

SCOTTISH AFFAIRS COMMITTEE VISIT TO QUEEN ELIZABETH HOUSE AND THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

The Scottish Affairs Committee visited Edinburgh on Monday 11 March 2024 as part of its ongoing inquiry into *Intergovernmental relations: 25 years since the Scotland Act 1998*. After a formal meeting in the morning at the Royal Society of Edinburgh (to take oral evidence as part of the inquiry), the Committee visited Queen Elizabeth House, and met with Members of the Scottish Parliament's Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee. This note briefly summarises the Committee's visit to Queen Elizabeth House and meeting at the Scottish Parliament.

Members in attendance:

- Alan Brown MP
- Wendy Chamberlain MP
- David Duguid MP
- Sally-Ann Hart MP
- Christine Jardine MP
- Mark Menzies MP
- Ms Anum Qaisar MP¹
- Douglas Ross MP
- Michael Shanks MP
- Pete Wishart MP (Chair)

Queen Elizabeth House

At Queen Elizabeth House, the Committee was hosted by Craig Chalcraft (Principal Private Secretary, Scotland Office) and Clark Dunn (Head of Campaigns, Scotland Office). Mr Chalcraft and Mr Dunn gave an overview of Queen Elizabeth House, including its history, purpose and how it is helping to deliver on the UK Government's 'Places for Growth' ambitions. Mr Chalcraft and Mr Dunn also outlined how the building improves UK Government visibility in Scotland, and how co-location with Scottish stakeholders enables more effective sharing of expertise, and therefore improved delivery of policy.

¹ Ms Anum Qaisar was not present for the meeting at the Scottish Parliament.

The Committee toured the building, and held informal discussions with officials of the various UK Government departments located there, including the Office of the Advocate General.



The Committee met with UK Government officials at Queen Elizabeth House, the UK Government's Edinburgh 'Hub'.

Scottish Parliament's Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee

The Committee was hosted for a working lunch by Clare Adamson MSP (Convener), Keith Brown MSP and Alexander Stewart MSP of the Scottish Parliament's Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee. The group discussed areas of mutual interest in their respective inquiries, including the CEEAC Committee's inquiries into how devolution is changing post-EU, the impact of Brexit on devolution, and the UK internal market, and picked up on some of the key themes in the CEEAC Committee's submission to the Committee's intergovernmental relations inquiry.²

Some of the topics discussed by the group include:

- How intergovernmental relations have changed over time, and what enabled or prevented more effective relations at key points.
- What impact the United Kingdom Internal Market Act, and disagreements between the two Governments in respect of the Scottish Government's Deposit

² [IGR0014](#)

Return Scheme and policy to ban the use and sale of glue traps, have had on intergovernmental relations.

- Progress implementing common frameworks.
- How recent high-profile disputes, such as the making of a section 35 order in respect of the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill, have affected intergovernmental relations.
- Inter-parliamentary co-operation and scrutiny of intergovernmental relations.
- Mutual issues both Committees have experienced securing the attendance of UK and Scottish Government Ministers.
- The expertise, skills and experience of UK and Scottish Government officials, and whether less frequent exchange of officials between administrations and, indeed, MPs and MSPs between the two Parliaments, has contributed to a diminished capacity for effective intergovernmental and interparliamentary working.
- The operation of the Sewel Convention.
- Whether lessons could be learned, in respect of fostering effective intergovernmental relations, from the British-Irish Council/Parliamentary Assembly.
- Progress implementing the new formal intergovernmental relations structures, and the extent to which they may result in improved intergovernmental relations.



The Committee met Clare Adamson MSP (Convener), Keith Brown MSP and Alexander Stewart MSP of the Scottish Parliament's Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee.