

Chief Executive's Report to the SPCB June 2022

Introduction

This Report looks at activities across the organisation from mid-May to the end of June.

Items highlighted include:

- A high demand on the Non-Government Bills Unit for support with Members bills
- An overview of the recent Member-sponsored events
- An update on our student placement who has been identifying circular economy opportunities within the Parliament
- An update on the recent recruitment exercise in response to the Strategic Resourcing Review

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Clerk/Chief Executive

Overview of Parliamentary Activities

Legislation and Parliamentary Business

Non-Government Bills Unit

The NGBU is experiencing exceptionally high demand for support with Members bills. The team has now met with 35 Members on their intentions to bring forward Members bills.

The number of lodged proposals at the end of June is almost double that at the same point last session (15 this session, 8 last session) and numerous proposals are being prepared over the summer recess for lodging in the autumn.

The number of large multi strand proposals, that could become multipurpose bills, is also a feature of this session. Broadly speaking, the bigger the proposal the more resources required to progress it.

The scale of certain consultation responses is an additional pressure on resources, for the NGBU team and for the Member.

There are a number of new processes required this session including informing the Information Commissioner of the data impact of proposals and assessing every proposal against its compatibility with the terms of the UK Internal Markets Act.

The **Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee** is considering a draft report on its inquiry into future procedures and practices with a view to publishing its report in early July.

Committees

Some specific areas of committee work in the last period are highlighted below:

The **Economy and Fair Work Committee** has reached the end of its evidence-gathering for its Retail and Town Centres Inquiry and will consider a report after the summer recess. The Committee will also be looking at identifying its future work programme priorities and its approach to pre-budget scrutiny before the summer recess.

Local Government, Housing & Planning Committee: The main focus of the Committee's work over the last month has been on the first phase of post-legislative scrutiny of the Community Empowerment Act 2015. The phase focussed on Part 9 of that Act, concerning allotments and food growing

strategies. The Committee began with a call for views and visits to allotments and community gardens in Edinburgh and Glasgow, then held evidence sessions with local authorities and representatives of the allotment and community garden stakeholder community. A report is expected after summer recess. Later in the year we will move onto the second phase of its post-legislative scrutiny of the 2015 Act, focussing on community planning.

The **Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee** is reaching the final stages of its evidence-taking on the Gender Recognition (Reform) Bill and is due to conclude by hearing from the Cabinet Secretary. The passage of this high-profile and contentious Bill has been a challenge for Members and for the parliamentary staff that support them. Learning from the lessons of previous high-profile committee inquiries, we have put in place a large team of offices – the GRR Contact Group – to support the front-line, by giving them direct access to named staff from the legal office, media, PO's team, People & Culture and security.

The **Social Justice and Social Security Committee** is nearing the end of its inquiry on low income and problem debt. The Committee has, with the assistance of PACT, SPICe, clerks and trusted organisations, been supporting people with lived experience to become an 'experts by experience' panel to influence the Committee's work. The Committee has held three online sessions where participants worked on their recommendations and priorities for the inquiry, followed by an in-person meeting with members to discuss evidence heard. This empowered them to consider their own ideas for [solutions and improvements](#) based on their own experience. This work has been integral to the Committee's work and will inform consideration of its report prior to the summer recess. It is hoped that by piloting a new approach where people with lived experience are given more information to contribute to the decision-making process, they can be empowered to have a more active role in the committee's inquiry work – as 'experts by experience'.

The **Covid-19 Recovery Committee** was designated as the lead committee on the Coronavirus (Recovery and Reform) (Scotland) Bill. This Bill sought to make permanent previously time-limited primary legislation from 2020. The original legislation received little or no committee scrutiny in 2020, so clerks wanted to make sure that this high-profile Bill received thorough and informed scrutiny. This Bill was wide-ranging and spanned many remits, which made it challenging for one committee to consider the entirety of the Bill in an informed way. The timetable for the Bill was also tight (introduced 23 January – Stage 3 on 22 June), so spreading the load between committees meant we could build in sufficient time for a call for views, evidence-taking and Stage 2 proceedings. The Criminal Justice Committee and Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee were therefore designated as secondary committees and the Education, Children and Young People Committee also

took evidence and reported on the Bill at Stage 1. These committees issued a joint call for evidence and received 89 written submissions and nearly 4,000 responses to a short survey. The conveners to these committees, in addition to the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee, took part in the Stage 1 debate. At Stage 2, the Bill was split between Covid-19 Recovery Committee and the Criminal Justice Committee.

The **Public Audit Committee** continues to scrutinise the Auditor General for Scotland's report, "New vessels for the Clyde and Hebrides". This has included holding two evidence sessions with the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland. Most recently, the Committee took evidence from the former Director, Ferguson Marine Engineering Ltd and plans to take evidence from Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd before the summer recess. The Committee has also sought written evidence from former accountable officers and the former Minister for Transport and Islands as part of its evidence gathering process.

