

Parliamentary Bureau – Designation of Bill at Stage 1

Scottish Languages Bill

Introduction

1. The Scottish Languages Bill was introduced in the Parliament on 29 November 2023 by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, Jenny Gilruth MSP.
2. The Bill makes provision in relation to the support for Gaelic and Scots languages in Scotland. The Bill consists of 3 Parts.
3. Part 1 makes provision in relation to Gaelic. It primarily amends the Gaelic (Language) (Scotland) Act 2005 (“the 2005 Act”). Section 1 provides that the Gaelic language has official status within Scotland and that this is given legal effect by the provisions of the 2005 Act (as amended) which confer functions on Bòrd na Gàidhlig (BnG), the Scottish Ministers and other public authorities, and other enactments relating to Gaelic education. The rest of Part 1 makes various provision about the respective functions of BnG, the Scottish Ministers and public authorities in relation to Gaelic, including provisions related to Gaelic education.
4. Part 2 of the Bill makes provision in relation to Scots. Chapter 1 deals with support for the Scots language generally. Section 26 provides that the Scots language has official status within Scotland and that this is given legal effect by the provisions in the Bill which confer functions on the Scottish Ministers and public authorities. The Bill requires the Scottish Ministers to prepare a Scots language strategy, report on that strategy and have regard to that strategy when making policies and exercising their functions. It also gives the Scottish Ministers the power to give guidance to public authorities on Scots. Chapter 2 relates to Scots language education in schools.
5. Part 3 of the Bill makes standard provision in relation to ancillary powers, commencement and short title.

Discussion

6. The Bill appears to engage the remits of the Education, Children and Young People Committee and the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee.
7. The remit of the Education, Children and Young People Committee is to consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills. The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills is responsible for languages, including Gaelic and Scots. Accordingly, the Education, Children and Young People Committee’s remit is engaged.

8. The remit of the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee is to consider and report on any matter falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture. The Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture is responsible for culture policy. The Bill makes provision for Scottish Ministers and public authorities to have regard to the desirability of developing and encouraging Gaelic or Scots culture. As such the remit of the Constitution, Europe, External Affairs and Culture Committee is engaged.
9. It would appear that the Education, Children and Young People Committee has the primary interest in the Bill. Designation of one committee as lead committee does not preclude any other committee whose remit is engaged from considering the Bill if it wishes to do so.

Recommendation

10. **The Bureau is invited to consider recommending to the Parliament by motion that it agrees, under Rule 9.6.1, to designate the Education, Children and Young People Committee as lead committee for consideration of Scottish Languages Bill at Stage 1.**

11. A draft motion can be found below.

12. **Draft Parliamentary Bureau motion on the Scottish Languages Bill:**

Designation of Lead Committee – That the Parliament agrees that the Education, Children and Young People Committee be designated as the lead committee in consideration of the Scottish Languages Bill at Stage 1.

Parliamentary Business Team
November 2023