

SCOTTISH AFFAIRS COMMITTEE VISIT TO OSLO, BERGEN AND STAVANGER

The Scottish Affairs Committee visited Oslo, Berge and Stavanger (Norway) between 10 and 13 March 2025. This visit was principally in connection with the Committee's inquiries into *GB Energy and the net zero transition* and *Problem drug use in Scotland follow-up: Glasgow's Safer Drug Consumption Facility*. Meetings were also held in connection with the *Scotland's space sector follow-up: launch* inquiry. This note summarises the Committee's main engagements, but is not intended to be exhaustive.

Members in attendance:

- Maureen Burke MP
- Patricia Ferguson MP (Chair)
- Susan Murray
- Elaine Stewart MP
- Kirsteen Sullivan MP¹

Oslo

Vårgrønn

At Vårgrønn's Oslo offices, the Committee met with:

- Sebastian Bringsværd, Director of Origination, Vårgrønn
- Stephen Bull, CEO, Vårgrønn
- Erik Dugstad, Senior Vice-President Market Analysis and Public Affairs, Vårgrønn

Vårgrønn specialises in the conventional and renewable offshore sector, and has ambitions for 5 GW of installed and sanctioned offshore wind capacity in Northern Europe by 2030.

The Committee discussed Vårgrønn's purpose, governance and ownership model, and its exclusive area of focus on northern Europe offshore wind. The importance of the UK as a market for Vårgrønn in this context was discussed, particularly as the UK is moving more quickly than Norway in respect of scaling up offshore wind (e.g. Green Volt is further ahead than Norway's own domestic projects). It was also noted that Vårgrønn's business model covers all aspects (i.e. end-to-end) of offshore wind assets, from development to construction, operation and ownership. This is different, for example, to ScotWind, which is focused solely on the early stages of leasing seabed space for

¹ Kirsteen Sullivan was not present for the Stavanger leg of the journey.

renewable installations. Vårgrønn's efforts to extend assets' lifespan (for example, through the replacing existing infrastructure) was also discussed.

An overview of Vårgrønn's key northern Europe projects was also provided:

- Green Volt: A joint venture between Vårgrønn and Flotation Energy, who won seabed rights in Crown Estate Scotland's leasing round to develop the project (up to 560MW). It will be commissioned in 2029. This project could be important in helping to achieve targets in the North Sea Transition Deal, as well as contributing to the UK's Carbon Budgets. This grid-connected floating wind farm should provide renewable power to oil and gas platforms, as well as the UK grid. The current status of Green Volt (post-consents, but pre-construction) was discussed. The Committee noted the potential for Green Volt to kick-start the supply chain for floating offshore wind.
- Dogger Bank A, B and C: The world's largest offshore windfarm, of which Vårgrønn acquired a 20% share (720MW) in 2022. A joint project between Vårgrønn (20%) and project partners Equinor (40%) and SSE Renewables (40%). Once completed (c.2026), Dogger Bank will be capable of powering up to 6 million homes.
- Baltic 2: Including acquisition of a 27.4% stake (288MW) in Baltic 2 (32km off the coast of Germany) in 2024.

The importance of utilising the transferability of skills from the oil and gas sector to offshore wind, to enable these projects to progress, was also discussed. So too was the importance of fostering a pipeline of skilled infrastructure workers (for example, welders), to ease challenges associated with availability of and access to engineers.

There was also discussion of the political/public debate about energy transition in Norway, relative to the UK; it was noted that continued oil and gas production for export in Norway is uncontroversial amongst the public, due to the high-quality jobs and revenue it brings. The Committee heard that, whilst arguments about the need to scale down oil and gas production in the longer-term are beginning to gain ground, the main political focus in Norway is currently on increasing electrification of homes and fossil fuel production, to maximise utility of Norway existing renewable electricity and reduce domestic emissions, rather than transitioning away from fossil fuel extraction. The Committee also heard that jobs in renewables are – generally – unlikely to be of the same value, due to the thinner margins on in which renewable energy companies operate; it was noted that the public needs to be aware that, unlike in oil and gas, there are no 'super profits' to be made in renewables, and the value creation therein cannot be replicated.

The relevance of current geopolitical considerations (i.e. the war in Ukraine, and posture of the current US administration) was noted as an important factor in informing the Norwegian public's attitude towards continued oil and gas production. Similarly, the

Committee also discussed Norwegian's attitude towards the country's cheap electric power, which can often be considered a 'right' or entitlement, and which has resulted in a per capita energy usage which is closer to the USA's, rather than European countries. The Committee also heard that oil and gas production is seen to be tied up with the provision of high levels of state welfare.