The Committee has recently commenced its scrutiny of the 2020/21 audit of South Lanarkshire College as well as holding an evidence session with the Director-General Scottish Exchequer and HM Revenue and Customs on the arrangements for administering Scottish income tax.

The Committee receives six-monthly update reports on the progress of major capital projects it is progressing. To establish the governance and accountability arrangements in place for these projects, the Committee held an evidence session with Scottish Government officials. This session will be followed by a further session with the Scottish Government scrutinising the most recent update, received on 15 June, in more detail.

Tapping into its new remit, the **Finance and Public Administration Committee** has, over the course of the last few months, been undertaking an inquiry into the National Performance Framework (NPF): Ambitions into Action through a public administration lens. It wants to establish the extent to which the NPF and its national outcomes shape policymaking and spending choices, by looking at how the cultures, systems, and processes support NPF delivery. As part of this work, the Committee held three engagement events, the first with Scottish Government officials in Edinburgh, and with representatives from the voluntary sector, public bodies, local authorities and scrutiny organisations in Dundee and Glasgow. It expects to report its findings in September.

The Committee held its first evidence session with the new Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government on 3 May to discuss public administration in government. A wide range of issues were discussed, including his priorities for his new role, decision-making in government, transparency, governance and cultures. This is likely to be a regular feature in

the Committee's calendar. It also heard from the Deputy First Minister for a second time on the Scottish Government's continuous improvement programme, which is part of the Scottish Government's response to the three last session harassment reviews.

On finance issues, the Committee has held one-off sessions on the Scottish Government's first Framework for Tax 2021, and on the Scottish Fiscal Commission's May 2022 Economic and Fiscal Forecasts, and the Scottish Government's first resource spending review since 2011. It also endorsed new appointments to the Scottish Fiscal Commission and explored growing the tax base with Skills Development Scotland.

Conveners Group

The Conveners Group continues to make progress on its strategic priorities. At its meeting on 22 June, the Group focussed on its strategic priority on cross-committee scrutiny. As part of this, Conveners considered its scrutiny role in relation to net zero and sustainable development issues. It also considered approaches to cross-committee scrutiny in order to encourage committees to use this approach as a way to consider complex policy issues. Finally, the Group received updates on developments in post-EU scrutiny issues.

SPICe

The Financial Scrutiny Unit attended the 14th Annual Meeting of the [OECD Working Party of Parliamentary Budget Officials and Independent Fiscal Institutions](#), in Dublin on 5-6 May 2022. Topics included green budgeting, policy costings, and best practices for parliaments in budgeting, at which FSU spoke on public engagement in the Parliament especially related to the budget.

The Data Visualisation Team attended the recent [Data4Parliaments conference](#) in Brussels on 15 June 2022. The conference is designed to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas related to sharing and analysing parliamentary text data between official archives and different user groups. The Data Visualisation Team spoke on recent developments in their work on text analysis of submissions to calls for evidence.

SPICe has also been supporting consideration of cross-committee conversations at Conveners Group on post-EU and on climate change / net zero. This has included scoping what counterparts in other European parliaments are doing in the climate change / net zero space.

Parliamentary Services

Engagement and Communications

Engagement in Committee Business

The Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee recently took evidence from several organisations who have worked in partnership this year with the Participation and Communities Team (PACT) to bring lived experience into committee work. All the organisations highlighted the difference that had been made by having a dedicated engagement team supporting communities to engage. A selection of comments are included below:

“[PACT’s] role in engaging Parliament with communities and managing to get communities into Parliament cannot be overstated.” (*Voluntary Health Scotland*)

“The common theme is that the participation and communities team is absolutely superb. It plays a vital role in the Parliament.” (*Liam Fowley, Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament*)

[PACT] “understand that you need to take that extra step and make that extra effort to ensure meaningful participation by working with civil society organisations. That change over the past two years has been remarkable” (*Scottish Rural Action*)

Events and Exhibitions

The team continue to support Member-sponsored events and in addition, have supported the following:

The Presiding Officer hosted the **Scottish Consular Corps’ Dinner** on Tuesday 31 May. The dinner provided the first formal opportunity for Members to meet with members of Scotland’s Consular Corps to re-establish and develop new relationships since the pandemic. Musicians in Exile provided excellent musical entertainment.

The **2022 Donald Dewar Memorial Debating Tournament Final** took place on Thursday 9 June chaired by Deputy Presiding Officer Liam McArthur MSP. All Scottish secondary schools were invited to participate with four finalists - The High School of Glasgow (Glasgow Anniesland), Dunfermline High School (Dunfermline), Hutcheson's Grammar School (Glasgow Southside) and Fortrose Academy (Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch) competing to be crowned overall winner. The winning school for the 2022 tournament was Fortrose Academy.

Euroquiz 2022 took place on Monday 13 June chaired by Deputy Presiding Officer Annabelle Ewing MSP. Four hundred and twelve primary schools participated in this year's competition heats. Twenty-nine teams from primary 6 classrooms across the country participated in the Final this year, each representing their local authority, and each having won their local heat. In a closely contested Final, George Watson's College (Edinburgh South West) won the overall competition by one point.

