Official Report
Aithisg Oifigeil

# Economy, Tourism and Energy Committee

# Comataidh na h-Eaconamaidh, Turasachd agus Cumhachd

**Tuesday 23 June 2026**

**Session 7**

The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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# Tuesday 23 June 2026

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**ECONOMY, TOURISM AND ENERGY COMMITTEE**
**1st Meeting 2026, Session 7**

**CONVENER**

*Duncan Massey (North East Scotland) (Reform)

**DEPUTY CONVENER**

*Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

*Gary Bouse (Falkirk West) (SNP)
*Kate Campbell (Edinburgh Eastern, Musselburgh and Tranent) (SNP)
*Martyn Day (Falkirk East and Linlithgow) (SNP)
*Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)
*Kristopher Leask (Highlands and Islands) (Green)

*attended

**THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:**

Stephen Imrie (Scottish Parliament Clerk)

**LOCATION**

The Mary Fairfax Somerville Room (CR2)

# Scottish Parliament

## Economy, Tourism and Energy Committee

*Tuesday 23 June 2026*

*[The Convener opened the meeting at 10:45]*

## Interests

**The Convener (Duncan Massey):** Good morning, and welcome to the first meeting in session 7 of the Economy, Tourism and Energy Committee.

We have one apology, which is from Kristopher Leask, who has had trouble with his transport. He is flying down from Orkney. There is a chance that he might join online, but that looks unlikely.

That also covers off members who might be attending remotely.

I am very excited about the committee. We have a tremendous remit, and we will be discussing a very broad spectrum of things. The economy touches on everything. There is momentum in the Parliament to start talking about growth and how we get it, so that will be an exciting issue to look at. We will talk about that a bit later, in relation to our remit.

Tourism is a key part of that economy and is important for every community in Scotland. Energy is also a key input. I am very excited to be looking at that in the committee and working with all the members. I look forward to working with everyone constructively and collegiately.

Agenda item 1 is the declaration of our registrable interests. I refer members to paper 1. I will start and then go around the table to ask each member in turn to put on record any registrable interests that are relevant to the work of the committee.

I have just finished employment as a senior economist in the oil and gas industry. That employment ended during May, but is still a registrable interest of mine. I am a councillor on Aberdeen City Council. I have a shareholding in a dormant limited company that was used for consulting.

I voluntarily declare that I am a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Scotland—ICAS. We may well see some evidence from it in the course of our work, so I wanted to mention that.

**Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab):** In line with my entry in the register of members' interests, I note that I am a company director and the sole shareholder of a company that has retail interests. It is a non-trading, holding company, which holds intellectual property for retail businesses. I am also a member of two trade unions—Community and the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers—and of the Federation of Small Businesses.

**Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con):** I welcome you to your role as convener, Duncan.

I am a shareholder in a hospitality business. You have asked us to share a little bit about our background—

**The Convener:** I think that we will do that under item 4 or 5.

**Rachael Hamilton:** That is everything, then.

**Gary Bouse (Falkirk West) (SNP):** My registrable interest that is relevant to the committee is that I am currently a councillor on Falkirk Council. I was housing convener for the past four years. For the first five years, I was resources portfolio holder. On 18 June, I finished up as commercial manager with a company that is part of the Rentokil Initial Group. Those are probably the most relevant interests to this committee.

**Martyn Day (Falkirk East and Linlithgow) (SNP):** I am going to sound really boring because I have got no registrable interests, but I will do my level best to make my contributions a bit more exciting.

**Kate Campbell (Edinburgh Eastern, Musselburgh and Tranent) (SNP):** I have had a number of previous roles as a board member for arm's-length external organisations for the City of Edinburgh Council, but none of those roles were remunerated. They were listed in my initial statement of interests. Although I have been given advice that they do not need to remain on the register of members' interests, I will leave them there as a voluntary gesture of transparency. I am still waiting for advice about whether my role in a limited liability partnership, Edinburgh Living, which was a joint venture between the council and the Scottish Futures Trust to deliver market and mid-market housing in Edinburgh, should remain on the register of members' interests; it is currently listed under voluntary. When the register is published, I will refer members to it and it will be clear where my interests sit.

