

# **ENTERPRISE AND CULTURE COMMITTEE**

Wednesday 11 June 2003  
(*Morning*)

Session 2

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### ENTERPRISE AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting 2003, Session 2

##### OLDEST COMMITTEE MEMBER

\*Alasdair Morgan (South of Scotland) (SNP)

##### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

\*Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP)

\*Mr Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab)

\*Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green)

\*Susan Deacon (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab)

\*Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con)

\*Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab)

\*Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)

\*Mike Watson (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab)

\*attended

##### CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Simon Watkins

##### SENIOR ASSISTANT CLERK

Judith Evans

##### ASSISTANT CLERK

Jane Sutherland

##### LOCATION

Committee Room 1



# Scottish Parliament

## Enterprise and Culture Committee

Wednesday 11 June 2003

(Morning)

[THE OLDEST COMMITTEE MEMBER *opened the meeting at 11:47*]

**Alasdair Morgan (Oldest Committee Member):** Good morning. I welcome committee members and members of the press and public to the first meeting of the Enterprise and Culture Committee, and ask everyone to turn off any noisy phones and pagers that they might have. I am in the chair because, apparently, I am the oldest committee member, which has come as a bit of a blow. Anyone who wants to challenge that on the grounds of age should please do so.

### Interests

**Alasdair Morgan:** The first item of business is declaration of members' interests. Members have received a briefing paper pointing out that they should declare any registrable interest that might give the appearance of prejudicing their ability to participate in a disinterested manner in the committee's proceedings. Given that our proceedings could range widely, that might cover many things. Furthermore, members might want to mention certain non-registrable interests.

I have been racking my brains for any registrable or declarable interests, and the only thing that I can think of is that I am a member of the Saltire Society, which might touch on our cultural discussions.

**Mike Watson (Glasgow Cathcart) (Lab):** I have no interests to declare other than those that are already in the register of members' interests.

**Alasdair Morgan:** I am afraid that, under the standing orders, members have to declare any interests on this occasion.

**Mike Watson:** I cannot remember my entry in the register of members' interests.

**Alasdair Morgan:** In that case, I will pass it to you and you can read it out to me.

**Mike Watson:** The committee that I attended this morning did not want this amount of detail.

You have given me Brian Adam's entry. That is not terribly helpful.

**Alasdair Morgan:** Your entry is at the bottom of the page.

**Mike Watson:** I am a life peer and a member of Amicus MSF.

**Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** The only interest that might be appropriate in this regard is that I am a member of the Law Society of Scotland.

**Christine May (Central Fife) (Lab):** I am a member of the Transport and General Workers Union and the Co-operative Party, and a trustee of the Fife Historic Buildings Trust. I also continue to be a member, for the present, of the European Union Committee of the Regions.

On former activities that might be relevant, I was a board member of both Scottish Homes and Scottish Enterprise. I was also the chair of the lowland Scotland objective 3 partnership. I was a member of the Kingdom of Fife Tourist Board and I was also a board member of Rosyth 2000, which became Rosyth Regeneration Ltd. Although I no longer continue with those memberships, they might be relevant to future committee discussions.

**Alasdair Morgan:** You clearly have lots of spare time on your hands now.

**Brian Adam (Aberdeen North) (SNP):** I declare what appears in the register of members' interests, which is that I have a discount travel ticket from Lothian Regional Transport—that will really influence committee decisions. On non-registrable interests, my family and I have several small shareholdings, none of which is so large that it needs to be declared. However, if anything comes up on any occasion that involves any of the companies in which we have a shareholding, I will declare an interest.

**Susan Deacon (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab):** My life is simple by comparison. I think that the only non-registrable interest that I need to declare for the record is that I am a member of both the Transport and General Workers Union and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

**Chris Ballance (South of Scotland) (Green):** I am a teacher of creative writing at the University of Glasgow's Crichton campus. The teaching part has ended, but I still have marking to do. After that is over, that will be it. I am a self-employed partner in Byre Books, which is a second-hand book shop that is part of the Wigtown national book town development. I am also a playwright.

On unremunerated interests, I am a director of the Wigtown Book Town Company and chair of the Wigtown book town festival. I am on the executive of the Writers Guild of Great Britain and I am a member of the Scottish Society of Playwrights. I cannot remember what the official

designation is, but I am a sort of lapsed member—one who is so inactive that he does not pay his subscription—of Equity, the actors' association.

