

House of Commons
Scottish Affairs Committee

**THE WORK OF THE
SCOTTISH AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE IN 2002**

First Report of Session 2002–03

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*Report, together with
Proceedings of the Committee*

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SCOTTISH AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

The Scottish Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Scotland Office (including (i) relations with the Scottish Parliament and (ii) administration and expenditure of the offices of the Advocate General for Scotland (but excluding individual cases and advice given within government by the Advocate General)).

Current Membership

Mrs Irene Adams MP (*Labour, Paisley North*) (Chairman)
Mr Alistair Carmichael MP (*Liberal Democrat, Orkney and Shetland*)
Mr Peter Duncan MP (*Conservative, Galloway and Upper Nithsdale*)
Mr Eric Joyce MP (*Labour, Falkirk West*)
Mr Mark Lazarowicz MP (*Labour/Co-op, Edinburgh North and Leith*)
Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger MP (*Conservative, Bridgwater*)
Mr John Lyons MP (*Labour, Strathkelvin and Bearsden*)
Ann McKechin MP (*Labour, Glasgow Maryhill*)
Mr John Robertson MP (*Labour, Glasgow Anniesland*)
Mr Mohammed Sarwar MP (*Labour, Glasgow Govan*)
Mr Michael Weir MP (*SNP, Angus*)

The following was also a member of the Committee during the period covered by this Report: Mr Peter Atkinson MP (*Conservative, Hexham*).

Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Order, principally in SO No.152. These are available on the Internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publications

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the Internet at www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/scottish_affairs_committee.cfm. A list of Reports of the Committee in the present Parliament is at the back of this volume.

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to The Clerk of the Scottish Affairs Committee, Committee Office, House of Commons, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA. The telephone number for general inquiries is: 020 7219 6123; the Committee's e-mail address is: scotaffcom@parliament.uk.

Footnotes

In the footnotes of this Report, references to oral evidence are indicated by 'Q' followed by the question number. References to written evidence are indicated by the page number as in 'Ev 12'.

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FIRST REPORT

The Scottish Affairs Committee has agreed to the following Report:

THE WORK OF THE SCOTTISH AFFAIRS COMMITTEE IN 2002

Introduction

1. The decision we made at the start of the new parliament to conduct short, sharp inquiries of a wide and varied nature has proved successful. There has been added interest from both the public and the media. Furthermore, attendance by Members has been high.

2. Our remit includes the examination of relations with the Scottish Parliament. We consider this to be of high importance. Consequently a meeting was held with the Conveners' Liaison Group of the Scottish Parliament on 14 February 2002. The meeting proved to be a very positive arena for a strong exchange of views and information.

3. In response to an invitation by the House of Lords Constitution Committee, the Chairman of the Committee, along with the Chairmen of the Welsh Affairs and Northern Ireland Affairs Committees, gave written and oral evidence on the inquiry into the working of devolution, examining inter-institutional relations in the United Kingdom. The evidence session was held on Wednesday 3 July.

4. Many of the objectives and tasks for departmental select committees set by the Liaison Committee do not apply to our unique position.

Reports

5. During Session 2001–02 we published five reports. In the calendar year 2002 three were produced.¹

6. Although convention expects replies to reports within two months of publication we find this continues to be a problem for the Scotland Office. This may arise from the need to consult other departments. But there does also appear at times to be inertia. The response to our short shipbuilding report (which was published on 15 July) was received on 16 December. Similarly, a letter from the Chairman dated 31 July 2002 concerned with expenditure matters arising from the Departmental Report 2002 was replied to on 6 December. This is not good enough.

Identification of Inquiries

Policies

7. We continue vigilantly to monitor and examine the many UK policy decisions which have an impact on Scotland. Most of these, for obvious reasons, do not emanate from the Scotland Office. For example, during the inquiry into Employment in Shipbuilding on the Clyde we took evidence from Ministry of Defence and Department of Trade and Industry Ministers as well as from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Scotland Office. As part of this inquiry we took evidence in Glasgow on 20 May 2002. During this session concerns were raised about a decision to sub-contract part of the work to a Dutch company. These concerns were passed to Ministers in advance of their appearance before us. Lord Bach, Minister for Defence Procurement, Ministry of Defence, subsequently

¹ Details can be found in the Annex to this Report.

wrote to the Committee stating that “... we have placed a clause in the ALSL contract that requires the company [Swan Hunter] to obtain MOD’s prior approval before subcontracting any fabrication or assembly of structural steelwork. Future shipbuilding contracts will incorporate a similar clause and we will make it clear that approval to place any such subcontracts outside UK and would only be granted in exceptional circumstances.”² This provides a first rate example of the way our work influences Government even before recommendations are made.

8. We held four one day evidence sessions during the year. Three of these were with public bodies, the Commission for Racial Equality in Scotland, the Scottish Consumer Council and Citizens Advice Scotland. Other public bodies have also contributed to our inquiries. British Waterways helped and gave evidence for the Job Creation Potential of the Modernised Forth, Clyde and Union Canal inquiry. BBC and BBC Scotland were examined for our inquiry into Post Devolution News and Current Affairs Broadcasting in Scotland. HM Customs and Excise witnesses gave evidence to our inquiry into Customs Services in Scotland. We also took evidence from Scottish Enterprise on Futureskills Scotland, an initiative designed to help improve skills levels and match them with opportunities.