It was also noted that onshore wind is considerably more unpopular in Norway, compared to the UK. The Committee heard that it is highly politically damaging to be seen as a proponent of onshore wind – which is often considered by the Norwegian public to be an unnecessary blight on Norway's nature environment, particularly given that Norway's domestic energy needs are almost completely provided for by hydropower.

The Committee also heard that the cost of offshore wind in Norway is relatively more expensive than other parts of the world (including the UK), as Norway has not developed an industrialised capacity for offshore renewable energy production (as it has, for example, in respect of hydro power). It was also noted that, whilst the high-value part of offshore wind (i.e. the blades) are manufactured in Norway, or nearby, companies such as Vårgrønn are otherwise reliant on existing supply chains from China for almost everything else.

Norwegian Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries

Amongst other Ministry representatives, the Committee met with Director General Jan Tore Føsund, Ownership Department, Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries. The Ownership Department contributes to the professional management of the state's direct ownership of companies and the Director General outlined to the Committee how those 21 companies are managed.

The Committee heard about the two categories of state-owned companies, the first of which comprising companies that are listed on the stock exchange, such as Equinor. The Committee heard that 20% of the Oslo stock exchange is directly owned by the state, excluding the state pension fund. The second category is unlisted companies, such as hospitals and national theatres, for which there is a clear purpose for the state's ownership.

The Committee discussed the accountability process for the ownership of these companies, hearing how the Norwegian Government reports to the parliament on how the state-owned companies are being managed and to set out the rationale as to why the state should retain that ownership. This process is done annually through a white paper. The rationale for state ownership must be assessed against a set of societal goals, which include keeping a head office of a company in Norway, civil protections, emergency and natural resources, as well as public good and/or social and geographical distribution.

It was noted that the commercial companies from category one have different priorities to category two, with a greater emphasis placed on securing the highest return over time in a sustainable manner. In contrast, category two companies are encouraged to work for the sustainable and efficient attainment of public policy goals.

The Committee heard that discussions of these goals in parliament is transparent. There is often debate as to which targets should be prioritised, and why the companies should be used to solve problems relating to key policy challenges such as climate goals or employment.

An example of the benefits of state ownership were highlighted through the case of Equinor. The Committee heard that the rationale for state ownership is to maintain a leading energy company with head office functions in Norway and, as a category one company, to ensure the highest possible return over time in a sustainable manner. The Committee heard how state ownership offers Equinor a level of stability, as the Norwegian Government can see the company through dips in the markets, and variation in interest in renewables, in a way private ownership may not offer.

Andøya Space

Amongst other Andøya Space representatives, the Committee met with Ketil Olsen, President and CEO of Andøya Space. Andøya Space is a civilian company operating on a commercial basis, owned 90% by the Norwegian Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries; and 10% by Kongsberg Defence Systems.

The group's discussion included:

- Norway's progress developing a domestic space launch capability at the Andøya space port. This included, in particular, the history of and policy development process relating to the port, and the governance of the business. The Committee heard that the objective of the spaceport is to ensure national control of a launch base for small satellites and test facilities for the Norwegian armed forces and defence industry.
- The structure of the Andøya space port's business beyond the core launch facility, including space sub-orbital, space education and space defence.
- Why Andøya was considered to be the ideal location for a spaceport, including the ease of achieving polar and sun-synchronous orbits, limited sea and air traffic below, and good infrastructure in the area.
- That Andøya space port has been licensed for 30 launched per year, and the facility's first launch pad has been licensed to Isar Aerospace under a 20-year exclusivity contract.
- That Andøya hopes to have a successful sub-orbital launch by around May 2025, but that this is dependent on the launch provider Isar Aerospace receiving its launch license.
- Discussion of safety, international relations, space debris and the impacts of launch activity on surrounding marine environment. It was noted that young

people in particular are increasingly concerned about the environmental impact of launch vehicle debris, and that this is what makes SpaceX and RocketLab's retrieval/reuse of launch vehicles appealing.

