

Monday 12 May 2014

## SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

### Crown Office

**Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S4W-20290 by Lesley Thomson on 2 April 2014, how many people have been flown back from holiday to attend court in the last financial year; how many of these cases were subsequently adjourned, and at what cost.

**Holding answer issued: 7 May 2014**

**(S4W-20676)**

**Lesley Thomson:** The figures for the last financial year have not yet been cleared by audit. However, it is estimated that to provide the information would cost over £600. This has been calculated on the basis, that there were around 30,000 witness expense claims paid in 2012-13.

A search was however carried out in all expense claims over £500 in 2012-13 and these were all examined manually. As a result, there was only one instance discovered, at a cost of £975, involving an essential witness in a High Court case being flown back from holiday. The trial proceeded and the witness gave evidence. Whilst we cannot verify this is the only instance, it does demonstrate that it is very rare that witnesses are flown home from holiday to give evidence.

### Enterprise and Environment

**Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Government how it will ensure that offshore windfarms are monitored to ensure that they do not result in greater than predicted impacts on the environment and to inform future plans and projects.

**Holding answer issued: 6 May 2014**

**(S4W-20590)**

**Richard Lochhead:** Offshore wind farm consents issued by the Scottish Ministers contain stringent conditions which the developer must comply with. These conditions include requirements for the developer to monitor the impact on the likes of birds, marine mammals, fish and benthic communities. The Scottish Ministers will also form independent regional and strategic advisory groups (including importantly, but not exclusively, members from ornithological, fishing, fisheries and marine mammal organisations) for the purpose of advising ministers on research, monitoring and mitigation programmes. Consent conditions will require developers to contribute to these groups. An iterative sectoral plan review process ensures that the results of environmental assessments and monitoring of wind farms developments, alongside a programme of relevant scientific research, will inform future strategic plans for offshore wind in Scottish territorial waters.

**Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Government what recent discussions it has had with (a) the UK Government, (b) the European Commission and (c) EU member states regarding the potential impact of offshore windfarms outwith Scottish waters on protected wildlife sites in Scotland, and what the reason is for its position on this matter.

**Holding answer issued: 6 May 2014**

**(S4W-20591)**

**Richard Lochhead:** The Scottish Government has ongoing discussions with the UK, European Commission and EU member states on marine issues, including renewables and protected wildlife sites. While the issue of windfarms outwith Scottish waters impacting protected sites in Scotland has not been specifically discussed, current evidence suggests that there are no significant impacts associated with this issue.

However, to ensure the Habitats Regulations Appraisal process is comprehensive, regular discussions do occur on this issue between the respective statutory nature conservation bodies.

**Sarah Boyack (Lothian) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Government how, in making planning decisions, it has taken account of the potential cumulative impact of offshore wind developments in Scottish, UK and other European waters on protected wildlife sites, and what the reasons are for its position on this matter.

**Holding answer issued: 6 May 2014**

**(S4W-20592)**

**Richard Lochhead:** At the strategic plan level, a Strategic Environmental Assessment and a Habitats Regulations Appraisal of Marine Scotland's forthcoming plans for offshore renewables, under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations as amended, have been undertaken and have considered the potential for cumulative impacts with plans and projects outwith Scotland on Scottish wildlife sites.

The need for a cumulative impact assessment is also laid down in the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive 2011/92/EU which requires that the impacts of a project be assessed 'cumulatively' with other projects. When assessing an offshore wind farm application and its cumulative impact on European protected wildlife sites, the Scottish Ministers, as the competent authority, must undertake an appropriate assessment. Within this assessment, the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 require that the in-combination impacts (e.g. with other developments both inside and outside Scottish waters) are fully considered. Previous examples of appropriate assessments for consented offshore wind projects can be viewed on the Marine Scotland website.

**Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (Scottish Liberal Democrats):** To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to combat illegal raptor persecution in the Leadhills area.

