



OFFICIAL REPORT
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee

Tuesday 22 June 2021

Session 6



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RURAL AFFAIRS, ISLANDS AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
1st Meeting 2021, Session 6

CONVENER

*Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Karen Adam (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP)

*Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)

*Ariane Burgess (Highlands and Islands) (Green)

*Jim Fairlie (Perthshire South and Kinross-shire) (SNP)

*Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con)

*Jenni Minto (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)

*Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab)

*attended

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Emma Johnston

LOCATION

Virtual Meeting

Scottish Parliament

Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee

Tuesday 22 June 2021

[Ariane Burgess opened the meeting at 09:31]

Interests

Ariane Burgess (Highlands and Islands) (Green): Welcome to the first meeting in session 6 of the Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee. I am Ariane Burgess, MSP for the Highlands and Islands, and, as the oldest member of the committee, I have the pleasure of convening this meeting for the first two items of business.

No apologies have been received. I welcome all members, and I look forward to working with you on the committee.

Before we move to the first item on the agenda, I remind everyone to switch their mobile phones to silent—I have just done that myself. I remind members to wait for your names to be called before you speak, to give broadcasting colleagues time to activate the microphones. Broadcasting colleagues will mute microphones for members who are not speaking, to keep ambient noise down and prevent distortion—we are in good hands for this first meeting.

Item 1 is for each of us to declare any interests that we have that are relevant to the committee's work. Background information on declarations of interest is provided in paper 1. I will ask each member in turn, in alphabetical order, to say whether they have interests to declare.

Karen Adam (Banffshire and Buchan Coast) (SNP): I have no interests to declare.

Dr Alasdair Allan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): I have no particular interests to declare, but I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests.

Ariane Burgess: I get to go next. I have no relevant interests to declare.

Finlay Carson (Galloway and West Dumfries) (Con): I declare an interest in a farming and letting business, and I am a member of NFU Scotland.

Jim Fairlie (Perthshire South and Kinrossshire) (SNP): I am a member of NFU Scotland. I have no other registrable interests.

Rachael Hamilton (Ettrick, Roxburgh and Berwickshire) (Con): I have no interests to declare with regard to this committee, but I refer

members to my entry in the register of members' interests.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (LD): Other than being an islander, I have no registrable interests to declare in relation to the committee, but I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests.

Jenni Minto (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): Like Liam, I live on an island. Other than that, I have no relevant interests to declare, but I refer members to my entry in the register of members' interests.

Mercedes Villalba (North East Scotland) (Lab): I have no relevant interests to declare.

Ariane Burgess: Thank you.

Convener

09:34

Ariane Burgess: Agenda item 2 is choice of convener. The procedure for choosing the committee's convener is explained in paper 2.

The Parliament has agreed that only members of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party are eligible for nomination as conveners of the committee. I invite a member of that party to nominate a candidate.

Rachael Hamilton: I nominate Finlay Carson.

Finlay Carson was chosen as convener.

Ariane Burgess: I congratulate Finlay Carson on his appointment as convener of the Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment Committee. I look forward to working with you, convener.

The Convener (Finlay Carson): Thank you very much. I appreciate your kind words, and I am absolutely delighted and honoured to take on the role as committee convener. I note that the committee's acronym is, unfortunately, RAINE, which is not quite as nice as the acronym of the predecessor committee that I sat on, which sounded like "éclair".

I am quite sure that this committee will be a fascinating one. It will have a huge amount of work to do in an area that I know all the members have a particular interest, and I look forward to working with all of you, the clerks and the Scottish Parliament information centre over the next few months.

Deputy Convener

09:37

The Convener: Item 3 is choice of deputy convener. The Parliament has agreed that only members of the Scottish Liberal Democrats are eligible for nomination as deputy convener. I understand that Liam McArthur is the party's nominee.

Liam McArthur was chosen as deputy convener.

The Convener: I congratulate Liam McArthur on becoming deputy convener, and I look forward to working with him over the coming months.

Legacy Papers

09:37

The Convener: Item 4 is a provisional discussion of the legacy papers produced at the end of session 5 by the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee and the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee. The papers summarise the committees' recommendations on ways of working, based on the experience of the session, and highlight work that this committee might wish to focus on.

