

Stink Pits

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Linda Fabiani): The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion S5M-05662, in the name of Christine Grahame, on stink pits stink. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

That the Parliament notes the continued use of stink pits, which are also known as middens, as part of the predator control regime on shooting estates in the Scottish Borders and elsewhere; understands that these are pits or piles of animal carcasses that are left to decompose so that the smell will attract foxes and other predators into snares placed around them; believes that the dead animals found in these pits recently have included foxes, deer, whole salmon, pink-footed geese, pheasants, rabbits, mountain hares and domestic cats; considers that killing and dumping animals, including protected species and domestic pets, to rot and act as bait to trap other animals, is inhumane and fundamentally disrespectful to the creatures; believes that current use goes beyond good practice in many instances; notes the view that it is necessary to assess the justification for permitting their use when the disposal of farm livestock is strictly controlled, when the extent to which their use is associated with the killing of protected species and domestic animals is taken account of and when the association between the pits and intensive predator control regimes as practised on driven grouse moors is examined, and notes calls for the Scottish Government to consider the merits of banning the use of stink pits in Scotland altogether, on ethical, animal welfare and public health grounds.

12:49

Christine Grahame (Midlothian South, Tweeddale and Lauderdale) (SNP): I thank the many Scottish National Party, Green, Labour and Liberal Democrat members who signed my motion. However, I am disappointed that not one Conservative member felt that they could support a motion that, after describing the horrors and indiscriminate cruelty of stink pits, merely asks the Scottish Government

"to consider the merits of banning the use of stink pits in Scotland altogether, on ethical, animal welfare and public health grounds."

After I lodged the motion, someone asked me what a stink pit is. I will be frank: until a few months ago and a discussion about snaring, I had never heard of one. As they say, "Ye ken noo," and I wanted to have this debate to educate members and, I hope, condemn to the past what to my mind is a barbaric practice.

I will be brief. The use of stink pits, which are also known as middens, is a fundamental part of intensive predator control on Scottish shooting estates. Gamekeepers are taught to dig a grave and fill it with bait such as wildlife carcasses, fish heads and other animal remains, and to build low

walls of brush and branches that direct foxes towards gaps, where snares are placed.

Snares are cruel and indiscriminate traps, which OneKind and the League Against Cruel Sports Scotland, along with 76 per cent of the Scottish public—including me—believe should be banned. I had the privilege of speaking in Colin Smyth's debate on the banning of snares.

Stink pits are designed to lure in and catch all foxes and other mammals in an area. Animals that have been dumped in stink pits in Scotland since the introduction of the snaring provisions under the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 include foxes, deer, whole salmon, pink-footed geese, pheasants, rabbits, hares and cats.

The killing and throwing away of domestic cats is known to cause particular offence, as is the use of stink pits to dispose of mountain hares that have been culled in large numbers. All that seems far from being "good hunting practice."

If members want to learn how to construct a stink pit, I direct them to "Middens factsheet: Your guide to working a midden/stink pit for humane fox control"—the word "humane" is ironic. The fact sheet is available on the website of the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust. I could also direct members to the many websites that display graphic images of disgusting, exposed animal graves and the non-predatory animals that fall victim to the encircling snares.

That is bad enough, but the fundamental point is that to pile exposed carcasses upon carcasses is, of itself, offensive. I recall the public being sickened by the sight of animal carcasses in vast funeral pyres during the foot-and-mouth outbreak. How would they respond to images of deer, foxes, pheasants, hares and cats piled on top of one another? Where is the regard for animal life?

Let me give some examples. In Marchmont estate in Berwickshire, in October 2015, a snare that was set by a stink pit contained a dozen pink-footed geese. Pink-footed geese are protected only between February and September—it seems that they were shot as soon as it became legal. In Glenturret estate in Perthshire, in June 2016, a cat was in a legal stink pit. In Leadhills estate, in South Lanarkshire, a young fox was found in a stink pit with a snare around its muzzle. Three other snares were found round the pit, one of which was not tagged. There are images of badgers that have been caught in snares, and so on.

Under the Animal By-Products (Enforcement) (Scotland) Regulations 2013, farmers are not permitted to bury livestock on their land, other than in designated remote areas in the Highlands and Islands. However, gamekeepers and land

managers are allowed to dispose of entire bodies or parts of wild game, as long as that is

“in accordance with good hunting practice”.

