Colin Keir (Edinburgh Western) (SNP)	18224
Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP).....	18225
Helen Eadie (Cowdenbeath) (Lab).....	18227
David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)	18229
Alex Johnstone	18230
Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab).....	18232
Keith Brown	18234
“LOW CARBON SCOTLAND: MEETING OUR EMISSIONS REDUCTION TARGETS 2013-2027”	18238
<i>Motion moved—[Rob Gibson].</i>	
Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP).....	18238
Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con).....	18240
Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP).....	18243
Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP)	18245
The Minister for Environment and Climate Change (Paul Wheelhouse).....	18247
Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)	18251
Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con).....	18254
Richard Lyle (Central Scotland) (SNP).....	18257
Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab).....	18259
Nigel Don (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP)	18261
Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab).....	18262
Marco Biagi (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)	18264
Jim Hume (South Scotland) (LD).....	18266
Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)	18268
Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab)	18270
Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)	18273
Jayne Baxter (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab).....	18275
Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP)	18277
Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green).....	18279
Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con)	18281
Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab)	18283
Paul Wheelhouse.....	18286
Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP)	18291
POINT OF ORDER	18293
DECISION TIME	18294
KURDISH CONTRIBUTION TO SCOTLAND	18295
<i>Motion debated—[Bob Doris].</i>	
Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP).....	18295
Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab)	18297
Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)	18299
John Lamont (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)	18301
Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab)	18302
The Minister for External Affairs and International Development (Humza Yousaf).....	18304

Scottish Parliament

Tuesday 26 March 2013

[The Presiding Officer *opened the meeting at 14:00*]

Time for Reflection

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Good afternoon. The first item of business is time for reflection. Our time for reflection leader today is Nila Joshi, who is from Edinburgh women's interfaith group and a former director of the Edinburgh Mela.

Nila Joshi (Edinburgh Women's Interfaith Group and Former Director of the Edinburgh Mela): Presiding Officer, members of the Scottish Parliament, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Nila Joshi and I came to Scotland in 1976 as a young bride. Coming from a Hindu cultural and religious background, I found it very difficult to adjust to a new environment—especially the Scottish weather, such as we can see outside today. However, adjusting to a new environment, I made Scotland my home.

When I came to Scotland, I brought lots of wealth with me, such as culture, religion, belief, customs, languages, spices and traditions. Hindu culture is a culture of love, respect, honouring others and humbleness. Hindu culture promotes peace and harmony in diversity. Being a part of such a culture makes me proud to be an Indian.

I was employed by the City of Edinburgh Council, after two years' research in 1990, to set up an ethnic library section. My fluency in many languages and my friendly approach helped me to make the library more than just a library. Members of the community could come to the library as a hub for all sorts of information and advice.

Being a resident of Edinburgh for the past 37 years has given me opportunities to be part of, and to work with, a variety of different cultures and communities within and around Edinburgh. My biggest contribution to the community in Edinburgh has been as director of the Edinburgh Mela, which is the annual three-day multicultural festival that runs in the Leith area.

As a member of the Hindu community in the Lothians, I have been able to make a valuable contribution as part of the Edinburgh Hindu Mandir and Cultural Centre. The celebration of festivals gives me the opportunity both to encourage the community to celebrate and be involved in the community and to educate community members of the importance of celebrating festivals.

In the Hindu calendar we have many festivals, but the most important festival is Diwali or festival of lights. On 26 March, Hindus all over the world celebrate the festival of colours. This joyful new beginning is celebrated on the last full moon day of Phalgun and is the most colourful festival in India. It is also called the festival of Holi or the spring festival.

I am also able to dedicate my time to voluntary work and was nominated for a hidden heroine award, or "Elsie", for my unique contribution to families and the community. I was the first Asian woman to receive the award, which was an honour for me.

Finally, I would like to thank the Scottish Parliament's Presiding Officer for her kind invitation to lead time for reflection. Thank you all for listening. Om shanti—may peace be upon you all.

Topical Question Time

14:04

Severe Weather

1. Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to assist people without power in Arran, Kintyre and elsewhere following the recent severe weather. (S4T-00296)

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The minister has advised that his first answer will be a bit long, but that his subsequent answers will be short.

The Minister for Transport and Veterans (Keith Brown): Throughout last week, the Scottish Government was on alert due to the risk of severe weather. As the forecast deteriorated on Friday, we fully activated our resilience arrangements and held our first emergency meeting with partners that afternoon. Those arrangements were maintained throughout the weekend, with two meetings each day on Saturday and Sunday, and are still in place, with meetings yesterday and today. Multi-agency response team—MART—partners were activated 24 hours a day from midnight on Thursday, with mutual aid working well across the roads and utilities sectors. The MART partners continue to work with the local authority and utility partners to support the restoration of services on Arran and the Kintyre peninsula.

Our priority has been to support the front-line agencies in their efforts to maintain communication links, to restore critical services and to provide support to vulnerable people affected by the unseasonable conditions. Having chaired resilience meetings over the weekend and having seen the extent of the challenges faced on Arran when I visited the island yesterday, I would like to pay tribute to the staff in local government, the national health service, the emergency services, Transport Scotland and the utility providers who have worked incredibly hard to restore infrastructure and reopen transport links. I would also like to highlight the work of volunteers and staff in search and rescue agencies, four-by-four volunteers and especially those ordinary people in the worst-affected communities who have got out and about to help neighbours.

Although extensive progress has been made, the people of Kintyre and Arran remain at the forefront of our minds. As a result, the Deputy First Minister is visiting Kintyre today to offer our support to the staff, volunteers and residents working to bring normality back to the peninsula. I chaired the latest resilience meeting around an

hour ago and can report that all power has now been restored to properties in Dumfries and Galloway. I was also informed by Scottish and Southern Energy, which paid tribute to the partnership working, support and co-ordination that it has had from councils, transport organisations and emergency services, that it is confident of having power restored to all customers in Arran, Kintyre and Islay by the end of Thursday, providing no further significant damage to the network is found. At present, there are 2,700 properties without power, which should reduce to fewer than 2,000 tonight.

All those efforts come at a very real cost, both physical and financial. In recognition of that, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth has been in discussion with Argyll and Bute, North Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway councils, and the Bellwin scheme has been triggered. Meantime, we will of course not rest until services have been fully restored to all those affected.

Kenneth Gibson: I thank the minister for his comprehensive reply. I understand that SSE has 170 engineers working on Arran and has brought in seven mobile food outlets and 30 generators to restore power, and that the police, the fire service, CalMac and others have been working day and night to help the people of the island of Arran, which is in my constituency. Of course, what the island will need ultimately is a permanent upgrade of its electrical infrastructure. When is the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets likely to agree to the provision of new electrical infrastructure for the island?

Keith Brown: Business plans for infrastructure investment are of course a matter for Scottish and Southern Energy Power Distribution, which owns and operates the network on Arran and the Kintyre peninsula within the regulatory framework that Ofgem sets. Around £6 million of investment for a range of maintenance and refurbishment activities in the Argyll area is already planned for 2013, which will underpin supplies to Arran as well as the SSEPD network. SSEPD is also developing business plans for its electricity distribution networks for the next price control period, which is from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2023. The Government encourages SSE and Ofgem to consider whether appropriate infrastructure investment in the near future and in the next price control period can further improve the resilience of electricity supply for the communities affected.

Kenneth Gibson: Given the minister's visit yesterday, does he agree that what has been happening in the difficult circumstances of the power outage on Arran has shown the high level of community spirit and resilience of the island's communities, particularly the hard-working

volunteers whom he mentioned, who have put in sometimes 18 hours-plus a day to help their fellow islanders keep warm, to deliver food, to clear snow and to aid communications?

Keith Brown: As Kenneth Gibson will know from my visit, because he was also there yesterday, it certainly brought home to me the incredible community spirit that we have on the island. For its part, the Scottish Government has invested considerable effort in supporting community resilience work across Scotland. Cases like this show the importance of that work and that it is bearing fruit in our communities.

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I congratulate the engineers and the emergency services, the many volunteers on the ground and local councillors who have done so much to help those in distress in Campbeltown and Kintyre, particularly. Can the minister assure me that everything is being done for the surrounding communities, especially those in Machrihanish, Southend and the Mull of Kintyre, because many there are still without power? Does the minister agree that this emergency has highlighted the importance of Campbeltown hospital, where the Beinn Ghuilean ward has had to be reopened to accommodate people in need?

Keith Brown: I am well aware of the co-ordinated activity that is being brought to bear to ensure that the people in the communities that Jamie McGrigor mentioned are being looked after. There are tremendous challenges. Obviously, Jamie McGrigor will know of the level of snowfall that has taken place, which has meant real problems on the roads. There have been efforts from people other than those whom he mentioned, such as council and Transport Scotland staff, who have used snowblowers and every available facility, and have put on exceptional services from Kennacraig to Campbeltown, for example. Indeed, one passenger asked what the fare was—there was no fare, because normally there is not that service.

I understand the point that Jamie McGrigor makes and I am certainly willing to join him in saying that there has been a huge amount of effort. I acknowledge the communities' effort that he mentioned in Kintyre and Southend, and across at Campbeltown and Machrihanish, as well.

Aileen McLeod (South Scotland) (SNP): The minister will be aware that parts of Dumfries and Galloway were severely affected by the adverse weather and I am sure that he will join me in again commending the efforts of everyone involved in the emergency response.

Dumfries and Galloway Council has applied to the Government for assistance under the Bellwin

scheme. Will the Government look sympathetically at Dumfries and Galloway's application?

Keith Brown: Yes; that is happening. As I mentioned, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth has triggered the Bellwin scheme and well understands the situation's urgency for many of the councils and communities concerned. On receipt of detailed claims for additional funding, the Government will recompense in full Dumfries and Galloway Council, North Ayrshire Council and Argyll and Bute Council for eligible expenditure, over and above the small amount that those councils were expected to include as a matter of course in their annual budgets to deal with unforeseen emergencies—around 0.2 per cent of their total net revenue budgets.

Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Lab): I, too, thank all the workers and volunteers, who have done an excellent job in difficult circumstances.

I have been contacted by a constituent in Arran who has informed me that power companies have in many cases been unable to restore power because they have been unable to gain access to local networks. I understand that there have been enough mobile generators on the island, but that they have not reached the right places because of a delay in clearing the roads. Will the minister comment on that? Does he believe that public authorities have put in place sufficient resources to clear the roads?

Keith Brown: Neil Bibby is aware that those roads are not trunk roads; they are local roads that are dealt with by the local authority. I was out on The String road yesterday, and I have seen the level of effort there. If the member has seen the levels of snow, which dwarf vans and some of the plant that is seeking to clear the snow, he will have some idea of the conditions faced by the agencies that are trying to clear the snow from the road. They have cleared right round the ring road, and they have cleared The String road, which is vitally important. It now remains to get into other areas, but I assure Neil Bibby that there has been no lack of resource or effort from all the agencies that have been involved in clearing the roads in Arran.

John Scott (Ayr) (Con): I declare an interest and I also congratulate communities who have pulled together in this extraordinary, once-in-200-years storm. Has the minister had any discussions with the cabinet secretary Richard Lochhead about the plight of livestock farmers in south-west Scotland, Arran and Kintyre, many of whom will have sheep and lambs buried in snowdrifts, which are unlikely to survive? If so, is he taking any measures to help that section of the community, many of whom are still isolated and cut off?

Keith Brown: Yes. I confirm that I have discussed that very issue with Richard Lochhead. We jointly approached the UK Government to seek a derogation for drivers who had been stuck in snow, to give them extra hours to deliver vital food for livestock at this time of year. Further discussions are taking place today. Richard Lochhead is leading on them and he is also looking to see whether it is possible to have helicopters take food to the areas that are still affected. A great deal of effort is going on in that area and the cabinet secretary is fully involved in that process.

College Waiting Lists (Audit)

2. Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the audit of college waiting lists. (S4T-00299)

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Michael Russell): Our study showed conclusively that claims that there was a large number of students on so-called college waiting lists were false. The study, which was conducted by working with colleagues in the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council, Colleges Scotland and individual institutions, could identify only 500 people who might be seeking a college place. That is a very long way from the misleading claims that some members have made.

Neil Findlay: The report into college waiting lists was written by the Scottish funding council under the direction of the Scottish Government, although it could have been written by Hans Christian Andersen. Does the cabinet secretary take students, lecturers and members of the public and this Parliament for fools? Are we supposed to believe that a waiting list of 12,866 at seven colleges in Glasgow and Lanarkshire was somehow magically reduced to 500 and that that figure accurately reflects the numbers on the waiting lists at those colleges?

Michael Russell: That is exactly the case. By the work that was done, which is outlined in the report, it is quite clear that the claims that were made in a survey in October were not true. To be fair to Colleges Scotland, it pointed out at the time that it would not verify its figures, but that was not, of course, a caution that was attended to by Mr Findlay or even Mr Hugh Henry. On 30 January, Mr Findlay said:

“In a study that Scotland’s Colleges—not Labour—carried out, more than 21,000 people were estimated to be on waiting lists.”—[*Official Report*, 30 January 2013; c 16178.]

The important word was “estimated”. However, Mr Henry threw caution to the winds. In October, he said:

“21,000 students are on college waiting lists”.

In January, he was slightly more cautious. He said:

“likely more than 13,000 Scots were denied a place at college”.

Those things were not true. Let me quote the report. This is from an audit that was carried out. It said:

“the processes colleges use for managing applications and waiting lists are not consistent. This means that these lists are not comparable between colleges and cannot be aggregated to obtain an accurate total of those waiting for a place at colleges in Scotland.”

The report is accurate and comprehensive. Those people who misled the chamber with the figures that they used last year should now apologise to members.

Neil Findlay: Getting lectures from the cabinet secretary about misleading the chamber is a bit rich.

I have a heavily redacted freedom of information request from the funding council that relates to the report. It shows that the main aim of its research was not to identify the numbers on college waiting lists, but to

“identify why college waiting lists cannot be a robust indicator of demand for places.”

It goes on to say:

“the sooner we can go on to produce our ‘our own version’ of events and discredit the Scotland’s colleges survey the better.”

Does the cabinet secretary agree that the exercise was fundamentally and deliberately flawed from the outset and designed not to help students to get a place at college, but to provide cover for a colleges policy that lurches from one disaster to another?

Michael Russell: The disaster will be if Mr Findlay votes with the Tories again when we come to decide on widening access tomorrow.

Colleges Scotland welcomed the report, of course. It recognises that there were considerable flaws in its methodology and that the way in which the information was presented was wrong. The report says:

“Colleges Scotland’s survey cannot therefore be considered a reliable measure of those waiting for a college place and should not be considered a reliable measure of unmet demand.”

The reality, of course, is that that completely destroys the arguments that Mr Findlay, Mr Henry and others have put in the chamber. Moreover, it shows that the figures that were used were wrong.

In those circumstance, the right thing to do for any member is to come to the chamber and

apologise. I have done that myself on one occasion. The reality is that no Labour member will do that because they are keen to undermine colleges rather than support young people.

George Adam (Paisley) (SNP): Does the cabinet secretary agree that the Scottish Government's college reforms will help to strengthen further education and bring it more into line with skills demand? [*Interruption.*]

The Presiding Officer: Mr Findlay, please do not shout across the chamber.

Michael Russell: Yes. The reforms to the college sector are well overdue and address the years of neglect that the sector has endured at the hands of successive Conservative, Labour and Labour-Lib Dem Governments, which have resulted in the wholesale absence of meaningful reform over a period of nearly 20 years. For the first time, we have a Government that is seriously challenging the past alignment and operation of the sector. The reforms will lead to estimated savings of £50 million a year through the removal of the need to prop up the inefficiencies that accumulated during the tenure of our predecessors.

Our recent decision to boost college funding by a further £61 million over our original plans is something that Mr Findlay is now apparently laughing at—let that go on the record after what he has said. He is laughing at £61 million in the college sector. That money will provide a stable funding platform for the sector, despite the swingeing cuts that Westminster continues to make to the Scottish budget, most recently last week.

Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): When the Education and Culture Committee was taking evidence on the college waiting list situation, the cabinet secretary said that definitions were extremely important. Will he put into the public domain the exact definitions that are being used to measure waiting lists for college places?

Michael Russell: The report is comprehensive, and I encourage the member to rely on it. I am very glad that she has not fallen into the trap that Labour has fallen into of questioning the methodology that has been used or the work that has been done.

The report is comprehensive—it tells us what is taking place. One of the things that it says is that we need a far better admissions system for the colleges. If the member wants to support a better admissions system, I will meet her to discuss the methodology and the definitions. That is a constructive way to take matters forward. She, at least, did not fall into the trap that Labour fell into of using figures in a way that misled the chamber.

The Presiding Officer: Three more members wish to ask a question and I intend to take all three.

Hugh Henry (Renfrewshire South) (Lab): The cabinet secretary referred to attempts to undermine colleges. Perhaps that is why college lecturers in the Educational Institute of Scotland, without opposition, passed a motion of no confidence in him.

The cabinet secretary talked about misleading figures. Will he confirm the figures that were recently obtained from a number of colleges, including Edinburgh College, which placed on the waiting list 961 people, and Reid Kerr College in my area, which placed on the waiting list 1,461 people? Will he do a comprehensive check of all colleges so that we can have accurate figures?

Michael Russell: Here is the accurate check—the report that was produced. What was Mr Henry's response when he saw it? He dismissed it out of hand, because it contradicted his words and his misleading of the Parliament and, indeed, of Scotland.

I return to the fact that, on 26 October, he said:

“over 21,000 students are on college waiting lists”.

That was not true. In *The Herald*, on 25 January, he said that

“more than 13,000 Scots were denied a place at college”.

Those figures were not true. Mr Henry should have stood up and apologised to the chamber, and the chamber should think less of him because he has not.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): Before we receive the responses to the next round of freedom of information requests, could the cabinet secretary advise the chamber whether any health warnings apply to any of the figures in the report that he would like to elucidate?

Michael Russell: What a very Liberal Democrat question. In it, Liam McArthur had neither the guts to do what Labour did—unfortunately, Labour still got it wrong—nor to do what he should have done, which was to say, “We accept the report; now let's work together to ensure that the college sector works.”

The figures are clear and the audit is clear. We need to work together to help the college sector. It is not too late for Opposition members to do that. Tomorrow, when we debate the stage 1 report on the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Bill, we will have the opportunity to come together and start the process of developing the bill in a way that I would welcome. That is the opportunity that we will have, and I hope that members will reflect on that overnight.

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): On 27 February, I asked the cabinet secretary on what date the waiting list figures for Cumbernauld College, and the accompanying analysis, would be made available. He assured me that that would happen “soon”. I again ask him when the waiting list information and the analysis for Cumbernauld College will be made available.

Michael Russell: I advise the member to have a look at the report, to reflect on it, to look at its methodology and then to ask himself whether it would not be far better to support Cumbernauld College instead of constantly trying to undermine it by the way in which he is operating.

Forth Road Bridge Bill: Stage 1

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-06057, in the name of Keith Brown, on the Forth Road Bridge Bill.

14:23

The Minister for Transport and Veterans (Keith Brown): I welcome the opportunity to open the debate on the general principles of the Forth Road Bridge Bill. I thank the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee for its work in leading on the bill and the Finance Committee for its work and the assistance that it has provided.

The Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee received a number of submissions and held several evidence sessions on the bill. I am grateful to all those who contributed to that process. A number of important issues were raised, and the debate provides an opportunity to hear those views expressed and to reiterate the benefits that the proposed arrangements offer; it also provides an opportunity to go through the committee’s report.

I am pleased to note that the committee acknowledges that the bill will support the Scottish Government objective of implementing a twin-bridge maintenance strategy and that it supports the bill’s principles. I also note that the committee has welcomed the approach that ministers and officials are taking, while recognising that work is needed to make the commitments a reality.

The bill’s provisions pave the way for another important stage in the evolution of the motorway and trunk road network. Trunking the road across the Forth road bridge and the adjacent routes will allow for this important structure, and its well respected staff, to become full partners in the trunk road and motorway network and the successful operating company approach of managing the road and bridge network efficiently and effectively. It will provide for the most cost-effective solution for this vital crossing and will complement the new Forth crossing under construction.

The committee commented favourably on the Scottish Government’s decision to contract a single bridge operating company to manage and maintain both bridges. Why was that ministers’ preferred option? First, Scotland’s motorway and trunk road network performs well and is well regarded, with our recent 4G contracts—the framework in which the new bridge contractor will operate—providing a sophisticated approach to asset management.

Long-term contracting to network maintenance has delivered continual improvement and significant efficiency savings—£18 million was saved in 2011-12. A recent review by the Highways Agency in England highlighted how Scotland's approach can generate cost savings without compromising service delivery, my publicly stated intention in the bill.

Of course, standards must be maintained. Although remedial action will be taken against an operator if necessary, delivery is based on inclusive team working by the client—Scottish ministers and Transport Scotland—the private operators and PAG plus, the performance audit group.

A virtuous circle of improvement via a system of incentives, obligations and shared best practice contributes to efficiencies, with regular inspections providing a no-surprises regime that enhances delivery and prevents, rather than simply corrects, faults. The existing road bridge and Forth Estuary Transport Authority staff will join that environment.

Secondly, as the committee has acknowledged, state aid considerations and the possibility of challenge meant that ministers were correct not to take the risk of allowing FETA to bid for the contract to manage and maintain the new bridge.

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): Was specific legal advice taken on that? Was there likely to be a state aid impediment in those circumstances?

Keith Brown: I have just made the point that the committee acknowledged the legal situation that ministers were in and the possibility of challenge, and that ministers were correct not to take the risk of allowing FETA to bid for the contract. It was not possible to demonstrate that delegating the functions to FETA would have realised value for money, and we must also bear in mind that FETA was not set up for that purpose. A competitive procurement exercise was clearly the right approach for all concerned and meets the risks that I have mentioned. Members will also know that operating contracts have been the preferred choice of previous Administrations.

Section 2 of the bill makes comprehensive provision for the transfer of FETA's liabilities. I repeat that Scottish ministers will meet the liabilities for which FETA is responsible. The committee report describes concerns that some of FETA's liabilities may remain with the City of Edinburgh Council. Officials will work to an agreed timeline with FETA and the City of Edinburgh Council to ensure that FETA's liabilities are properly accounted for in the transfer. I have provided assurances on that matter. In addition, future budgets explicitly allow for the associated claims and costs and, as mentioned in committee,

amounts in such cases often prove less than initially forecast. The council has estimated less than £100,000 for part 1 compensation claims.

The committee recommended that a formal communication be issued to the council on that issue before the passage of the bill. I have done that today by assuring the council that section 2 will transfer all FETA's property and liabilities to the Scottish Government.

A cessation payment will apply to pension liabilities. We are obliging the new contractor to apply for admitted body status. It will also be expected to cover the costs of employees. As the committee noted, that will apply to successor operating companies, too. Legacy costs need to be covered and, since FETA will no longer exist, it falls to Scottish ministers to act as guarantor. We will do that.

Various respondees to the committee have welcomed that outcome, and the committee commended Transport Scotland for the outcome achieved on admitted body status. Rightly, that has provided the reassurance to FETA staff that they fully deserved. There was much recognition of employees' concerns about their pensions.

There were also concerns about health and safety. During the recent event with veterans of the construction of the Forth bridge, I met a former employee. South Queensferry resident, Alan Macdonald, who is now 77 but was a supervisor who worked for the bridge designers, described a discovery in the project's south anchorage tunnel, which was one of many unexpected challenges during construction. As the Edinburgh *Evening News* reported, Mr Macdonald said:

"I saw bubbling coming up through the water in the bottom of the shaft. We collected a sample and took it back to the office. In our naivety we thought it'd be a good idea to see if it was flammable. We dropped a match in this glass jar and we just about blew up the whole office."

I spoke to another person, who talked about handling explosives and being told not to get the material on their face, because it would blind them. The material was accessed from a small hut at the bottom of the hill, next to the river. Things have obviously moved on tremendously in health and safety, which is a key consideration in our moving forward in the way that I am describing.

We understand that the bill impacts on individuals. It was essential that FETA staff should receive assurances about their future. The Scottish Government acknowledges and greatly values the skills, knowledge and professionalism of FETA staff. I have assured all FETA staff that their jobs will be protected, through the process that is provided for in the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations.

The committee's report reflects the reassurance that has been provided to FETA staff in the bill and through the arrangements that the Scottish ministers have made on their behalf. The bill provides protection for FETA staff's terms and conditions, through the application of TUPE.

On section 4, the committee commented on the impact that the dissolution of FETA might have on local accountability and local councils' ability to influence regional transport matters. We recognise that stakeholders hold strong views on the issue, which we welcome; the committee's endorsement of the Scottish ministers' approach as striking the right balance is also welcome.

