

The Highland Council

Political and Parliamentary Briefing – 1 July, 2011

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1 **Scottish Government**

1.1 **News**

Government

[Ministers welcome public service report](#) Christie commission publishes report on the future of public services.

[Pension reform](#) Finance Secretary calls for more dialogue to avert industrial action.

[Provisional Outturn 2010-11 and Budget Estimates 2011-12](#) An Official Statistics Publication for Scotland.

[Scottish Parliament](#) HM Queen at official opening of fourth term of Holyrood.

Culture and Sport

[Holyrood broadcasting powers](#) Culture Minister details priorities for enhanced Scotland Bill.

[2011 Scottish Open](#) First Minister unveils new trophy.

Environment and Rural Affairs

[Modernising game law](#) First strands of Wildlife and Environment legislation come into force.

[Blueprint for renewables revolution](#) Renewables Routemap shows steps to achieving ambitious renewable energy targets.

[Seal protection](#) Measures to control shooting of seals are working well, according to research

Education and Young People

[Higher education](#) Education Secretary responds to higher fees in England and Wales.

Communities

[Scheme to help homebuyers](#) Action to help rebuild mortgage market.

[Better broadband for all](#) Rural Scotland must be included in digital revolution.

Social Services and Health

[Family Nurse Partnership](#) Partnership has made a valuable difference to families – Health Secretary.

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1.2 New Scottish Government Consultations

Topic	Title	Consultation Period
Transport	Extending Local Bus Registration and Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) to Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) It is proposed to extend the definition of a local bus service to include DRT services...	01/10/2011
Agriculture	Consultation on the addition of Preservation Seed Mixtures to the Fodder Plant Seed (Scotland) Regulations 2005. The current fodder seed regulations has so far covered only the marketing of fodder seeds for agricultural and conservation use, however, EC Directive 2010/60 now requires that regulatory control is extended to cover the marketing of fodder seeds in what is known as “Preservation mixtures”...	23/09/2011
Rural Development	Election Regulations for the New Crofting Commission This consultation invites comments on the proposed draft election regulations for the elections to the Crofting Commission...	23/09/2011
Education	The “Student Fees (Specification) (Scotland) Order 2011” Proposals for secondary legislation to change the way in which higher education tuition fees are applied to students who normally live in another part of the UK outside Scotland (RUK).	02/09/2011

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2 Scottish Parliament

2.1 Announcements and Publications

[People of Scotland at the heart of Holyrood's Fourth Session](#)

[Royal fanfare ready to hit the high notes](#)

[Poetry, performance and song set to mark Holyrood's fourth session](#)

[Holyrood displays a tale of two ridings](#)

[SB 11-51 Early Years - Subject Profile](#) This subject profile provides an introduction to services for pre-school children.. Early Years refers to pre-school education, child health, children’s social work and childcare. This briefing focuses on 0 to 5 years and so does not cover ante-natal, school services or childcare for school age children except where these are also provided to pre-five children.

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2.2 Chamber – Business

Parliament in recess from 2 July - 4 September 2011

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2.3 Committee – Business

Parliament in recess from 2 July - 4 September 2011

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2.4 Calls for Evidence

The [Health and Sport Committee](#) has launched its [inquiry](#) and [call for evidence](#) on care regulation and is asking does Scotland's regulatory system ensure that care services for older people are providing good quality and appropriate care? The Deadline for submitting written evidence is 24 August, 2011

The Finance Committee has issued a [Call for evidence](#) on how is the Scottish Government encouraging a more preventative approach to public spending? The Deadline for submitting written evidence is 2 September, 2011.

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2.5 Scottish Government Bills

Scottish Government Bill	Description	Introduced to Parliament	Parliamentary progress	Committee
Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Bill	The Bill criminalises offensive or threatening behaviour likely to incite public disorder at certain football matches and provides for a criminal offence concerning the sending of communications which contain threats of serious violence or which contain threats intended to incite religious hatred	16/06/11	Stage one – completed 23/06/11	Justice Committee

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2.6 Private and Members Bills

None

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2.7 Oral Questions Selected for Answer

Parliament in recess from 2 July - 4 September 2011

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2.8 Written Answers

Modern Language

Claire Baker (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive what modern languages will be offered in schools under its proposals to introduce a scheme for modern language learning based on the EU 2+1 model. **Alasdair Allan:** We will work with local authorities, schools, parents and learners, to develop a new languages model that will increase the opportunities for young people to benefit from learning two additional languages and to develop the confidence and skills that they need to be successful in an increasingly globalised world. This model will have flexibility to enable local authorities and schools to agree the nature and content of language provision for the children and young people in their area, but it is envisaged that languages available would include both European and Asian languages.

Barnett consequentials

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive how much it has received in Barnett consequentials as a consequence of the UK Government's planned enterprise zones. **Fergus Ewing:** The 2011 UK Budget announcement on enterprise zones results in Barnett consequentials in Scotland of £0 million in 2011-12, £1.3 million in 2012-13, £3.4 million in 2013-14, £5.6 million in 2014-15 and £6.6 million in 2015-16. They arise as a result of expected business rate relief in England but remain illustrative. The final figures will reflect the actual level of relief provided. The figure for 2015-16 sits outside of the current UK Spending Review period and will be considered during the next Spending Review period. In line with all Barnett consequentials, it is for Scottish ministers to allocate this funding.