That is not a level playing field.

I make no bones about it: I wish a ban on the use of stink pits, on the ground of animal welfare, because stink pits are callous and indiscriminate, on the ground of public health, and because stink pits are just plain inhumane. I have no doubt that when the public are fully aware of the existence of stink pits, they will be disgusted and wish them banned—as they do in relation to snaring itself, which is the *raison d'être* for stink pits. I hope that that helps to persuade the Government.

My motion contains the mild request that the Government “consider the merits of” an outright ban, but I refer the cabinet secretary to my recent parliamentary question S5W-09661:

“To ask the Scottish Government, with reference to section 11E of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (As amended), what information it holds on (a) the location of snares and (b) which animals were caught, and whether such information is in the public domain.”

As a former lawyer, I cannot help going into some of the provisions that are pertinent to the use of stink pits. Paragraphs (a) and (b) of section 11E(1) of the 1981 act say that records must be kept of

“the location of every snare set in position by the person which remains in position”

and

“the location of every other snare set in position by the person within the past two years”.

Paragraphs (e) and (f) of section 11E(1) say that records must also be kept

“in relation to each animal caught in a snare mentioned in paragraph (a) or (b)”

of

“(i) the type of animal”

and

“(ii) the date it was found”

and

“such other information as the Scottish Ministers may by order specify.”

Section 11E(2) is about finding locations

“by reference to a map”

or

“by such other means (for example, by means of a description) capable of readily identifying the location.”

I do not know how many stink pits there are in Scotland. I do not know how many snares are around them. I do not know whether those snares

are all legal. I do know that they exist. In tackling the subject, that is the least we should require.

I agree with pest control, but this is not the way to go about it. We need reliable statistics. I look forward to members' contributions.

12:55

Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con):

I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests.

I thank Christine Grahame for the opportunity to discuss the use of middens as part of a policy of controlling foxes on estates that are used for sport and agriculture. Despite spending my whole life living and working in the countryside, I have never come across a midden as described in the motion, nor was I aware of what one was without doing some research. I presume that that is because I am a farmer and not involved in shooting. I have no problem with shooting in the countryside; I realise that it is an important part of the culture and finances of many Scottish estates, but I do not participate in it.

Middens are areas that are used for attracting foxes. They are baited using carcasses that are not fit for human consumption. We could say that they are similar to the deposits of grain that are used to attract rodents to places where they can be trapped and controlled. The difference is that middens use snares, not kill traps, and snares allow non-target species to be released.

The motion is, I feel, phrased in slightly emotive language, and thus it somewhat masks the truth. Middens are located in remote areas that are well away from habitation and from where non-target species are located. There is no point in locating middens in places where the very species that they target will be disturbed or where domestic animals can be accidentally encouraged to visit. The very fact that most visitors to the countryside—and, indeed, myself—have never seen a midden proves that what I have just described is correct.

On baiting, a proper midden is located in an area where target species can be naturally channelled and, as such, I am told that descriptions of piles of carcasses are frankly incorrect. Indeed, such piles are not necessary: it does not take a tonne of wheat to attract a rat—a small pile will do—and it would be the same for a midden.

Christine Grahame: Has the member looked at the online images that confirm the point about carcasses being piled on top of one another in middens? Does he stand by his statement in which he likened animal carcasses to grains of wheat?

Peter Chapman: Obviously there is a difference, but I used that as a simile for a way of attracting animals that we want to control to the site.

I have looked online, but I have not seen many instances. I accept that there might be occasions when carcasses are piled on top of one another, but it does not always happen and it is not necessary.

Vermin controllers often use the carcasses of animals that have been culled and are not suitable for human consumption, such as deer carcasses that have been damaged during culling or are in poor condition due to the animal's ill-health.

There should be no examples of farm livestock being used, because—as we rightly heard—it is illegal to do so. The fallen stock legislation requires all agricultural fallen stock to be disposed of via an approved knackery. To fail to do so would flout cross-compliance regulations, which could generate real penalties. That is where I have problems with middens. In the past, farmers were allowed to bury fallen stock on their farms. However, that has been illegal for some time now, so why are open pits with rotting wild animals still allowed?

Middens are used to attract predators, which can then be controlled through legal means. I fully understand that some members may not like the use of snares, and I respect that. However, they are an effective and, if used by a trained practitioner, legal form of control.