**(S4W-20747)**

**Paul Wheelhouse:** The Leadhills area has been identified as a poisoning 'hotspot' in the maps that are published annually by the Scottish Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime. There have also been incidents in the area involving illegal shooting of raptors.

Operational policing and the targeting of enforcement activity in any specific area is a matter solely for Police Scotland.

The Scottish Government works closely with the police, conservation groups and landowners through the Partnership for Action Against Wildlife Crime (PAW) Scotland. The PAW Scotland Raptor Group has established a short-life working group tasked with developing a clear message that raptor persecution must stop now. The message will have the explicit backing of all PAW partners and be aimed in particular at those areas where raptor persecution is most persistent.

See also my response to S4W-20748 on 12 May 2014 which sets out the additional steps being taken by the Scottish Government and partners to combat illegal raptor persecution.

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>.

**Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (Scottish National Party):** To ask the Scottish Government when all three Clyde Marine Protected Areas will be designated and whether they will exclude dredgers and trawlers to protect vulnerable habitats and white fish nursery grounds.

**(S4W-20906)**

**Richard Lochhead:** We aim to make decisions in summer 2014 on which of the 33 possible Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) included in the 2013 consultation should be designated. The 33 possible MPAs include three in the Clyde.

The management of MPAs will be informed by the conservation objectives for each site and recommendations from our scientific advisers on how to protect the features for which the MPAs are designated. The draft management options that were published as part of the public consultation provided further information on a range of possible protection measures for the three Clyde MPA proposals. These measures are being refined and developed by Marine Scotland in discussion with marine users and other interests.

## Finance

**Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party):** To ask the Scottish Government for what reason Scottish Government staff costs for 2013-14 increased from £149.9 million at the time of the autumn budget revision to £164.8 million at the time of the spring budget revision and whether it will provide a breakdown of the increase.

(S4W-20849)

**John Swinney:** The majority of the increase in Scottish Government staff costs in the 2013-14 spring budget revision was offset by changes to other parts of the administration budget: £5.2 million of gross expenditure was offset by income, mainly funding for outward secondments; and £5.5 million reflected transfers from other level three budgets within the overall administration total. The net increase was therefore only £4.2 million, which relates to costs of activity taking place within the organisation funded from programme budgets as set out in the following table:

Portfolio	Activity
FESG	Local government data collection
IIC	Support for public sector data linkage framework
CEA	Transfer of Historic Scotland staff to core Scottish Government
ELL	Delivery of the Early Years Change Programme and IT support costs for Scottish Children's Reporters Administration
Health and Wellbeing	Rollout of Family Nurse Partnerships and Integration of Adult Health and Social Care, the development of the National Confidential Forum for adult survivors of in care abuse, analytical support for NHS programmes, work with NHS and delivery partners to improve standards of care and compassion for vulnerable adults and older people, integration of support for outcomes in children's health
Justice	Support for action to tackle sectarianism and IT support costs for public bodies in the Justice portfolio

**Gavin Brown (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party):** To ask the Scottish Government for what reason £100,000 was reallocated from the finance, employment and sustainable growth portfolio to the administration budget at the 2013-14 spring budget revision.

(S4W-20854)

**John Swinney:** I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-20849 on 12 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 for what reason £200,000 was reallocated from the investment and cities portfolio to the administration budget at the 2013-14 spring budget revision.

(S4W-20855)

**John Swinney:** I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-20849 on 12 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 for what reason £400,000 was reallocated from the culture and external affairs portfolio to the administration budget at the 2013-14 spring budget revision.

(S4W-20856)

**John Swinney:** I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-20849 on 12 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 for what reason £2.1 million was reallocated from the education and lifelong learning portfolio to the administration budget at the 2013-14 spring budget revision.

**(S4W-20857)**

**John Swinney:** I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-20849 on 12 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 for what reason £1 million was reallocated from the health and wellbeing portfolio to the administration budget at the 2013-14 spring budget revision.