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will spend the Barnett consequentials received as a consequence of the UK Government's planned enterprise zones on creating enterprise zones in Scotland. **Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Executive how it will spend the money that it has received in Barnett consequentials arising from the UK Government's planned enterprise zones. **Fergus Ewing:** The Scottish Government is still in the early stages of considering how to introduce new enterprise zones in Scotland so as to maximise their economic impact. These considerations include the likely consequences for the Scottish budget. **Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will create enterprise zones in Scotland and, if so, what process it will undertake in deciding which areas to designate enterprise zones; which areas it will designate; what the timetable is, and what outcomes it hopes to achieve in the (a) short and (b) long term. **Fergus Ewing:** The Scottish Government is committed to the establishment of enterprise zones in Scotland and to maximising their economic impact. However, we are still in the early stages of determining the appropriate assessment criteria on which to base our detailed decision making. We expect to reach an initial view on this by early autumn 2011.

Living Wage

Kezia Dugdale (Lothian) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive what meetings or discussions it has had with COSLA on the living wage and its roll-out across local authorities. Aileen Campbell: Local authorities are independent autonomous bodies and set the terms and conditions under which their staff are employed. The Scottish Government has had a number of discussions with COSLA on pay issues and welcomes the fact that a number of local authorities have already introduced a living wage. The Scottish Government will continue to press all public sector employers to introduce the Scottish living wage.

Food Standards Agency

Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Executive, in light of the structural changes made to the Food Standards Agency (FSA) by the UK Government in 2010, what consideration it will give to the impact of these changes on the delivery of the devolved functions performed by the FSA in Scotland. **Michael Matheson:** The Scottish Government holds the work of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in the highest regard and considers that it has delivered an excellent service for consumers since its establishment in 2000. However, the changes made to the FSA in England and Wales have resulted in devolved functions being carried out by a UK-wide Government Department for Scotland and Northern Ireland alone. It is prudent, therefore, for the Scottish Government to carry out a review of functions performed at present by the FSA, as they relate to Scotland, to examine the most efficient and effective means of delivering the best outcomes for Scotland in line with our wider policy on simplifying and streamlining the public sector landscape. The review will include a full assessment of the feasibility of a devolved meat inspection service. I am delighted to confirm that Jim Scudamore will lead the review, supported by an expert panel. Work will commence this summer with the panel reporting to Scottish ministers later in 2011. Full terms of reference for the panel's work will be made available on the Scottish Government's website in due course.

Charity Banking

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it plans to allocate new funding to (a) social and charity banking and (b) micro-finance schemes. **John Swinney:** The Scottish Government is currently considering how best to support and encourage an expansion of social banking in Scotland and decisions on future funding will be made later in the year. Meanwhile, a review of the microcredit market in Scotland is underway. The Scottish Government is also making efforts to widen availability of affordable lending through existing schemes that make loans available to new and viable businesses over two years old.

Peat Extraction

Jim Hume (South Scotland) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Executive what its policy is concerning peat extraction for (a) horticultural and (b) other commercial uses. **Stewart Stevenson:** The Scottish Government issued a discussion paper in December 2010 setting out our position on the management of peatlands and other carbon-rich soils, including peat extraction. Peat extraction for horticultural or other commercial uses is subject to local authority planning controls for individual sites. Peat extraction is liable to give rise to greenhouse gas emissions, and the Scottish Government wishes to see the use of peat for horticulture reduced and eventually phased out. We plan to work with other interested parties on how this may best be achieved. **Jim Hume (South Scotland) (Scottish Liberal Democrats):** To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will revise its policy on the extraction of peat for (a) horticultural and (b) other commercial uses in the light of the UK Government's recent commitment to reduce the use of peat in horticulture to zero by 2030. **Stewart Stevenson:** The government discussion paper on carbon-rich soils, published last December, highlighted our aspirations to work with a range of interested parties to phase out the use of peat in horticulture. **Jim Hume (South Scotland) (Scottish Liberal Democrats):** To ask the Scottish Executive what steps it is taking to protect and restore peatlands and how its policies regarding the extraction of peat for (a) horticultural, (b) other commercial and (c) domestic use contribute to this.

Stewart Stevenson: The Scottish Government provides funding for peatland protection and restoration measures as part of the Scotland Rural Development Programme (the SRDP). Controls over the extraction of peat for horticultural or other commercial uses are designed to minimise the further damage which peat extraction may cause to the habitat. We are supporting initiatives such as Garden for Life to promote the use of alternatives to peat in horticulture. The customary right to extract peat for domestic use is limited in that sale of the peat is not permitted; we have no plans to alter the legal position

Climate Adaptation Fund

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive what measures it is taking to create a climate adaptation fund. **Stewart Stevenson:** We are currently examining the options for the development of climate change adaptation fund including support for international projects

Bullying

Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive what guidance it issues to local authorities regarding tackling bullying in schools. **Michael Russell:** Developed in partnership with the Scottish Anti-Bullying Steering Group, the Scottish Government published *a national approach to anti-bullying for Scotland's children and young people* in November 2010. The guidance is aimed at local authorities, schools and all organisations working with children and young people in Scotland.