I invite members to highlight any aspects of the legacy papers that they consider to be particularly important for our work programme. I will not call members alphabetically to comment; instead, I will begin with those who had experience of the previous committees, starting with Liam McArthur.

Liam McArthur: First, I want to thank the committee for choosing me as deputy convener. Like you, convener, I feel that it is a real privilege.

I, too, have looked at the legacy papers of the committees that are relevant to the work of this committee, and I have to say that they do not lack options with regard to issues that there will be pressure and an expectation on us to cover. It seems logical to continue with the work on the operation of the internal market and rural frameworks.

In addition, we have the questions around future trade deals that are being pursued. Parliament has already given some consideration to them, but the committee has the opportunity to drill down into those deals.

On the good food nation, I assume that we will have a bill to deal with it in due course, but we should consider whether we can find some time before then to squeeze in pre-legislative consultation on some of the areas that the good food nation bill is likely to cover.

It seems that we will have to revisit aquaculture from more of an island perspective. I also have a keen interest in continuing to shine a light on issues around ferry procurement.

There is a bit of dubiety about whether digital connectivity sits in our remit or in that of another committee, but over the past 18 months, the issue has demonstrated itself to be one of almost existential importance to many island and rural communities. Therefore, if we have any locus in that regard, we could usefully turn our attention to the matter.

I will flag one other issue, which is not on the list. The Public Petitions Committee was looking at a petition relating to centralisation of air traffic

control services, which cuts across the interests of this committee. We will need to wait to see what the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee seeks to do with the matter, because it is part of its legacy paper. However, if there is an appropriate way of following up on that, I am supportive of doing so.

The Convener: Thank you. I should have said at the outset that we recognise that there will be outstanding questions about where our remit falls, and whether there is crossover with the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee. After this session, I propose to write to the Scottish Government to ask for clarity in advance of our business planning meeting. However, I ask that members do not hesitate to raise topics that they think fall within the remit of this committee, and we can then clarify the position before we move forward.

Dr Allan: As Liam McArthur mentioned, in our papers, there are obvious topics such as the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26—and the replacements for the common agricultural policy, trade deals and so on. It is interesting that the committee has on it three members who live on islands. I apologise if we try to take over from time to time, but I echo what Liam said about the fact that many of the issues that affect islands, and perhaps other parts of the country, are ultimately about depopulation. Therefore, there will be crossover between issues, and possibly some negotiation will have to be done with other committees about exactly where our remit lies.

If we are talking about rural or island economies, an issue that is impossible to avoid is housing. I realise that we are not the housing committee, but it is an example of an area that we cannot avoid straying into, because we will not have an economy in some parts of the country if we do not have anywhere for people to live.

We need to clarify whether we will have opportunities to take a more holistic or cross-cutting look at some of the economic issues that affect islands and other areas that are affected by depopulation, but which might stray into other committees' remits and, as such, involve inviting them to negotiate remits.

The Convener: I absolutely agree. Although there are three members who are islanders in the truest sense, in Galloway and West Dumfries, we often feel as though we are an island, and housing is certainly an issue for us.

We might have a remit when it comes to the rural-based enterprise agencies—Highlands and Islands Enterprise and South of Scottish Enterprise—so we might need to consider such matters as well.

Rachael Hamilton: I congratulate you, convener, and Liam McArthur.

I am also slightly unclear about our remit. Looking at the legacy papers, I am interested in pursuing the food and farming future policy agenda.

It is important that farmers have a direction and know where they are going, and our committee could scrutinise any such policies that are introduced by the Scottish Government. That work might sit quite nicely with post-European Union legislative competence and other issues on that landscape.

09:45

The big issue for us will obviously be COP26. The question is how the committee, given its remit, will feed into all that with regard to the responsibilities and expectations that will be on agriculture in Scotland to reach net zero. That will, of course, include emissions targets.

It is important that we look at deer and grouse legislation, if, indeed, that falls within our remit. Another important aspect that has been raised by the British Association for Shooting and Conservation and which I think we should look at is the treatment of rural workers and people in agriculture.

I was greatly interested in the salmon farming inquiry that was carried out in the previous session. I was not a member of the particular committee that carried it out, but I think that it would be worth looking at what progress has been made on certain issues that it raised, such as the voluntary code of conduct.

Another important issue that we should look at is marine biodiversity, and there is also the matter of wildlife protection. Finally, on Alasdair Allan's point about island communities, I have to say that I do not think that housing falls within our remit, but the issue of rural life will obviously take in some of the work that we did in the predecessor committee with regard to the ferry inquiry and connectivity issues.

There is a lot going on and, as the convener has said, we have our work cut out for us. That said, I am really looking forward to contributing to the committee and working with all the fabulous clerks whom we heard from this morning.

Ariane Burgess: I have to say that everything stood out for me in the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee paper. I agree with quite a lot of what my colleagues have already said, but I just want to pick up on and emphasise a few points.

Whatever comes forward, whether it be a bill or not, the good food nation issue will be absolutely important. I would also like to look again at salmon and aquaculture, because I am concerned about the direction of travel in that respect, and an important piece of work for us will be on inshore fisheries and the restoration of limits.

I also feel that we could do some work on derelict crofts and on supporting the Crofting Commission in bringing more land back into use, given that so many people want to have and work crofts. Of course, there will always be climate change plans to consider; indeed, I am keen to look at anything to do with climate change.

An issue that stands out for me in the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee legacy paper is how we have a green recovery while responding to the twin emergencies of climate and nature. I want to look at land reform, given how much it underpins, including the housing issue that Alasdair Allan referred to. Finally, there is also COP26 to think about.

I am not an islander—although I would love to be—but I chose to be a member of this committee because I live rurally. I am also a member of the Local Government, Housing and Planning Committee. I had asked to be the Green spokesperson on these areas before I got on to these committees, because I feel that what lies at the heart of the issues is rural depopulation and repopulation. We must ensure that we have places for young people who want to stay in our rural areas and affordable housing for those who provide much-needed services to our rural communities. For me, community is at the heart of the issues. We need to consider people, land and the environment all together.

The Convener: Thank you. I will move on to Jim Fairlie.

Jim Fairlie: Thank you, Finlay, and congratulations on becoming convener. It is great to meet the rest of the committee in this setting.

One issue that I would like us to pursue is how the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 will affect farm funding. I would also like us to consider the implications of Brexit for devolution and the rural economy. Another issue is what future rural policy will look like. I absolutely agree that the farming community need a degree of certainty. As you and I know, convener, farming is not about tomorrow or the day after; it is about a generation ahead, so we need to get some certainty about what the policy will look like.

I would certainly like us to look again at a good food nation bill. I am interested in not only farming but in food, the environment and rural depopulation, which Ariane Burgess talked about. All of those things are utterly connected.

The issue of women in agriculture was looked at in the previous session, and we should pursue it further. We have made okay progress on that, but we could make a hell of a lot more progress by encouraging more women to get involved in agriculture and to actually run businesses, because they are more than capable of doing that, as we have witnessed on numerous occasions over the past two or three years.

Inshore fisheries are vital. They are a jewel in the crown, and we really need to protect them.

We all know about the problems with digital connectivity, even in urban areas, let alone in rural constituencies.

I would like us to investigate how we bring together two disparate groups. Rachael Hamilton talked about how people in the rural population feel as though they are not represented in the Parliament, yet I have written something in support of the gamekeeping fraternity on Twitter and been immediately bombarded from the other side. I say “the other side” because we currently have two sides of an argument, and I would like to find a way of bringing them together, because the two cannot and should not be mutually exclusive. There has to be a way of making those two separate groups come together and work out the best way to protect raptors and our environment, but not at the expense of losing rural jobs, which are vital in order to stop rural depopulation. There are a whole lot of interlinked issues there that I am keen to have a look at.

I live in Perthshire, but we have transport problems even there, so it must be an absolute tortuous journey to come to Parliament for those who live in the deep Borders or up in the Highlands and Islands.

