As the secretaries of the Cross Party Group on Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (SPREEE) we would like to submit our observations to your review into the operation and regulation of Cross Party Groups. Please note that a draft of this submission was circulated to the four MSP co-convenors of SPREEE for comment. Please also note that this submission should not be taken as representing the views of individual SPREEE members.

Please find, below, our submission. It focuses on the questions that we think are most pertinent to the operation and regulation of SPREEE.

**Question 7:** The Rules on All-Party Groups at Westminster require that, where secretariat services are provided by a consultancy or by a charity/not-for-profit organisation, the relevant organisation must agree to make certain information available on request. The information for a consultancy firm is its full client list and for a charity/not-for-profit organisation is a list of any commercial company which has made a donation or donations of more than £5,000 in the twelve months prior to the request being made. Should a similar requirement be introduced for CPGs?

SPREEE’s secretariat is provided by two not-for profit organisations, the Energy Saving Trust and Scottish Renewables.

As Scottish Renewables is a membership organisation for the renewable energy industry in Scotland it is partly financed by membership fees, which can be over £5,000 for some organisations.

It would seem clear that membership fees are fundamentally different from commercial donations; however, it would be helpful if the Committee could clarify whether membership fees would be covered by any obligations on the secretariat to report commercial donations of over £5,000.

**Question 9:** The Code states that “to maintain and guarantee the Parliamentary nature of CPG meetings, at least 2 MSP members of a Group must be present at every meeting”. Is the 2 MSP quorum sufficient to ensure the Parliamentary nature of CPG meetings? Should there be a requirement that the MSPs present should represent more than one of the political parties represented on the Group?

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1 We received one response approving the response.
Yes, we believe that the 2 MSP quorum is sufficient to ensure the Parliamentary nature of CPG meetings. MSP attendance at SPREEE meetings is variable – with the norm, in terms of attendance, being somewhere between 2 and 5 MSPs present at each meeting. There have however been instances where only 1 MSP has been in attendance. MSP attendance (in terms of numbers present) at SPREEE meetings does not however appear to be out of line with MSP attendance at other CPG meetings.

If more than 2 MSP members of a Group had to be present at every meeting then it would make it considerably harder to ensure that SPREEE (and potentially other CPGs too) fulfilled the requirements of the Code.

In this context – to ensure that the Parliamentary nature of CPGs is maintained -we believe that it might be helpful for the Standards clerks to issue guidance to secretaries (especially new secretaries) on how to maximise MSP attendance at meetings.

**Question 10: Should CPGs be required to hold a minimum number of meetings per year? If so, what should the minimum number be?**

While a minimum required number of meetings would serve to make sure that all CPGs are current, and that none of them have ceased to function, it would seem to defeat the purpose of CPGs for them to hold meetings for the sake of holding them. Holding a minimum of two meetings a year would seem to serve the purpose of both keeping them up-to-date but without being too onerous a commitment for MSPs.

**Question 12: The Code currently provides that there are limitations on the use of Parliamentary resources to support CPG meetings. What are your views on these limitations?**

We would like to request that CPG’s are allowed to make use of the Parliament’s audio and broadcasting facilities, for a fee if necessary.

Currently, the Code of Conduct for MSPs does not allow CPG’s to use “Parliament’s audio or broadcasting equipment and there is no provision for the televising or sound recording of their proceedings”. However, we would like to suggest that this be amended to allow CPG’s to make use of the Parliament’s audio and broadcasting facilities, provided that the necessary staffing capacity is available and that the CPG pays for the related costs of such an event if deemed necessary.

We would also like to ask that the Committee consider whether the Secretariat for CPG’s should be allowed parliamentary passes.

At the moment, the secretariat of SPREEE relies on MSP staff to escort guests to and from Committee rooms for meetings. However, with SPREEE meetings sometimes having as many as 70-80 attendees, it can be an arduous task for MSP staff to have to escort guests up and down to the
committee room in a number of tranches, especially if the committee room being used is on one of the upper levels of Parliament.

Therefore, we believe that allowing the secretariat to have one, or a maximum of two, parliamentary passes would allow them to facilitate CPG meetings more effectively and would mean less work placed on MSP staff.

