

# **TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE**

Tuesday 27 May 2008

Session 3

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## TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE

### 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2008, Session 3

#### CONVENER

\*Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)

#### DEPUTY CONVENER

\*Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab)

#### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

\*Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)  
\*Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)  
\*Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con)  
Alison McInnes (North East Scotland) (LD)  
\*Shirley-Anne Somerville (Lothians) (SNP)  
\*David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

#### COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTES

Alasdair Allan (Western Isles) (SNP)  
Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab)  
Gavin Brown (Lothians) (Con)  
Tavish Scott (Shetland) (LD)

\*attended

#### CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Steve Farrell

#### SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Alastair Macfie

#### ASSISTANT CLERK

Clare O'Neill

#### LOCATION

Committee Room 1



## Scottish Parliament

### Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee

*Tuesday 27 May 2008*

[THE CONVENER *opened the meeting at 14:01*]

### Budget Adviser

**The Convener (Patrick Harvie):** Good afternoon and welcome to the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting in 2008 of the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee. I apologise for starting a minute or two late. I have remembered to switch off my mobile phone—I remind everyone else to switch off theirs. We have apologies from Alison McInnes.

The first item on the agenda relates to the possible appointment of an adviser for the 2009-10 budget process. Members will have had a chance to have a look at the paper that explores the options.

**Cathy Peattie (Falkirk East) (Lab):** In a sense, the choice of adviser will depend on whether we are going to concentrate on climate change or transport issues. It might be next to impossible, but it would be helpful to have an adviser on each for our scrutiny of the budget because the climate change bill is coming up, and because of the inquiry we are going to have into trains and so on. I understand that that might be difficult, in which case I should say that I was very happy with our adviser on transport from last year. He was helpful, and I would be happy to endorse asking him again.

**Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con):** I agree with everything that Cathy Peattie said. However, when we spoke about this last year we realised that climate change issues would be more significant in the session's second year than in the first. As a consequence, although I agree that we got a great advantage from the adviser that we had last year because he was very good and I would not hesitate to reappoint him, I still think that we need someone whose speciality is climate change issues. If it comes to making a decision one way or the other, climate change issues should be our number 1 priority this year.

**The Convener:** I should point out that we will have the chance to consider specific candidates at a future meeting once we have made that decision.

We expect to focus more strongly on climate change because of the forthcoming bill and other work that is coming through. The transport inquiry

that we are considering doing after the summer recess will not necessarily relate specifically to the budget process. However, our take on the budget in the year of the climate change bill should have a strong focus on climate change.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville (Lothians) (SNP):** I also agree with Cathy Peattie. We need to seriously consider the climate change aspects of the budget, particularly with the climate change bill coming up and the number of changes in how the Government will consider the issue. It is also important to have a more in-depth discussion about how what we do relates to how the other subject committees consider climate change issues. It is almost impossible for one committee to consider the climate change aspects of every other committee's interests, but we need to ensure that those aspects do not slip through the net by our assuming that the other committees are doing it when they are assuming that we are doing it. I agree that we need to have an adviser who has a climate change remit.

However, I also agree with Cathy Peattie that it would be a shame if the other part of our remit were to be lost completely. That is perhaps a difficulty of having a remit that has two distinct parts. I would be keen for us to have an adviser on both areas, but if that is not possible, my preference would be for someone who has expertise on climate change.

**The Convener:** That sounds like a consensus view. My opinion is that if we are to prioritise climate change, we should not necessarily be surprised if we cannot combine expertise in both subject areas to the extent that we might wish.

We are being asked to consider whether to appoint an adviser. I take it that the answer to that is yes.

**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** We will ask the clerks to examine the specification, bearing in mind our desire to prioritise climate change, and to consider whether it needs to be changed in any way. It can be brought back to the committee at a future date. When are we likely to consider the issue again?

**Steve Farrell (Clerk):** Within the next few weeks.

## Petitions

### Railway Infrastructure and Services (Inverness, Thurso and Wick) (PE894)

14:05

**The Convener:** Item 2 on the agenda is consideration of petitions PE894 and PE1035. We have a paper on PE894, which was submitted by the Association of Caithness Community Councils. The petition—a copy of which has been provided for members—calls on the Scottish Parliament to consider investment in infrastructure, rolling stock and timetabling as part of a strategic root-and-branch review of the provision of rail services between Inverness, Thurso and Wick.

