

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

4th Meeting, 2024 (Session 6)

Tuesday, 30 January 2024

Evidence session with the Scottish Government on the Scottish Budget 2024-25

Introduction

1. On 21 December, the Scottish Government introduced the [Budget \(Scotland\) \(No. 3\) Bill](#). A Budget Bill is lodged annually to allow the Scottish Parliament to consider the Scottish Government's tax and public spending proposals before the new financial year begins in April. There is a discrete process for Budget Bills, as set out in Rule 9.16 of [Scottish Parliament Standing Orders](#).
2. The effect of the Bill, if agreed to, would be to implement the [Scottish Budget 2024-25](#). Supporting documentation and a more detailed breakdown of the budget within Cabinet Secretary portfolios, as well the climate change and carbon assessments of the Budget [can be found via this Scottish Government link](#).
3. The Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe) has issued a number of publications on the Scottish Budget, including—
 - [A SPICe blog with an initial analysis](#)
 - [A detailed briefing on the Budget](#).

Pre-Budget Scrutiny by the NZET Committee

4. Subject committees (i.e. Scottish Parliament committees that scrutinise major policy areas with significant public spending) normally make pre-budget recommendations to the Scottish Government each autumn, after taking evidence from stakeholders. These are on matters the committee wants the Scottish Government to take account of before finalising next year's budget. SPICe's guide to the budget process [is available here](#).
5. The Committee's pre-budget scrutiny for 2024-25 focused on—
 - The Fair Fares Review and bus travel;
 - Electric vehicle charging point infrastructure;

- Aspects of the Scottish Government’s response to our report on energy price rises;
 - The publication of the final Hydrogen Action Plan and associated capital investment, as well as the anticipated Energy and Just Transition Strategy;
 - Budgets associated with Scotland’s environmental regulators; and
 - The Joint Budget Review
6. The Committee held several evidence sessions in the autumn, including on the Scottish Government’s priorities and the Programme for Government with newly appointed Cabinet Secretaries, which included themes identified for budget scrutiny—
- [26 June 2023](#) – Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Net Zero and Just Transition, Màiri McAllan
 - [12 September 2023](#) – Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Fair Work and Energy, Neil Gray
 - [19 September 2023](#) – Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, land Reform and Islands, Mairi Gougeon and Minister for Transport, Fiona Hyslop
 - [3 October 2023](#) – session on environmental regulation with Scottish Environment Protection Agency and NatureScot
 - Follow-up letter from NatureScot was received on 25 October – [read the letter](#)
 - Follow up letter from SEPA received on 25 October – [read the letter](#)
 - [31 October 2023](#) – Scottish Water (Annual Report and Accounts 2022-23)
 - [7 November 2023](#) – Water industry
7. The Committee wrote to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Net Zero and Just Transition [on 16 November](#). The Cabinet Secretary responded [on 19 December](#).
8. Committees also have the option of taking further evidence once budget proposals have been published and whilst scrutiny of the relevant Budget Bill is ongoing. On 19 December, the Committee agreed to take further evidence from the Scottish Government on the Scottish Budget in early 2024. On 9 January the Committee agreed which of the budgetary themes it wished to explore at evidence sessions with the relevant Cabinet Secretaries with responsibilities for these policy areas.

Oral evidence on the Scottish Budget 2024/25

9. On 16 January, the Committee took evidence from the Minister for Transport in relation to an affirmative instrument about Bus Services Improvement Partnerships. Whilst this was not formally an evidence session on the 2024-25

budget, the Committee took the opportunity to ask some more general questions about funding proposals for the bus sector. [Read the Official Report for 16 January.](#)

10. On 23 January, the Committee took evidence on the Scottish Budget from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Cabinet Secretary for Wellbeing Economy, Fair Work and Energy. [Read the Official Report from 23 January.](#)

Evidence session on 30 January

11. On 30 January, the Committee will hold a further evidence session on the Scottish Budget with the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands and the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Net Zero and Just Transition and their officials as listed on the agenda.
12. The Committee received several transport related submissions on the Budget 2024-25—
 - [Confederation of Passenger Transport \(CPT\)](#) – October 2023
 - [Confederation of Passenger Transport](#) – January 2024 (letter to the Minister for Transport)
 - [Strathclyde Partnership for Transport](#) – January 2024

Next steps

13. The evidence taken by the NZET Committee in January does not formally amount to Stage 1 evidence on the Budget Bill, scrutiny of which falls formally to the Finance and Public Administration Committee. However, by taking evidence in this way, the NZET Committee contributes to the general public discussion around the Scottish Government's budget plans for next year, and seeks to influence the final content of the budget before the Scottish Parliament is asked to pass the Bill.
14. These sessions also form part of the Committee's rolling programme of evidence-gathering on core matters within its remit relating to energy, transport and the environment, and on the funding necessary to ensure that policies and strategic goals in these areas can be delivered. This includes the overall goal of achieving net zero in carbon emissions in Scotland by 2045.

Clerks
Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee