



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

# Conveners Group

## Agenda

4th Meeting, 2022 (Session 6) Wednesday 27 April 2022

The group will meet at 12.30pm in Committee Room 2.

1. Minutes
2. Climate change and net zero scrutiny issues
3. Business continuity (oral briefing)
4. Committee travel request
5. Gender balance on committees

**Next meeting – Wednesday 25 May**

The papers for this meeting are as follows –

- |    |  |              |
|----|--|--------------|
| 1. | Minutes of last meeting                    | CG/S6/22/3/M |
| 2. | Climate change and net zero scrutiny       | CG/S6/22/4/1 |
| 3. | Committee travel request (CEEAC Committee) | CG/S6/22/4/2 |
| 4. | Gender balance on committees               | CG/S6/22/4/3 |

## Contact details for the clerk

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The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Conveners group

### Minutes

3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting, 2022 (Session 6) Wednesday 30 March 2022

Present:

Liam McArthur MSP, Convener

Clare Adamson MSP, Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

Claire Baker MSP, Economy and Fair Work Committee

Siobhian Brown MSP, COVID-19 Recovery Committee

Ariane Burgess MSP, Local Government, Housing & Planning Committee

Jackson Carlaw MSP, Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

Richard Leonard MSP, Public Audit Committee

Gillian Martin MSP, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee (Virtual)

Martin Whitfield MSP, Standards and Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Elena Whitham MSP, Social Justice and Social Security Committee

Apologies were received from:

Finlay Carson MSP, Joe FitzPatrick MSP, Kenneth Gibson MSP, Stephen Kerr MSP, Dean Lockhart MSP, Stuart McMillan MSP, and Audrey Nicoll MSP

- 1. Minutes:** The Conveners Group agreed the minutes of the last meeting. The Group also agreed to continue its consideration of gender balance on Committees at a future meeting.
- 2. Post-EU scrutiny issues:** The Group considered the scrutiny challenges in relation to post-EU scrutiny issues as part of its strategic priority on cross-committee working.

It considered recommendations from the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture (CEEAC) Committee in relation to the SSI Protocol and SI Protocol 2.

It agreed with the CEEAC Committee recommendation that the SSI Protocol should be discontinued as it no longer facilitates proportionate or effective scrutiny. It was agreed that the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee would have final consideration of the process.

It also agreed that a formal review of SI Protocol 2 should be undertaken by Scottish Parliament officials on behalf of committees.

The Group also considered a number of post-EU scrutiny gaps identified by the CEEAC Committee, including in relation to the operation of SI Protocol 2, and noted that officials were working to address these gaps especially with regard to the levels of information provided by the Scottish Government. The Group would be provided with an update from officials prior to summer recess.

- 3. The legislative consent process for UK Parliament Bills:** The Group discussed delays to the lodging of legislative consent memorandums (LCMs) by the Scottish Government, and the detrimental impact this has on committee scrutiny. The Group agreed to write to the Minister for Parliamentary Business as a follow up to previous consideration of this issue.

The Group also considered the lack of provision in Standing Orders that apply in circumstances where a UK Bill makes relevant provision and the Scottish Government is not seeking the Parliament's consent. The Group agreed to invite the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee to investigate this issue further.

- 4. Witness diversity:** The Group agreed the questions to be asked in the committees witness diversity survey, and that it should go live on 12 May 2022, the start of the next parliamentary year. The Group also noted that a paper on the Parliament's diversity strategy would be brought to a future meeting.

Date of Next Meeting: 27 April 2022

## Contact details for the clerk

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# **Conveners Group**

## **4th Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Wednesday 27 April 2022**

### **Climate Change and Net Zero scrutiny issues**

#### **Introduction**

1. The purpose of this paper is to invite the Conveners Group to consider scrutiny of climate change and net zero issues.
2. Members will recall that the Group has identified the complex issues of net zero as well as scrutiny of post-EU issues as specific areas for development. Both of these issues present particular cross-cutting scrutiny challenges and the Group has agreed to consider these in the context of its strategic priority of cross-committee working. Conveners considered the scrutiny challenges in relation to post-EU issues at previous meetings.
3. The Group is now invited to consider the scrutiny challenges of climate change and net zero.