We have received a response from the Scottish Government, in which we are asked whether we would like to receive an informal briefing from officials on the Scottish transport appraisal guidance. We can also consider any other action that we wish to take. I invite comments on the petition or on the Government's response.

**Rob Gibson (Highlands and Islands) (SNP):** I declare an interest as a member of the Dornoch link action group.

I question the substance on which the Government's advice is based. Paragraph 5 of the committee's paper states:

"The Committee agreed to write again to the Minister to raise concerns regarding the methodology used to calculate the benefit to cost ratio for a new rail link. Members also questioned whether the full social and socioeconomic benefits of the Dornoch rail link project to the north of Scotland had been included in the calculation of the project's benefit to cost ratio."

I have some freedom of information material that is relevant, which I would like members to have a look at. It will be helpful to pass round copies of it so that I can refer to particular paragraphs.

Members will receive a copy of three e-mails, which start at the bottom of the second page and continue up the page from there. They were all written on 9 January 2006. Initially, a request was made to find out what the remits of the Halcrow and Scott Wilson studies were. That e-mail is in Arial type and was sent from a parliamentary e-mail account—the names have been blocked out. The next one is in Roman type and starts, "Gents". Discussions were held over Christmas 1995 about the proposed rail link. Near the top of "Page 2 of 3", the author of the e-mail, who I think was the chairman of the Highlands and Islands strategic transport partnership, says:

"What this all boils down to is that we don't have any vaguely authoritative information (that I'm aware of) on the likely costs with which to comment or respond to this continued campaign."

As you'll know we, as a steering group, decided that Scott Wilson shouldn't look at the Dornoch Costs under Room for Growth. This was a pragmatic decision, based on common sense, and almost certainly the correct one. However when we release the study briefs to Mr Gibson's office (as we'll have to) and they realise that the Dornoch issue was not specifically ruled out there, then we'll need to fall back on the minute of the steering group meeting and explain our thinking."

The e-mail goes on, and the final paragraph says that there are "dedicated campaigners" and that

"The bottom-line is that this issue isn't going to go away".

What worries me is that there is no sense of any detailed cost benefit analysis, although one paragraph suggests who could be asked to do such an analysis.

If members look at page 1, they will see an e-mail from a

"Rail Policy & Projects Officer  
Area 2-G Dockside  
Scottish Executive".

The first sentence is:

"Identifying the costs is only half the issue."

A section of the next sentence has been blocked out, but it ends:

"whatever figure you come up with, as long as they don't have to quantify the benefits."

I am extremely concerned. The information in these e-mails suggests to me that there has been agreement in the steering group involving Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Highlands and Islands transport partnership, and agreement among civil servants in the Scottish Executive, that they would not consider the petitioners' proposal. The e-mails probably reveal that no detailed analysis of the benefits was done. It therefore seems to me that the minister—whose answers we are now considering—may well have received information that is far from accurate. In other words, he is not misleading us but has been misinformed in respect of the detail that would be required in considering a major transport project.

I ask that we discuss this material with the minister, and ask him to tell us in detail what work was done, so that we can accurately estimate the costs of the proposal that the Association of Caithness Community Councils has made. I also ask that we keep the petition open to ensure that the committee receives the information that it requires. The e-mails that I have discussed appear to me to be an attempt to suggest that it would be common sense not to consider the proposal because it would cost far too much, and to suggest that a cost of £100 million would be outrageous.

We have to compare the proposal with other transport projects. Analysis is not done on the basis of the approach that is described in those e-mails. In this age of climate change, it beggars belief that we can ignore the potential of railways in any part of the country. The proposed link ought to be part of the modernisation that we hope for in the rest of the network, but it seems to have been ruled out on the basis of rather limited—indeed, scanty—information.

**The Convener:** I appreciate your bringing us the information that you received via a freedom-of-information request, but I do not want members to feel that we have to respond right now. It would be reasonable for committee members to have a more detailed look at the e-mails. We can then consider our response.

Which organisation received and responded to the FOI request?

**Rob Gibson:** The FOI request was made—I can give members the papers—by Mark Norton, who is the convener of the Dornoch link action group. The letter to him was delivered on 13 May this year, and it was from Transport Scotland. The letter details the information that Transport Scotland was prepared to release, and it also says that other information exists that Transport Scotland was not prepared to release because it concerned the organisation's professional ability to give advice to ministers.

