



Summary of academic engagement  
programme activity

January 2025 – March 2026



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba



**Academic  
Engagement**

Com-pàirteachadh  
Acadaimigeach

## About academic engagement

The Scottish Parliament scrutinises the Scottish Government, makes new laws on devolved matters and debates the issues of the day. Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs), their staff and parliament staff need access to relevant and timely evidence to be able to perform this scrutiny function effectively. They draw on many sources, including academic expertise.

The Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe) manages a [programme of activities](#) for individual academics and higher education institutions that encourages collaboration between academia and the work of Parliament.

Our programme for academic engagement aims to strengthen links with Scotland's universities. It also aims to better understand what is happening in academia and vice versa.

### January – March 2025

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In January 2025, as part of the Parliament's [Academic Fellowship Scheme](#), we published a [SPICe Briefing: Getting the inactive active: barriers to physical activity and their potential policy solutions](#) written by Dr David Meir, University of the West of Scotland, and Dr David Scott, Abertay University. The briefing explores barriers to physical activity in Scotland.

A [SPICe Spotlight Blog: How can the Scottish Parliament improve its public consultations?](#) written by Marie Bruyndonckx provides an overview of her masters dissertation, which was co-supervised by the University of Edinburgh and SPICe. It compares the public consultation processes of the Scottish Parliament and the European Commission.

In February 2025, Dr Tom Caygill, Nottingham Trent University, spoke at a SPICe Breakfast Seminar about post-legislative scrutiny in the Scottish Parliament. Dr Caygill drew on his research on this topic while he was an academic fellow in SPICe in 2024.

Professor Luke March, Personal Chair of Post-Soviet and Comparative Politics at the University of Edinburgh, and Professor Peter Jackson, Chair in Global Security at the University of Glasgow, presented at a SPICe Breakfast Seminar on the geopolitical situation in Ukraine.

Dr Christine Sylvester and Dr Fabrizio de Francesco, University of Strathclyde, completed commissioned research on the Process for recommending and agreeing sanctions on elected members: comparative research.

In February 2025 we issued a call around the Scottish Parliament Academic Network to identify academics with expertise relating to elements of the Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill to support parliamentary scrutiny of this legislation.

We published a SPICe briefing [Exploring Employability Funding Allocation in Scotland](#) by Dr Seemab Farooqi, University of Dundee, which was undertaken as part of a SPICe Academic Fellowship.

In addition, Annamae Burrows joined us for six months for the Jude Payne health policy traineeship.

In March, we launched our first Areas of Research Interest (ARIs) - a way for an organisation like the Scottish Parliament to express interest in seeing more research evidence in a specific area and/or understanding what research expertise exists that is of relevance to this policy issue. Our first ARIs focused on i) regional and sectoral employment implications of a just transition and ii) climate emissions from waste management and resource use.

We also hosted a webinar on how to apply for a Scottish Parliament Fellowship.

## **April – June 2025**

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In April 2025, Iñaki Goñi and Elisabet Vives, University of Edinburgh, published a Guest Blog on [Continuously improving people's panels at the Scottish Parliament – Lessons from our independent evaluation](#). The blog captures key points and recommendations from [the final evaluation report](#) on two Scottish Parliament People's Panels which took place in 2024.

We published a report [Applying Participatory Action Research & creative approaches to the committee scrutiny process within the Scottish Parliament](#). The report was co-authored by Dr Cara Broadley, SPICe Academic Fellow, Glasgow School of Art and based on research carried out in partnership with the Scottish Parliament Information Centre

(SPICe), the Participation and Communities Team (PACT), the Parliament Communications Office (PCO), and Clerking Teams in the Committee Office.

Professor Andrew K. Sweetman, Scottish Association for Marine Science, and Professor James Harrison, University of Edinburgh spoke at a SPICe Breakfast Seminar on 'Dark Oxygen' Discovery: Implications for Marine Science, the Origins of Life and Deep-Seabed Mining.

In June 2025, Ben Adam, University of Bristol, published a SPICe briefing looking at waiting times for children and adults seeking neurodevelopmental assessments, as well as the current provision of these services in Scotland. [Neurodevelopmental Pathways and Waiting Times in Scotland](#). This work was undertaken as a NERC funded, UKRI Policy Internship hosted by SPICe.

