



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Finance and Public Administration Committee

Simon Hoare MP
Chair
Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee

4 March 2026

Dear Simon

Implementation monitoring of public inquiry recommendations

Thank you for your letter of 27 January 2026, on implementation monitoring of public inquiry recommendations.

The Finance and Public Administration Committee has recently concluded scrutiny of the cost-effectiveness of Scottish public inquiries, and a debate on our findings was held in the Scottish Parliament on [26 February](#).

Our scrutiny sought to bring greater understanding of the current position with public inquiries in Scotland, looking at their purpose, terms of reference, timescales and costs, recommendations and cost-effectiveness more generally. The full remit of our inquiry is attached in the annexe.

Our [report](#), published in December 2025, includes distinct sections on concluding public inquiries (including implementation of recommendations) and scrutiny of public inquiries. The Scottish Government [responded](#) to our report on 11 February 2026.

I am pleased to share our findings, and hope these will be helpful to your Committee's inquiry.

Responses to inquiry reports

As you will be aware, there are no provisions within the 2005 Act relating to responses to a public inquiry report. The Minister should respond to an inquiry's report, but they are not required to accept its recommendations.

The Scottish Government guidance for sponsorship teams and inquiry teams also makes no mention about the timescale for providing a government response or in relation to responses from other bodies to which recommendations are targeted.

During our scrutiny, we heard that there should be a set process for the Scottish Government and public bodies to respond to an inquiry report, and parallels were

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drawn to the process in place for responding to recommendations made by Fatal Accident Inquiries.

While there was broad agreement on the need for some form of response mechanism, no substantive evidence was presented during our scrutiny to suggest that public authorities routinely fail to respond to public inquiries.

The Committee concluded that it is essential for transparency and accountability that the Scottish Government and relevant public bodies respond promptly to public inquiry reports.

We therefore recommended the adoption of an eight-week timescale for responses, with a protocol for responses to be added to existing Scottish Government guidance. This recommendation was however not formally accepted by the Scottish Government, due to the challenges it can present for those public authorities which are required to respond.

That said, the Deputy First Minister told the Committee during its debate, “I think that there are routes to implementing all the Committee’s recommendations”.

Implementation of recommendations

Under the 2005 Act, there is also no mechanism for monitoring the implementation of recommendations made by public inquiries and we heard examples of repeated tragedies and disasters that could have been avoided had earlier recommendations been acted on.

We heard from the Deputy First Minister that the Scottish Government’s “practice is to publish a response to the inquiry’s final report, setting out which recommendations are being accepted. A team in the Government is then responsible for overseeing the delivery of those recommendations. When recommendations are directed at a public body, it is also normal for that body to respond to those recommendations”.

Some witnesses provided examples of approaches used by inquiries elsewhere to monitor the implementation of recommendations, such as those taken in relation to the Telford Inquiry or the Independent Jersey Care Inquiry. In the case of the latter, the inquiry report included a recommendation that the panel “return to the island in two years to hear from those providing services and those receiving them”.

The Committee concluded that there is a serious lack of transparency in how public inquiry recommendations are implemented, and asked the Scottish Government to establish a robust, transparent system for tracking and publicly reporting on the implementation of inquiry recommendations, including a publicly accessible online platform, similar to the UK Government’s [dashboard](#). The Scottish Government has committed to considering options to establish a similar resource in respect of Scottish Public Inquiries.

We further asked the Scottish Government to work with the UK Government to place an obligation on inquiry Chairs and Secretaries to produce lessons-learned papers and working papers on logistics, as also recommended by the House of Lords Statutory Inquiries Committee in their 2024 [report](#) on “the efficacy of the law and

practice relating to statutory inquiries under the Inquiries Act 2005". The Scottish Government committed to strengthening existing guidance to reflect this requirement.

We also asked the Scottish Government to establish a central public inquiries unit, to share resources and best practice. This recommendation was not immediately accepted, although the Scottish Government committed to considering ways to streamline the delivery of support to public inquiries.

Scrutiny of public inquiries

A range of options were put to the Committee as to how oversight of the public inquiry system in Scotland could be strengthened, and examples of these are available in our report. The Committee concluded that the Scottish Parliament's role in relation to public inquiries must be strengthened to enable regular and robust review.

We therefore asked the Scottish Government to produce an annual, evidence-based report to Parliament detailing inquiry performance, itemised costs, and progress on implementing inquiry recommendations.

We also recommended that the next Scottish Parliament considers adding oversight of public inquiries to an existing parliamentary committee's remit, which would have the role of examining this evidence-based report.

The Scottish Government has, in its response to our report, agreed that "a system for reporting on expenditure and recording progress on implementing recommendations should be developed to enhance scrutiny".

As with other recommendations in our report, the Deputy First Minister committed to continuing to work with the Committee to find ways that these can be accepted and implemented. We expect this work to continue over the next Parliamentary session.

I trust that this response provides a helpful overview of the scrutiny of public inquiries in Scotland and wish your Committee well in its inquiry. Please get in touch should you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Kenneth Gibson MSP
Convener

Remit of the Finance and Public Administration Committee's inquiry into the cost-effectiveness of public inquiries in Scotland

The remit of this inquiry was:

- to foster greater understanding of the current position with public inquiries in Scotland, including their number, timescales, extensions to remit, costs, categories of spend and outstanding recommendations
- to enhance clarity around the purpose, framework and decision-making process for establishing public inquiries and their terms of reference, and whether any improvements are required
- to establish if public inquiries in Scotland deliver value for money, the extent to which spending controls are necessary, and how they might be implemented while maintaining the independence and effectiveness of inquiries
- to identify examples of good practice (in Scotland or elsewhere) which ensure cost-effectiveness
- to identify alternatives to the Scottish inquiry model, including how such alternatives may work, deliver outcomes and value for money.

The Committee did not consider the merits or otherwise of individual Scottish Government decisions on whether to hold a specific public inquiry, or recommendations made by individual public inquiries, as part of its scrutiny.