

Tuesday 6 May 2014

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

Enterprise and Environment

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what the overall megawatt capacity for (a) onshore and (b) offshore windfarms has been in each year since 2003.

Holding answer issued: 30 April 2014

(S4W-20480)

Fergus Ewing:

	Onshore Windfarms Consented Capacity (MW)	Onshore Windfarms Consented Cumulative Capacity (MW)	Offshore Windfarms Consented Capacity (MW)	Offshore Windfarms Consented Cumulative Capacity (MW)
2003	No records held	No records held	216	216
2004	No records held	No records held	-	216
2005	No records held	No records held	-	216
2006	No records held	No records held	-	216
2007	213	213	-	216
2008	1316.5	1529.5	-	216
2009	384.3	1913.8	-	216
2010	459.3	2373.1	-	216
2011	412.5	2785.6	6	222
2012	744.6	3530.2	-	222
2013	394.2	3924.4	7	229
2014	174	4098.4	1866	2095

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will require carbon assessments to be carried out prior to consideration of proposals to develop on peatlands.

(S4W-20587)

Paul Wheelhouse: Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) is currently under review, but the draft SPP, published for consultation in April 2013, proposed that where peat and other carbon rich soils are present, planning applicants should assess the likely effects of development on carbon dioxide emissions (paragraph 134). The finalised SPP is due for publication in June 2014.

Scottish Ministers already require a carbon assessment to be undertaken for wind farm proposals on peatland where these applications are with Scottish Ministers for determination.

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government, in light of the Minister for Environment and Climate Change's comment in his letter to the chief executive of Scottish Land & Estates dated 26 February 2014 that "despite all our efforts, there remains an element of sporting managers and owners who continue to flout the law and defy public opinion", whether it will conduct a review of the licensing and other arrangements for regulating game bird shooting in other countries, with a view to implementing stronger management and regulation.

(S4W-20655)

Paul Wheelhouse: The Scottish Government announced a package of measures in July 2013. These were a review of the penalties for wildlife crime, a restriction on the use of general licences and encouragement for the police to use the full range of investigative techniques at their disposal to deal with wildlife crime. We also introduced the vicarious liability provisions in the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act in 2012. The Scottish Government remains of the view that the measures have the capacity to help prevent, deter and detect wildlife crime. However, the measures must be given time to be fully implemented and for them to have an effect.

Nevertheless, we have been clear that if it becomes apparent that further measures are required we will take whatever action we consider necessary, including examining whether stronger management and regulation of game bird shooting is appropriate.

Alex Fergusson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government when it will publish Scottish Natural Heritage's revised guidance on the visual presentation of proposed windfarm developments to aid assessment of the likely impact on the landscape.

(S4W-20685)

Paul Wheelhouse: No date has been set for the publication of revised guidance on visual representation of wind farms. Scottish Ministers recognise the importance of this guidance and stakeholders will be advised in due course of a publication date.

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government how many people are on a debt arrangement scheme and what the (a) total and (b) median debt is.

(S4W-20688)

John Swinney: Statistics held at 31 March 2014, show that there were 13,166 debt payment programmes under the Debt Arrangement Scheme, the total debt included is £241.3 million with a median debt of £13,076.

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide a breakdown of its £1.2 million grant to Portfolio Recovery Associates UK and what it will pay for.

(S4W-20698)

John Swinney: The administration of Regional Selective Assistance is an operational matter for Scottish Enterprise. I have asked Scottish Enterprise to directly respond to you on this question.

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether any conditions are attached to its £1.2 million grant to Portfolio Recovery Associates UK.

(S4W-20699)

John Swinney: The administration of Regional Selective Assistance is an operational matter for Scottish Enterprise. I have asked Scottish Enterprise to directly respond to you on this question.

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether it (a) is discussing or (b) will provide any benefits (i) pecuniary or (ii) in kind as part of its £1.2 million grant to Portfolio Recovery Associates UK.

(S4W-20700)

John Swinney: The administration of Regional Selective Assistance is an operational matter for Scottish Enterprise. I have asked Scottish Enterprise to directly respond to you on this question.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether ministers made/have made representations to the UK Government regarding VAT on tourism in (a) 2013 and (b) 2014.

(S4W-20731)

Fergus Ewing: I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-20469 on 14 April 2014. All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the Parliament's website, the search facility for which can be found at:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx>.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government when ministers last made representations to the UK Government regarding VAT on tourism.

(S4W-20733)

Fergus Ewing: I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-20469 on 14 April 2014. All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the Parliament's website, the search facility for which can be found at:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx>.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether it has a commitment to reduce VAT rates on tourism in the event of independence.

(S4W-20734)

Fergus Ewing: I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-20474 on 14 April 2014. All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the Parliament's website, the search facility for which can be found at:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx>.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S4W-20469 by Fergus Ewing on 14 April 2014, whether it will publish its letter to the UK Government of 24 April 2012 regarding VAT on the purchase of static caravans.