**Alasdair Morgan:** I assume that you will have plenty of chances to exercise your skills in the committee.

**Mr Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD):** I have an interest in about 47 acres of land in my home town of Tain in Ross-shire, which might have development value in the future. I own 2,870 £1 shares in the company about which I get teased in the Parliament, namely my brother's cheese-making company. I have 4,102 £1 shares, which is about 20 per cent of the share capital, in Highland Fine Houses Ltd and I am an unpaid director of the company. I am a trustee of the Tain Guildry Trust and the Tain Museum Trust. I am an unpaid director of both Highland Fine Celtic Foods Ltd and the Grey Coast Theatre Co (Helmsdale) Ltd.

I should also declare that I have just been appointed a director, in terms of the companies acts, of the Scottish Parliament and Business Exchange. I am a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and I am a former director, in terms of the companies acts, of both the Highland Festival and the Highland Building Preservation Trust.

**Mr Richard Baker (North East Scotland) (Lab):** I am a member of the trade union, Amicus MSF.

**Alasdair Morgan:** I should say that it is not mere pedantry to go through the declarations. The idea is that before any committee meeting it should be made clear to the public and anyone else who is listening to the proceedings—or reading them afterwards in the *Official Report*—what members' interests are. Given that this is the committee's first meeting, we felt that we should get all interests out in the open. I think that Mr Adam has remembered something else.

**Brian Adam:** In light of the fact that Mr Stone declared his membership or directorship of the Scottish Parliament and Business Exchange, I think that I, too, ought to declare my membership of that body.

**Alasdair Morgan:** Okay, thank you. That might be relevant.

## Convener

**Alasdair Morgan:** The next item of business is the choice of convener. The Parliament has agreed that members of the Scottish National Party are eligible for nomination as convener. I seek a nomination for that position.

**Brian Adam:** I nominate Alasdair Morgan.

**Alasdair Morgan:** No other nominations have been received.

*Alasdair Morgan was chosen as convener.*

## Deputy Convener

**The Convener (Alasdair Morgan):** The Parliament has agreed that members of the Labour party are eligible for nomination as deputy convener. I seek a nomination for that position.

**Chris Ballance:** I nominate Mike Watson.

**The Convener:** No other nominations have been received.

*Mike Watson was chosen as deputy convener.*

## Legacy Papers

**The Convener:** Our final item of business, which is likely to be the longest item today, is consideration of the legacy papers that were passed to us by our two predecessor committees, the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee and the Education, Culture and Sport Committee.

Anyone who has looked at the papers will have realised immediately that we have a very wide remit. Our problem will be in deciding not what to do, but what not to do, over the next four years. Members will see that the papers include a number of suggestions about possible inquiries. There are also a number of suggestions that spring from the Scottish Parliament information centre briefing documents and some useful suggestions in the legacy paper from the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee about how we might decide to select topics for future discussion. It is a wise idea to have a strategy when we set out, rather than to be buffeted from pillar to post by every demand from week to week.

I intend to have a brief session today to allow members to say what their own interests might be and what areas they think that we should concentrate on. I would want a longer session—perhaps over a day or an afternoon and the next morning—when we could talk informally to ministers and those with interests in business, cultural areas, sport and so on. We would decide our programme as a result of that longer consideration. I had hoped that we could fit something in before the end of June, but that looks unlikely given that several members of the committee are on other committees that have already arranged meetings for the remaining two and a half weeks before the recess. I suggest that we have that longer meeting towards the end of August, prior to the commencement of business.

Any inquiry that we undertake would require a considerable amount of notice, because we need to send out a call for evidence and to decide who we will have in as witnesses. I hope that the committee shares my desire to start working with an inquiry in September. In order to get enough notice for that, we would need to decide at least one item of business that we want to start with in September. I would like to come out of this meeting with at least one fairly firm idea about what we should start with in September. Bearing in mind that we have a two-week recess in October, it should be a shortish type of inquiry that might take us through to about the beginning of December. By that time, the rest of the programme that we had agreed at our meeting in August would kick in.

I have one idea about what we might do, but before I launch into that I ask members for their views about what we might cover over the next four years.