**The Convener:** How do we deal with Kristopher Leask's declaration of interests?

**Stephen Imrie (Scottish Parliament Clerk):** If Mr Leask arrives when we are in public session, we will ask him to declare his interests. If he arrives when the committee is meeting in private, he can declare them then and we will record that in the

minutes. If he does not arrive at all, we will ask him to declare his interests at the first meeting after the recess in September.

## Deputy Convener

10:51

**The Convener:** Under the next item of business we will choose a deputy convener. I refer members to paper 2. The Parliament has agreed that the deputy convener will be a member of the Scottish Labour Party. Daniel Johnson MSP is the proposed deputy convener and I am happy to nominate him for the role.

*Daniel Johnson was chosen as deputy convener.*

**The Convener:** I congratulate Daniel Johnson on his new role and look forward to working with him.

**Daniel Johnson:** I hope that everyone was impressed with how slick that was.

I am pleased to serve on the committee again, as I did in the previous session of the Parliament when I was latterly, albeit briefly, committee convener. I am happy to share any insights from the prior committee's work, but it is up to members whether they choose to heed that or whether we choose to do our own thing in the new session. I look forward to our work.

# Steel Industry (Nationalisation) Bill

10:52

**The Convener:** The next item of business is on the timing of the legislative consent memorandum for the United Kingdom Government's Steel Industry (Nationalisation) Bill. I refer members to paper 3.

I will provide background on the timing, clarify the committee's position and explain to members why we could not consider the memorandum in committee and why the motion is going directly to the chamber. Last Wednesday, the issue of the referral of the memorandum was raised in the chamber. When it was first raised with me by the committee clerks, I took advice on the normal process for considering an LCM, which highlighted that it would not be possible for the committee to consider the LCM before recess.

Normally, an LCM is lodged by the Scottish Government and then referred to the committee. The committee considers the LCM during a formal meeting and decides whether to take advice and from whom. Once the committee has completed its work, a report is produced and debated in the chamber, with a conclusion from the committee on whether to recommend consent to the relevant provisions in the bill.

Last week, the Minister for Parliamentary Business made it clear that there would be no opportunity for the Scottish Parliament to consider granting legislative consent to the bill after the summer recess and that it had to be done before the recess, which meant that the first opportunity to discuss the LCM would be at today's meeting.

Ordinarily, for a bill such as this to receive appropriate scrutiny, we would have had representatives from companies, such as that operating the Dalzell plate mill in Motherwell, and, potentially, representatives from Community, which is the union that represents steelworkers in Scotland. We would have had to give them notice to appear, which is normally 24 hours. We would have wanted to hear directly from the Scottish Government, probably at the same meeting or, more usually, the next day. We would then have needed to produce a detailed report summarising all the evidence and our views, which we would have needed to agree at a subsequent meeting. That would then need to be published and debated in the chamber by all MSPs, where the decision would be taken.

Even with the best will in the world, it would have taken two or three further meetings to achieve all that. I was content for the LCM to be referred to the chamber, as I was advised that the timeline was simply not considered possible. Ultimately, I was resigned to that fact. It was simply the case that the timing of the bill at Westminster and our summer recess meant that there was not enough time to undertake the level of scrutiny that the committee would normally take. Therefore, the decision was taken to refer the motion directly to the chamber.

I agree with everyone that the committee's role is to effectively scrutinise these types of bills. I want to assure all members that, when future legislative consent memorandums come to my attention in the committee, we will discuss them as formal items of business and carry out scrutiny in the committee to the best of our ability.

That is the outline of the decision. I am happy to take questions on the matter.

**Daniel Johnson:** The decision as set out makes a lot of sense. However, it is important to put a couple of things on record. First, we do not always get that much notice about LCMs, and there are various reasons for that. It is important that the committee takes the opportunity to scrutinise LCMs, even if we do not have time to take as much evidence as we would want.

