



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

International Relations: Parliamentary travel

27 May 2022

Reference: SPCB (2022) Paper 39

Executive summary

1. The Corporate Body is invited to consider forthcoming overseas parliamentary travel and, in accordance with Section 2, paragraph 62 of the Code of Conduct for Members of the Scottish Parliament in relation to receipt by Members of travel, hospitality etc., approve the details of the travel and other costs associated with the outward visit below. There are two outward visits detailed below.

Issues and options

Lower Saxony

2. The Presiding Officer will undertake an official visit to the State Parliament of Lower Saxony on Friday 1 July 2022. This is the latest meeting as part of the relationship which has developed between both parliaments over the last 3-4 years. The purpose of the visit is for the Presiding Officer to have discussions with the President on:

- Diversity and particularly the representation and participation of women members
- Committee engagement techniques and public accessibility
- How parliaments work (the Lower Saxony parliament was one of the parliaments looked at in 1998 to help 'shape' the approach and procedures of this Parliament in 1999). This will cover issues around hybrid working, questioning of Ministers, and the role of the President/Presiding Officer in managing debates.

3. In addition, the Presiding Officer will meet with the State Government Minister for Europe (who visited the Parliament in March) and the Mayor of Hannover.

CPA annual conference

4. The annual conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association will take place in Halifax, Nova Scotia, from 20-26 August 2022. The 65th annual conference will bring together over 500 Parliamentarians, parliamentary staff and decision makers from across the Commonwealth for this unique conference and networking opportunity. There will be a broad conference theme of scrutiny of Parliamentarians and the overall public trust deficit in Parliaments. The conference will also include workshops on:

- Remaining Relevant in Response to a Pandemic: The Role and Responsibilities of Parliament
- Role of Parliaments in Achieving Sustainable Development
- A People's Parliament: Accessibility through Innovation
- Professional Development for Parliamentarians - Opportunities and Challenges for Small Parliaments
- Access to Assistive Technologies
- Implementation of Standards Across the Commonwealth Parliaments
- Building Gender Sensitive Parliaments Youth Roundtable
- Cyberbullying: Youth, Trolling and Mental Health
- The Climate Emergency: Are Parliaments Holding Governments to Account (to be hosted by the Scottish Parliament)

5. In addition to the climate emergency workshop, both Members (Claire Baker MSP and Stuart McMillan MSP) will participate in several of these workshops as well as wider conference discussions such as the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) and Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities networks and the CPA Executive Committee (ExCo - of which Stuart McMillan MSP is a member).

Governance

6. The SPCB will recall that, within the International Strategy which it agreed in September 2021, there is a new requirement for the International Relations Office (IRO) to outline to the SPCB why the visit is in person (as opposed to virtual) and the travel options and environmental impact considered by the delegation.

Lower Saxony

7. As a way of developing the relationships which it is important the Presiding Officer has with other parliament speakers and discussing their particular roles, perhaps a unique aspect of the international work, then in person, face to face meetings is considered appropriate and necessary on this occasion. There is now an established friendship between both parliaments (an example of the focus within the International Strategy of

developing closer collaborations) and this is a way of further cementing this relationship at the most senior parliamentary level. However, it is hoped that future collaboration on specific areas will be conducted virtually.

8. Travel options between Edinburgh and Hannover on the day of travel are limited. The Presiding Officer has Chamber and other responsibilities on Thursday 30 June which impact on the travel choice. These are:

- Train: Edinburgh to Hannover would take approximately 14 ½ hours with several connections. The same for the return journey on Saturday 2 July. Not considered a viable option. The CO2e footprint pp (return) would be 46.08Kg.
- Air and train: A flight and train connection option is not possible due to unsuitable flight times on the Thursday therefore the outward journey will involve two flights: Edinburgh-Frankfurt-Hannover. This is the only option which gets the Presiding Officer to Hannover on the Thursday night to allow for a full day of meetings on the Friday. The CO2e footprint pp for the outward flights is 140.9kg. For the return journey on the Saturday it is possible to get a train to Cologne and then a connecting flight to Edinburgh. The CO2e footprint for the train is pp 1.3kg and for the flight it is pp 135.46kg
- Total CO2e footprint pp is 277.66.

CPC

9. In respect of the CPC, this will be the first in person annual conference since 2019 and will provide an ideal opportunity for the Scottish Parliament to promote its work. As well as hosting a workshop discussion, both Members will proactively engage in other workshops to promote work which the Scottish Parliament is doing in these areas e.g gender audit. Both Members will also participate in the formal meetings of the ExCo and CWP. Factoring in the time difference, and that not all parts of the conference will allow for virtual participation, there is a strong argument for in person rather than virtual participation.

10. Air travel between Edinburgh and Halifax is the only realistic option. However, direct flights between Glasgow and Halifax have been selected, thereby removing connecting flights. The CO2e footprint pp is 2,029.94Kg (return).

Resource implications

11. The estimated costs for the visits are set out below:

- Lower Saxony: £900 which covers travel, accommodation, and appropriate incidental expense for the Presiding Officer and two accompanying officials (Principal Private Secretary and the Head of International Relations)
- CPC: Travel, accommodation, and appropriate incidental expense for both MSPs and the Secretary of the CPA Scotland Branch (from the International Relations Office). Note: the IRO can claim back some travel and accommodation costs from the CPA for both MSPs so the cost is reduced to £6,000

12. Section 2, paragraph 62 of the Code of Conduct for Members of the Scottish Parliament states that certain overseas visits are excluded from the requirement to register where the travel and other costs are wholly met by the SPCB (in this case, from the IRO budget).

Publication Scheme

13. This paper will be published in line with the SPCB's Publication Scheme.

Decision

14. The SPCB is invited to consider the above travel and, in accordance with the Code of Conduct, approve the details of the travel and the associated costs above.

15. The IRO will then notify the Members concerned they do not need to register this travel.

International Relations Office

May 2022