

Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body

International Relations: Parliamentary travel – Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference

Executive summary

1. The International Relations Office's budget is approved, as part of the overall budget proposal, by the SPCB on an annual basis. This budget is then allocated to individual visits and development opportunities by the International Relations Office, in line with the Scottish Parliament's International Strategy.
2. The Code of Conduct for MSPs requires Members to register and "provide details of visits outside the United Kingdom in certain circumstances." Some overseas visits are excluded from this requirement to register – that is when the travel and other costs of a visit are wholly met by the SPCB, or are approved by the SPCB prior to the visit, as the visit is deemed to be "parliamentary in nature".
3. This paper provides a brief summary of the upcoming visit to the 69th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPA) and invites the SPCB to confirm that it is parliamentary in nature, therefore exempting it from registration on Members' register of interests.
4. The SPCB is not asked to approve the travel – only the question of whether it is parliamentary in nature. The SPCB has previously considered IRO parliamentary travel related to the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Assembly British Islands and Mediterranean Region this Session.

Issues and options

The Code of Conduct

5. Members are required under the Code of Conduct for MSPs to register certain overseas visits – including certain visits for political purposes and a visit which meets the 'prejudice test' ("an interest meets the prejudice test if, after taking into account all of the circumstances, that interest is reasonably considered to prejudice, or give the appearance of prejudicing the ability of the member to participate in a disinterested manner in any proceedings of the Parliament").
6. In accordance with paragraphs 62 and 64 of Section 2 of the Code of Conduct, the travel and other costs of a visit which are wholly met by the SPCB, or are approved by the SPCB prior to the visit, is exempt from

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registration as an overseas visit in the Register of Interests of Members of the Scottish Parliament.

7. The purpose of this paper is therefore to invite the SPCB to agree that the visit outlined below is “parliamentary in nature” and that it is therefore exempt from needing to be registered by the Members taking part.

69th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference

8. The annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference (CPC) will take place in Cape Town, South Africa, from 13-19 September 2026. The event will bring together parliamentarians and parliamentary staff from across the Commonwealth for this knowledge sharing and networking opportunity.
9. This year’s conference will be held under the main theme of 'Strengthening International Law and Parliamentary Democracy in a Changing World Order: Commonwealth Leadership'. The conference will include the CPA General Assembly (plenary session), the 10th Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Conference and a meeting of the Commonwealth Parliamentarians with Disabilities Network along with six workshops.
10. The Scottish Parliament is allocated two MSPs (one delegate and one observer) to attend the conference. Following an application process, Claire Baker MSP and Michelle Campbell MSP were selected by the Scottish Parliament’s CPA Branch Executive Committee to attend.
11. Iain McIver, Head of the International Relations Office, will support the delegation.
12. The Scottish Parliament is a very active member of the CPA and the conference offers an opportunity for delegates to engage with counterparts from legislatures across the Commonwealth and to promote the work of the Scottish Parliament. The conference is not offered virtually, and as such Members need to be there in person to take part.
13. The only viable travel option between Scotland and Cape Town is by air. Due to the length of the flights, premium economy class was offered to the delegates. Business class travel was not considered. The individual CO₂e footprint for flying premium economy class (return) to Cape Town from Edinburgh is 1573CO₂eKG.

Publication Scheme

14. This paper will be published in line with the SPCB’s Publication Scheme.

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Decision

15. The SPCB is invited to agree that the travel outlined in this paper is parliamentary in nature, therefore exempting it from registration.

International Relations Office

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