The Roads Scotland Act 1984 and Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 create clear lines of responsibility for local roads and for trunk roads. The new Forth crossing, of course, will be a trunk road and motorway, responsibility for which properly will lie with the Scottish ministers. There is no other section of the motorway network in Scotland in relation to which councillors are in a position of authority.

The committee agreed with our judgment that the Forth bridges forum, which has council officer representation, is the most suitable vehicle for ensuring that local stakeholders' interests remain at the core of the management and maintenance of the Forth bridges. The Scottish ministers will, of course, be able to receive representations from the public and councillors about those strategic routes. The approach will be no different from the approach that is taken elsewhere in respect of the trunk road network.

Transport Scotland and the winning contractor will build on the relationships that FETA has established. Regular and meaningful engagement with community councils and residents will take place—and indeed has already begun. That will be stipulated in the Forth bridges operating company contract. Such arrangements are a condition of existing operating company contracts elsewhere on the trunk road network; again, we build on existing practice.

The committee shares our view that an important facet of FETA's work, which was highlighted by the chief bridgmaster, is the added value that is brought by contact with operators of similar structures elsewhere in the world. That will be evident later this year, when members of the International Cable Supported Bridge Operators Association arrive in Edinburgh. Transport Scotland is represented on a number of key national and international bodies, and I confirm that, to maintain the immensely valuable contact that I have described, the role of membership of appropriate national and international bridge bodies will pass to Transport Scotland rather than to a bridge operating company. Such an outcome

fits well with the principles of the national roads maintenance review.

I thank the people who contributed on the issue and I look forward to hearing members' opinions.

I move,

That the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the Forth Road Bridge Bill.

14:33

Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): The Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee welcomed the introduction of the Forth Road Bridge Bill and agreed to recommend to the Parliament that the bill's general principles be agreed to.

The committee received evidence from only a small number of organisations. We thank them for their contribution to the scrutiny process and for assisting us in our deliberations.

The bill is short and technical, and it is an important element of the Scottish Government's strategy to upgrade the Forth crossing transport network. As the minister said, its main focus is to pave the way for a single operator to carry out the management and maintenance of the Forth road bridge and the new Forth crossing.

The bill provides for the dissolution of FETA, which currently manages and maintains the Forth road bridge, and allows for the trunking of the Forth road bridge, which brings it under ministers' direct responsibility. It also allows for the transfer of all FETA's assets and liabilities to Scottish ministers and for FETA staff to be transferred into the employment of a new single bridge operator to be appointed by Scottish ministers. Each of those issues is addressed in the committee's short stage 1 report.

Although the committee welcomes the bill, we note the concerns that were expressed about the consultation process during the bill's development. Instead of carrying out public consultation on the bill's proposals, Transport Scotland officials adopted a targeted approach to consultation, involving only organisations and community groups that it had identified as having a direct and local interest in the Forth road bridge's management and maintenance, and stated in evidence that, given the bill's relatively narrow scope and technical nature, that kind of approach was considered more appropriate than a wider public consultation.

Although the committee acknowledges the obvious value of close and continuous dialogue with stakeholders directly affected by a legislative proposal, it is concerned that restricting consultation to only those groups can potentially disenfranchise others who might have a legitimate

and relevant interest. An example of the risks of such an approach was highlighted in evidence from the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians, which advised the committee that it had not been made aware of Transport Scotland's limited consultation process and was therefore unable to participate. In fact, the union had a very clear interest in the bill's proposals, given their impact on FETA staff.

The committee is aware that its session 3 predecessor committee, the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee, raised similar concerns in relation to the Scottish Government's failure to carry out a public consultation on the Abolition of Bridge Tolls (Scotland) Bill, which was clearly also related to the Forth road bridge. Regardless of whether legislative proposals are considered to be of limited or narrow interest, it is expected that an appropriate and proportionate public consultation will be carried out to ensure that everyone with an interest can input their views. As a result, the committee in its report

"calls on the Scottish Government to reflect on its approach to consultation in relation to future legislative proposals."

The Scottish Government's proposal to contract a single bridge operating company to manage and maintain the new Forth crossing, the Forth road bridge and connecting roads in the vicinity of the two crossings received strong support in evidence to the committee. The committee shares the view that contracting a single bridge operating company is the most appropriate and cost-effective approach to the management and maintenance of both structures and is also reassured that, under the new arrangements, the valuable expertise and experience of FETA staff will be available to the new operator, which will ensure a strong element of continuity.

Although content with the proposal for a single operator for both crossings, the committee considered it unfortunate that, with its valuable and extensive experience of and expertise in managing and maintaining the Forth road bridge, FETA was not able to be considered for the role of carrying out those operations for both crossings. However, as the minister has said, the committee was advised by the Government that if FETA had participated in a tendering exercise backed by Scottish Government funding, there was a very real risk of such a move being found in contravention of European Union state aid rules.

David Stewart: I am grateful for the member's comments; she will have noticed that I intervened on the minister to raise that very point. Did her committee receive any evidence from the EU to suggest that state aid rules would be breached? After all, it is one thing to assume a breach and another to have physical legal advice on that.

Maureen Watt: The committee itself did not take legal advice but in all the evidence that we received we understood why the Government did what it did. The committee understands and acknowledges the significant risk in this regard and therefore accepts the Scottish Government's judgment.

The committee considered it unfortunate that, as a consequence of the Scottish Government's decision, there is no mechanism for assessing how the option of FETA taking on this role compares in cost-effectiveness terms with other options. However, we understood why in practice that was not possible.

The committee heard differing views on the most appropriate duration for the new management and maintenance contract. The Scottish Government's proposal is for the contract to have a five-year duration plus add-ons that could take the term up to 10 years in total. However, FETA indicated in written evidence that it had a 15-year planning cycle for major maintenance and works programmes. FETA suggested that, in recognition of that, a minimum contract length of 10 years would be required.

Although the committee has no strong view on the optimum contract length, it recognises the importance of the contract duration being appropriate for the maintenance regimes that will be required. Therefore, the committee has called on the Scottish Government to provide further information on how its proposal to let the contract for five years, plus extensions, would fit with longer-term planned maintenance programmes of the type that are currently operated by FETA, which, as I said, cover 15 years.

On the issue of how the contract for the management of the Forth bridge and the new Forth crossing should be framed, the committee received written evidence from UCATT and Unite that made clear those unions' expectation that the contract will make it clear that any companies that have been involved in the practice of employee blacklisting or tax avoidance will not be eligible to tender.

The Presiding Officer: You must wind up.

Maureen Watt: The committee was also keen to establish how the procurement process might provide a community value element and allow for the creation of professional and vocational apprenticeships and job opportunities for long-term unemployed people.

14:41

Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab): This is a relatively uncontentious bill, although concern was

expressed to the committee about some issues, which might merit additional exploration at stage 2.

As the minister has described, the bill abolishes FETA, transfers its assets to Scottish ministers and designates the Forth road bridge as a trunk road, which is likely to be operated by a private sector operator who will be appointed by Scottish ministers. To that extent, it sets up a form of public-private partnership—I know that the party of Government was not keen on those when it was in opposition, but it seems to have come around to a different point of view in government.

As others have said, questions were asked about why FETA could not manage both bridges, instead of abolishing FETA and bringing the existing bridge under the control of Scottish ministers and Transport Scotland. That was FETA's preferred option, although Barry Colford said that, in view of evidence, it was preferable that a single authority should have responsibility for the management of both bridges. The minister and the convener of the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee have described the reasons why FETA's involvement was not appropriate, in relation to infringement of EU state aid rules and issues around value for money. On that latter point, I was slightly puzzled by the suggestion that it was impossible to prove FETA's value for money, as FETA has operated the current bridge for many years.

The convener has spoken of the concerns about the consultation process and the exclusion of UCATT. The unions that made representations were particularly concerned about the 70 or so staff who currently work for FETA, and wanted to ensure that they would be protected under the TUPE regulations, and also that there would be no compulsory redundancies. I am pleased that that has been guaranteed and that the operating company will join the Lothian Pension Fund, which means that employees will continue within their current pension schemes.

As the convener said, assurances were sought that no company that has been engaged in blacklisting workers because of their trade union membership or activity would be awarded a contract, and the committee received assurances that the contract will guarantee workers the right to trade union membership and collective bargaining. Labour would like the contract to go further by, as the trade unions suggested, excluding companies that are known to have practised blacklisting in the past.

The City of Edinburgh Council raised concerns about a couple of important issues. The first was that the compensation claims against FETA for construction work should not be transferred to it, as there were concerns—disputed by Transport Scotland—that the claims could run into millions.

The committee received assurances on the record—which have been repeated by the minister today—that Transport Scotland and the ministers will inherit any claims. I believe that that has been sufficient to allay the council's concerns. However, if that is not the case and the issue needs to be addressed again at stage 2, I would welcome further communication from the council.

The transport convener of the City of Edinburgh Council, Lesley Hinds, also raised the issue of local accountability. Elected members of the local councils are currently represented on FETA, but they will be replaced on the Forth bridges forum by council officials. The committee raised that issue with the minister, who said that he had given consideration to the inclusion of elected members but felt that an arrangement that involved councillors sitting on a board that was looking after a project that was wholly the responsibility of Scottish ministers would be, in his words, "unique". He was also unclear about what was being considered, with regard to which councils would be involved and whether the councillors who would sit on the board would be local members for the areas that are affected by the bridges or the transport conveners. He stated that the forum had been established to resolve issues that might arise both during and after the construction of the bridge and that, therefore, it was important to ensure that local community representatives had a say on the forum. However, he did not think that it was appropriate to add elected member representation.

In an unrelated session, the committee recently took written evidence from community groups regarding their relationship with Transport Scotland over issues arising from some of the current preparation and construction work. That suggested that the communities were not totally satisfied with the way in which Transport Scotland reacted to their concerns. There needs to be further discussion around the matter. I raised that when we discussed our stage 1 report, but I did not push it hard because, like the minister, I was not terribly clear about what representation was desired, whether the concern that had been expressed by City of Edinburgh Council was reflected by the other councils that currently had representation on FETA and whether they aspired to have elected member representation. If clarity can be achieved about what is wanted and if the councils that are currently represented on FETA would like the matter to be discussed further, I would be happy to take the matter up, through an amendment at stage 2, to allow further discussion with the minister. I felt that, in his response to the committee, he was not totally unsympathetic to the view; therefore, there may be ways in which we can raise the matter for further discussion later.

The committee was also assured that minimum standards on procurement, community benefit, apprenticeships and job opportunities for the long-term unemployed would be written into the contract. We were aware of the issue around the purchase of steel for the construction of the bridge and the fact that Scottish steel manufacturers have lost out to overseas competitors. Assurances regarding the future operation of the bridge are, therefore, welcome. However, the nature of those minimum standards and how employment opportunities will be achieved in practice will be important.

I realise that this is early days in the consideration of the bill. However, I would appreciate any light that the minister could shed on the process. I am sure that other members of the committee would, like me, also appreciate being kept apprised of any progress on that—particularly progress on the employment and blacklisting issues as we move towards the issuing of the contract. If there are ways in which the committee can examine some of those issues, I am sure that we would be interested in doing so.

Labour will support the bill at stage 1. However, I look forward to further discussion and clarification as the bill progresses, as there are one or two outstanding issues. There is an opportunity in the stage 2 process to go back to some of the issues that have been raised with the committee, using the amendment process to develop the arguments further to see whether there are ways in which those concerns can be addressed.

14:47

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):

Usually, when I am called to speak third or fourth in these debates the difficulty is that everything has been said already. I usually overcome that disadvantage by just disagreeing with everything that the minister has said. However, in this case I am unable to do that as I support the bill, and the Conservatives will vote in support of its general principles at stage 1.

It was interesting to go through the technicalities of the proposal, given that few of us, outside Government, thought much about the management of the new bridge when we were talking about its construction. I find myself fully supportive of the twin-bridge management strategy that the Government has adopted. Although I am aware that there are concerns over some issues, not least the state aid rules, I am able to say that I may have other reasons for supporting the strategy that the Government has adopted and, consequently, I maintain my support.

It is important that we use our road network efficiently. Change that allows us to take the Forth

bridge away from the current arrangement under FETA, with the replacement crossing managed simply as part of our broader motorway network, gives us sound opportunities to manage our traffic in the future without some of the more difficult considerations that FETA occasionally led us towards. Some of us feel that it may deliver an advantage if, as is suggested, councillors are not directly represented on the new bridge management structure, given that council involvement in FETA led us at one point to a proposal for a £4 toll on the bridge. That was before Parliament got together in one of its moments of unanimity and decided to abolish the tolls altogether.

As we look forward to the new structure, it is important to acknowledge the work that has been done to protect the staff who currently work for FETA. It is very important to ensure that there will be a straight move for those who are currently employed and that the TUPE process will ensure that their jobs and terms are protected. It is also important to acknowledge that the pension liability will be transferred for those current employees to, I believe, the new company and any successor—I see the minister nodding to confirm that. As a consequence, no one will lose their job or their rights as a direct result of the transfer. However, it gives us the opportunity to be more efficient in how we manage the bridge in the longer term.

One of the key issues that was raised a number of times—I admit that the minister clarified it for us consistently—was the worry that FETA might leave liabilities with the City of Edinburgh Council for which the council might be responsible in future. The minister has taken every opportunity to reassure both the committee and the council that that is not the case. The minister's announcement that he has now given the council a formal assurance that the liabilities have been transferred to Transport Scotland will take away one of the key concerns that was raised repeatedly.

Another issue that was raised was that of encouraging the representation of the bridge management on organisations for national and international bridge management companies. Considering the difficulties that were experienced with the first Forth road crossing, it is important that those with expertise work closely together so that they can learn from one another's experiences and understanding. In his closing remarks, the minister might be able to give us an assurance that simply transferring that responsibility to Transport Scotland will not take the connection one step away from those who are responsible for the day-to-day management of the bridge. I look forward to hearing that assurance.

The final issue that I want to address is the duration of the contract that is likely to be issued. I

appreciate that a five-year contract with potential add-ons extending up to 10 years makes for a substantial contract that will attract interest and give the winner the opportunity to carry out their responsibilities properly and seriously. However, the suggestion that emerged in the evidence that there might be management cycles for the new structure extending to 15 years gives me cause for concern. I ask the minister to consider that issue during the rest of the bill's passage to ensure that we do not undermine management's confidence to get on and do work that is necessary.

That said, the Conservatives will support the bill at stage 1.

14:53

Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP): As a former resident of South Queensferry, a town that sits in the shadow of two of the existing bridges over the Forth and the place where my sons grew up, I was pleased to see that the people who live and work there were not forgotten about when the new arrangements were being considered for the most cost-effective and co-ordinated approach to the management and maintenance of the new Forth crossing and the Forth road bridge.

The bill provides for existing employees to be transferred from FETA to the new contractor under the TUPE regulations. Although pension provision was not protected under those regulations, agreement has been reached for the continuation of existing pension arrangements for FETA staff.

The committee's report quotes Transport Scotland officials, who stated in evidence:

"we will write it into the contract that the successful bridge contractor will apply for admitted body status. Essentially, that means that the staff's pensions will remain unaffected".—[*Official Report, Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee*, 16 January 2013; c 1268.]

That ensures that the pensions of the existing 72 staff, 60 existing pensioners and other previous employees will continue to be part of the Lothian pension fund. I was able to ascertain during the evidence session on 16 January that Transport Scotland intends to ensure a continuation of that protection under any subsequent contracts in future years.

The winding up of FETA has resulted in a requirement for a new structure to allow local communities to engage with the bridge operators. The Forth bridges forum has been created to help manage operational and maintenance issues that emerge in relation to the Forth crossings and to maintain effective engagement with local communities.

Of the four local authorities that have current representation on the FETA board, only one—the

City of Edinburgh Council—raised the issue that local councillors would not be involved in the new forum. The minister, Keith Brown, explained that, if they were, that would mean

"putting in elected representatives who would not be responsible for the spending decisions."—[*Official Report, Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee*, 27 February 2013; c 1437.]

In their report, committee members agreed

"that it would not be appropriate for the membership of the Forth Bridges Forum to include elected local authority representatives."

The bill proposes that all assets and liabilities will transfer from FETA to Scottish ministers. Therefore, it was important to clarify the position regarding any potential liabilities relating to the building of the new crossing and the creation of new roads leading to the bridge, so that Edinburgh taxpayers were not left to pick up the costs.

The FETA representative stated that

"FETA is liable for any outstanding costs that arise from the scheme. We have budgeted for liabilities of £623,000, which is in our accounts".—[*Official Report, Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee*, 6 February 2013; c 1336.]

and the Minister for Transport and Veterans said:

"We have said that we will take on the obligations and we have made that plain to the council."—[*Official Report, Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee*, 27 February 2013; c 1431.]

We have heard those reassurances again this afternoon.

The bill will give Transport Scotland, on behalf of Scottish ministers, responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the crossings. It is already responsible for more than 2,000 miles of trunk road and 2,007 bridges, including nine major bridges on the trunk road network, many of which are over estuaries or rivers. They include the Erskine bridge, the Kessock bridge, the Kingston bridge, the Skye bridge and the other two bridges that cross the Forth: the Kincardine bridge and—the newest of all—the Clackmannanshire bridge. This change to the management of the existing Forth road bridge and the new Forth crossing brings the responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the bridges into line with what already exists everywhere else in the country.

14:57

David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the debate, not least as a former member of the Forth Crossing Bill Committee in the previous session, which was chaired very effectively by Jackson Carlaw, with solid contributions from Joe FitzPatrick, who has now gone on to greater things. Looking back at the 20 or so hours of

evidence that that committee heard from various witnesses, including the then Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change, Stewart Stevenson, and representatives from Transport Scotland, Friends of the Earth, FETA and the local communities, I suppose that, in a sense, it was

“history in the making ... the largest public sector infrastructure project since devolution.”—[*Official Report*, 26 May 2010; c 26567.]

I will make a few comments about the Forth Road Bridge Bill, and raise a few questions for the minister on issues such as consultation, staffing, finance and the environment.

As we have heard from previous speakers, the bill is simple, straightforward and clear, in that it is intended to make provision for a single bridge operating company to carry out the management and maintenance of the Forth road bridge, the new Forth crossing and the connecting trunk roads. We have also heard in evidence that the contract tender will be subject to EU and United Kingdom procurement law and that, due to its scale, it will be advertised in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

I have a few questions for the minister. I ask again: why has FETA not been able to bid for the new contract on the basis that it will be extinct by the time the tenders go round? I suppose that it is difficult in some ways to compete with extinct bodies.

Maureen Watt: Does the member not realise that the expertise that FETA has gained in managing bridges will be transferred as all the staff will be transferred, so the knowledge and expertise that they have gained will be used in the new structure?

David Stewart: I totally agree with that point, and I am very pleased and positive about that aspect of the bill. My point is that there is no reason why FETA should not be able to bid for the project. I would develop that point if I had time.

The Scottish Government bill team's supplementary report to the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee said:

“Ministers chose not to cost Option 3”—

which is delegation of the new crossing to FETA—

“due to the lack of an effective mechanism to assess VFM.”

Surely FETA has the best knowledge of value for money, as it runs the existing bridge. Surely there would be synergies in going from running one bridge to running a second bridge.

I ask the minister these questions again, too. Has there been specific legal advice around breaches of state aid rules, or is there an assumption by ministers that there will be a state

aid breach? Why not expand FETA so that it can cover the new crossing, too? When will the tender documents be issued? What is the timescale for assessment and the decision on the winning bid?

We have already heard that there will be community benefit clauses around local employment and apprenticeships, which I very much support. I specifically ask the minister to clarify in his closing speech whether there will be an unsuccessful bidder premium for the new contract. He will know that, when the bids for the new Forth crossing were put in, the unsuccessful bidder got a £5 million unsuccessful bidder premium. Will that happen in the new contract?

Will there be a condition in the contract that specifies that the successful bidder will have to register employees in the United Kingdom for national insurance purposes and not outsource them? That has been a feature of outsourcing organisations working with other companies.

The chief engineer was quoted recently saying that the condition of the cables on the existing bridge has not materially diminished since 2008 and that they are not expected to lose more strength as long as the dehumidification systems function correctly. Does the minister agree with the FETA convener, who said that there was nothing to stop the bridge accommodating non-motorway traffic, farm vehicles, learner drivers and abnormal loads?

Can we reconsider the issues around consultation? There was some evidence that the Forth Crossing Bill in the previous session did not follow the Aarhus convention in respect of consultation. Notwithstanding that, I support the general principles of the bill.

15:01

Colin Keir (Edinburgh Western) (SNP): I will confine my comments to how the bill affects my constituents, particularly those in Queensferry, which will bear the brunt of the civil engineering on the southern side of the Forth. As Gordon MacDonald pointed out, the history surrounding the two present bridges makes them an integral part of the community of South Queensferry.

There will be many years of civil engineering and there will be some problems along the way. Recently, we have had problems with lorry traffic movements. I look upon what we may have to deal with in the near future as we move through the construction phase. In particular, the construction efforts that are required in Echline, Springfield and the Clufflats, which are more or less in the line of the bridge, will produce some major inconveniences.

I am delighted that, so far, there has been engagement with the local community, as Gordon MacDonald pointed out. Almost every month, issues are brought to my attention at surgeries and in my mailbag—they are usually something to do with the bridge. They concern the noise, what is likely to happen and how people will be affected in general. When I hold my surgeries in Queensferry in particular, those are the issues that come across my desk more and more often.

There has been a long-standing relationship between the local community, the community councils and other local groups, such as the bridge replacement interests group south. I am sure that BRIGS has appeared at the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee, which I should thank for its report, which is an excellent piece of work.

FETA has been a part of Queensferry for quite some time—it is a relationship that has grown and grown. Some people who live in the Ferry work for FETA. I am delighted with the arrangements that have been made to TUPE staff over to the new management company and with the pension arrangements that have been put in place. Those are welcome steps and will make the process a little bit clearer for those people who are going through it.

The regeneration—the new bridge—may be the catalyst that makes economic development more likely in the surrounding area. I am thinking about the future job and development prospects, particularly around the Port Edgar area. Now that we have the new education and tourism centre, if we could get something up and running at Port Edgar, that would make the area a catalyst for development in relation to employment and sports. It is something for the future.

I see that I am running out of time. I fully support the bill. If we can do something to progress the world heritage site application, so much the better.

15:05

Roderick Campbell (North East Fife) (SNP): Although I am not a member of the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee, I welcome the opportunity to make a brief contribution to the debate.

Construction of the replacement Forth crossing is well and truly under way, creating more than 1,000 jobs over the life of the project and many more in maintenance for years to come. The crossing will be an essential link in our national transport infrastructure. The bill lays down a strong foundation for the whole project, which I hope will deliver best value for public money at a time of declining block grants from Westminster.

The staff who were employed by the old bridge authority, FETA, will be transferred while retaining their employment and pension conditions. The Scottish Government will take over responsibility for FETA's assets and liabilities. That is a fair and sensible way forward for the public and the staff.

Following its initial consideration of the bill, the committee said that it felt that the bill contains sufficient provisions to allow the Scottish Government to meet its objectives. I do not disagree with that, but it is worth noting that the committee's report made a few suggestions that I hope the Scottish Government will take on board.

The first relates to the consultation process and the simple question of ensuring best practice by consulting as widely as possible. The trade union UCATT was not consulted during the early stages because I understand that only limited stakeholder participation was facilitated. Although I also understand the Government's rationale for the course of action that was pursued, and I have no doubt that jobs and workers' rights are protected by the bill, there are surely lessons that we can learn in that regard.

Another point is the importance of reassuring the City of Edinburgh Council that it will bear no liability for costs that are incurred during construction. The same should apply to Fife Council, if appropriate, and I would welcome the minister's comments on that. Perhaps the issue is not relevant but I would still welcome his comments. Formal notification from the Scottish Government would help to remove any doubts about the position of the two local authorities in relation to the major construction project that is taking place within their boundaries.

Talking about the legislative provisions in a bill sometimes makes it easy for us to forget what the bill is all about. It is worth remembering how far we have come in recent years. Pre-2008, we had the Fife tax on people who were entering the kingdom of Fife, and people who lived in Fife had no reasonable way of avoiding the bridge tolls when they were on their way home. Today we have a toll-free Scotland, with one of our biggest infrastructure projects in decades under way right now, creating jobs and a precious new vital route connecting the north and south of Scotland.

We know that the current Forth road bridge, even if it is not deteriorating quite as we thought, cannot cope with the projected increase in traffic. The effects of a sixfold increase in bridge traffic over 50 years demonstrates why the responsible thing to do is to ensure that the infrastructure is in place to allow us to deal with unpredictable shifts in usage.

