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Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee

To consider and report on infrastructure, capital investment, transport, Scottish Water and other matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities, and matters relating to housing and digital infrastructure.

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Mike MacKenzie
Scottish National Party

Siobhan McMahon
Scottish Labour

David Stewart
Scottish Labour

Note: The membership of the Committee changed during the period covered by this report, as follows:
Previous Members of the Committee throughout session 4 were as follows:
Jackson Carlaw (from the start of session 4 until 16 November 2011)
Malcolm Chisholm (from the start of session 4 until 12 December 2012)
James Dornan (from 27 November 2014 until 5 November 2015)
Mary Fee (from 3 September 2013 until 2 September 2015)
Neil Findlay (from the start of session 4 until 22 December 2011)
Mark Griffin (from 3 September 2013 until 8 January 2015)
Jamie Hepburn (Deputy Convener from the start of session 4 until 23 February 2012)
Gordon MacDonald (from the start of session 4 until 27 November 2014)
Margaret McCulloch (from 18 January 2012 until 3 September 2013)
Aileen McLeod (from 7 March 2012 until 18 September 2012)
Elaine Murray (from 16 January 2013 until 3 September 2013)
Maureen Watt (Convener from the start of session 4 until 27 November 2014)
Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee Legacy Report

1. This legacy report is addressed to the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee’s successor committee(s) in the hope that it may prove useful as part of the consideration of forward work programmes for session 5 and the conduct of committee business.

2. The paper records the main pieces of work which the Committee undertook during session 4. The paper then identifies some work which may be required to be carried out in session 5, as well as some outstanding or ongoing work which the Committee believes its successor committee(s) might wish to consider undertaking. Finally the paper discusses the Committee’s working practices in session 4 and highlights possible approaches for the future.

The Committee holding an informal meeting with Community Transport providers as part of its inquiry.
Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee
Legacy Report, 6th Report, 2016 (Session 4)

- 126 Committee meetings
- 113 SSIs considered
- 46 Reports published
- 7 Bills scrutinised
- 595 Number of people who gave evidence representing 289 organisations
- 31 Fact finding visits
- 747 Written evidence received
ACTIVITY DURING THE FOURTH SESSION

3. The Committee has had a full programme of work during the fourth session of the Parliament and has a wide ranging remit. The Committee’s main pieces of work are recorded below—

Legislation

4. The Committee was the lead committee in respect of the following bills introduced by the Scottish Government—

- **Forth Road Bridge Bill** - made provisions about the management and maintenance of the Forth Road Bridge.
- **Harbours (Scotland) Bill** — repealed section 10 to 12 of the Ports Act 1991, removing the Scottish Ministers’ powers to require trust ports to prepare privatisation proposals, and amended a minor administrative requirement in Schedules 3 and 4 to the Harbours Act 1964.
- **Housing (Scotland) Bill** — made provision about housing, including provision about the abolition of the right to buy, social housing, the law affecting private housing, the regulation of letting agents and the licensing of sites for mobile homes.
- **Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Bill** — made provision about private rented housing; in particular to establish a new type of tenancy to be known as a private residential tenancy.
- **Procurement Reform (Scotland) Bill** — made provision about the procedures relating to the award of certain public contracts; required certain authorities to produce procurement strategies and annual reports; and for connected purposes.
- **Water Resources (Scotland) Bill** - made provision for the development of Scotland's water resources; to bring large-scale water abstraction under Ministerial control; to extend Scottish Water’s functions and to authorise grants and loans in favour of related bodies; to permit the taking of steps for the sake of water quality; to create contracts for certain non-domestic water and sewerage services; to protect the public sewerage network from harm and to allow for maintenance of private sewage works; to enable the making of water shortage orders; and for connected purposes.

5. In addition, the Committee was a secondary Committee in the consideration of the **Legislative Consent Memorandum on the UK Welfare Reform Bill 2011**.
Inquiries

6. The Committee carried out inquiries on the following subjects—

**Access to Scotland’s major urban railway stations**

This inquiry, carried out in May and June 2015 aimed to identify whether there were shared issues being experienced by rail passengers in Scotland in accessing major railway stations in Scotland, particularly pedestrians, cyclists and disabled people, as well as how accessing other modes of public transport and taxis from stations might be improved.

