

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

28th Meeting, 2023 (Session 6)

Tuesday, 3 October 2023

Evidence session with Scotland's environmental regulators

Background

1. On [27 June](#), the Committee agreed to hear this autumn from Scotland's environmental regulators ahead of the Scottish Government's Budget for 2024-25. This is in line with the Committee's general commitment this Session to hear from environmental regulators annually; to discuss their annual reports, finances and main priorities for the year ahead.

2. At its meeting on 3 October, the Committee will hear from representatives of two such bodies—

- Nick Halfhide, Director of Nature and Climate Change, NatureScot;
- David Harley, Chief Officer, Circular Economy, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA).

3. The most recent Annual Reports for SEPA and NatureScot are found here—

- [SEPA Annual Report and Accounts 2021/22](#)
- [NatureScot Annual Report and Accounts 2021/22](#)

Environmental regulations in Scotland

4. This is intended to be a wide-ranging session. Discussion points may include—

- SEPA and NatureScot's recent annual reports, their finances, assets and resources, and their main challenges going forward
- Consequences of EU exit on environmental regulation, including—
 - the Scottish Government's policy on 'keeping pace' with standards and regulations set by the EU in areas of devolved policy;
 - The impact, if any, on environmental regulation in Scotland following the passing of the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Act 2023;

- Governance and enforcement of environmental law;
- Common Frameworks relating to the Committee's remit. These are agreements setting out how the governments in the UK work together and manage divergence on law and policy in certain devolved areas formerly governed by EU law. The Committee is currently undertaking scrutiny of two environmental Common Frameworks—
 - [Resources and Waste Common Framework](#)
 - [UK Emissions Trading Scheme Common Framework](#)
- Air quality in Scotland, including the Committee's report on the [Scottish Government's Air Quality Improvement Plan and wider air quality issues](#); and
- Scottish biodiversity policy, including the Scottish Government's draft [Biodiversity Strategy](#) and [Delivery Plan](#).

Scottish Budget 2024-2025

5. Under the Scottish Parliament's annual budget scrutiny process, subject committees (i.e. committees that scrutinise major policy areas with significant public spending) normally make pre-budget recommendations to the Scottish Government each autumn. These are on matters within the Committee's remit which the Committee wants the Scottish Government to take into account in the preparation of the next national budget.

6. Last year, the Committee considered the Scottish Government's funding settlements for SEPA and NatureScot as part of its pre-budget scrutiny. The [Committee wrote](#) to the Scottish Government on 10 November setting out its conclusions on this matter. Upon the publication of the Budget, on 21 December it received [a response](#) from the Scottish Government on how its views had been accounted for in preparation of the Budget.

7. Prior to the summer recess, the Committee [sought an update](#) from the Scottish Government on how spending according to the Budget was being managed and delivering desired outcomes. It received [a response](#) on 19 June.

8. At its meeting on 27 June, the Committee agreed to continue last year's budgetary themes for its upcoming pre-budget scrutiny.

9. At its meeting on 3 October, the Committee will discuss with panellists any matters within its remit which pertain to the upcoming budget to inform deliberations around its pre-budget letter to the Scottish Government.

Clerks

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee