



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

# **International Relations: Parliamentary travel**

## **29 September 2022**

**Reference: SPCB (2022) Paper 62**

### **Executive summary**

1. The Corporate Body is invited to consider forthcoming overseas parliamentary travel and, in accordance with Section 2, paragraph 62 of the Code of Conduct for Members of the Scottish Parliament in relation to receipt by Members of travel, hospitality etc., approve the details of the travel and other costs associated with the outward visit below.

### **Issues and options**

#### **Arctic Circle Assembly & Visit to Parliament of Iceland (Alþingi)**

2. Deputy Presiding Officer Liam McArthur MSP; Deputy Convener of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport (NZET) Committee, Fiona Hyslop MSP; and member of the NZET Committee, Mark Ruskell MSP, will undertake an outward visit to Reykjavik, Iceland from 12 October to 16 October 2022 to undertake meetings in the Icelandic Parliament (Alþingi) and attend the annual plenary of the Arctic Circle Assembly.
3. The Arctic Circle Assembly is *'the largest network of international dialogue and cooperation on the future of the Arctic. It is an open democratic platform with participation from governments, organisations, corporations, universities, think tanks, environmental associations, indigenous communities, concerned citizens, and others interested in the development of the Arctic and its consequences'*.
4. Upon publication of the final conference programme, Members will identify other breakout and Plenary sessions which they will attend. Bilateral discussions will also be arranged with other parliamentarians,

Government Ministers, NGOs, academics etc. Participation will feed directly back to the Committee's work programme.

5. The DPO will lead on the pre-Assembly engagements in the Icelandic Parliament, which will include a meeting with the Speaker, Mr Birgir Ármannsson MP, and senior parliamentary officials on a number of topics including, but not limited to, the organisation and timetabling of parliamentary business in the Icelandic Parliament (including the role of the Speaker's Committee); and the role and operation of the Conveners' Group and similar bodies in the Icelandic Parliament. The delegation will also meet with the Standing Committee on the Environment and Communications in the Icelandic Parliament and other parliamentarians.

## **Resource implications**

6. The estimated cost for this visit is £12,050 which covers travel, accommodation, meals and appropriate incidental expenses for the Deputy Presiding Officer, two MSPs and two accompanying officials (Clerk to the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee plus one International Relations Officer).
7. Section 2, paragraph 62 of the Code of Conduct for Members of the Scottish Parliament states that certain overseas visits are excluded from the requirement to register where the travel and other costs are wholly met by the SPCB (in this case, from the IRO budget).

## **Governance**

8. The SPCB will recall that, within the International Strategy which it agreed in September 2021, there is a new requirement for the International Relations Office (IRO) to outline to the SPCB why the visit is in person (as opposed to virtual) and the travel options and environmental impact considered by the delegation.
9. The Presiding Officer and Deputy Presiding Officers play a unique role in developing relationships with other Parliaments which include, particularly during initial stages of engagement, face to face meetings with other Speakers and senior parliamentarians. As the first visit by a Scottish Parliament delegation of the new Session, and a new Speaker elected in the Icelandic Parliament, a face to face meeting with the Speaker and his colleagues was considered appropriate and necessary on this occasion. A physical presence in the Icelandic Parliament will also allow the NZET Committee members to hold inaugural discussions with their committee counterparts.

10. Participation by the Net Zero, Energy and Transport (NZET) Committee members at the Arctic Circle Assembly would not be possible online. In person attendance also allows MSPs to participate in face to face bilaterals with other delegates, including Icelandic Government Ministers, and attend other breakout sessions relevant to the committee.

11. The only viable travel option between Edinburgh and Reykjavik is by air. The CO<sub>2</sub>e footprint (each way) for flying (economy class) is 210 kg. Hotel accommodation booked in Reykjavik is within walking distance of both the conference venue and Icelandic Parliament.

## **Publication Scheme**

12. This paper will be published in line with the SPCB's Publication Scheme.

## **Decision**

13. The SPCB is invited to consider the above travel and, in accordance with the Code of Conduct, approve the details of the travel and the associated costs above.

14. The IRO will then notify the Members concerned they do not need to register this travel.

**International Relations Office**  
September 2022