Expenditure

9. Along with other departments, publication of the Scotland Office Departmental Report 2002 was delayed this year until 17 June, preventing us from holding our usual oral evidence session with Ministers. Instead, detailed expenditure questions arising from the Departmental Report were followed up in correspondence between the Chairman of the Committee and the Secretary of State for Scotland.

10. Professor David Heald of the University of Aberdeen who follows the activities of the Committee very closely, has stated that:

“Following evidence taken on 7 November 2001 [by the Scottish Affairs Committee], the Scotland Office provided supplementary data, which allowed the calculation of the Barnett formula consequences from Spending Review 2000 to be replicated. This was the first time on which this could be done from information in the public domain.”³

Public Bodies

11. The Scotland Office sponsors only one Public Body, the Boundary Commission for Scotland which reviews the parliamentary constituencies in Scotland.

Visits

12. We continue to place much emphasis and value on our visits to Scotland. These provide us with the opportunity to talk to a wide range of people and at the same time to explore issues not necessarily connected with a given inquiry. For example, during a visit to Orkney in connection with our inquiry into Customs Services in Scotland, we arranged a detailed briefing and discussion on public service obligations and the implications for flights to and from the islands of Scotland.

² Scottish Affairs Committee Fifth Report, *Employment in Shipbuilding on the Clyde* (HC 865) Ev 67.

³ Heald, D.A. and McLeod, A. (2002), ‘Public Expenditure’, in *The Laws of Scotland: Stair Memorial Encyclopaedia - Constitutional Law Volume*, Butterworths Tolley, Edinburgh, paras 480–551.

Summary

13. We have enjoyed a fruitful year. We have effected change in government policy and our work has been well represented in the Scottish media. We have ranged widely over a variety of issues.

Annex

SCOTTISH AFFAIRS COMMITTEE ACTIVITY DURING 2002

Inquiries

Post Devolution News and Current Affairs Broadcasting in Scotland.
Third Report (HC 549), Session 2001–02

Customs Services in Scotland.
Fourth Report (HC 782) [Reply in the Committee's Second Special Report HC 1287,
Session 2001–02]

Employment in Shipbuilding on the Clyde.
Fifth Report (HC 865) [Reply in the Committee's Second Special Report HC 199,
Session 2002–03]

Scotland Office Expenditure.
First Special Report (HC 198), Session 2002–03

Minutes of Evidence

The Work of the Commission for Racial Equality in Scotland (HC 712–i)

The Work of the Scottish Consumer Council (HC 1199–i)

Futureskills Scotland (HC 101–i)

The Work of Citizens Advice Scotland (HC 158–i)

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS RELATING TO THE REPORT

TUESDAY 17 DECEMBER 2002

Members present:

Mrs Irene Adams, in the Chair

Mr Eric Joyce

Ann McKechin

Mr Mark Lazarowicz

Mr John Robertson

The Committee deliberated.

Resolved, That the Committee do visit Glasgow and East Kilbride in connection with its inquiry into Homeworkers and the Minimum Wage.

Draft Special Report, [Scotland Office Expenditure], proposed by the Chairman, brought up, read the first and second time, and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the First Special Report of the Committee to the House.

Draft Special Report, [Employment in Shipbuilding on the Clyde: Response by the Government to the Fifth Report of Session 2001–02 (HC 865)], proposed by the Chairman, brought up, read the first and second time, and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Second Special Report of the Committee to the House.

Draft Report, [The Work of the Scottish Affairs Committee in 2002], proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 13, read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the First Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chairman do make the Report to the House.

[Adjourned till Tuesday, 14 January 2003 at Two o'clock.]

**LIST OF REPORTS AND FREE-STANDING
MINUTES OF EVIDENCE**

Session 2001–2002

Reports

28/11/01	FIRST REPORT The Drinks Industry in Scotland	HC 324
20/12/01	SECOND REPORT Job Creation Potential of the Modernised Forth, Clyde and Union Canal	HC 424
21/03/02	THIRD REPORT Post Devolution News and Current Affairs Broadcasting in Scotland	HC 549
16/05/02	FOURTH REPORT Customs Services in Scotland	HC 782
15/07/02	FIFTH REPORT Employment in Shipbuilding on the Clyde	HC 865
18/03/02	FIRST SPECIAL REPORT Response by the Government and the Scottish Executive to the First Report (Session 2001–02) on The Drinks Industry in Scotland	HC 696
05/11/02	SECOND SPECIAL REPORT Response by the Government to the Fourth Report (Session 2001–02) on Customs Services in Scotland	HC 1287

Minutes of Evidence

21/02/02	Scotland Office Departmental Report 2001	HC 345–i
30/05/02	Work of the Commission for Racial Equality in Scotland	HC 712–i

Session 2002–2003

Reports

19/12/02	FIRST REPORT The Work of the Scottish Affairs Committee in 2002	HC 197
19/12/02	FIRST SPECIAL REPORT Scotland Office Expenditure	HC 198
19/12/02	SECOND SPECIAL REPORT Response by the Government to the Fifth Report (Session 2001–02) on Employment in Shipbuilding on the Clyde	HC 199

Minutes of Evidence

05/12/02	The Work of the Scottish Consumer Council (Session 2001–02)	HC 1199–i
12/12/02	Futureskills Scotland	HC 101–i

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