There is a difference between practice and the requirements of the standing orders. The standing orders do not prescribe precisely the nature of the evidence. Sometimes, it is worth being fleet of foot so that we can at least undertake scrutiny, even if it is not as full as we might like, given the time afforded to us by the timing of the LCM.

The other thing for the committee to note on this LCM in particular is that, when it comes to the economy, the way in which the Scotland Act 1998 is framed and understood by the Scottish Government means that there is a degree of overlap as to whether such matters are devolved or reserved. Therefore, there is a high likelihood that we will have further LCMs that may straddle that understanding. I hope that my language is sufficiently diplomatic, especially given that the issue clearly touches on matters such as the security of supply chains and national security.

Those are just points to note. As I say, I am content, and I understand the approach that has been taken. However, such things—not being provided with the notice that many of us would like—have a habit of flaring up.

**Rachael Hamilton:** I welcome your explanation, convener. I was disappointed that we did not have an opportunity as a group to specifically discuss the suspension of standing orders because that would have set a good precedent for the tone and future focus of the committee.

As a committee member, I would like us to commit to ensuring that we scrutinise LCMs in the

manner that we should—their parliamentary scrutiny should be much more robust than just holding the debate, which will happen very shortly. Even with the tight timetable, I feel that, because it relates to the steel industry, it is in the public interest that we have a good debate about the LCM.

I agree with Daniel Johnson that, in future, we could consider the timetable, expedite it and make it work. Stakeholders would have been willing to come in and give evidence so that we could be informed. As it is, we are not informed going into a debate in the chamber—it is not a subject that I know much about—and this committee needs to be informed. Convener, I ask that you stick to your commitment so that we practise fuller scrutiny.

11:00

**Kate Campbell:** I agree with what has been said. We should be providing scrutiny as far as possible. Rachael Hamilton made the point that we would have felt much more informed this afternoon if we had been able to take evidence and have a deeper discussion. I would like to see that happen in the future.

The other point is that, as Daniel Johnson said, we often do not get notice. Legislation does not happen overnight, so even if we have not been informed about legislative consent memorandums, are we looking at where they might come from? I am learning this process, but are we able to see where we might expect them so that we are perhaps a bit more prepared?

**The Convener:** Does anyone have a comment on whether we are able to identify United Kingdom legislation that comes through Westminster?

**Stephen Imrie:** Thank you, Ms Campbell. That was a very good point. Normally, we get a little bit more notice about legislative consent memorandums than we did this time. The first opportunity that we get to prepare is the publication of the King's speech, which was given recently. Colleagues in Government and the Parliament identify which of the bills that the UK Government is proposing to introduce might require legislative consent. Normally, we then get an indication from the office of the relevant minister, who writes to us to indicate which bills he or she expects will trigger the legislative consent process. All that information is then circulated to members.

This time, we were caught by a bill that was passing very quickly through Westminster and by our own summer recess, but normally we would get a lot more notification and the committee would be able to do the scrutiny that it expects to be able to do. Clerks and colleagues in the research service will help the committee to effectuate that scrutiny.

**The Convener:** Do you have anything to add, deputy convener?

**Daniel Johnson:** I agree with everything that Stephen Imrie said. The other element to consider is that aspects of legislation that have not been seen in advance are sometimes spotted as touching on devolved competence—or there is emergency legislation. It is almost as if there is an 80:20 rule. There are the LCMs that are expected, but there are others—although perhaps the figure is not as high as 20 per cent. This is not necessarily the first time that we have had an LCM without getting the notice that we might want. Such issues and concerns were raised at least two or three times in the previous parliamentary session.

**Martyn Day:** I am grateful, convener, for your explanation of the process. As a new member, this is the first time that I have had to look at the legislative consent process, so I put on the record that I think that you made the correct call at the beginning. We will have to be fleet of foot in order to deal with the circumstances as they arise.

I say this as a new member, but we might have been rabbits in the headlights looking at something with no timescale. Let us all hold our hands up and say that this is a learning process for us all, and I am grateful to be part of it. I look forward to getting stuck into these things over the coming period.