Snares are designed not to kill animals but to hold them, so non-target species can be released and target species can be humanely controlled. It is of course vital—it is in the rules on the use of snares—to examine snares at least once every 24 hours, so that the suffering of caught animals is kept to a minimum.

Some might argue that it would be better not to use middens and to rely on shooting. However, we know that a canny old fox will never be seen during the day and will never stand in the light. Middens are therefore an important tool in the toolbox. They are not used only on intensively managed grouse moors. I am told they are used across many sporting estates and agricultural holdings, although I have never come across them in Aberdeenshire—I do not know whether there are any there.

I do not believe that there is any need for the Government to consider the merit of banning middens. If folk feel that there is an issue, it would be right to promote the proper use of middens in the snaring training course that is a legal requirement in Scotland.

13:02

Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP): I thank Christine Grahame for bringing the topic to the chamber and for her long-standing commitment to animal welfare.

I found out about the existence of stink pits only very recently and accidentally when I was doing some research in advance of the recent debate on snares. I am grateful that the debate has brought the issue more fully to my attention, and to the attention of other members and the general public. If our constituents are appalled by the indiscriminate and cruel nature of snares, wait until they get a load of stink pits, which are even more indiscriminate and even more cruel—and, to be frank, disgusting.

As we have heard, stink pits are quite simply holes in the ground in which piles of putrefying carcasses are dumped and surrounded by snares. The putrid and pungent smell of the stink pit attracts other animals, which are killed by the snares and then added to rot on the pile with the rest—an unpleasant and chronic cycle of inhumane death and decomposition.

Not only are stink pits simply repulsive and barbaric, they are absolutely indiscriminate. Although I do not believe that there can be any justification for the use of snares, the case is often made that precautions can be taken, such as setting snares on animal runs, which reduces—if it does not eliminate—the chances of trapping non-target species.

Stink pits, by contrast, attract a wide range of mammal species, which hugely increases the already huge risk of non-target species being trapped in snares. Animal welfare charities report that they have found all sorts of animals in stink pits—foxes, deer, pink-footed geese, mountain hares, otters, pheasants, and even domestic cats. For that reason, whether people are for or against snares, there can be no justification for stink pits.

For a person who is against snaring, stink pits are a gruesome extension of a generally cruel and indiscriminate practice. For the pro-snaring lobby, the existence of stink pits hugely undermines the arguments that are put forward about taking precautions to respect animal welfare and protected species. In addition to the direct harm that is caused to the animals that they trap, stink pits also indirectly harm other animals—in particular, sheep. During the summer, stink pits generate maggots and blowflies, which are a significant and expensive health issue among sheep.

As well as the clear animal welfare case against stink pits, there is also a strong public health argument, in that stink pits that are close to areas

that are accessible by the public, or close to water courses, pose a serious health risk to humans.

It is shocking that there is currently no legislation or regulation covering stink pit use in Scotland or elsewhere in the UK, but even if there was, I am not sure that any legislation or regulation could sanitise or condone the use of stink pits. It is my opinion that they should be banned. Trusted animal welfare organisations, from the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to the League Against Cruel Sports and OneKind, are unanimous in their calls for a ban. I appreciate that there is big money in countryside sports, and that advocates for those sports have loud and powerful voices, but when it comes to animal welfare I will stand with those who protect animals, not those who profit from their suffering.

If recent weeks have shown us anything, it is that we cannot rest on our laurels when it comes to animal welfare. If Theresa May had had her way last week, we would now be seeing moves towards the reintroduction of fox-hunting in England and Wales. Thankfully she did not, but that near miss should serve to remind us that we cannot take animal welfare achievements for granted, and that we must continue to push for progress in areas where little progress has been made, and protect against regressive steps.

Some animal welfare debates can be nuanced, with cases made for each side. However, there is simply no case for stink pits and there is every argument against them, and all the major animal welfare charities support a ban. They stink, and it is time for them to go.

13:06

Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab): I refer members to my entry in the register of interests, which shows that I am a member of the League Against Cruel Sports. I thank Christine Grahame for lodging the motion and bringing this important issue to the chamber. As Christine Grahame's deputy on the cross-party group on animal welfare, I know how passionate and knowledgeable she is when it comes to championing animal welfare. That passion and knowledge were very evident again today in her opening speech.

