FINANCE COMMITTEE

AGENDA

12th Meeting, 2005 (Session 2)

Tuesday 26 April 2005

The Committee will meet at 10.30 am in Committee Room 2 to consider the following agenda items:

1. **Item in private:** The Committee will decide whether to take item 6 in private and whether to consider its draft reports on the Financial Memoranda of the Housing (Scotland) Bill and the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Bill in private at its next meeting.

2. **Housing (Scotland) Bill:** The Committee will take evidence on the Financial Memorandum from –
   - Archie Stoddart, Head of Housing Bill Team, Scottish Executive;
   - Roger Harris, Private Sector and Affordable Housing Policy Division, Scottish Executive;
   - Jonathan Dennis, Economic Adviser, Analytical Services Division, Scottish Executive; and
   - Jean Waddie, Private Sector and Affordable Housing Policy Division, Scottish Executive.

3. **Annual Report:** The Committee will consider its draft annual report.

4. **Efficient Government:** The Committee will consider a paper on site visits as part of its scrutiny of Efficient Government.

   Not before 11.30 am:

5. **Infrastructure Investment Plan:** The Committee will take evidence on the Infrastructure Investment Plan from –
   - Nicol Stephen, MSP, Minister for Transport;
   - John Ewing, Head of Transport Group, Scottish Executive;
   - John Howison, Head of Trunk Roads, Design and Construction Division, Scottish Executive;
   - Damian Sharp, Head of Public Transport Major Infrastructure Team, Scottish Executive; and
   - Claire Dunbar-Jubb, Head of Finance and Business Planning Team, Scottish Executive.
6. **Witness Expenses:** The Committee will be invited to agree to the payment of witness expenses and to delegate to the Convener responsibility for considering claims under rule 12.4.3.

7. **Management of Offenders etc. (Scotland) Bill (in private):** The Committee will consider its draft report on the Financial Memorandum of the Management of Offenders etc. (Scotland) Bill.

Susan Duffy
Clerk to the Committee
The papers for this meeting are:

**Agenda Item 2**

Written submissions on the Housing (Scotland) Bill from:
- COSLA
- Scottish Association of Landlords

Housing (Scotland) Bill and associated documents available online (previously circulated to members):

- [Housing (Scotland) Bill](#)
- [SPICe briefing on Housing (Scotland) Bill](#) available online

**PRIVATE PAPER**

**Agenda Item 3**

Finance Committee Draft Annual Report

**Agenda Item 4**

Paper from the Clerk

**Agenda Item 5**

Infrastructure Investment Plan 2005: Report by the Budget Adviser (previously circulated to members as Committee paper [FI/S2/05/11/1](#))


**PRIVATE PAPER**

**Agenda Item 6**

**PRIVATE PAPER**

**Agenda Item 7**

**PRIVATE PAPER**
Background
1. Members will take evidence today from the Bill Team responsible for the Housing (Scotland) Bill. Requests for written evidence in the form of the Committee’s standard questionnaire on financial memoranda were sent to COSLA, Disability Rights Commission Scotland, Law Society of Scotland, Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors in Scotland, Scottish Association of Landlords (SAL), Scottish Consumer Council, Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, and Scottish Tenement Group.

2. Written responses were received from:
   - COSLA
   - Scottish Association of Landlords

3. These responses are attached.

Recommendation
4. Members are invited to consider the responses received to inform their questioning of the Bill Team.

Judith Evans
Senior Assistant Clerk to the Committee
COSLA

Consultation
1. Did you take part in the consultation exercise for the Bill, if applicable, and if so did you comment on the financial assumptions made?

Yes, COSLA were involved in extensive consultation on the Bill, although we did not have any opportunity to comment on the financial assumptions made prior to the Bill being laid before parliament.

2. Do you believe your comments on the financial assumptions have been accurately reflected in the Financial Memorandum?

See response to question 1.

3. Did you have sufficient time to contribute to the consultation exercise?

There was sufficient time for the content of the Bill, but not for financial considerations. However, even with more time, it would have been difficult to accurately reflect the financial costs for local government in such a far-reaching piece of legislation. For this reason we seek flexibility in the allocation of resources.

Costs
4. If the Bill has any financial implications for your organisation, do you believe that these have been accurately reflected in the Financial Memorandum? If not, please provide details.

