

CAVENDISH

Who's who:

Inside Holyrood.

June 2026





Inside the Scottish Government

Engaging with the Scottish Government is not just a 'copy and paste' approach from Westminster – that's simply not good enough. A different culture, context and cast of characters means that those seeking to get their voice heard and changes made across the policy and regulatory debate in Scotland need to engage on the Parliament's own terms.

While the SNP fell short of an outright majority, they are now in their fifth consecutive term in government. However, with 68 newly elected MSPs in this Parliament, a new party in the Chamber and an evolving political landscape, it's not just new faces but shifting ideologies and agendas that will need to be carefully navigated over the next five years.

This report looks at the new composition of the Scottish Government and Parliament, including Cabinet Secretaries, Ministers, Special Advisers (SpAds) and the Civil Service. It provides information on Committees, opposition spokespeople and the key moments every week to watch out for at Holyrood, as we seek to myth-bust the inner workings and personalities of Scotland's devolved government.

After all, it is in three buildings in central Edinburgh – the Scottish Parliament building, St. Andrew's House and Bute House, where much of Scotland's policy and legislation is crafted, revised and delivered. A deep understanding of this ecosystem is integral for any business or industry looking to advance their investment objectives.



First Minister and Cabinet.

Ministers:



John Swinney

First Minister

The First Minister has been a member of the SNP since 1979, making him possibly the party's most experienced political operator. First elected to the Scottish Parliament in 1999 as MSP for Tayside North, he initially led the party from 2000 to 2004.

He first entered Cabinet in 2011, serving as the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth. At various points since, he has served as the Deputy First Minister, Finance Secretary, Education Secretary and Secretary for Covid Recovery, before being appointed First Minister in May 2024. He has stated that his key priorities for Government are the cost of living, supporting economic growth through innovation and efficiency, reducing child poverty and tackling the climate emergency.

As part of this push, the First Minister has said he will place energy at the heart of policy making. This is why Stephen Gethins, the Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Energy, is reporting directly to the First Minister. John Swinney has stated that he sees both energy policy and a closer connection to Europe as pivotal to a future independent Scotland, this Government's guiding priority.



Stephen Gethins

Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Energy

Stephen Gethins served as MP for North East Fife from 2015-2019, then again as MP for Arbroath and Broughty Ferry from 2024-2026. His election as MSP for Dundee City East is the first time he has sat in the Scottish Parliament.

Before entering Westminster, Gethins worked in democratisation and peacebuilding in the western Balkans and South Caucasus. He has also worked as a SpAd on EU and International Affairs as well as Energy and Climate Change. Gethins' responsibilities include Europe, oil and gas, energy policy and heat in buildings.



Jamie Hepburn

Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans

An MSP since 2007, Hepburn has held a number of Government roles, acting as Minister for Sport, Business, Higher Education and Independence over the years. Hepburn's responsibilities include elections, parliamentary business and veterans.

Ministers:



Jenny Gilruth

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government

The MSP for Mid-Fife and Glenrothes since 2016 and a former secondary school teacher, Jenny Gilruth replaces Kate Forbes as Deputy First Minister, who stood down at the last election.

Gilruth served as the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills from 2023, having served as a Minister for Transport and Europe beforehand. Her elevation to Deputy First Minister is noteworthy in the context of the widely assumed leadership ambitions of fellow Cabinet Secretaries Stephen Flynn and Màiri McAllan. When taken alongside her policy responsibilities for Scotland's public finances, at a time when the Scottish Government is grappling with a £5bn shortfall, Gilruth's importance and influence is not to be underestimated.



Hannah Mary Goodlad

Minister for Public Finance (reporting jointly to the Deputy First Minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Public Services Reform)

Elected for the first time in 2026 as MSP for the Shetland Islands, Goodlad previously worked for energy company Equinor before entering politics. Her responsibilities include consumer advocacy, community empowerment and planning.



Ivan McKee

Cabinet Secretary for Public Service Reform

The MSP for Glasgow Provan, Ivan McKee served as the Minister for Public Finance in John Swinney's last government and has now been promoted into a new Cabinet Secretary position.

This suggests faith in McKee personally, but also that public service reform (which many may view as a euphemism for 'cuts') will be a top priority for this Government. Announcing his new, slimmed down Cabinet, the First Minister was at pains to emphasise that he wanted a 'leaner, more agile' government. McKee has been assigned the monumental task of delivering this across the public sector. McKee has also been assigned the Energy Consents brief.



Màiri McAllan

Cabinet Secretary for Education, Culture and Gaelic

The former corporate lawyer and Special Adviser to the then First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, Màiri McAllan was elected to the Scottish Parliament in 2021 as MSP for Clydesdale and has rapidly risen through the ranks.

