



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

ECONOMY, ENERGY AND TOURISM COMMITTEE

Wednesday 19 September 2012

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ECONOMY, ENERGY AND TOURISM COMMITTEE
24th Meeting 2012, Session 4

CONVENER

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

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Marco Biagi (Edinburgh Central) (SNP)

*Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP)

*Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

*Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green)

*Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP)

*John Park (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Lab)

*David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP)

*attended

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Douglas Wands

LOCATION

Committee Room 6

Scottish Parliament

Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee

Wednesday 19 September 2012

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 09:31*]

Interests

The Convener (Murdo Fraser): Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the 24th meeting in 2012 of the Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee. I remind everyone to turn off their mobile phones and other electronic devices.

There are three items on this morning's agenda. Just before we come to item 1, members will be aware that we have had a small—well, actually quite large—reshuffle of the committee membership. At this point, I pay tribute to the departing members—Stuart McMillan, Angus MacDonald and the deputy convener, John Wilson—and thank them for their contributions to the committee's work since the start of the parliamentary session a year and a half or so ago. I certainly enjoyed having them on the committee and hearing their contributions and was very grateful for their support. I am particularly grateful to John Wilson who, as deputy convener, ably assisted me behind the scenes, and I am sure that we wish them well as they go on to new pastures.

I warmly welcome our three new members: Marco Biagi, Dennis Robertson and David Torrance. Thank you for joining the committee and we look forward to working with you.

Moving to item 1—

Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP): Before we do so, convener—and noting the spirit of amity—I am afraid that I wish to make two points of order. First, as you will know from the copies of the letter that I have sent to the secretary of state, I believe that this committee was misled by his response to a question about subsidies to the nuclear industry, which can be found in the *Official Report* of 20 June. He said that there would be no such thing. However, we now know that to have been manifestly untrue. As I have not yet received a response—and indeed do not expect to receive one—it might be propitious if you as convener could send him a letter, asking him to clarify his statements.

Secondly, the committee has prided itself on ensuring that we gather clear evidence. I will not go down the “I am the evidence” route, but I was disappointed that, on the same date, you asked a question that speculated on what might happen to

energy bills in an independent Scotland. I am sure that you were not attempting to lead the witness but, as I have said this committee—and I as a member of it—has prided itself on seeking bona fide evidence, not speculation, and in that respect that particular question was regrettable. I do not expect you to retract it, but I ask that from now on our questions seek the best evidence that we can get, not speculation.

The Convener: Thank you for those points, Mr Brodie. First of all, from a procedural point of view, there are no points of order in committee. Nevertheless, you have put your points on the record.

I assume that you are referring to the evidence given by the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, Ed Davey. If you have not received a reply to your own letter, I am content as convener to write to him to seek clarification on the points that you have raised.

As for your second point, I have as committee convener observed all committee members at different times pursuing robust lines of questioning and issues in various political directions. We must all exercise our judgment about what is and is not appropriate and, in that spirit, I do not regard my line of questioning to Mr Davey as being in any way inappropriate.

Perhaps we can now move on. I invite the new members to declare any relevant interests.

Marco Biagi (Edinburgh Central) (SNP): As is customary, I point members to my declaration of interests. I also put on record that I have a brother who works in the North Sea energy industry as a fluids engineer with Halliburton.

Dennis Robertson (Aberdeenshire West) (SNP): I have no interests to declare.

David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP): I have no interests to declare.

Deputy Convener

09:36

The Convener: Item 2 is selection of the deputy convener. The Parliament has agreed that only members of the Scottish National Party are eligible to be chosen as deputy convener. I invite nominations for the position.

Mike MacKenzie (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I nominate Dennis Robertson as vice-convenor.

The Convener: Deputy convener.

Mike MacKenzie: Sorry—deputy convener.

Dennis Robertson: I am not into vice.

Dennis Robertson was chosen as deputy convener.

The Convener: Excellent. I congratulate Dennis Robertson on his appointment.

09:37

Meeting continued in private until 12:51.

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