(S4W-20737)

Fergus Ewing: The text of the letter to the UK Chancellor of the Exchequer, issued on 24 April 2012, is as follows:

"VAT ON STATIC CARAVANS - UK BUDGET 2012. I wrote in March 2012, prior to the UK Budget, setting out suggestions on a range of issues which would help boost economic growth within Scotland.

I highlighted that the existing disparity in VAT rates between the UK and many European countries continues to place our tourism and hospitality sectors at a clear competitive disadvantage. The 20% VAT on hospitality businesses in the UK is the second highest in the European Union.

Tourism is one of the priority sectors in the Scottish Government Economic Strategy. The sector contributes over £4.1 billion every year to the Scottish economy and is a major success story. Indeed despite the challenging economic environment, overnight visitors to Scotland rose by 9% in 2011, with visitors from within Great Britain increasing by 10% along with a 20% increase in domestic visitors spend.

The latest data from the 2011 VisitScotland Visitor Survey shows that UK residents were more likely to camp or stay in a caravan during their visit than overseas visitors. However, your proposal in the Budget to introduce VAT on static caravans from 1 October 2012, will inevitably increase the cost of purchasing or renting such units, as highlighted in *HM Treasury's tax information and impact notes*. Clearly, this will have a negative impact on what is a growing and successful part of the Scottish tourism industry.

The Scottish Government is determined to make the most of Scotland's fantastic assets and take full advantage of opportunities to drive up visitor numbers and spend. However the VAT increase on static caravans announced in your recent Budget will do precisely the opposite. It will damage a successful part of the tourism industry whilst yielding little additional tax revenue for the UK Government. Indeed it will increase VAT receipts by just 0.04% a year. I strongly urge you to reverse this damaging proposal at the earliest opportunity.

I am copying this letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment and the Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism."

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S4W-20469 by Fergus Ewing on 14 April 2014, whether its letter to the UK Government of 24 April 2012 regarding VAT on the purchase of static caravans also called for action on VAT on tourism more widely.

(S4W-20738)

Fergus Ewing: I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-20737 on 6 May 2014. All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the Parliament's website, the search facility for which can be found at:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx>.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S4W-20469 by Fergus Ewing on 14 April 2014, whether it will publish its letter to the UK Government of (a) 18 June 2012 and (b) 11 September 2012 regarding VAT on ski-lifts.

(S4W-20739)

Fergus Ewing: The text of the letter from the Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism to the UK Chief Secretary to the Treasury, issued on 18 June 2012, is as follows:

"I welcomed the UK Government's budget decision to reduce to 5% the VAT applied on cable operated transport systems, including ski lifts. When introduced, this reduction will bring our VAT rate into line with that applied elsewhere in the European Union and, in removing that competitive disadvantage, should bring a small, but much needed, boost to Scotland's five snows ports centres.

I am, however, concerned by the proposed timing of the change, which we understand is not to be made until April 2013. I wonder if you could give some further thought to the timing, particularly whether the reduction could be introduced at the beginning of January 2013, very slightly earlier than is currently proposed.

The small change in timing will make a considerable difference to the centres whom I met recently to reflect on the last season and the challenges ahead of them. As you will understand, the centres see the reduction in VAT as key to releasing vital resources that they can invest in their future sustainability. All the centres have planned improvements which they hoped to fund with released resources, including upgrading machinery such as piste machines and gondola motors, replacing lifts and building projects to house machinery. Without resources, they simply cannot afford to implement their plans. Unfortunately, the current timetable would mean that the reduction would not be made until after the end of the next snowsports season, with the centres not seeing any real benefits until 2014. Given the need for essential maintenance and the urgency in starting the process of upgrading and replacing ageing infrastructure at the centres, an earlier introduction is key to ensure the intended impact of the Chancellor's Budget decision comes into effect sooner rather than later.

There is one further aspect of the VAT decision which has been brought to my attention by the centres: the status of travelator lifts. The wording in the budget statement does not mention travelator lifts, which perform the same function of transporting skiers but in a safer manner, and clarification on their status. In respect of VAT would be greatly appreciated, not least since it is likely that travelators will progressively replace some of the smaller wire tows for safety reasons.

I know that you recognise the substantial contribution that this iconic industry makes to the Scottish economy, generating around £30 million a year and supporting over 600 jobs, often in very fragile communities. Our natural resources, scenery and tourist infrastructure combine to make Scotland a first class destination for global snowsports. I hope that you will be able to review the timetable to make the small change necessary to support the sector's survival.

I look forward to your response."

The text of the letter from the Minister for Energy, Enterprise and Tourism to the UK Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, issued on 11 September 2012, is as follows:

'I welcome your letter of 18 July 2012 setting out HM Treasury's position with regard to travelator lifts and the legislative timing of the rate of 5% VAT on cable-suspended passenger transport.

Your advice on travelators was extremely helpful and, while this will obviously be disappointing to the one Scottish centre which operates this mechanism, it has certainly clarified the distinction between those transport systems which will benefit from the reduced rate and those which fall outwith the eligibility criteria.

I know that Scotland's main economic development agencies, Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, have responded to the ongoing HM Customs and Revenue consultation about the timing of the introduction of the reduced VAT rate. I am sure that there will be further responses, not least from the five snowsports centres for whom an early introduction of the reduced rate would have the most impact, setting out the potential contribution it would make to their long-term viability.

I look forward to the result of the consultation, which I am sure will take account of the importance this vital part of Scotland's tourism sector has on our remote communities.'

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S4W-20469 by Fergus Ewing on 14 April 2014, whether its letter to the UK Government of (a) 18 June 2012 and (b) 11 September 2012 regarding VAT on ski-lifts also called for action on VAT on tourism more widely.

(S4W-20740)

Fergus Ewing: I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-20739 on 6 May 2014. All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the Parliament's website, the search facility for which can be found at:

www.scottish.parliament.uk/Apps2/Business/PQA/Default.aspx.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S4W-20469 by Fergus Ewing on 14 April 2014, whether it will publish the minute of the meeting on 9 March 2012 between the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth and the Chancellor.

(S4W-20743)

John Swinney: There was no meeting with the UK Chancellor on 09 March 2012. The representations made by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth on 9 March 2012 were made via the annual letter to the UK Chancellor setting out Scottish Government proposals for the UK Budget.

Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S4W-20469 by Fergus Ewing on 14 April 2014, what representations or proposals regarding VAT on tourism the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth made during the meeting with the Chancellor on 9 March 2012.

(S4W-20744)

John Swinney: There was no meeting with the UK Chancellor on 9 March 2012. The representations made by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth on 9 March 2012 were made via the annual letter to the Chancellor setting out Scottish Government proposals for the UK Budget.

The Scottish Government's representations were reflected in a news release issued on 12 March 2012, which is available using the url:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2012/03/budget12032012>. Within that the following text from the letter, in respect of VAT, is:

'The disparity in VAT rates between the UK and many European countries puts our tourism and hospitality sectors at a competitive disadvantage. The majority of EU countries levy reduced rates of VAT on their hospitality and tourism sectors, but the UK does not and I would like the Chancellor to consider this further.'

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government, in light of the potential impact on employment in Scotland, whether it has made an assessment of the UK Government's report on the gas leak from a platform in the Elgin-Franklin Field between March and May 2012, and what information it has on when the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service will make a decision on whether to take legal action.

(S4W-20825)

John Swinney: Although the regulation of health and safety is not a devolved matter, the Scottish Government were fully aware of the Elgin Gas Leak incident and co-operated with the UK government to minimise and monitor environmental impact and to plan for and assist in the response through Marine Scotland.

Reports from the Health and Safety Executive and the Department for Energy and Climate Change on the incident have been submitted to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service. A decision as to criminal proceedings will be taken following the conclusion of a full investigation, including consideration of those reports.

An offshore oil and gas industry with the highest standards of safety is vital to Scotland's economic well-being. The Scottish Government will always work with all interested parties to ensure a rigorous and well-funded North Sea safety regime.

Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S4W-17189 by Fergus Ewing on 26 September 2013, what assessment it has made of how the recommendations in the Civil Aviation Authority's recent review of the safety of helicopter operations will affect workers in the (a) offshore oil and gas and (b) helicopter industries.

(S4W-20826)

Fergus Ewing: The recommendations in the Civil Aviation Authority's (CAA) review will have a positive impact on the safety of offshore workers travelling to and from their place of work. With the oil and gas industry and the rest of the country we were shocked and saddened by the fatalities which have occurred and are determined that all appropriate lessons are learnt and implemented. We understand that some of the recommendations may be challenging for helicopter operators and are pleased that Oil and Gas UK and the CAA are having productive discussions on implementation of the review. The overall objective is to reduce the likelihood of accidents happening, and when accidents do occur to increase the likelihood of passengers and crew surviving. We would encourage everyone involved in this process to ensure that objective remains paramount.

Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what information it has on how many construction companies were registered in (a) Aberdeen and (b) Aberdeenshire in 2013.

(S4W-20909)

John Swinney: The latest official statistics for enterprises operating in Scotland by local authority are available from the Scottish Government *Businesses in Scotland 2013* publication. The publication shows that:

As at March 2013, there were 650 registered enterprises in the construction sector in Aberdeen City and 1,405 in Aberdeenshire.

These data are taken from the Inter-Departmental Business Register and are rounded to the nearest five. Data refer to VAT/PAYE registered enterprises only. Unregistered enterprises, sole traders and partnerships who are not registered for PAYE or VAT, are not included.

Note that the majority of construction enterprises are not registered for VAT/PAYE. The latest data from *Businesses in Scotland 2013*, show that 64% of all construction enterprises operating in Scotland are not VAT/PAYE registered (so called 'unregistered' enterprises). These 'unregistered' enterprises would include, for example, self-employed plumbers, electricians, joiners etc. Data on unregistered construction enterprises are not available by local authority area.

Although unregistered construction enterprises are significant in number, data from *Businesses in Scotland 2013* show that unregistered construction enterprises only account for 8% of total construction turnover generated in Scotland.

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to help develop a vaccine for squirrel pox virus.