We believe that the Financial Memorandum places an inaccurate ceiling on the funding levels that would be required for national implementation. The Memorandum states that £3 million would be at the high end of the possible range as it has been based on the Glasgow model. However, we would contend that the costs incurred in other areas may also be significant or even proportionally higher.

Rural areas are likely to face significant costs due to the remoteness and inaccessibility of the areas. To illustrate this, Angus Council’s model for a Private Sector Housing Team to meet the requirements of the Bill has estimate annual costs of £78,000. If this figure were used to establish a pro rata national cost it would be well in excess of £3.5 million (based on 2001 Census population). We agree that this is very crude, but does illustrate that at the figure of £3 million is not necessarily at the 'high end' of the possible range.

5. Are you content that your organisation can meet the financial costs associated with the Bill? If not, how do you think these costs should be met?

On behalf of local authorities, we are not convinced that financial costs can be met. Given the importance of the extra responsibilities being
placed upon local authorities, we would be very keen to avoid inadequate resources being made available to ensure the success of this ambitious legislation, and urge the Scottish Executive to avoid setting unrealistic ceilings on funding levels.

6. Does the Financial Memorandum accurately reflect the margins of uncertainty associated with the estimates and the timescales over which such costs would be expected to arise?

It is very difficult to anticipate the likely costs that will arise for local authorities. Accordingly, we would welcome a great degree of flexibility in the possible funding allocated to local authorities, e.g. the removal of language such as 'the estimated annual cost of about £3 million is likely to be at the high end of the possible range'.

Wider Issues

7. If the Bill is part of a wider policy initiative, do you believe that these associated costs are accurately reflected in the Financial Memorandum?

As stated in the Financial Memorandum, the Bill seeks to improve the condition of private sector housing, which contains an estimated total of £5 billion worth of disrepair. If we are serious about tackling this staggering figure, we should ensure that adequate investment is made at an early stage in the life of this legislation. This will maximise the impact it has from the start, and avoid the possibility of increased disrepair through underinvestment in local authorities’ role. We fully agree with the Bill’s principal aim of encouraging owners to take responsibility for their own homes. However, local authorities will need adequate resources to encourage owners to make the kind of investment required to tackle the £5 billion disrepair figure.

8. Do you believe that there may be future costs associated with the Bill, for example through subordinate legislation or more developed guidance? If so, is it possible to quantify these costs?

As stated earlier, it is very difficult to anticipate the likely costs that will arise for local authorities. However, we do hope that the Scottish Executive is sympathetic to future costs for local government as they arise, to ensure the overall success of this legislation.
Scottish Association of Landlords

Dear Ms Evans

Written Evidence provided to the Scottish Parliament Finance Committee considering the Housing (Scotland) Bill

The Directors of the Scottish Association of Landlords (SAL) welcomes the opportunity to provide written evidence to the Finance Committee on behalf of members and consultees to its Policy & Parliamentary Affairs Committee.

Our Association’s membership represents a diverse range of private landlords operating throughout Scotland including corporate professional landlords and some who act as agents for landlords. SAL aims to promote good practice in the private rented sector and act as a conduit between landlords and local and central government to best reflect the overall views and interests of those member landlords operating in the sector.

SAL would like to draw the Finance Committee’s attention to the following main issues of concern to our members as outline in the Bill:

Defect, Disrepair & Repairing Standard

Whilst SAL is cognisant of the need to address the now outdated ‘Tolerable Standard’ as outlined in Schedule 10 of the Housing (Scotland) 1988 Act and welcomes the opportunity to debate the introduction of a new ‘Repairing Standard’, we would like to reflect concern that these new standards do seem to be higher than those already existing in Schedule 4 of the 2001 Act for RSL’s. In recognising the need to introduce a new standard we do have serious concerns that, yet again, a differential is stated between repairing standards in both social and private rented housing sectors.

The SAL would like all landlords to have regard to the same standards as they should apply to all tenancies and not just the PRS and goes further to support the suggestion that all written leases should include an explicit statement of repairing obligations on the part of the landlord. However, the SAL would welcome further clarification on the proposal for landlords to carry out a repair inspection before every let, which potentially could be every six months. How extensive would the repair inspection expected to be and what resultant impact will this have on rents increases to tenants?

Whilst SAL does accept that RSL’s are subject to other forms of regulation in this regard we also believe that any differential is inequitable and could cause confusion for tenants.

