Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee

5th Report, 2012 (Session 4)

Annual Report 2011-12

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Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee

Remit and membership

Remit:

The remit of the Committee is to consider and report on the Scottish economy, enterprise, energy, tourism and renewables and all other matters within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth apart from those covered by the remit of the Local Government and Regeneration Committee and matters relating to the Cities Strategy falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Wellbeing and Cities Strategy.

Membership:

Chic Brodie
Gavin Brown (until 16.11.11)
Murdo Fraser (Convener) (from 23.11.11)
Rhoda Grant
Patrick Harvie
Angus MacDonald
Mike MacKenzie
Stuart McMillan
John Park (from 22.12.11)
Anne McTaggart (until 22.12.11)
John Wilson (Deputy Convener)

Committee Clerking Team:

Clerk to the Committee
Stephen Imrie

Senior Assistant Clerk
Joanna Hardy

Assistant Clerk
Diane Barr
Committee Assistant
Vikki Little
The Committee reports to the Parliament as follows—

Introduction

1. During the parliamentary year from 11 May 2011 to 10 May 2012, the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee has been busy, getting straight down to business. During this period, the Committee has concluded 4 inquiries and also considered a bill and other forms of legislation.

Inquiries and report

Review of the Business Gateway service and the renewal of contracts

2. Between September and October 2011, the Committee considered the renewal of contracts for the Business Gateway service. This service offers free and impartial business advice to anyone wanting to start up or develop a business. The inquiry looked at the strengths and weaknesses of the service with a view to making recommendations to feed into the contract renewal process.

3. During the inquiry, the Committee received 19 submissions and heard from 17 witnesses. A report¹ was published on 10 October 2011, recommending that as the Scottish Government’s flagship for SMEs, Business Gateway has to be operating at peak effectiveness.

Energy price increases

4. In June 2011 the Committee undertook a one-off evidence session to examine the proposed rise in energy costs.

Fuel poverty

5. In the latter half of 2011, the Committee held a short inquiry into fuel poverty. Although the major 6 energy providers had announced a cut in prices, following a

recent steep rise, it was reported at the time that 28% of all households in Scotland were experiencing fuel poverty.\footnote{Scottish Government, Scottish House Condition Survey, Key Findings for 2010: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/11/23172215/0}

6. While the Committee recognised that the Scottish Government alone is unable to eradicate fuel poverty, it noted that the major energy companies were taking steps to address the issue. In its report,\footnote{Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, Fuel Poverty report. Available at: http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/47767.aspx} the Committee recommended closer working between the Scottish Government and the energy companies, and agreed to revisit this issue in the future.

**Independent Commission on Banking**

7. The Committee undertook a, one-off evidence session into the proposals contained within the final report of the Independent Commission on Banking (ICB). Following the session, the Committee wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, making a series of recommendations.\footnote{Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, Report on Banking. Available at: http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/42896.aspx}

**Issues affecting Scottish Tourism**

8. Finally, a one-off evidence session was held with 10 representatives from the Scottish tourism industry. Following this session, a short report\footnote{Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee, Report on Scottish tourism. Available at: http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/47916.aspx} was produced, highlighting areas of concern. The Committee agreed to revisit this issue at a future meeting.

**Renewable Energy Targets**

9. In January 2012, the Committee began an inquiry into the achievability of the Scottish Government’s Renewable Energy Targets. To date, there have been 6 evidence sessions and 168 submissions. This inquiry is expected to continue until June 2012, and a report is due to be published in September 2012.

**Bills**

**Land Registration etc. (Scotland) Bill**

10. The Committee has recently concluded its Stage 1 and 2 consideration of the Bill. The Bill is mainly concerned with updating the current law on land registration.

**Public Body Consent Motion on the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA).**

11. This year, the Committee considered a public body consent motion on NESTA. The purpose of this consent motion and the statutory instrument was to abolish NESTA as part of the UK Government’s public bodies reform programme and allow it to transfer to charitable trust status.

12. The procedure for consideration of this instrument varied slightly from that used when considering a Legislative Consent Memorandum (LCM). Typically, an LCM is lodged when changes are being made by...
13. A Bill in the UK Parliament which relates to devolved matters of changes the powers of the Scottish Parliament or the Scottish Ministers. However, in this case, the change to the status of NESTA was being introduced via a statutory instrument in the UK Parliament, and not through primary legislation. In any case, this change of status required the consent of the Scottish Parliament. The Committee agreed to recommend the consent motion be approved.

_Subordinate legislation_

14. In this parliamentary year the Committee considered 2 statutory instruments:
   - The Home Energy Assistance Scheme (Scotland) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 2011: SSI 2011/350; and
   - The Storage of Carbon Dioxide (Licensing etc.) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2011 (SSI 2011/draft).

_Petitions_

15. No petitions were referred to the Committee in this year.

_Innovation/Networks/Miscellaneous_

16. Building on a history of engaging with stakeholders and key groups, the Committee once again hosted a seminar with the STUC and is also organising the 7th Business in the Parliament Conference in June 2012.

17. The Committee this year included 4 newly elected MSPs. The Committee undertook informal training sessions prior to committee meetings to discuss procedures for bills and when dealing with subordinate legislation.

_Equalities_

18. The Committee has ensured that all meetings it organises reflect the Parliament’s guidance on these issues.

_Meetings_

19. During the parliamentary year (from 11 May 2011 to 10 May 2012), the Committee met 31 times. 2 meetings were held entirely in private and 18 were partly in private. Of the 20 meetings where some or all of the items were in private, this was to consider draft reports, the appointment of an adviser or to discuss approaches to inquiries or evidence heard.
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