(S4W-20987)

Paul Wheelhouse: Further to a ministerial meeting in May 2013 with MSPs from the South of Scotland and relevant stakeholders, it was agreed that it was vital to ensure that the work of the Moredun Research Institute to develop a vaccine to protect red squirrels from squirrel pox virus was able to continue until an application by the Moredun to secure funding through the EU Life + programme has been completed. In order to help fill the funding gap, the Scottish Government is providing a total of £40,000 over the next two years. I also wrote on 31 May 2013, to my counterparts in England, Northern Ireland and Wales and have secured additional commitments that, when taken together with the sum committed from the Scottish Government, amount to 50% of the budget required to continue trialling the vaccine over the next two years. The Red Squirrel Survival Trust has offered to fund the remaining balance in order to ensure the work is undertaken.

This research will enable development work on a squirrel pox virus vaccine to make further progress and it is to be hoped, will lead to the solution to one of the most serious threats to the long term survival of the much loved, red squirrel throughout the British Isles.

Governance and Communities

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government how it will report to the Parliament the findings of the expert advice that it has sought on the proposed National Planning Framework 3.

(S4W-20584)

Derek Mackay: A range of expert academic and professional advice informing the preparation of National Planning Framework 3 and Scottish Planning Policy is either already in the public domain or is being given further consideration by the Scottish Government ahead of publication of both policies June 2014. The reporting arrangements and times for this work varies.

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide a response to requests from stakeholders for clarity in relation to its policy on wild land in the proposed National Planning Framework 3.

(S4W-20585)

Derek Mackay: At the 18 March 2014 parliamentary debate on the Proposed National Planning Framework 3, it was confirmed that Scottish Planning Policy is the appropriate place to deal with wild land with a reference to the issue in the finalised National Planning Framework.

The finalised National Planning Framework 3 and Scottish Planning Policy to be published in June 2014, will clarify our position on wild land.

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will publish its reasons for removal of projects from the proposed National Planning Framework 3.

(S4W-20588)

Derek Mackay: *The National Planning Framework 3 Main Issues Report*, published in April 2013, explained why national development status was no longer considered to be needed for several national developments identified in National Planning Framework 2 (NPF2). *The NPF2 Monitoring Report*, published in 2012, also provided an update on progress in delivering all of the national developments that were included in NPF2.

Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will include clarity on surface access to Glasgow Airport in the final National Planning Framework 3 in order to influence investment decisions.

(S4W-20589)

Derek Mackay: The Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee's report on its consideration of the Proposed National Planning Framework 3 recognised the importance of good surface access systems for airports. We will consider all of the Parliament's recommendations in finalising National Planning Framework 3.

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government how long it has taken each local authority in the Forth Valley region to process a building warrant completion certificate application in each of the last five years; how many applications each has processed during that period; how many have taken (a) up to and (b) more than two months to process, and how these figures compare with the Scottish average.

(S4W-20664)

Derek Mackay: The Scottish Government does not hold this information. From 2005, local authorities' verification performance has been measured under a balanced scorecard framework. This required them to have in place a customer charter that included measurable performance targets.

Building on the previous approach, a revised performance framework for local authority verifiers was introduced in May 2012. The objectives include improving processing times, driving consistency, and enhancing the customer experience. The Scottish Government intends to publish a report in the early summer on the first full reporting year (April 2013 to March 2014) of the performance framework.

Local authority balanced scorecards from 2006-7 to 2012-13 can be viewed at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/Building/Building-standards/publications/publa>.

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government how long it has taken on average for each local authority in the Forth Valley region to process a building warrant application in each of the last five years; how many applications each has processed during that period; how many have taken (a) up to and (b) more than two months to process, and how these figures compare with the Scottish average.

(S4W-20665)

Derek Mackay: I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-20664 on 6 May 2014. All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the Parliament's website, the search facility for which can be found at:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx>.

Health and Social Care

Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what the definition is of an "exempt visitor" for the purpose of receiving a free eye test as referred to in the publication, General Ophthalmic Services Statistics: Updates of existing pages - as at 31st March 2013, published on 27 August 2013.

(S4W-20594)

Michael Matheson: An 'exempt visitor' is a person who is not ordinarily resident in the UK who is exempt from NHS charges under the National Health Service (Charges to Overseas Visitors) (Scotland) Regulations 1989, as amended.

Further information on people who may not be charged for conditions (including eye conditions) that occur during a visit to the UK can be found at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Health/Services/Overseas-visitors>

Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether visitors from the rest of the UK are eligible for free eye tests if they are charged for such tests in their normal place of residence.

(S4W-20595)

Michael Matheson: NHS eye examinations are free to all UK residents, irrespective of the place of residence, when provided in Scotland.

Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what the evidence base is for providing free eye tests (a) annually for age groups under 16 and over 60 and (b) every two years for the age group between 16 and 59 for people who do not qualify for a free supplementary eye test other than those who should have a repeat test because of personal or family conditions.

(S4W-20596)

Michael Matheson: Free NHS eye examinations are available annually, where required, for children aged under 16 and adults aged 60 and over.

For children rapid growth may require them to attend for eye examinations annually. Cases where it is particularly important for annual eye examinations in children include the detection and up to date correction of refractive error and early and regular intervention to reduce visual loss due to squints.