Teachers

Drew Smith (Glasgow) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive what strategy it has for ensuring that teachers who have qualified since 2007 and who are not working in schools have an opportunity to join the profession. **Michael Russell:** The Scottish Government is firmly committed to reducing teacher unemployment and to balancing teacher supply and demand. Our strategy has been to reduce the number of teachers being trained while, at the same time, to secure a commitment from local authorities to protect teacher jobs. This commitment means that local authorities will offer sufficient teaching posts for all new probationers in 2011-12, for all finishing probationers to apply for and to further reduce teacher unemployment.

Local Government Funding

Nanette Milne (North East Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Executive when it will establish a minimum level for local government funding and what the minimum level will be. **Aileen Campbell:** The Scottish Government is committed to introducing a new funding floor to ensure no local authority receives less than 85 per cent of the Scottish average revenue support per head. It is our intention that this new floor will be in place for the 2012-13 local government finance settlement.

Housing

Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive how many homes for social rent it will build in each of the next five years. **Keith Brown:** We have indicated that we plan to build 5,000 new council houses during this Parliament, but have not set an overall target for council/housing association homes for social rent. **Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Executive how many affordable homes it will build in each of the next five years. **Keith Brown:** The Scottish Government aims to approve an average of 6,000 affordable homes per year for the lifetime of this Parliament. **Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Executive how many affordable homes it will build through the New Supply Shared Equity with Developers scheme in each of the next five years. **Keith Brown:** We aim to enable around 320 households to access home ownership in 2011-12 under the New Supply Shared Equity with Developers Scheme. We have not set a target for beyond 2011-12. **Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Executive how many homes for social rent it will build through the Innovation and Investment Fund in each of the next five years. **Keith Brown:** We have indicated that we plan to build 5,000 new council houses during this Parliament, but have not set an overall target for council/housing association homes for social rent. We received a very positive response for the 2011-12 Innovation and Investment Fund by the deadline of 31 May. Work is now under way, involving our local authority partners, to pick the best bids against the criteria we set out. We will not know the final make-up of our approvals from this programme until all the bids have been assessed. We hope that final decisions will be made at the end of August 2011. Plans for future financial years have not yet been set. **Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Executive whether it classifies housing delivered through the National Housing Trust as housing for social rent. **Keith Brown:** No. All homes provided under the National Housing Trust initiative will be classed as private sector lets and will be available for rent below the levels of housing benefit limits. This makes them accessible to households on lower incomes, and therefore available as affordable housing.

Fuel Poverty

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive what its current estimate is of the number of people living in fuel poverty. **Alex Neil:** In 2009, 770,000 households (33%) were estimated to be in fuel poverty. **Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour):** To ask the Scottish Executive, in light of the recent announcement by Scottish Power of price rises of 19% for gas and 10% for electricity, what the Scottish Government's revised estimate would be of the number of people living in fuel poverty. **Alex Neil:** If the price increases announced by Scottish Power were replicated by the other suppliers, up to 169,000 more households would be placed into fuel poverty.

Future generation's Fund

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Executive when it plans to establish a future generations fund. **Alex Neil:** Plans for the Scottish Futures Fund are a matter for the Spending Review, which will report in autumn 2011.

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Question Time

Not available on the Scottish Parliament's website

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First Minister's Question Time