**The Convener:** We have to consider whether matters had moved on after those e-mails were written and before the minister responded to us. The Government response that we have just received may take account of recent developments. Obviously, the question will have to be explored; it cannot be answered through speculation alone. Do members have any comments on how we should explore this matter further?

14:15

**Cathy Peattie:** I have no problem with holding back and taking another look. The point has been well made that, in this time of climate change, basing a decision on whether to go ahead with a railway line simply on costs is not the best way forward. I do not think that the minister's letter helps at all, particularly in the light of the e-mail that Rob Gibson has just put before us, which I would like more time to consider. We have to decide what to cover in our inquiries; we could consider the issue as part of our rail inquiry.

**The Convener:** Without wishing to pre-empt any discussion of our work programme, I think that if it is possible to have a face-to-face discussion, we should build that into the meetings that have already been scheduled instead of trying to set up

a specific meeting. Are members comfortable with exploring the issue in writing with the minister before we get to that stage? I suspect that any face-to-face discussion with him will have to take place after the summer recess. Are members content with the general approach?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**Rob Gibson:** I am content as long as it keeps the petition alive and as long as the intention is to get a proper analysis of the costs.

**The Convener:** The petition will remain open for the time being.

I also suggest that we accept the offer of a briefing on STAG. I do not think that would do any harm.

**Rob Gibson:** I do not think so, either.

### **Ferry Service (Gourock to Dunoon) (PE1035)**

**The Convener:** The next petition is PE1035, by John Rose, which calls on the Parliament to urge the Scottish Executive to withdraw direct and indirect support for CalMac Ferries on the Dunoon to Gourock ferry service and to ensure full transparency of Government subsidy of ferry services. The issue clearly relates not only to our current work but to on-going matters in Europe. Do members have any comments?

**David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab):** You have predicted what I was about to say, convener. The fact is that we are carrying out a comprehensive inquiry into ferry services throughout Scotland. Some work has been done on the Gourock to Dunoon service. Shirley-Anne Somerville, the clerk and I were also present at a meeting at which we met the boards of CalMac Ferries and Western Ferries.

The petition raises a specialist issue. As members will be aware, there is a long history behind the service, which I am not—you will be pleased to hear—going to rehearse. A Dunoon constituent said to me that it is like the Schleswig-Holstein question: only three people have ever understood it, and one of them is dead, one is mad and the last one has forgotten it.

I am very reluctant to arbitrate in a debate over whether public is bad and private is good: we have to take a more sophisticated approach. I have asked a number of parliamentary questions on issues such as frequency restriction which, as we know, applies to CalMac and which the Government has said it has no plans to change. I have also asked about European state aid issues, but it appears that nothing is going to happen in that respect until the European Commission investigation into ferry services is concluded.

We should put ourselves in the shoes of people who live in Gourock and Dunoon. I appreciate that members have other views on the matter, but my feeling is that many people in the area want a good service with good frequency and prices. In other words, they want two services. It will not help for us to make a particular judgment on the petition. Instead, we should note the specific requests but cover in our inquiry the issues that are raised in the petition and that we are currently investigating. The issue might well arise in any chamber debate that we might secure.

As we have not examined all the details, it is not really fair for us to carry out a complete analysis of the matter. Equally, given that we do not have all the evidence, it would be a mistake to make a hard and fast ruling on the petition. In any case, the petition raises a much wider question that requires much more debate, not least with the European Commission, whose response will not be known for another 18 months.

**Alex Johnstone:** I start from a slightly different position but come to a similar conclusion. People may be aware that my opinion—some might say my prejudices—tend to take me with the petitioner. However, it would be inappropriate for us to prejudge the position that we will take in our inquiry. Although I agree with the vast majority of the points that the petitioner makes, I do not support the suggestion that we should urge the Scottish Executive to withdraw direct funding from the service at this time.

**Cathy Peattie:** I would not urge the Scottish Executive to withdraw funding from the service at all—I take the opposite view. It is scary to see that my notes on the petition are almost identical to those of Neil Kay. I have real problems with some of the information that the petitioner has submitted. We will await the conclusion of our ferry inquiry, but I am concerned that a private company has submitted a petition to the committee. What is to stop private bus companies submitting petitions against Lothian Buses, or other private sector operators submitting petitions against local authorities in relation to service bids? I have a problem with the nature of the petition but, like other members, I am prepared to await the outcome of our inquiry and the Commission's investigation.