For adults the incidence of eye disease increases dramatically with age and with poor general health. Cataract, glaucoma, and macular degeneration are common causes of visual loss in older people. Frequent refractive error changes, and the screening and monitoring of disease development and progression are vital to maintain optimal vision. Good vision does not rule out the possibility of sight threatening eye disease and regular eye examinations in older people are most important.

Less frequent examinations may be recommended by the optometrist where the likelihood of ocular disease and refractive change is low.

Supplementary eye examinations are available to all, free of charge, where required. Supplementary eye examinations are undertaken for a range of reasons including follow up or repeat tests or procedures to monitor an abnormality or suspect abnormality; referral refinement before deciding if a patient requires referral to secondary care; where a patient has a problem with their eyes before their next primary eye examination is due.

Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what its estimate is of the additional number of people saved from (a) severely reduced sight and (b) blindness as a result of the introduction of free eye tests.

(S4W-20597)

Michael Matheson: No assessment has been undertaken by the Scottish Government on the impact that free NHS eye examinations have had on sight threatening conditions.

There are a number of factors which impact on sight and increase the incidence of blindness, including an ageing population and poor general health.

The free NHS eye examination is one in a number of changes in how we deliver eye care services, with the emphasis now being on the screening and monitoring of eye disease in community optometric practices. The introduction of the supplementary examination has further supported practitioners in the early detection of sight-threatening disease. Early detection of sight threatening problems and appropriate and timely referrals from the optometrist to the ophthalmologist are key.

Changes to secondary care treatments, improvements to ophthalmic surgical techniques and increased patient care have also resulted in the ability to save the sight of more patients.

Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government how many (a) prosecutions and (b) convictions there have been for carrying out unregulated teeth whitening in each of the last five years.

(S4W-20764)

Michael Matheson: An unregulated person carrying out tooth whitening is considered to be unlawfully holding themselves out as practising, or being prepared to practise dentistry, contrary to sections 38 (1) and (2) of the Dentists Act 1984. This legislation is a reserved matter, however the General Dental Council has provided the following information:

2014: five prosecutions, five convictions.

2013: three prosecutions, three convictions.

2012: two prosecutions, two convictions.

2011: two prosecutions, two convictions.

No information is available prior to 2011.

Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government how many people are registered with (a) community pharmacists and (b) GPs for (i) chronic prescribing and (ii) the minor ailments scheme, broken down by NHS board, and how it encourages people to register.

(S4W-20766)

Alex Neil: The following table sets out the number of current registrations for the Chronic Medication Service (CMS) and the Minor Ailment Service (MAS), broken down by NHS board. Eligible patients can register with the community pharmacy of their choice for each service. Registration arrangements for both services are pharmacist-based and -led.

The Scottish Government publishes leaflets giving details of both services. These leaflets are made available at GP surgeries and community pharmacies, and at Jobcentre Plus offices and Citizens Advice offices:

Health Board	CMS Registrations	MAS Registrations
Nhs Ayrshire And Arran	33284	82742
Nhs Borders	8328	19972
Nhs Dumfries And Galloway	11685	22205
Nhs Fife	24926	62861
Nhs Forth Valley	21850	44772
Nhs Grampian	37322	78717
Nhs Greater Glasgow And Clyde	93566	239219
Nhs Highland	20507	43944
Nhs Lanarkshire	52813	151625
Nhs Lothian	52806	135327
Nhs Orkney	550	2985
Nhs Shetland	616	2846
Nhs Tayside	26232	68875
Nhs Western Isles	725	768
Grand Total	385210	956858

Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether only people who were eligible for free prescriptions prior to the abolition of prescription charges can register for the minor ailments scheme.

(S4W-20769)

Alex Neil: The eligibility criteria for the minor ailment service are the same as those which entitled people to free prescriptions before charges were abolished in April 2011.

Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government how many people have registered for the minor ailments scheme since the abolition of prescription charges.

(S4W-20770)

Alex Neil: Some 1,559,000 patients have been registered at some point for the minor ailment service since prescription charges were abolished in April 2011. The total number of current registrations is 956,858.

Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government how much it costs to administer the continuing limited eligibility registration process for the minor ailments scheme.

(S4W-20771)

Alex Neil: The costs of administering the registration process for the minor ailment service, is approximately £96,000 per annum.

Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what it is doing to improve the uptake of eye tests by people (a) with learning difficulties, (b) with impaired capacity, (c) from deprived households, (d) whose first language is not English and (e) from ethnic minority communities.

(S4W-20772)

Michael Matheson: In recognition of the additional needs of some groups optometrists can visit certain approved day centres to provide NHS eye examinations for patients who would have difficulty in obtaining services from practice premises because of their particular needs. The types of patients who could be seen include, those whose first language is not English who are new to the UK and require the service of an interpreter.

Optometrists may also undertake domiciliary visits to patient's homes or residential homes in order to provide NHS eye examinations where the patient cannot leave home unaccompanied because of their particular needs, such as people with dementia or other disability.

GPs are also promoting optometrists as the first point of contact for eye related problems, with them now referring 33% more patients annually for NHS eye examinations than in 2007.