NHS

Iain Gray (East Lothian) (Lab): In the time in which we have faced each other, the First Minister and I have often talked about the national health service. The First Minister and Nicola Sturgeon have told us that they are protecting the NHS, yet this week we found out that, in the past six months, 1,600 NHS jobs have gone. Of those, 700 are nurses and midwives—the very people on the front line of patient care. The Royal College of Nursing called that “unsustainable”. Why is the First Minister not protecting the NHS as he promised he would? **The First Minister:** As Iain Gray knows, we have guaranteed that all consequential will go to the national health service. That was not a universal view when the issue was debated last autumn. I remember that Iain Gray himself, on “Newsnight Scotland” on 8 September 2010, said: “We wouldn't ring fence the health budget.” The protection of the health budget has meant that, even in these difficult times, health employment in every single category—through medical consultants, general practitioners, dentists and nurses to allied health professionals—is substantially up today on the level that we inherited in 2007. **Iain Gray:** The First Minister needs to examine the statistics that he has given to make sure of their veracity. The fact is that there are fewer nurses and midwives in the NHS now than there were at the end of 2007-08, which was the period of the last budget of the Labour Administration that was in office up to 2007. It was not just nurses who got big promises that the First Minister would protect them. In March, he announced: “if the people return me as first minister, then I will secure that prize—of no compulsory redundancies”. He said specifically that he was talking about local government, schools, colleges and the health service. Fifty staff at Edinburgh's Telford College are facing compulsory redundancy. The chances are that some of them voted for Alex Salmond on the basis of that promise. He has his job as First Minister, but they are getting P45s. This Tuesday, Michael Russell told a parliamentary committee, “I have no power to enforce the policy”, so why did Alex Salmond make the promise? **The First Minister:** I want to correct Iain Gray on the health service statistics. The number of consultants, on a full-time equivalent basis, is up by 20 per cent from September 2006. Well, that is on the basis of the term of the previous Scottish National Party Administration. The number of general practitioners is up by 7.2 per cent, the number of nursing and midwifery staff is up by 383; the number of dentists is up by 20 per cent and the number of allied health professionals is up by 9 per cent. That is a comprehensive increase. Even under the most difficult and severe Westminster-induced budgetary cutbacks, our decision to pass on the full consequential and to ring fence the national health service shows that we are maintaining and sustaining that level of investment in our staff in the national health service. As Iain Gray well knows, the no-compulsory-redundancy pledge was made to our 30,000 central Government staff and to the hundreds of thousands of people who work in the national health service in Scotland. That pledge is not available elsewhere in the United Kingdom and nor, incidentally, is that a new phenomenon. I have quotes here from 2006 when Tony Blair, the then Prime Minister, said in answer to a question that it was all right, because there would be only a few hundred compulsory redundancies in the national health service in England. Do not let us believe that compulsory redundancies south of the border started as a Tory-led initiative. We have applied the policy in the areas that we directly control. As Iain Gray well knows, the colleges, thanks to a statute passed by the Labour Party when it was in government, are independently run in Scotland. The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning gives them advice. I hope that colleges throughout Scotland will take that advice. **Iain Gray:** Mike Russell was right and the promise was worthless. As for directly employed employees, what about the 16 Caledonian MacBrayne workers who are redundant today?

CalMac is a company that is wholly owned by the Scottish Government. Those workers are employed by a company that is owned by the Scottish Government and they are redundant today. If promises to nurses and college staff were worthless, what about teachers? Paul Bisland is a newly qualified teacher who, no matter how hard he tries, cannot get a job, and 80 per cent of his colleagues are in the same boat. Mr Russell wrote personally to Paul Bisland in January and promised him that “there will be a sufficient number of vacancies for all teachers seeking employment in 2011”, so where are they? **The First Minister:** Can I just correct Iain Gray? As a point of fact, there are no compulsory redundancies in Caledonian MacBrayne. I hope that he accepts that. It is not appropriate to come to the chamber and make an announcement that is absolutely not true. There are no compulsory redundancies. There are areas in which our advice to other public bodies has prevailed. I am thinking of James Watt College, which, after some debate, accepted the policy of no compulsory redundancies. Recently, I even heard the leader of Inverclyde Council on air reversing his policy of compulsory redundancies. Iain Gray should not underrate the ability of exhortation of ministers in this Administration to persuade even the most recalcitrant Labour authority to follow such a policy. Incidentally, among the groups that we have not yet convinced of the value of our policies are some Labour-led councils in Scotland that, as we know from many previous debates, are responsible for the vast majority of the decline in teacher numbers in Scotland. **Iain Gray:** This is the pattern, is it not? The First Minister makes the promise and then blames someone else when he breaks it. When the First Minister made his announcement of no compulsory redundancies in March, he said that he would spend every day trying to deliver the policy. Is the problem not that he has spent every day doing something else? I do not deny that he has been busy, what with non-stop constitutional bickering over his referendum, gratuitously insulting Supreme Court judges and, let us not forget, introducing a bill on sectarianism so badly drafted that his own minister could not explain it. There has been intransigence, intemperance and incompetence, and, all the time, indifference to cuts in the number of nurses, redundancies in colleges and teachers on the scrapheap. All they get are excuses. When is he going to get off his personal agenda and start paying some attention to the promises of jobs and services that he made to the people of Scotland only six weeks ago? **The First Minister:** I recognise that rhetoric—it is a throwback to some 50 days ago. It is what Iain Gray was arguing in the election campaign. Let us reflect on some of the things that have happened since the election campaign. Unemployment fell by 10,000 over the quarter—the seventh consecutive reported fall in Scotland. Official statistics show that, for the fifth successive year, Scotland is in a stronger budgetary position than the United Kingdom as a whole. What about some specific announcements that I know Iain Gray is dying to welcome? Amazon has created 900 jobs in Scotland. State Street has established its European centre of excellence here. Gamesa, one of the great companies in the renewables revolution, has announced the start of its recruitment programme in Scotland. I know that, in his current position, Iain Gray is not able to welcome those signs of positive achievement under the most adverse circumstances, but I also know that when he is in a different position—when he is less committed and is able to take a judicious view of such matters—he will be the very first to welcome the positive achievements of this Administration.