**Gary Bouse:** My point is similar to Martyn Day's point, but not entirely. I understand that it was in your gift to make the decision that you did, convener. I understand why you made that decision, and I am grateful for your explanation today. I also agree that we have to be fleet of foot in relation to such matters in future. It would have been incredible if we could have been fleet footed enough to have been able to get through the usual LCM process by the end of today, but I think that that might have been beyond our abilities.

I am also grateful for your commitment to ensure that we scrutinise things properly as they arise. I think that the situation has been handled as well as it could be, and I thank you again for your explanation.

**The Convener:** Thank you all for your comments. Before we move on, I advise members that we received a letter from the Scottish Government last night to advise us of its approach to the bill. It is now recommending consent to the bill, and, as we know, that will be dealt with in the chamber this afternoon.

**Rachael Hamilton:** The papers before us set out why the Government did not support the bill, but the letter that has come to us sets out that it now supports it. How can we speak in a debate if

we do not understand why the Government has changed its mind in the course of two days?

**The Convener:** That is a good point. The only thing that we can do is query the minister in the chamber this afternoon to try to gain an understanding of why the Government has changed its initial opinion. You make an excellent point about the fact that a last-minute change of opinion changes the debate somewhat.

**Rachael Hamilton:** I suggest that we write to the minister to ask about that, and say that we expect an answer before the debate this afternoon.

**The Convener:** Do members agree with that suggestion?

**Gary Bouse:** I thought that Tom Arthur set out the reasons for recommending consent in the letter that we received. It says that the bill

"falls within the legislative competence of the Parliament"

and that the Parliament should agree to give consent its provisions. The letter also says that the Government would consult us on the matter at a future date. Maybe I am reading it wrong, but I think that it sets out the reasons.

**Daniel Johnson:** I think that the letter sets out that the Government has changed its position; it does not really set out why it has done so. It will be useful to hear the minister set that out this afternoon. If no explanation is forthcoming, it might be useful to get a response in writing.

**Kate Campbell:** The letter says:

"Given a political commitment by UK Government has been made to consult with Scottish Ministers, should the Bill's powers extend into Scotland, the Scottish Government will therefore now be recommending consent to the Bill."

If we are going to write to the minister, it should be to ask for that sentence to be elaborated on.

**Rachael Hamilton:** I am still slightly perturbed by the point in paragraph 18 of our papers. It says:

"While this response acknowledged the compressed timelines being worked to",

the UK Government has not agreed to the request to enable ministers to consider whether the consent requirement applies. I therefore wonder how, since the Parliament dissolved after discussion of the matter, further discussions were able to take place. I would like to know what discussions took place and what the content of them was. I am not content to be told one minute by the business manager that there is no time to consider the LCM and that the UK Government did not consent to discussion with the Scottish Government on the specific devolved matters regarding the public interest in Scotland, and then to be told, on 22 June, that we are expected to roll over and accept that the UK Government has spoken to ministers. I do not think that the UK Government will have had time to do that. It has been dealing with elections and all sorts of things.

**The Convener:** That is for the ministers to answer.

**Daniel Johnson:** The Government raised a number of things in advance of this meeting. Although there is a broad explanation of the dialogue, some particular points arise. We will have an opportunity to debate the subject this afternoon, but if there are still questions after that, it may be that we will wish to write to the Government about them.

One issue that we encounter with LCMs is that, very often, the two Governments decide that they are happy, but there are still potential questions for Parliament, given its role in oversight and scrutiny. Maybe we should have a look at the answers that are forthcoming and then decide via an exchange of email whether further correspondence after this afternoon's debate would be in order. That is my suggestion.

**The Convener:** I am happy with that. We will have the debate this afternoon. I think that it is highly unlikely that we would get a response to any correspondence before then, but Rachael Hamilton make some excellent points about how the position has changed but we as parliamentarians have not had enough time to scrutinise that.

**Martyn Day:** I am sorry, convener. I am showing my ignorance here, but where does this afternoon's debate appear? I saw that the *Business Bulletin* did not include it explicitly, so I am slightly confused as to what the process in the chamber is.