**Murdo Fraser:** The thing that struck me is how wide the remit of the committee is—we cover a huge range of subjects. I would not want the enterprise side of the committee's work to be subsumed into everything else. Issues such as the arts, for example, took up a huge amount of the time of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee. Things are always happening in the arts world that require to be responded to. We need to be quite jealous of the committee's time in relation to enterprise, because the Scottish economy is vital.

I have two or three specific suggestions to make in relation to enterprise. One of those suggestions is that we consider the effectiveness of the Scottish Enterprise network; in the light of events over the past week or so, that may be an appropriate subject for us to look into. The other topical issue is the Scottish water industry, on which there is a crossover between us and the Environment and Rural Development Committee. However, I believe that that committee considered the issue yesterday and felt that the water industry—in particular the impact of water charges on the business sector—related to enterprise. That might be an area that we could usefully look into.

On the lifelong learning side of things, the future of higher education funding is very relevant, given the possible and likely introduction of top-up fees south of the border. That will have an impact on the funding of higher education in Scotland. It would be useful for us to address how that will be worked out. Those are my initial thoughts.

12:00

**Mr Stone:** Perhaps not surprisingly, I approach this from the perspective of people in remote and rural areas. If the committee could find the time, I would be keen to consider the issue of job dispersal. We are aware that that is a thorny issue, following the case of Scottish Natural Heritage. It is also linked to the roll-out of broadband. Murdo Fraser is nodding: as he comes from Inverness, he knows what a big issue that is if we are to ensure a vibrant future for the economies of remote areas. As well as civil service job dispersal, the issue concerns encouraging private companies to move information technology and payroll functions to remoter areas, which can prove to be attractive. We could do some useful work on that, which would strike a chord in areas such as those that the convener and I represent.

The other issue that the committee would be well advised to consider is renewable energy.

There is vast potential out there and it is an issue that concerns the whole of Scotland, because a tidal energy plant could be sited in the far north or the south-west. There is also tremendous potential for using oil rig building yards and facilities in the central belt to build turbines, wave machines and whatever. Perhaps policy at the national level—both in Scotland and in the United Kingdom—could be more coherent. We should, at least, try to get our heads round what the policy is and what the committee and the Parliament could do to facilitate and improve it. With global warming and fossil fuels dwindling, renewable energy must be the way forward for us.

**Mike Watson:** I echo what Murdo Fraser said about the committee covering a balance of subjects. I would not downplay the importance of enterprise in its various aspects and sectoral considerations, but it is important to remember that the committee has had culture and sport added to its remit. Those areas cannot be seen simply as a bolt-on or as being of little importance. If they are not covered in this committee, they will not be covered in any committee. They must, therefore, be given appropriate weight.

I agree with Murdo Fraser on the question of higher education funding, which is mentioned in the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee legacy paper, on the clear understanding that we would not be considering whether the proposed English system would be applicable in Scotland. I am not aware of any political party in Scotland that is advocating that that system should be used here; certainly, the Executive is not doing so. We should take it as given that the proposed increase in fees will not happen here. However, it is going to happen south of the border and the knock-on effect will be an important aspect that will require urgent attention.

The legacy paper refers to what it terms the sectoral parts of the Scottish economy. As its last piece of work, the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee completed a tourism inquiry. One of the issues in the legacy paper is the fact that the question of registration—perhaps even compulsory registration schemes—was left aside. We should look into that in the context of the area tourist board review that is due to be published by the Executive later this year. I put down a marker for that.

The question of the national theatre will be part of the common currency of life in Scotland over the months to come, as it has been over the past year or so. It is not going to go away. However, it should perhaps be considered further down the line. We might, if we can, wait for the outcome of the review that the Executive has suggested will take place concerning the future of the Scottish Arts Council, Scottish Screen, and so on.

The last issue that I want to raise concerns sport. The point that the legacy paper makes about the paper that was published earlier this year on general sporting activity is important. However, that paper needs time to bed in and I do not have any specific suggestion regarding sport. Quite a few Executive initiatives will want to report on how they are doing, but I suggest that we can consider those issues in greater detail further down the line.

**The Convener:** I agree that we need to give appropriate weight to all the areas. I suspect that if there is disagreement, it will be about what the appropriate weight is in each case. However, we will come to that.