Widely talked about as a future leadership contender, McAllan is building up the Government experience that will be integral to her trajectory in the SNP hierarchy.



Siobhian Brown

Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise

The MSP for Ayr since 2021, Siobhian Brown previously served as the Convener of the Covid-19 Recovery Committee, before being appointed the Minister of Victims and Community Safety. In her new role Brown presides over children's rights and protection, early years policy and online safety.



Ben Macpherson

Minister for Innovation, Technology and Tertiary Education

Representing Edinburgh North-Eastern and Leith (formerly Edinburgh Northern and Leith) since 2016, Macpherson previously served as a Minister in Nicola Sturgeon's Government but declined to work in First Minister Humza Yousaf's team.

John Swinney appointed him as Minister for Higher and Further Education in his last Government, and Macpherson's responsibilities now include science and STEM, tertiary education and AI policy and strategy.



Shirley-Anne Somerville

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice and Housing

A cabinet stalwart since 2018, Shirley Anne-Sommerville served as the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice in the previous administration and keeps her role, with Housing added to her portfolio.

The merging of briefs means that the same Cabinet Secretary is now responsible for tackling child poverty, human rights and social security as well as homelessness, tenant rights and fuel poverty. This speaks to the SNP's instincts on housing policy as a vehicle for reducing poverty and tackling insecurity, as opposed to the focus on economic growth often adopted in Westminster.



Simita Kumar

Minister for Equalities and International Development

The new MSP for Edinburgh South Western, Kumar was previously an Edinburgh City Councillor, leading the SNP group on the Council. Kumar's responsibilities include refugees and asylum seekers, international development and diversity, inclusion and equalities.



Gillian Martin

Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action & Rural Affairs

The MSP for Aberdeenshire East, Gillian Martin retains her position as Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action, a position she has held since 2024, with Rural Affairs now added to her portfolio.

The First Minister's evident faith in Martin signals a continuation in the Scottish Government's Climate Change Plan. This comes despite opposition from those close to Gillian Martin's own constituency, where there is growing discontent over expanding energy infrastructure.



Jim Fairlie

Minister for Agriculture, Marine and the Islands

A former shepherd and hill farmer, Fairlie was first appointed to Government under the Humza Yousaf administration as the Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity.

Under his expanded remit, Fairlie leads on agriculture policy, animal welfare and fisheries policy.



Stephen Flynn

Cabinet Secretary for Economy, Transport and Tourism

Stephen Flynn may be one of the freshest faces in the Scottish Government but he is no stranger to frontline politics. Flynn served as the leader of the SNP group in Westminster since 2022, becoming known for his interventions at PMQs and commanding performance in the media.

He left Westminster for Holyrood on winning the Aberdeen Deeside and North Kincardine seat. A senior appointment with a high-profile brief in his inaugural term as an MSP acknowledges Flynn's leadership ambitions, whilst tying him to the principle of collective responsibility. Flynn will be very much on the political frontline, no doubt drawing on his experience at Westminster to advocate vocally for Scotland's priorities as he sees them.



Tom Arthur

Minister for Business and Fair Work

The former freelance piano teacher has served as an MSP since 2016, initially entering Nicola Sturgeon's Government in 2021 as the Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth.

After serving as the Employment and then Social Care Minister, Arthur's ministerial responsibilities now include towns, cities and community investment, the digital economy and planning for the just transition.



Angela Constance

Cabinet Secretary for Health and Care

The MSP for Almond Valley served as the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs in the last government, having essentially switched roles with her cabinet colleague Neil Gray.

An experienced political operator, Angela Constance has served in several previous cabinets under former First Ministers Alex Salmond, Humza Yousaf and Nicola Sturgeon. Her institutional knowledge will be evident in her interactions with stakeholders.



Alison Thewliss

Minister for Community Care

The former Glasgow City Councillor, Alison Thewliss served as the MP for Glasgow Central from 2015 to 2024. During this time, Thewliss served as the SNP spokesperson for Communities and Local Government, Treasury and Home Affairs.

Elected for the first time to the Scottish Parliament this year, her responsibilities include community care, social care and the Care Inspectorate.



Maree Todd

Minister for Mental Wellbeing, Public Health, Sport, Alcohol

Maree Todd entered the Scottish Parliament in 2016, following a career as a hospital pharmacist in the Highlands. Initially joining the Scottish Government as the Minister for Children and Young People in 2017, since 2021 Todd has consistently held Ministerial portfolios in health and sport.

In her current position, Todd's responsibilities include women's health, mental wellbeing policy and sport and physical activity.