Electrical/Gas Appliance Safety & Basic Thermal Insulation

From views sought from members, SAL sees no reason to object to extending the tolerable standard to include thermal insulation and the requirement that installations for the supply, distribution and use of electrical power be adequate and safe for use. However, some concern was raised with regard to how to define what is electrically ‘safe’ and what qualifications are required of
engineers carrying out these safety inspections. On consulting with SELECT (Electrical Contractors Association of Scotland) concern has been raised about the standards in which electrical checks are benchmarked against as many practitioners are not members of a regulatory body in Scotland.

From gathering responses together from members there appears to be a great deal of confusion with regard to: what details are required to determine basic thermal insulation, who will carry out such inspections and at what cost? In addition, SAL is of the opinion that any additional costs incurred will undoubtedly be passed onto the tenant and all endeavours should be made to minimise such costs.

SAL also wishes to comment on the initial costing of these alterations as detailed in the Financial Memorandum to the Bill which estimates such costs to be in the region of £2 million to £4 million. Such work will, at least potentially, require to be carried out, six months from enactment of this part of the Bill and may prove too onerous for some landlords unless some form of grant aid funding is made available. This is of course assuming that such tests, or requirement for works to be carried out, form part of the ‘works to carried out’ report required to be given to tenants at the beginning of their tenancy.

**The Private Rented Sector Housing Tribunal**

SAL welcomes this proposal as a much more ‘user friendly’ approach to dealing with landlords refusing to carry out essential repairs. Indeed, further consideration to extend this service to give landlords the right to bring tenants to a tribunal who refuse to give access to do essential repairs would be most welcome by landlords who, like tenants, only have redress through the courts.

The Rent Assessment Committee seems an excellent model on which to base this tribunal and its members, with additional training, should be most able to deal with the cases put before them.

As previously noted SAL is keen to see equal standards across all tenure and would respectfully recommend that consideration is given to these tribunals becoming cross-tenure although Communities Scotland is delegated the responsibility to regulate RSL’s it is often reported that social tenants do not have ‘easy access’ to redress through a tribunal system and are often not able to exercise the same ability to move as some private tenants. This often involves high costs and moving away from their living area of choice where they have family and local ties. Such Tribunals, if cross-tenure, would be much better regarded by ALL tenants as fair and equitable if ALL tenants had equal rights to access such a service.

As landlords already have a contractual duty to carry our essential repairs such fair costs should be borne by the landlord and SAL does not see this proposed system as being unduly onerous to landlords. However, given this opinion, SAL would strongly recommend that this ‘tribunal’ should not be extended to consider cases which go beyond the landlords’ statutory duty to repair and maintain.
Houses in Multiple Occupation
The SAL is clearly of the opinion that there is a need for HMO Legislation to be framed as primary legislation in order for there to be parity in regulations and welcome the possibility that Scottish Ministers could direct how licencing fees are determined. Existing legislation allows Local Authorities to impose additional regulations and set fees which has proven to both confuse and frustrate many private landlords seeking licences in more than one local authority. SAL members often report their frustration in being unable to apply for three year licences in some Authorities and are confused by the additional costs levied on them by Authorities imposing additional licencing conditions on a year on year basis. A new legislative framework would be seen as a very positive step towards developing consistency in regulations throughout Scotland, which we believe is essential in developing any national licencing scheme.

Given the experience reported from members since the orders were introduced in 2000, SAL would respectfully suggest than any future Bill in this regard would place importance on such introduction, sooner rather than later, in order to minimise further confusion and the consequence of HMO Landlords leaving the market place.

Extending the National Registration Scheme for Private Landlords
The SAL has long supported a national registration scheme which we hoped would be developed and administered by the Executive and not devolved to Local Authorities. The current conditions detailed under the Anti-social Behaviour (Scotland) Act 2004, like HMO Licencing, would appear to add to further confusion for landlords who are required to comply with different registration tests in different authorities. In light of the fact that registration schemes have yet to be implemented, SAL strongly recommends that the National Registration Scheme is not extended to include additional regulations until such time as the existing scheme can properly be implemented and evaluated.

SAL recognises that Scottish Ministers, under the Anti-social Behaviour etc (Scotland) Act 2004, have reserved powers to cap registration fees but it is also cognisant of the fact that ultimately any cost in extending such a licencing regime will be passed onto landlords in higher fees and SAL would respectfully recommend that the Finance Committee considers further financial burdens on landlords as being potential detrimental to the PRS as a whole.

