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## **Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee Comataidh Eaconomaidh Dùthchail is Co- cheangailteachd**

# **Annual Report of the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee for 2018/ 19**



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# Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee

To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and the matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity.



<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/rural-committee.aspx>



[Rec.committee@parliament.scot](mailto:Rec.committee@parliament.scot)



0131 348 5244

# Committee Membership



**Convener**  
**Edward Mountain**  
Scottish Conservative  
and Unionist Party



**Deputy Convener**  
**Gail Ross**  
Scottish National Party



**Peter Chapman**  
Scottish Conservative  
and Unionist Party



**John Finnie**  
Scottish Green Party



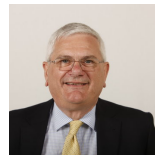
**Jamie Greene**  
Scottish Conservative  
and Unionist Party



**Richard Lyle**  
Scottish National Party



**John Mason**  
Scottish National Party



**Mike Rumbles**  
Scottish Liberal  
Democrats



**Colin Smyth**  
Scottish Labour



**Stewart Stevenson**  
Scottish National Party



**Maureen Watt**  
Scottish National Party

# Introduction

1. This report covers the work of the Rural Economy and Connectivity (REC) Committee during the parliamentary year between 12 May 2018 and 11 May 2019.
2. The role of the Committee is to scrutinise the Scottish Government's policies and expenditure on a number of matters including agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, crofting, transport (including major infrastructure projects), food and drink, digital connectivity and islands issues.

## Meetings

3. During the parliamentary year, the Committee met 33 times. Of these meetings 28 were partly in private. Items taken in private were to consider the Committee's work programme, approach papers, draft reports and to review evidence.
4. The Committee met once externally, in Dumfries, with all other meetings being held in Edinburgh.
5. Agendas and minutes of all meetings of the Committee, including details of matters considered in private, are published on the Parliament's website.

## Membership changes

6. The membership of the Committee changed during the period covered by this report, as follows:
  - Kate Forbes (from April 2018 until June 2018)

Kate Forbes was replaced by Maureen Watt.



# Legislation

## Transport (Scotland) Bill

7. The [Transport \(Scotland\) Bill](#) was introduced by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Constitution, Derek Mackay, on 8 June 2018. The Bill was introduced to -
- make provision for low emission zones;
  - make provision for and in connection with the powers of local transport authorities in connection with the operation of local bus services in their areas;
  - make provision about arrangements under which persons may be entitled to travel on local bus and other transport services;
  - prohibit the parking of vehicles on pavements and prohibit double parking;
  - make provision in connection with the status of the office of the Scottish Road Works Commissioner, the Commissioner's functions and the regulation of road works;
  - make provision in connection with regional Transport Partnerships and to adjust the number of members on the British Waterways Board.
8. The Committee's general call for evidence led to [94 responses](#), as well as an online survey on the Bill receiving [278 responses](#).



*Discussion forum event in the Scottish Parliament on 24 October 2018.*



9. The Committee agreed its [Stage 1 report](#) on the general principles of the Bill on 7 March 2019. A [response from the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity](#) to the Committee's report was received on 1 April 2019, prior to the Stage 1 debate in the Chamber on 4 April 2019.

## South of Scotland Enterprise Bill

10. On 24 October 2018, the [South of Scotland Enterprise Bill](#) was introduced by the Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy, to establish a South of Scotland Enterprise agency and to provide for its functions.
11. The Committee took oral evidence on the Bill from November 2018 to January 2019 from a range of local authorities, national bodies, businesses and communities groups. It launched a call for evidence and an online survey on 12 November 2018, which ran to early January 2019 and resulted in [24 written submissions](#) and [93 survey responses](#).



*Informal discussion event in Galashiels on 23 January 2019.*

12. The Committee published its report on the Bill on [4 March 2019](#) and received a response from the Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy on [21 March 2019](#).
13. The Committee completed Stage 2 of the Bill on 15 May 2019.