Professor Colin Reid, Emeritus Professor, University of Dundee, produced a Guest Blog on [The climate jigsaw part one: the general framework of devolution and climate change](#). This blog is [one of a series](#) that illustrates how climate change relates to policy areas covered by subject committees with the Scottish Parliament.

Professor James Harrison, Professor of Environmental Law at the University of Edinburgh Law School, published a Guest Blog on [Regulatory Autonomy in Post-Brexit Waters: lessons from the UK-EU Sandeel Dispute](#).

In June 2025, Sarith Fernando joined us for six weeks on his Economic Futures summer placement, working on parcel delivery surcharges for rural areas.

Dr Elizabeth Lawson, SPICe Academic Fellow, Newcastle University, co-produced a SPICe Blog exploring Scotland's drought preparedness in response to the driest start to the year since 1964. [Drouthy Days: is Scotland prepared for drought?](#)

In June 2025, Dr Tom Caygill, Senior Lecturer in Politics, Nottingham Trent University produced a SPICe briefing as part of his fellowship with SPICe. The briefing [Post-Legislative Scrutiny in the Scottish Parliament in Session 6: A Strategic Priority](#) presents the results of a research project into post-legislative scrutiny in the Scottish Parliament.

Dr Katie Dow, SPICe Academic Fellow, and Dr Claire Niedzwiedz, Research Fellow, University of Glasgow, spoke at a SPICe Breakfast Seminar on the links between health, social care and climate change.

## July – September 2025

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Dr Clementine (Clemmie) Hill O'Connor, SPICe Fellow, University of Glasgow, published a SPICe Blog to share interim findings and reflections about how lived experience is used in the Scottish Parliament. [Where does lived experience sit in the work of the Parliament?](#)

In July 2025, Dr Katherine Dow, SPICe Academic Fellow, published a SPICe Blog to highlight how climate change relates to health and mental wellbeing. [Climate change and health: what are the co-benefits of climate action?](#) Dr Dow has also published a SPICe Briefing on the [Links Between Climate Change and Health in Scotland](#).

Dr David Meir, SPICe Academic Fellow, University of the West of Scotland, and Dr David Scott, SPICe Academic Fellow, University of Abertay, published a SPICe Blog highlighting some of the key barriers to physical activity in Scotland. [Sport and Physical Activity: What is preventing participation?](#) The authors also published a SPICe Briefing [Getting the inactive active: Barriers to physical activity and potential policy solutions](#) and contributed to a SPICe Breakfast Seminar on this topic.

Dr Dan Fisher, SPICe Academic Fellow, University of Glasgow, published a SPICe Briefing examining the collaboration and communication that took place between the Government of the United Kingdom, the Scottish Government, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) and Local Authorities in the implementation of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and the Scottish Super Sponsor Scheme. [A review of inter-governmental cooperation and communication during Ukraine resettlement efforts in Scotland](#).

In September Dr Claire Perrier, SPICe Academic Fellow, University of Edinburgh, produced two SPICe Blogs to give an overview of recent developments in food policy ahead of the Scottish Parliament scrutiny of the first National Good Food Nation Plan: [Recent developments in food policy across the UK](#) and [Next steps towards a Good Food Nation – do we have the right plan?](#)

Ben Adam, SPICe UKRI Intern, and Dr Marion Rutherford, Queen Margaret University contributed to a Scottish Parliament Breakfast Seminar on Neurodevelopment Pathways and Waiting Times in Scotland.

We published a SPICe Briefing [Digital assets in Scots law](#) written by SPICe Academic Fellows, Dr Alisdair MacPherson and Professor Burcu Yüksel Ripley, University of Aberdeen.

We worked with Scottish Policy & Research Exchange (SPRE) and the Scottish Government's Office of the Chief Researcher to develop and deliver a workshop on Policy Engagement Essentials. The workshop was designed to provide essential context and understanding on how, when, and why to engage the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament with research evidence and expertise.

In September the Scottish Parliament published its third [Area of Research Interest \(ARI\)](#) – focusing on industrial decarbonisation ahead of parliamentary scrutiny of the draft Climate Change Plan.

