

Key points

- The Scottish Parliament term commenced on 22 October and began recess on 21 December.
- The Scottish Budget was announced and published by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work on 12 December.
- The Economic Action Plan was published on 24 October.
- The Enterprise and Skills Board published their strategic plan on driving productivity and inclusive and sustainable growth.

Key publications

Policy

- [Scottish Budget 2019-2020](#)
- [Economic Action Plan 2018-2020](#)
- [Business and Regulatory Impact Assessments \(BRIA\) toolkit](#)
- [Scotland's Place in Europe: Science and research](#)

Announcements

- [Budget Statement 2019-2020](#)
- [Leaving the European Union \(Learning Directorate\)](#)
- [National Economic Forum – November 2018: First Minister's Speech](#)
- [Circular Economy Hotspot 2018: First Minister's speech](#)
- [Tay Cities Region Deal](#)

Reports / Factsheets

- [Enterprise and Skills Board: strategic plan](#)
- [Scottish income tax: 2019-2020](#)
- [Tourism tax: discussion document](#)
- [European Structural and Investment Funds: Operations funding](#)
- [Scotland's export performance monitor](#)
- [Infrastructure Investment Plan 2015: programme pipeline update September 2018](#)
- [LEADER 2014-2020: process evaluation](#)

Research & Statistics

- [Fair Start Scotland – 2018, quarters 1 and 2, Work First Scotland and Work Able Scotland – 2018, quarter 2](#)
- [South of Scotland Enterprise Bill: equality impact assessment](#)
- [South of Scotland Enterprise Bill: business and regulatory impact assessment](#)
- [Smarter Workplaces programme: EQIA summary](#)
- [South of Scotland Enterprise Bill \(SPICe\)](#)
- [Labour Market Update: December 2018 \(SPICe\)](#)

Minutes

- [National Economic Forum: November 2018](#)
- [Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board minutes: August 2018](#)
- [Council of Economic Advisers teleconference minutes: August 2018](#)

Selected Open Consultations (closing date)

No applicable consultations are currently open.

In the Chamber

Young People (Equality of Opportunity) [25 October]

During General Question Time, Iain Gray MSP (Lab) asked the Scottish Government what they are doing to ensure equality of opportunity for young people across local authorities. The Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, John Swinney MSP (SNP) said the government were focusing on raising attainment and achievement and are working collaboratively with national agencies, such as Skills Development Scotland ([Read more](#)).

Economic Action Plan [25 October]

During General Question Time, Dean Lockhart MSP (Con) asked the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work when he will publish the new Economic Action Plan and whether it will include specific targets for improving the economy. Mr MacKay noted it was published on 24 October and includes stimulus in relation to innovation, infrastructure and investment ([Read more](#)).

Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board Strategic Plan (Implementation) [31 October]

During Portfolio Question Time, John Scott MSP (Con) asked the Scottish Government what role local government will have in implementing the Board's strategic plan. The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government, Aileen Campbell MSP (SNP) stated that the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board is independent and will develop its own plans for engagement and implementation; the Government will continue to work closely with COSLA ([Read more](#)).

Life Sciences Sector [1 November]

During General Question Time, Miles Briggs MSP (Con) asked the Scottish Government what support it is providing to help grow the life sciences sector. The Minister for Trade, Investment and Innovation, Ivan McKee MSP (SNP) outlined the £18 million investments in the sector, including collaborative working and innovative centre. The target for sector growth is £8bn from £4bn ([Read more](#)).

Tourist Tax [7 November]

During Portfolio Question Time, Andy Wightman MSP (Green) asked the Scottish Government for an update on consultations for the introduction of tourist tax powers for local authorities. Derek Mackay MSP (SNP), Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work, stated that national discussions will take place, starting with round table discussions ([Read more](#)).

City Deals [7 November]

Ruth Maguire MSP (SNP) asked the Scottish Government during Portfolio Question Time how much of the budget has been allocated for City Deals, and if the Ayrshire Growth Deal is a priority. Mr Mackay noted that the Scottish Government's budget will outline resources with the upcoming Scottish Budget and the Government's intention to achieve a heads of terms agreement with both Governments in Ayrshire as soon as possible ([Read more](#)).

Borderlands Growth Deal [8 November]

During General Question Time, Colin Smyth MSP (Lab) asked the Scottish Government when it will respond to the proposals from the five cross-border local authorities regarding a borderlands growth deal. The Minister for Energy, Connectivity and the Islands, Paul Wheelhouse MSP (SNP) responded on behalf of the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity (Michael Matheson MSP), noting that he had reiterated the Government's strong support and agreement to meet again to discuss next steps. He added that they continue to push the UK Government for 100 per cent coverage of Scotland with Growth Deals ([Read more](#)).

