

Conveners Group
Wednesday 26 November 2025
6th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

Committee debates

Introduction

1. The Conveners Group will consider an update on requests for committee debates in the current parliamentary year at this meeting. The number of requests is likely to exceed the remaining allocation of time for committee debates this session. The Group is therefore invited to consider and agree how the requests should be prioritised.

Background

2. Priority is given to committee business in the Chamber over Scottish Government business on 12 half sitting days in each parliamentary year. A half sitting day is defined as that part of a sitting day between 14:30 and 17:00 on a Monday, between 09:15 and 12:30 or 14:30 and 17:00 on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday or between 09:30 and 12:00 on a Friday.
3. A typical afternoon would normally allow the following time for debate:
 - 130 minutes on a Tuesday (160 minutes if no statements are to be scheduled)
 - 130 minutes on a Wednesday (NB: opposition business is usually scheduled on Wednesdays, so committee debates are not often scheduled on these afternoons)
 - 120 minutes on a Thursday
4. Generally, the number of requests does not exceed the amount of time allocated for committee debates, as shown **in the Annexe (Table 3)** below. In such circumstances, bids are allocated by the clerks as an administrative function.
5. Committee bids are being brought to the Conveners Group for consideration at this meeting because in the current parliamentary year (13 May 2025 – 12 May 2026) the number of bids would appear to exceed the remaining time available. In summary, eight committee debates have already been scheduled, with a further debate yet to be scheduled before or after the Christmas recess. A further seven bids have been received with only three half sitting days remaining in the allocation for committee debates.
6. The **Annexe** to this paper provides an overview of:
 - committee debates held in this parliamentary year;
 - the remaining bids yet to be scheduled;
 - the allocation of committee debates in this session; and

- the topics debated by committees in each parliamentary year in Session 6.
7. An important factor that influences the scheduling of committee debates is the timescale for reporting on the inquiry topic, where applicable. The general expectation is that Scottish Government should normally respond to any committee report not later than:
 - two months after publication of the report; or
 - where exceptionally the debate is to be within the 2 months of publication, a week before the Chamber debate the report.
 8. Where the timescale for debating a report makes it impractical to provide a written response in advance of the debate, the expectation is that a government response should still be provided within two months of publication.
 9. The Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans has expressed his desire to provide expedited responses to committee reports where this assists with the scheduling of committee debates. However, this will depend on the topic being debated and may not always be possible.

Decision

10. Matters to be decided by the Conveners Group require the agreement of all members who are present.
11. Accordingly, the Group is invited to consider the remaining bids for a committee debate and to decide how the remaining bids should be prioritised. Options for prioritising the remaining bids may include by:
 - The order in which each committee expects to report and receive a response from the Scottish Government (where applicable); or
 - The committees with the lowest number of bids in the current parliamentary year, followed by the order in which each committee expects to report and receive a response from the Scottish Government (where applicable); or
 - The subjects/themes which have been underrepresented in committee debates to date, or by the topicality of the issues raised, between now and the end of the session; and/or
 - To delegate the final decision on the scheduling of committee debates to the Deputy Presiding Officer.
12. The Group may also wish to agree to shorter (e.g., 60-minute) debates on these topics so that as many bids as possible can be accommodated in the remaining time available.

Clerks to the Conveners Group
November 2025

Annexe: information on committee debates

Table 1: Debates held or yet to be scheduled in the current parliamentary year (2025-26)

	Date	Committee	Debate topic
1	22/05/2025	Standards, Procedures & Public Appointments Committee	Committee effectiveness inquiry
2	03/06/2025	Citizen Participation & Public Petitions Committee	Public participation inquiry
3	04/09/2025	Public Audit Committee	Report on the 2022/23 and 2023/24 audits of the Water Industry Commission for Scotland
4	18/09/2025	SPCB Supported Bodies Landscape Review Committee	SPCB Supported Bodies Landscape Review
5	04/11/2025	Social Justice and Social Security Committee	Financial considerations when leaving an abusive relationship inquiry
6	06/11/2025	Standards, Procedures & Public Appointments Committee	Committee effectiveness inquiry
7	04/12/2025	Education, Children and Young People Committee	Widening access
8	11/12/2025	Equalities, Human Rights & Civil Justice Committee	British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 Inquiry
9	Date TBC	Criminal Justice	Substance misuse in prisons inquiry
10	Date TBC	Slot available	Slot available
11	Date TBC	Slot available	Slot available
12	Date TBC	Slot available	Slot available

Table 2: Remaining bids yet to be allocated in the current parliamentary year (2025-26)

	Committee	Debate topic	Scheduling factors
1	Citizen Participation & Public Petitions Committee	PE1859: Retain falconers' rights to practise upland falconry in Scotland	The petition is ready to be scheduled for a debate at any point (there is no committee letter or report and not waiting on a SG response). Committee would be content with 90-minute debate.
2	Citizen Participation & Public Petitions Committee	PE2018: Recognise the value of swimming pools and provide financial relief to help keep pools open.	The petition is ready to be scheduled for a debate at any point (there is no letter or report and not waiting on a SG response). Committee would be content with 90-minute debate.
3	Public Audit Committee	Ferguson Marine	Report published in July and Scottish Government's written response has been received. Committee would be content with 90-minute debate.
4	Equalities, Human Rights & Civil Justice Committee	Legal aid	Report published on 17 September. SG response due by 17 November. Expects to need full half-sitting day.
5	Criminal Justice	Cybercrime	No report. Committee has gathered written evidence analysing the issue, which would be collated and published ahead of a debate. Committee would be content with 90-minute debate.
6	Health, Social Care and Sport	Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) pathways and support inquiry	Committee due to be consider its draft report on 13 January 2026.
7	Finance and Public Administration	Cost-effectiveness of public inquiries	Committee report due to be published 17/18 December 2025. Committee would be content with 90-minute debate.