State of the Nation

Annabel Goldie (West Scotland) (Con): Why, according to a recent report from the United Nations, does Scotland top the list of world cocaine use? Why are there 712 fewer nurses and midwives in Scotland than there were last year? Why is childhood obesity escalating? Why do only 7 per cent of reported rapes end in conviction? Clearly, the First Minister has taken his eye off the ball, preferring to grandstand on the Supreme Court, pick fights with Westminster and provoke constitutional tension. Why has he allowed this appalling catalogue of failure to happen right here in Scotland under his watch? **The First Minister:** I do not accept Annabel Goldie’s strictures in that respect. However, I am delighted to find that she will be back after the recess to upbraid me more on these issues. Incidentally, I hope that she reconsiders her entire position and decides to make her comeback permanent. The Conservative Party would be well advised to compare Annabel’s talents with the available alternatives. Miss Goldie has nevertheless given me ample opportunity to talk about certain things that she will have noticed. With regard to the health service, in particular, the most recent announcement on waiting time targets, which came at the end of last month, showed that 99.9 per cent of patients are waiting 12 weeks or less for their first out-patient appointment. People with drugs problems continue to access treatment more quickly; indeed, waiting times show that 94 per cent are offered an appointment within four weeks of referral. Although many of the issues that Annabel Goldie has referred to are deeply structured in Scottish society, I know that she will be the first to welcome the positive signs of improvement. In fairness, Miss Goldie will acknowledge that we face extraordinarily difficult times in public spending in Scotland. That might—just might—have something to do with the £1,300 million of cuts that the Westminster Government is implementing. **Annabel Goldie:** Time and again, the First Minister has proclaimed the virtues of free university education, with his mantra being “the ability to learn, not the ability to pay”. However, he never told us that his mantra comes with the small print, “Does not apply to students from England, Wales or Northern Ireland and does not plug the funding gap”. Is that not the most brazen and barefaced sell-out of his so-called political principle? It is patently divisive; hypocritical, because it would not even be possible in an independent Scotland; hugely damaging to the welcome tradition of United Kingdom students studying in Scotland; and utterly ineffective in plugging a widening funding gap of more than £200 million. Will he abandon his little Scotlander mindset and bring forward serious proposals for the long-term funding and sustainability of our Scottish universities? **The First Minister:** Annabel Goldie knows full well that the circumstances in which we have been placed by decisions of the Conservative-Liberal Administration at Westminster mean that we cannot possibly fund the fees of students from elsewhere in these islands, no more than we can fund free personal care or prescription charges for the people of England. I do not understand why Annabel should think that we have ever argued anything other than that.

The only change is that we wanted to have a £6,000 fee across the board, but we were persuaded by the university principals and Universities Scotland that the better way to go was the one that was outlined by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning. I therefore find what Annabel Goldie has said surprising. Time after time, she has upbraided me with quotes from principals from across Scotland who have not been in support of our policy—she has said. Virtually every principal in Scotland has supported Michael Russell, as has the Scottish Youth Parliament. I have with me quotes from Tim O’Shea of the University of Edinburgh, Professor Ian Diamond, the principal of the University of Aberdeen, and professors at the University of Glasgow, Robert Gordon University and the University of the West of Scotland, all supporting the announcement that the education secretary made yesterday. I will quote from one of them—from Annabel Goldie’s very favourite principal, Anton Muscatelli. She will recall promoting the views of Professor Muscatelli as she was attacking Government policy last autumn. He said today: “We fully support the Scottish Government moving quickly to address the issue of non-Scottish UK student fees in light of the UK coalition Government’s increase of fees south of the border ... The measures outlined by the Scottish Government play a part in ensuring Scotland’s universities maintain their world class offering.” Why has Annabel Goldie deserted Anton Muscatelli at this crucial time? She will remember quoting him and upbraiding me about my lack of Latin only a few short months ago. I say to Annabel on what she does with regard to the future leadership of the Conservative party, *carpe diem*—seize the day.

Lloyds Bank

Marco Biagi (Edinburgh Central) (SNP): The First Minister will be aware of today’s announcement by Lloyds Banking Group of 15,000 job losses, focused on offices rather than branches. Many of those offices are in my constituency. I ask the First Minister to contact Lloyds urgently for reassurances and clarity for Scotland-based staff, who woke up to uncertainty this morning. **The First Minister:** We have pursued meetings with Lloyds Banking Group, and we have been in touch with Lloyds again this morning; John Swinney will be speaking to its representatives again this afternoon. I hope that it helps the constituency member if I say that Lloyds has given us a statement saying that it expects the reductions to take place without using compulsory redundancy. Lloyds pledges to “continue to work with the Scottish Government’s Financial Services Jobs Taskforce to ensure maximum levels of employment are retained across the wider financial services industry in Scotland.” These are difficult times for Lloyds staff. If I can offer one element of hope, however, I have with me a set of workforce statistics for the financial sector. After the financial crisis, employment in the financial sector in Scotland fell from 107,000 right down to 92,000. According to the latest statistics, which were released just last week, the number had risen back to 106,000, thanks to many announcements from a range of financial services companies in Scotland. Some of the work that has been done, both in promoting the financial services sector in Scotland and successfully attracting jobs, and in placing people who had been released from our major clearing banks, is thanks to the Financial Services Advisory Board and the task force that was established to make that possible. I am pleased that, in these difficult circumstances, Lloyds Banking Group has said that it will work fully with the financial services jobs task force to minimise compulsory redundancies and to maximise levels of employment in the Scottish financial sector.