A patient information leaflet *Your guide to free NHS eye examinations in Scotland* is also available for display in optometrists, GP practices, and pharmacies.

Finally, training packages to support all optometrists in Scotland have been produced via the UK Directorate of Optometric Continuing Education and Training, supported by the Scottish Government. These include:

Making a Difference: Professional Eye Care for People with Learning Disability
Dementia and Optometry
Optometry and Ethnicity

Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what financial incentives in addition to universal fees it offers to optometrists to improve uptake of eye tests by people (a) with learning difficulties, (b) with impaired capacity, (c) from deprived households, (d) whose first language is not English and (e) from ethnic minority communities.

(S4W-20773)

Michael Matheson: There are no financial incentives in addition to the present fees that optometrists may claim for carrying out free NHS eye examinations in their practices.

Free NHS eye examinations are universal and available to the whole population which is reflected in the current fee structure.

Although we don't provide any additional incentives to optometrists in order to improve uptake of NHS eye examinations by such groups we do recognise the additional needs of some groups. For this reason optometrists can visit certain approved day centres to provide NHS eye examinations for patients who would have difficulty in obtaining services from practice premises because of their particular needs. The types of patients who could be seen include, those whose first language is not English who are new to the UK and require the service of an interpreter.

In addition, optometrists may undertake domiciliary visits to patient's homes or residential homes in order to provide NHS eye examinations where the patient cannot leave home unaccompanied because of their particular needs, such as people with dementia or other disability. An additional fee is payable for undertaking domiciliary visits.

Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what it has done to ensure that falls coordinators in each NHS board encourage people at risk of falls to take an eye test.

(S4W-20774)

Michael Matheson: The importance of including vision assessment in a multifactorial approach to falls prevention is highlighted in two national documents produced by the National Falls Programme. Both documents aim to support the local development of co-ordinated, integrated and person centred falls prevention and management pathways:

Up and About, Pathways for the prevention and management of falls and fragility fractures. Produced by NHS Quality Improvement Scotland (2010)

The Prevention and Management of Falls in the Community: A Framework for Action for Scotland 2014-2015 (currently out for consultation, expected date for publication June 2014)

Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what managed care networks there are that deal with ophthalmic conditions.

(S4W-20775)

Michael Matheson: It is for NHS boards to determine, based on local priorities and clinical need, the level of local ophthalmic service they provide in order to meet the needs of their population.

The Visual Impairment Network for Children and Young People (VINCYP) was designated a national managed clinical network on 1 April 2014. VINCYP aims to bring together health, education and social care agencies to improve the care for visually impaired children and young people. The network has been commissioned by NHS National Services Scotland and an official launch is scheduled for 30 May 2014.

The Scottish Government has invested £2 million to implement the recommendations in the 'See Hear; A Strategic Framework for meeting the needs of people with a sensory impairment' published on 24 April 2014 and will work with service providers, service users and relevant voluntary and statutory agencies to achieve this.

Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what the outcome is of the Scottish Microbiology Forum's work to consider the centralisation of Scottish mycobacterial diagnostic services into a smaller number of laboratories.

(S4W-20777)

Michael Matheson: Published in 2011, the *TB Action Plan for Scotland* contains a recommendation for the Scottish Microbiology and Virology Network (SMVN, formerly the Scottish Microbiology Forum) to consider the centralisation of mycobacterial diagnostic services into a small number of laboratories with higher throughput and defined quality standards in laboratories in Scotland.

This has now been achieved. It has occurred through a natural evolution process and via facilitation by the work of the SMVN sub-group on mycobacterial services. All board TB laboratories in Scotland are accredited by Clinical Pathology Accreditation and have achieved external quality assurance results for TB culture and microscopy of 100% in 2012. In addition, Scottish TB laboratories have

exceeded the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control target for 80% of all new pulmonary TB cases to be confirmed by culture.

Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what action it has taken to implement each of the recommendations set out in the 2011 report, *A TB Action Plan for Scotland*.

(S4W-20778)

Michael Matheson: The Scottish Government published the first annual report of the *TB Action Plan for Scotland* in November 2013. The report sets out the progress made towards implementation of the action plan's 42 recommendations and includes key recommendations following on from the action plan.

These include the development of a strategic monitoring framework to manage implementation and measure progress towards the achievement of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) target 'To eliminate, by 2050, TB as a public health problem (incidence <1 per million population)'. A suite of key performance indicators has been developed to track progress with Scottish recommendations and this is in addition to annual reporting against ECDC indicators. To facilitate implementation a national multidisciplinary TB network has been set up and is chaired by an NHS board. The report can be viewed at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0043/00437667.pdf>.

Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what it has done to (a) ensure and (b) monitor the delivery by midwives of (i) pertussis vaccine during pregnancy and (ii) MMR vaccine immediately after pregnancy.

(S4W-20791)

Michael Matheson: Midwives are recognised as a key group in promoting the benefits of pertussis vaccination and rubella screening.