I am aware that some opposed the building of a new road bridge because they felt that traffic

would increase as a result. Others argued that abolishing the tolls in 2008 would lead to a massive increase in traffic. However, the official figures show that the average daily heavy goods vehicle traffic on the bridge was lower in 2011 than in 2003, and the average daily number of cars has remained virtually the same since 2001. The volume of all types of traffic, including public transport, is increasing in Scotland and all around the world, but there are still many communities for which public transport is not a convenient option. Although investing in greener public transport is, in many ways, the right way forward, it would be reckless to abandon motorists by neglecting to secure for the future the infrastructure that they need and depend on.

When the new bridge is complete, the existing Forth road bridge will be retained exclusively for public transport, pedestrians and cyclists. I am sure that we all recognise the benefits of making cycling and travelling by bus more attractive.

I welcome the bill and the committee's report, and I am confident that the new Forth crossing will bring enormous benefits to Fife and Scotland as a whole in the next century.

15:09

Helen Eadie (Cowdenbeath) (Lab): At their northern end, all three Forth crossings will land in the Cowdenbeath constituency, which I am privileged to represent. Immediately prior to being elected to the Scottish Parliament, I was the vice-chair of the Forth Road Bridge Joint Board, the parties to which were Fife Council, the City of Edinburgh Council, West Lothian Council and Perth and Kinross Council.

My preference would have been option 3. I endorse all the comments and the searching questions from Dr Murray and David Stewart. It is worth remembering that the legislation agreeing to the building of the Forth road bridge was passed as far back as 1947 but the bridge was not opened until September 1964. It is incredible to contrast the timescale for that crossing with that for the new Forth crossing. At that time, the new Forth road bridge was the longest suspension bridge in the world—an icon of Scottish engineering, as I am sure the new Forth crossing will be.

It is also worth remembering that the Forth road bridge was initially funded by the local authorities that I mentioned—namely Fife, Edinburgh, West Lothian, and Perth and Kinross—not by Scottish taxpayers. It was funded by those authorities and there was no funding from any Government.

The Forth Road Bridge Joint Board was dissolved and its assets, liabilities and responsibilities were passed to the Forth Estuary Transport Authority, which was created under the

provisions of the Forth Estuary Transport Authority Order 2002. The bridge board did much to lobby for many of the improvements around the bridgehead area, and that was also an attribute of FETA as it became much more involved over the years.

The loss of FETA will be a loss to the entire transport infrastructure in the Forth bridgehead area. The creation of FETA marked a significant step forward in the efforts to tackle congestion on the Forth road bridge and to improve travel across the Forth. Maintenance of the bridge was always a top priority and FETA was always able to use revenues to fund public transport alternatives, road works, traffic management measures and other schemes that it felt would bring benefits to bridge users.

I have some questions that I would like to have answered. Why was Perth and Kinross Council not included in the forum that considered the future arrangements for the Forth road bridge, given that the council was part of the original bridge board? What shape will the future engagement with community councils and local elected members take? How meaningful will the consultation be?

We have heard a lot about consultation this afternoon, but communities have not really been consulted effectively across Scotland, even though so many people are dependent on the bridge. I also take a different view from the committee. I strongly support the view of the City of Edinburgh Council that there should be elected member representation on the Forth bridges forum. If the Government is intransigent on that key issue, it will smack yet again of a controlling and centralising agenda. We have seen that with the Scottish Police Authority and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Board; are we to see it again with this?

What arrogance it would be to keep the consultation so narrow, given that it was the hard-earned taxes of the ratepayers of Fife, Edinburgh, West Lothian and Perth and Kinross who raised the entirety of the finance to build the Forth road bridge. It is one thing to accept the judgment of a Scottish Government if it has had specific and crystal-clear legal advice on state aid rules, but neither the minister nor the convener of the committee has given any evidence to support their assertions—and they are assertions. Facts are facts, and that is what we need. The minister needs to answer the fair questions that have been put by David Stewart, who is absolutely right.

It is a good idea to include VisitScotland and Network Rail on the forum, but I hope that the minister will listen to what my colleagues and I have been saying.

15:13

David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP): The Forth road bridge is one of the most iconic structures in Scotland and it is also the second longest single-span suspension bridge in the United Kingdom. The bill proposes to put management for the Forth road bridge and the new replacement crossing under a single bridge operating company. The benefits of doing that include financial and operational efficiencies and a strategic and collaborative approach to the management and maintenance of both bridges. Further, the bill proposes to transfer the current employees of the Forth Estuary Transport Authority to the new company, ensuring that their experience is retained.

A unified management approach is key to the continued operation of one of the east coast's most vital transport structures and, in particular, the creation of the Forth replacement crossing. As MSP for Kirkcaldy, I see the replacement crossing as being vital for growth and for transport links. Locally, the new crossing is welcomed most by businesses, as it will remove all uncertainties in the business community. Businesses know that in future there will be excellent transport links for the whole of Fife, the east coast and beyond, which will allow them to grow and expand to provide jobs and strengthen the local economy.

Commuters will also have reason to celebrate the new crossing. Transport Scotland has confirmed that pedestrians, cyclists and bus users will see no change as a result of the bill, as the new operator will carry out the same functions as the present one. Once the replacement crossing opens, the Forth road bridge will be used exclusively by buses, taxis, cyclists and pedestrians, which will provide a real benefit to commuters on both sides of the Forth. Having a dedicated crossing will reduce travel times and make journeys much easier and more pleasant, and it is hoped that it will prove to be a boon to tourism in Fife by encouraging more tourists to venture into the region.

The replacement crossing has already provided benefits for Scotland. It is currently progressing on time and on budget, and it now directly employs 1,200 people. Many more people will be indirectly employed in the next three and a half years until the project's completion, and there will be many opportunities for the local and national economies.

Last December, motorway management technology was implemented on the M90 in Fife, which is the first time that an intelligent transport system has been used in Scotland. The system creates a dedicated bus lane and uses variable mandatory speed limits during periods of congestion to cut traffic jams and make journey times more reliable. That is another early benefit

of the crossing, especially as it will greatly help a very busy section of our transport network.

The replacement crossing has generated 110 places for vocational training and for the long-term unemployed, and community benefit clauses will deliver an annual average of 45 vocational training positions, 21 professional body training places and 46 positions for the long-term unemployed. The replacement crossing contract is the first contract to demand that subcontracts are advertised on the public contracts Scotland procurement portal, which means that all job opportunities must be advertised in local jobcentres. Already, 63 per cent of subcontracting opportunities and 89 per cent of supply orders have been awarded to Scottish firms, and the final stages of assembling the steel components will be carried out in North Queensferry and South Queensferry.

The Forth Road Bridge Bill will ensure the continuation of the effective management of the Forth road bridge and the replacement crossing, and of the benefits that those essential transport links provide now and in the future. I am happy to support the Government's bill at stage 1.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott): We move to closing speeches, and I call Alex Johnstone.

15:17

Alex Johnstone: Thank you, Presiding Officer—here we go again.

Quite a few interesting points have been made, but it would be remiss of me not to emphasise, as other members have, the economic importance of a reliable crossing over the Forth. The problem with the old Forth road bridge is not only the difficulties that are associated with its structure but the fact that its design means that it is often closed, certainly to high-sided vehicles, as a result of bad weather.

Although we have heard that the number of HGVs crossing the bridge has declined slightly, I emphasise that the average weight of such vehicles has perhaps slightly increased, which indicates that the bridge is still vital to Scotland's long-term economic wellbeing. The economic centre in the east of Scotland relies heavily on the fact that it can draw its labour from the area north of the Forth, which is why the councils in not only Edinburgh and Fife but Perth and Kinross—as Helen Eadie pointed out—contributed to the cost of constructing the first bridge. However, I dispute Helen Eadie's claim that the bridge was not funded by taxpayers' money, although she later conceded that it was. She seemed to think that the money came from councils alone without that level of accountability.

It is important that we get the management of the new crossing right, which is why I support the terms that the bill contains.

Helen Eadie: I stand to be corrected, but I think that only the councils funded the bridge, through long-term loans.

Alex Johnstone: Yes indeed, but councils are funded through taxpayer contributions; I am afraid that that is how the world works.

It is vital that we ensure that there are good relationships between those who run the bridge and those who live in the surrounding communities. We have heard that the current bridge operator and its predecessor have had good working relationships with the communities north and south of the Forth. However, as a parallel activity, the committee has taken evidence from those communities about their experience of the construction project that is under way. Although perhaps not everything is going according to plan, everybody is working hard to ensure that there are not the problems associated with the previous year's construction being carried over into the next year's construction. It is important that the bridge operator remains a good neighbour, and the fact that many staff will be carried over from FETA to the new bridge operator will give us the opportunity to ensure that that good relationship continues over time.

The final thing that I want to mention—again—is the issue of representation in bridge management. Concerns have been expressed by members on the opposite side of the chamber in particular that elected members will no longer be represented in bridge management. I, too, have concerns about that issue. I jokingly mentioned earlier the proposal for a £4 toll. However, what worried me about that proposal was that, at the time, it was proposed almost as a proxy for the city entry charge. As a result, those who cross the bridge would have been put at a disadvantage by a political priority that should have nothing to do with crossing the Forth. There are those in Edinburgh who, if they had been given the opportunity to influence the design of the bridge, might have included a drawbridge section so that they could have wound it up when they decided that enough people had crossed.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: You must wind up, too, please. [*Laughter.*]

Alex Johnstone: I want the new bridge to be available to the people of Scotland so that they can develop the economic prospects of the east of Scotland effectively to the benefit of us all. I support the bill and will vote for it at decision time.

15:21

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab): I think that Mr Johnstone spent some time winding up at the end of his speech.

This has been a useful debate on a bill that is limited in scope but which concerns a very important issue, because it is about securing the best stewardship in the public interest of both the existing Forth road bridge and the new replacement crossing, which will also be a crucial part of Scotland's transport infrastructure and vital to our economy in these challenging times, as many members have said. The management of the bridge has not been the issue of greatest controversy around the new crossing; the focus of that has clearly been the Scottish Government's inability to secure the new bridge in a way that would have ensured maximum economic benefit for our economy and support for local firms. However, that issue will not be addressed by this bill. We look to the long-awaited procurement reform bill for reassurance that those lessons have been learned by ministers. I hope that Mr Brown will display just now that those lessons have been learned.

Keith Brown: How would Richard Baker's party, which never did this when it was part of an Administration, have directed the business to a Scottish company? How would it have achieved that?

Richard Baker: We would not simply have given the whole contract for the construction of the bridge to one firm and then taken a hands-off approach to any of the subcontracting work. Ministers had available to them several ways of pursuing better procurement of the building of the bridge and greater economic benefit for Scotland as a whole, but particularly for the area around the bridge. Clearly, though, ministers must take up that issue in the procurement reform bill.

The Forth Road Bridge Bill is important in itself. The committee looked carefully at the key issues. I congratulate the convener and committee members on their scrutiny of the bill, which was diligent and effective. We have heard of a number of significant issues that are highlighted in the committee's report. The committee is critical of the limited scope of the consultation on the bill, to which Roderick Campbell referred. That meant that, for example, the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians was not able to take part in Transport Scotland's engagement process.

That is a crucial difficulty, because responsibilities that currently lie with FETA are to be transferred to a private operator. As UCATT has described,

"FETA was a not for profit company and enshrined democratic accountability, by having a board with elected

representatives making decisions. Clearly, the decision to privatise the operation of the bridge management and maintenance will end this culture and organisation.”

The committee was also concerned about that issue and stated in its report that it was

“unfortunate that there was no mechanism for an assessment to be made of how Option 3—

retaining FETA as the operator—

“compared with the other options in terms of cost effectiveness.”

A number of members have referred to that point, including my colleague David Stewart. However, I would go further than that, as members may imagine, in that I believe that it is another indication of a worrying default position of the Government to move service provision into the private sector when more effort could be made to retain services in public control.

Bruce Crawford (Stirling) (SNP): Will the member take an intervention?

Richard Baker: I am afraid that I am struggling for time.

We are where we are with this bill, so the crucial issue now is that the new operator works in the best interests of the public. How the FRB and FRC maintenance contract is procured is therefore very important. As I have said, it is important that lessons are learned from the mistakes that were made in awarding the contract for the construction of the Forth replacement crossing.

I turn once more to one of the submissions to make key points for ministers to consider, this time from my own trade union, Unite, which is clear in its view that the overarching future procurement agenda in Scotland should

“shift focus on moving away from lowest price tender to quality and sustainability which largely benefits people, not profit in public procurement.”

Unite makes the important point that companies that are engaged in blacklisting should be barred from tendering for public contracts in Scotland. I hope that that position will find favour with ministers, and I note that Mr Brown highlighted to the committee the Scottish Government’s concerns over that pernicious practice.

The final issue that I will touch on, which will also be a matter for procurement of the maintenance contract, is how transparency and accountability for this important management function are to be secured for the future. I understand that currently agendas and minutes of meetings are matters of public record. We must ask how that kind of transparency can be achieved in the future arrangements and, although ministers have ruled out councillors being members of the bridge users’ forum, nothing has yet been put in

place to ensure the required level of dialogue between them, the contract holder and the relevant local authorities.

As my colleague Elaine Murray indicated, we may well need to return to issues after further discussion with relevant local authorities. Helen Eadie also raised concerns. We have a number of anxieties about the bill that ministers will need to address at stage 2 and we will certainly test a number of those arguments further as the bill progresses. However, as Dr Murray made clear, those concerns are not sufficient for us not to agree with the committee’s conclusion that the bill should be allowed to progress to stage 2, to allow further debate on the measures and the legislation. That view informs how we will vote on the bill and we look forward to debating the important issues further in the weeks ahead.

15:27

Keith Brown: I thank all members for their contributions to the debate. We will consider their comments fully and respond to the committee’s points in writing. I will try to answer some of the questions now. I am pretty sure that I will not be able to get through all of them, but I will be happy to answer in writing any further questions that members put to the Government or officials.

A number of people made points about consultation. I will put the record straight: we have consulted those who are most directly affected. The trade unions that have been mentioned, in particular UCATT and Unison, were contacted prior to the original announcements and invited to all FETA staff meetings that were arranged between Transport Scotland, Scottish Government human resources and Barry Colford, the bridgemaster. Three trade unions in particular engaged through transition officials: UCATT, Unison and Unite. Transport Scotland arranged face-to-face meetings at that time for officials from all three unions and FETA, although not all trade union officials attended. There has been substantial contact, but I will take on board some of the points that have been made.

Elaine Murray made a number of points on which I am happy to provide some reassurance. I also want to address the point about representation, which a number of members raised. Helen Eadie pointed out that the original bridge was funded largely through loans that were raised by councils. It was quite right that those councils were the direct point of accountability. However, it is also the case that a commitment was given to stop the tolls once the capital costs were paid off. As I understand it, they were paid off in the mid-1990s, yet the tolls continued to be charged for many years and were the source of some of FETA’s funding. Just as it was right that

councils were accountable for the money that they raised, it is right that Scottish ministers are responsible for the money that is being spent on the new bridge. Of course, the maintenance of the existing bridge is funded directly through Scottish ministers, so it is right that that should be the level of accountability.

As I said, the bridges will be fully integrated into Scotland's motorway and trunk road network. The Forth road bridge, the staff who currently maintain it and—I underline this point—their pensions and Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations terms are going to be safeguarded in the process.

Helen Eadie: If the minister desires to have the full co-operation and involvement of local people and it is about economic benefits, social justice and social involvement, surely there must be partners on board. After all, we are talking about a forum, not a decision-making body. There is a difference between the two, and I ask him to please reconsider the matter.

Keith Brown: I have considered and reconsidered the matter as representations have been made. We should think again about the points that have been made by the City of Edinburgh Council, which remains the only council to have made representations on having further representation on the forum. I have not had the same representations from Fife Council, West Lothian Council or Perth and Kinross Council. In fact, the City of Edinburgh Council was unable to say what the level of representation should be or whether any of the other councils supported its position. It has made representations about obligations in respect of previous work on the A9000, said that we should take on those responsibilities, and pointed out that the Government is taking on responsibilities. Therefore, we should take on the accountability as well, not the councils. It wanted to hand over responsibility to the Government, and I have said that we will take that on. That responsibility should be reflected in the democratic arrangements, which is what we intend.

It seems to me that the point that Alex Johnstone made in relation to the international bridge organisations is absolutely right and that the people who will get most benefit from that will work directly on the bridge. I will check that further, but it seems absurd not to have those people directly involved in that process.

Dave Stewart made a number of points. He mentioned that we should not just make assumptions about the legal position. We do not do that. We do not pluck such things out of the air. We have advice, we have considered the issue, and the position has been given.

Dave Stewart also raised the question whether there should be an unsuccessful bidder premium. There will be no unsuccessful bidder premium. I think that he also made a point about maximising the use of the existing bridge. We will certainly do that, and I am happy to provide more information on that in writing.

I simply disagree with some of the points that Helen Eadie made. The first speech that I made in the Parliament was on abolishing the existing tolls. Alex Johnstone mentioned the idea of increasing tolls to £4 and recoiled in horror. Perhaps he should have recoiled in horror at the Skye bridge tolls, which were sky high. I am very proud to say that, to this day, I have still not paid the fine from my conviction for refusing to pay those tolls. That shows that, given the opportunity, it can seem very easy to draw on an income stream and it is very hard to refuse that, as people should have done in the 1990s to keep faith with the Government's promise that the tolls would stop being applied once the capital costs of the Forth bridge were paid. I am sure that, even now, had it not been for the actions of the Scottish Government, we would still be paying the tolls for the Skye bridge and would be a long way from seeing its capital costs paid off.

The committee's report explains that there are various community engagement requirements and that they are in the process of being put in place or are being developed. It expressed views on membership of the forum. In my view, the preferred outcome will be achieved without the loss of democratic accountability.

It is true that the next generation of trunk road operating company contracts that are currently being rolled out has been designed to positively seek value for money. I think that Alex Johnstone made that point.

Alex Johnstone asked what the cost would be if we did not have the new bridge. The cost would certainly run into billions of pounds to the Scottish economy. I think that that cost would be around £600,000 a day if the existing bridge was out of commission, so it is absolutely right that we continue with the new bridge. One or two members have mentioned that. It is not the case that the work that is being done on the cables on the existing bridge obviates the need for the new bridge. The case for the new bridge was not predicated solely on the problems with the cables. The current bridge reached its design capacity many years ago and is currently taking more traffic than it was designed to take. The case for the new bridge is therefore made.

I made a point about the existing contract for the bridge, which was to a consortium that involves Scottish companies. Beyond that, of course, there is the chance to have commercial arrangements

for subcontracts. Richard Baker's assertion that it should have been broken up into different contracts fills me with horror.

We have ensured that an original budget of between £1.7 billion and £2.3 billion has now been reduced to around £1.4 billion to £1.7 billion. The project is on time.

Richard Baker: Will the minister take an intervention?

Keith Brown: I am sorry, but I do not have much time left.

We do not have a cost or time overrun, and junction 1a has been completed on time. That seems to me to have been the most effective and efficient way of arranging the contract, and it is perhaps a shame that previous Administrations did not take the same approach.

Operating company contracts were, of course, let by the Labour Party as well. It is as if the process is new and that it is not the case that previous trunk road contracts were let in the way that we decided. That was how it was done before, going back to the 1990s, and the process was carried on by the previous Labour and Liberal Democrat Governments. We are continuing that process. We have a very well-developed network of operating companies that can take on such work, but we accept that those who have worked on the Forth road bridge for many years have particular expertise. That is why we are defending their rights under TUPE and why we have asked that it be an obligation for the new contractor to have admitted body status in the Lothian Pension Fund. To answer the point that Alex Johnstone raised, that obligation is taken on by the Government, which acts as the guarantor. TUPE obligations will, of course, continue when subsequent contracts are let.

I am pleased that there is general support for the bill in those regards. I will seek to answer the other questions that members have raised, and I hope that that support continues right through stage 2 and until the bill is passed.

“Low Carbon Scotland: Meeting our Emissions Reduction Targets 2013-2027”

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

The next item of business is a debate on motion S4M-06033, in the name of Rob Gibson, on reports on “Low Carbon Scotland: Meeting our Emissions Reduction Targets 2013-2027—The Draft Second Report on Proposals and Policies”.

I call Rob Gibson to speak to and move the motion on behalf of the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee.

15:36

Rob Gibson (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP): The debate provides the opportunity for mainstream scrutiny of the Scottish Government's “Draft Second Report on Proposals and Policies”, or RPP2, which sets out how our Government intends to ensure that Scotland meets its world-leading climate change targets. It has been a thorough, constructive and collaborative process, with the reports of four committees outlining how the draft document can be improved.

I firmly believe in the Parliament working on a cross-party basis in committees and here in the chamber to urge the Scottish Government to take on board our reports so that positive engagement by and with stakeholders will lead to a final RPP2 that is stronger, more transparent, more accessible and fully fit for its critical purpose.

First, the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee scrutinised broad governance issues in the development of RPP2. Will the document as a whole deliver the emissions reductions that are required? How will its implementation be monitored and evaluated? Secondly, we addressed interests that were relevant to our remit, such as emissions reductions in farming, forestry, peatlands and the marine environment.

We applaud the Government and the Parliament for establishing such ambitious targets, and we are pleased that Scotland tops the European Union 15 table for emissions reductions, but we must meet our future annual targets and the overall reductions targets that are set out in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, especially as we missed the first target in 2010 because of the poor winter. Thus, RPP2 must be a robust document that sets the framework for delivery.

The draft RPP2 will allow us to meet all our annual targets only if all policies and proposals are implemented, which we call on the Government to do. When the targets were set when the 2009 act

was passed, it was envisaged that the EU would move from its current 20 per cent emissions reduction target to one of 30 per cent, but deep recession has sidelined that aspiration. Nevertheless, the Scottish Government should work with the United Kingdom Government to press the EU to adopt the 30 per cent target. However, the final RPP2 must demonstrate how greater domestic reductions could be achieved within the current EU 20 per cent target.

A forecast as far into the future as 2027 is not an easy thing for any Government to make firm policy and spending commitments on. Worryingly, the draft does not strike the appropriate balance between policies and proposals. It is unclear whether or when some of the proposals will become policies. Clarity is essential for properly researched, funded and monitored plans. Where possible, more detail is essential for each proposal in the final document.

Changing behaviour is the key challenge for delivering emissions reductions. Sadly, the Government's behaviours framework was published after the committees concluded their evidence taking on the draft RPP2. Now that the document is out there, we firmly believe that the Scottish Government, as lead player, must guide Scots to meet their reduction targets, working with the UK Government, the EU, the public and private sectors, civic society and all our citizens to deliver sweeping behaviour change on the scale that is required.

I will move on to policies in the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee remit. We warmly welcome the restoration of our degraded peatland habitats, which make a significant contribution to locking carbon in the soil. We recommend that RPP2 policies restore 21,000 hectares of peatland a year and, on clarifying technical uncertainties, speedily adopt that proposal as a policy.

We welcome the practical forestry planting targets as important and the use of more Scottish timber in new-build houses as highly desirable. The potential to make much more of our new-build housing from native wood and the timber that is available should bring eco-friendly housing to the fore and make it a bigger feature in Scotland's housing landscape.

Waste reduction takes a positive trajectory through the zero waste plan. Some real successes are evident in managing our domestic waste, on which we must build. RPP2 appropriately details how landfill emissions will continue to reduce, but the final document must embody the waste hierarchy—reduce, reuse and recycle—as part of the methodology, particularly to encourage behaviour change.

Farming poses the most arduous challenge. Behaviour change is crucial to delivering the required abatement and yet the farming for a better climate programme is practised by only a few farms at present. It is the agricultural section of the draft RPP2 that overtly relies on proposals and lacks enough detail. We want clarity from the Government in all those areas.

I truly believe that the four reports by the four committees of the Scottish Parliament should prod the Government to sharpen the final RPP2 to lead and deliver Scotland's climate change targets up to and beyond 2027. We must come together to ensure that we deliver on the targets. We owe it to future generations to get RPP2 fit for Scotland's low-carbon future.

I move,

That the Parliament notes the reports of the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee, the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee and the Local Government and Regeneration Committee on the Scottish Government document, *Low Carbon Scotland: Meeting our Emissions Reduction Targets 2013-2027 - The Draft Second Report on Proposals and Policies*.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Murdo Fraser to speak on behalf of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee.

15:42

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): The Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee scrutiny focused on the energy and business sections of the draft RPP2. The inquiry was short and focused, unlike our previous effort on renewable energy. Before I comment on the substance of the committee's report, I record my thanks to those who gave evidence to the committee, to my fellow committee members, to our clerks and to the Scottish Parliament information centre researchers who supported us.