Concluding this work, the Committee wrote to the ScotRail Alliance to highlight a number of areas where it would wish to see improvements made. In responding to the Committee’s letter, the Managing Director of the Alliance advised the Committee of proposed improvements, including to access for cyclists and pedestrians at Edinburgh Waverley. He also attended a subsequent meeting providing an update on these measures in March 2016.
Broadband Infrastructure in Scotland

In this inquiry the Committee sought to identify the key issues relating to the provision of broadband infrastructure in Scotland. In its report, it recommended that the Scottish Government’s broadband targets for 2020 must be more ambitious in order to ensure that rural areas in Scotland are not left further behind. The Committee also considered that the targets should offer greater clarity to local communities and businesses about the level of broadband service that they can expect for their areas in the future. It also recommended that the 2020 target could usefully be enhanced to include the aspirational objective to deliver world-class digital infrastructure to 100% of the population.

The Committee agreed to monitor the progress of the Scottish Government’s Scotland’s Digital Future - Infrastructure Action Plan, including the development of the procurement strategy. In addition, the Committee submitted its report to the House of Lords Communication Committee for consideration and sought additional information from Ofcom, the telecommunications regulator and from the UK Government department in charge of broadband roll-out in the UK.

Community Transport

In this inquiry, the Committee sought to identify the key challenges faced by operators of Community Transport in delivering this vital service in communities. During April 2013, the Committee undertook a series of fact-finding visits to community transport operators across Scotland, and took formal evidence from a range of stakeholders during April and May 2013. The final evidence session took place in June 2013 when the Committee heard from the Minister for Transport and Veterans.

The Committee made several recommendations, including that funding should be made available for community transport vehicle replacement. Subsequent to a Chamber debate on the Committee’s report on 30 October 2013, the Scottish Government allocated a one-off £1m fund to support the purchase of replacement vehicles by community transport organisations.

Freight Transport in Scotland

The key aim of this inquiry was to seek to identify and understand some of the challenges facing the freight transport industry in Scotland. The inquiry took place between February and April 2015 and as part of it, the Committee visited the ports of Aberdeen, Cairnryan and Grangemouth, as well as key freight facilities at Coatbridge, Falkirk and Daventry. The Committee was also keen to identify examples of good practice in freight handling in other European countries and members made visits to the Binnenstadservice, an urban freight consolidation centre in Nijmegen and the Port of Rotterdam, both in the Netherlands; and the Skaraborg Logistic Centre, an intermodal rail terminal in Falköping, and the Port of Gothenburg, both in Sweden. The Committee also took evidence from a range of
stakeholders with an interest in the various aspects of freight transport and from the Minister for Transport and Islands.

Committee members on the Freight inquiry fact-finding visits.

Given the crossover in themes between this piece of work and the Economy, Energy and Tourism’s inquiry into “Internationalising Scottish businesses”, the Committees held a joint media launch and call for evidence for its inquiries and undertook some of these visits jointly.

The Committee’s report made a number of recommendations in relation to rail, road and water freight. This report was followed by a debate in the Chamber on the Committee’s findings, at which the Minister for Transport and Islands committed to refreshing the Scottish Government’s freight strategy.

**Inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the closure of the Forth Road Bridge**

In response to the closure of the Forth Road Bridge on Friday 4 December 2015, the Committee agreed at its meeting on 16 December 2015 to undertake an inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the closure of the Bridge. The Committee published its findings on 11 March 2016, a little over 3 months after the closure of the Bridge and these were debated in the Chamber on Tuesday 15 March.

**Inquiry into the 2012 Homelessness commitment**

The purpose of this inquiry was to consider the progress towards the 2012 homelessness commitment, in order that it could feed into the preparation for a legal requirement being placed on local authorities entitling all unintentionally
homeless households to settled accommodation. In its report, the Committee made recommendations in support of the positive impact of the housing options approach adopted by local authorities, where considerable prevention work had been undertaken to ensure services were working effectively to support people affected by homelessness. Further recommendations included further support and development of Housing Options Hubs, the development of a measurement tool for homelessness prevention work, ensuring consistency across Scotland and including debt advice in any support offered to those affected by homelessness. The Committee also recommended examination of current tenancy regimes to encourage partnerships with private sector landlords.

A debate on the Committee’s report took place in the Chamber of the Scottish Parliament in April 2012 and the Committee held a well-received informal event to engage with key stakeholders shortly in advance of the debate and to inform its considerations.

