

**Chief Executive's Report to the SPCB
June 2019**

Introduction

This report looks at recent activities across the organisation including:

- Extinction Rebellion camp on the landscape area
- Heavy legislative workloads
- Finance Office's proposal to move to quarterly reporting.
- Engagement activities including the successful launch of the Presiding Officer's regional days programme, strengthening local engagement with local communities, and giving a voice to under-represented groups.

If you have any comments or questions on any aspect of this report, I would be happy to discuss them with you.

Paul Grice

Clerk/Chief Executive

OVERVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITIES

General

At the time of writing this report, Extinction Rebellion is coming to the end of its 5 day protest camp. While the protestors have caused some disruption to traffic in the centre of Edinburgh, there has been no disruption to parliamentary business. The group held a 'chain around Holyrood' on Tuesday but apart from a short period when the car park was blocked, all Members and staff were able to access the building without any problems. Members will have noted the increased police presence in the Chamber for the stage 3 debates and FMQs and again, there was no disruption to business.

As agreed with the SPCB, we had increased searches in place at the public entrance for all visitors but arrangements were put in place for all committee witnesses to be fast tracked. We also had additional staff volunteers helping out to speak to those waiting to check in bags. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Members, staff and contractors for their patience over the week.

Parliamentary business

Chamber/ Committee

As anticipated, June is proving to be very busy. Members will be well aware that much of June has been taken up with stage 3 debates. Some, such as the Planning Bill, have also necessitated longer sitting times.

Over the month, Committees have been looking into the handling of the Government's harassment processes, supporting Stage 1 of the Smacking Bill, and Stage 2 of the Transport Bill and the Climate Change Bill.

In addition, work has been undertaken on contingency plans in case Parliament/Committees need to meet over the summer in relation to Brexit.

Legal Services

The Solicitors Office has been considering the timetable for the Referendum Bill and under which will fall under the Finance and Constitution Committee's remit.

Solicitors are also working with clerking teams on the implications for the legislation programme in the event of Project Unicorn being put into place during a sitting period.

The Solicitor's Office will continue to be busy over the summer recess with ongoing Bill work.

Parliamentary Engagement

Public Engagement Group

The first pillar of our Public Engagement Strategy, to improve awareness of the relevance and accessibility of the Parliament, is the focus of the Parliament's 20th anniversary programme. There were two key anniversary milestones for the Parliament in May – the date of the first election and that of the first sitting. Media coverage was widespread and included Presiding Officer interviews with the Press Association, Global Radio, ITV Border, the BBC and the Herald. Our social content included interviews with former Members, photographs from 1999, Winnie Ewing MSP's opening speech (which had the highest viewing figures on Facebook for 2019), and the launch of a #throwbackthursday series on Instagram.

May also saw the successfully launched the Presiding Officer's regional days programme, strengthening local engagement with local communities, and giving a voice to under-represented groups. The first took place in Maryhill and Springburn on Friday 31 May when 6 engagements were undertaken. These took place in a local primary school, with asylum seekers, with Regional Equality Councils, on mental health through the Festival of Politics, and to promote our apprenticeship scheme.

The launch of the Presiding Officer's tour struck a particularly positive note with the media and featured prominently in the Herald and the Scotsman, 6 other newspapers and the BBC network.

We also trialled a new engagement tool with 54 young people, known as Agenda Day. Indeed, it was a young person we met through our Year of Young People work who facilitated the Agenda Day element.

Encouraging further engagement with those we meet is key. So, it was rewarding to see a previous participant of the Young Women Lead initiative included in the book edited by Dr Jim Johnston and Professor James Mitchell "The Scottish Parliament at 20".

International Relations Office

The International Relation Office supported the following inward visits:

- The Parliament played host to two separate visits by Speakers of Australian state parliaments, Tasmania and Victoria, during the reporting period. The focus of both visits was parliamentary reform as well as parliamentary services and support to MSPs (accommodation, facilities management, security).
- Stuart McMillan MSP attended the mid-year meeting of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's International Executive Committee as Acting Regional Representative for the British Islands and Mediterranean Region and attended meetings of the Planning and Review Sub Committee. The meeting took place in Ottawa, Canada from 11-15 April.
- Claire Baker MSP, Stuart McMillan MSP, Margaret Mitchell MSP and Tavish Scott MSP attended the CPA's BIMR Annual Conference and AGM in

Guernsey from 19-22 May 2019. The theme of the conference was 'Fake News and Disinformation'.