**(S4W-20858)**

**John Swinney:** I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-20849 on 12 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 for what reason £400,000 was reallocated from the justice portfolio to the administration budget at the 2013-14 spring budget revision.

**(S4W-20859)**

**John Swinney:** I refer the member to the answer to question S4W-20849 on 12 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**

**Jim Hume (South Scotland) (Scottish Liberal Democrats):** To ask the Scottish Government what scientific evidence was used to justify the selection of primary school children for the programme of flu vaccination during winter 2013.

**(S4W-20749)**

**Michael Matheson:** In line with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's recommendations, a new childhood influenza vaccination programme was introduced in October 2013, which is being rolled out over the next few years on a phased basis. When fully implemented this will double the size of the existing seasonal influenza vaccination programme across Scotland from one million to almost two million doses administered annually, offering protection to those aged 2-17 years.

A number of factors were taken into consideration when deciding how best to implement the expanded programme in Scotland. Key among these was the epidemiology of influenza in Scotland. Advice from Health Protection Scotland was that maximal public health benefit was anticipated through introducing the programme in the youngest age groups initially because they are most at risk and are least likely to have immunity to influenza. As such, the programme has been implemented among two and three year olds in the first instance.

At the same time, delivery of the expanded programme has been piloted in various primary schools throughout Scotland. This has enabled us to test a number of aspects of the programme among this cohort. In particular, no immunisation programmes are delivered currently in primary schools, and these pilots have helped shape proposed delivery mechanisms for the implementation of the programme in primary schools.

**Jim Hume (South Scotland) (Scottish Liberal Democrats):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will review its plans to roll out the flu vaccination programme to all school age children in 2014, in light of new evidence provided by the Cochrane Collaboration on the effectiveness of Tamiflu.

**(S4W-20750)**

**Michael Matheson:** The Cochrane Collaboration has recently published updated data on the effectiveness of antivirals, including Tamiflu, against seasonal influenza. Antivirals are used for the treatment and post-exposure prevention of influenza, and should not be confused with seasonal influenza vaccines.

Accordingly, the Cochrane Collaboration publication has no bearing whatsoever on the seasonal flu vaccination programme in Scotland and there are no plans to review it.

**Jim Hume (South Scotland) (Scottish Liberal Democrats):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will publish new guidance for people eligible for the flu vaccine to help them to make an informed choice about whether to receive it.

**(S4W-20751)**

**Michael Matheson:** Each year the Scottish Government, with the support of the Scottish Immunisation Programme Communications Advisory Group, delivers a national marketing and awareness raising campaign to people eligible for free seasonal flu vaccination. This includes TV and radio adverts, leaflets and guidance for healthcare professionals.

This year, in addition to the seasonal flu campaign, the Scottish Government will raise awareness of the childhood flu vaccination programme to inform and educate parents, children, healthcare professionals and others about the programme, the live attenuated intranasal vaccine (Fluenz) and the benefits of extending the programme to children.

Vaccination is voluntary, and it is always our aim to ensure that people are able to make informed choices about whether or not to accept the offer of vaccination for themselves or those for whom they make decisions. The materials provided as part of the programme will help to support this process.

**Jim Hume (South Scotland) (Scottish Liberal Democrats):** To ask the Scottish Government how many suicides have been recorded in NHS mental health wards in each of the last five years, broken down by NHS board.

**(S4W-20759)**

**Michael Matheson:** All NHS boards' mental health services carry out individual suicide reviews that examine the circumstances of suicides of patients under their care with the aim of making mental health services safer. Healthcare Improvement Scotland provides a unique resource through the Suicide Reporting and Learning System which analyses these reviews to promote learning and improvement strategies throughout Scotland. The primary aims of this process are to learn any lessons that help to improve services, to reduce risk and to improve the actual process of suicide reviews.

In-patient suicide data for Scotland.

The following in-patient suicide data has been provided by Healthcare Improvement Scotland for the past five years from January 2009 to April 2014 based on reviews from NHS boards' mental health services.