**The Convener:** I believe that it was decided on just this morning, so there is a revised *Business Bulletin*.

**Martyn Day:** Ah—okay.

**The Convener:** Are there any more comments?

**Members:** No.

**The Convener:** Thank you.

## Decision on Taking Business in Private

11:11

**The Convener:** Agenda item 4 is a decision on taking business in private. Do we agree to take item 6 in private?

**Members** *indicated agreement*.

## Work Programme

11:12

**The Convener:** Agenda item 5 is consideration of our work programme. I ask members for some initial reflections and, again, I will go round the table. Please give a little introduction to yourselves and some of the areas that interest you. As we have said, we will have a more detailed chat afterwards.

I will give a quick introduction to myself and some of my interests. My background is in oil and gas. I started life as an engineer before moving into finance, becoming a chartered accountant and, latterly, working as an economist and analysing projects. That gives me a lot of interest in energy and the wider economy.

On the scope that I would like to see in our work programme, I think we have a great opportunity initially to review the current state of the economy, the tourism industry and the energy industry. I would like to see a lot of evidence from our colleagues in the Scottish Parliament information centre, but also from external experts, where we can, so that we can get a clear understanding of where we are right now. I think that we have opportunities to do deep dives into all the various industries that are prominent in Scotland, and also opportunities to look at some of the regional economies.

In the report by the session 6 committee, two areas really caught my attention and interest me: the future of Grangemouth and how we consider artificial intelligence in terms of growth. There are also areas such as skills development and lots of other areas where policies may have a strategic impact on the economy. Areas such as tax, planning and transport may or may not be covered by other committees, but they obviously have an impact on the economy.

That is my broad thinking at the moment. I am happy to go round the table and hear from everyone else, starting with Daniel Johnson.

11:15

**Daniel Johnson:** In terms of my background, there were two components to my career prior to entering the Parliament. I started my career working as a management consultant, primarily focusing on the financial services sector, which gave me an insight into that. For the eight years prior to entering the Parliament, I ran my family's retail business. That background gave me two distinct and quite interesting alternative views of the economy; both elements had a strong private sector focus.

Regarding the committee's focus, I think that the overarching view of committee members at the end of the previous session was that there had maybe been some missed opportunities and that there was an opportunity for the committee to look at more structural issues in the economy.

The technology point has already been raised. There was a frustration that, given the importance of artificial intelligence and other technologies and the changes that they bring, there had been insufficient focus on those areas by the committee.

There were some broad labour points—not just about skills but, given the ageing population, about thinking about the nature of the workforce and types of work.

There are some broad infrastructure points. I do not think that the Parliament necessarily focuses in the right ways on infrastructure, which is absolutely the connective tissue of the economy.

Likewise, we need to look at really important and stark points around security and resilience, particularly when we consider the economy. An overarching point is about how we are getting investment into the economy.

Finally, the big piece is energy in the round. The energy transition is upon us, and the world is changing how it supplies and generates energy. Scotland is absolutely at the fulcrum of that change with its heritage and strength in the oil and gas sector and its transition to renewables. The committee should think about how we interact with and discuss that issue, and we must ensure that we are led by the evidence.

**Rachael Hamilton:** I, too, welcome you as the deputy convener, Daniel. The experience that you bring from the previous committee will be invaluable, although we will be looking at slightly different subjects. I am sure that you will be able to share with us how the devolved nature of the economy relates to our responsibilities in Scotland.

I have had the privilege of sitting on quite a number of committees, including the Culture, Tourism, Europe and External Affairs Committee; the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee; the Public Petitions Committee; the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee; the Social Justice and Social Security Committee; the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee; the Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee; and the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee.

I have experience of running a hospitality business, which I helped my husband with, although it was a long time ago now. It was a very valuable part of my life and my learning experience. There is nothing more important than knowing how to run a business, look after people in the business and invest in skills. I know that the previous committee did a lot of work in that area.

Before that, I was an agronomist, which is a crop specialist. I worked in the field of agricultural science, having graduated from an agricultural university. The rural economy is very close to my heart. Obviously, I represent a constituency that is distinctly rural.

