Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee

6th Report, 2014 (Session 4)

Annual Report 2013-14

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Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee

Remit and membership

Remit:

To consider and report on agriculture, fisheries, rural development, climate change, the environment and other matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs & the Environment.

Membership:

Jayne Baxter (until 31 October 2013)
Claudia Beamish
Graeme Dey (Deputy Convener)
Nigel Don
Alex Fergusson
Rob Gibson (Convener)
Cara Hilton (from 31 October 2013)
Jim Hume
Richard Lyle (until 3 April 2014)
Angus MacDonald
Dave Thompson (from 3 April 2014)

Committee Clerking Team:

Clerk to the Committee
Lynn Tullis

Senior Assistant Clerk
Nick Hawthorne

Assistant Clerk
Alison Wilson

Committee Assistant
Ross Fairbairn
The Committee reports to the Parliament as follows—

Introduction

1. This report covers the work of the Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment (RACCE) Committee during the parliamentary year from 11 May 2013 to 10 May 2014.

Legislation

_Crofting (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill_

2. The Crofting (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill was introduced by the Scottish Government on 10 May 2013 and was subsequently referred to the RACCE Committee for scrutiny at Stages 1 and 2.

3. The Committee issued a call for views and took evidence from stakeholders on 15 May and from the Minister for Environment and Climate Change on 22 May 2013.

4. The Committee published its Stage 1 Report on 31 May 2013 and the Bill passed Stage 1 on 6 June 2013. The Committee then considered the Bill at Stage 2 on 12 June 2013 with Parliament passing the Bill at Stage 3 on 25 June 2013. The Bill received Royal Assent on 31 July 2013.

_Regulatory Reform (Scotland) Bill_

5. The Regulatory Reform (Scotland) Bill was introduced in the Parliament on 27 March 2013 and was subsequently referred to the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee as the lead committee for Stage 1 scrutiny by the Parliamentary Bureau on 16 April 2013. RACCE was designated as secondary committee and took evidence at Stage 1 on part 2 of the Bill relating to environmental regulation and the elements of part 1 which related to its remit at Stage 1.

6. The Committee issued a call for views and took evidence at its meetings on 22 and 29 May from stakeholders and on 5 June from the Minister. The Committee published its report on 28 June 2013.
7. The Bill was debated at Stage 1 on 12 November 2013, with Members of the Committee taking part, and the Bill was passed at Stage 3 on 16 January 2014.

**Draft Agricultural Holdings (Scotland) Act 2003 Remedial Order**

8. The proposed draft Agricultural Holdings (Scotland) Act 2003 Remedial Order 2014 (SG 2013/261) (which responded to a Supreme Court judgement that provisions in the 2003 Act were not compatible with the European Convention on Human Rights) was laid in the Parliament, by the Scottish Government, on Friday 22 November 2013, along with an accompanying Statement of Reasons.

9. The Committee took evidence on the proposed draft order from Scottish Government officials at its meeting on 4 December 2013 and then from stakeholders and the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment on 18 December 2013 and 15 January 2014 respectively. A subsequent final draft order was laid on 25 February 2014.

10. The Committee published its report on the proposed draft order on 7 February 2014, and then published its report on the final draft order, recommending that the Parliament approve the order, on 20 March 2014.

**Draft Budget 2014-15**

11. The Scottish Government's Draft Budget 2014-15 was laid in the Parliament on 11 September 2013. The Committee issued a call for views and took evidence at its meetings on 24 and 31 October 2013 from the Minister for Environment and Climate Change and the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment respectively.

12. The Committee asked all other relevant committees to include in their reports an assessment of how the budget in their portfolio areas had taken account of climate change issues. This was part of an on-going initiative to encourage engagement on climate change issues across other relevant committees. Whilst some committees engaged very productively, the Committee was disappointed by the lack of engagement by some other committees and looks forward to improved collaborative working in the future.

13. The Committee’s own report, which was included in the Finance Committee’s report, was published on 9 December 2013.

**Subordinate legislation**

14. Over the course of the year the Committee scrutinised—

- 2 Scottish Statutory Instruments (SSIs) subject to the affirmative procedure;
- 33 SSIs subject to the negative procedure; and
- 1 piece of guidance subject to approval.
Inquiries/evidence sessions/other work

European issues
15. On 20 June 2013, the Committee agreed and monitored its European priorities during this year, and also held an evidence session with Janez Potočnik, European Commissioner for the Environment on 20 June 2013.

16. On 13 March 2014, the Committee hosted an event with Michael Scannell, Director of the Food and Veterinary Office in the European Commission on measures to strengthen the enforcement of health and safety standards for the whole agri-food chain to provide a modernised and simplified risk based approach to the protection of health and the operation of the food chain. The European and External Relations and Health and Sport Committees were also invited to the event.

