



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee

Wednesday 17 January 2018

Session 5



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RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE
2nd Meeting 2018, Session 5

CONVENER

*Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Gail Ross (Caithness, Sutherland and Ross) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con)

*John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green)

*Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con)

*Richard Lyle (Uddingston and Bellshill) (SNP)

Fulton MacGregor (Coatbridge and Chryston) (SNP)

*John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP)

*Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD)

*Colin Smyth (South Scotland) (Lab)

*Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)

*attended

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Steve Farrell

LOCATION

The Mary Fairfax Somerville Room (CR2)

Scottish Parliament

Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee

Wednesday 17 January 2018

[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:00]

Post-legislative Scrutiny

The Convener (Edward Mountain): Good morning and welcome to the second meeting in 2018 of the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee. I ask members of the committee and members of the public to ensure that their mobile phones are on silent. Apologies have been received from Fulton MacGregor, for whom no substitute is attending. We are joined in the public gallery by a delegation from Bahrain, which I welcome.

Under agenda item 1, the committee will consider its approach to post-legislative scrutiny. I remind members that the point of post-legislative scrutiny is to look back at areas that the committee has dealt with in the past to identify whether Government legislation that has been passed is working as intended. Members have a paper on the issue, which I invite comments on.

Mike Rumbles (North East Scotland) (LD): The paper suggests a number of bills that we could have a look at, but there is something that it is important for the public to appreciate. In session 1, I was a member of the Rural Affairs Committee, which saw through a number of bills that are not on the list of those that it is suggested that we consider. It is important to let people know that they are not on the list because those matters are now dealt with by a different committee.

The Convener: That is entirely right. Given the split in responsibilities between the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee and the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee, our interests are different from those of the original Rural Affairs Committee. That is an important point to make.

Stewart Stevenson (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): I am not quite sure how to deal with this—we might not have to—but one of the bills on the list in our paper is a bill that I was responsible for as a minister. It is important to draw the committee's attention to the fact that I might end up in the slightly odd position of appearing to review my own work. Therefore, if we select the bill concerned for consideration, we should jointly consider how my role should properly be played

out in that regard. I do not expect that we will select the bill in question, but you never know.

The Convener: We will not ask which bill that was. That is an important point.

John Mason (Glasgow Shettleston) (SNP): We now have the Public Audit and Post-legislative Scrutiny Committee, which we did not use to have. How is what legislation it scrutinises decided? I presume that it can scrutinise any legislation. How is it decided which stuff we and the other subject committees should scrutinise?

The Convener: Where the Public Audit and Post-legislative Scrutiny Committee has a role, we can approach it, if that is important as part of our scrutiny of the legislation concerned. However, I think that it is important that this committee takes a lead on the competencies that it deals with. That is how we would deal with that.

John Mason: Our paper contains a list of some of the bills that we could look at. I am not familiar with exactly what was in the different transport bills that were considered in sessions 1 and 2, so perhaps we and the public could get some guidance about that before we make a decision.

The Convener: Absolutely. When we take the list of suggestions out to consultation to find out which bills stakeholders would like us to look at, a brief summary of the contents of each of them will be provided.

Do members have any other questions?

John Finnie (Highlands and Islands) (Green): I would like to revisit the point that Mike Rumbles made. It is hugely important to get public involvement, so would it be worth while, as part of the consultation, outlining what the present committee's remit is?

The Convener: Yes. I think that that would be a useful introduction to what we are doing, and I am sure that the clerks will make that happen.

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Con): What criteria will be used to decide on who should be consulted? I suspect that, with some of the bills, there might have been areas of contention in which specific stakeholders had interests and on which they might have had a louder voice than others.

The Convener: As you know, when we issue calls for evidence, they go out to all the interested stakeholders who are involved in the work of the committee. When we ask people about the post-legislative scrutiny that they would like us to do, we will do the same—we will issue as wide a call for views as is possible. As we get closer to the time, I am sure that we will review the list, and if anyone thinks that we have missed out any stakeholders, we will be able to rectify that. In

fairness, we usually get pretty good responses to our calls for evidence.

The clerk has pointed out to me that information will be available on the website and that we will mention what we are doing on social media, in an effort to garner as much support as we can.

Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Con):

I have a simple question. We will consult widely with the general public. Will the decisions that we take about which bills to look at be dependent on the number of responses that we get back? Will we decide which ones to pick on the basis of how many people want particular bills to be looked at, or would that be too simplistic an approach?

The Convener: First, we must make sure that the responses fit the criteria for post-legislative scrutiny as laid down in the approach document. After that, it will be for the committee to decide where we can make the most impact. We will obviously be mindful of the responses that we receive. We can have that debate when we see what level of responses we get. We will have the chance to consider each of the responses, as we do following every call for evidence that we make.

I received more questions than I anticipated—thank you for keeping me on my toes.

Does the committee agree with the approach to post-legislative scrutiny that is outlined in our paper?

Members *indicated agreement.*

10:07

Meeting continued in private until 10:31.

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