



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Christina McKelvie MSP
Convener
Equalities and Human Rights
Committee

By e-mail only

**Rural Economy and Connectivity
Committee**

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Dear Christina,

I am writing in response to your correspondence of 26 January 2018 requesting input from the Rural Economy and Connectivity (REC) Committee to the Equalities and Human Rights Committee's recently launched inquiry on 'human rights and the Scottish Parliament'.

I note that your committee is interested in gathering information from committees on how they interact with human rights issues as part of their scrutiny processes.

The REC Committee takes the approach of mainstreaming equalities/ human rights issues as part of the scrutiny process, whether it is for legislation or its own inquiries.

Your letter also raises several questions relating to the consideration of human rights issues more broadly by parliamentary committees. In a general sense, it would seem appropriate that one committee retains responsibility for general matters relating to human rights. The current situation whereby human rights issues are included with equalities within the remit of your Committee appears reasonable.

That is not to say that other committees should not carry out scrutiny of human rights issues which are pertinent and specific to their remits.

However, it is suggested that scrutiny of human rights issues could be enhanced by the provision of suitable guidance and other resources to committee clerks and SPICe to ensure that they are best placed to provide the necessary support and advice to members when they arise. In addition, the provision of suitable guidance

to increase the capacity of stakeholders to comment on human rights issues when making submissions to committee inquiries and bill scrutiny might also be worth considering.

In addition, a key role of committees is to scrutinise the Scottish Government's legislative proposals. When a bill is introduced, the associated Policy Memorandum will contain a statement on whether it gives rise to human rights issues and is ECHR compliant. It is suggested that it would be of benefit to the scrutiny process if the Scottish Government was encouraged or required to include more detail in the Policy Memorandum on how it consulted and reached conclusions on the potential impact of the bill on human rights.

I look forward with interest to your Committee's inquiry findings in due course.

Kind regards



Edward Mountain
Convener