

Key points

- Parliament entered recess on 23 December 2017: With business commencing again on 7 January 2018.
- The Scottish Draft Budget 2018-2019 was published.
- The Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe) published research briefings on the Impact of the Autumn Statement, and the Scottish Government's Draft Budget 2017-2018.
- A consultation on Socio Economy Duty in public authorities Scotland ran from 8 July to 12 September 2017.

Key Publications

Reports

- [Scottish Framework and Action Plan for Women in Enterprise](#)
- [Scottish Expert Advisory Panel on the Collaborative Economy: Call for Evidence](#)
- [Scottish Budget: Draft Budget 2018-19](#)
- [The Role of Income Tax in Scotland's Budget](#)
- [Report of the Barclay Review of Non-Domestic Rates](#)

Research & Statistics

- [Scotland's Devolved Employment Services, Work First Scotland and Work Able Scotland, 2017, Quarters 1 and 2](#)
- [Labour Market Update: August 2017 Overview](#)
- [Non-Domestic Rates and Operating Surplus 2011 - 2014](#)
- [BREXIT: The Financial Settlement and the Withdrawal Agreement](#)
- [Labour Market Update: September 2017](#)
- [Disposable Household Income in Scotland 2015](#)
- [Gross Domestic Product \(GDP\): 2nd Quarter 2017](#)
- [How is the Scottish Economy Performing? 2nd Quarter 2017](#)
- [Air Passenger Duty and Air Departure Tax - Highlands and Islands Exemption](#)
- [Labour Market Update: October 2017](#)
- [Labour Market Update: November 2017](#)
- [Non-Domestic Rates and Operating Surplus 2010-2015](#)
- [Earnings in Scotland: 2017](#)
- [UK Autumn Budget 2017 - Impact on Scotland](#)
- [Local Government Finance: Fees and Charges 2011-12 TO 2015-16](#)
- [The Social Impact of the 2017-18 Local Government Budget](#)
- [Income Tax in Scotland: 2017 UPDATE](#)
- [Labour market Update: December 2017](#)
- [Local Government Finance: Draft Budget 2018-19 and Provisional Allocations to Local Authorities](#)
- [Draft Budget 2018-19](#)

- [Draft Budget 2018-19: Taxes](#)

Selected Open Consultations (closing date)

- [Consultation on the Digital Economy Act 2017: part 5 \(data sharing codes and regulations\) in relation to the delivery of Scottish public services](#) (5 February 2018)

In the Chamber

Universal Credit

During a meeting of the Parliament, a motion was introduced by Alex Rowley (Lab) on Universal Credit. Mr Rowley called on support for Citizens Advice Scotland's call to stop the accelerated roll-out of universal credit. Christina McKelvie (SNP) supported the motion, noting that her constituents were the next local authority area to see the roll out of Universal Credit. Jeremy Balfour (Con) noted that the current benefits system is extremely complex and that Universal Credit should simplify social security by replacing a complex and chaotic system that has damaged people. ([Read more](#))

Finance (Income Tax)

During a meeting of the Parliament a debate was introduced by Alex Rowley (Lab) on Finance. Mr Rowley noted that Nicola Sturgeon, in a speech on the Programme for Government, had stated that there will be discussions on creating progressive tax in Scotland. Mr Rowley welcomed this statement and that Scottish Labour will be open to these discussions however the question of how much tax is to be raised and how that will be spent still remains. ([Read more](#))

Gender Pay Gap

During a meeting of the Parliament a motion was introduced by Gordon Lindhurst (Con) on behalf of the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee. Last spring, the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee undertook an inquiry into the economic impact of the gender pay gap in Scotland. Mr Lindhurst thanked everyone who gave their views during the inquiry, all their views helped to inform the inquiry and shape the report. The committee wanted to look at the issue from an economic point of view and to understand the potential benefits to Scotland's economy if there were parity of earnings. ([Read more](#))