Total In-Patient Suicide Figures – Jan 2009 to April 2014						
2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
16	12	18	18	23	7	94

Healthcare Improvement Scotland has confidence in the completeness of reporting over the past two years but not the first three years of the current arrangements so comparisons of annual data should be made with caution.

In-patient suicides by health board.

Healthcare Improvement Scotland does not publish in-patient suicides by health board for the following reasons:

The numbers are very small and there is a high risk of the unintended disclosure of the identity of individuals, particularly in the smaller health boards. This would constitute a breach of confidentiality and the risk of great distress for the relatives of the people who have died.

Suicide is a multi-faceted and multi-factorial phenomenon. Suicidal risk can be increased by mental illness, social circumstances, addictions, life events and many other factors. The nature of mental health services and the communities they serve vary greatly across Scotland. Publishing completed suicides by health board could lead to unjustified comparisons of health board performance in relation to what is a highly complex and sensitive subject.

The primary purpose of reviewing the circumstances of the suicides of people in contact with mental health services is to identify areas of improvement and to share learning that can help reduce the risk of suicide. This requires a culture of openness and sharing which is not well served by using suicide statistics as a mental health services performance indicator.

**Jim Hume (South Scotland) (Scottish Liberal Democrats):** To ask the Scottish Government what the standard review process is in cases of suspected suicide in NHS mental health wards; how many reviews have been carried out in each of the last 10 years, broken down by NHS board, and whether these results are made publicly available.

**(S4W-20760)**

**Michael Matheson:** Review process:

Across mental health services in Scotland, suicide review policies have been gradually integrated into NHS board adverse event policies which are part of the wider adverse event management. All NHS boards categorise every adverse event to determine the level of review required. The categorisation is partly based on the level of harm caused by the incident. Suicide is usually considered a high-level category which will prompt a full review.

All NHS boards' mental health services carry out individual suicide reviews that examine the circumstances of suicides of patients under their care with the aim of making mental health services safer. Healthcare Improvement Scotland provides a unique resource through the Suicide Reporting and Learning System which analyses these reviews to promote learning and improvement strategies throughout Scotland. The primary aims of this process are to learn any lessons that help to improve services, to reduce risk and to improve the actual process of suicide reviews.

The current Healthcare Improvement Scotland arrangements, for health boards to report their reviews of completed suicides of people in contact with mental health services in Scotland, dates from the end of 2008. Prior to this the only reporting requirement was to the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland but their reporting criteria did not capture all completed suicides.

In-patient suicides by health board.

Statistics for suicides in NHS mental health wards are not available. Healthcare Improvement Scotland does not publish in-patient suicides by health board for the following reasons:

The numbers are very small and there is a high risk of the unintended disclosure of the identity of individuals, particularly in the smaller health boards. This would constitute a breach of confidentiality and the risk of great distress for the relatives of the people who have died.

Suicide is a multi-faceted and multi-factorial phenomenon. Suicidal risk can be increased by mental illness, social circumstances, addictions, life events and many other factors. The nature of mental health services and the communities they serve vary greatly across Scotland. Publishing completed suicides by health board could lead to unjustified comparisons of health board performance in relation to what is a highly complex and sensitive subject.

The primary purpose of reviewing the circumstances of the suicides of people in contact with mental health services is to identify areas of improvement and to share learning that can help reduce the risk of suicide. This requires a culture of openness and sharing which is not well served by using suicide statistics as a mental health services performance indicator.

**Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Government how many NHS Grampian patients have (a) been offered and (b) received treatment from NHS boards outwith Scotland in each of the last five years.

(S4W-20907)

**Alex Neil:** Information is not available centrally on how many NHS Grampian residents have been offered treatment outwith NHS Grampian or on how many NHS Grampian residents received treatment outwith Scotland.