Legal Profession (Cadder Ruling)

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what discussions the Scottish Government has had with the legal profession regarding the attendance of solicitors during interviews following the Cadder ruling. **The First Minister (Alex Salmond):** The Scottish Government has had regular discussions with the Law Society of Scotland regarding the provision of police station advice following the Cadder ruling. Once we have seen the results of Lord Carloway’s review of the law and practice of detaining and questioning suspects in criminal investigations, the society will continue to be fully involved in discussions on longer-term changes that might need to be made. **Christine Grahame:** I welcome the continuing discussions with the Law Society of Scotland and recognise that Scotland’s legal system is clearly capable of adapting quickly to the demands that are placed on it, but does the First Minister agree that, at the very least, Scottish courts must be given parity of referral, under certification, to the United Kingdom Supreme Court as soon as is practicable? **The First Minister:** Yes, I do. I place on record my thanks to Lord McCluskey and his expert team for producing such a thorough and well-considered report in such a short timescale, in order to inform today’s parliamentary debate on the subject, the debate that will take place over the summer and the definitive report, which will be produced in the autumn. As Christine Grahame correctly identifies, a key recommendation of the report is that Scotland’s highest court of criminal appeal, the High Court of Justiciary, must be placed on a level footing with other courts across the UK when it comes to appeals before the UK Supreme Court. I welcome that recommendation and the recommendation that amendments be made to the Scotland Bill to limit the role of the UK Supreme Court by ensuring that referrals from the High Court of Justiciary can be made only on the same basis as referrals from courts south of the border. That anomaly must be addressed, and the appropriate amendments to the Scotland Bill should be made after Lord McCluskey’s group publishes its final report this autumn.

Borrowing Powers

Derek Mackay (Renfrewshire North and West) (SNP): To ask the First Minister what recent discussions the Scottish Government has had with the United Kingdom Government on the issue of borrowing powers.

The First Minister (Alex Salmond): On 20 June, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth, John Swinney, presented proposals to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on borrowing powers in the Scotland Bill. Those proposals reflect the consensus across the Scottish Parliament for a robust, substantial and sustainable borrowing framework for Scotland. **Derek Mackay:** I look forward to those proposals being considered by the UK Government. It is clear that there is now consensus in the Parliament for the urgent transfer of borrowing powers. Does the First Minister share my belief that Scotland must have access to more economic levers to boost economic activity and support jobs? Does he welcome the comments by Lord Foulkes that the time has now come for Scotland to have full fiscal responsibility? **The First Minister:** It is extraordinary that, in four years in this Parliament, Lord Foulkes hardly ever mentioned a sensible idea but, as soon as he went back to the House of Lords full time, he came up with a cracker. I have it here: “I think that the time has now come when we must seriously consider a more radical change in funding devolved Governments. It is described by some as full fiscal autonomy; I would describe it more appropriately as full fiscal responsibility; so that the responsibility for raising money as well as spending it goes to the Scottish and other Governments.” Out of the mouths of babes and innocents and Lord Foulkes comes a declaration that the Labour Party in Scotland would do well to follow. **Jim Hume (South Scotland) (LD):** On the Forth road bridge, does the First Minister welcome the United Kingdom Government’s allowing of prepayment, which will, of course, allow other infrastructure projects in Scotland to go ahead? **The First Minister:** We welcome initiatives, but I remind the member that prepayment will amount to the ability to advance borrow perhaps £100 million or £200 million. That money is not a gift; it must be paid back. The Forth crossing, even under the rigorous financial control that the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth is exerting, which has resulted in substantial savings to the Scottish purse, will cost more in the order of £1.5 billion. However, any contribution and sign of flexibility is welcome. I know that, with his long-standing support not only for fiscal responsibility but for fiscal federalism even, the member well understands why prepayment is no substitute for real financial and economic powers.

Care Homes (Inspections)