The pertussis immunisation programme for pregnant women was introduced in October 2012 in response to a UK wide outbreak of pertussis. The programme aims to provide passive immunity to young infants in the first few weeks of life before they are old enough to start their immunisation schedule at eight weeks of age. Most pregnant women are vaccinated against pertussis in their GP practice.

Prior to the introduction of the programme, training materials were produced by NHS Education for Scotland for registered healthcare professionals and midwives and a revised version will be issued in May 2014. A leaflet explaining the benefits of vaccination is also provided to pregnant women by NHS Health Scotland.

A point of delivery audit was undertaken in the main maternity units in Scotland in January 2013, which estimated that uptake of the vaccine was high at 78.1%. HPS is currently working on a mechanism to obtain regular uptake data via general practices for the routine monitoring of this programme.

HPS monitors the incidence of pertussis and this includes collecting a dataset on all laboratory confirmed cases under one year of age, including whether the mother was vaccinated during pregnancy. The number of laboratory confirmed cases in infants < 1 year, declined by over 85% from 140 cases in 2010 to 19 in 2013.

MMR vaccine is offered to women immediately after pregnancy if they have been identified as not immune to rubella during screening tests in pregnancy. Screening for rubella antibodies is one of the routine tests offered to all pregnant women at their first appointment with their midwife at around two to three months pregnant. Information about Rubella immunity is also included in the pregnancy screening guide which is issued to every pregnant woman in Scotland.

The MMR vaccine is the only licensed rubella vaccine in the UK. It is a live vaccine and should not be given to pregnant women. So although screening for rubella immunity happens during pregnancy, MMR vaccine can only be given after delivery and offers protection for future pregnancies.

Rubella screening services are commissioned by each NHS board and at this time there is no national system where screening and vaccination are recorded. However, a number of initiatives have been developed to monitor pregnancy and newborn screening programmes at the local (NHS board) level.

Clinical standards for pregnancy and newborn screening were developed by NHS Quality Improvement Scotland in 2005.

NHS National Services Division (who commission screening services in Scotland) developed quality indicators for pregnancy and newborn screening in 2011. These indicators included an indicator for uptake of MMR in rubella susceptible women within five days after delivery. NHS boards provided preliminary data against these indicators in 2011-2012 but the data was not robust enough to be reported.

NHS Healthcare Improvement Scotland published a series of indicators for pregnancy and newborn screening in 2013. There is no specific indicator for uptake of MMR. This can be found at: http://www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org/our_work/reproductive,_maternal_child/programme_resources/pns_indicators.aspx

Rubella screening for pregnant women is a routine and well established part of pregnancy and newborn screening.

Jackson Carlaw (West Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what its response is to the recent *Cochrane Collaboration* report on the effectiveness of the antiviral drugs, Tamiflu and Relenza.

(S4W-20794)

Michael Matheson: In collaboration with colleagues across the UK, we will consider all new relevant scientific evidence on the effectiveness of Tamiflu and Relenza. This will include the *Cochrane Collaboration* reviews published on 9 April 2014, which considered data from the initial trials of Tamiflu and Relenza, dating back to the late 1990s. It will also include evidence from other studies carried out since the medicines were licensed, which support the view that they can reduce severe outcomes such as intensive care admission or death. The results of this review will inform our next steps.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government how many (a) NHS and (b) NHS 24 staff are employed on so-called zero-hours contracts.

(S4W-20795)

Alex Neil: The information requested is not held centrally. NHS boards determine their requirement for any staff bank services and the use of this service therefore remains primarily a matter for NHS boards as employers.

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government for what reason the NHS uses so-called zero-hours contracts.

(S4W-20797)

Alex Neil: NHS Scotland use 'as and when required' contracts in staff bank services to great effect. These arrangements have the dual benefit of providing a safe and reliable temporary workforce who can help NHS Scotland respond to unexpected circumstances, and allowing those who require it, the flexibility to continue to work without a fixed commitment that other contractual arrangements could not provide.

Richard Simpson (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what action it takes to ensure that its BCG vaccination programme follows each of the guidelines set out by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

(S4W-20810)

Michael Matheson: The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) undertook a review of the BCG vaccination programme in 2005 and recommended an improved targeted programme directed towards those most at risk of tuberculosis.

The Scottish Government's *TB Action Plan for Scotland*, published in 2011, contains four recommendations in respect of BCG vaccination. One of these requires NHS boards to review BCG neonatal immunisation in their locality to re-examine current operational plans. In preparation for the 2013 annual report of the action plan, boards were asked to confirm their implementation status for each recommendation and thirteen reported that this had either been completed or that a review was underway. A further update on progress will be sought from boards in preparation for the 2014 annual report.

In addition, the action plan requires Health Protection Scotland to undertake a more detailed review of NHS Board BCG audit activities so that best practice can be shared across Scotland. The results of the review are awaited, but are expected to confirm that NHS boards are delivering the BCG vaccination programme in line with the recommendations set out by the JCVI and in line with the *Green Book chapter* publication. This can be accessed at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/148511/Green-Book-Chapter-32-dh_128356.pdf.

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government which part of the NHS is responsible for decisions on the design of nurses' uniforms.