**Christine May:** I will try not to repeat what others have said, but one thing that I picked up from the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee legacy paper was the need for a balance between ministerial suggestions and the committee's own initiatives. At a relatively early stage, and before we draw up a work programme, we should consider a paper on how we approach that. The problem is that if we have too many of our own initiatives, we may lose sight of something that is important in the legislative programme that we might want to slot in.

The current review of regional policy and the consultation on that that is being carried out UK-wide, and indeed Europe-wide, is an issue. We need to consider how we will liaise with the European and External Relations Committee on that.

If we are to consider the Scottish economy *per se* rather than just the Scottish Enterprise network, it would be useful to look at those indicators that put Scotland's economy in the third or fourth quartile of developed countries, as shown in the table in the SPICe briefing that has been provided. Broadband is one aspect in which we might want to take an interest.

Finally, I support what Jamie Stone said about renewables. There is an issue to do with how we ensure that Scotland's manufacturing capacity can take advantage of untapped opportunities in renewables fabrication.

**Susan Deacon:** Before commenting on which substantive issues we should examine, I have a couple of comments on methodology. Albeit that I was not a member of the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee in the previous session, I was struck by the fact that it was one of the more innovative and effective committees in exploring different ways of investigating issues. The committee managed to get away from some of the strictures of formal evidence-taking sessions by organising forums, seminars and the like. At the outset, let me say that I for one hope that we will



build on that and develop it. Having considered the matter last year from the angle of the Procedures Committee, which looked across the other committees, I genuinely think that the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee was ahead of the game. It was often cited as an example of best practice. I believe that if we give some early thought to how we do our work as well as to what we do, we can be more efficient and more effective.

Picking up on the committee's relationship with the Executive, which was mentioned by others, I am keen to explore ways in which we can add value to the Executive's work, notwithstanding the clear scrutiny role that we have. Over the weeks ahead, I am sure that dialogue with ministers will crystallise our thinking on that, as the convener suggested. We should learn some of the procedural lessons from the first session and avoid the unnecessary duplication that sometimes happened. There are ways of working together on a partnership basis or—to use the Parliament's phrase—on a power-sharing basis that can really work.

On the specific issues, I would endorse three things that have been said already. First, I agree that Scottish Enterprise remains a live and important issue. There are several different angles and aspects that we could look at, but Scottish Enterprise certainly needs to be in our programme in some shape or form at quite an early stage. Similarly, we also need to look at higher education funding at an early stage. I agree with Mike Watson that we should not approach the issue purely through the prism of what may or may not happen in England, but there are undoubtedly issues to be considered. Thirdly, tourism is unfinished business from the previous session and I understand that the Executive also has work on that at various stages of completion. Again, I do not want to be too specific about which aspects we should look at, but I sense that work is outstanding on the review of area tourist boards and that there are continuing issues and questions around VisitScotland and its relationship with the industry.

I will move on from those issues which, as I said, were mentioned previously. I want to identify two bundles of issues that I would like us to consider at some stage over the lifetime of the committee—I am not suggesting that these are the number 1 priorities. There is a big people agenda—for want of a better way of putting it—that cuts across both the enterprise and culture dimensions of the committee and is to do with how we develop the next generation. How do we develop the hard skills and soft skills that are necessary not only for the fulfilment of people's potential, but for the wider needs of the economy? I would like us to examine some of those issues. We have heard a lot about formal structured education in schools on

entrepreneurialism, but there are wider issues to do with our attitudes towards risk in this country. We could also usefully consider wider issues to do with leadership and management development.

The second bundle, oddly enough, is in the culture field. As far as I can see, an awful lot of the attention of the previous Education, Culture and Sport Committee was on the national arts bodies and the like but, as the national cultural strategy identified, and as different committees and the Executive touched on in recent years, the role of culture among young people in our schools and communities is a huge issue. I would like us to shift the balance a wee bit in thinking how we can give added momentum to that area.

**Mr Baker:** I have four points to make, which echo points that other members made. I agree with Jamie Stone and Christine May on broadband roll-out, which is an important issue in rural areas. I certainly heard about it in the north-east from people who are interested in developing their businesses. They want quick progress to be made.

I agree that we should also examine renewables, in particular—and this links in to some of the Scottish Enterprise stuff that Susan Deacon talked about—in relation to the development of the intermediary technology institutes. For example, there is an ITI on energy in Aberdeen. I want the committee to monitor the progress that is made in developing ITIs so that they keep to an effective time scale.