- Margaret Mitchell MSP attended a meeting of the BIMR Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Steering Committee on 20 May in Guernsey. The meeting focussed on discussions to develop a new strategic plan for the next three years.
- The International Relation Office supported inward visits by the Turkish Consul General and the Principal Officer of the US Consulate in Edinburgh. Further visits were also hosted by delegations from Sweden and Pakistan.

Events and Exhibitions

The Parliament's ongoing **20th Anniversary programme** saw the Presiding Officer host a series of events starting with the *Still true to its principles? 20 Years of the Scottish Parliament* event on Thursday 9 May in the Debating Chamber with former Members Annabel Goldie; Robin Harper; George Lyon; Tricia Marwick; and Henry McLeish.

In addition, the Presiding Officer hosted an event to launch two new books – *The Scottish Parliament in it's own words; an oral history* and *Scottish Parliament at Twenty* – on Wednesday 12 June. On Wednesday 19 June the Presiding Officer will host a preview screening of *Children of The Devolution*, a BBC produced two-part series on the lifespan of the Parliament. The Presiding Officer will also chair a Question and Answer session with the journalist Allan Little.

The **Euroquiz 2019** national final event took place on Monday 13 May. After winning local heats, the top 32 teams took part in the Debating Chamber final chaired by the Deputy Presiding Officer Christine Grahame MSP.

On Thursday 6 June the **Donald Dewar Debate Memorial Debate** event took place in the Chamber chaired by the Presiding Officer. 128 teams took part in the competition with four teams making it to final.

Her Majesty The Queen will address the Scottish Parliament on Saturday 29 June as part of the Parliament's 20th Anniversary programme of events and activities. The ceremony will be held in the Parliament's Debating Chamber. The ceremony will also include performances from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, the National Youth Choir of Scotland and Jackie Kay, Scots Makar.

Members will be joined by some of the young people who were born on 1 July 1999. Once the Chamber event has concluded, the Parliament will open its doors to the people of Scotland for an afternoon of celebration and commemoration.

The *Welcome* and *Parliament & You* sections of the new semi-permanent exhibition will be launched as part of the anniversary event on Saturday 29 June. The *Welcome* section features a short video by the Presiding Officer and also features a large-scale replica of the head of the Parliament Mace, made following 3d digitisation of the Mace.

The *Parliament & You* section features digital interactives exploring laws passed by the Parliament since 1999 and the work of the Parliament, its Members and Committees. The main content of these are video interviews with six people exploring a range of issues – the ban on smoking in public places; the promotion of British Sign Language; support for young people growing up in care; land reform; LGBT+ equality; and voting rights for 16 and 17 year olds.

Visitor Services

Visitor Services received confirmation that the first annual inspection by VisitScotland, following our Five Star Visitor Attraction award in 2018, has resulted in a stronger Five Star award being confirmed for this year. All public-facing teams assessed received an equal or better score this year, resulting in an increase in the overall points being awarded. This is a particularly satisfying result, given the additional efforts to improve services and additional training sessions that all teams have undertaken.

May remained a very busy months for guided tours with 1,743 visitors joining our free tours (128% capacity fill), with a further 1,246 joining our 10 Minute Talks.

The Parliament Shop continues to sell good quantities of the 20th anniversary-branded merchandise.

Facilities Management

Facilities Management has been working on recommissioning the ponds outside the Parliament; these have now been painted and the barriers around them removed.

A room in Queensberry House has recently been refitted as a quiet workspace. It has been fitted with three workstations and can be booked via the FM Helpdesk.

Three lifts in various parts of the building will be out of action over the summer recess to allow for essential maintenance. Alternative lifts are available except in Queensberry House. Contingency measures will be in place for anyone with accessibility issues in Queensberry House.

Human Resources

Human Resources will be undertaking a complete review of HR policies over the next two years. This is intended to be a review of content which is no longer relevant. The reviewed policies will be published online in the Staff Handbook.

The 2019-20 pay award was agreed by the TUS. The award will be made in the June payroll run. It was agreed that arrangements for the next pay discussions would start in August of this year.

Security

SPCB members will have noted that work has been completed to make both turnstiles at Queensberry House entrance dual access/exit. This has improved access for Members and staff and speeded up entry to the building.

Finance Office

The Finance Office has been undertaking a review of our regular financial reporting, in conjunction with a wider re-design of the SPCB's performance management reporting. I propose to move to a quarterly report format, to be presented to the SPCB alongside the existing Quarterly Performance Report. The first report in the new format, covering the quarter ended 30 June 2019, will be included in the next CE Report and I look forward to your feedback on both timing and format.

The financial reporting for the first two months of 2019-20 confirms that the SPCB's underspend against budget remains within our targeted range.