

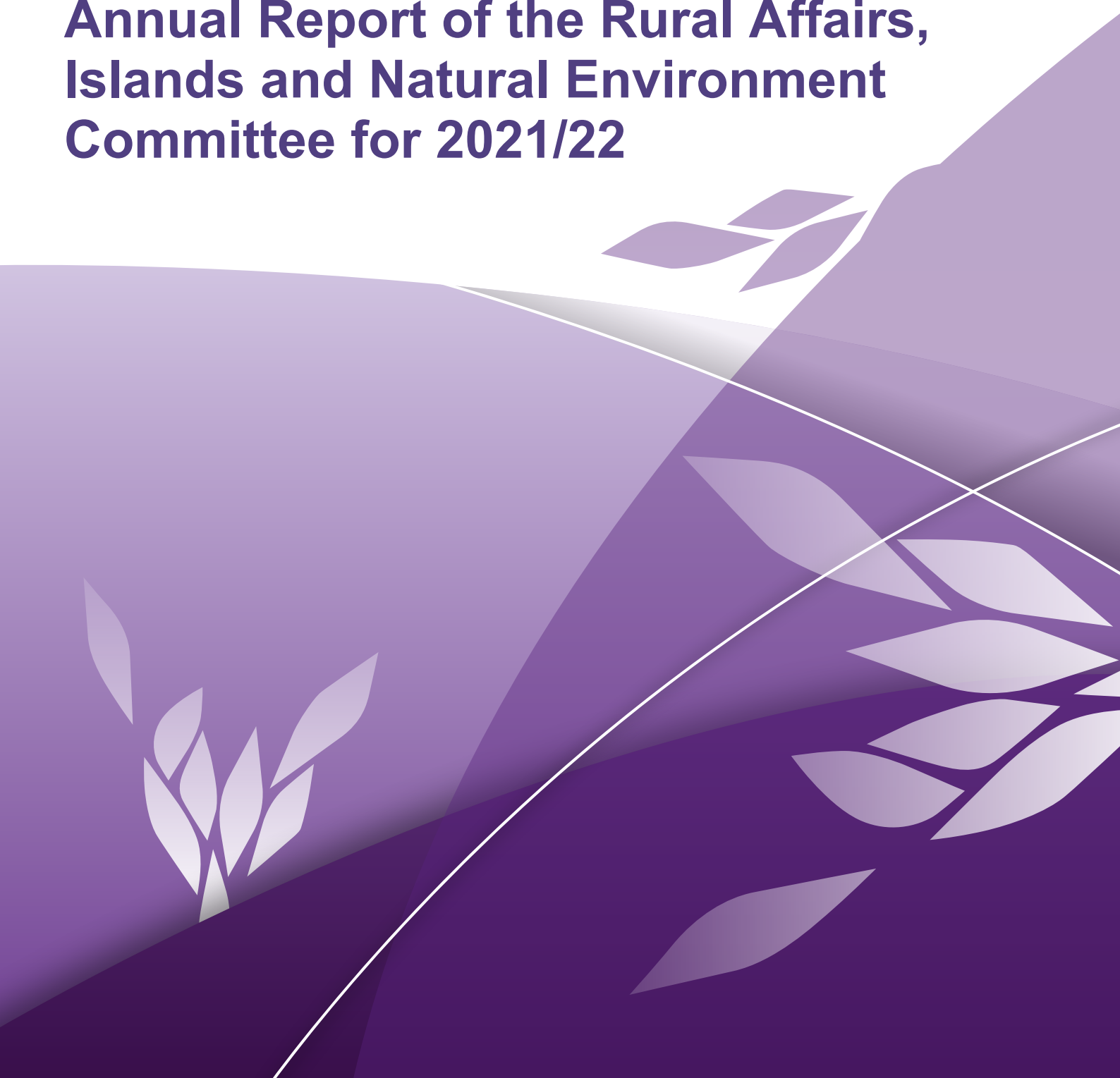


The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Published 26 May 2022
SP Paper 172
6th Report 2022 (Session 6)

Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee

Annual Report of the Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee for 2021/22



Published in Scotland by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body.

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Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee

To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands.