As I am a former president of the National Union of Students Scotland, members would expect me to say something about student funding. As Mike Watson said, that will be an important issue during the term of the committee. The schedule will be busy, as the committee has so much to consider, so it would be useful to know as far as we can Westminster's time scale for taking decisions on student funding, so that we can examine how they will affect the situation in Scotland.

We also need to look at different issues that are specific to Scotland. I notice that the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee legacy paper talked about examining the handling of student awards and loans. We should do that at the same time as we consider issues that are inspired by what happens in England. I am pleased that the partnership agreement refers to reviewing student bursary levels, and seeing how we can give more help to students from poor backgrounds. I hope that we can do that. That may come later in the committee's work programme, in light of what happens at Westminster. It would be useful to think about our time scale in light of that.

Finally, I return to entrepreneurship, which was mentioned by Susan Deacon. I was pleased to

see what the Education, Culture and Sport Committee did in the previous session about entrepreneurship in schools. I am interested in that committee's studies on the social economy. That work was only begun and the committee did not have time to conclude it. The committee examined the work of Columba 1400. I hope that this committee will examine not just the promotion of entrepreneurialism in schools, but its promotion in wider Scottish society to encourage entrepreneurs in our communities, not just in terms of expanding entrepreneurship in business and economic development, but in terms of regeneration. I hope that we look at the work of national bodies such as the Community Action Network. A lot of fruitful work can be done on that.

12:15

**Brian Adam:** I endorse what has been said about investigating higher education funding. I would be happy to consider the nature of the remit of that investigation. We should not be slow to deal with that.

On the enterprise agenda, although Scotland's economy was a major issue in the election, I believe that we have not one economy but a range of economies across various sectors and regions. Jamie Stone touched on the impact of that fact on rural issues, but I want to suggest that we consider whether the enterprise network serves us best by working in a sectoral or regional way. We have to examine the tension that exists between the need to do what is best for local circumstances and the need to have a national strategy. Do we need to have a national strategy on every issue or should we encourage people to take ideas from the bottom up without having to fit them into the stultifying framework that has been set at the top? That suggestion applies not only to the enterprise network, but to the tourism sector, where there is tension between VisitScotland and the area tourist boards—as people have said, there is unfinished business in that regard. It applies also to the arts strategy. Concerns have been expressed over the years about the fact that, because the Scottish Arts Council's funding arrangements basically support national organisations, the spending has no benefit for people unless they happen to live in an area in which those organisations work, despite the outreach programmes.

I have two other hobby-horses. I was grateful to Mike Watson, in his role in the previous session, for the way in which he promoted tourism in relation to family history. There is tremendous potential for that to be developed further. The committee might want to have an inquiry into that subject with a view to finding out how we might best integrate what happens at a voluntary level with the work of VisitScotland, the enterprise

network, the General Register Office for Scotland and so on. So far, those activities are not gelling as well as they might. We are not taking full advantage of the existing voluntary network.

Lastly, I think that we need an inquiry into football in Scotland—I think that I do not need to explain my reasons for that.

**Chris Ballance:** I agree that we should have an inquiry into the development of the renewable energy industry, with particular regard to how we can ensure that it creates extra local production. That inquiry must not be hidebound by a requirement to think of energy only in terms of electricity. Wind technologies in particular are reasonably well developed. We can make progress in relation to biodiesel, hydrogen and the new fuels that are being developed at the moment. There is room for us to have an input at the beginning of that process.

I also support the call for an inquiry into the broadband strategy. Anything that we can do to speed up the roll-out of broadband would be helpful, as it is of crucial importance, particularly to rural regeneration. Many of us hear regularly from people who want to settle in rural areas but would do so only if broadband were available, which is not the case in Galloway and other parts of the south of Scotland.

On tourism, it is important that we examine VisitScotland and, more important, its web presence, about which many representations have been made to me. We need to ensure that changes to VisitScotland gel with what is happening in relation to the area tourist boards.

On the social economy, we need to examine how community businesses operate and how they add value to communities, employment and enterprise in general. We could examine community recycling in particular as that initiative seems to be stalling at the moment and there is a great deal of scope for work to be done in that regard that would have benefits for the national waste strategy and for employment.

On higher education, I agree that the issue of top-up fees is a priority.