I will deal first with some general issues. We heard some concern from witnesses about the difficulties in reading across from RPP1 to RPP2 and in identifying whose responsibility it would be under RPP2 to take action. We have recommended a number of ways in which the draft RPP2 could be improved. Those include providing a clear update on progress and how it is monitored through the inclusion of indicators and milestones; identifying whether policies are Scottish, UK or EU; identifying who is responsible for the costs associated with policies, whether that is the Government, business or consumers; and identifying the potential wider economic, social and environmental benefits of implementing the policies and proposals.

Specifically, we ask the Scottish Government to undertake a broad range of consultation and engagement exercises in advance of the publication of the draft RPP3 and to ensure that it publishes future draft RPP reports prior to publishing its draft budget. It would be helpful if the minister, when summing up the debate, could confirm whether he agrees with those general areas of improvement that we would like to see.

The committee considered whether the proposals and policies outlined in the draft would enable the climate change targets to be met. In the brief time available, I will address one or two key issues that we considered.

First, there is the question of reducing carbon emissions. A significant area of interest for the committee was the energy emissions abatement targets. We heard about a number of risks and unknowns, which have the potential to impact on the targets' achievability.

The committee heard that the setting of a 2030 target for decarbonising the electricity sector is an important signal for the energy sector. As the target was announced at the same time as the draft RPP2 was published, we could not examine it in detail. We look forward to seeing the detail of how it will be achieved in the final version of the report.

The committee heard concerns about the Scottish Government's decision to agree to a UK-wide emissions performance standard of 450g per kWh until 2044. We understand that a UK-wide standard is necessary to secure electricity supply, but given the high level and lengthy timescale, we run the risk of not meeting the 2030 decarbonisation target.

We also heard concern that the agreed EPS would reduce the incentive for power stations to fit carbon capture and storage. CCS accounted for an important part of the evidence that we heard. We heard many calls for a quick decision on CCS schemes. Such is the influence of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee that no sooner had we agreed our report—and even before it was published—than the UK Government announced that Peterhead would be one of the preferred bidders for CCS, with a final decision to be taken in 2015. I am sure that members welcome that. However, witnesses were concerned that the high cost of CCS could mean that it might not proceed on the scale that has been envisaged, which might mean that targets will not be met.

Witnesses expressed serious concern about the impact of the EU not adopting a 30 per cent emissions reduction target. We asked the Scottish Government to say how it would mitigate the risk in that regard, in relation to achieving its emissions reduction targets. It would be helpful if the

minister, in his closing speech, said how the Government plans to do that.

Good progress towards meeting renewable energy targets has undoubtedly been made, but less progress has been made on renewable heat. Witnesses agreed with the Scottish Government's assessment that more needs to be done. We heard concerns about how the Scottish Government will address the promotion and funding of community district heating schemes, the raising of public awareness, assistance to off-gas-grid and rural properties, and the promotion of investment in large industrial facilities. Given that a variety of areas need to be addressed, we recommended that the Scottish Government include in its final report the recommendations of the expert commission on district heating.

The committee considered measures to reduce energy demand. The draft RPP2 contains a number of Scottish and UK energy efficiency schemes that aim to reduce demand for households and businesses. Witnesses welcomed the national retrofit programme, which focuses on tackling hard-to-treat properties, but asked for further detail on how schemes will achieve the desired emissions abatement levels. Witnesses also requested that future draft RPPs be accompanied by an updated energy efficiency plan; it would be helpful if the minister could advise the Parliament whether that is the Scottish Government's intention.

Concern was expressed about the level of funding for the national retrofit programme. Witnesses questioned whether the £135 million per annum that is expected from energy companies can be achieved and asked how an expected quadrupling of carbon abatement as a result of the NRP can be achieved at a time when the Scottish Government's budget line remains flat.

We heard a lot of concern about building regulations and the potential financial impact on businesses of meeting carbon emissions targets for existing buildings. In particular, we heard that the targets might be onerous for small and medium-sized enterprises. I would be grateful if the minister said how the Scottish Government plans to assist SMEs in improving their buildings' energy efficiency, so that they do not bear an undue financial burden.

The Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee is of the view that the report, "Low Carbon Scotland: Meeting our Emissions Reduction Targets 2013-2027—The Draft Second Report on Proposals and Policies" provides the necessary framework but could be improved on if some of the detail that I have mentioned were included. It is essential that the final report provides confidence that it contains the right proposals and policies to

achieve the legally binding targets in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Maureen Watt to speak on behalf of the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee.

15:49

Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP): I think that the joint parliamentary scrutiny of the draft RPP2 was the first of its kind, involving as it did four committees. I will outline the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee's view of the report. First, I thank everyone who gave evidence to the committee and I thank the other three committees, whose work on the report means that there has been proper scrutiny of an important and extensive document.

Unfortunately, some of our academic witnesses could not attend our evidence session, so we may not have received as balanced a view as we could have done. We focused on two main themes: energy efficiency measures in homes and communities, and transport. We made some practical suggestions about the clarity of the document to the Government and I am pleased that the Minister for Housing and Welfare said in evidence that she will reflect on suggestions for improvement in the presentation of material in RPP2 made by our and other committees.

We are clear about the enormity of the challenge facing the housing and transport sectors in contributing to meeting Scotland's ambitious and world-leading climate change targets. We will need significant behavioural changes across Scottish society if we are to meet that challenge. It was made clear to the committee that improving energy efficiency in our homes is key if we are to meet the emissions reduction targets. However, that it is not an easy task—not least because of the large number of existing hard-to-treat properties in Scotland. We feel that regulation for minimum standards in private housing and energy-efficient building standards for new homes will help Scotland face the challenge. It is essential that we reduce the cost of heating our homes through energy-efficiency measures and that we seek to mitigate the associated cost and other barriers that make it difficult for home owners to do that.

We are concerned that it is not clear how the UK-based policies aimed at addressing this—for instance, the energy company obligation and the green deal—will work alongside Scottish policies. We recommend that the Scottish Government works closely with the UK Government to ensure that the Scottish-specific issues are fully recognised in the delivery of those schemes. Our

committee will be writing to the UK Government about that.

We welcome the new national retrofit programme and the warm homes fund, which will help those in the most fuel-poor areas. It is important that the Scottish Government works with stakeholders and especially with local authorities, who have a key strategic role in identifying fuel-poor areas and housing stock that badly needs upgrading. The current economic climate and the impact of the welfare reform agenda make it even more important that programmes like that are rolled out to those who need them most. We look forward to seeing the detail of how the retrofit programme will be delivered when the Scottish Government publishes its sustainable housing strategy.

I will move on to the transport sector and what the committee believes is vital if RPP2 is to set Scotland on the right path to meeting the targets up to 2027. The Government must be able to embrace emerging technologies and innovations to meet the challenges in this sector. That is why we support a flexible approach to proposals and policies for the period up to 2027. I am pleased that the Government is funding a wide range of initiatives and programmes, such as those on decarbonising vehicles, promoting sustainable communities and encouraging people to change their travel practices and behaviour.

We do not know what the economic climate will be like in 2027, nor what budget levels future Governments will have. Since the 2009 act setting our emissions targets was passed, the economic climate has changed significantly and it will be a hugely significant factor in our ability to deliver the changes and improvements required to meet those targets.

The committee also acknowledges the positive impact that a shift to more sustainable procurement methods and procedures might have on carbon emissions reduction. I have little doubt that this will be an important part of Parliament's scrutiny of the Government's forthcoming procurement reform bill.

We hope that the Government will address the various concerns in our report and that these will be reflected in the final RPP2, setting out how Scotland will go about meeting its climate change targets up to 2027. We recognise that the Government has set ambitious, ground-breaking and world-leading targets and that to meet them Scotland must stay at the forefront of climate change policy.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I call Kevin Stewart to speak on behalf of the Local Government and Regeneration Committee.

15:55

Kevin Stewart (Aberdeen Central) (SNP): The Local Government and Regeneration Committee was responsible for considering aspects of RPP2 relating to local government, communities and planning. I intend to summarise briefly the views of the committee and leave it to colleagues to provide greater detail on individual aspects.

At the outset, I express my thanks and those of the committee to the witnesses who provided written and/or oral evidence to us, often at short notice. Without their considerable assistance, we would not have been able to complete the report in the time available.

The committee made a deliberate choice to look forward, as RPP2 is an opportunity to set out the proposals and policies to facilitate the delivery of a second tranche of climate change targets. It also, of course, provides an opportunity to revise the approach to meeting the first batch of targets and, again, we have chosen to look forward and concentrate our thoughts on ways in which that can be achieved and reporting improved.

Although the total quantity of emissions output from the public sector is relatively small, at 2 per cent, local authorities have large estates and are responsible for a wide range of functions as consumers and suppliers of services. The Minister for Local Government and Planning said that the actions of local government

“will be central to the transition to a low-carbon economy and in helping to deliver the associated social, environmental and economic benefits to our communities”.—[*Official Report, Local Government and Regeneration Committee*, 27 February 2013; c 1758-59.]

It is, therefore, right that the committee should consider how local government can influence public behaviour as well as contributing to meeting the targets.

All Scotland's local authorities have signed Scotland's climate change declaration and all have produced annual statements, the latest of which—published in February 2013—were analysed by the sustainable Scotland network. The ensuing report set out a series of recommendations to improve the reporting of good practice and to support the development and use of its impact and influence. The sustainable Scotland network also made a series of recommendations that were aimed at improving the support that it can provide to local authorities. Basically, it wants more resources—nothing new there—to improve its reporting and analysis. The committee commends and supports its work and has recommended that future climate change reports to the Parliament should include a section specifically on local authorities, along with milestones by which progress can be measured.

We also recommend that the future reports of local authorities include the amount that they are spending to support the delivery of measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

One example of work that is being undertaken by local government that can be shared by all concerns street lighting. Authorities are facing a triple whammy of increasing energy costs, significant increases in the distribution system charges from Scottish Power and increasingly non-compliant, out-of-date lights. Street lights and other lights, such as traffic signals, illuminated traffic signs and so on, account for 18 per cent of local government energy costs, which represents an annual figure of £43 million. Work in East Dunbartonshire Council on installing LED technology and other measures has shown that annual energy consumption—and therefore costs—can be reduced by 63.5 per cent. That equates to a reduction in carbon use of 26,752 tonnes annually. Of course, significant initial capital investment is required but, given the figures that I have provided, the payback period is relatively short. We were pleased to learn that the Government has indicated that it is providing pilot funding to some authorities to take schemes forward and we look forward to such schemes being quickly rolled out across the country.

Local authorities have a significant role to play in influencing behavioural change. Like other committees, we were disappointed that the low-carbon behaviours framework was published after we had concluded our evidence taking. It is our view that that document should not be a stand-alone but should find expression in all sections of future RPP documents. Change is required across all sectors of the economy and society, if the targets are to be met.

I will stay with our theme of looking forward. We made recommendations in relation to proposed new planning guidance, new building standards and the new national planning framework, all of which are expected later this year. In each case, we recommended that explicit requirements on favouring low-carbon-emission options be included. We also want planning authorities to be required to produce a statement setting out how the implementation of development plans and planning consent for major planning applications would contribute to the reduction of emissions.

We were interested in a Government bid fund that has been made available to support local authorities that have applied for assistance in considering planning applications for wind farms. Assistance is provided to ensure that authorities have the necessary resource, policies and guidance in place when considering wind farm applications with the aim of speeding up the decision-making process. We consider that to be a

helpful initiative and recommend that the Government widen its scope so that it can provide support for other climate change-related planning issues.

I see that I have only 20 seconds left.

We see opportunities in the forthcoming procurement reform bill. I hope that the Government will take cognisance of that. I also hope that more recognition will be given to communities' input—perhaps the minister will deal with that in his summing up.

I agree with colleagues that the four reports that were published last week by four committees of the Parliament provide the Government with the basis to improve the draft RPP2. We should be proud of the approach that Scotland has pioneered and do everything that we can to turn into reality the targets in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.

16:01

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change (Paul Wheelhouse): I thank Rob Gibson, Murdo Fraser, Maureen Watt and Kevin Stewart for their comments and the work of their committees in considering the draft second report on the Scottish Government's climate change proposals and policies, which we have all come to call RPP2.

I also express my thanks to the many organisations that provided written and oral evidence to the four committees. Those detailed and thoughtful submissions are a vital part of the scrutiny process for the draft report.

The fact that four parliamentary committees took evidence on the draft RPP2—only two took evidence on RPP1—signals the growing recognition of the relevance across all parts of Scotland's society and economy of acting on climate change. I am not aware of any subject other than the annual budget that would find six different Government ministers giving evidence to committees.

I put on record my recognition of the effort that the four committees have made in completing what has been an important but demanding task within the time constraints set down in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. The 60-day timeframe stems from the desire expressed by Parliament that there should be a defined period for scrutiny of each RPP before the reports are finalised. However, I appreciate the challenges posed by exploring such an all-encompassing subject and I would be happy to work with the Parliament to learn the lessons of the two RPPs to date and to consider whether there may be ways to improve the process for RPP3, which I reassure

members—who are probably suffering stress from this exercise—is not due until at least late 2016.

The last thing that a minister wants is an important piece of their work to be picked apart and criticised, albeit constructively. However, I believe that the Parliament's scrutiny of the draft RPP2 has been an extremely valuable process. Fresh eyes have added fresh perspectives and the final document will benefit as a result. The draft RPP2 is a complex and wide-ranging document, and the breadth of the recommendations reflects that. The Parliament will appreciate that, although we may not be able to respond to everything, there are some areas that we are already working on.

There were comments about the clarity of the data in some instances and it was noted that certain approaches that were taken in the first RPP are absent from the second report. Murdo Fraser referred to that. In many cases, those were editorial choices in attempting to simplify the document, but I am happy to reconsider how the data is presented in order to make it clearer.

In particular, committees have asked for more information to be provided about the three proposals that outline the technical emissions abatement potential in housing, transport and land use. Those proposals are intended to illustrate the emissions abatement that our modelling shows could be achieved in the longer term. More requires to be done to work through the possibilities associated with those proposals to improve our understanding and to narrow down the various ways in which they might be delivered. As we look towards 2027 and beyond, certain elements of RPP2 will, understandably, be work in progress. However, we will certainly reflect on what more we might be able to say about the technical potential proposals in the final report.

Many members and stakeholders emphasised the importance of behaviour change. Indeed, we have heard about that in the first four speeches in the debate. Whether that is the behaviour of individuals or organisations—or, to pick up Kevin Stewart's point, communities—that is important in seeking to cut emissions significantly.

I am pleased that the principles set out in RPP2, which have been built on in the subsequent publication of our low-carbon behaviours framework, have been widely welcomed, but I appreciate the desire for the Government to demonstrate how it is turning the theory into action.

A programme of work is commencing to roll out the framework's individual, social and material—ISM—tool to Government officials and delivery partners to help define and refine the behavioural aspects of our policies and proposals to deliver the

greatest change. We will publish a report in the autumn highlighting the progress that has been made.

Finally, there have been calls for reassurance that appropriate governance and monitoring arrangements are in place to ensure that sufficient progress is maintained in delivering the action that we need. Although the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 certainly does not lack reporting requirements, the Government is happy to reconsider the use of milestones in the RPP in order to drive achievement. I emphasise the commitment that we have made to ensure that the senior civil servants responsible for the policy areas covered by RPP2 have individual and specific programmes of work to ensure deliverability and accountability.

RPP2 is the most comprehensive outline of measures for reducing national emissions that we know of anywhere. As the report describes and as I have explained in committee, revisions to the data used to calculate past and future emissions have significantly increased the challenge that faces us versus what we anticipated when we set our climate change targets as a Parliament. Despite that, RPP2 sets out a package that can meet those targets, delivering more emissions abatement than even our independent advisers, the Committee on Climate Change, suggested is possible.

Scotland is already a leader on emissions reductions in Europe. Our emissions cut of 24.3 per cent from 1990 is the biggest fall of any of the EU-15 member states and is higher than the average reduction of 14.3 per cent seen across the EU-27, which includes the accession countries from eastern Europe.

The Climate Change (Scotland) Act requires an emissions cut of at least 42 per cent in 2020. RPP2 shows that we can get to 42.8 per cent even without the assistance of a stronger European Union target. If the EU does move, the RPP shows that that will help Scotland to achieve an emissions cut of up to 46.6 per cent in 2020.

When this Parliament passed its Climate Change (Scotland) Act in 2009 it was in the hope—even the expectation—that our ambitious stance would be followed by others. In fact, progress on an international climate deal has been disappointingly slow in the past few years. It would have been easy, in response, to set less demanding annual targets or use older data, allowing us to cross comfortably low hurdles, but we have not done that.

Similarly, it would have been easy in the face of Westminster's cuts to the Scottish budget to deprioritise climate change, but we have not done that either, as testified by the £1.1 billion

committed over the current spending review period specifically to support low-carbon action.

That continued commitment is delivering progress such as: continuing to lead the United Kingdom on renewable power with 36 per cent of electricity consumption met from renewable energy, exceeding the 2011 target of 31 per cent and the UK's own figure of 9 per cent; more than doubling the installation rate for loft insulation from 40,000 homes in 2008-09 to 104,000 in 2011-12; and reversing the declining woodland planting rate by increasing it from 2,600 hectares in 2009-10 to around 9,000 hectares in 2011-12, protecting that important carbon sink.

The Committee on Climate Change recognised that positive action in its recent Scottish progress report, and RPP2 shows where we can achieve even more in the future. Proposals will be turned into policies, but the RPP does not seek to nail down how every measure will be delivered over the next 15 years. RPP2 maps out where many of the opportunities lie, but there must continue to be flexibility about how those are realised.

I am not the first climate change minister to remind this Parliament that the Government cannot deliver this agenda on its own. Partnerships with the public and private sectors will be important and the actions of individuals and families will be vital.

RPP2 signals that the Government will not shy away from regulation where appropriate, but if we want to maintain the enthusiasm of the people of Scotland and their commitment to reducing emissions, we need to ensure that the effort that we expect of them is fair. Before regulating, it is right to seek to give people choices and to encourage and support households and businesses to use energy and other resources more efficiently, saving money as well as cutting emissions.

I think that the RPP2 gets the balance right. It is ambitious and wide ranging. It sets out a clear path for meeting our climate change targets while allowing flexibility to respond to future events. We are already laying the foundations for Scotland's low-carbon future and the RPP2 shows how those foundations can be built on.

I have a bit more time, so I want to pick up on one point. Murdo Fraser requested information about how small and medium-sized enterprises might be assisted. We will respond in due course to the many points that the conveners raised, but I can highlight the fact that, as of April this year, the Scottish Government is establishing resource efficient Scotland, integrating current energy and resource efficiency advice and support for business and the public sector into one streamlined programme. The intention is that

about £7 million of investment will be used under that programme to improve annual administration efficiency savings. I hope that that will help with the issue that Murdo Fraser raised on behalf of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee.

16:10

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): I welcome this afternoon's debate. The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 is a significant piece of legislation, which established Scotland as a good example of both Government and Parliament action on climate change. It set out ambitious targets, which we all agreed to. It is recognised internationally as progressive.

In a number of recent debates, we have made it clear that the rewards of delivery are not just domestic; they contribute towards Scotland's effort to deliver climate justice and our international obligations. The collective international effort is not where it needs to be, however, and there is an increasing need for leadership and for results. There is a huge responsibility on the Parliament and the Government to deliver.

We all accept that Scotland's targets are ambitious, and that places all the more emphasis on the need to deliver if those targets are to be credible. We have had early indications that all is not well, and the first emissions target was missed. At the time, the minister identified a cold winter, but it is surely not a surprise to have a cold winter in Scotland. We need to move away from those excuses, and we need greater action. Cold winters by themselves are not the problem; the problems are too many homes and properties with inadequate insulation and inefficient heating, and not enough progress on building standards for new homes. We cannot afford to miss those opportunities if we are to deliver the step change that is needed.

Paul Wheelhouse: I wonder whether the member might wish to reflect on the report from the Committee on Climate Change, which vindicates the point that we made at the time of announcing the missed target in 2009-10, as it says that the weather was a key factor.

Claire Baker: The weather will be a contributory factor, but we cannot accept it as the reason why we might fail to achieve targets in future years. The issue needs to be addressed. The Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee said that policies to address those challenges, such as on building standards and home efficiency, need to be accelerated.

Furthermore, much of the progress that has been made has been attributed to the economic downturn, and there are concerns that change is not being embedded. This afternoon we are

debating a draft report, and the next few weeks provide the Scottish Government with the opportunity to respond to the concerns that are being raised and to come back with a more convincing set of policies and proposals.

In this short debate, it is impossible to cover the four committee reports, although the conveners' opening speeches set out the thrust of them. Although there has been scrutiny by policy area, there is a need for scrutiny of RPP2 as a coherent package of measures. Although the RACCE Committee is the lead committee, there was little synergy between the committee reports. I know that there was frustration from some witnesses at the RACCE Committee that they could not talk about transport policy, even though it is pretty impossible to discuss behavioural change without talking about transport policy.

Key messages emerge from the hours of scrutiny involving MSPs, local authorities and environment campaigners, which the Government must listen to and act on. Although it is a statutory requirement to report on how the Scottish Government will respond to the missed target, it is open to interpretation whether or not that can be achieved through RPP2. There has been rhetoric, but it has been difficult to identify what specific policies or proposals have changed in response to the missed target.

There has been criticism that it has been difficult to compare RPP1 and RPP2, and I acknowledge the minister's comments on that in his opening speech. There is a lack of transparency on which proposals from RPP1 have become policies, which proposals and policies have been dropped, and how policies will be addressed. If that point could be addressed in the redraft, it would be much appreciated.

No one suggested that meeting our climate change targets would be easy. It needs a combination of Government effort and effort from local authorities, individuals and communities. The committee reports make some good points in those areas. There is an acknowledgement that there are positives in RPP2—that is not in any doubt. There is a recognition of the importance of peatland restoration as a welcome addition to the Government's priorities. We can also point to the progress that there has been on recycling.

In relation to behavioural change, schools and their partners are doing a lot of good work on early years. As my local primary school headed off to the beach this morning as part of eco-week, I do not think that they expected to be going there in the snow. The unpredictability of the weather, both at home and abroad, is one of the key challenges of climate change.

The question is whether RPP2 is robust enough to get us to where we need to be and whether it is credible, ambitious, transparent and capable of delivery. When the document was published, Stop Climate Chaos did a scenario calculation demonstrating that Scotland would hit all its targets only if the EU shifted to a 30 per cent target and all policies and proposals were introduced.

It looks increasingly likely that the change at the EU level will not happen until at least 2016, so RPP2 is at risk of being doomed to failure. Missed targets in the early years will only make future targets more difficult to achieve and we will constantly be compensating rather than making progress. Stop Climate Chaos chair Tom Ballantine said in recent days:

“Ministers are trying to pull the wool over the eyes of the parliament with the current climate plan”.

Rob Gibson: Will Claire Baker give way?

Claire Baker: I am just about to refer to the RACCE Committee.

To be fair, the committees have recognised the risk. The RACCE Committee report states:

“It is clear from the draft Second Report on Proposals and Policies ... that there is only one combination of circumstances that will allow Scotland to meet each of its annual targets from 2013 until 2027.”

The committees are consistent in calling for the Scottish Government to be clear about how it will respond if the EU delays setting, or fails to set, the 30 per cent target.

At the weekend, a Government spokeswoman was reported as saying that it is “commonly understood” that Scottish targets are based on the EU target. However, that is not the case. It was always recognised that it would be harder without the 30 per cent target, but the Scottish targets were still to be achieved regardless of the EU target.

In that context, the challenge for Scotland is to be bold and ambitious, and RPP2 needs to respond to that challenge. The concern is not only about the EU target and the impact that it will have but about the overreliance on proposals over policies.

Although proposals have a role to play, the dominance of proposals risks undermining the credibility of the RPP2. The Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee described it as a failure

“to strike the appropriate balance between policies and proposals.”

RPP2 itself recognises its limitations. As Stop Climate Chaos highlights, low-carbon transport

policies are classified as proposals rather than policies, and RPP2 states:

“while in most cases they are already being taken forward, they are not yet being implemented at the intensity required for the abatement figures in this document.”

Of course, there needs to be a degree of flexibility, but an overreliance on proposals leads to the plan lacking credibility. Policies, as opposed to proposals, come along with finance and/or legislation and a clear set of timetables. It is not clear when, or which, proposals are expected to become policy.

When the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 was passed, there was recognition of the need for early action. However, RPP2 back-loads activity, and there is a lack of evidence of policy action of sufficient intensity in the early years. Transport, housing and rural land use are the policy areas that are identified for additional effort. That is not to say that nothing is happening, but the scale of the challenge in those areas is significant and we have the opportunity to do more now.

