

FAQs

What is the Scottish Affairs Committee?

The role of the Scottish Affairs Committee is to scrutinise the expenditure, administration and policies of the Scotland Office, and its associated bodies. The Committee also examines the wider UK Government, to assess policies and legislation that lead to direct impacts on Scotland. The Committee is a cross-party group of eleven MPs from the Conservative Party, Labour Party, Liberal Democrat Party and Scottish National Party (the membership reflects the biggest parties sitting in the House of Commons and their number of seats). The Chair of the Committee is Pete Wishart MP, a Scottish National Party MP elected by the whole House of Commons to Chair the Committee.

What is an inquiry?

An 'inquiry' is a project, or investigation, conducted by the Committee to examine a specific issue. The Committee normally meets once a week, when the House of Commons is sitting. Together, Members decide on what policy issue they want to investigate which forms the basis of an 'inquiry'.

It can be external developments that drives what the Committee decides to look at, or the legislative programme of Government Departments that the Committee feels needs scrutiny. The Committee also investigates issues where the Government is not planning to legislate but where they think reform may be needed. The Committee can choose to devote several weeks or months to examine a particular issue – but sometimes the Committee will examine an issue quickly, in a matter of days.

Inquiries normally start by the Committee asking for people's view on a subject. This is followed by a series of public meetings with experts, interest parties and Government Ministers to ask detailed questions and get more information. It usually concludes with the Committee publishing a report setting out some recommendations to the Government for how improvements can be made. The Government then has 60 days to respond to the Committee's recommendations.

Why should I submit something to your inquiry?

The remit of the Scottish Affairs Committee (and therefore the remit of what the Committee can look at) is a very broad one. As a Committee, we are keen to hear from as wide a range of organisations and people as possible, especially on issues that the Committee hasn't previously looked at, or from people who haven't previously engaged with the Committee. This will help the Committee tap into the widest possible pool of expertise and experience to bring new and different ideas and issues to our attention. If your suggestion is taken forwards by the Committee, we will investigate it in Parliament and seek to raise the issue with Government.

What subjects can the Committee look into?

The Committee's role is to explore the impact that UK-wide policies have on Scotland, so we can't look at policies that are the responsibility of the Scottish Parliament. Here's a guide to which policy areas are devolved to the Scottish Parliament and which are reserved to the Westminster Parliament:

Devolved matters	Reserved matters
Agriculture, fisheries, forestry	Constitution
Economic development	Defence & national security
Education	Energy
Environment	Foreign Policy
Fire and rescue services	Financial & Macroeconomic matters
Housing	International development
Local government	Nuclear energy and installations
NHS and Social Care	UK, EU elections
Some Transport	Broadcasting
Sport and Arts	Civil Service
Water and flood defence	Consumer protection
Tourism	Postal services
Justice and policing	Immigration and Nationality
	Employment

What issues has the Committee previously investigated?

The Scottish Affairs Committee has examined a range of issues in recent years including:

- [Problem drug use in Scotland](#)
- [Access to financial services](#)
- [Post-Brexit agriculture policy](#)
- [Scotland's Oil and Gas industry](#)
- [Digital connectivity](#)
- [Scotland's immigration needs](#)
- [Intergovernmental relations between the UK and Scottish Governments](#)

The Committee's website contains further information on previous inquiries, evidence sessions, reports and Government responses.

What do you mean by "submission"?

We would like you to fill in a short online form, setting out who you are and why the issue you are writing about is important.

Can I contact you about an individual case?

The Committee is not able to take up individual complaints or cases.

What else should I know about sending in my submission?

The Committee will be looking for inquiries that are timely, have potential for high impact and bring a new issue to the forefront or a fresh perspective to an existing problem.

Accepted submissions are normally published on the Committee's website. Committee staff would always remove personal information such as your address and e-mail account from the submission; it would contain your name or the name of your organisation only.

If you do not wish your submission to be published online, or if you are including private or confidential information in your submission to the Committee, please contact the Committee to discuss this. Contact details for the Committee can be found here:

<https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/136/scottish-affairs-committee/>

We would ask you not to comment on matters currently before a court of law, or matters in respect of which court proceedings are imminent. If you have any queries about this, please contact the [Committee team](#).

What happens next?

A member of the Committee team will read your submission (the Committee will not accept submissions that are unrelated to the Committee's remit or inappropriate in terms of content).

All relevant submissions will be considered by the Committee at one of its meetings. Submissions accepted by the Committee as formal evidence have special legal protection ('parliamentary privilege') and can be published on the Committee's website.

Please note that the Committee will not be able to launch an inquiry into every submission. If the Committee chooses not to pursue your submission, we will write to you and let you know. However, the Committee may potentially pursue some of the proposals by other means, for example taking forward ideas through Parliamentary action such as correspondence or questions to Ministers.

If the Committee decides to look at your submission in more detail, we may ask you for further information.

A selection of the proposals will be shortlisted for an opportunity to present to the Committee at a public session. The aim of the meeting would be for Committee Members to learn more about the issue you have raised before taking a final decision on subjects to launch an inquiry on.

Will you accept a submission in large font/braille/video?

If you have difficulty making a submission via our form and wish to submit evidence in an alternative format or would like to make a submission after the formal deadline for evidence, please contact the Committee using [the contact details available on the webpage](#).

For more information on providing evidence to a select committee, the House of Commons has produced a [Guide for witnesses giving written or oral evidence to a House of Commons select committee](#).