Business Rates [6 December]

During First Minister's Questions, Jackson Carlaw (Con) asked Ms Sturgeon if small firms in Scotland will feel the full benefits of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Business Rate reduction in England. The First Minister noted that this will be set out in the Budget on 12 December, but also stated that the average value of relief received by businesses in Scotland this year is more than £4,500. The comparable figure for England is less

than £4,000. Finally, even after the announcement in the chancellor's budget, average relief in England will still be lower than in Scotland, and that is before the Scottish Government's budget for next year ([Read more](#)).

Scottish Government's Draft Spending and Tax Plans 2019-20 [12 December]

During a meeting of the Scottish Parliament, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Economy and Fair Work, Derek Mackay MSP (SNP) read a statement on the Scottish Government's draft spending and tax plans for 2019-20. Mr Mackay noted that the Budget "prepares our economy for the opportunities of the future, enables the transformation of essential public services and builds a more inclusive and just society" ([Read more](#)).

In the Committees

Business Support Inquiry [13 November]

During a meeting of the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee, the Committee took their first evidence session on their Business Support Inquiry. The Committee heard from Lynne Cadenhead, Chair, Women's Enterprise Scotland; Matt Lancashire, Director of Policy and Public Affairs, Scottish Council for Development and Industry; Susan Love, Policy Manager, Federation of Small Businesses; and Liz Cameron, Chief Executive, Scottish Chambers of Commerce. Questions included support for SMEs following the transfer of Business Gateway to Local Authorities, if information on performance should be in the public domain and support from the private sector ([Read more](#)).

Business Support Inquiry [20 November]

During a meeting of the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee, the Committee continued to review evidence for the Business Support Inquiry. The witnesses were Rachael Brown, Chief Executive Officer, Cultural Enterprise Office; Douglas Westwater, Director of Community Enterprise; and Fiona Godsman, Chief Executive of the Scottish Institute for Enterprise. The witnesses were asked 'How would you describe the provision of business support for small and medium-sized enterprises at the local level in Scotland? What are the strengths and weaknesses of that provision, and what can be done to improve it?' ([Read more](#)).

Business Support Inquiry [27 November]

The Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee were joined by witnesses for the Business Support Inquiry: Andrew Dickson, Fund Manager, Business Loans Scotland; Keith Devine, Senior Director of Business Banking, the Royal Bank of Scotland; and Professor Gary McEwan, Chief Executive, Elevator. They were asked 'What do you think of the provision of access to finance for small and medium-sized enterprises in Scotland? Is sufficient finance provided and available to them? Do SMEs in Scotland face specific difficulties in gaining access to finance?' ([Read more](#)).

South of Scotland Enterprise Bill: Stage 1 [28 November]

During a meeting of the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee, the Committee heard their first evidence session on the South of Scotland Enterprise Bill, in which they heard from the Scottish Government bill team: Karen Jackson, Team Leader with the south of Scotland Economic Development Team; Sandra Reid, the Bill Team Leader; Felicity Cullen from the Legal Directorate; and Fraser Gough, the Parliamentary Counsel to the Scottish Government. The bill team were asked about the SoSEB consultation and how the new agency would differ from existing arrangements ([Read more](#)).

South of Scotland Enterprise Bill: Stage 1 [12 December]

During a meeting of the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee, the Committee continued their evidence session on the new South of Scotland Enterprise Agency. The Committee heard from Garry Clark, Development Manager, East of Scotland, Federation of Small Businesses; Matt Lancashire, Director of Policy and Public Affairs, Scottish Council for Development and Industry; Margaret Simpson, Director, Scottish Borders Social Enterprise Chamber; and Norma Austin Hart, Chief Executive Officer of Dumfries and Galloway Third Sector Interface. Mike Rumbles MSP (LD) asked panel members, 'What are your aspirations for the economy of the

south of Scotland? What is your vision for the area in 10 to 20 years' time, and what needs to be done for the area if it is to reach its full potential?' ([Read more](#)).

Business Support Inquiry [18 December]

During a meeting of the Economy, Energy and Fair Work Committee, the Committee were joined by Hugh Lightbody, Chief Officer, Business Gateway National Unit at the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, and Jamie Fowler, Customer Service and Partnership Manager for Business Gateway at COSLA. The Convenor first asked How effective has business gateway been in terms of its original intention, which was to be “a first stop access for businesses of all sizes and all public support, available both locally and nationally”? Has it achieved the original intention, exceeded it or not quite met it and, if so, in what areas? ([Read more](#)).

South of Scotland Enterprise Bill: Stage 1 [19 December]

During a meeting of the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee, the Committee began with the third evidence session on the South of Scotland Enterprise Bill. Witness were Steve Dunlop, Chief Executive, Scottish Enterprise; Douglas Cowan, Director of Strengthening Communities, Highlands and Islands Enterprise; Chris Brodie, Head of Skills Planning and Sector Development, Skills Development Scotland; Malcolm Roughead, Chief Executive, VisitScotland; and Michael Cross, Director of Access, Skills and Outcome Agreements, Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council. The witnesses discussed what the major economic and social challenges were faced by the South of Scotland ([Read more](#)).