**The Convener:** Members do not seem inclined to agree to the terms of the petition; at the present time, I do not agree to them, either. We may want to explore the issues that it raises with the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change. Some may arise in the normal course of our ferries inquiry, but there may be issues that we have not explored in great detail. It is reasonable for us to seek from the Scottish Government information on the timetable for the Government's work on the

matter and on the European Commission process. Do members agree?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** Do members want to keep the petition open and to return to it in the future, after we have received information in response to our letter to the minister?

**Charlie Gordon (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab):** We should close the petition formally but treat it as evidence in our broader ferries inquiry.

**The Convener:** That is a useful suggestion.

**Cathy Peattie:** I agree.

**The Convener:** Do members agree to close the petition and to consider it as evidence during our ferries inquiry?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** We will write to the minister in the terms that I have suggested.



## Work Programme

14:23

**The Convener:** When committee papers were circulated, members were reminded that the options for our inquiry into rail services are not intended to be prescriptive and that, if they want to throw other ideas into the mix, they should present them in a well-developed, concrete and specific form at this meeting. That is the main issue that we need to resolve today. Would members like to comment on the options that are suggested in the paper?

**Rob Gibson:** The inquiry must include one item that deals with the rest of Scotland. At the moment, the options to be considered are the intercity express programme, central Scotland electrification and links to the rest of the United Kingdom. The glaring omission with which we will eventually have to deal is services in the areas south of Glasgow and north of Perth and Aberdeen. If those are not included, we will never have a rail network throughout the country. I understand the point that the convener makes, but we must add a further element to the inquiry. If we do not, people will think that it is biased towards one area.

**The Convener:** The paragraph that sets out the options for the inquiry asks us to consider only one option. It gives alternatives, rather than a list to be worked through comprehensively in one inquiry.

**Rob Gibson:** I know that, but the list is not complete. We might want to draw up our proposal in a form that enables us to include most parts of the country.

**David Stewart:** Perhaps I can suggest a compromise. If we consider increasing electrification throughout Scotland, our work will not only cover the whole of Scotland but link in well with our responsibilities on climate change. There is a good crossover point in that regard.

**Charlie Gordon:** It is no secret that option 3 in paragraph 4 is based on a suggestion that I made in an earlier meeting. We should try to take account of Rob Gibson's concerns—I am in favour of rail links between continental Europe and Dornoch.

**Rob Gibson:** Or even Thurso.

**Cathy Peattie:** I agree with Charlie Gordon. Option 3 is fine, but we need to consider services Scotland-wide, too. I have suggested that we include petition PE894 and the Dornoch issue in an inquiry on rail services, but the current proposals are not written in a way that would allow us to do that. The principles are fine, but we need to add something about services in wider Scotland.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** Option 3 is of particular interest, given recent media reports about aviation. Consideration of how we might encourage a move to rail would fit with our remit on climate change. Perhaps we need to widen the proposal slightly to include connections to the rest of Scotland. It would be interesting to consider how we could promote the rail network for transport initiatives in the longer term.

**The Convener:** I am instinctively sympathetic to considering longer-distance rail links. My only concern is whether the Scottish Government can do anything about the issue without the co-operation of the United Kingdom Government and therefore whether the committee can usefully prompt the Scottish Government. We might be able to seek witness evidence from UK Government representatives. I do not think that such requests are prohibited.

**Charlie Gordon:** You have a point, but only to a degree. The overnight sleeper services to London from various parts of Scotland are part of the ScotRail franchise, which is wholly under the control of the Scottish Government. There are ways and means by which we can extend our aspirations across the border and beyond.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** It would be interesting to hear from the rail companies about why things are not working, so that we can find out where the barriers are and where we should apply pressure.

**The Convener:** Do members have further comments on the options in paragraph 4?

**Rob Gibson:** We have an opportunity to consider the rail network from Thurso to Penzance in Cornwall—that is the longest rail journey in the UK. We have an interest in the matter and we could at least act as advocates in relation to cross-border matters. The issue is worth exploring. We should bear in mind that the whole network in Scotland involves long-distance travel—the journey from Inverness to Thurso is one of the longest, at more than four hours. Scotland is a big geographical area with a small population. I would be happy if we could encapsulate such issues.