## **October – December 2025**

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Dr Clementine Hill O'Connor, SPICe Academic Fellow, University of Glasgow, produced a SPICe guest blog to summarise research findings from work exploring the ways that lived experience is understood as a form of evidence and how it features in the work of the Scottish Parliament: [Strengthening the use of lived experience in the Scottish Parliament](#). Dr O'Connor also co-authored a SPICe Briefings [The Role of Lived Experience in the Scottish Parliament](#) and [Lived experience in the Scottish Parliament: three case studies](#).

Dr Elizabeth Lawson, SPICe Academic Fellow, University of Newcastle, produced several SPICe guest blogs on legislating for water resilience: [Key challenges facing Scotland's water industry](#), [Why Scotland's water laws need an upgrade](#) and [How can we ensure water services for all of Scotland?](#). Dr Lawson also co-authored a SPICe Briefing [Scotland's water industry: overview of regulation and key challenges](#). and contributed to a Scottish Parliament Breakfast Seminar on Scotland's water resources in a changing climate alongside Professor Sarah Hendry, University of Dundee, and Professor William Sloan, University of Glasgow.

Professor Jill Robbie, University of Glasgow, Dr Elizabeth Lawson, University of Newcastle and Dr Luis F. Yanes, University of Edinburgh, co-authored a guest blog [Should there be a human right to water in Scotland?](#)

Dr Dan Fisher, SPICe Academic Fellow, University of Glasgow, contributed to a Scottish Parliament Breakfast Seminar on Scotland's approach to the integration of displaced people from Ukraine.

In November 2025, we brought together parliamentary staff and academic experts to connect research and policy to support climate change scrutiny. With the support of [Scotland Beyond Net Zero](#) and the University of Edinburgh, the Scottish Parliament welcomed 45 academics from universities across Scotland for a workshop designed to support parliamentary scrutiny of the draft Climate Change Plan (CCP).

Dr Vera Eory, SRUC, and Professor Roxane Andersen, University of the Highlands and Islands presented at a SPICe Breakfast Seminar about agriculture and land use in relation to the Climate Change Plan

In December, we issued a call around the Scottish Parliament Academic Network to identify academic expertise to support the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee in its inquiry into the broadcasting market in Scotland.

In the autumn the Scottish Parliament produced a [series of short video clips](#) that provide some reflections about academic engagement with the Scottish Parliament. The clips include academics sharing their experience of engaging with the Scottish Parliament and a clerk highlighting the benefits to the Parliament of working with the academic community.

## **January – March 2026**

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In January 2026, Dr Joy Edwards-Hicks, University of Edinburgh, Dr William Cawthorn, University of Edinburgh, and Professor Alexandra Johnstone, The Rowett Institute, University of Aberdeen, presented at a SPICe Breakfast Seminar about promoting healthy ageing in Scotland.

From January-March 2026, Ota Dvorak, University of Edinburgh, undertook a UKRI Policy Internship in SPICe. He published a [SPICe briefing looking at preventative spending in Scotland](#).

In February 2026 Professor Sajjad Hussain and Dr Dely Lazarte Elliot, SPICe Academic Fellows, University of Glasgow published a SPICe Briefing [The impact of tightening finances on Scotland's universities](#). This was accompanied by a guest SPICe blog in March 2026 [The impact of financial challenges facing Scotland's universities](#).

Dr Emma Stewart, SPICe Academic Fellow, University of Glasgow published a SPICe Briefing about [The impact of cash transfers in the first 1000 days on child health outcomes and health inequalities: an evidence review](#).

We published our fourth ARI. The ARI sought to identify academics with expertise on public administration to enable us to build our understanding of the expertise available to draw on in this topic to support future parliamentary scrutiny.

Dr Lila Skountridaki, Senior Lecturer in Organisation Studies, The University of Edinburgh Business School (UEBS), and Lynn Houmdi, Senior Manager, Learning and Leadership, The Challenges Group, completed commissioned research – a literature review of international practices of job share for elected Members.