**Homelessness in Scotland**

The Committee undertook a short, follow-up inquiry into the 2012 homelessness commitment in Scotland, taking evidence from key stakeholders and from the Minister for Housing and Welfare between June and October 2014. Following this work, the Committee wrote to the Scottish Government in November 2014, welcoming the positive impact of the implementation of the commitment. However, it outlined its concern that the legislation which abolished ‘priority need’ might be behind a rise in intentionally homeless decisions being made by local authorities. It therefore asked the Scottish Government to report on the reasons behind the variation in intentionally homeless decisions being taken by local authorities as a matter of urgency.

**Scottish Passenger Rail Franchise**

The Committee undertook an inquiry in advance of the issue of the tender for the ScotRail passenger rail franchise, which was in 2014. The Committee sought views on the future content and operation of the passenger rail franchise in order that it could input to the preparations for the tendering process for the next franchise period running from April 2015. The Committee’s report, containing several recommendations to be taken into account by the Scottish Government as part of the franchise development process, was published in May 2012.
Scottish Social Housing Charter

In this inquiry, the Committee scrutinised proposals for the introduction of the “Scottish Social Housing Charter”. As part of the modernised regulatory regime for social landlords introduced by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010, Scottish Ministers must set out the standards and outcomes which social landlords should aim to achieve when performing housing activities in a “Scottish Social Housing Charter”. The Act requires Scottish Ministers to consult on the Charter and it can only take effect once it has been laid before, and approved by a resolution of, the Scottish Parliament.

The Committee took evidence from stakeholders and the Minister for Housing and Transport in respect of the Charter and communicated its findings to the Scottish Government. It also formally considered the Charter and recommended its approval to Parliament. The Committee’s consideration of the charter identified potential future scrutiny, specifically in relation to the work of the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Other work

7. The Committee has undertaken work in a number of other areas during the course of the session. These pieces of work have included—

- Annual scrutiny of the Scottish Government budget,
- Regular evidence sessions with the relevant Cabinet Secretaries with responsibility for procurement reform, Scottish Water and digital infrastructure
- Regular evidence sessions with the Minister for Housing and Welfare and the Minister for Transport and Islands on key developments within their portfolios,
- Scrutiny of the National Planning Framework 3 (NPF3) document, and Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) alongside the Local Government and Regeneration, the Economy, Energy and Tourism and the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committees,
- Regular evidence sessions with the project team on the Forth replacement crossing to monitor progress on the project,
- Regular evidence sessions with key organisations in the Scottish water industry to scrutinise the functions of Scottish Water and its regulatory regime,
- Annual evidence sessions with the Scottish Housing Regulator on its performance,
- A one-off evidence session with OfCom,
- Two sessions with the European Commission on the Digital Agenda and the proposed European Digital Single Market,
- Various pieces of subordinate legislation, including instruments arising from the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014, legislation relating to landlord registration and the private rented housing panel.

Scrutiny of public petitions

8. The Committee considered ten petitions this Session, these were as follows:
• PE1115 calling to reopen the Blackford Railway station.
• PE1192 on independent vehicular ferry routes between the islands and the mainland.
• PE1236 calling for safety improvements on the junction where the A937 crosses the A90 at Laurencekirk.
• PE1390 calling for an independent expert group to consider and recommend institutional and regulatory options for issues relating to the provision of competitively tendered Scottish ferry services under EC law.
• PE1394 calling for the reintroduction a direct ferry service between Lochboisdale and Mallaig.
• PE1424 on improving transport provision for older people in remote and rural areas.
• PE1425 on the adverse impact of Driver Vehicle Licences Centre local office closures.
• PE1475 on the Bus Service Operators Grant.
• PE1481 on employment blacklisting.
• PE1539 calling for Housing Associations to come under Freedom of Information

9. Of the above petitions, two remain open at the close of the session, PE1236 and PE1539. These petitions will need to be considered by the successor committee at an early stage in Session 5 to establish whether any associated further work is required.

OUTSTANDING AND ONGOING ISSUES

10. The Committee recognises that its successor committee will have complete autonomy to consider and agree its own work programme. It has, however, identified some outstanding or ongoing areas of work from session 4, which its successor Committee may wish to follow up in session 5. The Committee draws these pieces of work to the attention of its successor committee, in order that it can consider whether it would wish to factor them into its work programme.