#### **Background**

4. This paper supports the delivery of a facilitated session for the Conveners Group to consider scrutiny of climate change (the problem) and net-zero (policy response) issues. The Conveners Group has a short session at this meeting, with a follow-up scheduled for the meeting in May.
5. Climate change and net-zero are complex scientific, socio-economic and environmental issues, and so require whole-society solutions. This is reflected in the challenges faced by parliament, and parliamentary committees, in delivering effective scrutiny of the Scottish Government on these issues. The Conveners Group can deliver clear leadership in helping to navigate these complexities.
6. As noted, the Conveners Group has identified cross-committee scrutiny on climate change and net zero. This paper is part of the response to how that defined need can best be met, and also helps the Parliament meet its own statutory public duties on climate change and sustainable development – as detailed in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, and the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019.

## Purpose of this session

7. This session is about hearing from committee conveners on what they need in order to effectively have their committees ensure climate change and net zero issues are considered in the context of their committee remit. Furthermore, it is an opportunity to consider how the Conveners Group as a collective can create impetus on these issues across committees.

## Framing the issues

8. Climate change is an existential threat to life on the planet. The most recent scientific analysis conducted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is unequivocal on this – and that the science and related [summary for policy makers](#):

“recognizes the interdependence of climate, ecosystems and biodiversity, and human societies [...] and integrates knowledge more strongly across the natural, ecological, social and economic sciences than earlier IPCC assessments. The assessment of climate change impacts and risks as well as adaptation is set against concurrently unfolding non-climatic global trends e.g., biodiversity loss, overall unsustainable consumption of natural resources, land and ecosystem degradation, rapid urbanisation, human demographic shifts, social and economic inequalities and a pandemic”.

9. The discussions at COP26, to which many committee conveners were party (together with members of the NZET Committee, and party leaders), were framed in this wider context – that of sustainable development - that is climate change is at the heart of, and an amplifier of, many other local and global challenges. This framing was also reflected in the Session 5 Conveners Group [Legacy Report](#) – which concluded that climate change cannot be tackled alone by a climate change, or net zero committee – that there is a role to be played by many other committees.

## Work to date

10. At official level, the parliament already has a developing ‘pathway’ to support scrutiny through the lens of climate change and sustainable development. This work develops the themes outlined in the CG Legacy Report mentioned above, as well as drawing together threads from the Session 5 Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee recommendations to the Parliament on the scrutiny challenges presented by climate change and net zero (see Annexe 2 of the [Session 5 Legacy Report](#)).
11. Those developing and delivering this pathway (primarily SPICe and Committee Office) have been supporting cross-committee work for many years – for example in scrutiny of climate change legislation and statutory reports, and in recent consideration of the National Planning Framework 4. However, the capacity to extend this kind of support to other committees is

more limited – and officials have worked creatively and collaboratively to help the parliament innovate where resources are a challenge, including:

- Work across myriad departments to ensure MSP access to the COP26 Blue Zone in Glasgow, creating platforms for [global activity in Holyrood](#), and working in partnership with the Nordic Council, the UK Committee on Climate Change and others in Glasgow around the theme of Code Red: the role of parliaments in the climate emergency.
- Development, through an Action Research PhD Student, of the Parliament's Sustainable Development Impact Assessment Tool. Soon to be used for the first time in committee by the NZET Committee (but already tested extensively by officials on 'live' issues), this tool is considered to be the first of its kind in any parliament – and is being cited as best practice, including in a [Westminster Foundation for Democracy Guide for Parliamentary Practice](#). At COP26 the UN and the International Institute for Sustainable Development were interested in the parliament's approach – a continuing conversation as part of our pathway.
- Securing and rollout of Royal Scottish Geographical Society [Climate Solutions training](#).

### **The next step for Scottish Parliament committees**

12. The next step on the pathway needs partially framed by the Conveners Group. Officials have ideas and external expertise which can be brought to the table, but these have to be appropriate to the needs of the Conveners Group – and by association, the committees they convene.
13. Some committees may see that they have a clear line to climate change and net-zero issues, others may feel that link is more tangential, and others that they have no role at all – this discussion is designed to unpack these thoughts, and to consider how we can best support Conveners in their own thinking about how they can contribute – either through leadership in committee, or at Conveners Group. A strategic approach could see shared ownership, with, for example, the NZET Committee playing a leading role, but legitimising and supporting other committees.
14. This follows the structure of the Group's consideration of post-EU scrutiny challenges where the Group was invited to consider the respective roles of the various bodies involved (lead committee, other committees, Conveners Group/Parliament).