- Andøya spaceport representatives noted that issues presented by marine and land boundaries are less complex for Andøya compared to SaxaVord, since – beyond Norway – Andøya's launch location only engages Danish territory (in the form of Greenland).
- Andøya noted that there is sufficient demand for space launch capability to easily accommodate three or four launch sites in Europe, meaning SaxaVord and Andøya are unlikely to pose sources of existential competition to each other. It was noted that the current international security context makes the relevance of sovereign European space launch capability all the more relevant and important, particularly in respect of potential military use cases.
- The role of space launch facilities like Andøya and SaxaVord were also noted as facilitators of economic growth.
- There was also brief discussion of the security threats posed by state actors which manifests itself, for example, in the form of increasing electronic warfare within the vicinity of the facility.
- There was discussion of interest in the Andøya spaceport from the US.

Prindsens Reception Centre

The Committee visited the Prindsen Reception Center, touring Oslo's Drug Consumption Room, and meeting with the Drug Consumption Room's team leader Hanne Langaas.

During a tour of the facilities, the Committee heard that the site offers an integrated service, with an onsite needle exchange and emergency accommodation. The needle exchange, which sees 400-500 clients per day, allows service users to access a range of equipment, including foil, needles, and vitamin C. Users of the service can remain anonymous, with identification only required if there are concerns a visitor may be underage. The Committee saw that medical examination rooms are also available for wound care and testing of blood borne viruses, with a doctor available on site five days a week. Staff can facilitate referrals for service users, which can include recovery services.

The Committee heard about the initial launch of the Drug Consumption Room, based in the Prindsen site. The Drug Consumption Room began as a pilot heroin-injecting facility in 2005, before being made permanent in 2009. Further legislation passed a decade later enabled the service to expand beyond heroin consumption, permitting other illegal substances in the facility and enabling the facility to open an inhalation room. While the inhalation room is available, the legislation specified that the facility is only for those who



Committee Members with Hanne Langaas, team leader at Oslo's Drug Consumption Room

have “harmful injecting techniques”. The Committee heard that encouraging those who currently inject drugs to move towards inhalation can be a harm reduction measure, as it reduces the risk of blood-borne viruses and injecting wounds. The staff reported that last year, approximately 34% of visitors to the facility used the inhalation room.

The Committee heard that the Drug Consumption Room receives 200 people per day, though staff emphasised that this number would be higher if they had more space for service users. The consumption space has seven injecting booths and capacity for four people in the inhalation room. In the injecting room, staff can advise visitors on injections practices, working to reduce harm by suggesting safer techniques such as needle placement. The Committee heard that the majority of service users are male, which is common for drug services in Norway, with adults of all ages visiting the site. No overdose deaths have occurred in the facility since it opened.

When discussing the high number of drug related deaths in Norway, the Committee learnt about Oslo’s long-established open drug scene, and that in recent years there have been a record number of drug related deaths. The Committee heard that this has been driven by addiction to prescription medication, particularly opioids.

Norway’s only other Drug Consumption Room operates in Bergen, which follows the service model of the Oslo site. The Committee heard that there are discussions in Norway of opening further facilities, with a preference for this integrated service model rather than a stand-alone or mobile units, due to the ease of referrals and connection with other services.

The Committee discussed how the facility has applied for the necessary legal exemptions to open a drug checking service, but that this is still under consideration as there is not an existing legal framework in Norway for drug checking,

The Committee heard that staff at the facility have a good working relationship with local police, with regular engagement facilitated by meetings every two weeks. The staff emphasised that the police would rather have people consuming illegal substances within the facility than in public. Similarly, the Committee heard that the local community recognised the need for the facility.

The Committee discussed the importance of ensuring service users were treated with dignity, and the work that has been done to create a space where service users felt welcome. The provision of services outside of the injecting spaces and medical facilities, including the garden and bathrooms, as well as the work done to build closer relationships with staff were emphasised as key to this. The staff explained how they consider community inclusion to be a part of harm reduction and explained how, during the last election, staff arranged for a voting booth to be set up on the premises. As ID is required to vote in Norway, and many service users don’t have identity documents, staff were able to verify and vouch for the identity of regular visitors, enabling them to vote when they otherwise would not have been able to.

Statkraft

Amongst other Statkraft representatives, the Committee met with Petter Tollefsen, Head of Governmental Relations and International Affairs, at Statkraft's offices in Oslo. Statkraft, Norway's second largest company after Equinor, has a £1.5bn+ investment pipeline in the UK for onshore wind, hydrogen, EV charging infrastructure, solar farms, greening of the grid and battery storage. Statkraft is also looking to widen their offshore wind portfolio and to re-enter the UK offshore wind market.