Further Powers

11. A number of areas will be devolved to the Scottish Parliament following the passage of the Scotland Bill. Many of these will come under the remit of the Committee, including:

• the devolution of Air Passenger Duty
• OFCOM strategic priorities
• Maritime Coastguard Agency strategic priorities
• Northern Lighthouse Board strategic priorities
• Public sector bids for rail franchises
• Speed limits and road traffic signs
12. An LCM regarding the Scotland Bill was considered and agreed by the Parliament on 16 March 2016. The successor Committee will wish to consider how it factors these new powers into its scrutiny in next session’s Parliament.

Committee members at Tweedbank, the terminus of the new Borders Railway.

Transport

National Transport Strategy refresh

13. A refreshed version of the National Transport Strategy was published on 21 January 2016, replacing the original version published in 2006. The high level strategy and outcomes in the refreshed review remain unchanged. The Minister for Transport and Islands confirmed that the main outcome of the refresh exercise is a commitment to a full review of the Strategy during the next session of Parliament. The Committee’s successor may wish to carry out some scrutiny work on the Government’s plans in this area next session, with a focus on the review process and its outcomes.

Active travel

14. The Scottish Government published an updated version of the Cycling Action Plan for Scotland (CAPS) in June 2013, which includes the “shared vision” for 10% of everyday trips to be taken by bike by 2020. The Scottish Government’s walking strategy for 2014 is designed to encourage people to walk more often and to create better quality working environments.

15. Through its budget scrutiny in Session 4, the Committee has consistently called on the Government to increase budgets for active travel and associated infrastructure. There is evidence to show that the level of travel by foot and bike
has remained relatively stable over the last few years and that there is considerable variation over Scotland. The Committee therefore recommends that its successor should continue to monitor progress in this area.

High Speed Rail

16. The Minister for Transport and Islands confirmed on 9 March that the Scottish Government is engaging with the UK Government on the development of high speed rail to Scotland and that the outcome of these discussions were related to the Scottish Government plans to develop an Edinburgh-Glasgow high speed rail line. The Minister confirmed that a report on these issues would be published prior to the dissolution. The Committee’s successor may wish to take evidence on the issues to emerge from this report and to continue to monitor developments in relation to high speed rail in Session 5.

Ferry services

17. The current Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Service Contract, operated by CalMac Ferries, is due to end in September 2016. The competitive tendering exercise for the next contract is now at an advanced stage and Transport Scotland has invited formal bids from two participants, CalMac Ferries Ltd and Serco Caledonian Ferries Limited. The Committee’s successor committee may wish to monitor the outcome of this tendering exercise.

Circumstances surrounding the closure of the Forth Road Bridge

18. Given that the closure of the Forth Road Bridge occurred close to dissolution, the Committee was able to carry out a short focused inquiry into the circumstances surrounding its closure, focussing on the structural defects identified and whether these could have been avoided or dealt with differently. Given the time available, the Committee was unable to consider the impact of the closure of the Bridge on its regular users and its impact upon businesses, including scrutiny of the alternative traffic and public transport measures put in place following the closure. It acknowledged, however, that these related and hugely important issues might however be investigated at a later stage and therefore, its successor Committee may wish to consider these issues further. Its successor may also have to consider how it could tie in this work with any work that the future iteration of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee may carry out on the impact of the bridge’s closure on the economy.

Forth replacement crossing project

19. The Session 3 Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee served as a secondary committee in scrutiny of the Forth Crossing Bill, providing a final report to the Forth Crossing Bill Committee focussing its scrutiny on the use of the Forth Road Bridge as a public transport corridor. The Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee scrutinised the progress of the Forth Replacement Crossing (FRC) Project throughout Session 4 as it developed, receiving bi-annual
oral and quarterly written updates from key officials of the FRC Project Team, ensuring that key milestones and cost estimates were met.

20. Given that the Forth Replacement Crossing continues to be the most significant transport infrastructure project in Scotland, the Committee suggests that the continuation of this model of ongoing, regular parliamentary scrutiny by its successor committee will be of vital importance in ensuring that the project remains on time and on budget for its predicted opening of December 2016. It further suggests that the successor committee may wish to hold an evidence session with the project team following the completion of the new bridge to discuss issues arising during the lifetime of the project and to identify any learning experiences in terms of the planning, management and delivery of major infrastructure developments.
Housing

General

21. The Scottish Government has committed to delivering at least 50,000 affordable homes over the next five years, backed by a £3 billion investment. The Committee may wish to keep a watching brief in this area, including whether the target of affordable housing supply is being met. The successor Committee may also wish to monitor the implementation of the Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Bill and carry out any post legislative scrutiny as it deems appropriate. It may also wish to monitor the operation of the private rented housing market in general. For example, the Committee has heard of concerns from tenants that some private landlords prohibit those who receive housing benefits from renting properties.