I hosted a **briefing with Admiral Tony Radakin**, the Chief of the Defence Staff on Wednesday 15 June for Members and staff. The event provided an opportunity for Members to hear about the UK's military response to this era of renewed competition and his priorities for defence and the reforms that are underway to ensure that Armed Forces are able to meet the threats we face in the world, as well as their contribution to national resilience.

A new artwork, **Our Common Humanity**, by Edinburgh-based Costa Rican artist Juli Bolaños-Durman, went on display in the Garden Lobby on Monday 9 May. Using upcycled and new pieces of glass, the artwork explores ideas about creativity and healing. The artist's work with psychiatric patients during art therapy workshops inspired her to reflect on values important to the patients. The artwork is on loan to the Scottish Parliament Art Collection from Tonic Arts/NHS Lothian Greenspace and Health until 2023.

Major events during summer recess

The **World Press Photo 2022** exhibition of international photojournalism will take place in the Main Hall from Thursday 28 July to Saturday 27 August. Featuring 122 photographs, the exhibition gives perspectives on issues including access to education, civil rights, the climate crisis and preservation of indigenous culture, through the work of 24 winning photographers from 23 countries. The Scottish Parliament is currently the only UK venue for this international exhibition.

The **Festival of Politics 2022** will take place between Thursday 11 and Saturday 13 August at the Scottish Parliament. A programme of in-person and online panel discussions based around topical current affairs; Presiding Officer chaired *In Conversation with ...* events will take place alongside visual arts exhibitions and live music in the Festival Café Bar over the three days.

The Scottish Parliament along with the other partners – British Council, Edinburgh International Festival and the Scottish & UK Governments - will host the **2022 Edinburgh International Culture Summit** from Friday 26 to Sunday 28 August. The overarching theme, reflecting one of the major concerns of our time, Culture and a Sustainable Future weaves together two programme strands: Culture and Education and Culture and Sustainability over the three days

International Relations

The International Relations Office supported the:

- Presiding Officer at a meeting with the Falkland Islands Government Representative to the UK
- Presiding Officer at a meeting with the Ambassador of Hungary
- MSPs across meetings with members of the Balochistan Provincial Assembly
- Parliamentary Staff meeting with researchers from the National Assembly of South Korea
- Meeting of British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly Committee D at Holyrood
- Presiding Officer at a meeting with the Ambassador of Poland
- Presiding Officer at a meeting with The Lord Speaker
- Presiding Officer at a meeting with a member of the Ukrainian Parliament
- Presiding Officer at a meeting with The Ambassador of Switzerland
- MSPs across meetings with members of the Saxon State Parliament
- Presiding Officer and MSPs across meetings with the President of the State Parliament of Upper Austria
- Visit of interns from the Ontario Legislative Assembly
- Presiding Officer at a meeting with the Speaker of the Alberta Legislative Assembly

Resilience and Sustainability

Circular Economy Placement

Over the last few months we have employed a student placement, Garima Singh, who has been looking at how the Parliament can adopt a more circular economy approach in its operations. With the introduction of the Circular Economy Bill and single use plastic ban, the Parliament has a duty to look at circular economy opportunities in its own operations. Some of the initiatives Garima has collaborated with colleagues on include:

- Hosting an IT disposal box to drop-off end-of-life personal equipment in the Parliament to recycle old tech, in partnership with a social enterprise organisation
- Organized an in-person Supplier's Sustainability Workshop Event held for big suppliers to embed circular economy thinking in the supply chain
- Arranged an onsite sewing/mending workshop to encourage colleagues to learn new skills on repairing and reuse as well as to learn different kinds of mending techniques

- Hosted a talk from circular economy expert Elaine Brown (Edinburgh Remakery) to adopt circular economy practices in colleagues' personal lives.
- Reviewed the existing Scottish Government's sustainability procurement tools with a Circular Economy lens when evaluating the quality aspect of tenders for the Scottish Parliament

People and Culture

We have made significant progress in appointing to the additional 46 full time equivalent roles which were created as a result of the recent Strategic Resourcing Reviews. Our recruitment plan for this exercise, which sits alongside 'business as usual' recruitment, runs from February to September 2022. Three quarters of the roles have now been appointed to. As a result of running large scale recruitment campaigns for roles in Clerking, SPICe, and Legal Services, we have also retained a pool of candidates who are suitable for employment should further vacancies arise as a result of turnover in the next 12 months. In excess of 300 applications were received for roles in these areas.

Our strategy has been to attract and retain the best candidates from the widest possible pool. Working with external partners and by utilising our own recruitment platform and others such as LinkedIn, we have been targeting potential applicants from diverse backgrounds to encourage them to apply for our roles. In addition, we have held two online recruitment events with another planned for September. These events have allowed us to showcase the Parliament as an employer and to engage directly with potential applicants in what continues to be a competitive external jobs market. Initial feedback from those who attended these events has been positive and a full evaluation of our recruitment approach will be carried out at the conclusion of this exercise.