The group's discussion included:

- Norway's energy mix – noting, in particular, that 80% of Norway's domestic energy comes from hydropower, and 9% from wind – and the role of Statkraft in overseeing this. The Committee heard about Statkraft's objective, as a state-owned company, of sustainably delivering the highest possible value to shareholders (namely, Norwegian society). In respect of hydropower, the Committee discussed the relative advantages (including multi-year storage, high installed capacity, remote control, easy outlets and a solution to intermittency issues), as well as the potential disadvantages (including reliance on highly variable weather, resulting in surpluses and deficits within and across years). The Committee noted that interconnection and import/export of electricity with other countries has proved an economical solution to the variation in surpluses and deficits.
- The role of oil and gas production in Norway today. In particular, it was noted that:
 - Virtually all of Norway's oil and gas is exported. Norway has limited domestic need for oil and gas because electricity dominates in domestic settings.
 - Revenue from oil and gas goes into Norway's pension fund, rather than into the domestic fiscal budget. It was noted that profits/dividends from that income in the pension fund indirectly feeds into the fiscal budget.
 - Norway's policy of continued oil and gas production is uncontroversial amongst the country's main political parties, partly on account of the number of high-paying jobs in the oil and gas sector (60,000), and the way in which profits from oil and gas production can enable investment in renewable energy.
 - There is an increasing political debate about whether there is a moral, social and ethical case for reducing production. A commission has recently been established to examine whether and how to reduce production.
 - A more salient political debate at the moment concerns reducing emissions from oil and gas production through the electrification of oil platforms.
 - Oil and gas production is an important employer for Norway, with over 60,000 people employed.
- Norway's climate goals. In particular, it was noted that:
 - Norway, through its Climate Law, has committed to become a low emission society by 2050 (entailing a 90-95% reduction in emissions).

- Norway is part of the EU's Climate Framework, and is committed to alignment with the EU's 2030 target through the Climate Agreement.
- These climate goals are accompanied by climate policies through the pricing of emissions including:
 - The CO2 tax introduced in 1992;
 - Participating in the EU's Emissions Trading Scheme since 2008; and
 - The Norwegian Global Emissions Reduction Initiative.
- This pricing of emissions is also complemented by other policies, including:
 - Regulation (including the banning of fossil fuel heating in some settings, requirements to electrify offshore energy production, and regulations on biofuels, procurement and transportation emissions in Norwegian cities);
 - Government support, notably through Enova (in respect of transportation, industry and households), Carbon Capture and Storage, electric vehicles, and offshore wind;
 - Goals and policies at municipal levels; and
 - Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI).
- Progress in Norway on CCUS and hydrogen. In particular, the Committee discussed:
 - Gassnova's role, as a state-owned company, in supporting the Government to achieve its environmental goals, particularly through the facilitation and implementation of CCUS solutions since the mid-2000s (including the Northern Lights Project); and
 - Enova's role, as a state entity, in supporting the Government's ambition to achieve its climate goals and ambitions for Norway to become a low-emission society, through increasing hydrogen production capability by building hydrogen value chains.
- The history of Norway's power market, including the role of the Alta conflict and NordPool in shaping Norway's current marketplace for energy.
- The characteristics of Norway's power market, including that it is:
 - Predicated on a market-based approach with full competition in generation and trading;
 - Characterised by high taxation of resources (with the state receiving 52bn NOK (c.£4bn) from taxation on power in 2024);
 - With high share of public ownership (88% of hydropower, and 23% of wind) – but with minimal dividends (since taxation is the main way to redistribute income);
 - And limited subsidies (these are currently offered only in respect of wind) – reflecting the market-based principles of Norway's power market; and
 - Inclusive of measures to protect consumers from high prices through subsidisation.

HM Ambassador to Norway

The Committee was hosted by HM Ambassador to Norway, Jan Thompson, for a working lunch at the Ambassador's Residence. A range of topics were discussed, including UK-Norway relations, trade and exports (particularly in respect of Type-26 Frigates), energy, Norway's space sector, and military cooperation.



Committee Members with HM Ambassador Jan Thompson.

Equinor

The Committee met with Stein Hernes, Vice President Political and Public Affairs and Tarjei Skirbekk, Special Advisor Political and Public Affairs Global from Equinor, a partially state-owned company which is the largest operator on the Norwegian Continental Shelf.