Table 3: Allocation of committee debates in Session 6

Combined total of debate allocations by committee in each parliamentary year in Session 6						
Committee	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Session 6 Total
Total debates held in each parliamentary year	12	12	11	10	9	54
Citizen Participation & Public Petitions Committee	0	1	2	1	1	5
Constitution, Europe, External Affairs & Culture Committee	2	1	2	1	0	6
Standards, Procedures & Public Appointments Committee	1	2	1	0	2	6
Health, Social Care & Sport Committee [^]	2	2	1	1	0	6
Criminal Justice Committee [^]	0	0	1	1	1	3
Public Audit Committee	0	1	1	0	1	3
Social Justice and Social Security Committee [^]	0	1	1	0	1	3
Equalities, Human Rights & Civil Justice Committee	1	0	1	0	1	3
Net Zero, Energy & Transport Committee	1	1	1	1	0	4
Economy & Fair Work Committee	0	1	0	1	0	2
Education, Children and Young People Committee	0	1	0	0	1	2
Rural Affairs & Islands Committee	0	1	0	1	0	2
Joint debates on drug deaths and harms [^]	1	0	0	1	0	2
Covid-19 Recovery Committee [*]	1	0	0	0	0	1
Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee	1	0	0	1	0	2
Finance & Public Administration Committee	0	0	0	1	0	1
SPCB Supported Bodies Landscape Review Committee [*]	0	0	0	0	1	1
Local Government, Housing & Planning Committee	2	0	0	0	0	2

Key:

[^] committees who participated in the joint debates on drug death and drug harms^{*} committees that have been dissolved

Table 4: Total number of debates held by committees (ranked highest to lowest) in Session 6

Committee	Debates
Constitution, Europe, External Affairs & Culture Committee	6
Standards, Procedures & Public Appointments Committee	6
Health, Social Care & Sport Committee^	6
Citizen Participation & Public Petitions Committee	5
Net Zero, Energy & Transport Committee	4
Criminal Justice Committee^	3
Public Audit Committee	3
Social Justice and Social Security Committee^	3
Equalities, Human Rights & Civil Justice Committee	3
Economy & Fair Work Committee	2
Education, Children and Young People Committee	2
Rural Affairs & Islands Committee	2
Joint debates on drug deaths and harms^	2
Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee	2
Local Government, Housing & Planning Committee	2
Covid-19 Recovery Committee*	1
Finance & Public Administration Committee	1
SPCB Supported Bodies Landscape Review Committee*	1

Table 5: Topics covered in committee debates in Session 6

2021-22
Covid-19: Preparing for Winter and Priorities for Recovery
Shaping parliamentary procedures and practices for the future
Retrofitting buildings for net-zero
The made affirmative procedure
The road to COP27 and beyond: Tackling the climate emergency in the aftermath of COP26
UK Internal Market Act
Ending conversion practices
Perinatal mental health
National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)
Scottish Government's international work
Health and Wellbeing of Children and Young People
Tackling drugs deaths and drugs harm
2022-23
Future procedures and practices
Low income and the debt

Inquiry into alternative pathways to primary care
The impact of Brexit on devolution
Health inequalities
Petition PE:1865 Suspend all surgical mesh and fixation devices
Retail and Town Centres in Scotland
The role of local government and its cross-sectoral partners in financing and delivering a net-zero Scotland
Complaint against Maggie Chapman MSP
Future agriculture policy in Scotland
New Vessels for the Clyde and Hebrides: Arrangements to deliver vessels 801 and 802
Colleges regionalisation
2023-24
Tackling online child abuse, grooming and exploitation
Embedding Public Participation in the work of the Parliament
Future ferry inquiry
Culture in communities report
Female participation in sport and physical activity

Asylum Seekers in Scotland
Proxy voting evaluation
How is Devolution Changing Post-EU report
Addressing Child Poverty through parental employment
Petition: create an Unborn Victims of Violence Act
Audit Scotland report: Adult mental health
2024-25
Additional Support for Learning
Just Transition
Commissioner Landscape Inquiry report
Trade and Cooperation Agreement report
Remote and Rural Healthcare
A9 dualling project inquiry
The People's Panel report on reducing drug harm and deaths in Scotland
Salmon farming in Scotland
The Aarhus Convention and Access to Environmental Justice
Inquiry into Framework Legislation and Henry VIII powers

2025-26
Committee effectiveness inquiry
Public participation inquiry
Report on the 2022/23 and 2023/24 audits of the Water Industry Commission for Scotland
SPCB Supported Bodies Landscape Review
British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 Inquiry
Financial considerations when leaving an abusive relationship inquiry
Committee effectiveness inquiry
Widening access
Substance misuse in prisons inquiry