Although there were calls for greater commitment in the early years, particular concerns were raised about the future abatement—

Paul Wheelhouse: Will Claire Baker give way?

Claire Baker: I am sorry, but I am running out of time.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I am afraid that the member is in her last minute.

Claire Baker: I know that we are tight for time in this debate.

Particular concerns were raised about the future abatement figures—the phrase “wishful thinking” was used in more than one committee. In his opening speech, the minister referred to the fact that significant abatement potential is identified in transport, rural land use and housing in particular. There needs to be greater transparency about how projections are arrived at if there is to be confidence in RPP2.

The minister cannot deliver on the challenges alone. If RPP2 is to have the confidence of MSPs and wider Scotland, a Government response and leadership in the Cabinet are needed. Although there is support for what can be achieved, the purpose of RPP2 is to set out the future path to hit statutory targets, and there are concerns that the report as it stands will fail to achieve that. Scotland has a reputation on climate change that is world leading and worth saving.

16:19

Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): I am pleased take part in the debate.

The subject is an important one. It will impact not only on this session of Parliament but on the next three as well. The policies and proposals in the report that we are talking about take us up to the year 2027—a long time hence—and some of the scrutiny of the policy area seemed like something of a lottery at times. That surely makes it all the more important to be as robust as possible in any report of this nature. All the committees have delivered suitably robust reports on this occasion, and I commend the minister for the changes that he has already committed to making.

The Scottish Government has rightly earned plaudits from far and wide on account of the carbon abatement targets that it has set. Government ministers are fond of calling them world leading, and why should they not? In many ways, they are world leading.

In the previous debate on these issues, I said that the Government could easily have set less challenging targets that were easier to achieve but that it was wise not to go down that route. Instead, with the backing of Parliament, it has set challenging targets and gained a lot of good publicity for doing so.

The only problem was that the Government failed to meet the first target that was set. During the previous debate, the minister shifted some of the blame for that to the UK Government, but more accurately he then focused on the truly dreadful winter conditions of 2010 as the primary reason for the failure. Having just returned last Saturday from more than 80° in Malawi to minus quite a lot in Dumfries and Galloway, I am tempted to suggest that the minister might need to dust off those arguments again when this year's results are eventually published.

There is a serious point here. Given the vagaries of the Scottish climate, I find myself asking whether it is realistic to expect any Government to

“ensure Scotland achieves each annual target, as well as the overall emissions reduction set out in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009”,

as stated in the very first paragraph of the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee report. I suspect that it is not realistic but it should certainly remain our constant aim to do so, even if it necessitates the setting of challenging targets that run the risk of not being met, as those annual targets undoubtedly do. I commend the Government for sticking to its guns in that regard.

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): Although one can look back to cold winters, does the member agree that, for the future, we need to

be factoring the possibility of cold winters into RPP2?

Alex Fergusson: Of course one should factor in as much as possible, but we cannot factor in how cold a winter is going to be. We are always at risk of freak weather conditions. Although it is absolutely right that we should try to take that risk into account, it is inevitable that, from time to time, conditions will arise that give us an even greater challenge to achieving the targets—but that is not to say that we should not try to achieve them all the time.

It is difficult not to harbour some concerns about how the Government proposes to carry out its plans. As witness after witness in committee and speaker after speaker today have said, the Government's strategy is strong on proposals but a bit short on policies. In others words, it tends to be high on aspiration but low on action.

I will spend a little time on two areas of RPP2 that fall within the remit of the committee on which I serve: forestry and agriculture.

Our committee report rightly welcomes the forestry planting targets, and I am happy to agree with that. However, I raised my concerns at committee about whether those targets can be met. I do not think that it reads well that the Government has switched its planting target from 10,000 hectares per year to 100,000 hectares over 10 years. I know that the final outcome will be exactly the same, but the ability to scrutinise progress towards that outcome will be greatly diminished by the change and I rather regret it. It looks to me—and, I suspect, to neutral onlookers—that that is the action of a Government that is seeking to cover its back in a policy area in which it is increasingly unsure of itself and with a sector that is increasingly uneasy about its direction of travel. That is not a good place to be, especially given that forestry has a huge part to play in achieving our abatement targets.

As our report highlights, the situation with agriculture is even more concerning. It is absolutely right to point out that the levels of abatement and reduction being sought from the agricultural sector will depend on significant levels of behaviour change. Behaviour change is, however, an inexact science, particularly perhaps in the agricultural sector, so an awful lot is being taken on trust. That might not matter, were it not for

“the lack of information and detail regarding the proposals, which account for significant volumes of abatement in the later years of the draft RPP2.”

Those later years are the years 2024 to 2027, and the figures given for agriculture in those three years exactly mirror the assumed abatement levels from transport in those same three years.

When we combine the two figures, we end up with 11 per cent of the total abatement forecast for the whole period—surely an unwise level to commit to in what is essentially a pretty vague aspiration that will only be delivered after 2024, if at all. I have some difficulty in agreeing that that is the proper basis for a policy of this importance, and it should concern all of us that the back-loading that Claire Baker referred to is quite as evident as it is.

I will highlight one factor over which we have little control, yet which could render all of these proposals almost unachievable. As many people from outside this Parliament—and from within it—have told us, unless the EU moves to emission reduction targets of 30 per cent, only one of the Scottish Government's targets can be met. The good news is that the UK Government fully endorses a move to 30 per cent and I hope that both our Governments will pressurise the EU on the matter at every available opportunity. If they can do that, it will achieve two things: it will make RPP2 doable, which we all want, and it will prove that, as in so many other things, we are indeed better together.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):

We turn to the open debate. Speeches are to be five minutes long.

16:26

Richard Lyle (Central Scotland) (SNP): It is now a number of years since the subject of climate change was first highlighted. In those days, no one gave climate change any serious thought. How things have changed. In the 21st century, we must act on what is one of the main issues in the world today. What we dare to do today will affect the generations that will follow us in this world of ours. What we do today will help to ensure the survival of all mankind tomorrow.

I believe that Scotland has the most ambitious climate change legislation in the world. Scotland's emissions are reducing; Scotland has had the biggest fall in emissions of the EU 15 since 1990. The challenge is increasing, but we are over halfway to achieving our target of 42 per cent emissions reductions by 2020.

Missing the 2010 annual target was disappointing, but annual fluctuations are to be expected. 2010 saw the first year-on-year increase since 2006, which was the result of very cold weather at the beginning and end of the year—the coldest six months since 1919. Scotland was not alone in experiencing the impact of that cold weather; the Welsh Assembly Government noted that increased demand for energy during the winter months was a major contributory factor to Welsh emissions increasing by six per cent between 2009 and 2010. The measures that are

set out in RPP2 show that it is possible to compensate for having missed the 2010 target by beating targets in future years, thereby meeting our obligations on cumulative emissions, as well.

The Scottish Government has committed £1.14 billion over the current spending review period to support additional climate change action. That is on top of its traditional investment in areas such as public transport. The investment will support a range of climate change measures, including investment in driving the growth of low-carbon energy over the next three years in renewables and grid enhancement; investment in homes and communities, including support for fuel poverty reduction, energy efficiency and the climate challenge fund; investment in active travel, low-carbon vehicles and congestion reduction to reduce the impact of transport; and investment over three years to tackle emissions from rural land. The overall estimated annual costs that are set out in the draft RPP2 present overall financial costs to society as a whole, not just to the Government.

It is not just about Government money; investment decisions that are taken by local government, the wider public sector and the private sector will all contribute. Everyone in Scotland has their part to play in the climate change agenda and everyone needs to plan. If we all buy in and take part, we can help to meet our emissions target. Simple things such as saving energy in our daily lives will help. Remember the switch off campaign some years ago? Occasionally, I go around my house and switch off lights when my wife has left a room, which really annoys her. I used to say that my daughter lit up my life, but that was because she left all the lights on in the house. Basically, if we take part and switch off, we can save a lot of energy and help to move towards our targets.

It has been suggested that the Scottish Government needs to turn proposals into policies, and I am sure that the Government will do so where that is practicable. The money that the Government has invested over three years demonstrates its commitment. For example, the national retrofit programme will refurbish or refit Scotland's older houses to make them more energy efficient. Other proposals are already contributing at a lower level, including support for cycling and for a modal shift to bus or rail and away from private car use.

I suggest that the Scottish Government is delivering on climate change. We are ahead of our schedule on renewables targets. By 2011, 65 per cent of Scottish homes had achieved a good energy efficiency rating—up from 50 per cent in 2007 and from 31 per cent in 2002. Tackling fuel poverty and cutting emissions from homes should

be a priority of the Government, and I am sure that the Government is doing that.

The Government is reversing the decline in the woodland planting rate. It is phasing out, by 2020, the sending of biodegradable waste to landfill—the first ban anywhere in the UK—and it is giving more resources to Scottish communities to support low-carbon action at local level.

I believe that RPP2 takes the Scottish Government's commitment further in building on the strong package of proposals and policies that were in RPP1. The new vision for decarbonising heat means that Scotland will have a largely decarbonised heat sector by 2050, with significant progress being made by 2030.

I compliment the staff, the convener and the other members of the RACCE committee on the work that they did on an excellent committee report.

16:31

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):

It is extremely disappointing that this is such a short debate. Last week, we spent days debating issues that are not within this Parliament's competence, but this week a debate on an issue of global significance that is within the Parliament's competence is being squeezed into a very short time.

The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 is world leading, with ambitious targets to cut greenhouse gas emissions enshrined in law. Alex Salmond struts the world stage taking plaudits for the legislation, but his Government has missed the first annual target and RPP2 shows no real commitment to getting us back on track. Again, the Scottish Government seems to be making assertions without principles or policies to underpin them. Only if all the policies and proposals in RPP2 are implemented is there any likelihood that we will achieve the legally binding targets.

When the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee tried to hold the Government to account over the targets and the content of RPP2, the Government party used its built-in majority on the committee to protect the Government from hard questions. A committee's constitutional role is to hold the Government to account, but the votes that are listed in annex A to the EET committee report show how some committee members failed in that role.

Section 36 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 requires Scottish ministers to set out proposals and policies to compensate for any missed targets, but such measures are missing from RPP2. A committee recommendation on the

inclusion of such measures was again voted down by Government party back benchers. However, that is a legal requirement, which must be included in the final RPP2 report. The Scottish Government must also show how it will act to meet those missed targets, and that must be addressed urgently. Otherwise, the cumulative emissions from the missed targets will cause further damage.

The EET committee had previously asked that the report on policies and proposals be provided ahead of the budget so that the budget could be scrutinised in tandem with the report. Again, Government party committee members blocked the inclusion of such a request in our report. However, unless reports are provided in that way, budget scrutiny of the targets is impossible for committees. As RPP2 is unclear about where the costs of policies and proposals lie, any financial scrutiny of the measures is impossible. Stakeholders have found that frustrating, because they cannot calculate where the costs lie and what their financial commitment will be.

Our meeting our target is dependent not only on all the policies and proposals in the report being implemented, but on the EU setting a 30 per cent emissions reduction target. If the EU fails to do that, our target will not be met. The report provides no contingency to mitigate the effects of that happening. That must be included in the final report.

Energy efficiency is crucial for meeting our targets. We need improved building standards for new builds and the retrofitting of our existing buildings with insulation. However, the RPP2 report depends heavily on new technologies for meeting those targets. That is pie in the sky, because the report provides no real knowledge of what such technologies will be, when they will come into being and whether they will be able to provide the emissions savings that are indicated in the report. Other countries have much better-insulated homes than we have. We need to learn from them and start now to improve the fabric of our new buildings and retrofit our existing stock.

Paul Wheelhouse: I accept that in the report there is a degree of dependency on technology change, but does not Rhoda Grant accept that there is inherent uncertainty about new technologies this far out, given that we are talking about the period up to 2027?

Rhoda Grant: I agree that there is uncertainty about new technologies, but the report must be based on reality in showing how we will get to our legally binding targets, rather than doing things on a wing and a prayer in the hope that something will come out of the woodwork to help us get there.

Carbon capture and storage is one of the technologies that the report is so dependent on for

meeting the targets. The UK Government has just announced funding for two CCS test sites, but the UK Energy Bill does not include power station emissions targets at a level that would incentivise CCS. The Scottish Government intends to align itself with that by handing back the power to the UK Government to legislate on those emissions for Scotland. Meeting our targets is dependent on CCS, but there is no incentive or, indeed, compunction to use that technology. Again, Government back benchers stopped the committee asking those difficult questions.

RPP2 is a draft document and there is time to improve it. However, I am concerned that the Scottish Government is trying to avoid scrutiny rather than to make an honest attempt to deal with our missed target. The Government is legally obliged to meet the targets and to report on how it will mitigate the missed target. I hope that it will do that when it publishes the final report.

16:36

Nigel Don (Angus North and Mearns) (SNP): I congratulate the Scottish Government on its ambition, but I note that the ambition is shared across Parliament and will be inherited by future Governments.

All members who have spoken have mentioned targets and plans, but how will we make it all happen? I am following a number of other members in considering how we will achieve behaviour change. Governments can, of course, have policies in that regard, but Governments control relatively little. The Government employs what feels like a great number of people, whose example will be important. However, as a parent, I note that our children may sometimes listen to what we say but, infuriatingly, they by and large copy what we do. Societal change is inevitably the sum of our individual changes, so it will depend on what we do.

The best model that I can come up with for what we are trying to do in terms of the climate change challenge is probably how we have tackled public health issues over the past decade or two, because this really is about the public good. I refer members to a couple of recent public health issues, starting with smoking.

Smoking has been an issue for a generation or two now, but I invite members to reflect on the fact that if an individual who smokes—there is nothing in society that smokes—is to stop smoking, he or she first has to see the risk of their behaviour and understand the desirability of the change; they then need to believe that change is something that they must do rather than something that somebody else must do and they must internalise that belief to the point at which they act on it. They

also of course need to be able to persevere, and even then it may be too late. The ban on public smoking has undoubtedly helped that process, but I suggest that the individual requirements on the way are crucial. In that regard, I do not think that I have told anybody anything that we do not know.

I now want to consider the on-going public health issue of obesity and being overweight, for which exactly the same sequence as for smoking must be gone through. I will not repeat it for the record, but will acknowledge that the individual must feel the need to make the change and must persevere. In this particular instance, society is not that helpful. Food is actually good and public bans on this and that are not going to help. We can see that the public environment for that situation is not particularly helpful.

Before I go on to discuss one or two other little issues, I point out that the greener Scotland website provides some very helpful stuff regarding RPP2.

How will we change our energy use? First, we have to ask the question, “Does it matter to me?” It must do, because it costs money. “Do I care about that?” That depends on how rich I am. “How much trouble is it worth taking to save that money?” We are struggling to give away loft insulation, but the UK Government has discovered that if an offer is made to clear the loft at the same time, people are much more likely to take it. If I can borrow a phrase from chemistry, we need to get over the activation energy. It is not just about inertia—there is a hoop to jump through.

It also helps if we can see the costs. When we used to go through from the lounge for tea, my beloved and late, lamented mother-in-law would go back, find the light switch and turn off what was maybe a 100W bulb. On the way back, she would walk past the electric fire, on which two bars were still on. That is why her chemical engineer son had not worried about turning off the light; I knew that the 100W bulbs up there were helping to heat the house when she already had 200kW on with the electric fire. She simply could not see that or understand that the fire was giving out energy and that turning off the light was irrelevant in the context. Unless people actually understand energy, they will not respond in the right way. Metering is absolutely crucial: what gets measured gets done.

16:41

Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh Northern and Leith) (Lab): I congratulate the Scottish Government on its great progress on renewable energy and some other areas, but the two sectors with the biggest emissions are housing and

transport, and those are the two sectors that unfortunately are letting us down.

Emissions from the residential sector were 3 per cent greater in 2010 than they were in 1990. There are some very good initiatives—including the national retrofit programme, which starts next week—but they are not of sufficient scale to meet the UK Climate Change Committee's recommendations. For example, the committee said that all lofts and cavities should be filled by 2015. Notwithstanding what the minister said about that, only half of lofts currently have good insulation. The committee also recommended that 230,000 solid walls should be treated by 2020. For some reason, work on that seems to be at a virtual standstill. Perhaps the minister could comment on that.

The biggest problem is in existing homes in the private sector. There is provision for that in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009; section 64 provides a regulatory power to establish minimum standards for not just the private rented sector, but the whole private sector. The draft report that we are considering today has a proposal for minimum standards for 2018, but I support the call of WWF and other bodies that have made submissions that that should be turned into a policy for 2015. As well as helping us meet our commitments, it would drive uptake of, for example, the new national retrofit programme, the green deal and the energy company obligation, which are excellent new initiatives. WWF recommends that the standard should kick in at the point of sale or rental and it recommends that it should be at point E on the performance certificate scale for 2015 and point C by 2020. Those proposals should be seriously considered.

Transport emissions were also higher in 2010 than in 1990. Vehicle kilometres inexorably rise, which leads me and many others to the conclusion that demand simply must be reduced. In a 2009 study, the Scottish Government said that measures to reduce demand had greater impact, but I can see none in RPP2 and there are virtually no policies, either. In that and other ways, RPP2 is weaker than RPP1, which called for some demand management measures, as well as, for example, a 5 per cent budget for active travel, which we are nowhere near.

More of the proposals in the transport section need to be turned into policies, whether they are to do with cycling, car clubs, travel planning or the sustainable communities proposals.

We also have a problem with the vague statements beyond 2020. The report talks about additional technical abatement beyond 2020. In particular, for the last three years—from 2025 to 2027—there are massive transport reductions for which there is no explanation whatever.

In general, we need more of a focus on behaviour change, as Maureen Watt said. As Kevin Stewart said, it is regrettable that that is in a separate framework, rather than its being integral to RPP2.

RPP2 suggests that we should aim for

“Almost complete decarbonisation of road transport by 2050, with significant progress by 2030 through wholesale adoption of electric cars and vans”.

However, concerns have been voiced in the consultation process that too much faith is being placed in the capacity of low-carbon vehicles to contribute to that reduction. Perhaps it would be advisable to focus more on modal shift towards public transport and active travel in the immediate future. The benefits that would be achieved through that change are far more certain and are more likely to contribute to our meeting our ambitious targets.

Finally, the clarity and transparency of the broader proposals in RPP2 have come in for some criticism, with the report clearly lacking in key detail in comparison with RPP1. Specifically, the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee has been urged in submissions from Transform Scotland and Sustrans to push for a disaggregation of data in the same format as RPP1 to allow for proper scrutiny. Increased transparencies will also facilitate proper monitoring and evaluation, which would, preferably, be helped by more milestones for both 2015 and 2020.

I hope that the minister will take on board many of the suggestions that have been made in the debate. Many of those suggestions have, of course, come from outside bodies, whose help with the proposals that I have put forward I acknowledge.

16:47

Marco Biagi (Edinburgh Central) (SNP): We are at our best as a Parliament when we act together and with ambition. I think that we are together today in saying that we need, as well as world-leading targets, world-leading action to achieve them.

It is very easy to get caught up in party-political fights and not to realise that we are, to an extent, fighting the problem and discussing it in the margins. Even with the policies alone that are set out in RPP2, we are, by my calculation, on course to reduce emissions by 39.56 per cent, from 72.3 megatonnes to 43.7 megatonnes. At the start of the passage of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, even a reduction of 34 per cent seemed like a good place to go.

It is clear that we should accept at this point that, although proposals will need to be turned into

policies, the policies alone can take us quite a distance. In fact, it turns out from the recalculation that we were, to begin with, further than we had thought from our target. The Scottish Government is to be commended for saying that, instead of going only so far, it will go to a point that may be further away and may require more effort. It may have gone unnoticed by many, but the 42 per cent target that we talked about is now 43.66 per cent as a result of the recalculation. That the Government has stuck to its guns is definitely worthy of commendation.

We have in the plan a hugely ambitious trajectory for recycling that will finally put us among the best in Europe. We heard at the last cross-party group on renewable energy and energy efficiency meeting that the Scottish Administration is the only one of the four UK Administrations that is now directly funding home energy efficiency. More than that, that public funding can help to unlock private sector funding from the likes of the ECO and the green deal. The £200 million a year can bring about a fundamental change not only in the cost of heating homes, but in the amount of carbon that that heating emits. That is a win-win situation that really does not need much of a sell to the public to win its support.

RPP2 sets out very clearly an electricity decarbonisation goal of 50g of CO₂ equivalent per kilowatt hour. In Scotland, we continue to recognise that nuclear energy, although it is—very arguably—a low-carbon energy source, is definitely not a green one. All of that is commendable to anybody who approaches the debate from an environmental perspective.

In committee and when I met environmental groups, I heard the same calls for more information as we have heard during the debate, but we must acknowledge that there are limits to how much we can expect from a document that, essentially, seeks to peer into a crystal ball and to see 14 years hence. I have not been an MSP for very long, but every committee report that I have seen or co-authored has called for more information; the reports that we are considering this afternoon are no different.

I have sensed an openness in the Government. I remarked to one representative that it would be handy to have the tables at the end of RPP2 in Excel format, and he replied that the officials had already sent him the spreadsheets, along with more detail that he had wanted, and he offered to forward them. The draft RPP2 is already clearer and more comprehensive than any other climate change action plan in any nation anywhere, and every reasonable request for more information that the EET committee has made has been answered positively.

Of course, that brings me to the unreasonable requests. Many EET committee members—and many members who have spoken in the debate—have pressed for the inclusion in RPP2 of a lot of hypotheticals. Although it is sensible to take risk into account, to acknowledge it and to present an assessment of its impact, it is impossible for any organisation to produce a complex branching tree of all the overlapping contingency plans that covers every factor and every potential mathematical combination thereof. No one in the chamber needs me to remind them that the EU's target, regulation of the green deal, energy market reform, the renewable heat incentive, the successful development of CCS and even the possibility of a run of bad or good winters are all very much beyond the Scottish Parliament's control.

On CCS, Commissioner Oettinger put the issue well when he spoke to the EET committee. He pointed out that once Government decreed that sulphur dioxide should no longer be pumped into the air by industry, the practice was stopped. The pumping out of nitrogen oxides was then stopped, too. Now it is the turn of carbon dioxide. All that stands in the way of CCS being deployed on a sufficient scale is our having sufficient will to ensure that it happens, and the same can be said about achieving CO₂ reductions on a sufficient scale in all the other dimensions. If the Parliament has the will, I believe that RPP2 shows the way.

16:52

Jim Hume (South Scotland) (LD): My committee—the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee—rightly starts its report by recognising that the Parliament established world-leading targets for emissions reductions. However, I recall that, back then, the Scottish Government did not want annual targets to come in immediately on the passing of the 2009 act and was keen for the proposed reductions in emissions to be measured at a later stage. We Liberal Democrats opposed that. In his report, Stern made it clear that action as early as possible would have the most effect and that later action would, de facto, be more expensive to implement. It was thanks to us and some other Opposition parties—plus Jamie McGrigor and Margaret Mitchell rebelling—that the Parliament voted narrowly to have emissions reductions measured from 2010, hence today's debate.

It is frustrating that it took so long for the 2010 figure to be announced—we now await the 2011 figure—and that the first climate change target was missed by some distance. I know that we had a cold winter that year, but if the Government wants to be serious about achieving future targets, it needs to be serious about actions. Therefore, we

need stronger building standards in the public and private sectors. It is worth remembering that more than half our electricity is used to make heat, so insulation makes sense.

The draft RPP2 outlines the pathway to achieving our ambitious targets, but it was clear in the committee's many evidence sessions that many people were concerned that the report was heavily reliant on proposals rather than policies, and members of all parties have noted that during the debate.

Some of the figures in the document are worth noting, and I intend to look at them in more detail. In evidence on rural land use, it was mentioned that in the tables at the rear of RPP2, the Government forecast that the abatement from "Fertiliser Efficiency Measures" would rise from zero in 2017 to 260 kilotonnes of carbon dioxide the following year. It is unknown what those measures could be. Suddenly, from 2020, there is to be 310 kilotonnes of carbon dioxide abated annually from "Developments in agricultural technology". Furthermore, from zero in 2024 to 250, 500 and 750 kilotonnes of carbon dioxide in 2025, 2026 and 2027 respectively would suddenly be abated from

"Additional technical potential from low carbon land use".

It is as clear as mud where the abatements in those areas are coming from or going to, but the three together add up to 48 per cent of total abatements from rural land use forecast for 2027.

Paul Wheelhouse: As I explained to the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee, we have ambitious targets on rural land use, and Rob Gibson has outlined those targets in relation to the restoration of peatland. However, we must also develop a peatland plan and identify the next Scotland rural development programme, and we need to know what the budget is arising from the CAP reform. All those are uncertain, so there is an element of uncertainty. We have ambition to improve on peatland restoration, but we need to know the detail before we can put that forward.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will give Jim Hume a bit of time back for that intervention.