Draft Third National Planning Framework (NPF3)
17. The draft NPF3 was laid in the Parliament on 14 January 2014 and was scrutinised by four Parliamentary committees (RACCE; Local Government and Regeneration; Economy, Energy and Transport; and Infrastructure and Capital Investment) which considered aspects of the document relevant to their remits.

18. The Committee took evidence from stakeholders at its meetings on January 29 and February 5, and from the Minister on 19 February 2014, and published its report on 14 March 2014.

The Scottish Government’s implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Scotland Rural Development Programme 2014-20
19. The Committee took evidence on the implementation of the newly reformed CAP in Scotland from stakeholders at its meetings on February 26 and March 5; from the Cabinet Secretary on 26 March; and from the UK Secretary of State, Owen Paterson MP, on 23 April 2014.


Deer management
21. The Committee scrutinised the issue of deer management in Scotland and heard evidence from stakeholders on 13 and 20 November 2013.

22. On 5 February 2014, the Committee published its letter to the Scottish Government summarising its views and setting out its recommendations on the future of deer management.

The Scottish Government’s draft Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme and behaviour change
23. The Committee scrutinised two separate pieces of work by the Scottish Government in relation to climate change. The first was the Low Carbon Scotland: A Behaviours Framework (the Framework) which was published to support the Scottish Government’s Low Carbon Scotland: Meeting our Emissions Reduction Targets 2013-2027 - The Draft Second Report on Proposals and Policies
document (RPP2). The second was the Scottish Government’s draft Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme.

24. The Committee held a debate in the Chamber on 14 January 2014 on the Draft Climate Change Adaptation Programme. The Committee had previously written to the Minister on 2 December 2013 after considering evidence from sessions with the Minister on 6 November and with stakeholders on 9 and 30 October.

Other evidence sessions/inquiries/reports
25. The Committee also took evidence on the following issues—

- Biodiversity;
- Wildlife crime;
- Resource use and a circular economy;
- Marine issues;
- Agricultural holdings;
- Community transport;
- Land reform
- The Crown Estate;
- Raasay sporting rights lease;
- Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee reviews of EU rules, and the legislation process; and
- Aquaculture and fisheries issues.

Petitions
26. The Committee considered five petitions over the course of the Parliamentary year—

- PE1336 on the protection of wild salmon and sea trout stocks from inappropriate commercial fish farm activities – closed 12 June 2013;
- PE1386 on the establishment of further static gear only inshore fisheries – closed 11 September 2013;
- PE1450 on environmental and genetic impact on natural stocks of Sea and Brown Trout by stocking rivers with farmed Brown Trout and hatchery reared Atlantic Salmon – closed 11 September 2013;
- PE1441 on flood insurance problems – closed 30 October 2013; and
- PE1490 on the control of wild goose numbers – subject to ongoing consideration.

Engagement and innovation
27. In August 2013, the Committee held its business planning event at the Glenlivet Estate, where Members met representatives from the Crown Estate, local farmers and local tourism businesses to discuss issues including working
with tenants; supporting local businesses; and community initiatives and partnerships.

28. The Committee also visited the University of Edinburgh’s ClimateXchange building and the Scotland’s Rural College GreenCow Project in January and February 2014 respectively. The Committee also hosted an event with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) with speakers from the IPCC and Met Office. The event was open to all MSPs, researchers and SPCB staff.

29. The Committee joined the Digital Parliament programme pilot which encourages use of digital over printed publications throughout the organisation. The Committee increased its engagement with the public through targeted press releases and added to that with video pieces on deer management and CAP.

30. The Committee has also continued to engage stakeholders interested in the Committee’s work via its Twitter account and has now attracted nearly 1000 followers.

**Equalities**

31. The Committee focussed on equalities issues (and disability in particular) as one of the themes of its budget scrutiny in 2013. The Committee wrote to the Equal Opportunities Committee, which focussed its own budget scrutiny on disability, asking it to specifically consider issues faced by people with disabilities in rural communities.

32. In its budget report, the Committee noted its concern that people’s use of the outdoors is declining, and that only 64% of people with disabilities are currently accessing the outdoors, compared to 80% of non-disabled adults and welcomed current initiatives designed to improve the use of the outdoors by equalities groups. It also recommended that the Scottish Government encourages further projects and ensures that disabled groups are included in informing and developing any such initiatives.

**Meetings**

33. The Committee met 35 times during the Parliamentary year. Two meetings were held entirely in private and 22 meetings included items in private.

34. The majority of the items taken in private were to consider draft reports and the Committee’s work programme. All meetings were held in Edinburgh.
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