The Committee heard about the 'ten oil commandments' written by Norwegian Labour MP Rolf Hellem in the 1970s, which have become the foundation for Norwegian oil policy. The Commandments are as follows:

1. National stewardship and control must be secured for all activities on the Norwegian Continental Shelf (NCS).
2. Petroleum discoveries shall be utilised such that Norway achieves maximum independence from others as regards access to crude oil.
3. New business activity shall be developed with a basis in petroleum.
4. The development of an oil industry must be founded on necessary considerations for existing business activity, nature conservation and environmental protection.
5. Flaring of unusable gas on the NCS must not be accepted, with the exception of brief trial periods.
6. Petroleum from the NCS shall generally be landed in Norway, except in certain specific cases where socio-political considerations provide a basis for a different solution.
7. The State shall be involved at all appropriate levels, contribute to coordination of Norwegian interests within the Norwegian petroleum industry and the construction of a Norwegian, integrated petroleum community with national as well as international objectives.

8. A state oil company shall be established to safeguard the State's commercial interests and engage in appropriate collaboration with domestic and foreign oil interests.
9. North of the 62nd parallel, the chosen activity pattern shall be in keeping with the special socio-political factors associated with that region.
10. Norwegian petroleum discoveries may lead to broader perspectives for Norwegian foreign policy.

The Committee heard about the commitment and social responsibility Equinor feels to contribute to and support economic growth in Norway. Equinor explained how this is reflected in the high petroleum tax rate it pays, set at 78%. Whilst Equinor pays a high tax rate, it explained that it also receives significant tax breaks on its investments. The Committee heard about the ripple effect Equinor has on jobs, as it has deals and contracts with 1900 companies, with 80,000 jobs directly connected to them.

When discussing the future of the North Sea Continental Shelf, the Committee heard that Equinor is planning on continuing the same levels of production until 2035, and are taking steps to prolong the lifespan of the NSCS. Although Equinor explained it was unlikely that any other large fields will be discovered, they are continuing to look for smaller fields around their existing extraction sites, where existing infrastructure can be used to ensure the costs of extraction remains low.

The culture of consensus and cooperation amongst Norwegian stakeholders was emphasised to the Committee as a key success factor for Equinor, with the government, industry and trade unions working together for a national purpose. This climate of cooperation has enabled stable conditions, facilitating forward planning and investment.

On Rosebank, Equinor explained that it believed it can develop the site with as low emissions as possible, citing previous experience of developing difficult projects. Equinor emphasised how important it considers the project to be and explained its intention to be as transparent as possible with the work.

The Committee discussed the constant balancing pressures of costs, emission and security of supply Equinor, as well as the wider industry, contends with. Equinor explained that since the war in Ukraine, this balance has shifted, with a heavier weight being placed on the need for security of supply. It explained that Norway was able to increase its supply of gas by 8% following the war, to manage the increased demand. Equinor noted that the intermittency of renewables was posing a challenge in countries such as Germany, which has added emphasis to the need for security of supply.

Bergen

Northern Lights Project

The Committee visited the Northern Lights Project, outside Bergen. The Committee was hosted by:

- Benedicte Staalesen, Director, Communication & Public Affairs.
- Aksel Plener, Operations Manager.

The Northern Lights Project (NLP) is responsible for developing and operating CO₂ transport and storage facilities, open to third parties, as part of 'Longship', the Norwegian Government's full-scale carbon capture and storage project. It will be the first ever cross-border, open-source CO₂ transport and storage infrastructure network and offers companies across Europe the opportunity to store their CO₂ safely and permanently underground.

- The Committee heard about the Northern Lights Project's (NLP) overarching mission to reduce and remove European industrial CO₂ emissions, and the unique nature of NLP's business case (namely, offering its carbon injection as a commercial service to private parties). The conception and gestation of the project was also discussed, from launch by the Norwegian Government, subsidisation and EU approvals processes, and final approval in the Norwegian Parliament in 2020 with broad support.
- The Committee noted the NLP's governance and ownership model – including the role of Equinor, TotalEnergies and Shell, and cross-border collaboration.
- It was noted that the facility's construction is now complete, and the Project is ready to begin operation and injecting CO₂, for two commercial customers in the Oslo-fjord region. The Committee heard the facility is due to start operations in the summer, with CO₂ received from a waste facility in Oslo. NLP can currently proceed 1.5m CO₂ tonnes/year as part of phase one, which will increase to 3.5m tonnes in phase two, and then up to 5m tonnes in the longer term.
- The Committee discussed the role of Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) as a vital part of the solution to carbon reduction, particularly in respect of carbon-intensive industries where it is difficult or impossible to reduce emissions (such as cement or steel production).
- The methods of transporting CO₂ to the facility were also discussed. NLP explained their belief that both pipeline and transportation by vessel is necessary to ensure a flexible approach which can reach a more geographically dispersed range of emitters. The Committee heard about the development of four bespoke CO₂ transporter ships (the largest dedicated CO₂ transporter