City Regional Deals

During a meeting of the Parliament a statement was made by Keith Brown (SNP), The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work, on the City Regional Deals. Cities and their regions are the engines of our economy. Increasing jobs, investment and employment in our city regions will drive up national economic growth. City region deals are one of our key economic levers. Eighty-three per cent of Scotland's population—4.5 million people—live in the areas that are covered by existing or planned city region deals. According to the

latest figures, which are from 2015, those same areas account for 86 per cent of Scotland's gross value added and 2.2 million jobs, which is 85 per cent of the total number of Scottish jobs. ([Read more](#))

Burntisland Fabrications

During a meeting of the Parliament a statement was made by Keith Brown (SNP), The Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work, on Burntisland Fabrications (BiFab). On Thursday 9 November, ministers and officials were informed that BiFab was in some financial difficulty. The company contacted the Minister for Business, Innovation and Energy, to inform him that it was about to file a notice of intention to appoint administrators the following day in order to protect the company. That notice created a 10-day period during which BiFab could seek a solution to its financial difficulties. ([Read more](#))

Non-domestic Rates (Arm's-length External Organisations)

During a meeting of Parliament, a debate was introduced by Murdo Fraser (Con) on the Barclay Review of non-Domestic rates and arm's-length external organisations. Mr Fraser referred to the recent findings on the "competitive advantage" local authority sport, culture and leisure facilities receive under charitable conditions and rate relieve, but noted the detrimental impact that rates would have on Scotland's leisure trusts. Mr Fraser thanked the Cabinet Secretary of Finance and Constitution for the reversal of implementation of the "swim tax" and maintaining the rate relief to Trust organisations. The Minister for Public Health and Sport, Aileen Campbell, noted that the Scottish Government will consider the review's 30 recommendations, and that Mr Mackay has announced the support of charitable rate relief to ALEOs ([Read more](#))

In the Committees

Draft Budget Scrutiny 2018-19

The Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee met with witnesses from Highlands and Islands Enterprise: Sandra Dunbar, the head of business improvement and internal audit, and Charlotte Wright, the chief executive. The discussions were surrounding the scrutiny of the Draft Budget 2018 -19 and members of the committee were invited to ask the witnesses questions. ([Read more](#))

Islands (Scotland Bill) - Stage 1

The Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee met to discuss the Islands (Scotland Bill) for the first evidence session. The committee were joined from the Scottish Government; Ian Turner, who is the team leader for community empowerment; Darren Dickson, who is a policy officer; and Kirsten Simonnet-Lefevre, who is a solicitor. The committee discussed the development of the bill and involvement of the Islands of Scotland. ([Read more](#)).

Economic Data

The Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee met with Richard Marsh, Margaret Cuthbert, John McLaren, Professor Richard Murphy, and Professor Catia Montagna to commence the economic data inquiry. The remit for the inquiry is to examine the accuracy, utility and comprehensibility of Scottish economic statistics; to consider what data is required for effective delivery and scrutiny of policy; and—perhaps most importantly—after looking at the issue, to recommend where any improvements might be made. ([Read more](#)).

European Union (Withdrawal) Bill

The Finance and Constitution Committee met to take evidence on the Scottish Government's legislative consent memorandum on the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill, which is currently being considered by the United Kingdom Parliament. For that purpose, they were joined by Michael Russell, who is the Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe. Mr Russell was accompanied by Scottish Government officials Ian Davidson and Gerald Byrne. The minister had written to the committee with a set of draft amendments that would rectify what he sees as deficiencies in the bill. ([Read more](#)).