Scottish Social Housing Charter

22. The Scottish Government has confirmed that the Scottish Social Housing Charter that was approved by the Scottish Parliament in 2012 is to be reviewed during 2016 and a revised Charter is required to be considered by Ministers and approved by Parliament by 1st April 2017.

23. The Committee recommends that the successor Committee may wish to take oral evidence from stakeholders including tenants and the Scottish Housing Regulator on how the Charter is working and what difference it is making as part of its scrutiny into the proposed review of the document.

Homelessness

24. During the autumn of 2014, the Committee undertook a follow-up review of the 2012 homelessness commitment. Part of this review considered the development of the housing options approach to homelessness. In May 2014, the Scottish Housing Regulator produced its report Housing Options in Scotland - A thematic inquiry. The Regulator recommended that the Scottish Government should provide enhanced guidance for local authorities on the delivery of Housing Options and ensure that guidance provides clarity on how local authorities operate Housing Options effectively within the context of homeless duties and obligations.

25. The Minister’s letter to the Committee in December 2015 said that “early in 2016 the Scottish Government will publish guidance for local authorities on the development of housing options.” Given that the current iteration of the Committee
Sustainable Housing and Fuel Poverty

26. The Scottish Government's Scotland's Sustainable Housing Strategy, published in 2013, sets out the Scottish Government's vision and actions to deliver a step change in provision of energy-efficient homes in Scotland. The Scottish Government has prioritised improving the energy efficiency of buildings in Scotland as a national infrastructure priority, with a focus on the energy efficiency of existing buildings. The Government announced, in September 2015, that it would take forward a consultation on energy efficiency standards for the private sector in the next Parliamentary session.

27. The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights recently announced that a new short life Strategic Working Group will be set up with the aim of reporting to Scottish Ministers by the end of 2016. Its main output will be a report outlining a new fuel poverty strategy, as well as looking at how new powers being devolved to Scotland (for example ECO implementation) can best be deployed to improve energy efficiency and tackle fuel poverty.

28. Fuel poverty rates vary widely across Scotland as shown by the Scottish House Condition Survey 2012-14 local authority analyses. Higher levels of fuel poverty are found in rural and island areas. The Scottish Government has established a new Scottish Rural Fuel Poverty Task Force that will explore issues around fuel poverty in rural areas and report on its findings in 2016.

29. Given the level of activity surrounding sustainable housing and fuel poverty due to be occurring in the next session, the successor Committee may wish to undertake a piece of work in this area.

Scottish Housing Regulator

30. The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) is responsible for regulating social landlords and safeguarding and promoting the interests of current and future tenants, homeless people and people who use the services provided by social landlords. The Committee is responsible for scrutinising the performance of the SHR and in Session 4, it has done so by holding annual evidence sessions on its Annual Report. The Committee widened these sessions to hear from stakeholders of the SHR (Housing Associations, representative bodies and tenants) following concerns raised about the quality of the SHR’s stakeholder engagement, during its scrutiny of the 2013/14 Accounts. Following a six month progress update in June 2015 and
scrutiny of the 2014/15 accounts, stakeholders had identified improvements and the SHR had developed its engagement plans.

31. The Committee recommends to its successor that annual scrutiny of the SHR’s accounts continue as the most pertinent mechanism to monitor the performance of the SHR. The successor may also wish to continue seeking the views of the SHR’s stakeholders to ensure is engaging appropriately.

Public Procurement and Blacklisting

32. The Committee was responsible for scrutinising the Procurement (Scotland) Reform Act 2014 and subsequent Subordinate Legislation enacting changes to procurement law in Scotland, as a result of the bill and European regulations. Given the large suite of legislation related, the Committee may wish to consider undertaking some post-legislative scrutiny in this area to ensure that the legislation is fulfilling its intended purpose to improve procurement law in Scotland.