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): To ask the First Minister what action the Scottish Government will take in response to figures showing that one in 10 care homes have been assessed by Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland as weak or unsatisfactory in at least one area of inspection. **The First Minister (Alex Salmond):** As Jackie Baillie knows, the Government has already taken action. It was this Government that introduced the grading system to which she refers. That system showed that, in 2008-09, 10 per cent of care homes for older people were unsatisfactory or weak under one of the five new quality measures. The figure for 2010-11 has fallen by nearly a quarter. That is good progress, which I am sure Jackie Baillie will be the first to welcome. There is still room for improvement, of course, and we will strive to make further progress. **Jackie Baillie:** If a significant proportion of our care homes are being assessed as weak or unsatisfactory, that is still a matter of concern, as we all want the best standards and the best possible quality of care for our older people. The new care inspectorate has a key role to play, of course. A couple of weeks ago, the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Cities Strategy was adamant that the cut in that inspectorate’s budget was 1 per cent and that I was wrong to say that it was 25 per cent. This week, the inspectorate’s corporate plan for 2011-14 shows a 25 per cent cut in its budget, and let us not forget the 20 per cent reduction in staff. Who should we believe—the cabinet secretary or the care inspectorate? Will the First Minister now act, reinstate the budget and stop the staff cuts, so that we can protect the quality of care for Scotland’s older people? **The First Minister:** Who should we believe on these matters? Certainly not Jackie Baillie. The care regulator’s budget for 2011-12 is £35.444 million, which is a reduction of 1 per cent in the combined budget of the three predecessor organisations for 2010-11. Jackie Baillie well knows, as the Labour Party has consistently demanded details on this, that budgets for future years are looked at as part of the spending review and against a framework that considers the risk and inspection regime. The crucial point that Jackie Baillie has chosen not to inform members about is that the new inspections are unannounced and risk based. That is a much better framework, and we should have some satisfaction that the new regime has resulted in a fall in the number of unsatisfactory homes. Jackie Baillie will find that her fears are again misplaced, I am afraid, as future budgets are announced. The 1 per cent figure is detailed and verified. **Bob Doris (Glasgow) (SNP):** The Health and Sport Committee has just announced that it will conduct an inquiry into how care for the elderly is regulated, which is a serious attempt to play its part in improving that care, as opposed to engaging in the cheap point scoring that we have just heard. Will the First Minister encourage all those who have concerns to submit evidence to that inquiry and, more important, will the Scottish Government take into account any conclusions that are drawn from it to inform policy and reform? **The First Minister:** The debate on care for the elderly is hugely serious. The Parliament, the Government and every single one of us owe an obligation to older people. It is not helpful to deliberately quote a figure from 2008-09—10 per cent—for the number of care homes for older people that are unsatisfactory and not acknowledge that the 2010-11 figure showed substantial improvement. That was acknowledged not in Jackie Baillie’s question, but after I had pointed it out. That level of debate does not do this subject proper justice. The Government, the Parliament and the parliamentary committees owe it to the older people of Scotland to increase in every possible way and sustain the inspection regime to ensure that performance throughout the care home sector is satisfactory. That is a joint obligation and undertaking. I look forward to the parliamentary committee investigating the matter, because it will see that that commitment is held by all the parties represented in this chamber.

3 **UK Government**
3.1 **Press Releases**

[Government publishes Bill to reform grants for Royal Household](#) The Government has published the Sovereign Grant Bill.
[New plans to cut bureaucracy in Brussels and keep the UK on the front foot in Europe](#) Proactive and early engagement will be the key to cutting European bureaucracy under plans announced today by Business Minister.
[VAT: Cost Sharing Exemption consultation launched](#) A consultation to examine how the European VAT cost sharing exemption might be used by UK businesses and organisations was published today by HM Revenue & Customs. It will also explore a framework for its possible implementation.

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4 **UK Parliament**
4.1 **Chamber Business**

House of Commons

Monday 4 July 2011

Oral Questions - Defence, including Topical Questions
Legislation - Finance (No. 3) Bill - Report stage

Tuesday 5 July 2011

Oral Questions - Deputy Prime Minister, including Topical Questions, Attorney General
Legislation - Finance (No. 3) Bill - Report stage & Third reading

Wednesday 6 July 2011

Oral Questions - Northern Ireland, including Topical Questions
Prime Minister's Question Time

Thursday 7 July 2011

Oral Questions - Energy and Climate Change, including Topical Questions
Presentation of Bill - Proceedings on the Supply and Appropriation (Main Estimates) Bill
Legislation - Fixed-term Parliaments Bill - Consideration of Lords amendments

House of Lords

Monday 4 July 2011

Legislation - Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill - Report stage (Day 2)

Tuesday 5 July 2011

Legislation - Localism Bill - Committee of the whole House (Day 5)
Statement - Higher Education

Wednesday 6 July 2011

Legislation - Wreck Removal Convention Bill - Third reading
Legislation - Armed Forces Bill - Second reading

Thursday 7 July 2011

Legislation - Localism Bill - Committee of the whole House (Day 6)

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4.2 **UK Parliament**
Commons Select Committee Business

Tuesday 5 July 2011

Energy and Climate Change - A European Supergrid

Wednesday 6 July 2011

European Scrutiny - Parliamentary Scrutiny of Opt In decisions and European Investigation Order
Scottish Affairs - Health and Safety in Scotland

Thursday 7 July 2011

Political and Constitutional Reform - The prospects for codifying—or not codifying—the UK Constitution

