



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

# **International Relations: Parliamentary travel**

## **By correspondence**

**Reference: SPCB (2024) Paper 11**

### **Executive summary**

1. The SPCB is invited to consider and approve forthcoming overseas parliamentary travel. In accordance with paragraphs 62 and 64 of Section 2 of the Code of Conduct, the travel and other costs of a visit which are wholly met by the SPCB, or are approved by the SPCB prior to the visit, are exempt from registration as an overseas visit in the Register of Interests of Members of the Scottish Parliament.

### **Issues and options**

#### **Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) - Nepal**

2. The WFD has invited a Member to visit the Federal Parliament of Nepal and one Provincial Assembly from the 10 – 16 March 2024 to share learning around post-legislative scrutiny as well as standards and processes within the Scottish Parliament.
3. Martin Whitfield MSP has agreed to do this visit, he was asked on the basis of his experience and availability.
4. The visit aligns with the aims of the Parliament's International Strategy to provide opportunities for the continuous professional development of MSPs and officials through meetings and discussions with elected Members and officials in other legislatures and organisations and showcase and develop the policy, procedural and corporate knowledge of MSPs and officials through international collaboration and engagement.

5. The Convener's Group has agreed that promoting greater use of post-legislative scrutiny in committees is one of its strategic priorities in this parliamentary session. As a member of that Group, Martin Whitfield MSP has contributed to the development of the plan to achieve this goal. Additionally, the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee, of which Martin Whitfield is the Convener, has direct experience of post-legislative scrutiny through conducting an inquiry into the effectiveness of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016, starting with the commissioning of [a partial evaluation of the lobbying act which has been produced by SPICe research services](#). As Convener, Martin Whitfield is also well-placed to share learning about procedures of the Scottish Parliament.

## Resource implications

6. The WFD will cover one business airfare, airport transfers in the UK and Nepal, accommodation while in Nepal, and meals for one MSP and one accompanying official. The estimated cost for the parliamentary visit to Nepal is £4,700 which covers one business airfare, and appropriate incidental expenses which is not covered by WFD.

## Governance

7. The SPCB will recall that, within the International Strategy which it agreed in September 2021, there is a requirement for the International Relations Office to outline to the SPCB why a visit is being proposed in person (as opposed to virtual) and the travel options and environmental impact considered by the delegation.
8. In person attendance allows MSPs to participate in a number of face-to-face bilateral meetings with parliamentarians. Due to the time difference with Nepal this would not be practical online.
9. The only viable travel option between Scotland and Nepal is by air. The individual CO<sub>2</sub>e footprint for flying economy class (return) to Nepal from Edinburgh is 2588kg. Business class (return) travel would be 7505kg. Return economy class flights are an estimated £1,358 per person, while business class flights are £4,540 per person. There are no premium economy flights available.
10. IRO recommends that the delegation goes Business class as per the travel policy, which states 'Business class may be used for flights of a longer duration of 5 hours continuous flying and inter-continental flights'. The flights to and from Nepal have a layover in Doha, three of the four flights are over 5 hours and there is a 5 and a half hour time difference.

The delegation will arrive on the Monday morning and have their first meeting that afternoon.

## **Publication Scheme**

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

## **Decision**

12. 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 provided.

13. The IRO will then notify the Member concerned that he does not need to register this travel.

## **International Relations Office**

February 2024