### **How this session will run**

15. The session will be run by a facilitator, Gillian Baxendine, Head of the Parliament's Participation and Communities Team. Peter McGrath, Clerk to the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee, and Graeme Cook, Head of Research and Sustainable Development Scrutiny in SPICe will

also be in attendance. Notes will be taken through the session, in which two questions will be asked:

- **What do individual conveners feel their committee needs to ensure they can effectively consider climate change and net zero issues in the context of their committee remit?**
- **How does Conveners Group see itself as a positive force for cross-committee scrutiny on climate change and net-zero, and what is needed to make that happen?**

### **What will happen next**

16. Officials will capture deliberations on the day and return in May with a potential package of approaches and measures. An agreed Conveners Group approach will form part of the pathway described above.

### **Recommendation**

17. Conveners are invited to consider their response to the bullet points set out at paragraph 15. As part of the discussion, Conveners are invited to consider the respective roles of—

- (a) lead committee (NZET)
- (b) other committees
- (c) Conveners Group and the Parliament

**Graeme Cook, SPICe**  
**Peter McGrath, Committee Office**  
**Gillian Baxendine, Participation and Communities Team**  
**April 2022**



# Conveners Group

## 4th Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Wednesday 27 April 2022

### Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee - Request for Members to travel to Brussels

#### Introduction

1. The purpose of this paper is to invite the Conveners Group to consider and approve a committee travel request.
2. Under Rule 12.10 of Standing Orders, committees (or individual members of committees) wishing to travel outwith the United Kingdom in connection with any competent matter before that committee requires prior approval of the Conveners Group, as well as the Parliamentary Bureau.

#### Nature of request

3. In this case, Conveners Group approval is sought for the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee to travel to Brussels on 19 to 21 June. It is intended that seven members of the Committee, if available, and one clerk and one SPICe researcher will undertake the visit which would run from Sunday to Tuesday.
4. Approval is being sought separately from the Bureau.

#### Justification/benefit

3. The Committee has recently published a report on its inquiry into the Scottish Government's international work. The Committee's view is that it is essential that both the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament continue to have a strong relationship with the EU. The Committee recommended that the Scottish Government publishes a clear strategy and priorities in relation to its engagement with the EU. This should include its priorities in relation to—
  - The policy commitment to align with EU law;
  - The operation of the EU-UK Trade and Co-operation Agreement;
  - Engagement of Scottish institutions in EU programmes;
  - A UK-wide approach; and
  - Soft power and informal engagement.
4. The purpose of the visit will be to follow up a number of issues which the Committee considered as part of the inquiry including—

- developing future relations with the EU;
  - the role of Scotland House in Brussels following the UK leaving the EU including engagement with EU institutions and the UK Mission to the EU; and
  - scrutiny of the UK-EU Trade and Co-operation Agreement (TCA) including the UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly.
5. The Session 5 Europe Committee recommend in its legacy paper that a successor Committee “will need to monitor EU policy and legislative developments in order to assess the extent to which a future Scottish Government is remaining aligned with EU law and the implications of the policy approach being taken.” The visit will allow the Committee to discuss EU policy and legislative priorities with both the European Parliament and the European Commission within the context of the Scottish Government’s commitment to align with EU law.
  6. A key priority for the Committee is developing inter-parliamentary relations and the visit is also intended to allow all Members of the Committee to build relations with the European Parliament including in relation to its role in scrutinising the TCA. The need to build informal relations at an EU level was also raised by a number of witnesses during the Committee’s recent inquiry on the Scottish Government’s international work. To increase the benefit of the visit it is anticipated that Members will split into two groups for some meetings in order to widen engagement and cover a wider range of issues.
  7. The Committee’s programme is still being finalised but meetings are expected to include –
    - Scotland House;
    - The UK mission to the EU;
    - European Parliament;
    - European Commission;
    - Non-EU embassies;
    - Sub-state representations to the EU;
    - Policy think tanks.
  8. It is expected that the visit will help to enhance Members’ awareness of the work of the EU institutions and also to inform the Committee’s work priorities for the remainder of the session especially in relation to scrutiny of the Scottish Government’s commitment to align with EU law and wider engagement with the EU as well as scrutiny of the TCA.
  9. For the reasons stated above – the building of informal relations at the EU level; following up on a number of specific issues raised in the Committee’s recent report on the Scottish Government’s international work; enhancing Members’ awareness of the work of the EU institutions; and informing the Committee’s scrutiny of the Scottish Government in terms of its EU engagement over this parliamentary session – it would be of benefit if all Members of the Committee were to attend the visit.