Information, although limited is however available on NHS Grampian patients who had elective treatments in other health board areas within Scotland over the last five years to the end of 2013 and the number of patients who had elective treatment within NHS Grampian for the same period is shown in the following table:

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013p
Patients treated in other Health Board areas	971	1,178	1,354	1,501	1,418
Patients treated within NHS Grampian	41,448	42,248	47,426	47,300	49,290

Source: Information Services Division Scotland acute hospital records SMR01  
p 2013 figures provisional and the data is for booked patients only

The number of patients having elective treatment in NHS Grampian increased by 7,802 between 2009 and 2013. The number of Grampian patients having elective treatment in other NHS boards in Scotland is under 3% and this includes patients going for highly specialised treatment to Glasgow and Edinburgh.

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Government whether the Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Programme is now available for every newborn child.

(S4W-20946)

**Michael Matheson:** Yes, the Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Programme is offered to all newborns in Scotland and has been since April 2005.

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will investigate the lack of services for children with chronic pain outlined in the Healthcare Improvement Scotland report, *Chronic Pain Services in Scotland: Where are we now?*.

(S4W-20956)

**Michael Matheson:** The Scottish Government recognises the challenge of providing specialist chronic pain services for children and young people. All of the Service Improvement Groups/Managed Clinical Networks were asked to consider the needs of children and young people when establishing their local groups and where services are not available locally how they link to those provided in the larger centres. A dedicated sub-group of the National Chronic Pain Steering Group has been established to consider the needs of children and young people.

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Government whether all NHS boards have set out plans to tackle staff shortages at chronic pain clinics as noted in the *Healthcare Improvement Scotland report, Chronic Pain Services in Scotland: Where are we now?*.

(S4W-20957)

**Michael Matheson:** The *Healthcare Improvement Scotland 'Chronic pain Services in Scotland: Where are we now?'* report noted that there were some staff vacancies during the period of the data collection which may have had an impact on service delivery at the time of reporting. At the date of publication (28 April 2014) a number of these vacancies had been filled.

Staff vacancies are an on-going consideration for NHS boards across all services and well established processes are in place to ensure that identified vacancies are filled.

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Government whether NHS boards' plans to improve chronic pain services will be made public.

(S4W-20958)

**Michael Matheson:** The supporting information published alongside *Healthcare Improvement Scotland's 'Chronic pain Services in Scotland: Where are we now?'* report, which is available at: [http://www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org/our\\_work/long\\_term\\_conditions/chronic\\_pain/where\\_a\\_re\\_we\\_now.aspx](http://www.healthcareimprovementscotland.org/our_work/long_term_conditions/chronic_pain/where_a_re_we_now.aspx), notes that all of the chronic pain Service Improvement Groups/Managed Clinical Networks will make plans publicly available on their local pages of the new national chronic pain website from April 2014. The website can be accessed via: [www.chronicpainscotland.org](http://www.chronicpainscotland.org)

NHS boards are required to include chronic pain service improvement in their local delivery plans for 2014. The Scottish Government will monitor progress through the NHS board annual review process.

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Government whether any NHS board is not providing additional funding for an increase in staff and other resources for chronic pain clinics in the current financial year.

(S4W-20960)

**Michael Matheson:** Information on the levels of funding for each NHS board chronic pain service is not held centrally. Scottish Ministers have made it clear that we expect chronic pain services to be delivered through existing funding provided to boards in their annual allocations. The detailed planning and delivery of services is a matter for individual NHS boards taking account of their resident populations and assessment of needs.

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Government what steps it is taking to help people with chronic pain to remain in employment, in light of the findings in the Healthcare Improvement Scotland report, *Chronic Pain Services in Scotland: Where are we now?*, that 77% of new patients were of working age but only 33.3% were still in jobs.

(S4W-20961)

**Michael Matheson:** The *Healthcare Improvement Scotland 'Chronic pain Services in Scotland: Where are we now?'* report provides boards with a range of information to assist in the planning and delivery of services including information on the demographics of those accessing chronic pain services.