Committee Members at the Northern Lights Project.

ships in the world, one of which has been delivered to date), and the carbon-reducing technology employed on the ship (including their use of rotor sails, liquid gas as a fuel source, use of ‘bubbles’ to improve aquadynamic efficiency, and utilisation of onshore electrical power when moored).

- There was discussion of technology and geology underpinning the injection method, and the reliability of the technology therein.
- The Committee heard that the NLP is now looking to move from proof of concept, to a commercial pace of operation – noting, in particular, that the facility has capacity to accommodate 10% of Norway’s industrial CO2 emissions. It was noted that the NLP’s longer-term financial viability is underpinned, in part, through voluntary participation in emissions trading schemes (for example, a bioenergy plant in Denmark is contracted to provide for 430,000 CO2 tonnes/year in order to secure voluntary ETS credits for selling to Microsoft). Equally, the Committee heard that the current regulatory landscape reduces the project’s cost effectiveness. For example, the NLP is subject to the same regulatory frameworks as offshore oil and gas production facilities, but without the financial value creation to be able to absorb the cost of this regulatory drag. It was noted that the Norwegian Government is a positive collaborator, in recognition of the fact that de-risking the regulatory context improves profitability, and results in increased competition, thereby improving the environment impact.
- There was also discussion of the NLP’s efforts to share learning with international collaborators, in order to improve the uptake and viability of CCUS technology worldwide. Gassnova – Norway’s state-owned enterprise responsible for providing strategic and technical advice to the Ministry of Energy in respect of the state’s interests in CO2 management – has been instrumental in this.
- Finally, the Committee heard about the importance of local acceptance/buy-in to such large infrastructure.



Committee Members at the Northern Lights Project.

The Committee then received a tour of the Northern Lights facility, following the value chain from vessel docking/receipt of carbon, to temporary onshore storage, and then pipeline transportation prior to injection.

MO Gyldenpris

The Committee visited MO Gyldenpris, a facility that houses the Drug Consumption Room in Bergen and was hosted by Catherine Rørstadbotten, the Head of the facility. When comparing the site to the facility the Committee visited in Oslo, the opening hours of the two sites was noted as a key difference, with the Bergen site mostly operating from 8:00 -14:00 and 15:00 – 20:30 and the Oslo site operating from 9:00 – 22:00.

Similarly to the Oslo site, the Drug Consumption Room is connected to a needle exchanges service, which offers clean equipment to visitors. The Committee heard that the service distributed 500 needles last year, and had 50% of those needles returned to them for safe disposal.

The Bergen Drug Consumption Room has six injecting bays and an inhalation room, which has capacity for up to three people. On average, the Drug Consumption Room has 200 visits per day, with the injecting services being used more than the inhalation room. The Committee heard that amphetamines and heroin are the most common drugs consumed at the site. Since 2024, staff noted that an increased police presence in the centre of Bergen had led to an increased attendance of the facility.

Encouraging a shift from injecting to inhalation was again highlighted to the Committee as a harm reduction practice. The staff noted that due to the size and set up of the space, monitoring and communicating with visitors in the inhalation room can be a challenge, but that the risk of overdose was lower there than in the injecting booths. The Committee heard that the site could benefit from more space, since the facility was reconfigured to create the inhalation room.

The Committee discussed the limited medical services offered on site, including some blood tests, but heard that staff refer visitors to the local hospital for wound care and more serious issues. The importance of the day centre, which is co-located in the same building, was emphasised to the Committee, as a space where visitors can access further services. The Committee heard that co-ordination between related services was a challenge, particularly when there was potential overlap in responsibilities and provision. Availability of emergency accommodation and broader housing was also highlighted as a challenge for the sector.