Even in Perthshire, we have rural housing problems. We need to look at that issue across the board.

If that is not enough to be going on with, I am pretty sure that we can find more.

The Convener: Thank you. There is certainly a lot of food for thought there, if you will excuse the pun. Your contribution alone gives an indication of the committee’s remit.

I welcome Jenni Minto and ask for her comments.

Jenni Minto: Thank you, Finlay, and congratulations on becoming convener. I also congratulate Liam McArthur. I look forward to working with everyone on the committee and the fantastic experts that the Parliament provides us with. I think that RAINE is probably the most appropriate title for the committee because, without rain, we would not have the wonderful green and blue Scotland that we have.

As everyone has said, this is a fantastic committee with a wide remit. As you know, I represent Argyll and Bute and, as I was reading the legacy papers, I felt that Argyll and Bute ticks many of the boxes, as does the rest of rural Scotland.

I will not repeat what everybody else has said but, like Alasdair Allan, I live on an island, and I absolutely understand the issues regarding housing, depopulation, ferries and connectivity. The situation is the same in rural, remote Argyll and Bute and in rural, remote Scotland generally.

We can build on the fantastic work that has already been done. Members have talked a bit about food and the Scottish brand that is food. Wonderful research has been done on the subject, and we are talking about top products. Could we perhaps widen that fantastic research to cover other rural industries, such as fabric, and use it in relation to tourism?

Ariane Burgess talked about communities, which is the one thing that I wrote down. We absolutely have to recognise the importance of our rural communities, and the input of farmers, fishermen, crofters and the aquaculture industry. However, we have to get the right balance between the environment and those organisations.

I also cannot not mention the issue of land reform, on which the members of the committee will have to work together. As Ariane said, with regard to the issue of people and the land, we are in it together, so we need to get through it together.

We have a huge remit, which is exciting, and there is loads of work to do. I am very pleased to be part of it.

Finally, one of the points that I picked up from the two legacy reports is about how we gather the evidence and people’s lived experience. We all have lived experience, but we need to get out into our communities to ensure that we are gathering information from people’s lived experience and what they know about their communities, as widely as we can.

The Convener: Thank you, Jenni. I am glad that you mentioned that last point. Kate Smith from the participation and communities team, whom we briefly met in the briefing session, did a fantastic job for the ECCLR Committee in the previous session. She made sure that we got opinions from not only stakeholders—or opinion holders, as some people like to call them—but a broad selection of people, in order to get a range of different opinions on the various topics. I look forward to working with Kate Smith to ensure that we get a broad spectrum of opinions from across our communities and stakeholders.

I will move on to Karen Adam, whom I welcome to the committee.

Karen Adam: Much like my colleagues, I am excited about and looking forward to being a part of the committee. I represent a coastal and rural community, so I will be interested in everything that relates to fishing and fisheries.

Rachael Hamilton picked up on the issue of marine biodiversity. One of the important recommendations of the ECCLR Committee was that we consider taking an integrated approach to scrutiny. It is important that we have a holistic outlook, which will be helpful and beneficial to all aspects of marine biodiversity scrutiny, particularly when scrutinising the outcome of the post-EU exit negotiations between the UK, the EU and other coastal states and the implications for sustainable fisheries in Scottish waters.

I am also interested in the ECCLR Committee's recommendation on

"Engaging with debates on human rights mainstreaming in relation to the relevance to the environment and considering how Committees may best prepare to scrutinise any forthcoming human rights legislation."

From the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee's legacy report, I picked up on the issue of women in agriculture, which Jim Fairlie touched on. I am interested in looking at the work of the task force, building on what it has already done and continuing to implement its suggestions.

It is important that we deal with digital connectivity and transport issues, as well as the implications of Covid. The pandemic has had significant impacts on agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, and we need to consider what we can do to get off on the right foot with regard to our recovery.

I also agree with what has been said about housing. Keeping a young workforce in the area is an issue that is often brought up. There is such a large remit here, but everything is connected. Having a holistic approach to transport and broadband connectivity and ensuring that there are jobs for our young people is part of the committee's remit and everything that I am looking forward to getting stuck into. It is such a huge remit that it is hard to know where to start, but I am looking forward to it.