The musculoskeletal model and associated quality improvement work being rolled out nationally is designed to help people access early self-management support or appropriate intervention to facilitate early recovery and return to work. There is an evidence base that this early intervention prevents loss of function and will help to reduce the number of those suffering from chronic pain.

#### Learning and Justice

**Alex Rowley (Cowdenbeath) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the maintenance needs of the school estate in each local authority area, also broken down by the number of schools where the need for repairs has been categorised as (a) urgent, (b) essential and (c) desirable.

(S4W-20752)

**Michael Russell:** The Scottish Government does not hold this level of information. This information is held by individual education authorities as it is their statutory responsibility to maintain school buildings as outlined in Section 17 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.

**Neil Bibby (West Scotland) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S4O-03099 by Angela Constance on 2 April 2014, as its paper, *Childcare and female labour market participation*, states that, to match Swedish participation rates, an additional 104,000 women would need to enter the workforce, how long it would take its proposed childcare policy to get this amount of additional women into employment, and, as only 64,000 women with young children are considered economically inactive, what further action would be required.

(S4W-20863)

**Angela Constance:** Boosting childcare has the potential to transform the labour market in Scotland and to greatly increase the choices and opportunities available to current and future parents. While the immediate benefit of the policy will accrue to economically inactive parents, especially women, who currently have young children, the long-term policy impacts are not limited to this group.

The difference in male and female economic activity rates persists for parents whose children are over the age of five. There is a gender gap of over eight percentage points in the activity rates for parents with children aged 12 to 18. This is a consequence, in part, of the time that many women take out of the labour market due to childcare responsibilities and the widely acknowledged difficulties and lack of choice they often face in returning to work. By improving participation rates for women with children aged one to five, a transformational childcare policy could therefore over time increase participation rates among women with children of all ages.

#### **Transport Scotland**

**Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Government how much its proposed Edinburgh-Glasgow high-speed rail line would cost to build, and whether it will provide details of the expected (a) capital and operating costs, (b) line capacity, (c) stations services would call at and (d) maximum speed of services.

**(S4W-20877)**

**Keith Brown:** Costs for the proposed Edinburgh-Glasgow high-speed rail line are in development, as are the details of capacity and service specifications. It is clear, however, that the case for and the detail of a high speed line between Edinburgh and Glasgow is dependent upon how HS2 is extended to Scotland beyond the current end-points of Leeds and Manchester. I announced in November 2013 the joint study with the Department for Transport on bringing HS2 to Scotland. My officials are fully engaged in that work, which will report in autumn 2014.

**Jean Urquhart (Highlands and Islands) (Independent):** To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S4W-20531 by Keith Brown on 22 April 2014, whether this constitutes official confirmation that there is no reasonably convenient alternative route that has no ferry or toll.

**(S4W-20903)**

**Keith Brown:** No. S4W-20531 confirmed that an alternative route certificate was not required.

**David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Government when it last met the chief executive of Flybe and what was discussed.

**(S4W-20920)**

**Keith Brown:** We are in regular contact with FlyBe, most recently in relation to its new Inverness to London City service. The First Minister was scheduled to meet Saad Hammad, Chief Executive of Flybe, on 13 March 2014 to discuss Flybe's operations in Scotland. This meeting was postponed at Flybe's request and an alternative date is being identified.

**Margaret McCulloch (Central Scotland) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S4W-18953 by Keith Brown on 6 January 2014, when it expects to determine the dates for the electrification of the East Kilbride railway line.

**(S4W-20963)**

**Keith Brown:** The Scottish Government, along with industry, is developing its rail electrification strategy to determine future phases of electrification. As yet, there is no publication date.

**Margaret McCulloch (Central Scotland) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Government what priority it gives to the electrification of the East Kilbride railway line.

**(S4W-20964)**

**Keith Brown:** Priorities for future electrification, following the electrification of the line between Edinburgh and Glasgow Queen Street via Falkirk High, will be determined in due course.

*The following questions received holding answers:*

S4W-20864

S4W-20866