Jim Hume: I appreciate what the minister said, but I was trying to show that the forecast 48 per cent rural land use abatement—a significant figure—is reliant on woolly figures. I am not necessarily criticising the minister; everybody today has recognised that the figures need to be clearer.

The figures are unclear not only in relation to rural land use, but in other sectors. The homes and communities section also refers to "Additional Technical Potential" and, in the transport section,

the same figures of 250, 500 and 750 kilotonnes of carbon dioxide pop up for 2025 to 2027 under the heading

"Lower Emission Potential in Transport",

bearing in mind that the section on "Decarbonising Vehicles" might have accounted for that.

It is not unfair to believe that there will be some efficiency measures, developments in technology and—this is my favourite—"Additional Technical Potential" that will help Scotland abate carbon dioxide emissions. That is why the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee calls for

"greater detail of how each proposal may be taken forward ... in the final RPP2."

However, the report is too reliant on unclear figures. I look forward to the minister providing clarity on that in the future; I think that he said he would do that.

The targets are reliant on much happening way beyond this parliamentary session and Government, particularly with regard to land use. They are also heavily reliant on a large increase in costs, from £70 million in 2019 to £377 million the next year, which is an increase of 538 per cent in one year. It would be interesting to know where the funds will come from; perhaps the minister will address that point, too.

I am glad that so many committees have examined the draft RPP2, but it is obvious that the draft report is too reliant on proposals rather than policies and heavily reliant on unclear proposals that will come to be in the future somehow. The Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee's report applauded Scotland's ambitious world-leading targets, but if the detail of how we make the proposals into policies and how they are to be implemented is not in place for the final report, we may be the country with the most ambitious world-leading targets that we do not meet.

16:58

Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I congratulate Murdo Fraser on giving yet another statesmanlike speech in his role as convener of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee. I am pleased that the committee's report on RPP2 was a good one, but it could have been better. It might have been better had the Labour members of the committee concentrated more on climate change mitigation and a bit less on political point scoring.

I am sure that most of the committee's members would agree that the great thing about the Scottish Government's ambitious climate change targets is that they not only tackle the threat of climate

change, but give impetus to our renewable energy targets, to much-needed investment in our grid and to tackling the scourge of fuel poverty. I am therefore proud that the Scottish Government has set such ambitious targets and that it is more than halfway to meeting them.

In our scrutiny of RPP2, the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee heard calls from some quarters for more clarity and detail. Such calls represent a failure to recognise that RPP2 is a high-level, strategic document, or that it relates to a fast-moving field, in which innovation, the application of technologies and business practice are all moving forward at a startling pace.

Jim Hume: I am a member of a different committee, so I am not sure to what Mike MacKenzie is referring. I understand that RPP2 is a high-level document, but does he not understand that the high-level document must enable people at all levels to understand how proposals can be turned into policies on the ground?

Mike MacKenzie: I think that the member will agree that technologies are moving so quickly that it is impossible to predict where they will go, other than to say that they will be helpful during the next few years, given that a lot of our technology is directed at solving the problem that we are talking about.

There is a failure to recognise that plans that are too inflexible will be an obstacle to achieving targets, far from increasing the possibility that we will achieve them.

There were calls from some quarters to introduce more punitive regulations to enable us to achieve our targets. For example, it was suggested that the introduction of tougher building standards would lead to greater energy efficiency in new homes. Such suggestions fail to recognise that the house building industry is on its knees. We are building less than 0.5 per cent of our building stock per annum.

Rhoda Grant: Could the lack of house building be due to the SNP Government's huge cut in funding for house building?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I will give you a bit of time back, Mr MacKenzie.

Mike MacKenzie: I reject that suggestion absolutely, Ms Grant. If you want a tutorial on the cost implications of higher building standards and energy efficiency, I will make myself available to give you such a tutorial.

New houses have to meet high energy efficiency standards and tougher standards are being introduced—they might not be as tough as some people would wish them to be, but that is for very good reasons.

Our energy efficiency problem lies not with new houses but with the existing housing stock. The vast majority of the housing stock—more than 90 per cent—is more than 10 years old and such homes are not nearly as energy efficient as new houses are. To raise energy efficiency standards for new homes beyond what is planned would be to run the risk of building far fewer new homes, which would be counterproductive, even in the context of our climate change targets.

It was suggested that tough regulations should be introduced for the private rented sector. The suggestion fails to recognise that even with today's high energy prices, many interventions have a payback period of more than 60 years. That is made clear in the Sullivan report, which I commend to members who have not read it. The green deal also fails to recognise that issue. If it is any sort of deal, it is the wrong deal for the wrong people; it will certainly not help the people who are most in need, who are increasingly suffering fuel poverty.

If we are to make progress in the area, it is better to use the carrot than to use the stick and to work in partnership with Scotland's businesses and people. That leads me to one of the most significant problems that we face in meeting our climate change targets. Whereas the Scottish Government is focused on renewable energy and its climate change targets and recognises that the approach offers many opportunities as well as challenges, the UK Government is unfocused and perhaps confused. It is procrastinating on energy market reform and the necessary grid enhancements, it is procrastinating on transmission charges, especially for Scotland's islands, and it is procrastinating on the domestic renewable heat incentive, all of which could help Scotland to achieve its climate change targets sooner rather than later.

I would think better of some Opposition members of this Parliament if they thought less about applying unwise and punitive regulation to Scotland's people and businesses and more about the inadequacies of the UK Parliament, and if they gave a little thought to the issue and recognised how well the Scottish Government is doing in achieving its very ambitious climate change targets.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I remind members to speak through the chair.

17:05

Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab): This is my second time on my feet this afternoon, so I should apologise to anyone who sat through my earlier speech.

First, I welcome the process that the Parliament has adopted in examining RPP2. I was a member of the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee when, as our contribution to the budget discussions in 2011, we decided to examine how RPP1 was being delivered. We found the process quite frustrating, because many of the issues that we wanted to examine came under the remit of other committees and therefore the emphasis that was placed on the examination of climate change measures depended on the emphasis that those committees wished to place on that rather than on other budgetary issues. The process for examining RPP2 has allowed all the relevant committees to scrutinise the whole document. There might be an issue about how all that scrutiny is tied together, but the exercise itself has been useful.

As Maureen Watt pointed out, it is unfortunate but perhaps inevitable that given the limited time committees had to gather evidence some witnesses were unable to attend the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee's round-table evidence sessions on housing and transport. As Malcolm Chisholm has made clear, both sectors are vital to the delivery of emissions reductions.

Concerns were expressed about the balance between policies and proposals, particularly in the transport sector. RPP2 cites seven policies and five proposals on housing but, for transport, there are only two policies, both of which result from EU directives on decarbonising vehicles, and four proposals. Some witnesses expressed concern that the policies were reliant on EU car emissions standards instead of being led by the Scottish Government and, as a result, RPP2 was very dependent on the EU's improving its emissions reduction targets from 20 to 30 per cent. The minister argued that that was not the case and that we would still meet our targets even if the EU did not improve its own, but other witnesses suggested that the Scottish Government would then be required to implement every policy and proposal in RPP2 to achieve the 2020 target. A 100 per cent success rate is really quite a tall order.

There might have been some confusion over what constitutes a policy and what constitutes a proposal, with the perception that there is less commitment to proposals. I accept that the Government can cite as a policy only what it is undertaking in this parliamentary session and funding in the current spending review cycle and that proposals are what it intends to do over a long timescale and what might be suggested for later spending reviews. The criticism, therefore, really relates to the question whether some proposals should have been brought forward to become policies in the current spending review cycle.

As other members have pointed out, the decision to publish RPP2 in a different format from RPP1 makes it more difficult to assess progress. The Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee noted that the transport section in the draft RPP2 contained no estimate for abatement potential and costs for the Scottish Government's initiatives, and that the five proposal headings were new and not used in RPP1.

There seems to be an overreliance on the emissions savings to be made in the final three years from 2025 to 2027, with a saving of 750 kilotonnes of CO₂ in the final year but little indication of how that will be funded. The Minister for Transport and Veterans told us

"we cannot know the technical and policy contexts that will apply up to 14 years from now".—[*Official Report, Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee, 27 February 2013; c 1444.*]

Although I am sure that that is true, surely it is unwise to place such reliance on a large reduction at the end of the RPP period in the hope that technological and policy development will somehow make it happen.

With regard to the housing sector, housing for social rent will be required to reach minimum energy efficiency standards by 2015. According to recent research, 75 per cent of social rented properties in Scotland achieved a good rating under the national home energy rating scheme in 2011 compared with 62 per cent of owner-occupied properties and 52 per cent of private rented properties. It is very likely that the social rented sector's higher achievement is due at least in part to the response to the 2015 target. That is why some witnesses argued that it was important to introduce regulation and minimum standards for existing private homes earlier than the 2018 date that has been proposed.

Targets in the private sector could focus efforts and the UK and Scottish Government energy efficiency programmes can provide routes for financing the necessary improvements. I realise that covering the entire private sector is, indeed, ambitious, but the committee has asked the Government to investigate—

Mike MacKenzie: Will the member give way?

Elaine Murray: I am about 10 seconds away from the end of my five minutes.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I can give you a bit of time, but not much.

Elaine Murray: How much time?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Well, we are wasting time now. It is entirely up to you.

Elaine Murray: All right, I will not waste time. I think that I probably need to make progress.

The Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee has asked the Government to investigate whether it will be possible to introduce the standards more quickly.

Obviously, it has not been possible for me to cover the 53 pages of the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee's report in five minutes. I reiterate the committee's recommendation that the Government should respond to all its conclusions and recommendations in the final RPP2.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: For the benefit of other members, I clarify that, at this stage of the debate, if members want to take interventions, I can give them back a few seconds.

17:10

Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP): I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak in this important debate, because it highlights the role of the Scottish Parliament's committees in scrutinising the progress that has been made towards meeting our emissions reduction targets. It also provides us with the welcome opportunity, based on the extensive evidence that we have received from a range of stakeholders, to identify the further measures that need to be taken and milestones that need to be met if we are to meet the ambitious targets that were set by the Parliament.

I will focus on housing and transport, as they are areas that can make a significant contribution to meeting our emissions reduction targets and were examined by the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee, of which I am a member.

Housing accounts for 25 per cent of our CO₂ emissions, so there is a role for the Scottish Government, local authorities and other agencies to ensure that we do all we can to improve the energy efficiency of our existing housing stock. We should recognise where significant progress has been made. For example, according to the Scottish house condition survey, 65 per cent of homes were rated good by 2011, which was up by 31 per cent from 2002-03. Some 400,000 homes have received loft or cavity-wall insulation since 2008. The Scottish Government has provided further investment for boiler scrappage, and is on target to replace 30,000 boilers ahead of the anticipated timeline. We have a national retrofit programme that is the only scheme of its kind in Great Britain, as Marco Biagi said.

In welcoming the progress that has been made, we should recognise the scale of the challenge that we face. The Scottish house condition survey also identified more than 500,000 homes with solid walls that need insulation. We need to use the levers at our disposal, which include the role of

standards and regulation. Mike MacKenzie sounded a note of caution in relation to the introduction of minimum standards, but that was not the view of the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee, as my colleague on that committee, Elaine Murray, said. Paragraph 120 of the committee's report says:

"The Committee acknowledges the ambitiousness of the proposal to introduce minimum standards across all of the private housing sector. However, it requests that the Scottish Government investigates whether the timescales for the introduction of these minimum standards could be revised with a view to an earlier than 2018 introduction".

We heard that view in evidence during the committee's consideration of RPP2. Elizabeth Leighton, from the existing homes alliance, stated:

"We are talking about a minimum standard—the bottom level. It is about ensuring that we drive demand so that we do not let off the people who could not be bothered to do anything with their houses, despite the incentives."— [*Official Report, Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee*, 6 February 2013; c 1350.]

WWF has also issued a challenge to the Government to signal a step-change, which it will need to do if it is to achieve significant reductions in energy demand in Scotland's homes. If we can bring forward the 2018 deadline, we will have gone a considerable way towards meeting that challenge. I look forward to further clarification when the Government publishes its sustainable housing strategy.

Transport has an important role to play in meeting our emissions reduction targets, as Malcolm Chisholm said. Paragraph 239 of the committee's report stated:

"The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government continues to monitor the impact of initiatives in relation to encouraging behavioural change and whether certain demand management initiatives might require to be considered as potential future options in advance of the publication of the RPP3."

Rob Gibson talked about the need for positive engagement. In what I think is a model of such positive engagement across the chamber, my parliamentary colleagues Claudia Beamish, Alison Johnstone and I have written to the Minister for Transport and Veterans, Keith Brown, making the case for introducing a competitive award for an urban, on-road, segregated cycle lane project. That type of project is commonplace in other European countries and is a practical example of the kind of behavioural change that all the committees called for, which we could facilitate through the introduction and adoption of such a project. It is the type of initiative that is necessary if we are to persuade people who do not cycle because of safety fears that cycling is a viable alternative mode of transport.

Scotland can join the European mainstream in emulating the success of other northern European

countries by investing in housing and transport in order to reduce our climate change emissions.

17:15

Jayne Baxter (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab): The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 was, indeed, something for parliamentarians of all parties to be proud of. It was testament to the progressive policies that can be implemented when we work together towards a common goal. However, in the Scottish Government's failure to meet the annual emissions abatement target for 2010 we also see the danger of taking our eye off the ball. That failure serves to emphasise how important the second report on proposals and policies is.

Given the importance of RPP2, it is disappointing that the document, as it is currently laid out, looks extremely unlikely to provide the framework for meeting the next set of targets. Some of the strongest criticism of the draft report came from key stakeholders. For example, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency highlighted its concerns, saying:

"there is more that needs to be done in order to make the RPP fit for the purpose of delivering world leading climate legislation. There is a need in our view, for a step change in the ambition of RPP2, particularly in the light of the first annual target having been missed."

As the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee report has highlighted, there is only one combination of circumstances that will ensure that Scotland reaches each of its annual targets from 2013 right up until 2027. Frankly, it seems pointless to have emissions reduction targets proudly set out that everyone in the chamber knows we have no chance of meeting. Aspiration in this case is simply not enough. As we now know—the committee reports highlight this—in order to meet each of the annual targets, we will have to implement all the proposals and policies that are laid out in the draft RPP2 and rely on the EU-wide emissions reduction target shifting to 30 per cent.

Paul Wheelhouse: Will the member take an intervention?

Jayne Baxter: No, thanks.

It is realistic to be sceptical about whether such a set of circumstances is likely to occur. During the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee's round-table evidence sessions, a number of stakeholders made it clear that there are too few policies and too many proposals. To be fair—I think that the committee's report makes this clear—in some circumstances it might not be possible to have clear policies stretching ahead into 2027. However, for the more immediate

annual deadlines I hope that we will see more detail on how we will meet our targets.

It is heartening to hear from colleagues in the debate today, and from the reports in front of us, a recognition that the targets are not just numbers in a document. For many of the proposals and the policies to work, it will rely on people to implement them.

Kevin Stewart: Ms Baxter is right to point out that people will make the difference. However, sometimes people do not need the policies to drive things forward. I saw that when I was on the carbon management board of Aberdeen City Council. Does the member think that, rather than have everything set in stone, we should allow certain people to make decisions as they go along, which often results in huge impacts?

Jayne Baxter: No. I think that we need some bottom-line requirements that people know they are expected to achieve, with a role for all organisations, agencies and individuals to work together to meet those targets. It must be recognised that some bottom lines need to be achieved.

Behavioural change is a key factor in helping everyone to play their part in meeting targets. We cannot rely on someone else to do it for us. However, a strict timetable is laid out for scrutiny of RPP2, which the Scottish Government would have been aware of prior to the publication of the draft document. Given that fact and the importance of behavioural change to meeting any targets, it is doubly disappointing that the behaviours framework was published only on 4 March this year—and not in the detail that many were hoping for. I am pleased that the committee has received a commitment from the minister to respond to scrutiny of aspects of the behaviours framework separate to the report.

It is not all negative. There are a number of areas that, I know, the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee has welcomed, which have been highlighted in the debate—particularly the inclusion of peatland restoration and forestry planting as possible means of helping to meet our targets.

It must be hoped that the Scottish Government will take the criticisms that the four committees levelled at the draft report in the constructive spirit in which they were intended. I urge ministers to make the necessary changes to the document and to report back to the Parliament with an improved plan to increase our country's chance of making a difference and reducing our carbon emissions to effective levels.

17:21

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP): I am pleased to contribute to this debate, not least because of the importance of RPP2 to achieving our target of 42 per cent emissions reductions by 2020, which we are more than halfway towards achieving.

We have heard some criticism from Opposition members about missing the 2010 target, but members have acknowledged that that was due to the very cold weather, which increased energy demand for heating, particularly in the residential sector. RPP2 shows that it is possible to compensate for that by beating targets in future years. In 2010, there was the first year-on-year increase since 2006, which was a result of very cold weather.

It is worth reiterating that the UK Committee on Climate Change noted in its second statutory progress report to Scottish ministers, which was published earlier this month, that temperature-adjusted figures indicate that, in a normal year for temperature, the 2010 emissions reduction target would have been met.

It is also worth noting that David Kennedy, chief executive of the Committee on Climate Change, concluded that Scotland had performed well by saying:

“Scotland has made good progress in delivering on emission reduction measures to date. This lays the foundations for meeting ambitious Scottish emissions targets and building a low-carbon economy in Scotland with the benefits that this will bring.”

It should also be noted that our world-leading climate change targets, which go over and above those in the UK act—the targets are higher and include international aviation, shipping and annual targets, which are not included in other parts of the British isles—make this not only the most ambitious Parliament in the UK but the most ambitious Parliament in the world when it comes to emissions reduction targets.

The report also states that Scotland continues to lead the UK on renewable power, with 36 per cent of electricity consumption met from renewable energy, exceeding the 31 per cent target and the UK's 9 per cent. The setting of a 2030 decarbonisation target provides longer-term certainty for the sector.

If members of the EET Committee will forgive me for straying into their territory, I must say how pleased I am to see progress on the carbon capture and storage front. As a former member of the EET Committee, I was pleased to see the Peterhead CCS project receive preferred bidder status just last week. However—to make a local point—I remind ministers about the application for the £500 million CCS plant proposed for my

Falkirk East constituency in Grangemouth, which I believe Summit Power is continuing to progress despite not being awarded preferred bidder status. The benefit of that project—assuming that it is approved—is that once the Grangemouth plant starts up, an identical one will already have been built in Texas, which will be a tried-and-tested plant, so any teething problems will already have been dealt with on the other side of the pond. Given that there will be more than 90 per cent carbon capture in a 500MW electricity plant, I do hope that the project goes ahead.

I return to the report from the RACCE Committee. We welcome the setting out of how targets up to 2027 will be met and accept the challenges that are presented by planning 14 years into the future. We also called for all policies and proposals to be implemented to ensure that annual targets are met and called for the Government's farming for a better climate initiative to be extended and ramped up to deliver increased emissions reductions by encouraging farmers to adopt efficiency measures that reduce emissions and help them adapt to climate change while also having a positive impact on business performance, primarily by driving efficiencies in working practice. However, as the convener of the RACCE Committee, Rob Gibson, stated in his opening speech, we need more clarity from the Government on the matter.

Another policy that is well worth mentioning is the increase in woodland creation rates to 10,000 hectares per year, with the planting of 100 million trees by 2015, which, as the minister has mentioned, is indeed the equivalent of 10,000 hectares per year.

Other land use measures include peatland restoration, which has been warmly welcomed by the director of RSPB Scotland, Stuart Housden, and many others. There is also the wood first timber construction programme and the encouraging of best practice in nitrogen efficiency, with a 90 per cent uptake of nitrogen fertiliser efficiency measures.

Our world-beating targets are not helped by uncertainty over reform of the common agricultural policy, with rural development pillar 2 funding at risk and the resultant reduction in SRDP funding. The situation is not helped by our own cabinet secretary having been locked out of the CAP reform process meetings in Brussels last week. Thanks to the UK Government, 16 member states got an uplift of their pillar 2 budget, but the UK, despite having the best case of all countries, did not itself seek an uplift. Scotland had, and looks set still to have, the lowest share of funding in Europe, which will affect the funding of local projects in the future.

17:26

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): As a member of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, I was pleased to help scrutinise our section of the RPP. It was unfortunate that the final meeting took place on a day of public sector strikes against the cuts. Personally, in supporting those who were striking, I felt unable to cross the picket line. I thank the convener, my committee colleagues and the clerks for their flexibility in taking on board some of my input and comments in my absence.

I share some of the concerns that were raised by Rhoda Grant that, in voting down some sensible recommendations, Scottish National Party back benchers have not assisted their own Government colleagues to ensure that the finalised RPP2 is as robust as possible. I am sure that the minister is willing and able to accept constructive input.

The task of meeting our ambitious climate targets is not easy. It requires changes—small ones, bigger evolutionary ones and a few large-scale transformational ones—if we are to play a fair part in tackling the climate crisis. Transport did not form part of my committee's scrutiny, but it is one area where poor choices are compromising the plan. It is impossible to double-think our way into a future of more motorways and to expect to meet our climate targets, too. I invite the minister to comment on what more can be done in that respect.

The RPP almost entirely neglects demand management or the possibility that the policies and the investment decisions that we make can reduce the number and distance of journeys that are taken by car. Such decisions are largely devolved, but the only transport policy in the current draft RPP is based on EU directives. We can see from transport that the Government's scale of ambition is falling away. Comparing RPP1 with RPP2, we see that 500,000 tonnes of abatement have been lost every year from 2014 to 2018. The necessary policy changes have just been pushed further into the future, and emissions from transport have risen, not fallen. We largely know what needs to change.

Maureen Watt: Does the member not think that if we can move to hydrogen fuel cell or electric vehicles or to using other forms of fuel, that does not mean that we cannot build motorways to get people to their destinations?

Alison Johnstone: Although technological advances that reduce emissions will be welcome, traffic jams could still add to congestion, and not all vehicles will be so powered. What we really need to do is to spend more than just 1 per cent of the transport budget on cycling and walking. I

hope that the final RPP2 will have active travel, car clubs, travel planning and ambitious demand management included as policy.

As the RACCE Committee has recognised, the only way in which we will meet our future targets is if all the policies and proposals are implemented and if the EU shifts to the 30 per cent reduction target. There is no margin built into the plan. We heard real concern from witnesses that the EU will not move to 30 per cent, so the RPP needs explicitly to work out domestic actions to mitigate that risk. The EET Committee recommended that.

The same risk exists for carbon capture and storage. Witnesses fear that the 2020 target will not be met. Peterhead now has preferred bidder status, but the RPP is predicated on CCS and we cannot put our heads in the sand about the risk.

Electricity gets lots of attention, but the provision of cheap and clean heat is important too. After all, heat accounts for more than half of our energy demand. I hope that the final RPP will provide more ambition and detail on delivering district heating. From the evidence that we heard in scrutinising the RPP and in previous committee work, it is clear that the public sector has a key role to play in that.

The Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee looks forward to the forthcoming heat policy and has asked the Government to provide more details on how it will support community district heating schemes and off-gas-grid properties to get out of fuel poverty. I hope that the minister will confirm that the Government will provide that in due course and will listen carefully to the recommendations of the expert commission on district heating.

Cheap, low-carbon heat will be important in tackling fuel poverty, but high-quality insulated homes are essential too. Stop Climate Chaos, the existing homes alliance and others have all called for the proposal for minimum efficiency standards in the private sector to be upgraded to a policy and implemented by 2015. That would help to bring our existing housing stock up to standard, lever in investment and jobs for local trades and help to meet targets in a difficult sector.

Scotland has played a leading role in setting the bar high, promoting climate justice and inspiring ambition, but we missed our first target. That is not the end of the line, but it is a clear signal that we need to match ambition with a credible plan with fully funded climate policies that have headroom built in to address the possibility of long, cold winters, clear milestones to track our success and bold Government action on the big challenges of, and opportunities for, ending our dependence on fossil fuels.

17:31

Jamie McGrigor (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I am pleased to close the debate for the Scottish Conservatives. I thank the members and clerking team of the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee for producing the thorough and useful report that we have debated today. Thanks should also go to the external organisations that have provided us with briefings for the debate, including the RSPB, Stop Climate Chaos Scotland and the existing homes alliance.

As we have heard from members across the chamber, there remains support for the Government's targets but real concern about the failure to achieve the annual emissions reduction target for 2010 and about whether Scotland will be able to achieve future targets. The committee's report rightly sets out how difficult fulfilling future commitments will be and the need for measures to be implemented across all policy areas.