In February 2026, we held our SPAN annual network meeting bringing together 30 colleagues from the SPAN network in knowledge exchange focused roles. With a focus on discussing the parliamentary schedule for the forthcoming year and context for the next parliamentary session we explored opportunities for academic engagement in the year ahead and how SPICe can best support engagement.

We delivered a further workshop with Scottish Policy & Research Exchange (SPRE) and the Scottish Government's Office of the Chief Researcher on Policy Engagement Essentials.

Dr Kirsten Jenkins, University of Edinburgh and adviser on climate change and net zero targets to the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee, published a SPICe blog [Draft Climate Change Plan: key themes from scrutiny](#).

Dr Lewis Forsyth, SPICe Academic Fellow, University of Glasgow, published a SPICe Briefing [Assessing the council tax against the principles of "good" tax policymaking](#).

We published a SPICe guest blog written by SPICe Academic Fellow, Dr Claire Perier, University of Edinburgh [Good Food Nation: we have a plan, but does it have any teeth?](#)

## Fellows appointed in 2025

Fellow	Project scope
<b>Dr Claire Perier</b> , University of Edinburgh	Good food nation: options for innovative scrutiny, collaboration, and policy coherence
<b>Dr Coree Brown Swan</b> , University of Stirling	Devolution and the UK Internal Market Act
<b>Dr Eleanor Kirk</b> , University of Glasgow	Employment advice in Scotland: need, provision and distinctive models
<b>Dr Emma Stewart</b> , University of Glasgow	Impact of cash and in-kind transfers on child health and health inequalities
<b>Dr Francisco Perez-Reche</b> , University of Aberdeen	Extracting and summarising content from NHS Board reports using artificial intelligence
<b>Dr Lewis Forsyth</b> , University of Glasgow	Council tax and the Scottish Approach to Taxation
<b>Dr Dely Elliot and Professor Sajjad Hussain</b> , University of Glasgow	Impact of job cuts on the Scottish university sector
<b>Dr Alisdair Macpherson and Professor Burcu Yüksel Ripley</b> , University of Aberdeen	Digital Assets in Scots Law
<b>Dr Mustapha Douch</b> , University of Edinburgh	Using data to identify legal aid hotspots and gaps across Scotland

## Breakfast seminar speakers from academia – January 2025 to March 2026

Seminars are designed to enable MSPs, their staff and parliament staff access to external expertise, including academics, to improve parliamentary scrutiny by developing understanding and awareness of issues and encouraging engagement and debate among parliamentarians. SPICe seminars are held under the Chatham House Rule to create a trusted environment for open discussion of policy issues.

Speaker	Policy topic
<b>Dr Tom Caygill</b> Nottingham Trent University	Post-legislative scrutiny in the Scottish Parliament
<b>Professor Luke March and Professor Peter Jackson</b> University of Edinburgh and University of Glasgow	The international response to Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine
<b>Professor Andrew Sweetman and Professor James Harrison</b> Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS) and University of Edinburgh	Dark Oxygen' Discovery: Implications for Marine Science, the Origins of Life and Deep Seabed Mining
<b>Dr Katie Dow and Dr Claire Niedzwiedz</b> SPICe Academic Fellow and University of Glasgow	Links between Health, Social Care and Climate Change
<b>Ben Adam and Dr Marion Rutherford</b> SPICe UKRI Intern and Queen Margaret University	Neurodevelopmental Pathways and Waiting Times in Scotland
<b>Dr David Meir and Dr David Scott</b> University of the West of Scotland and Abertay University	Barriers to Physical Activity
<b>Dr Elizabeth Lawson, Professor Sarah Hendry and Professor William Sloan</b> University of Newcastle, University of Dundee and University of Glasgow	Water, Water Everywhere? Scotland's Water Resources in a Changing Climate
<b>Dr Dan Fisher</b> University of Glasgow	Scotland's approach to the integration of displaced people from Ukraine
<b>Dr Vera Eory and Professor Roxane Anderson</b> SRUC and University of the Highlands	Climate Change Plan: agriculture and land use
<b>Dr Joy Edwards-Hicks, Dr William Cawthorn and Professor Alexandra Johnstone</b> University of Edinburgh and University of Aberdeen	Promoting Healthy Ageing in Scotland