As members might expect from my declaration of interests, I believe that we should keep our eye on the issue of a national theatre for Scotland. We should ensure that continuous support from the Executive is translated into an opening night. In the coming years, there will be considerable discussion of the structure of arts funding and of the future of the Scottish Arts Council, Scottish Screen and the museums and galleries. That issue will exercise us. I support the suggestion in the legacy paper of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee that we revisit the issue of the Scottish traditional arts.

The legacy paper states:

"**sportscotland** published a review of its Sport 21 strategy on 25/3/03 and a successor committee may wish to consider the review."

That might be an appropriate way in which to consider sport, because the review is overarching and does not concentrate on one sport.

**Christine May:** In the partnership agreement, there is a commitment to examine the development of a co-operative and mutual enterprise agency. Although consideration of that issue may begin in the Communities Committee, given the importance of community activity in local businesses the Enterprise and Culture Committee may want to take an interest in the agency's development.

**The Convener:** Another broad area comes to mind—some members have touched on issues affected by it. Because this is the second session of the Parliament, we have the opportunity—and sometimes the duty—to examine previous committee reports, to see whether recommendations have been implemented and, if so, whether they have worked. We also have the opportunity to examine whether previous legislation in our subject area has been effective.

I take on board the points that Susan Deacon made about the need to pursue the innovative approach of the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee to taking evidence. The committee's legacy paper is instructive and much of it is very interesting.

There is a great deal of commonality in the issues that members have raised, although I suspect that if we did everything that has been suggested we would be here for a very long time. Earlier, I suggested that towards the end of August we should hold an away day or informal meeting to talk to ministers and the key players in our subject area. That would allow us to flesh out a detailed programme for our first year and to provide broad indications for the time thereafter. Is that suggestion acceptable?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** We also need work to be going on with when we reconvene formally at the beginning of September. I have been considering an inquiry into higher education funding, which chimes with comments by several members. One advantage of that issue is that all the parties agree that they do not want to introduce top-up fees and tuition fees in Scotland. We start with agreement on the contentious part of the subject. However, we need to consider whether the proposals in the English white paper on higher education funding will place our educational institutions at a competitive disadvantage vis-à-vis their English counterparts and, if so, how big the problem is likely to be and what we can do to solve it.

I suspect that such an inquiry would be short enough not to have too great an impact on the rest of our programme and that it would usefully take up the time that is available to us from September to November. Do members agree to the proposal?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** I propose, after discussion with the deputy convener, to draw up a general remit for the inquiry and to e-mail it to members within the next week or so for comment. Unless there are adverse comments, we will proceed with the inquiry on that basis. Is that a reasonable suggestion? There is little point in having another formal meeting to cobble together a one-paragraph remit. Is that acceptable?

**Members indicated agreement.**

**Mr Stone:** I do not want to go against anything that you have said, convener, but can I take it that the clerks will trawl the wider comments that we have made in order to come up with suggestions on how we can follow them up?

**The Convener:** We will be preparing papers for the away day at the end of August. I am sure that those comments will be a useful input. Does anyone have diary problems for the last week of August? Is anyone planning a long holiday then?

**Christine May:** The Subordinate Legislation Committee yesterday bagsied Friday 29 August for its away day. So, convener, unless you want to have your away day without me, on which there may be consensus around the table—

**Members:** No.

**Christine May:** Thank you, colleagues, thank you.

**The Convener:** I would certainly want all committee members to be there—and, if possible, both ministers—for at least part of the day or days. If in the next week or so anyone else realises that they have commitments around the end of August, it would be helpful if they could let the clerks know.

**Mike Watson:** Perhaps all the clerks should liaise on this, because this morning the Public Petitions Committee also agreed to hold a similar away day towards the end of the recess. The clerks will be organising dates and it would be helpful if we could avoid clashes.

**The Convener:** I am sure that, as the committee with the biggest work load, we will have some seniority in the pecking order for booking days.

**Mike Watson:** What will be the committee's regular meeting day? Like others, I have another committee to consider.

**The Convener:** I am afraid that the committee timetable has not been drawn up and I do not think

that the committee will have too much say in it. However, the timetable will certainly be drawn up with an eye on possible clashes. The four Labour members of the committee all have second committees. We will try to avoid clashes as far as is possible.

*Meeting closed at 12:26.*

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