33. As part of its scrutiny of procurement legislation, the Committee committed to keep a watching brief on how companies associated with the practice of blacklisting would be managed in public procurement procedures. The Scottish Government has committed to ensure that companies involved in blacklisting will be prevented from taking part in procurement exercises. As part of its understanding of laws concerning blacklisting and UK law, it was suggested that some joint work with the Westminster Committee for Scottish Affairs may be arranged, given that employment law is reserved. A joint informal event on blacklisting to be held in the Scottish Parliament was proposed, but it was not possible to arrange this before the end of Session 4. The Committee therefore strongly recommends that the successor committee takes this work forward with the Scottish Affairs Committee early in the new session.

Digital Infrastructure and Broadband

34. The Committee undertook an inquiry into broadband infrastructure in Session 4, and following the publication of its report the Committee received regular updates from the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and the Economy on the implementation and delivery of proposals outlined in the Scottish Government’s Digital Infrastructure Action Plan and other broadband related measures, including digital participation. It is recommended that the successor committee continues to closely monitor developments in this area.

35. A report published by the SCDI in January 2016, *Digital Solutions to the Productivity Puzzle*, makes recommendations on business transformation, data, skills and infrastructure. Given the timing of this publication, the successor Committee might wish to explore some of the issues around maximising the opportunities presented by improving broadband infrastructure.
Ofcom

36. Ofcom oversees the TV and radio sectors, fixed line telecoms, mobiles, postal services, plus the airwaves over which wireless devices operate. The Scotland Bill ensures that there is a formal consultative role for the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament in setting the strategic priorities for Ofcom with respect to its activities in Scotland by introducing measures that will require Scottish Ministers to appoint one member of Ofcom capable of representing the interests of Scotland. The measures will also ensure that Ofcom’s Annual Report and statement of accounts be laid before the Scottish Parliament and that the Scottish Parliament can require Ofcom to appear before its Committees. The Committee heard from Ofcom in advance of these powers being introduced on 3 February 2016.

37. A draft Memorandum of Understanding between Ofcom, the Scottish Government and UK Government is currently in development. Ofcom is currently consulting on its draft annual plan for 2016/17, with a view to publishing the final version, taking into account responses from stakeholders, in March 2016. Given these new powers, the successor Committee may wish to have annual evidence sessions with Ofcom to discuss its activities in Scotland.

Scottish Water

38. In session 4, the Committee tied in its annual evidence sessions with Scottish Water with the publication of its Annual Report, allowing it to focus its scrutiny on Scottish Water’s performance in relation to its annual targets, climate change and sustainable development and customer and stakeholder engagement. It also gives the Committee an opportunity to question Scottish Water on specific incidents of concern (including the issue of first time connections) and how it is addressing these. Scottish Water has just entered into its second year of the charging period, covering 2015 to 2021. The Committee has found that this annual approach has worked well in terms of scrutiny and following up on issues raised and would commend this approach to its successor.

European issues

39. The Committee has monitored and engaged with European issues throughout the session. Its primary focus has been on the EU’s work on public procurement and building a connected digital market while European issues also played a substantial role in the Committee’s inquiry into freight transport in Scotland.

40. On building a connected digital market, the Committee took evidence on the European Commission’s Digital Agenda from Robert Madelin, Directorate General of the European Commission for Communications Networks, Content & Technology during a visit to
Scotland.

41. In preparation for this evidence session, the Committee wrote to a range of stakeholders inviting them to submit questions they would be interested in the Committee putting to the Director General. As a result, a number of questions from stakeholders were incorporated into the evidence taking process and later used to inform evidence sessions on digital infrastructure with Scottish ministers.

42. The Committee’s work on the digital agenda showed how being better informed on the interconnected EU agenda can better inform scrutiny of the Scottish Government’s actions. The Committee draws this example of engagement on EU initiatives to the attention of its successor committee.

Health inequalities

43. The session 4 Committee has received a letter from Health and Sport Committee urging all Committees to consider tackling health inequalities is part of the wider issue of inequality within its work, given that health inequalities have been driven by a growing disparity in income, power and wealth. The current Committee recommends that the successor committee should look for opportunities to explore these issues as part of the scrutiny process, particularly in areas such as transport and housing and access to digital services.

METHODS OF WORKING

44. The Committee notes that it will be for its successor committee to determine its own methods of working. The Committee considers, however, that it may be helpful to record some of its experiences in handling its work programme this session.