Economic Data

The Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee met with Rebecca Riley, who is director of the Economic Statistics Centre of Excellence; Martin Weale of the Royal Statistical Society; and Professor Campbell Leith of the Royal Economic Society. The committee met to discuss the economic data inquiry, the current provision of economic statistics in Scotland and the nature of the statistics and data that are available. ([Read more](#))

Brexit (Impact on Scottish Budget)

The Finance and Constitution Committee met for a discussion on the impact of Brexit on the Scottish economy, which is part of the focus for budget scrutiny this year. The committee were joined by Professor David Bell, who is a fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, and Professor David Heald, who is professor of public sector accounting at the University of Glasgow. The committee had received written responses from the guests and spent the meeting asking questions on the impact Brexit will have on the Scottish Budget. ([Read more](#))

Economic Data

The Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee met to continue discussions on the economic data inquiry. The committee were joined by Dr Stuart McIntyre, Fraser of Allander institute, and Professor David Bell, University of Stirling. The discussion was based on the measuring and collection of data, and whether the correct data was being collected. ([Read more](#))

European Union (Withdrawal) Bill

The Finance and Constitution Committee met for a round-table evidence-taking session on the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill, and were joined for the discussion by Simon Collins, executive officer, Scottish Fishermen's Federation; Kate Houghton, planning policy and practice officer, Royal Town Planning Institute; Isobel Mercer, policy officer, RSPB Scotland; Robin Parker, public affairs manager, WWF Scotland; Dr Serafin Pazos-Vidal, head of the Brussels office, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities; Professor Colin Reid, professor of environmental law, University of Dundee; Clare Slipper, political affairs manager, National Farmers Union Scotland; and Daphne Vlastari, advocacy manager, Scottish Environment LINK. The round-table session was structured around five themes. ([Read more](#))

Economic Data

The Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee met to continue discussions on the economic data inquiry. The committee were joined by witnesses from the Scottish Fiscal Commission: David Wilson, chief commissioner; John Ireland, chief executive; and Mairi Spowage, deputy chief executive. There were discussions around possible gaps and weaknesses in Scottish data. In evidence from the Scottish Fiscal Commission, Mr Wilson highlighted a number of challenges, including construction, lack of real-terms GDP data for expenditure and income methods, and the lack of Scottish-specific price data. ([Read more](#))

European Union (Withdrawal) Bill

The Finance and Constitution Committee met for further discussions and evidence on the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill. The committee were joined by Michael Clancy, director of law reform at the Law Society of Scotland; Professor Jim Gallagher, research fellow at Nuffield College at the University of Oxford; Professor Michael Keating, professor of politics at the University of Aberdeen; and Professor Aileen McHarg, professor of public law at the University of Strathclyde. The discussions had a focus on Clause 11 and if it is necessary in order for the United Kingdom Government to achieve the objectives that it seeks to achieve in the bill. ([Read more](#))

Economic Data

The Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee met to continue discussions on the economic data inquiry. The committee were joined by Sir Charles Bean, member of the budget responsibility committee, Office for Budget Responsibility; Ed Humpherson, director general for regulation, UK Statistics Authority; and Jonathan Athow, deputy national statistician and director general for economic statistics, Office for National Statistics. The discussions focused on the current provision of economic statistics in Scotland, any gaps in coverage in those statistics and any specific recommendations for improving them. ([Read more](#))

Budget (Scotland) Act 2017 Amendment Regulations 2017 [Draft]

The Finance and Constitution Committee met for consideration of the Scottish statutory instrument that provides for the 2017 autumn budget revision. Before the committee came to the motion that seeks their approval of the regulations, they had an evidence-taking session. The committee were joined by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution, Derek Mackay, who was accompanied by two officials, Bill Stitt and Scott Mackay. ([Read more](#))

Economic Data

The Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee met to conclude discussions on the economic data inquiry. The committee were joined by Keith Brown, the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work. He was accompanied by Roger Halliday, chief statistician and head of performance; Gary Gillespie, chief economist; and Sandy Stewart, senior statistician; all from the Scottish Government. Mr Brown made a statement on the need for robust and timely economic statistics for Scotland. ([Read more](#))