It is worth repeating exactly what we mean by a stink pit or midden, because I suspect that many of our constituents will not know about their existence, and would be appalled if they did. As we have heard, stink pits are literally piles of dead animals, carcasses and fish heads that have been dumped on the ground or in plastic containers, which are then surrounded by snares. Their purpose is very clear: they are raw bait that is

designed to lure foxes and other mammals to the snares that are laid nearby.

Research by the League Against Cruel Sports in Scotland has shown that, in some cases, dozens of snares have been found around a single stink pit. Unlike snares, no regulations or legislation cover use of stink pits in Scotland or elsewhere in the UK. However, just like snares, stink pits are indiscriminate and often lure non-target species, including badgers, to the traps.

Most people might think that the presence of stink pits would be at odds with the regulations on disposal of livestock carcasses, as controlled by the European Union animal by-products regulations. As members will know, under those regulations, farmers in most of Scotland are not permitted to bury livestock on their land. However, there is a derogation whereby gamekeepers and land managers are allowed to dispose of entire bodies or parts of wild game as long as it is done

"in accordance with good practice".

It is clear from the evidence that has been produced by OneKind and League Scotland that the use of stink pits across Scotland falls far short of that good practice. Good practice would dictate that stink pits comprise

"wild fish ... rabbits ... deer galloch and dead foxes".

However, the charity OneKind has found numerous examples of protected species on stink pits that have been

"killed and thrown onto the pile to rot",

in addition to domestic animals, including cats. The dumped carcasses are more often than not uncovered, and snares around the stink pits are often set in walls of branches, which heightens the risk of an animal that is attracted to the pit becoming strangled or entangled. They are also sometimes found close to accessible public areas, which heightens the health risk to pets, people and livestock, given the prevalence of blowflies, which so often become a feature of stink pits in summer months.

I will give some more details of one of the examples that Christine Grahame gave to highlight the reality of a stink pit in my South Scotland region. Late last year, OneKind responded to a complaint from a member of the public about a fox being caught in a snare on the Leadhills estate. Unfortunately, the responding unit was unable to find the fox and, on returning to the site the next day, a member of staff found it with horrific injuries, piled on top of a stink pit. The staff member said:

"It looks like the snare killed the fox by causing that massive wound. There were gobbets of flesh on the grass and blood and fur. The fox's eye was bulging out so much

... which must have been due to being strangled by the snare.”

Stink pits are indiscriminate, cruel, stomach churning, unhygienic and antiquated. They have no place in a modern Scotland. However, stink pits are merely the symptom of a wider disease: snaring.

Perversely, the tightening up of the rules on snaring by the Scottish Government could act as an encouragement to use stink pits. The logistics of having to check snares daily could limit the number of snares, so stink pits could be used increasingly to draw animals to a few more easily checked sites, especially on large estates. Certainly, the guidance on middens from the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust points out that difficulties of snaring mean that

“the midden technique is now widely used by grouse keepers.”

Although I would welcome a ban on stink pits, what we really need is a ban on snaring itself. There is no point treating the symptoms when we could get rid of the disease itself. I set out that view in my recent member’s business debate—a view that is shared by three quarters of the Scottish public.

I regret that the Government’s failure to ban electronic shock devices and to consult on a ban on snaring, as well as this week’s decision to favour the reintroduction of tail docking and concerns that the Government will not go far enough on banning hunting, all seriously undermine the credibility of the Government when it comes to animal welfare.

I hope that today’s debate will signal a commitment that that is not the case, and that the Government will work across Parliament with those who want a truly progressive approach to animal welfare. I hope that we will hear today that the Government will consider a ban on stink pits and that it will at least consider a more thorough look at the animal welfare implications of snaring, which the recent Scottish Natural Heritage review utterly failed to do.

13:11

Alison Johnstone (Lothian) (Green): I am grateful to Christine Grahame for securing this debate on stink pits and for her work as the convener of the cross-party group on animal welfare. We have recently seen dispiriting performances from the Scottish Government on issues of animal welfare, but I remain optimistic that today we will see a more enlightened approach and that stink pits will soon be outlawed in Scotland.

I am particularly grateful to the League Against Cruel Sports, the SSPCA and OneKind for providing MSPs with detailed briefings for the debate, especially at a time when the Scottish Government is keeping them busier than ever. As Colin Smyth highlighted, the Government is proposing the reintroduction of tail docking for working dogs against advice from vets—every single professional veterinary body is opposed to it; it is standing by while foxes in Scotland continue to be offered less protection from hunts than those south of the border; and it is refusing to ban the use of snares despite the inability of those barbaric devices to discriminate between species, with family pets as vulnerable to a slow, agonising death as target species.