## Travel and costs

10. In order to maximise the time available for Members to engage in a full programme of meetings during the visit it will be necessary for Members to travel on the Sunday. This means that they will have almost two full days in Brussels in which to meet with as broad a range of people as possible.
11. Members were provided with additional information regarding travel options for the Brussels trip. The clerks calculated the estimated CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions attributed per passenger using this UK Government document: [Greenhouse gas reporting: conversion factors 2021](#), for emissions per kilometre travelled as follows –
- Air travel: estimated emissions per passenger is approximately 242kgCO<sub>2</sub>e.
  - Train: estimated emissions per passenger is approximately 48.51kgCO<sub>2</sub>e
12. Having been presented with this information and the given the option to either fly or to travel by train, five Members of the Committee opted for the former and two have chosen the latter.
13. The anticipated costs for the visits are set out below.

<b>Costs</b>	<b>£</b>
Return flights from Edinburgh to Brussels (7 people)	1,000
Return Rail Travel from Edinburgh to Brussels (2 people)	565
Overnight Allowance for 2 nights x 9 people	3,960
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,525</b>

## Decision

14. **The Committee seeks the Conveners Group approval for travel to Brussels and for the associated expenditure as detailed in Annexe A.**

**CEEAC Committee Clerks  
April 2022**

**Visit to Brussels**

<b>Travel</b>	<b>£</b>	
7 economy class air fares from Edinburgh to Brussels	1000	
2 return rail journeys from Edinburgh to Brussels	£565	
Subtotal	1565	
<b>Expenses</b>		
2 x overnight allowance for 9 people	3960	
<b>Total</b>		<b>5525</b>

**Costs incurred in current financial year**

Total		<b><u>5525</u></b>
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**Cost Codes**

Committee Travel	Cost
SP414030	1565
Committee Expenses	
SP414035	3960

# Conveners Group

## 4th Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Wednesday 27 April 2022

### Gender balance on committees

#### Introduction

1. The purpose of this paper is to update the Conveners Group on gender balance on committees.

#### Background

2. This issue was raised at the previous meeting where recent changes to the membership of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee returned it to an all-male membership.
3. Conveners will also recall that the Group previously wrote to the Parliamentary Bureau raising concerns at the gender balance of membership on some committees.
4. A response to this letter has now been received and is attached in the annex.

#### Next steps

5. Members will note that the response confirms that the Bureau will be discussing the issue of gender balance on committees, as a shared responsibility for all parties, at a future meeting.
6. The Presiding Officer has undertaken to write to the Deputy Presiding Officer to provide the Group with an update on the outcome of that discussion. The Group will be advised of the update once it has been received.
7. Conveners have also expressed a wish to monitor progress being made in achieving gender balance on committees.
8. A possible approach would be for the Group to be provided with updates on any changes to committee membership. This would include the impact this has on the gender balance of the committee(s) concerned as well as the overall impact on committee membership.
9. This would provide with the Group with ongoing details of current developments in achieving gender balance.

## **Recommendation**

### **10. The Conveners Group is invited to note—**

- **the response from the Parliamentary Bureau and that an update will be provided following discussions with Business Managers; and**
- **that it will be provided with updates on committee membership changes in order to monitor progress being made in achieving gender balance on committees.**

**Conveners Group clerking team  
April 2022**



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

**The Presiding Officer**

Liam McArthur MSP  
Chair of Conveners Group  
Scottish Parliament  
Room Q2.04  
By email.

21 April 2022

Dear Liam,

Thank you for your letter regarding gender balance on committees. It is important for the Parliament to have balanced representation on all of its committees. The Bureau discussed your letter and agreed that it would consider the importance of addressing imbalances when proposing committee membership changes.

You will be aware that a recent change to the membership of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee has seen a reversion to a wholly male membership. While I understand the challenges that all parties face in proposing committee memberships it was disappointing to see this reversion. The Bureau will be discussing the issue of gender balance on committees, as a shared responsibility for all parties, at a future meeting and I will write to you to update you on the outcome of that discussion.

Best wishes,

**Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP**  
**Presiding Officer**