Inquiry work

45. The Committee acknowledges that where subject matter merits it, there will be a need to undertake lengthy inquiries. For example, its Freight inquiry required a number of oral evidence sessions, accompanied by a number of Scotland, UK and European fact-finding visits, over a few months, to allow it to have a good understanding of the issues facing freight providers across Scotland, prior to the publication of its recommendations.

46. It has also, however, found that inquiries can be even more effective when they have a clear and focused remit, with a relatively short number of oral evidence taking sessions scoped early in the inquiry. The Committee believes that this approach helps keep inquiry work focused and topical, avoiding the loss of momentum which can arise if evidence session are stretched over many weeks. For example, the Committee’s Access to Scotland's major urban railway stations inquiry was carefully scoped and focussed on the main issues, allowing the Committee to provide a thorough report, in a relatively short period of time.
47. The Committee found that there are merits in scoping potential topics in the early stages of planning an inquiry, to ensure that any inquiry undertaken by the Committee is timed in such a way that it has the opportunity to make meaningful recommendations which could influence policy development. For example, the scoping of the Committee’s freight inquiry allowed the Committee’s recommendations to be published in time to inform a review of the Scotland’s freight strategy alongside a National Transport Strategy refresh.

Budget scrutiny

48. In the first few years of the Session, the Committee’s budget scrutiny focussed on the budget allocations for transport, active travel and affordable housing.

49. In its scrutiny of the Draft Budget 2014-15, the Committee agreed to adopt a strategic approach to scrutiny, with the main focus being on the Scottish Government’s performance in delivering its stated outcomes and objectives from Spending Review 2011 (using relevant aspects of the National Performance Framework (NPF) such as ‘reducing Scotland’s carbon footprint’, ‘reducing traffic congestion’ and ‘increasing the proportion of journeys to work by public or active travel’).

50. This outcomes based approach was considered a success and was continued in the Committee’s budget scrutiny in 2015-16 and 2016-17. This approach also complemented the Finance Committee’s principles of financial scrutiny as a framework for the budget process: affordability; prioritisation; value for money; and budget processes. The Committee commends this approach to its successor committee.

One-off evidence sessions

51. The Committee commends to its successor committee its practice of holding annual one-off evidence taking sessions with the relevant Cabinet Secretary on a range of topical matters within his remit. Given that the Committee had a broad remit, the Committee has held these one-off sessions with the Minister for Transport and Islands, the Minister for Housing and Welfare and the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and the Economy (on digital infrastructure). Not only does it allow the Committee to discuss topical issues, it can provide a valuable platform to examine progress on key aspects of the Scottish Government’s policy and project work and to scrutinise a wider range of topics than might be possible during the Committee’s normal scrutiny work.

Varied methods of engagement

52. The Committee sought to increase its engagement reach in terms of its inquiries, by promoting its call for evidences on social media and providing opportunities to respond to these using smart surveys. This proved particularly successful in its access to Scotland’s major urban railway stations and its scrutiny of the Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Bill, with the former receiving close to 5000
responses, showing that such methods can reach those who do not readily have an opportunity to engage with the parliamentary process.

The Committee held an external Committee meeting as part of Parliament Day in Dumbarton, on 24 February 2014, to take evidence on aspects of the Housing (Scotland) Bill. The Committee also held informal meetings with local tenants’ groups, housing associations and local authority representatives in Dumbarton to discuss those parts of the Bill which deal with social housing. This level of engagement serves to encourage local people to take an interest in and engage directly in the work of Parliament and its Committees.

53. Given the impact and value brought to its inquiries from such methods of engagement, it is recommended that its successor Committee may wish to build on these in the next session.

Committee members at the Parliament Day in Dumbarton.

Business Planning sessions

54. The Committee held a session to discuss its work programme very early on its formation and it would thoroughly recommend the Committee following this lead to establish early on its priorities for its work programme. The Committee also recognised the benefits of reviewing these priorities regularly, in order to adapt its work programme to topical events, membership changes and renewed Government priorities and it therefore recommends holding work programme chats three to four times over the year.

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1 This issue was raised with the Committee in correspondence by Jackie Baillie on 29 February 2016 and is available on the Committee’s website here: [http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_Pentland_Hills_Park_Committee/General%20Documents/LetterFromJackieBaillieMSPReWaterSupplyForHerConstituents.pdf](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_Pentland_Hills_Park_Committee/General%20Documents/LetterFromJackieBaillieMSPReWaterSupplyForHerConstituents.pdf)