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Committee Membership



Convener
Finlay Carson
Scottish Conservative
and Unionist Party



Deputy Convener
Beatrice Wishart
Scottish Liberal
Democrats



Karen Adam
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Scottish National Party



Ariane Burgess
Scottish Green Party



Jim Fairlie
Scottish National Party



Rachael Hamilton
Scottish Conservative
and Unionist Party



Jenni Minto
Scottish National Party



Mercedes Villalba
Scottish Labour

Introduction

1. This report covers the work of the Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment (RAINE) Committee during the parliamentary year between 13 May 2021 and 12 May 2022.
2. The role of the Committee is to scrutinise the Scottish Government's policies and expenditure on a number of matters including animal welfare; agriculture and crofting; fisheries and aquaculture; the food and drink supply chain; and island issues.

Membership changes

3. There was one membership change.
 - Liam McArthur left the Committee on 26 August 2021 and was replaced by Beatrice Wishart (31 August 2021 to date).

Meetings

4. During the parliamentary year, the Committee met 30 times. Of these meetings, 20 were partly in private. Items taken in private were to consider the Committee's work programme, approach papers, draft reports and to review evidence.
5. Agendas and minutes of all meetings of the Committee, including details of matters considered in private, are published on the [Parliament's website](#).



30

Committee meetings



125

Number of people
who gave evidence



Bills scrutinised



Reports published



SSIs considered



2 Petitions considered

Legislation

6. This section covers the Committee's scrutiny of primary legislation, secondary legislation and legislative consent memoranda for UK primary legislation.

Primary legislation

7. During the 2021-22 parliamentary session, the Committee considered the following two bills—
 - Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill; and
 - Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Bill.

The Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill

8. The Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill was introduced by the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands on 7 October 2021. The policy memorandum published to accompany the bill states the purpose of the bill is “to provide for the Scottish Ministers and certain other public authorities to produce good food nation plans and to make provision as to the effect of those plans, namely that the Scottish Ministers and specified public bodies must have regard to the plans when exercising certain functions”.
9. Following the introduction of the Bill, the Committee issued a call for evidence and received 66 submissions. The Committee took oral evidence over six meetings.
10. The Committee published its [stage 1 report](#) on the Bill on 17 March 2022.
11. The Committee considered the Bill at stage 2 at its meeting on 11 May 2022.

The Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Bill

12. The Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Bill was introduced by the Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport on 24 February 2022.
13. The Hunting with Dogs (Scotland) Bill will repeal and replace the Protection of Wild Mammals (Scotland) Act 2002 which makes it an offence to hunt a wild mammal using a dog in Scotland except in limited specified circumstances.
14. The Policy Memorandum states the Bill will broadly replicate the provisions of the 2002 Act, but will make certain modifications to further limit the circumstances in which it is permitted to hunt a wild mammal using a dog and to prohibit trail hunting (the practice of directing a dog to find and follow an animal-based scent laid for that purpose) except under limited circumstances. It also aims to address deficiencies of the 2002 Act, in particular with regard to inconsistencies and ambiguities in the wording.
15. The Committee launched a call for views to consider the general principles of the Bill on 1 April 2022. The call for views closed on 13 May, outwith the period covered

by this report.

Subordinate legislation

16. During this parliamentary year, the Committee considered 24 Scottish statutory instruments, of which 16 were negative and eight were affirmative.
17. The Committee also scrutinised 22 consent notifications where the Scottish Government sought consent for the UK Government to legislate in the UK Parliament on matters which are within the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament.
18. At its meeting 9 March 2022, the Committee considered the [Sea Fish \(Prohibition on Fishing\) \(Firth of Clyde\) Order 2022 \(SSI 2022/35\)](#) and took evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands.

Legislative consent memoranda

19. At its meeting on 17 November 2021, the Committee considered a legislative consent memorandum (LCM) from the Scottish Government on the UK Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill. The [Committee's report](#), published on 24 November 2021 recommended the Parliament approve the legislative consent motion.