10:00

The Convener: Last, but not least, is Mercedes Villalba. I hope that I have not pronounced your surname wrongly.

Mercedes Villalba: No, that is right. It is great to be here this morning. It is an exciting committee with a huge, seemingly endless remit that has so much potential, so I am excited to be part of it. I

represent the north-east region, which has constituencies that other committee members represent. Like so much of the rest of Scotland, the region has an abundance of natural heritage and is beautiful, but we struggle with the infrastructure to make the region a fantastic place for people to grow up and stay in. I see a lot of potential for the committee to look at what we can do to make the rural and coastal areas of Scotland vibrant. That means looking at connectivity in terms of digital infrastructure as well as transport, which has been mentioned. It means looking at jobs around food and agriculture and exploring workers' rights in those areas, and it means looking at support for farmers and business owners to diversify and restore nature, which I hope will extend those businesses.

There is huge scope for the committee, and I agree with much of what has already been said about it. I am excited to get started. The key issues for me—I concur with Ariane Burgess here—are how we can move forward policies that benefit and work for nature, people and the land, and having a holistic, integrated approach that benefits all of us.

The Convener: I will make some comments now, but if anybody wants to comment further, put an R in the chat box; then I will call you and we can turn your microphone on.

The comments in the past 15 minutes have certainly given us a wake-up call about how much work we have to do. For example, we could be the lead committee when it comes to Scottish Water, NatureScot, Marine Scotland and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency. There is quite a bit of work to do on scrutinising SEPA's work alone and ensuring that it is efficient.

We have touched on aquaculture, for which a report was produced in the previous Parliament. The ECCLR Committee and the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee worked on the report, which attracted a huge amount of public interest. We might need to look at the issue of the wild salmon population, or at the freshwater environment on a broader scale with regard to non-native, invasive species that impact on our biodiversity, which is in crisis, as we all know, and is affected by the climate change crisis that the world faces.

We will also probably need to look at some of the Government's mitigation plans for hitting our net zero targets. They include forestry planting, which has implications for our natural environment as a whole, and peat restoration. We have touched on blue recovery in the marine environment and the seas around our coast. We might have to do a bit of work on looking at species decline, which goes hand in hand with the issue of our inshore fisheries.

In addition, of course, we have the issue of rural payments and new rural policies, which Jim Fairlie touched on—I think that we are past calling it CAP reform. We need to look at how that will tie in with land use strategies. The work of the new land groups that have been set up to look at how farming and environmental issues can be progressed together will be relevant to that.

There are also the on-going implications of Brexit. I am glad that Jim Fairlie mentioned parliamentary scrutiny and our role in relation to the United Kingdom internal market and animal welfare and food standards in future trade deals.

Work will also need to be done on crofting and the Crown Estate, as well as on animal welfare. There is a huge amount of work to be done. When they put together the legacy papers, some of the members of the predecessor committees must have had a good idea that they would not be coming back to serve on this committee, because they have given us a massive workload.

Communication is a big issue—it is really important that the work that we do is communicated not just to everyone inside the Parliament but to people in our communities. We should have as much engagement as possible. The ECCLR Committee was particularly good at that in the previous session.

Ariane Burgess: We certainly have a lot to cover. You mentioned forestry, which gives us a fantastic opportunity, and not just from the point of view of carbon capture and biodiversity. Forestry involves a long-term vision, just as agriculture does. We need to look at how we can grow the trees and therefore produce the timber from which we could build houses in Scotland. We also need to look at how we can grow trees from which we can make added-value products, such as fibre. There should be investment in the production of added-value products. For example, there could be a fibre manufacturing plant in rural Scotland, in the south or up in my area—we could haggle over that.

There will be tremendous opportunities as we move away from oil and gas. We need to start thinking about how we can make all the products that are currently made from oil and gas out of things that we can grow in Scotland. I would love us to have a first look at that, too.

I want to underscore the importance of the issue of women in agriculture. I strongly support our looking into that. I have met some amazing women pioneers, and I think that we need to do the work to open the doors and support more women to move into the sector.