**Question 15:** At present, the SPPA Committee has not delegated to the Standards clerks any role in ensuring that CPGs are aware of and comply with the key rules relating to the administration of CPGs. What are your views on whether it would be of assistance to CPGs if the Standards clerks were to perform such a role in relation to matters such as the notification of CPG meetings, updates to registration details and deadlines for submission of documentation?

It is our view that it would help with the effective organisation of SPREEE if the clerks were allowed to engage directly with the secretariat in terms of the notification and organising of CPG meetings, including the booking of rooms and the organisation of passes for attendees.

The SPREEE secretariat has developed a short checklist to ensure that each meeting they organise complies with the key rules relating to the administration of CPGs. We have included a copy of this in Appendix 1. If deemed useful this could be adapted by the Standards clerks and circulated to the secretaries of other CPGs.

**Question 16:** Do you have any other comments on the operation of the CPG system in the Scottish Parliament?

The Committee may wish to look at whether it would be sensible for an upper limit to be set on the number of individual members of CPGs. Currently SPREEE has over 400 individual members, which is large but manageable; however it is unclear whether any future increase in membership would lead to the organisation of the CPG becoming impracticable.
## Appendix 1: SPREEE checklist

### SPREEE Co-ordination

For meeting xxxx 20xx

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>By When</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Check room booking - Room booking xxx  
   xx – xxpm  
   Arrive at xx for xxpm start                                      |     |         |
| 2. Topic: xxx                                                       |     |         |
| 3. Chair –xxx                                                      |     |         |
   Assistant - xxx                                                      |     |         |
   T: xxx  
   E: xxx                                                          |     |         |
| 4. Approach two people to speak at the event and one for the panel. Speakers need to:  
   - provide presentation a couple of days in advance, (or bring on memory stick)  
   - provide a short biography (for the meeting chair to use),  
   Inform them who else is speaking and what they’re speaking about, give them directions etc.  
   Confirmed speakers are:  
   Xxx  
   xxx                                                      |     |         |
| 5. Send out meeting invitation                                       |     |         |
| 6. Keep a record of who has said they’ll come to the meeting        |     |         |
| 7. Organize sandwiches/refreshments for the meeting (normally order for c20-30% less than the number of people who has said they’ll come). Organise with Sodhexo, contact details xxxxx |     |         |
| 8. You will also need to inform parliament at least 7 days in advance that a meeting is taking place. (crosspartygroup@scottish.parliament.uk or call Standards on 0131 3485179 / 6924) including what the topic will be. |     |         |
| 9. Ask MSPs assistant if staff will be available to help            |     |         |
with escorting people to the room and make sure that a screen and computer and projector will be available.

10. Ask for Speakers biographies by xxxx date. Chase if not received.

11. Prepare short briefing for the meeting chair. This should include a note of who the speakers are (using the biographies provided), what the agenda is (running order) and associated timings, and any background information that’s relevant.

12. Send confirmations to attendees.

13. Send a full list of attendees to MSPs assistant/security for Security, at the following e-mail address xxxxx. They will then ensure enough passes are available on the day.

Print a copy of the attendee list to circulate during the meeting for people to register their attendance.

14. On the day:
   - Get there at least 10 mins before the meeting start time in order to collect security passes,
   - Let the meeting chair know you are there (they or a member of their staff will need to come down and sign out the security passes for you).
   - Introduce yourself to the chair (MSP’s pics are all on the Parliament website), give them a printed copy of the briefing and quickly talk them through it (and make sure they’re generally happy with what’s planned).
   - Make yourself known to the presenters and try and introduce them to the chair in advance of the meeting (useful to get them to arrive say 10-15 mins before start time).
   - You will then need to hand out security passes
   - You will need to get presentations loaded up onto the computer in the room in advance of the meeting.
   - You (or member of MSPs staff) should stay in the Parliament foyer with passes for c.5-10 mins after the meeting start time to ensure that latecomers get a pass and are directed to the room.

15. Send parliament a record of the meeting (see file for previous examples) to xxxxx. Note: this needs to be
agreed by meeting convenor first.