Adaptations for Disabled Occupants
SAL supports the ethos that tenants with disabilities are able to carry out adaptations to their home. However, we do exercise caution in issuing blanked rights for tenants and compulsion on landlords to comply. Although grants are available to qualifying tenants to carry out such adaptations, many disabled tenants may not have the resources to restore the property to its original condition at the end of the tenancy.
Member landlords along with other interested bodies have noted such concerns with SAL and have even suggested that where it was not previously their practice to take a security deposit from tenants they might now consider doing so in the event of any remedial works being required once a tenant vacates. Members also raised further questions as to who will pay for such reinstatement where a tenant dies or abandons the property.

Perhaps the Committee could give further consideration and guidance to what adaptations they might deem ‘reasonable’ given the circumstances of the particular tenant concerned.

Conclusion
SAL welcomes the opportunity to debate these important issues which impact on the PRS in Scotland. However, we do exercise caution on imposing further regulation on a sector of Scottish society that operates on market forces and relies on individual investors providing vital housing stock for tenants who often are unable to access other housing options of their choice.

Ultimately SAL is concerned that further regulations and resultant costs will, at best, only further increase rent levels and reduce the opportunity for many tenants to access private rented accommodation, or at worst, further deter existing and new private landlords from investing in the sector.

The above comments reflect the collective opinion of the Directors and Members of the Scottish Association of Landlords, who welcomed the opportunity to contribute its opinion on the Stage 1 debate of this Bill.

John Blackwood
Director
Policy & Parliamentary Affairs
Scottish Association of Landlords
Finance Committee
12th Meeting 2005 – Tuesday 26 April 2005
Finance Committee Annual Report 2004-05

Background
1. The Committee is required to publish its annual report for the parliamentary year 7 May 2004 to 6 May 2005. The style and length of the report, with a maximum of 750 words, has been laid down by the Conveners’ Group in order to maintain consistency across committees.

2. The Committee is being asked to agree the report at this meeting in order to finalise the substance of the report and in order to make provisional arrangements for publication.

Recommendation
3. The Committee is invited to consider and agree the attached draft report.

Kristin Mitchell
April 2005
Finance Committee

Remit and membership

Remit:

1. The remit of the Finance Committee is to consider and report on-

   (a) any report or other document laid before the Parliament by members of the Scottish Executive containing proposals for, or budgets of, public expenditure or proposals for the making of a tax-varying resolution, taking into account any report or recommendations concerning such documents made to them by any other committee with power to consider such documents or any part of them;

   (b) any report made by a committee setting out proposals concerning public expenditure;

   (c) Budget Bills; and

   (d) any other matter relating to or affecting the expenditure of the Scottish Administration or other expenditure payable out of the Scottish Consolidated Fund.

2. The Committee may also consider and, where it sees fit, report to the Parliament on the timetable for the Stages of Budget Bills and on the handling of financial business.

3. In these Rules, "public expenditure" means expenditure of the Scottish Administration, other expenditure payable out of the Scottish Consolidated Fund and any other expenditure met out of taxes, charges and other public revenue.

*(Standing Orders of the Scottish Parliament, Rule 6.6)*

Membership:

Des McNulty (Convener)
Wendy Alexander
Ted Brocklebank
Alasdair Morgan (Deputy Convener from 28 September 2004)
Fergus Ewing (Deputy Convener to 23 September 2004)
Jeremy Purvis (to 26 January 2005)
Frank McAveety (from 28 October 2004)
Jim Mather
Kate McLean (to 28 October 2004)
Dr Elaine Murray
Andrew Arbuckle (from 26 January 2005)
John Swinburne

Committee Clerking Team:

Clerk to the Committee
Susan Duffy

Senior Assistant Clerk
Terry Shevlin (to 31 January 2005)
Judith Evans (from 31 January 2005)

Assistant Clerk
Emma Berry (to 21 January 2005)
Kristin Mitchell (from 7 March 2005)

Committee Assistant
Emilia Crispo (to 1 October 2004)
Christine Lambourne (between 4 October 2004 and 9 January 2005)
Edna Stirrat (from 1 February 2005)
The Scottish Parliament

Finance Committee

x Report, 2005 (Session 2)

Annual Report of the Finance Committee for the Parliamentary Year 7 May 2004 to 6 May 2005

The Committee reports to the Parliament as follows—

Introduction

1. There have been a number of changes in the membership of the Committee during the last parliamentary year. Alastair Morgan replaced Fergus Ewing on 23 September 2004, and was chosen as the new deputy convener on 28 September 2004. Frank McAveety replaced Kate McLean on the Committee from 28 October 2004. Andrew Arbuckle replaced Jeremy Purvis on the Committee from 26 January 2005.