(S4W-20812)

Alex Neil: Following a public consultation in 2008 the design of the NHSScotland national uniform was determined in partnership with NHSScotland boards, professional bodies, trade unions, staff focus groups and the Scottish Government. All boards are required to comply with the National Uniform Policy issued in December 2010 when providing staff with their appropriate national uniform. The National Uniform Policy is available at:

http://www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/mels/CEL2010_42.pdf.

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on nurses and nurse practitioners having uniforms that are distinguishable from each other.

(S4W-20813)

Alex Neil: The purpose of the NHSScotland national uniform is not intended to distinguish between nurse and nurse practitioners. The aim of the uniform policy is to provide clarity for patients and the public between registered nurses and clinical support staff.

Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government what recent discussions it has had with private care providers regarding the price of residential care.

(S4W-20814)

Alex Neil: The Scottish Government and our partners have recently published the recommendations of the task force on the future of residential care for older people, which is available at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/02/1187>.

The task force considered all aspects of residential care, including costs, in making its recommendations.

Mark McDonald (Aberdeen Donside) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government what the average price of residential care is in each local authority area.

(S4W-20815)

Alex Neil: *The Scottish Care Home Census* collects information on the weekly cost for self-funding residents in care homes for older people. This is published at:

John Pentland (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether it is its policy that all babies (a) in intensive care should be treated on a one-to-one basis and (b) requiring high dependency care should be treated on a one-to-two basis by a qualified in speciality neonatal nurse and, if so, what monitoring it undertakes to ensure that this policy is followed.

(S4W-20832)

Michael Matheso: *Neonatal Care in Scotland: A Quality Framework*, published in 2013, states that all babies requiring intensive care should be cared for by staff who have completed accredited training in specialised neonatal care or who, while undertaking this training, are working under the supervision of a registered nurse who is qualified in speciality. A minimum of 1:1 staff-to-baby ratio will be provided at all times, although some babies may require a higher staff to baby ratio for a period of time.

Babies requiring high dependency care will be cared for by staff who have completed accredited training in specialised neonatal care or who while undertaking this training are working under the supervision of a registered nurse who is qualified in speciality. A minimum of a 1:2 staff to baby ratio will be provided at all times although again some babies may also require a higher staff to baby ratio for a period of time.

These staffing ratios are in line with the *British Association of Perinatal Medicine (BAPM) Service Standards for Hospitals Providing Neonatal Care* (3rd edition, 2010).

The Scottish Government is fully committed to providing the people of Scotland with the NHS services which meet their needs and maintain high standards of care. While policies, frameworks and resources are provided by the Scottish Government, it is for each NHS board to decide how best to deliver high quality, safe and sustainable services to meet the needs of their population. This includes how best to utilise funding and staff, taking account of national and local priorities, to meet local health needs and importantly provide high quality seamless care. We expect NHS boards to have robust processes in place to ensure the provision of safe, effective and high quality patient care which is delivered by the right professional at the right time.

John Pentland (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether it is its policy that more than one nurse should always be assigned to a neonatal special care side room containing more than four babies and that registered nurses and non-registered clinical staff should always work under the direct supervision and responsibility of a qualified in speciality neonatal nurse and, if so, what monitoring it undertakes to ensure that this policy is followed.

(S4W-20834)

Michael Matheson: *The Neonatal Care in Scotland: A Quality Framework*, published in 2013, states that babies requiring special care should be cared for with a minimum of 1:4 staff to baby ratio at all times by either a registered nurse or non-registered staff with the appropriate competencies and skills, working under the supervision of a registered nurse, qualified in speciality. This staffing ratio is in line with the *British Association of Perinatal Medicine Service Standards for Hospitals Providing Neonatal Care* (3rd edition, 2010).

The Scottish Government is fully committed to providing the people of Scotland with the NHS services which meet their needs and maintain high standards of care. While policies, frameworks and resources are provided by the Scottish Government, it is for each NHS board to decide how best to deliver high quality, safe and sustainable services to meet the needs of their population. This includes how best to utilise funding and staff, taking account of national and local priorities, to meet local health needs and importantly provide high quality seamless care. We expect NHS boards to have robust processes in place to ensure the provision of safe, effective and high quality patient care which is delivered by the right professional at the right time.

John Pentland (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what guidance it has issued regarding cases in which demand for neonatal intensive care facilities exceeds available resources.

(S4W-20835)

Michael Matheson: *The Neonatal Care in Scotland: A Quality Framework*, published in 2013, acknowledges that the transfer and admission of babies from other neonatal units' networks may occur to deal with peaks of demand or requests for specialist care not available elsewhere.

All NHS board chief executives in Scotland have been asked to assure themselves that their neonatal units are staffed according to the *British Association of Perinatal Medicine (BAPM) Service Standards for Hospitals Providing Neonatal Care* (3rd edition, 2010) and that they are using the Scottish Government's mandated neonatal workload and workforce planning tool twice daily to review dependency levels and staffing requirements.

The following questions received holding answers:

S4W-20590

S4W-20591

S4W-20592

S4W-20670

S4W-20671

S4W-20672

S4W-20673

S4W-20793