## Restricted Roads (20mph Speed Limit) (Scotland) Bill

14. The [Restricted Roads \(20mph Speed Limit\) \(Scotland\) Bill](#) was introduced by Mark Ruskell MSP (the member in charge) on 21 September 2018. The Bill aims to reduce the default speed limit on restricted roads, generally residential streets and minor roads in urban areas, from 30mph to 20mph.
15. The Committee launched an online survey on the Bill and received a total of [6585 responses](#). 98% of the responses were submitted by individuals and other respondents were from community councils, NGO's, businesses, public transport operators, universities and colleges, local authorities, and regional transport partnerships. A call for written submissions was also published and [45 submissions](#) were received.
16. Four evidence sessions were held with local authorities, academics, third sector groups, health and environmental organisations, road and motoring interests, the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity and the Member in charge. The Committee also held an informal meeting with local authority representatives on 28 February 2019 to discuss the practicalities of how local authorities might implement the Bill's proposals.
17. The Parliament's Outreach team organised a series of pop-up events in Dundee, Dunfermline and Glasgow to ask members of the public for their views on the Bill. The Outreach team also recorded views on the Bill from school pupils across Scotland, and at a Girl Guides event hosted at the Parliament. The views received from these events overall were very mixed, with a range of views expressed both in support and against the Bill and its policy aims.
18. The Committee's consideration of its Stage 1 report was ongoing at the time of this report's publication.

## UK Parliament Legislation

19. During the parliamentary year, the Committee considered and reported on -
  - [A Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Parking \(Code of Practice\) Bill](#).
  - [A Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Agriculture Bill](#).
  - [A Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Fisheries Bill](#).

## Subordinate Legislation

20. During this parliamentary year the Committee considered 39 statutory instruments of which 35 were negative and 4 were affirmative. Several of these statutory instruments were related to the UK's exit from the European Union.

## **Statutory Instruments - European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018**

21. During this parliamentary year the Committee considered consent notifications relating to 52 statutory instruments made under the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018.
22. These were considered under the terms of a protocol between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament which set out a process by which the Parliament could scrutinise proposals to consent to the UK Government legislating in devolved areas.

# Inquiries

## Salmon Farming in Scotland

23. The Committee's previous annual report provided details of its then ongoing inquiry into salmon farming in Scotland.
24. The Committee published [its report](#) on the inquiry on 27 November 2018. It received two responses to its report from [the Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy](#) and [the Scottish Environment Protection Agency](#).
25. The Parliament debated the Committee's report on the inquiry on [6 February 2019](#). The Committee intends to monitor any actions arising from the report's recommendations.

## Other evidence sessions

### Transport

26. The Committee has looked at a broad range of transport issues during the reporting year, including those related to air, bus, road, rail, ferry services and active travel.
27. The Committee continued to pay particularly close attention to the performance of rail services and the management of the rail network in Scotland, including the consideration of a remedial order issued by the Scottish Government to Scotrail Alliance on its performance issues. It took evidence on [27 March 2019](#) from Scotrail Alliance and the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity. The Committee plans to consider a second remedial order for Scotrail Alliance on passenger satisfaction targets. It also received a general update on the performance of rail services from Scotrail Alliance on [14 November 2018](#).
28. Several members of the Committee visited Prestwick Airport to tour the operational facilities in advance of an evidence session on [20 June 2018](#) with the airport's senior management.
29. Following the Committee's consideration of ferries investment in Scotland, members of the Committee visited Ferguson Marine Engineering Limited. The purpose of the visit was to discuss the two new ferries that are being built at the yard for Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd (CMAL) as well as the regeneration of commercial shipbuilding on the River Clyde. The Committee will continue to monitor progress in relation to the construction of the two new vessels in the light of [a letter of 25 April 2019 from the Scottish Government](#), which indicated that their delivery would be significantly delayed.
30. The Committee took evidence on [5 December 2018](#) from the principal contractors of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR), Balfour Beatty and Galliford Try, and the joint venture Aberdeen Roads Ltd on the delay in the project delivery. This followed an announcement made by the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity on [1 November 2018](#), that the opening of the AWPR would be delayed. The Committee also discussed the project with the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity as part of a wider transport update also on [5 December 2018](#).

### Implications for Scotland of the UK leaving the European Union

31. Throughout 2017 and 2018, the Committee held regular sessions with stakeholders and the Scottish Government on the implications of Brexit for the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors. [On 6 June 2018](#), the Committee conducted further scrutiny of these areas, taking evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and the Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations.

32. The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Michael Gove MP, appeared before the Committee via video conference on [27 June 2018](#), to provide an update on the impact of the UK's departure from the European Union on agriculture, forestry and fisheries.



*Video conference with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on 27 June 2018.*

33. The Committee continued to consider issues around the implications of Brexit for the agriculture, fisheries, transport, digital connectivity and food and drink sectors when taking evidence on these areas of its remit.

## Digital Connectivity

34. The Committee wrote to the Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands to seek a written update on digital infrastructure development in Scotland. The Minister [responded on 20 December 2018](#). The response included information on the status of the Reaching 100 (R100) project, Community Broadband Scotland (CBS), broadband speeds and the Mobile Action Plan.
35. The Committee also took evidence from Ofcom on 3 April 2019, receiving an update on its Annual plan for 2019/20 and its Connected Nations Report 2018 :Scotland as they related to digital connectivity.