2. The Committee has had a busy work programme this year. The main element of the Committee’s work is the annual budget process, and additionally scrutinised 18 Financial Memoranda, completed 2 inquiries, and undertaken a further 2 inquiries.

Inquiries and Reports

3. The principal role of the Finance Committee is to co-ordinate the Parliament’s response to the Scottish Executive’s expenditure proposals throughout the annual, three stage Budget Process. (Further information on the budget process may be found in the SPICe briefing note 03-24, Guide to the Scottish Budget).

4. The Committee and the Scottish Executive have agreed that a revised process should be adopted to recognise the impact of biennial spending reviews. It has been agreed that there should be a full three stage process in Spending Review years and a more limited process (with no formal stage one) in non-spending review years.

Inquiry into the Relocation of Public Sector Jobs

5. The Committee published its report on 24 June 2004 and the Executive has subsequently revised its guidance in accordance with the Committee’s recommendations. The Committee has subsequently taken evidence from the Minister for Finance and Public Services and requested bi-annual report updates from the Executive on its progress.
Cross Cutting Review of Economic Development
6. The Committee undertook phase two of its cross-cutting review which involved considering written evidence and taking oral evidence from a range of witnesses, including 4 Ministers, at four meetings. The Committee’s report was published on 18 March 2005.

Efficient Government
7. The Committee agreed to scrutinise the Executive’s Efficient Government initiative which was published on 29 November 2004. As part of this, the Committee is also considering civil service reform and intends to submit written evidence to the Public Administration Select Committee on their inquiry into the Effectiveness of the Civil Service. The Committee will continue to take written and oral evidence as part of the scrutiny process.

Holyrood
8. In addition to its role in scrutinising the budget of the SPCB, the Finance Committee has taken oral evidence on the Holyrood building project five times in the last parliamentary year.

Bills
9. To improve its scrutiny of Financial Memoranda for Bills, the Committee agreed to adopt differing levels of scrutiny for Financial Memoranda, depending on the financial impact of the legislation. These three levels are:

Level 1 – invite written evidence to pass on to the lead committee for the Bill.

Level 2 – invite written evidence from bodies and organisations upon whom costs fall, and take oral evidence from Scottish Executive officials.

Level 3 – as Level 2, but with additional oral evidence from affected organisations.

10. Since the implementation of this, the Committee has scrutinised 4 Financial Memoranda at Level 1, 5 Financial Memoranda at level 2 and 5 Financial Memoranda at Level 3. The Committee has also considered 4 Financial Memoranda prior to the introduction of the new scrutiny levels.

Subordinate Legislation
11. In this parliamentary year, the Finance Committee considered two Scottish Statutory Instruments, both of which sought to amend the Budget (Scotland) Act 2004.

Petitions
12. The Finance Committee has received no petitions in the past year.
Innovations/ Networks/ Miscellaneous

13. The Committee ran a Budget seminar on 22 March 2005. This seminar enabled the Committee to discuss its approach to scrutinising the annual budget process with delegates from a variety of organisations.

Mainstreaming Equality

14. In addition to ongoing discussions with the Scottish Executive on equality issues in the budget, the Committee’s Budget Adviser is part of a working group investigating ways to equality proof the annual budget.

Meetings

15. The Finance Committee met 32 times between 7 May 2004 and 6 May 2005. Of these meetings, one was held entirely in private and 20 were held partly in private. The majority of private items were to consider draft reports.

16. All Committee meetings were held in Edinburgh, with the exception of its meeting in Cupar on 15 November 2004.
Finance Committee

12th Meeting 2005 - Tuesday 26 April 2005

Efficient Government – Site Visits

Background

1. At its meeting on 25 January 2005, the Finance Committee agreed that it would take evidence from Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) and local authorities as part of its scrutiny of Efficient Government towards the end of the Parliamentary year.

2. It is suggested that rather than invite representatives to give evidence to the Committee, Committee members could visit local authorities and NDPBs to speak to a cross-section of staff.