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UK Government Bill	Description	Parliamentary progress
Fixed-term Parliaments Bill	The Bill fixes the date of the next General Election at 7 May 2015, and provides for five-year fixed terms.	HofC Stages Complete Ping Pong - 07/07/11
Postal Services Bill	Make provision for the restructuring of the Royal Mail group and about the Royal Mail Pension Plan; to make new provision about the regulation of postal services.	Passed – 09/06/11
Public Bodies etc Bill	To make provision for conferring powers on Ministers of the Crown in relation to certain public bodies and offices, to confer powers on Welsh Ministers in relation to environmental public bodies, to make provision in relation to forestry, to make provision about amendment of Schedule 1 to the Superannuation Act 1972.	HofL Stages Complete 2nd Reading – 12/07/11
Energy Bill	A Bill to make provision for the arrangement and financing of energy efficiency improvements to be made to properties by owners and occupiers	HofL Stages Complete Report Stage -TBC
Scotland Bill	A Bill to amend the Scotland Act 1998 and make provision about the functions of the Scottish Ministers; and for connected purposes	HofC Stages Complete Second Reading - TBC
Pensions Bill	A Bill to make provision relating to pensions; and for connected purposes.	HofL Stages Complete Committee Stage – 05/07/11
Welfare Reform Bill	A Bill to make provision for universal credit and personal independence payment; to make other provision about social security and tax credits; to make provision about the functions of the registration service, child support maintenance and the use of jobcentres	HofC Stages Complete Second Reading – TBC

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5 European Commission & European Council 5.1 News

[The EESC president's statement on the EU budget review: deciding on the eu future budget means putting solidarity into practice](#)
[CoR proposes bold steps to improve sustainable water management](#)
[EU closes accession negotiations with Croatia](#)
[Digital Agenda: lower roaming prices as of 1st July](#)
[Commission launches consultation on improving EU air quality policy](#)
[European Court of Auditors publishes its first special report on the Single Payment Scheme of the common agricultural policy](#)
[Joint statement by President Barroso and President Van Rompuy following the vote in the Greek Parliament on the revised economic programme](#)
[Money where it matters – how the EU budget delivers value to you](#)
[Reducing greenhouse gases from ships: time is ticking away](#)
[Successful start of Iceland's membership negotiations with the EU](#)

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6 European Parliament 6.1 News

Strasbourg, European Parliament Plenary Session – 4 -7 July, 2011

Key Agenda items being considered

Clearer food labelling to help consumers choose - Food labels will in future have to spell out a food's energy content as well as fat, saturated fat, carbohydrate, sugar, protein and salt levels, under EU rules set to be approved by MEPs next Wednesday.

MEPs gear up for talks on derivatives, short selling and investor compensation - Three draft EU laws - to regulate derivatives trading, to regulate short selling and to increase guaranteed investor compensation for fraud to €100,000 - come up for votes in Strasbourg next week. The lead MEPs are seeking the full Parliament's backing to strengthen their hand in negotiations with Member States.

GMO cultivation: the right to a red light - Member States would be able to restrict or ban the cultivation of genetically modified crops for various reasons under a proposed change to EU law. Parliament's Environment Committee wants to include environmental grounds, as this could provide such decisions with a firmer legal basis in the context of international trade rules.

Traffic offences: loopholes for foreign drivers to be closed - Car drivers caught speeding, drink-driving or going through red lights in another EU Member State will no longer get off scot-free, thanks to plans for cooperation between European police forces set to be approved by MEPs in Strasbourg.

European elections: EU-wide lists for 25 candidates? - To boost turnout at European Parliament elections starting with the next polls in 2014, voters should get two votes, says a plan that comes before the House on Thursday. One vote would be cast for national candidate lists as at present, and one for EU-wide lists. The EU lists would allow voters to pick an extra 25 MEPs, bringing the total to 776.

Regional funding: a new category of eligible regions? - Regional and local investment funded partly by Brussels has been a great success in boosting economic and social cohesion in the EU, argues a draft resolution on the "Strategy for the post-2013 Cohesion Policy" by the Regional Development Committee. MEPs want the policy to continue but are proposing adjustments to increase transparency as well as the leverage effect of structural funding.

Poland takes over at the helm of the EU from Hungary - On Wednesday morning Prime Minister Donald Tusk will present the priorities of Poland's incoming Council presidency, whose overall objective will be to lead the EU back on track towards faster economic growth and an enhanced political community. The Polish Presidency will focus on three priorities: European integration as the source of growth, Secure Europe and Europe benefiting from openness. Prime Minister Orbán will review the period of the Hungarian administration on Tuesday.

Debate on long-term EU budget - The Commission's proposals for the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework (2014-2020) and a new system of own resources will be debated by leading MEPs with President Barroso and Budgets Commissioner Lewandowski on Tuesday 5 July. The plans were presented to Parliament's Conference of Presidents on 29 June.

Schengen: temporary reintroduction of border controls under the spotlight - Parliament will react to the European Council's call for a safeguard clause in the Schengen rules allowing for the reintroduction of internal border controls in a "truly critical situation", where a Member State facing heavy migratory pressure at EU external borders can no longer comply with its obligations.

Parliament set to back refund of €4.54 billion to Member States - Parliament will vote on a plan to return €4.54 billion to Member States from this year's EU budget, as the result of a surplus from the 2010 financial year. Of the total, €2.72 billion consists of money not spent on EU programmes in 2010. The rest comes from fines, interest on late payments and surpluses due to exchange rate differences. Britain is due to receive €639 million, while €48 million will go to Ireland.