European Union (Withdrawal) Bill

The Finance and Constitution Committee met for the taking of evidence as part of the consideration of the Scottish Government's legislative consent memorandum on the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill. The committee were joined by Dr Kirsty Hughes, director, Scottish Centre on European Relations; Professor Alan Page, professor of public law, University of Dundee; and Professor Rick Rawlings, professor of public law, University College London. The committee meeting was focused on questioning on issues relating to clause 11. ([Read more](#))

Scotland's Economic Performance

The Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee met for evidence in round-table format, as part of the inquiry into Scotland's economic performance. The committee were joined by Professor Catia Montagna who has a chair in economics at the University of Aberdeen; Richard Marsh, director of 4-Consulting; Dr Tanya Wilson from the University of Stirling; Dr Alexandros Zangelidis from University of Aberdeen; and Professor Julia Darby from the University of Strathclyde. The witnesses began with opening statements about their work and the committee posed their questions. ([Read more](#))

Draft Budget Scrutiny 2018-19 and Scotland's Economic Performance

The Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee met for an evidence session, in which the committee scrutinised the draft budget 2018-19 and Scotland's economic performance. They were joined by Linda Scott, chief executive officer at West Lothian Chamber of Commerce. There was a change in witnesses so the committee held a single session, covering a number of issues that were relevant to Linda Scott's area of operation and remit. ([Read more](#))

European Union (Withdrawal) Bill

The Finance and Constitution Committee met for the taking of evidence on the Scottish Government's legislative consent memorandum on the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill, which is currently being considered by the United Kingdom Parliament. They were joined for this item by Michael Russell, the Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe, who was accompanied by Scottish Government officials Ian Davidson and Luke McBratney. The minister gave evidence on 20 September, and since then the committee have taken evidence from a range of witnesses, including lawyers, academics, UK ministers and other stakeholders. ([Read more](#))

Budget (Impact of Brexit)

The Finance and Constitution Committee met to discuss the impact of Brexit on the Scottish budget. They were joined for this item by Dr Jim Campbell, reader in economics at the women in Scotland's economy research centre at Glasgow Caledonian University; Jonathan Hall, director of policy and member services at NFU Scotland; and Naomi Clayton, policy and research manager at the Centre for Cities. The committee began discussions around the economic impact on Scottish cities. ([Read more](#))

Draft Budget 2018-19

The Finance and Constitution Committee met for discussion on the administration and collection of Scottish income tax with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. They were joined by Jim Harra, who is director general, customer strategy and tax design, and Sarah Walker, who is deputy director, devolution. The discussions were focused on paying for the new tax system in Scotland. ([Read more](#))

Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body Budget 2018-19

The Finance and Constitution Committee met for the taking of evidence on the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body's budget for 2018-19. They were joined by Jackson Carlaw MSP, from the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, and, from the Scottish Parliament, Sir Paul Grice, chief executive, Derek Croll, head of finance and security, and Michelle Hegarty, assistant chief executive. Mr Carlaw made an opening statement on the budget, noting that the main drivers of the current budget, on all indicators available, the corporate body believes that we have moved on to a new level of demand for services that will continue throughout the session. It is busy on the legislative front and in terms of inquiries, votes, motions and other indicators that we can measure. ([Read more](#))

Draft Budget Scrutiny 2018-19

The Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee met to hear the Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work, Keith Brown, give evidence on the Scottish Government's draft budget 2018-19. The Scottish

Government officials with him were Chris Stark, director of energy and climate change; Mary McAllan, director for economic development; and Hugh McAloon, deputy director, fair work and skills. ([Read more](#))

Draft Budget 2018-19

The Finance and Constitution Committee met for evidence on the Scottish Government's draft budget 2018-19. They were joined via videoconference by Lady Susan Rice, who is the chair of the Scottish Fiscal Commission; John Ireland, its chief executive; Professor Alasdair Smith, who is a commissioner; and David Wilson, who is also a commissioner. The discussion was surrounding the forecast reports produced by the Scottish Fiscal Commission. ([Read more](#))