**The Convener:** Is the general preference for option 3? We can ask the clerks to come back with a more detailed paper.

**Charlie Gordon:** Option 3, but liberally interpreted.

**Rob Gibson:** I never thought that I would hear you say that.

**The Convener:** We will ask the clerks to interpret option 3 as liberally as they can. I should point out that, in the annex to the paper on our work programme, it is noted that we will have the opportunity to consider taking evidence on the

strategic transport projects review, if that is necessary. I imagine that members will broadly welcome such an approach.

The next section in the paper is on climate change. It is suggested that we seek an update from the minister on the development of climate change policy. We have had the recent consultation on the issue and we will have a subject debate on it in the chamber this week. We will continue to have opportunities to debate the issue, but do we want to ask for an update briefing? Is that a yes?

**Members:** Yes.

14:30

**The Convener:** Okay. You need to say yes if you want me to hear it.

I ask the clerk whether there is a specific question to ask on the stakeholder briefings on climate change.

**Steve Farrell:** The proposal is to invite relevant stakeholders from various sectors to start talking to the committee about their views on the appropriateness of the proposed targets and to flag up any challenges that they may face in meeting them. They could also talk about existing examples of good practice in the various sectors. The aim is to continue the awareness-raising programme for members as we move towards the introduction of the climate change bill. We see that as an opportunity for fairly detailed dialogue, which will not be possible in a short debate in the Parliament.

**The Convener:** As the timetable for the bill's introduction gives us a bit more time than we expected, we should use that time as constructively as possible.

**Cathy Peattie:** It is important that we speak to stakeholders and the wider community and that we consider good practice, not only in Scotland but elsewhere in Europe or wherever. The committee has gone on visits, which were helpful but, given the nature of the proposed legislation, it is important that we are aspirational in our vision for how the bill should progress. A wee bit of lateral thinking would be helpful, and it is vital that we know what is happening elsewhere.

**David Stewart:** Informal discussions are helpful. The informal meeting that we had with a Californian adviser was first class. I am not sure that all members attended so, for those who were not there, I endorse the hour-long lecture that she gave—it was superb.

The big issues on climate change are energy and transport. Some of the issues impact on Westminster responsibilities, but if we cannot get

the energy aspect right, it will be hard to have an effective bill. Therefore, it is worth doing some work on that. We should not be humble—we should raise our horizons and invite key players to speak to us. I propose seriously that we invite Al Gore to speak to us, by videoconference rather than on a personal visit, so that he does not have to leave his mansion. He has done that for other groups. That is important, because he is a world leader on the issue. As we all know, "An Inconvenient Truth" is a first-class representation of the way forward on climate change.

**The Convener:** We will certainly consider that as we work up the more detailed proposals.

**Shirley-Anne Somerville:** I have a suggestion, although I am not sure whether this would fit in with those informal discussions or later in the process. Through contacts that I have with WWF Scotland, I am aware that the Children's Parliament is considering climate change in great detail and I presume that the Scottish Youth Parliament is doing something, too. The Children's Parliament is keen to fit in with the committee's work and is holding an event in the Parliament during the festival of politics. It would be interesting and innovative for the committee to link with the work of the Children's Parliament and the Scottish Youth Parliament, if it is doing work on the issue. That would give us different ideas and would be a different way of working with a key stakeholder group that will be left to deal with the mess that we are perhaps making of the planet. If we could fit such work in at some point during the process, it would be useful.

**The Convener:** That is a useful observation. We are aware that the festival of politics event is in the pipeline—it is mentioned in the work programme paper. It is worth noting that several non-governmental organisations will want to hold events in the lead-up to the introduction of the climate change bill. We will try to have a discussion about how best the committee can take part in that series of events, to ensure that we complement the process, rather than duplicate anything. Are we content to go ahead with the series of events suggested?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** On our ferry services inquiry, the recommendation is that we bid for chamber time for a committee debate on our report. Is that agreed?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**Cathy Peattie:** We have to complete our inquiry and publish our report. The paper does not refer to the fact that the committee might want to spend more time on regulation and the maritime strategy. I want to ensure that our work programme allows sufficient time for that.

**The Convener:** I take the point, but it is difficult to see where it fits in. Does any other member have a view on the matter?

**Rob Gibson:** I am not sure of the timescale within which the clerks expect us to plan ahead.

**Steve Farrell:** We are looking for members to bring forward realistic proposals for the next six months and beyond. The committee should also bear in mind that transport is only one element of a wide-ranging maritime strategy.

**The Convener:** Given the long-term nature of that, perhaps we should not put it into our current work programme. We can look at the matter when we come to discuss the subsequent year's work. That said, we will need to bear in mind the overlap with the remit of other committees.