As has been highlighted, stink pits are filled with bait such as rotting wildlife carcasses, fish heads and other animal remains so that the smell of decomposing animals will lure foxes towards the snares that are set to catch them as they approach. Both wild and domestic animals are regularly found among the piles of bodies that are left to rot, as well as protected animals including mountain hares, badgers and pink-footed geese. Animals found in pits have also included sheep, deer and cats, with a high probability that family pets have been killed.

Although farmers in Scotland are not allowed to bury livestock on their land, other than in designated remote areas in the Highlands and Islands, gamekeepers are free to kill and dump piles of entire animal bodies or parts of wild game as bait to kill even more animals as long as it is

“in accordance with good hunting practice”.

I agree with OneKind that that seems a far cry from good practice of any sort.

Among the evidence that has been provided by OneKind is an example that further demonstrates how feeble current legislation is at protecting animals from those who operate shooting estates. A dozen pink-footed geese were found in a stink pit in Berwickshire in October 2015. As the birds are protected between February and September, OneKind has concluded that they were shot and dumped in the stink pit as soon as the season opened. That is gravely concerning.

Along with OneKind, the League Against Cruel Sports, the SSPCA and supportive members in the chamber, I am determined that we will continue to fight for improvements in legislation to protect Scotland’s animals. I see no reason for delay in banning stink pits, and I agree wholeheartedly with Colin Smyth and other members that we need to revisit the Government’s refusal to ban snares altogether.

Those who defend stink pits do so on the basis that a profit is to be made from allowing people to

kill animals. That is simply indefensible. I do not think that I am alone in preferring to see priority given to those who visit Scotland's countryside for many other reasons, including to enjoy our fabulous scenery and our natural wildlife. Visitors do not want to be confronted with piles of decaying carcasses surrounded by snares, but people are coming across them. I would prefer priority to be given to people who do not go into the countryside to indulge a blood lust that, in my view, has no place in modern society. As Ruth Maguire pointed out, many people were incredulous and horrified when Theresa May called for a repeal of the fox-hunting ban. A civilised nation does not indulge in such pastimes.

I fully support OneKind's call for the use of stink pits to be reviewed as a matter of urgency, and on behalf of the Scottish Greens I urge the cabinet secretary to take the necessary steps to introduce—on ethical, animal welfare and public health grounds—an outright ban in Scotland on the truly barbaric use of stink pits.

13:15

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (Roseanna Cunningham): I congratulate Christine Grahame on obtaining this members' business debate. She has long taken similar stances on issues related to animal welfare, and her persistence and consistency require to be acknowledged and admired.

As I said during the previous debate on snaring, four weeks ago, the use of stink pits, or middens as they are also known, is an emotive issue, so I understand the use of emotive language in this connection. I appreciate that the idea of rotting carcasses in a stink pit will be repugnant to many, if not most, people. However, it is the job of legislators to give careful consideration to how and why the pits are being used rather than to immediately come to the conclusion that they should be banned.

People are asking why the pits are needed, but I suppose that people do—even given their comments—accept and understand that stink pits are used as a way of maximising the effectiveness of snaring as a means of fox control. They are used to draw foxes into fewer, more easily checked sites; thus, they have the benefit of concentrating snaring effort and reducing the number of snares that are set in the wider countryside. They are legal as long as they do not use livestock whose use is prohibited under the Animal By-Products (Enforcement) (Scotland) Regulations 2013.

As Christine Grahame mentioned, the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust has a best-

practice fact sheet specifically on the use of stink pits in Scotland. It is provided as a handout during the compulsory snaring training courses that people must pass before they are allowed to set snares, and it clearly sets out what carcasses can be used for baiting the stink pit. I understand that some land managers are trialling the use of alternative methods for stink pits, and we will be interested to hear how those trials develop and whether their use can be incorporated into best practice.

There is no evidence or intelligence that suggests that the use of stink pits encourages increased unlawful activity such as the killing of protected species or domestic animals. If people believe that they have such evidence or intelligence, it should be reported. All snaring operators must now put their personal identification number on each set snare, which makes them more accountable to the law.