Bergen Chamber of Commerce

The Committee met with the Bergen Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI), which is the largest trade and industry organisation in Bergen. The Committee was hosted by Tom-Christer Nilsen, Business Policy Manager and Nicoline Westervoll Wiederstrøm, Business Policy Adviser at BCCI. The BCCI has more than 5000 members, and represents more than 150,000 employees.

The BCCI is politically neutral and aims to:

- Set the agenda for, and influence current commerce and industrial political issues;
- Be the most important meeting place for members – an intersection between government, administration, research and higher education;
- Organise networks and resource groups on important areas of interest; and
- Make the business of the region visible.

The Committee discussed Bergen's position as a cluster city, due to the closely linked industries and prevalence of cooperation and collaboration. Examples of such clusters include the Seafood Innovation Cluster and Media City Bergen. The Committee heard that services, primarily shipping and maritime services, make up the largest portion of Bergen's exports, followed by fuels and then seafood and metals. The vast majority of those exports go to Europe, with the UK and Germany amongst the top importers.

The Committee heard that some of the most significant environmental challenges facing businesses in Bergen include the increased costs of transportation, prompted by the challenges posed by fjords, and access to energy through the grid. The EU emissions standards, including the EU CO₂ quota system, as well as a national carbon taxes, were cited as the key regulations businesses face regarding sustainability,

In terms of barriers to further transition to renewables, the Committee heard about grassroots opposition to onshore windfarms, stemming from several political groups and fuelled by the spike in energy prices that came after the war in Ukraine. Opposition comes from, amongst other quarters, conservationists and climate change deniers, as well as those who sought to challenge the export of Norwegian gas and oil in order to lower domestic prices and reduce the need for onshore windfarms.

The Committee heard that Norway has mitigated the potential negative impact on jobs by enabling the upskilling of workers, encouraging education to allow workers to shift industries.

Greenspot Mongstad

Whilst at the BCCI, the Committee met with Einar Vaage, Head of project Greenspot Mongstad. Mongstad Industrial Park is home to Norway's biggest industrial cluster offering high quality facilities and efficient services for the energy industry. The cluster is responsible for 1/3 of exports for the region.

The cluster is home to Norway's largest oil refinery, operated by Equinor, Technology Centre Mongstad (TCM) and Mongstad supply base (Asset Buyout Partners). The refinery produces 4% of Norwegian CO₂ emissions, with Mongstad being the biggest CO₂ emitter in Norway, although the Committee heard that having these emissions concentrated in one area was advantageous.

Greenspot Mongstad is a project seeking to help industries with the green transition at the Industrial Park and facilitate new growth. Its focuses include:

- Decarbonisation of the oil refinery;
- Supporting new large industries e.g. DRI, land-based fish farming and Sustainable Aviation Fuel); and
- Carbon Capture and Storage for existing and new industries.

The planned projects from these new large industry developments have a cumulative estimated turnover per year of 18 billion NOK, creating 600 new jobs. The Committee heard how Mongstad was working towards its own just transition by building new, viable industries around the oil refinery, using existing infrastructure and land. Einar Vaage emphasised the opportunities for skilled workers, and the potential creation of local housing and a new community for staff at the Industrial Park.

Stavanger

Nysnø

The Committee visited Nysnø's offices in Stavanger, and was hosted by:

- Ingvild Meland, Chief Operations Officer
- Yvonne Silden Langlo, Senior Investment Manager

Nysnø is the Norwegian state's climate investment company. Nysnø invests in companies that provide profitable and smart solutions to the challenges of climate change, stimulating the development of sustainable businesses and technologies.

- The Committee heard about the context to and rationale for the creation of Nysnø, including the 2015 reduction in the price of oil (and potential for resulting unemployment in Norway – particularly in Stavanger), and the impetus to reduce greenhouse gas emissions created by the Paris Climate Agreement. It was noted that this cumulative context led to the identification of a gap in respect of venture capital equity for unlisted entities, which the Norwegian Government responded to through the creation of Nysnø – an investment firm that can invest in early-phase companies in clean technology.
- The Committee heard that Nysnø was established in 2017, and began work in 2018. Since then, the company has made approximately 50 investments. All investments are intended to result in a return, a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, and therefore to result in positive environmental and social impact. It was noted that, as a state-owned company, Nysnø's goal is to achieve the highest possible return over time within a sustainable framework. This is achieved through Nysnø's mandate, which is to:
 - Reduce greenhouse gas emissions;
 - Invest in unlisted companies;
 - Focus on companies in the transition from technology development through to commercialisation and growth/scaling up;
 - Focus on companies within or linked to Norway;
 - Always be a minority investment, with no more than 49% ownership;
 - Ensure market-based returns on investments; and
 - Secure funding through the state budget on an annual basis.