**Cathy Peattie:** I also mentioned regulation, which has cropped up a lot in our inquiry. We need to ensure that we have time to consider regulation in detail. We should not simply recommend better regulation; wider implications are involved.

**Charlie Gordon:** That is very much the case. Professor Kay's evidence made an impression on the committee in several respects. We have to face up to the fact that regulatory issues will form a substantial part of our ferry services inquiry report.

The maritime strategy is a broader issue for the Parliament as a whole. Certainly, it has a transport dimension, but our starting point should be the regulatory issues about which we have heard during the ferry services inquiry.

**The Convener:** Certainly, there is nothing to prevent us from looking at issues that are relevant to the current inquiry. They will be reflected in the report. I guess that the question relates to the need to build anything further into the work programme. I propose that any further additions to our work programme should be considered when we look at the subsequent year's work programme. Is that agreed?

*Members indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** There is also the issue of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee holding an inquiry into determining and delivering Scotland's energy future. Obviously, the remit of our climate change inquiry will overlap with that inquiry remit. How do we want to build that into our work, and to what extent? Do we want to track the other inquiry or appoint a committee member to take it on?

**David Stewart:** We are trying to find a bridge between the two inquiries. Those committee members who went to Brussels picked up on the important issue of carbon capture and storage. Obviously, that is the bridge between fossil fuels—

including heavily polluting coal—and reducing emissions. The issue is an extremely useful one for us to pursue, either by appointing a reporter or by other means. I am happy to take advice on the best way of doing that. Carbon capture is the link between energy and climate change. I think that there are 15 pilot carbon capture projects throughout Europe. The technology is not yet totally proven, but it is a fantastic and valuable future resource for the UK.

**The Convener:** I probably agree with that, but the question is how far we have to look into the future.

**Cathy Peattie:** I agree with most of what has been said. Perhaps it makes sense to appoint a reporter who could form part of the other committee inquiry and feed back to us. That would ensure that we keep on track of the work that is being done.

**Rob Gibson:** I wonder whether, at some point, we could have a joint meeting with the other committee to review some of the work that it is doing and see whether it understands how its inquiry fits into our climate change material. We should recognise that, sometimes, it is a good idea to have a round-table debate. We need to find the appropriate time to do that, before the other committee has made up its mind what it is going to report.

**The Convener:** Okay. Are we agreed that we want to take account of the inquiry that the other committee is running and have some level of engagement with it? We will put the matter on the agenda of a subsequent meeting to discuss whether to have a reporter on that committee or some other mechanism for tracking that work.

*Members indicated agreement.*

**The Convener:** Thank you. Are we agreed that our work programme should be updated to reflect our discussion and our decisions today and that a revised version should be published on our web page?

*Members indicated agreement.*

## Annual Report

14:41

**The Convener:** Item 4 is our draft annual report for 2007-08. An additional paragraph has been provided on the fact-finding visit that we undertook to London and Brussels. Do members have any comments to make on the annual report?

**David Stewart:** It is a fair summary of the work that we have done. The only tiny omission that I can see—I may not be reading it correctly—is that there is no reference to our videoconference with people in Orkney. That may have been informal, and I do not know whether it counts.

**The Convener:** Yes, that can be included in the report.

**Rob Gibson:** I do not know whether we are allowed to put pretty pictures in such reports, but we have been further and wider than other committees and it would be a nice idea to show that.

**The Convener:** Perhaps the clerks can clarify whether we are allowed to put pretty pictures in our annual report.

**Steve Farrell:** There is nothing to preclude that, although I think that it would be setting a precedent.

I advise the committee that the videoconference with Orkney was outwith the reporting year, so it cannot be included in this report. It will be included in next year's report.

**Rob Gibson:** The pictures need not be pretty, but they could be illustrative of the work that we have been doing.

**The Convener:** I leave it to members to speculate whether we would be included in the pictures according to those criteria. I suggest that the clerks and I consider the possibility of including pictures.

There has been discussion about whether there should be specific reporting on sustainable development as a theme in annual reports. Has a decision been taken on that?

**Steve Farrell:** That is still being developed.

**The Convener:** In that case, are we content with the annual report as it has been presented to us?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** Thank you. That is the end of our agenda. The next meeting will be on Tuesday 3 June, when we will take evidence from the minister as part of our ferries inquiry.

*Meeting closed at 14:43.*

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