3. This paper identifies four NDPBs whose efficiency programmes are contained in the Scottish Executive’s publication, Efficiency Technical Notes, that the Committee may wish to consider visiting.

4. The Committee could also meet with representatives from the two local authorities in the area where two of the NDPBs are based. The two local authorities will be subject to savings for the Efficiency Technical Notes, in conjunction with the other local authorities in Scotland. Further information on this is provided later in this paper.

5. This paper also provides a suggested timetable for the Committee to make site visits to four NDPBs and two local authorities as part of its scrutiny of Efficient Government.

Savings from NDPBs

6. From details provided in the Efficiency Technical Notes, the following information below outlines a brief summary of the savings envisaged for each of the NDPBs and local authorities that the Committee will be meeting at these site visits.

Scottish Natural Heritage

7. Between 2005-06 to 2007-08, SNH intend to save £3.667m. These savings will be dependent upon the completion of their on-going programme of improvements to ICT systems and equipment, while other savings will be dependent upon the outcome of their relocation exercise. Savings may also come as a result of its current Performance, Finance and Management Review, which it expects to offer recommendations with potential for securing business efficiency gains and scope for additional efficiency savings.

VisitScotland
8. Savings for VisitScotland will be £2m, with £1m in 2006-07 and £1m in 2007-08. These savings will fall against VisitScotland’s running costs and will result from the consolidation of support services and other functions, following the integration of VisitScotland with the area tourist boards.

Scottish Enterprise
9. Scottish Enterprise identifies that £5.3m will be saved each year, between 2005 and 2008. Scottish Enterprise states that these savings will be made through their Business Transformation programme which has been implemented and is currently entering its final stage. The savings will come from headcount reduction (for example, reducing the number of staff required and establishing seven new shared services) and through areas such as procurement.

Scottish Environment Protection Agency
10. The savings in SEPA are dependent upon their restructuring programme which started on 1 April 2005. It intends to save a total of £3.995m between 2005 and 2008. SEPA states that these savings will be made through a reduction of staff over a number of business areas, the introduction of a national laboratory IT system, and the reduction of expenditure in supply costs (for example, utilities, travel, catering, etc.).

Local Government
11. It is intended that between 2005 and 2008, £335m will be saved across all local authorities. It is the responsibility of each local authority as to how and if the savings are actually achieved, and to manage its share of the efficiency savings in the most appropriate way depending on local circumstances and priorities. In order to deliver this, funding to local authorities will be reduced, and local authorities will be expected not to compensate this through increasing council tax levels.

Timetable of Site Visits
12. The case study visits, would take the place of formal Committee meetings held in Edinburgh, on two Tuesday mornings. As there would be four NDPBs involved in these site visits, the Committee could split into two groups to meet two of the NDPBs each.

13. The first visit would see each group visiting an Edinburgh based NDPB on 7 June 2005. These would be SNH and VisitScotland.

14. The groups would then report back to the next Committee meeting on the 14 June 2005.

15. On the morning of 21 June 2005 each group would go either to Glasgow to visit Scottish Enterprise and the Council, or to Stirling to visit SEPA and the Council.

16. The table below illustrates the suggested site visit timetable.
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Group A</th>
<th>Group B</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday 7 June 2005</td>
<td>VisitScotland (Edinburgh)</td>
<td>SNH (Edinburgh)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday 14 June 2005</td>
<td>Committee Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday 21 June 2005</td>
<td>Scottish Enterprise; Glasgow City Council</td>
<td>SEPA; Stirling Council</td>
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<td>(Glasgow)</td>
<td>(Stirling)</td>
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17. The Committee is also invited to agree that the following members from the Committee are assigned to each group for the site visits. Should members have a strong preference over which group they wish to be in, the Clerks will try and accommodate this as far as possible.

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<th>Group A</th>
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<td>Des McNulty</td>
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18. Should the Committee agree to these suggested site visits, the clerks will prepare a paper on behalf of the Committee to obtain permission from the Parliamentary Bureau.

The Committee is invited to agree:
- To undertake site visits to SNH and Visit Scotland in Edinburgh in the morning of 7 June 2005;
- To undertake site visits to Scottish Enterprise and Glasgow City Council; and SEPA and Stirling Council in the morning of 21 June 2005.

Kristin Mitchell
Assistant Clerk to the Committee