- It was noted that Nysnø's funding on an annual basis through the state budget can result in the challenge of unpredictable levels of funding, but that Nysnø's total investment fund now stands at approximately £500m.
- Nysnø invests in companies which are focused on renewable energy, resource efficiency, sustainable society-building, or enabling technologies.
- The Committee heard that the returns on investment are longer-term – with investments usually not expected to provide a return for at least 10 years.
- The Committee also discussed the investment challenges presented by state-owned companies. It was noted, in particular, that profits from state-owned businesses are usually returned to the annual state budget, rather than being re-invested into new technology. As a result, investment in new and emerging green technologies can be more limited than in other countries. The Committee heard that Nysnø is intended to address this limitation.
- It was noted that venture investment per capita is the lowest in Norway amongst Nordic countries, largely on account of domestic knowledge and capital being used primarily for oil and gas investment, rather than venture investment in green technology. Nysnø's role in addressing this limitation was discussed.
- A number of specific examples of Nysnø investments and technological applications were discussed, including 'Thorvald' by Saga Robotics (intended to reduce pesticide use and therefore waste in agriculture), and an industrial heat pump by Heaten.
- The Committee also heard about Nysnø's intention to improve sovereign capabilities and resource security through green solutions; for example, encouraging domestic production of biofuels for jet fighters (to reduce current reliance on Finnish biofuels)
- The wider global context, and challenges for green technologies therein, was also discussed.

Norwegian Offshore Directorate

The Committee met with Louis Vos, Assistant Director of Data Management and Nadine Mader-Kayser, Assistant Director Technology, Analysis & Co-existence from the Norwegian Offshore Directorate, an arm of the Ministry of Energy.

The Committee discussed the Directorate's main objective, which is to contribute to maximising value to society from oil and gas activities through efficient and responsible resource management. This includes responsibility for the coexistence of various industries on the Norwegian Continental Shelf, including fisheries, seabed minerals and oil and gas.

The Committee heard that demand for oil and gas is forecasted to persist, even with a green transition, particularly since the war in Ukraine which has resulted in an increased dependence on Norway.

The Directorate highlighted that, when compared with international competitors, Norway had the lowest average emission intensity in kg CO₂, for both oil and natural gas. The oil and gas industry remains responsible for a quarter of Norway's national emissions, which prompted the Government to set a target of a 50% reduction of 2005 emission rates from the industry by 2030.

The Committee heard praise for the Norwegian Sovereign Wealth Fund, which the Directorate explained secured the proceeds of the oil and gas industry for future generations, and a time when the oil and gas industry may decline.

Looking to the future, the Directorate explained that if investment continues in exploration and there is continued use of new technologies and recoverability programmes, a higher plateau of oil and gas production could be maintained in Norway beyond 2050.

Energy Transition Norway

The Committee attended a round table hosted by Energy Transition Norway, an energy transition cluster comprised of more than 150 members and partners from a wide range of companies, including start-ups, investors and research covering the complete value chain for oil and gas. The Committee was hosted by Kristoffer W. Moldekleiv, EU Advisor and Egil Aanestad, Managing Director at Energy Transition Norway.

The Committee heard how the cluster seeks to develop innovative industry projects through their Technical Committee, which is made up of major energy producers on the Norwegian Continental Shelf. By using this committee to evaluate project proposals early on, the cluster hopes to minimise the market risk, ensuring end users are involved in the project endorsement. Once endorsed as a cluster project, ETN provides active support to project teams, helping secure financing while ensuring steady progress in industry projects aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, unlocking new business opportunities, and fostering job creation.

The Committee heard presentations on the history of oil and gas production in Norway and state ownership and involvement in the sectors, the challenges of scaling up the green energy industry and the powers national authorities hold from:

- Atle Blomgren, Senior Researcher, NORCE and Project Manager, ImpactWind.
- Dr. Jason Deegan, Senior Researcher, NORCE.
- Charles Abbott, Advisor, Rogaland fylkeskommune.
- Rune Dahl Fitjar, Professor of Innovation Studies, University of Stavanger.