From being at the Royal Highland Show on Friday, I know that Scottish Land & Estates and NFU Scotland are emphasising the importance of the spend in the rural economy—for every £1 that is spent, you get £1.51 back. I hope that the committee will look at the rural economy. [*Interruption*.] I see that Kristopher Leask has joined us. Is that Kristopher?

**The Convener:** Yes.

**Rachael Hamilton:** Hello, Kristopher.

I agree with the convener that we should be looking at the future of Grangemouth, as well as artificial intelligence. Data centres have the potential to be massive economic drivers, so they are a huge opportunity, but they carry risks as well. Scotland has the conditions to attract data centres, which would give the UK resilience, as we would not have to import our iCloud space. They can deliver benefits for communities, and the committee has the opportunity to look at how they are brought into being. At the moment, they are quite controversial.

I noted with interest that the previous committee thought that the current format of the business in Parliament conference is past its sell-by date and does not represent good value for money. We should include that in our work programme in the summer, because any changes that we recommend making will involve a lot of organising.

**The Convener:** Good morning, Kristopher. Thank you for making it to the meeting. I will bring you in at the end.

**Gary Bouse:** I, too, welcome Daniel Johnson to his role as deputy convener.

How does my background assist the work of the committee? For the past 16 years, I have been a commercial manager of a Scottish business that has a turnover of about £5 million, with 10 surveyors and a number of technicians working on the front line. It is a reasonably profitable company—it is always nice to have one of them.

I have always believed in getting things done. I appreciate that we are here to scrutinise and debate, but if we do not come to conclusions, that scrutiny and debate does not help us. Therefore, I will always be driving for us to get to an outcome, to make sure that we are doing something positive.

I agree that AI data centres are probably one of the first things that we should look at, because there are two sides to them: there is the potential for benefits and investment that could come with them, but there is also the impact that they could have on communities. We have to look at both aspects, because you cannot have one without the other.

I was a councillor for nine years, and I was the resources portfolio holder. That is a thing that you never tell anybody—especially coming up to an election, you never say that you do the budget—and it was not a big vote winner, but it was a very important role. When I started in that position, Falkirk Council's revenue budget was about £360 million, and it was not a bad business to be looking after over that period.

During the past four years, I have also been housing convener. One of the first things that I was asked in that role was, what is the most important thing that we can do? I said that the most important thing is to spend the capital money on building houses, upgrading houses and making houses warmer, which, hopefully, helps to deal with homelessness. The council officers thought that that was an interesting position, and that might give you an idea of my approach. If we can look at doing things, we should look to make things better.

**Martyn Day:** I have had 25 years of elected experience in different places—16 on a council and nine at Westminster. Before that, I was in banking, so I have quite literally worked in the two most despised professions in the world. I think that the experience and knowledge that I gained in those roles will be useful here.

I am delighted with what I have heard from the previous speakers. It will not come as a surprise to members that I think that Grangemouth needs to be a big focus for our committee. I also agree that we need to consider AI data centres and energy, so I think that we are all pretty much on the same page.

When I looked through some of the legacy reports, I noticed that there were references to the need for greater joined-up working across committees, and that approach will be critically important to the AI data centre issue, because I think that three committees have a strong interest in it. Although that is beneficial, we do not want to all come to different conclusions. We need to get a broad consensus on the issue in Parliament.

**Kate Campbell:** I have been a councillor in Edinburgh for the past nine years, although I resigned a couple of weeks ago. Many of my interests stem from when I was the housing and economy convener. I am interested in how we can grow the economy so that it works for our society. I am also interested in fair work and in how we ensure that the Government's support for industry, sectors and businesses goes to the businesses that are giving back the most to society through well-paid jobs, good career progression and providing opportunities for people. We have to look at the benefits that our economy gives to society.

I would be very interested in the committee looking at the gig economy, which I did at the City of Edinburgh Council. With the Workers Observatory, we looked at working conditions for people in the gig economy and the challenges that they face, including those around safety.