It is true that stink pits will attract the interest of non-target species such as badger, wildcat and pine marten. However, there is no reason why a stink pit should catch a higher percentage of non-target species than a snare that is set in the open countryside. It is still the responsibility of the snare operator to ensure that snares are not set in close proximity to badger setts or otter holts, where it is highly likely that they would catch those non-target species. It is also the responsibility of the snare operator to release unharmed any non-target species that is caught.

I hear the comments that are being made about animal welfare and public health issues surrounding the use of stink pits but, again, we have no hard evidence to substantiate the claims. If people believe that they can provide such evidence, I strongly encourage them to do so.

A review of snaring was undertaken recently by SNH on behalf of the Scottish Government. As I indicated in May, in my response to the members' business debate on snaring, I will ask the Scottish technical assessment group to look at the use of stink pits as part of its overall consideration of the snaring recommendations in that report, and the issues that members have raised today will be brought to the group's attention.

Christine Grahame: I went through my parliamentary question in some detail in my speech. Is the cabinet secretary aware of how many stink pits there are in Scotland and their location? That would be a start.

Roseanna Cunningham: I am going to mention that. At present, I have no information about the number of stink pits, but that is possibly because the numbers will change because the pits will not necessarily be in the same places over a period of

time. I need to check that—I will return to that point in a minute.

We are asking the Scottish technical assessment group to look at the use of stink pits. If the group's review of their use highlights any significant issues, we will, of course, consider their use and the possibility of introducing further regulation.

I also recently announced a package of measures in response to the report on the fate of the satellite-tagged golden eagles, which included a commitment to set up an independently led group to consider grouse moor management. I have yet to confirm the details of that, but I would expect the use of stink pits as part of predator control to be within the scope of that group. If the group comes up with proposals to regulate the use of stink pits, I will give them serious consideration.

That means that we now have two separate groups looking at the use of stink pits from slightly different perspectives. I will inquire whether there is any possibility of establishing the extent of the use of stink pits in order to answer the questions that have been raised by my colleague Christine Grahame. I hope that members will accept that that is the proper way for the Government to proceed.

Snaring is a divisive issue, and I am determined that snaring and its associated activities, such as the use of stink pits, shall be carried out to the very highest standard. There are currently only 1,571 snaring operators who have passed the snaring training course and have been issued with a snaring identification number by Police Scotland, which I regard as an indicator of success. Our position has always been that, if snaring is to be carried out, it requires a professional approach. It should not be undertaken unless it is really necessary and the operator is confident that they can meet the high standard that is required.

13:22

Meeting suspended.

14:30

On resuming—

Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body Question Time

Garden Lobby Roof

1. **John Scott (Ayr) (Con):** To ask the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body what plans it has to address the pooling of water on the roof of the garden lobby. (S5O-01130)

David Stewart (Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body): As the member might recall, a question relating to the garden lobby roof drainage was raised on 10 November 2016, when members were given the following advice:

"An inspection of the roof was carried out in 2007 by our property service consultants, Lee Boyd. The garden lobby roof consists of stainless steel"

cladding and glazed panelled

"roof lights which are designed as leaves and positioned close together. Combined with the three-dimensional form, that creates a complex roof arrangement. The inspection confirmed that the design can lead to water pooling in certain areas after heavy or persistent rainfall. The bespoke roof has shallow falls and raised seams, which are part of the original architectural design. Our consultants advised that the issue does not affect the roof's waterproof structure. ... we clean the roof regularly to maintain its appearance and to check that the drainage points are clear and free flowing."—[*Official Report*, 10 November 2016; c 42.]

However, areas of pooling are still expected to occur.

John Scott: Members of the corporate body will be aware that, in recent weeks, standing water has covered a large area of the roof and, in addition, a red algal bloom has developed on the roof. Has the corporate body considered installing one or several small electric float pumps, discreetly located, to drain off the pond of water and, thereby, to reduce the area that is covered by standing water? In the long term, notwithstanding Mr Stewart's reply, that will help to maintain the integrity of the roof, as well as reducing the annual cost of £7,000, or thereby, of cleaning the roof. An investment in such a roof drainage solution would probably pay for itself in one year.

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Christine Grahame): There you go, David Stewart. That was a thorough question.

David Stewart: Perhaps it would be helpful if I added a little bit more information for the member.

Facilities management has been aware of the issue since occupation of the building in 2004, and it commissioned an inspection by the property service consultants, Lee Boyd, as I said. Following