The Convener: Absolutely—I could not agree more. Our work on that could be built around work on the wider issue of succession planning when it

comes to farming businesses. As someone who was involved in young farmers groups for many years, I know that that was an issue way back then—it must be 30 or 40 years ago now. Succession planning was an issue, but we did not look specifically at women in agriculture, which was a failing.

There is quite a bit of work to be done in that area. We must ensure that we bring through future generations of farmers. Entrepreneurial behaviour in farming tends to be exhibited by the young people. That is not always the case—I do not want to be ageist—but we certainly need to pay due regard to how agriculture will develop in the short and the long term.

Rachael Hamilton: I have a comment to make about how we will shape the work that we do. Ariane Burgess mentioned specific aspects that she is interested in. We all have specific issues that we are interested in, but we need to look at umbrella subjects, such as the future of food and farming policy. That undoubtedly brings in procurement, which is an issue that could be pursued through, for example, the good food nation bill. That would not necessarily cover the question of where stocks of indigenous timber are going and whether those could be used to build houses, but such issues are all part of the big procurement tent.

Do you have any idea as to when we might get a bit of direction on our remit and how, within that, we might be able to pursue the subjects that we are interested in?

The Convener: That is a good question, Rachael. We have a big task ahead of us, not just in covering all our remit but in tying it down. I think that the previous committees' huge remits inevitably resulted in them, in some areas, only scratching the surface of the topics that they engaged with, and probably not scrutinising them enough.

We need to be aware that we might have to focus on some topics more than others, but we can discuss that as part of the work programme meeting that we will have, I hope, at the end of August, just before formal meetings resume in the Parliament. The clerks have a lot of work to do to pull together some suggestions for the work plan for us to discuss at that meeting. We also need to clarify exactly what the remit is and where it crosses over with the remits of other committees.

Jim Fairlie: Something crossed my mind earlier when I talked about forestry. We heard about the perception that the rural community is left behind by a central belt Scottish Government. I disagree with that, but I note the conflicts that we have. I absolutely get that we need to tackle the climate emergency, and planting trees is definitely

recognised as being part of that, but I think that getting 18,000 hectares a year of the right kind of trees in the right places is more important than getting specific numbers.

It is important to note the conflicts that we have and bring people together so that we can talk about things in a balanced way and find the right solutions or results—things that everybody is happy with. We can continue to keep the rural population where they are and working, and we can also continue to hit our climate change targets. There does not have to be a conflict there. I would like us to focus on how we can bring those issues together so that we can find proper solutions, rather than making them into political footballs.

The Convener: Absolutely. I think that the members on the previous committees, certainly on the ECCLR Committee, worked very well together to come to the best solutions. That involved compromise on each side, but we had very few divisions and our committee reports were consensual. I would like to think that, going forward, we will gather evidence from stakeholders and work in a joined-up manner to try to get the best policies, laws and solutions for everybody. That will involve compromise in some cases, but I am sure that we will be able to reach the best solutions.

We could probably talk for the next week about our remit and set out what we think we will need to achieve over the next few years, but unfortunately we only have until 10.15 today. If members agree, we will programme an informal business planning event towards the end of the summer recess. My preference would be for committee members to meet physically in Parliament, rather than virtually.

Unfortunately, because of the Covid restrictions and where we are at present, we will be unable to have an away day. An away day is always a fantastic team building opportunity because it allows us to speak to one another both formally and informally and to get to know one another a little better, but we will not be able to do that before the Parliament reconvenes in September. However, I hope that we can have a face-to-face business planning meeting at some time towards the end of August.

If everyone agrees, the committee clerks will be in touch with members regarding the arrangements for that informal planning session, which will be organised in a way that takes due regard of the restrictions that are in place at the time.

As there are no other comments from members, I thank you all very much and say once again that I am absolutely looking forward to working with you all on what I believe will be the best committee

in the Parliament. Not only do I have the best constituency, but I now have the best committee. I am delighted to go into the recess on that basis. I look forward to the committee's hard work and to getting to know you all better when we have our next meeting.

Meeting closed at 10:14.

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