The concern that RPP2 lacked detail has also been a theme of the debate, as has the belief that a developed nation such as Scotland must be seen internationally to achieve its targets.

The Scottish Conservatives have consistently supported practical policies and incentives that will encourage consumers to make decisions that will help to reduce emissions. That remains our approach. That is why we championed the concept of a green council tax discount and are disappointed at the low take-up of the option so far.

On 12 November, the Scottish Government invited local authorities to consider how greater uptake could be encouraged, and I would be grateful if the minister would update us on that subject. What can the Scottish Government do to help, or persuade, councils to promote the measure?

Homes represent one quarter of Scotland's emissions, and the existing homes alliance is right to highlight the need to transform Scotland's existing housing stock. It says:

"The homes and community sector is well-placed to make a significant contribution to reaching Scotland's climate change targets if given the right tools—sufficient investment for incentives combined with regulating for standards."

Tackling heat loss from our homes must remain a huge priority.

A number of members talked about the importance of Scotland's peatlands. I emphasise that, too. As I have said many times in the Parliament, Scotland's peatlands are a world-class resource that act as a significant carbon sink, storing 10 times more carbon than all the trees in the UK.

Like the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee, the Conservatives are positive about moves that would enable peatland restoration to be promoted but have sympathy with the experts who have warned that, although the funding of £1.7 million for 2012 to 2015 is welcome, it would need to be expanded if it is to lead to a significant area of peatland being restored. Ministers need to consider that as we go forward.

We also urge ministers to work with the private sector to develop innovative ways of allowing peatland restoration to be undertaken as part of corporate social responsibility programmes. I commend the good work and effective partnership working that have taken place for the peatland restoration at RSPB Scotland's Forsinard reserve in Caithness in my region. Others can learn from what has been achieved there.

I note that the committee received evidence suggesting that the waste and resource use section of the RPP2 was overly focused on waste and did not consider wider aspects of resource use. Where local authorities are concerned, I sympathise with an antipathy towards directives that talk about targets for recycling if the markets are not in place for the material. Markets should be identified to make targets achievable. The slogan should be "No targets without markets."

Turning to agriculture, I note in paragraph 173 that

"the policies in the draft RPP2 relate principally to the Scottish Government's Farming for a Better Climate (FFBC) programme."

That is more than just a pipe dream. I am sure that arable farmers in Perthshire and central Scotland who experienced the wettest summer on record last year, and now those in Kintyre and Arran who are experiencing the worst winter weather for 50 years would agree that farming for a better climate is an admirable aim. In his comments to the committee, Professor Smith made an interesting point when he called for a thriving Scottish agricultural sector to be as low carbon as possible but pointed out that reductions in activity or output in Scotland were not the sensible way to achieve the targets because that activity and output would simply be taken up in another part of the globe.

The Scottish Conservatives look to ministers to provide greater clarity and detail on their policy as we go forward. We encourage them to prioritise practical options that act as incentives for consumers and businesses.

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): We have a couple of minutes in hand. I call Claudia Beamish. You have seven minutes, although I will be a wee bit generous.

17:37

Claudia Beamish (South Scotland) (Lab): Our meeting our climate change targets is a domestic imperative here in Scotland, and it is a climate justice issue here and globally. I am convinced that mainstreaming of deliberations across four committees, leading to today's debate, is particularly valuable in focusing on necessary changes to the final RPP, and I thank all the witnesses who took part.

A step change is necessary in many sectors, not least housing and transport, as was highlighted by Maureen Watt, who stressed the enormity of the challenge. Elaine Murray, Malcolm Chisholm, and Jim Eadie in particular explored those issues.

Perhaps it is equally challenging for all political parties to see how we can get from where we are now to where we need to be. Transport is the hardest issue, in my view. We have road-building commitments, rural public transport which is, to be frank, a joke in some areas, and pretty much non-existent urban segregated on-road cycle routes—although the award that Jim Eadie mentioned will no doubt help, if it goes through. The shift to low-carbon vehicles is in its early stages and, as Malcolm Chisholm stressed, it is uncertain.

Jamie McGrigor: Will Claudia Beamish take an intervention?

Claudia Beamish: I would like to make progress.

It will take bravery as well as vision and, of course, funding, to achieve the shifts that are needed at all levels. The serious concerns about the level of EU targets were explored by my colleague Claire Baker and many others. In view of the strong possibility that, even if the EU target is changed, it might well not be changed before 2016, the RACCE Committee recommendation that

“the final RPP2 be more explicit in demonstrating how greater domestic reductions could be achieved within the current 20% EU target”

becomes even more significant. I hope that the minister will address that in his closing remarks.

As the debate draws to a close and the minister grapples with consideration of changes that might be made in view of the committees' reports, I want to instil a sense of optimism. Many of us have a vision of how we could move forward towards a low-carbon economy, so I will look at the positives and at the opportunities. We can make the step change to meet our targets; Scottish Labour is clear that that must be done in a way that is inclusive and fair for all our communities and at household level—in particular for those who are living on the edge.

While meeting our climate change targets, we must also tackle fuel poverty and food poverty, air pollution, poor local environments and—as many members have mentioned—insulation to tackle cold and damp houses. Helping people through cold winters is essential.

Yes, we missed our first target. That must not happen again, but I puzzle over what is a “normal year”, as was mentioned by Angus MacDonald. We must firm up proposals into policies and there are concerns that much has been pushed into the later years.

The RACCE Committee asked the minister about interdepartmental discussion, which is so needed if we are to succeed in meeting our targets. That discussion must be on-going in order to evaluate progress and the need to adapt. I am sure that the minister will commit to that continuation.

The minister's commitment to milestones today is significant—we must see those milestones in the final document. There can also be a strong commitment across all departments to properly funded research with appropriate academic partners, aided by citizen science.

Research is needed into the effectiveness of current programmes, such as farming for a better climate. The RACCE Committee

“notes the Cabinet Secretary's ambition for every farm in Scotland to have a carbon reduction plan in place,”

but without research, there cannot be real monitoring of programmes, and alteration—and indeed regulation—as is needed across all sectors.

Research into new technologies is also needed, so that the step change that we are all committed to can become a reality—otherwise our ambitious proposals for the later years of RPP2 will not be realised as policies. The minister emphasised clarity, which was encouraging.

Who leads on this challenge to reach our targets? We all do. Local authorities all signed up to the climate change declaration; Kevin Stewart stressed the need to report to the Scottish Parliament on that. Primary schools—and now, many of us hope, more secondary schools—will contribute through the eco-schools programme.

All public bodies can play their part as well, as can businesses across sectors. Dr Andy Kerr, the director of the centre for carbon innovation at the University of Edinburgh, told the RACCE Committee:

“it is very much about creating the conditions under which we can also encourage private investment, because there are huge opportunities to deliver fairly radical change. Markets in this space are growing around the world.”—

[*Official Report, Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee*, 6 February 2013; c 1705.]

I want to focus on the marine environment, which other members have not mentioned today—it sometimes seems to get left out. The RACCE Committee

“recommends that the Scottish Government ensure the final RPP2 acknowledges the contribution”

of blue carbon, which could have

“an ambitious route map for future development, which can be updated in RPP3”.

The committee agreed that publication of the marine

“plan has become a matter of some urgency”

and that

“concurrent consultations on marine protected areas and a marine renewables plan”

are also extremely important.

Although I am disappointed by the lack of focus on marine protection and opportunities in the draft RPP2, I was somewhat reassured by the cabinet secretary’s remarks to the committee:

“The Committee notes the comments made that the final RPP2 might benefit from the inclusion of a specific marine section, and/or improved presentation of issues relevant to the marine environment and welcomes the Cabinet Secretary’s remarks which indicate he is prepared to consider this issue before the RPP2 is finalised.”

It was disappointing that the behaviour change framework came out so late, as many members have highlighted. The Local Government and Regeneration Committee report recommends that

“behavioural change should find expression in all sections of the RPP2 report and should not be stand alone as change is needed across all sectors of the economy and society.”

We all have a responsibility at individual level and to all the communities to which we belong, but people will contribute only if they believe that their contribution matters—that it makes a difference—which, often, they still do not believe, and if there is a pay-off. For some people, one of those will matter more than the other, depending on their circumstances. It is up to all of us in the chamber to ensure that everyone in Scotland understands that tackling climate change matters for both reasons.

Finally, let me use the words of Simon Pepper, with his wealth of experience of sustainable development. In evidence to our RACCE Committee, he said:

“One of the problems is the label “behaviour change”, because it tends to focus the mind on individual action whereas, in strategic terms, we need to concentrate on societal attitudes and norms. I like to think of it more as culture change.”—[*Official Report, Rural Affairs, Climate*

Change and Environment Committee, 6 February 2013; c 1708.]

A culture change is what we need, and we must all work towards that in the future.

The Presiding Officer: I call Paul Wheelhouse to respond to the debate. Minister, I can give you until 5.56 pm, and I would be obliged if you would continue until then.

17:45

Paul Wheelhouse: I will do my absolute best, Presiding Officer.

First, I thank all members for their contributions to the debate, all of which will help to inform the Government’s thinking as we finalise the second report on proposals and policies for meeting Scotland’s greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets. I also thank members for the constructive tone in which all have engaged in the debate.

Many members have spoken with a great deal of conviction—as exemplified by Claudia Beamish in her closing speech—about ensuring that a specific course of action is taken, and they have expressed concern that RPP2 does not commit to certain long-term policies right now. I recognise that some members have also suggested that RPP2 has an overreliance on proposals rather than policies. I am aware that that has also been a criticism from people outside the chamber; that view has been part of the narrative of evidence sessions.

However, I urge colleagues across the chamber to get the issue into some sort of perspective. The difference in the position for Scotland in 2020, between the scenarios where only policies are implemented and those where proposals are also implemented, equates to about 2.3 megatonnes of CO₂ equivalent. With a 20 per cent EU-wide target, the balance of abatement from policies alone and the impact of net emissions trading—adding those together—amounts to an additional reduction of 4.1 megatonnes of CO₂ equivalent, which is more than 2.3 megatonnes of CO₂ equivalent. If the EU target of 30 per cent is adopted, the impact of policies and net trading will amount to a slightly higher reduction of 6 megatonnes of CO₂ equivalent. That, again, is much more than the 2.3 megatonnes of CO₂ equivalent that we will depend on from proposals.

Hence, the majority of the abatement to 2020 under all scenarios is delivered by policies, with potential to add more from the proposals that are outlined in RPP2. That is just for the period up to 2020, for which we know we need urgent action if we are to achieve our interim targets.

On what will happen if there is no 30 per cent target across the EU—unfortunately, Jayne Baxter

did not let me intervene to address this point—the Commissioner for Climate Action, Connie Hedegaard, has acknowledged that the EU will probably hit about 27 per cent in terms of actual climate change mitigation by 2020. Therefore, I am reasonably optimistic that, by 2016, the EU will perhaps move to a 30 per cent target. However, I accept that we need to take measures to allow for the possibility that that does not happen.

As I have said, the majority of abatement to 2020 will come through policies rather than proposals. Although there is a natural tendency to focus on the absolute targets in tonnes that are our statutory annual targets—I acknowledge that we will need to push for the EU-wide ambition to meet the statutory 2020 target—it is unfortunate that the nature of our annual target framework has locked in a now out-of-date understanding of Scotland's actual emissions. As was pointed out earlier, we now know that our baseline was higher than we had originally thought. Given that the latest data make it clear that the baseline was a good bit higher, I welcome the fact that the Climate Change Committee, in the form of Ute Collier, who gave evidence to the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee, has also acknowledged that point.

Another issue to get in perspective—aside from the accepted movement in the starting line—is the following: if the EU moves to a 30 per cent target and we implement proposals and policies, we will reduce emissions by 46.6 per cent against the revised higher 1990 baseline, even allowing for the fact that we started from a higher position. That would give us a considerable amount of headroom, as I hope members will appreciate. If we do not implement proposals at all, we will still lower emissions by 43.4 per cent from the revised baseline, provided that the EU adopts a 30 per cent target.

In the absence of an EU-wide target at 30 per cent—if the EU target instead continues at 20 per cent, which is the current position—Scotland will see its emissions fall by 42.8 per cent, as Marco Biagi pointed out, provided that proposals become policies.

Even if proposals do not, for whatever reason, become policies—I apologise because this is getting complicated—emissions are projected to fall by 39.6 per cent, which is a point that Marco Biagi also made. Members should bear it in mind that the EU Climate Change Committee targets were set on the basis of assumptions about the old emissions baseline and how much it was thought a country such as Scotland could deliver. The committee explicitly assumed in its calculations that a 30 per cent emissions target for the EU would be in place. We have stuck with the CCC's annual targets, even though we could have

used a legislative route to adjust the targets to reflect improved science. Alex Fergusson referred to that.

As Richard Dixon of Friends of the Earth Scotland put it:

“The Government could have changed the 2020 target and all the annual targets in between to make up for the fact that the baseline was different”.—[*Official Report, Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee*, 20 February 2013; c 1764.]

Dr Dixon went on to state that he welcomed the fact that the Government had decided not to mess with the numbers, but to go with them.

We have not sought to escape the statutory annual targets, and achieving them will be difficult. I was certainly pleased to hear most members acknowledge that. However, it is crucial to a rational debate to emphasise that, to the best of our knowledge at this time, we may see emissions fall by 39.6 per cent against the higher baseline emissions figures in the worst-case scenario, and at best we may even see a decrease of 46.6 per cent by 2020. If the EU does not move to a higher ambition, we project a 42.8 per cent decrease. I hope that gives members some room for optimism. Yes—we still have to go further to get to the 43.7 per cent that we must achieve to get the tougher annual statutory target because the baseline has moved.

Marco Biagi: The trajectories that are set out in RPP2 at the moment express the position purely in megatonnes. Does the minister think that we might have in the final version of RPP2 a percentage reduction trajectory, instead of having to get such figures by using a scientific calculator to do some arithmetic?

Paul Wheelhouse: Absolutely; I wholly accept that point. It is one of the most obvious examples of where we realised that our presentation had not helped us or helped our colleagues in the chamber to understand exactly what we are trying to achieve. I provided the information to which Marco Biagi referred to the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee, and we will seek to incorporate it in the final version of the report.

As I said, we have not sought to escape our tough targets, but it is worth highlighting that only Germany and Denmark among member states have an emissions target of 40 per cent, which is marginally higher than that for our projected worst-case scenario, as set out in annex B of the report. I am slightly confused as to how Stop Climate Chaos can assume that we are pulling the wool over people's eyes, because the figures are in annex B. However, I accept Marco Biagi's point that they are not presented in the clearest way.

Claire Baker: Will the minister take an intervention?

Paul Wheelhouse: I ask Claire Baker to be brief.

Claire Baker: In relation to Stop Climate Chaos, does the minister want to say something around the importance of the interim targets and the difficulty that there will be in achieving them prior to 2020? There is also concern that the policies that are meant to deliver after 2020 are unclear and undefined at this stage in RPP2.

Paul Wheelhouse: In terms of the early years, I accept that the impasse in Europe makes matters more difficult. However, we are taking steps, including the extra £24 million that the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth found in the latest budget for additional housing investment, where we are trying to do more. That money is in addition to what we already have in the RPP2 document. We can obviously do more and are looking to do more, where we can.

I think that I have addressed Claire Baker's other point, so I will carry on, because I am conscious of the time.

Members should bear it in mind that the Conservative and Lib Dem UK Government—not to criticise it—is currently aiming for a target of just 34 per cent. I point that out just to please Alex Fergusson. In addition, the UK Government does not even set itself annual statutory targets, unlike the Scottish Government. The UK's modelling is extremely sophisticated.

Jim Hume: Will the minister take an intervention?

Paul Wheelhouse: I need to carry on.

The UK Government does not provide as much detail on its proposals and policies as we have done on our RPP. I accept that Wales has a 40 per cent target, but members may not be aware that the Labour-controlled Welsh Assembly Government applies that level of ambition only to areas of its economy for which it has devolved responsibility, with the UK target of 34 per cent applying elsewhere in the Welsh economy. Like the UK, the Welsh targets also exclude international aviation and shipping. I know that Scotland's legislation and approach serve as exemplars to others and are used as such by our stakeholders to push other nations to have high ambition. That is, in a sense, why this Government is under so much scrutiny and pressure to be seen to deliver. Any Administration of any party would be under this pressure at this time for the same reasons.

I hope that the analysis that I have set out demonstrates that we can deliver world-leading reductions in emissions, but I strongly urge members to recognise that we are already going

beyond what our independent advisers thought was possible when they set our targets. I have acknowledged that there are presentational issues in RPP2 that need to be addressed and we will review other substantive points, but there is much that members can welcome in the report. For example, there is our approach on behavioural change aspects, which was warmly welcomed by WWF; our peatland proposals, which were warmly welcomed by RSPB Scotland; and our commitment to deliver forestry targets, which was welcomed by RSPB Scotland on behalf of Scottish Environment LINK.

Jamie McGrigor: Will the minister give way on that point?

Paul Wheelhouse: I am afraid that I cannot; I am running out of time.

The Presiding Officer: The minister is in his last minute.

Paul Wheelhouse: Our bold 2030 decarbonisation target for electricity generation has been welcomed by many people. Moreover, as was stated earlier, we are investing £1.1 billion from the spending review to support climate change actions on renewables, delivery of the home energy efficiency programme, community action through the climate challenge fund, and delivery of advice and provision of low-carbon loans to businesses and the public sector. We are reducing the impact of transport by supporting active travel, low-carbon vehicles and congestion reduction, and we are funding our zero waste Scotland programme to help families and businesses to unlock savings and to reduce emissions by cutting waste. We are also helping farmers to make more efficient use of nitrogen fertiliser. I take on board the points that a number of members made about the farming for a better climate initiative.

It must be noted that the Government has received support from Lord Deben, or John Gummer as many may know him better, who is now the chair of the EU Climate Change Committee. Lord Deben stated:

"Scotland has tougher targets than the rest of the United Kingdom. I very much want to look at whether we can learn from Scotland, whether there are ways which we can copy elsewhere ... I am very supportive of the Scottish attitude which has been able to put through the whole of government an understanding that climate change is part of the job of every single department."

Rabbie Burns, albeit in a different context, once wrote:

"O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us
To see ourselves as others see us!"

Scotland has achieved much already—we can be positive about that. This Government is by no means complacent, but I maintain that we can

continue to be proud of Scotland's ambition and the progress that we continue to make. RPP2 is part of that, but it is not the end of the journey. I and my fellow ministers look forward to continuing the work of Parliament on what is the most important issue that any of us will be involved in.

17:56

Graeme Dey (Angus South) (SNP): It is interesting to compare and contrast the nature of and approach to the scrutiny of RPP2 and RPP1. Two years ago, RPP1 was considered by a lead committee—the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee—and the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee provided a report that was appended to the TICC Committee's report. The process involved just one cabinet secretary being questioned and only four stakeholder sessions were held. The chamber debate ran to only a little over 90 minutes.

The delegated but co-ordinated scrutiny of RPP2 has undoubtedly made for a more forensic process. Each of the four committees focused on particular areas of responsibility to produce specific individual reports, although, as we have heard, some common themes run through them. Such scrutiny can only have been to the benefit of the process of consideration, as have been the level of stakeholder input and the extent to which ministers and cabinet secretaries have been questioned.

I doubt that many relevant or appropriate organisations or interest groups could claim to have been denied their say. The views of many of those organisations and groups are reflected in the reports.

In addition to the written submissions that it received, the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee held three round-table sessions, followed by separate question sessions with the minister and then the cabinet secretary. That was replicated across the other committees. In the time leading up to the debate, some 30 per cent of MSPs eligible to serve on parliamentary committees have been involved directly in scrutinising RPP2. All told, half a dozen cabinet secretaries and ministers were questioned.

Despite the challenging nature of the timeframe allowed to committees to carry out their work, I suggest that the extent of scrutiny, the nature of the four reports and what we have heard in the course of the debate testify to not only the way in which this institution is maturing and growing, but the importance that this Parliament places on delivering its world-leading climate change legislation.

There are those who have sought—for whatever reason—to assert that the committees of this

Parliament do not hold the Government to account. I do not think that any reasonable person who has witnessed the committees in action—and certainly the committee that I serve on—read the reports or tuned into the debate would concur with that view. Given the sometimes critical—albeit largely constructively critical—nature of the reports, I doubt that the Government would, either.

I will begin to draw my remarks to a conclusion by highlighting, as others have, the important issue of behavioural change. In evidence to the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee, James Curran, the chief executive of SEPA, said of meeting our climate change targets:

“This is Scotland's challenge—it is a challenge to each and every one of us to contribute what we can”.—[*Official Report, Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee*, 6 February 2013; c 1710.]

He is right. As far as rising to that challenge is concerned, there is no free pass for us MSPs. It is not sufficient for us to sit in this place and pass legislation aimed at tackling climate change; we must live up to the demands created by that legislation ourselves. As a nation, we will only get where we need to get on emissions reduction by partnership working across Government—national and local—the private sector and NGOs, as Claudia Beamish noted. Just as important, we also need to change our individual behaviour where it impacts on the environment.

The Government must provide leadership, but it falls to every one of us to behave in a more environmentally responsible way. Small and simple changes, if they are widely practised, can make a contribution that matters. Therefore, before we head off for the recess in 48 hours' time, will we ensure, for example, that all the appliances in our offices are switched off and are not left on standby; that none of our bins contains recyclable material; and that we will make the journey back to our constituencies on foot, by bicycle or public transport or, indeed, by car sharing? Will we continue in that vein going forward?

The clear message from the debate has been that the Parliament is absolutely committed to living up to the ground-breaking climate change legislation that it passed in 2009 and that it will demand that the Government does everything possible to make that happen. That is as it should be.

On behalf of the four committees that have been involved in scrutinising RPP2, I welcome the commitment that the minister has given to address some of the points that are raised in our reports, and I reiterate that we are all looking forward to a clearer and more robust final document emerging from the process of which this debate forms an important part.

Point of Order

18:01

Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab): On a point of order, Presiding Officer.

As MSPs, all of us have an obligation to conduct ourselves with integrity, and one of our stated priorities in the Parliament is the promotion of jobs and the economy of Scotland. Any loss of jobs is deeply worrying, not just to those who are directly affected, but to their family members and colleagues, who may face uncertainty in their own jobs.

It is therefore remarkable that a former Scottish National Party minister today appears to gloat that 30 jobs have been lost at the *Scotsman* group. It is remarkable that the former minister Stewart Stevenson made a direct link between *The Scotsman* not being a supporter of the SNP's plans to break up Britain and those job losses. *[Interruption.]*

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): Order.

Patricia Ferguson: To play politics with the jobs of hard-working Scots brings the Parliament into disrepute.

Mr Stevenson recognised his error of judgment and deleted the offending tweet, but he has not apologised for linking job losses to his constitutional views. Why would an MSP link job losses to the referendum? Is that now the SNP's position?

The views that Mr Stevenson expressed are shocking and are not compatible with the values of our Parliament. The SNP Government must disassociate itself from those remarks.

I would welcome your guidance, Presiding Officer, on what steps can be taken against Stewart Stevenson for bringing our Parliament into disrepute in that way.

The Presiding Officer: Members will know very well by now, because I have said so a number of times, that the Presiding Officers are not responsible for what members say in the formal proceedings of the Parliament, and we are certainly not responsible for what members choose to say using social media.

Decision Time

18:03

The Presiding Officer (Tricia Marwick): There are two questions to be put as a result of today's business. The first question is, that motion S4M-06057, in the name of Keith Brown, on the Forth Road Bridge Bill, be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament agrees to the general principles of the Forth Road Bridge Bill.

The Presiding Officer: The next question is, that motion S4M-06033, in the name of Rob Gibson, on reports on "Low Carbon Scotland: Meeting our Emissions Reduction Targets 2013-2027—The Draft Second Report on Proposals and Policies", be agreed to.

Motion agreed to,

That the Parliament notes the reports of the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee, the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee and the Local Government and Regeneration Committee on the Scottish Government document, *Low Carbon Scotland: Meeting our Emissions Reduction Targets 2013-2027 - The Draft Second Report on Proposals and Policies*.

