

Tuesday 27 May 2014

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

Learning and Justice

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government when the Ministerial Strategic Group on Women and Work was formed; when it has met, and what its remit is.

(S4W-21163)

Angela Constance: The Strategic Group on Women and Work was formed following the Women's Employment Summit in September 2012. The first meeting was on 27 March 2013 with subsequent meetings held on 26 June 2013, 30 October 2013, 26 February 2014, and 7 May 2014.

The remit of the group is to:

Agree the range of actions and recommendations from the Women's Employment Summit;

Agree priorities across each commission and the timescales for action and by whom;

Advise on actions to further address the challenges raised, in particular how those outwith the Government could support change, e.g. employers, the third sector, communities and education and training sector;

Monitor implementation of the agreed plans, reviewing progress and challenging inaction;

Agree the content of Ministerial reports to Parliament on progress; and

The group will meet 3 or 4 times a year.

Strategy and External Affairs

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether the statement by the First Minister in his speech, Scotland's Place in Europe, on 28 April 2014 that the result of an independent Scotland failing to negotiate membership of the EU would see "the fishing fleets of 12 countries being denied any access to Scottish waters and as a consequence, their access to Norwegian waters, which is also dependent on Scottish access" represents Scottish Government policy.

(S4W-21112)

Fiona Hyslop: A scenario whereby the vessels of 12 non-Scottish nations would lose access to fishing opportunities in Scotland's waters, the fourth largest and among the richest in the core waters of the EU, cannot be seriously entertained.

The First Minister made clear that we propose a practical common sense approach to EU membership, which means that there is no detriment, none whatsoever, to any other member of the European Union as a result of Scotland's continuing membership. The First Minister did not put forward an alternative scenario but referred to the fact that the alternative of denying foreign vessels access to fishing opportunities in Scottish waters was both absurd and has no basis in EU law.

Transport Scotland

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government what progress has been made regarding the introduction of wifi on all CalMac vessels.

(S4W-21092)

Keith Brown: CalMac Ferries Ltd (CFL) has made good progress in completing the procurement of a new wide area network which will include the connection of all CalMac vessels. A contract has been prepared and an award letter is expected to be issued very shortly.

The preferred supplier will begin work as soon as possible to deliver a wide and local area network at each of CalMac's locations and on all vessels. This involves over 80 locations spread throughout the west of Scotland and is expected to be delivered before the end of this year.

Public wifi is an integral part of CFL's plans and should be available throughout the CalMac network this year. The first ports and vessels are expected to have public wifi by late summer 2014.

Alex Rowley (Cowdenbeath) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what its initial position was regarding concessionary travel access to the Edinburgh trams project for people living outwith the City of Edinburgh Council area and for what reason tram travel will no longer be covered by the national concessionary travel scheme for all travellers in Scotland.

(S4W-21122)

Keith Brown: In agreeing to provide substantial funding for the introduction of the Edinburgh trams project in 2007, the Scottish Government made clear that no further subsidy would be provided once the network was commissioned and that it was making no commitment at that time to include tram travel within the national concessionary travel scheme. This is consistent with the approach to other non-bus schemes such as the Glasgow Subway and Scottish rail travel.

The Scottish Government, through the national concessionary travel scheme funds Scotland-wide free bus travel for older and eligible disabled people. The scheme is based around free bus travel as it is the most widely available mode of transport in Scotland. Local authorities can if they wish, offer their resident cardholders concessionary transport schemes for modes other than bus. Any local authority that chooses to operate local concessionary transport schemes is responsible for the administration and funding of these schemes.