



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

**Local Government and Communities
Committee**

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Dear Michelle,

COVID-19: Scottish Government's Advisory Group on Economic Recovery

Thank you for your letter of 8 July 2020 providing an update on your Committee's inquiry on the impact of COVID-19 on Scotland's economy. The Committee will be very interested in the outcome of your work and welcomes your offer to provide an update in due course.

In your letter, you ask for information on whether the Committee intends to carry out any work in relation to the relevant recommendations in the report of the Scottish Government's Advisory Group on Economic Recovery. I can confirm that the Committee has plans in place to undertake the following related work:

5.8 Planning and regulation (Local Government and Communities Committee)

The Scottish Government, regulatory bodies and local authorities should review their key policy, planning and consenting frameworks, especially for key infrastructure investments such as marine renewables, to accelerate projects.

The Committee keeps a watching brief on planning matters. Publication of the draft National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) has been delayed a year to September 2021 due to COVID-19. The Scottish Government also recently [wrote to the Committee](#) to confirm that it is consulting on parts of Scottish Planning Policy that relate to housing and the Committee will consider whether to undertake some work relating to this consultation shortly after recess, as well as whether and how to contribute to scrutiny of NPF 4. Except inasmuch as it might be covered by NPF 4, the Committee has no particular detailed locus in relation to marine planning.

5.16 The Third Sector (Local Government and Communities Committee)

The Scottish Government should take action to protect the capacity and financial sustainability of the third sector, in recognition of its important role in building and strengthening social capital. It should examine the scope for longer-term funding arrangements for services; more flexible and collaborative approaches to procurement; and new ways to incentivise private investment in the sector.

The Committee has been looking at the impact of COVID-19 on voluntary organisations and the third sector, considering the issues above and other issues with representatives of the sector at our [meeting on 26 June 2020](#). We are holding a further evidence session with the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government on third sector on 21 August, and will then consider next steps.

5.17 People, place and community (Local Government and Communities Committee)

The Scottish Government should support a renewed focus on place-based initiatives, building on lessons learned from initiatives on Community Wealth-Building. It should also accelerate investment in housing, in particular through the Scottish National Investment Bank.

Prior to the COVID19 crisis, the Committee undertook [an online digital engagement exercise](#) to find out from people what makes good community wellbeing. A common theme emerging from this work was a desire from people to be more involved in local decision-making and in providing local services, and to contribute to placemaking. To follow up on this, the Committee had agreed to undertake post-legislative scrutiny of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, particularly those parts of the act which allow community bodies to enter into dialogue with public authorities about local services and issues and those which allow community bodies to take on assets from the public sector. This work was regrettably put on hold due to the crisis. As we emerge from lockdown, there is now an opportunity to begin this work late this year.

I hope this is helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any further question on any of this work.

Yours Sincerely



James Dornan
Convener
Local Government and Communities Committee