Kurdish Contribution to Scotland

The Deputy Presiding Officer (John Scott):

The final item of business is a members' business debate on motion S4M-05871, in the name of Bob Doris, on the Kurdish contribution to Scotland, remembering Halabja. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament recognises the contributions to Glasgow and wider Scottish society by the Kurdish diaspora; welcomes the role that Kurds and other migrants play in making Scotland a vibrant and multicultural nation; understands that many Kurds have made a new life for themselves all over the world after fleeing several countries, including Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran, for many reasons, especially violence, discrimination and persecution against their language, education, religion and culture; particularly notes the 25th anniversary of the horrific attack on Halabja in northern Iraq on 16 March 1988, which is reported to have left up to 5,000 dead and another 7,000 to 10,000 injured, mostly unarmed women and children, from indiscriminate chemical and conventional bombardment; understands that this attack was part of the larger Anfal Campaign, a bureaucratic ethnic cleansing directive led by Saddam Hussein and Ali Hassan al-Majid from 1987 to April 1989, marked by mass disappearances, village destruction and forced relocation, executions, detentions and the use of chemical weapons; understands that up to 4,000 villages were destroyed and 182,000 people killed or reported missing as a result of the campaign; welcomes the 2005 Hague decision that formally recognised the 1988 attacks as genocide and the decisions by the UK, Norwegian, and Swedish parliaments to do the same, and believes that formal recognition will bring justice and awareness to the plight of the Kurdish people and comfort to Kurdish communities around the world still suffering as a result of these tragic events.

18:04

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP): I begin by welcoming my Kurdish constituents from Glasgow—and, in particular, a young man, Mr Shakha Sattar—who inspired me to secure this debate in Scotland's national Parliament. It might be a politician who is opening the debate, but it is very much the Kurds of Glasgow who have brought it to the Parliament. I also welcome Kurds from other parts of Scotland and from across the United Kingdom and beyond who are here, and I thank them for their support. [*Applause.*]

I know that the debate has generated much interest in Kurdistan and in Kurdish communities around the world, and I want to say a few words to pay respect to them.

Ema Sarbarzin ba Kurdakani Scotland. Bashdari Kurdakan le komalgay emada gringa boman. Scotland herqyz karasata tyrsnakakani Halabja w anfal la yad nakat ka boona hoay hatni zhmaraiKy zory Kurd bo welatekaman. [*Applause.*] I hope that I said that we are proud of Scotland's Kurds, that their contribution to our society is valued by our

nation, and that Scotland will never forget the horrific events at Halabja and the brutal Anfal campaign that brought many Kurds to our shores.

The debate is an opportunity to pay tribute to them and to thank them for all that they do for Scotland. It is also important that we stand in solidarity with Scotland's Kurds and recognise the pain and suffering that led many of them and their families to come to Scotland in the first place. As it is now 25 years since the horrors of Halabja and the Anfal campaign, it is both right and timely for Scotland to show solidarity with them.

We must all do what we can to prevent such genocide and such acts against humanity from ever happening again. For me, never forgetting those events and recognising them as genocide are fundamental to ensuring that that is the case. Two other motions before the Scottish Parliament seek to do likewise.

The genocide has been recognised. In 2005, the International Court of Justice in The Hague recognised it and, in 2007, it again said at an appeal that there had been genocidal intent. Between 2007 and 2010, the Supreme Court of Iraq ruled that the 1988 attacks on the Kurdish population constituted genocide. That they were genocide has been acknowledged by members of the Swedish, Norwegian and Westminster Parliaments.

On 16 March 1988, indiscriminate rocket, phosphorus and napalm attacks fell upon Halabja. Chemical weapons that are likely to have included mustard gas, various nerve agents and cyanide were carried by Iraqi MiG and Mirage fighters. Up to 5,000 Kurds died and 10,000 were injured. Most were women and children. Many died instantly. Others did not—they died painfully from their injuries, in some cases much, much later. No one can ever quantify the physical pain and mental anguish of those who survived, but other long-term effects can be quantified, such as higher probabilities of miscarriage, infertility, birth defects, blood malignancies and cancer.

Al-Anfal in 1988 was part of wider attacks that were carried out on Kurds between March 1987 and April 1989. During that two-year period, Kurds were forced to endure great pain. That evil campaign was led by Saddam Hussein's first cousin, Ali Hassan al-Majid, who was notoriously known as Chemical Ali. The scale of the horror was massive. Thousands of Kurdish villages—perhaps 90 per cent of all Kurdish villages in Iraq—were destroyed. Official figures document that 100,000 persons disappeared in 1988 alone, although some Kurdish sources claim that the figure could be as high as 182,000. Those who were abducted or arrested were often sent to concentration camps, where women and children were separated from men of military age. The

elderly and infirm were also separated from others.

Many Kurds across the world—many of whom were displaced because of these very events—live with the memory of those atrocities. Younger Kurds in Glasgow and elsewhere have heard stories about the events, and it is vital that the younger generation grows up with the knowledge and understanding of the previous generation's suffering. I know that many of them have done so. However, it is not only Kurds who should remember such terrible events, but all of us.

Before today's debate, Fergus Ewing MSP told me about his work with Kurds in Glasgow in the late 1980s and early 1990s. He recalls attending a ceremony in Queens park—which is one of Glasgow's large parks—where a tree was planted by Kurdish families in remembrance of those whose lives were lost at Halabja. That small gesture is a powerful symbol of solidarity with Kurds not only in Glasgow but everywhere.

I am sure that there have been similar events across Scotland over the years in remembrance of Halabja and Anfal. Perhaps the Scottish Government will consider how to support and co-ordinate such activities in the future.

I said that such genocide must never be allowed to happen again. Looking at the world, we see how troubled it can be. Remembering the history of pain and suffering is crucial to that, but so is how people respond. Peace and mutual respect are vital ingredients in that response, too. For Glasgow and Scotland, that should be about celebrating our Kurdish communities—not only the Kurdish doctors, lawyers and engineers who contribute to our society, but the asylum seekers and refugees who still need much support and assistance.

I began by mentioning Shakha Sattar. His response to the atrocities when he came to Scotland as a boy was to grow up steadfast in the belief that helping his community in Glasgow was how he could play his part in ensuring a positive legacy from such terrible crimes. It is a privilege to work with him and others on that task.

Scotland is a more rich and vibrant place because of the contribution that many new Scots have made to our nation. Glasgow's Kurds are a powerful part of that mix.

I note that today we commemorate with sadness the events of Halabja and Anfal. It is crucial that we also celebrate the contribution that Glasgow's and Scotland's Kurds have made to our nation.

18:13

Patricia Ferguson (Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn) (Lab): I congratulate Bob Doris on

securing a debate on such an important subject. I very much echo the sentiments expressed in the motion, which

“welcomes the role that Kurds and other migrants play in making Scotland a vibrant and multicultural nation”.

Indeed, that has always been the position of the Scottish Labour Party and the approach of the Parliament since its inception. Modern Scotland views ethnic diversity as a strength; it is a multicultural society that sees new citizens in a positive light. Such variety enriches our communities and our democracy.

Tragically, in Iraq, the Kurdish people have over many decades faced significant and violent opposition to their desire to progress towards an acceptable degree of Kurdish autonomy. As far back as 1960, Kurds led by Mustafa Barzani were engaged in heavy fighting against successive Iraqi regimes. In 1970, Iraq announced a peace plan providing for Kurdish autonomy but, of course, that did not last, and by 1974 the Iraqi Government had begun a new offensive against the Kurds.

During the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, the regime implemented anti-Kurdish policies and a de facto civil war broke out. It is shameful that although the Iraqi regime was widely and rightly condemned by the international community, it was never punished for its actions—not for the deportation of thousands of Kurds to central and southern Iraq, not for the complete destruction of villages, and not even for the mass murder of thousands of Kurdish civilians.

The motion rightly focuses our attention on the notorious attack on Halabja, in northern Iraq, on 16 March 1988. The atrocity was perhaps the most infamous episode in the genocidal campaign that was waged against the Kurdish people between 1986 and 1988 by the Iraqi regime—it does not deserve the name “Government”, so I do not intend to use it. The campaign included ground offensives, aerial bombing, systematic destruction of settlements, firing squads and the horror of the largest chemical weapons attack in history to be directed at an area populated by civilians.

We should never forget the attack, which killed up to 5,000 people and injured up to 10,000 more—predominantly civilians. Thousands more died of complications, disease and birth defects in the years after the attack. It is right that the motion reminds us that the attack on Halabja was part of the larger Anfal campaign, which was led by the bloody tyrant Saddam Hussein. It is also right that the Parliament welcomes the 2005 decision in The Hague that formally recognised the 1988 attack as genocide, just as the UK, Swedish and Norwegian Parliaments have done. I hope that such an approach will help to generate awareness of what

the Kurdish people have endured in their struggle for democracy.

Last year I had the pleasure of meeting representatives of the Kurdistan Regional Government, courtesy of my colleague Hanzala Malik. I also had the privilege of being able to take part in an interview with Kurdistan Television. I think that that helps to demonstrate how things have begun to change since the fall of Saddam Hussein. Conditions for people in Iraqi Kurdistan have changed. Literacy has increased significantly, infant mortality has fallen, there are seven universities where there used to be one, and there is of course a regional devolved Government. That is not to say that the invasion was correct or indeed the only option, or that all is now well for the Kurdish community. However, the changes illustrate that matters of war and peace are more complex and their consequences less easy to predict than is suggested in the one-dimensional analysis that is sometimes evident.

It is an honour to have representatives of the Kurdish community living in my home city of Glasgow. It is also an honour to have representatives of the community in the Parliament today. I very much look forward to meeting them later and I am grateful to Bob Doris for lodging the motion.

18:17

Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP): I congratulate Bob Doris on securing this debate on a subject of international importance and on affording our Parliament the opportunity to mark the tremendous contribution that the Kurdish community makes to Scotland.

It is right that we mark and remember the 25th anniversary of the horrific attack on Halabja, which left up to 5,000 people dead and another 7,000 to 10,000 people injured—mostly unarmed women and children. The attack featured the indiscriminate use of chemical weapons such as mustard gas, as well as conventional bombardment. As Bob Doris reminded us, the UK, Norwegian and Swedish Parliaments have recognised it as genocide.

It is also right and proper that we mark the fact that Kurdish heritage is rooted in one of the world's oldest cultures. We in Scotland owe a great debt of gratitude to the many Kurds who have chosen to make Scotland their home. The addition of a people with such a noble culture, steeped in history, has made a great contribution to the rich and vibrant tapestry of life in Scotland and helps to make our nation a vibrant and diverse place in which to live.

The Kurdish people are the largest national minority in the world that has no homeland. We in

Scotland can be proud that, according to the Kurdish Cultural Association, more than 2,000 Kurds have chosen to make Scotland their home. Last week, Kurds around the world celebrated the festival of Newroz, the Kurdish new year, and I offer my sincere thanks to all the Kurds who are in the gallery and throughout Scotland for the contribution that they make to the country that they now call home. I am proud to have in my constituency members of the Kurdish diaspora—a people who are renowned for their hard work and for their tenacity in the face of adversity and brutality.

Around the world the Kurdish culture is famous for its ancient history and its distinct culture transmitted through art, dance and song. The Kurdish people have a rich literary history, despite a long history of oppression that includes the banning of the written and spoken Kurdish word. The defining trait of Kurdish culture is its language, which until very recently was brutally suppressed. Despite the oppression that the Kurdish people have faced, they continue to speak their language, in which Bob Doris opened the debate.

Scotland is a country that celebrates cultural diversity and that is particularly true in our cosmopolitan capital. We are proud that the Edinburgh Kurdish Society has been based here since 1993 and we benefit greatly from its addition to the local community. One recent event saw the Edinburgh Kurdish Society open its doors to people of all cultures and creeds in order to share ideas and discuss how greater links could be forged between the many cultures that are present in Scotland.

There are many similarities between our two lands, not least the fact that the Kurdish national dish of serupe, made from all the best bits of a sheep sewn up with various herbs and spices, bears more than a passing resemblance to our own national delicacy. As was pointed out by Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman, the Kurdistan Regional Government's high representative to the UK, we both have a population of 5 million; we are proud of our highlands and landscapes; we have devolved administrations and are rich in natural resources.

The Scottish Government has been proactive in fostering close ties between Kurdish and Scottish officials. Meetings between the First Minister and Karim Sinjari, the Kurdistan Regional Government's interior minister, focused on developing future cooperation in areas from education, health, policing, energy and business to culture and heritage. Scotland has already provided some police training in Kurdistan and Mr Sinjari and Cabinet Secretary for Justice Kenny MacAskill have already discussed ways to progress that and to widen cooperation.

Once again, I congratulate Bob Doris on bringing the debate to the chamber. Along with members of all parties, I look forward to deepening the relationship between the Scottish and Kurdish peoples and embracing the Kurdish community as a vital and valued part of a vibrant and multicultural Scotland.

18:22

John Lamont (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): I too congratulate Bob Doris on securing the debate and I welcome those in the gallery who have travelled to be with us in the Scottish Parliament.

I must say, however, that it is with mixed emotions that I make my speech. Reflecting on atrocities such as those systematically inflicted on the Kurdish people since the early 1980s is never something to savour. However, the debate provides us with an opportunity to remember those crimes, to learn the lessons that we can and, importantly, to celebrate the Kurdish people, their future and their contribution to Scotland.

I turn first to remembering. It was 25 years and 10 days ago that the skies above Halabja rained bombs, both conventional and chemical, on its innocent inhabitants. An estimated 5,000 civilians were massacred over the two-day bombardment with a further 10,000 injured, some in the most unimaginable ways.

The massacre at Halabja was just one part of the Anfal campaign during which, at the behest of Saddam Hussein, some 180,000 Kurds lost their lives between 1987 and 1989. It is right that we remember those outrageous atrocities and it is for that reason that I recently lodged a motion in the Parliament to remember the struggles of the Kurdish people and formally to recognise the genocide committed against them. I am pleased that so many members supported that motion. It is also a tribute to the Scottish Parliament, as well as an indication that we take the Kurdish population and its interests at home and abroad seriously, that the formal recognition of the Anfal genocide was also the subject of motions by both Labour and the SNP. Today is a significant and symbolic occasion on which the Kurdish genocide can receive further parliamentary recognition.

Secondly, I turn to the lessons that we can learn from the events in Kurdistan over the past 25 years. As all of us here will surely agree, there are profound lessons to be learned. For my part the Kurdish experience confirmed my belief that human nature is incompatible with totalitarianism and that only when a people are liberated from tyranny can they progress, prosper and flourish.

That brings me to my third point—what can we celebrate, 25 years after Halabja and the Anfal

campaign? Since liberation in 1991 we have seen democracy flourish in Kurdistan. We have seen the economy prosper, civil society blossom and the regeneration of Kurdish civil rights and liberties. Kurdistan now has seven public universities bringing higher education to its citizens. It has a stable and democratically elected Parliament, with a percentage of women representatives similar to that in our own Parliament. It has progressive laws that have banned female circumcision and which protect women from domestic abuse. Violence, terrorist activity and the persecution of religious minorities are significantly lower—in some cases, non-existent—in comparison with the rest of Iraq.

All that serves to underline Kurdistan's place as a progressive beacon in the Middle East. Tonight's debate represents an opportunity to celebrate Scotland's links with Kurdistan, both internationally, with the relationship between our Parliaments and Governments, and nationally, with the Kurds who live and work in Scotland.

We must never forget the atrocities committed against Kurds—atrocities which led the head of the Iraqi graves commission to remark that,

“There is another Iraq, buried under Iraq.”

Tonight's debate allows us to remember, learn and celebrate.

18:26

Hanzala Malik (Glasgow) (Lab): I thank Bob Doris for securing today's debate. I would like to start with the words: “Bismillah-hir-Rahman-nir-Rahim”. For the record, that means: “In the name of God, the benevolent and merciful”. I also add: “As-salam alaykum”. That means: “Peace be upon you all”—and in particular upon our guests today in the chamber and their brothers and sisters at home in Kurdistan.

I add my voice to the debate and urge the Scottish Government to recognise formally the genocide of the people of Iraqi Kurdistan. I also encourage the European Union and the United Nations to do likewise, as many of the perpetrators seem to have escaped prosecution. Doing so will enable the Kurdish people—many of whom are in Scotland—to feel a sense of achievement and justice after their loss. The United Kingdom Parliament has already recognised the Kurdish genocide after the campaign led by Bayan Abdul Rahman. I congratulate her and her team on that achievement.

The genocide went on for decades—in fact, since early 1963—and it involved the deportation of ordinary Kurdish people, the use of chemical weapons in the 1970 and 1980s, and then the campaign of 1987-88 in which hundreds of

thousands of innocent people died. Families were torn apart. More than 4,500 villages were destroyed between 1976 and 1988 alone—genocide at its worst, while the whole world sat back and did nothing. That we allowed that genocide to happen in our day and age is a shame upon us.

On a positive note, I am very fortunate to have made at least two visits to Kurdistan in recent years and I am planning a third. I have received six delegations from Kurdistan, who have had meetings with people including the First Minister, the justice secretary, the education secretary and many officials and members—all in a bid to do our bit in trying to correct history. I have written two reports that explore how we can offer support to our friends in Kurdistan—one of which I have presented to the First Minister—and a third report is being done just now.

On education, we are looking at establishing university campuses in Kurdistan and at students coming to Scotland to study. We are also looking at law and order and policing, as has already been mentioned. I had the privilege of visiting the police training centre in Erbil and I was very impressed with the level of training on offer and, more importantly, the feeling that I got from the young students there who felt an ownership. They felt that they could work with the community rather than the community feeling dictated to and abused by the police force. That is a new concept in policing.

We also looked at water supply and water treatment issues, and at gas and oil exploration. We are now exploring the possibility of ministerial visits to Kurdistan, in a bid to bridge the gaps between our communities.

Kurdistan is similar to Scotland. It has a population of approximately 5 million and it is a mountainous region. The shame is that, in the genocide that took place, it was the innocent people who suffered. The people who were scratching a living on the barren, hard land with no irrigation facilities were targeted with poison gas weapons. I still cannot understand how the Iraqi Government got away with it. I still do not understand why we human beings allow such things to happen internationally.

Bob Doris: I agree with all the sentiments that Hanzala Malik has expressed. The European Union and the United Nations have been mentioned. I believe that the genocide should be formally recognised by both those institutions, but not just as an end in itself. Rather than just individual Parliaments recognising the genocide, the strength of having it recognised by the United Nations would be in the entire international community that turned its back on the people of Kurdistan formally recognising the genocide that

took place there. That would be a powerful cathartic experience for the international community in ensuring that such events never happen again.

Hanzala Malik: I thank the member for that intervention. I agree with him, which is why I suggest that the UN must take that proposal on board. We continue to see genocide taking place around the world, and we need to say that enough is enough. We must learn the lessons. Young Parliaments such as the Scottish Parliament have an important role to play in adding their voices to those of all the world's Governments in saying that we, too, want the UN to take that proposal on board.

18:32

The Minister for External Affairs and International Development (Humza Yousaf): I thank Bob Doris for lodging the motion and securing a debate that will promote greater understanding of the plight of Iraqi Kurds as well as highlighting and commemorating the terrible tragedies of Halabja and the Anfal campaign. Importantly, it also allows us to reflect—as every member has done—on the contribution that the Kurdish community has made to Scotland. I add my voice and the voice of the Scottish Government to those welcoming the Kurdish community to our and their Parliament.

Last week, the Parliament reflected on the 10-year anniversary of the start of the war in Iraq. When coalition forces entered Iraq looking for weapons of mass destruction, they found mass graves concealing men, women and children, all killed for nothing but their ethnicity. As members have said, last week also marked the 25th anniversary of the Anfal campaign, the last and most well-known phase of persecution against the Iraqi Kurds in 1987-88. It is estimated that 180,000 people perished in a systematic ethnic cleansing programme—as Hanzala Malik said, there were perhaps many more whom, to this day, we still do not know about. The campaign was instigated by Saddam Hussein and the Baathist regime against the mainly Kurdish population in northern Iraq.

The atrocities were characterised by the gross violation of human rights and included mass executions and the disappearance of men, women and children; the widespread use of chemical weapons including mustard gas and the nerve agent sarin—the worst incident being, as members have said, in Halabja, where 5,000 civilian inhabitants are thought to have died in a single aerial bombardment using such chemical weapons; the destruction of 2,000 villages as well as dozens of towns and administrative centres; and huge numbers being imprisoned without just

cause other than their presumed sympathies for the Kurdish.

In 1993, the Human Rights Watch report on the Anfal campaign against the Iraqi Kurds concluded:

“This crime far transcended legitimate counterinsurgency and includes the murder and disappearance of tens of thousands of non-combatants due to their ethnic-national identity.”

There can be no doubt that it was ethnic cleansing.

The events of 1987-88 are a tragic example of a man's inhumanity and act as a reminder that Scotland's strong and enduring commitment to human rights cannot be taken for granted. That places a responsibility on us as a nation to ensure that other countries develop and maintain a similar commitment.

The Scottish Government's international work reflects Scotland's enduring social democratic values. We also use our international engagement as an opportunity to help to increase respect for and understanding of human rights worldwide, not through arrogant lecturing but through mature, even-tempered discourse with our international partners.

We have on-going dialogue with states at ministerial and official level to raise human rights issues where appropriate in a diplomatic and culturally sensitive fashion. I mention that because, as John Lamont and others said, not everything is rosy. Things are improving in northern Iraq, but not everything is rosy and human rights abuses are still regularly flagged up. Developing relationships with these countries helps further to increase our understanding of shared world values.

I want to take a moment to reflect as others have done on Scotland and Kurdistan's relationship, which Jim Eadie, John Lamont, Hanzala Malik and Bob Doris mentioned; they gave their own personal accounts of how that relationship has been built, whether through visits and inward delegations or through the fact that they have members of the Kurdish community in their constituencies and regions. Scotland and Kurdistan share many commonalities: both have a population of 5 million; oil, water and gas are our main natural resources; and, of course, we are both located north of a more populous neighbour.

The Scottish Government hosted two interns from the Kurdistan regional Government on a work placement in 2011 to help Kurdistan to develop its understanding of devolved government procedures. Ministers have also met representatives of the Kurdistan regional Government to explore areas in which our two countries can work together and where Scotland can share her expertise, for example in the fields

of business, finance, education and engaging with the diaspora. I welcome that role, as others have done.

I welcome the contribution that the Kurdish diaspora and other populations make to Scottish society. For generations, Scotland has opened its doors to refugees, students, migrant workers and visitors from around the world, all of whom have contributed—through their ideas, skills and talents—to building our country's future.

I often say that in Scotland we take the best from our migrant populations—from those new Scots; and I always say that cuisine is one of the things that benefits the most. From the Italian community we took spaghetti bolognese; from the Pakistani and Indian community we took chicken tikka masala; and it seems that Jim Eadie was perhaps suggesting that we took haggis from our Kurdish population, which might be a controversial thing to say. We take from the best and we have taken much from our Kurdish community.

Here in Scotland, we do not see ethnic, religious or cultural diversity as anything to be threatened by; rather, we see it as something to embrace as it contributes to making Scotland a safer, stronger and more inclusive society.

This debate is about remembering those who did no crime but were subjected to the worst punishment. In the modern day and age in which we live, it can be easy to become desensitised to violence and tragedy. However, the stories of the most profound human suffering cannot but affect us all.

I conclude the debate by assuring members that the Scottish Government recognises the immense suffering of the Kurdish people during that terrible period in history. On the substance of one element of the motion, I say that members will be aware that foreign affairs are, of course, a matter reserved to the UK Government. However, I am pleased that the Scottish Parliament is debating the motion, with consensus from across the parties, to say that it welcomes the 2005 Hague decision that formally recognised the 1988 attacks as genocide. This Parliament joins the UK, Norwegian and Swedish Parliament in doing so.

In a recent debate in the House of Commons, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office minister Alistair Burt said that genocide was not a term for the UK Government to decide upon but a legal decision to be taken in international fora. The UK Government's current position is not sufficient, and it recognises that itself. I therefore commit the Scottish Government to working with my colleague Bob Doris and with leaders in the Scottish Kurdish community to impress on the UK Government the need to find a route to recognise the Anfal

campaign appropriately and internationally, and the need for a more robust response.

Meeting closed at 18:40.

There is no question in my mind and in the minds of decent people around the world but that the people of Iraqi Kurdistan were the victims of the most unspeakable crimes, perpetrated by a vicious and evil regime that had no hesitation in committing crimes against humanity and slaughtering the innocent simply because of their identity and language and their desire for freedom from fear and oppression.

The Anfal campaign is a stain on our collective conscience, and we must never allow it to happen again.

Members who would like a printed copy of the *Official Report* to be forwarded to them should give notice to SPICe.

Available in e-format only. Printed Scottish Parliament documentation is published in Edinburgh by APS Group Scotland.

All documents are available on
the Scottish Parliament website at:

www.scottish.parliament.uk

For details of documents available to
order in hard copy format, please contact:
APS Scottish Parliament Publications on 0131 629 9941.

For information on the Scottish Parliament contact
Public Information on:

Telephone: 0131 348 5000
Textphone: 0800 092 7100
Email: sp.info@scottish.parliament.uk

e-format first available
ISBN 978-1-78307-719-9

Revised e-format available
ISBN 978-1-78307-734-2