Inquiries and evidence sessions

Introductory sessions

20. At the start of the parliamentary session, the Committee agreed to hold a series of introductory evidence sessions covering key aspects of the Committee's remit, these included:
1. Scottish Government priorities;
 2. Farming and crofting;
 3. Fisheries and aquaculture;
 4. Animal health and welfare;
 5. Scotland's food and drink supply chain; and
 6. Scotland's island communities

The impact of the climate and nature emergencies on agriculture and fisheries policy

21. To coincide with the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow, the Committee held a series of evidence sessions covering the climate and nature emergencies.
22. The evidence sessions focused on the following areas—
- The science behind the climate and nature emergencies, particularly as they relate to the rural economy;
 - Solutions to climate change and biodiversity loss for and within rural sectors;
 - The role of Scottish public agencies on nature and the environment in relation to rural Sectors and communities; and
 - Funding and finance, focusing on both public grant funding and subsidy, as well as private funding options.

Other evidence sessions

23. During this parliamentary year, the Committee also held evidence sessions on various subjects within its remit, including—
- Impact of EU exit on the rural affairs and islands remit;
 - National Planning Framework (NPF4);

- Draft joint fisheries statement;
- Impact of the conflict in Ukraine on Scottish food supply chains; and
- Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 annual report.

Impact of EU exit on the RAI remit

24. Following publication of the Scottish Government's draft policy statement and first annual report published under the UK Withdrawal from the European Union (Continuity) Act 2020, the Committee took evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands on issues relating to the impact of EU exit within the Committees remit on 12 January 2022.

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)

25. The National Planning Framework (NPF) is a long-term spatial plan for Scotland up to 2045 that sets out where development and infrastructure is needed. The [draft NPF4 document](#) was laid on 10 November and Parliament had 120 days to consider, report and debate. As part of this process, the Committee held an evidence session with the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands and the Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth on 9 February 2022. Committee members also contributed to the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee debate on NPF4 held on 19 April 2022.
26. Following the meeting, the Committee [wrote to the Local Government, Planning and Housing Committee](#) setting out its views in relation to the areas covered in evidence.

Draft joint fisheries statement (JFS)

27. Under Schedule 1 of the Fisheries Act 2020, there is a requirement on the UK government and devolved administrations to lay a consultation draft of the JFS before the appropriate legislature. To inform the Committees response, the Committee launched a [call for views](#) on the draft JFS on 3 February 2022. The Committee also held an evidence session with stakeholders and the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands on 23 February 2022.

Impact of the conflict in Ukraine on Scottish food supply chains

28. On 27 April 2022, the Committee held an evidence session examining the impact of the conflict in Ukraine on Scottish food supply chains.

Islands Act annual report

29. The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 received Royal Assent on 6 July 2018. One of the purposes of the Act is to make provision for a national islands plan, the aim of which is to set out the main objectives and strategy of the Scottish Ministers in relation to improving outcomes for island communities that result from, or are contributed to by, the carrying out of functions of a public nature.
30. Section 5 of the Act provides that the Scottish Ministers must publish an annual report setting out the extent to which outcomes have been improved and, where an outcome has not improved, what steps the Scottish Ministers are taking to address this.
31. The Committee scrutinised the second annual report at its meeting on 4 May 2022, hearing from the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands and Scottish Government officials.

Financial scrutiny

32. The Committee considered and agreed its approach to budget scrutiny at its meeting on 27 October 2021. The Committee agreed to—
 - Adopt the ‘full year’ scrutiny approach whereby budget scrutiny is integrated throughout the work programme; and
 - Provisionally focus its pre-budget scrutiny around the policies and funding commitments made in relation to the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 and the islands plan.
33. Following the publication of the draft Scottish Budget 2022-23, the Committee also held an [evidence session on 12 January 2022](#) with the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands and Scottish Government Officials.

Petitions

34. The Committee considered two petitions during the parliamentary year.

[PE1758: End greyhound racing In Scotland](#)

35. The Committee considered petition PE1758, which calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to put an end to greyhound racing in Scotland, on 20 April 2022. Following the meeting, the Committee agreed to keep the petition open and write to various stakeholders seeking further information.

[PE1490: Control of wild goose numbers](#)

36. The Committee considered petition PE1490, which calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to address the problems created by increasing

populations of wild geese, at its meeting on 27 April 2022. Following the meeting, the Committee agreed to keep the petition open and write to various stakeholders seeking further information.