Like others, I think that AI is huge and there are massive opportunities for us, but there are big questions about energy. I am also concerned about youth employment. A couple of months ago, I was on "Question Time". A young woman in the audience became very annoyed when politicians were talking about young people needing skills. She said that young people do not need skills—they have skills, but they need jobs. Many highly skilled young people who are coming out of university are not able to get jobs, so we need to look at how we match young people to the work and ensure that there are jobs for them.

I am concerned that AI is taking space from young people when they first leave university. A lot of work that people would normally do as their first or graduate job is being done by AI. We need to work out how we bridge the gap and ensure that we are not losing lots of jobs for young people.

Tourism is important for employment, but there are big challenges. For example, in Edinburgh, we can look at the loss of housing and how tourism has fed into the pressure on housing. The issue is how we get the balance right with the businesses and sectors that are creating jobs so that they do not extract too much from other sections of our society.

There are three parts to energy. There is the jobs aspect, which is really important; there is the cost, not just for homes but for businesses—it is one of the biggest challenges for businesses at the moment; and there is a climate aspect. The committee will have to have an interesting discussion about that. I am glad to hear terms such as "evidence led". I want to ensure that we understand the reality of the situation and that we look at it as honestly as we can. The just transition and how we create jobs in renewables will be a huge focus for the committee.

**The Convener:** Kristopher, thanks very much for making it to the meeting. I explained your planes, trains and automobiles journey this morning. To start, you will have to declare any interests from your entry in the register of members' interests.

**Kristopher Leask (Highlands and Islands) (Green):** My apologies to the convener and committee members for the disruption. In future, if there is disruption—I am afraid that it will be a case of when and not if—I will join the meeting online, so that I do not interrupt the committee's work and so that I can be present for the full meeting. As this is our first meeting, and particularly given the agenda, I felt that it was important to be here in person to see you all.

I will begin by declaring my interests. I am a member of Orkney Islands Council and have been for the past four years. For the past two years, I have been chair of our enterprise and infrastructure committee. My position ceased a month ago. That is the end of my registered interests, but it segues nicely into my background.

I was responsible for the council's work on local economic development and city region growth deals. Alongside the council leader, I sat on the Highlands and Islands regional economic partnership and had oversight of our work on energy, tourism and harbours. That gives you a flavour of my experience.

I have a background in community energy and some background in marine energy, both of which are areas that I want the committee to look into.

11:30

There are a few important areas that the committee needs to grapple with over the next five years. I agree with many points that members have made—on the rural economy, for example. In particular, delivering capital is becoming increasingly challenging in rural and island contexts. The committee could do a good piece of work on understanding the growing inequity in local economic development in our island and rural communities versus, perhaps, our more urban or exurban communities.

On the energy front, the committee has a substantive piece of work to do on the repowering of onshore wind. We are coming into the next generation of that; the first generation of mass onshore wind is going to be repowered. There are challenges and opportunities in that, and that is a particularly meaty issue for the committee to look into.

More broadly, I am interested in the expansion of community energy, as well as marine energy and our wave and tidal sectors. Heat networks and the return of the heat in buildings bill will be an inevitable focus of the committee's work, which is welcome.

On the tourism side, I have experience and a great interest in regenerative tourism and how we can ensure that our tourism sector supports wider community infrastructure and wellbeing by interacting well with communities rather than being an extractive force in their lives. VisitScotland's local versus national focus and the work that it is doing, working alongside communities, will be a substantive piece of inquiry work for the committee.

It might also be worth reflecting on the context in which I come to the committee, because I come from a council in Orkney where I am the only party-political councillor—it is me and 20 independents—so, to be frank, for me, the novelty of this place is almost the party-political groups. Chairing the council's development and infrastructure committee over the past two years has involved working, on an issue-by-issue basis, with members with very differing viewpoints and a range of views. I look forward to continuing in that collaborative spirit. My background means that I am well equipped to do that and to work together with folks and with you, convener.

**The Convener:** Thank you, members. That was an excellent range of opinions and backgrounds, which will help the committee as we grapple with the issues in our remit.

As previously agreed, we will now move into private session to discuss matters in more detail. That was an excellent opening discussion.

11:32

*Meeting continued in private until 12:06.*

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