## Budget scrutiny

36. At its meeting on 27 June 2018, the Committee agreed to focus its scrutiny of the Scottish Government's draft Budget 2019-20 on investment to support Clyde and Hebrides ferry services.
37. The Committee took evidence from stakeholders with an interest in these ferry services as part of its pre-budget scrutiny at its meeting on [26 September 2018](#).
38. The Committee received [14 responses](#) to its call for written evidence asking what investment was necessary to support the Clyde and Hebrides ferry services. In addition, the Committee received [282 responses](#) to an online survey.
39. On 31 October 2018, the Committee [wrote](#) to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity regarding its pre-budget scrutiny. The letter contained a range of recommendations to the Scottish Government. These recommendations focused on future strategic planning and associated investment, port infrastructure issues, Road Equivalent Tariff, tendering and state aid rules and community engagement, equalities and improved customer experience.
40. Following the publication of the Scottish Budget 2019-20, the Committee took evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity on [16 January 2019](#).

# Petitions

41. Over the course of the parliamentary year the Committee considered the following public petitions:
  - [PE1598: Protecting wild salmonids from sea lice from Scottish salmon farms](#)
  - [PE1616: Parking Legislation](#) which calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to make it an offence to park in front of a dropped kerb.
42. Following the completion of the inquiry into salmon farming in Scotland conducted by the Committee during 2018, it agreed to close petition PE1598 on [12 December 2018](#). The petitioner commented positively on the Committee's work to address the issues raised in the petition.
43. [At its meeting on 28 November 2018](#), the Committee considered PE1616 and agreed to take it into account when considering its Stage 1 Report on the Transport (Scotland) Bill, as the same issue had been raised in evidence given on the Bill. In the report, the Committee called on the Scottish Government to bring forward an amendment at Stage 2 to prohibit parking over pedestrian crossing points and other public access points.



# Engagement and Innovation

44. The Committee is grateful to the wide number of individuals and organisations who engaged with its work this year.
45. The Committee undertook a number of engagement activities particularly as part of its scrutiny of the Transport (Scotland) Bill and the South of Scotland Enterprise Bill.
46. On the South of Scotland Enterprise Bill engagement activities included Committee visits in Dumfries and Galashiels, including a formal committee meeting in Dumfries. As part of its scrutiny of the Transport (Scotland) Bill, the Committee held a informal video conference with London transport stakeholders, as well as holding a discussion forum with stakeholders in the Parliament.
47. Members of the Committee participated in several visits and events. The table below outlines the events/visits that the Committee undertook and which Members attended.

Visit/Event	Members in attendance
Visit to Prestwick Airport - 4 June 2018	Edward Mountain, Jamie Greene, Richard Lyle, John Mason and Colin Smyth
Video conference with London travel stakeholders - 26 September 2018	Edward Mountain, Peter Chapman, Richard Lyle, Colin Smyth and Maureen Watt
Visit to Scottish Youth Parliament - 14 October 2018	Colin Smyth
Stakeholder event on Transport (Scotland) Bill - 24 October 2018	Edward Mountain, Gail Ross, Peter Chapman, John Finnie, Jamie Greene, John Mason, Colin Smyth and Maureen Watt
Visit to Ferguson Marine Limited - 29 October 2018	Edward Mountain, John Mason and Colin Smyth
Visit to Strathclyde Partnership for Transport - 2 November 2018	Edward Mountain, Richard Lyle and John Mason
Formal meeting/workshop related to the South of Scotland Enterprise Bill in Dumfries - 14 January 2019	All members of the Committee
Workshop in Galashiels related to the South of Scotland Enterprise Bill- 23 January 2019	Edward Mountain, Peter Chapman, Jamie Greene, John Mason, Mike Rumbles, Colin Smyth, Stewart Stevenson
Informal meeting with local authorities on Restricted Roads (20mph Speed Limits) (Scotland) Bill - 28 February 2019	Edward Mountain, Gail Ross, Peter Chapman, John Finnie, Richard Lyle, John Mason, Mike Rumbles, Stewart Stevenson



*Members on a visit to Strathclyde Partnership for Transport on 2 November 2018.*

## Equalities and human rights

48. The Committee mainstreamed equalities and human right issues throughout its work in the parliamentary year. For example, it took evidence from the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACs) on the pavement parking and road works sections of the Transport (Scotland) Bill.
49. Following the publication of the Committee's Stage 1 Report on the Transport (Scotland) Bill, MACs [wrote to the Committee](#) thanking it for the opportunity to contribute to the process.