Neil Gray

Cabinet Secretary for Justice

The MSP for Airdrie, Neil Gray has returned to the cabinet after serving as Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care in the previous administration. Another experienced political operator, Neil Gray previously served as an MP in Westminster from 2015, before being elected as an MSP in 2021.

After his election, he quickly became a minister for Culture, Europe and International Development, before being promoted to the Cabinet as Secretary for Wellbeing, Economy, Fair Work and Energy.



Kirsten Oswald

Minister for Victims and Community Strategy

New to the Scottish Parliament as of this year, Oswald previously served as the MP for East Renfrewshire until 2024, where she served as Deputy Leader for the SNP Group in Westminster from 2020 to 2022.

Her responsibilities include access to justice, the legal profession and any bills that come through the Scottish Law Commission.

Special advisers (SpAds).

Unlike in the UK Government, where SpAds work for individual Cabinet Ministers in their allocated departments, in Scotland they are appointed by the First Minister and then allocated across various government policy portfolios.

They work closely alongside civil servants and external stakeholders on the priorities of the Scottish Government. They complement the official, impartial advice of civil servants with advice that takes the politics of a policy, bill or external development into account. Outside of Government, they may get involved in political campaigning and are key contacts for stakeholders looking to influence the policymaking process or political priorities of the day.

In recent times, SpAds in Westminster have often found themselves in the spotlight (think Dominic Cummings and Morgan McSweeney), but they tend to have a lower public profile in Holyrood. Their importance however should not be underestimated. It is also worth noting that

the SpAd structure in the Scottish Government is more conducive to a 'one team' mentality than in Westminster. There, SpAds work to advance the policy and political interests of their principal, even when that comes into conflict with the interests of other Cabinet Ministers or departments. This only serves to enhance the value of a relationship with a SpAd in Scotland. Though they may have a 'discipline', such as policy or communications, they are more likely to work across multiple areas of the Government than their Westminster counterparts.

In addition, SpAds are more likely to survive in post after a leadership change in Scotland. Many of the political team have worked for a combination of Salmond, Sturgeon, Yousaf and

Swinney. In contrast, Westminster witnessed the turnover of entire groups of SpAds through the tumult of the May, Johnson, Truss and Sunak handovers. This allows for institutional knowledge to become more deeply embedded in the teams advising the First Minister and Cabinet on the politics of any given policy, Bill or external development.

SpAds generally provide Cabinet Secretaries & Ministers with support on:

- Policy development
- Communications and media handling
- Strategic advice on political positioning and messaging

The new team are.

** Portfolios to be announced by Scottish Government*

Policy.



Colin McAllister

Chief of Staff to the First Minister

McAllister is responsible for the First Minister's strategic programme in Government and co-ordination of the Special Adviser team.

The former head of communications for the SNP, McAllister served as Special Adviser to Alex Salmond. After a brief period in the Care Inspectorate, he rejoined the Scottish Government, becoming Head of Policy in 2013. McAllister rose to become the Chief of Staff in 2021 and is the most senior 'gatekeeper' at the top of Government. Given the huge volume of requests, briefings, submissions and invitations flowing to the First Minister on a daily basis, it is McAllister's stewardship of the political team, as well his own priorities and contacts, that will define what gets through to the First Minister and what is directed elsewhere.



Emily Mackintosh

Deputy Chief of Staff

A former Communications Officer for the SNP, Mackintosh has rapidly risen through the ranks since first being appointed a Special Adviser in 2021. She has advised on the economy and business engagement.



Davie Hutchison

Head of Policy

He has acted as a Special Adviser since 2011, supporting three First Ministers in that time.





Jeanette Campbell

Senior Special Adviser

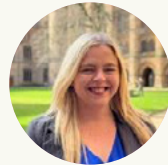
A former communications and public affairs professional, Campbell joined the Scottish Government as a Special Adviser in 2015. She previously served as head of Research for the SNP parliamentary group.



Stephen Noon

Senior Special Adviser

Stephen Noon initially served as a Special Adviser for the Scottish Government between 2007 and 2010, before working as Chief Strategist for the Yes campaign during the Independence referendum. Noon then left politics and took on academic research roles in Ethics and Practical Theology. He returned to the Scottish Government as a Special Adviser in October 2024.



Erin McKee

Senior Special Adviser

McKee previously worked in the office of MSP Bruce Crawford, before acting as an adviser on Government Policy at the University of Glasgow.



Emilie Louise Purdie

Special Adviser

Prior to becoming a Special Adviser in 2023, Purdie worked in Westminster as the Head of Research for the SNP group.



Helen Scott

Special Adviser

Helen Scott joined John Swinney's team of Special Advisers in December 2025, following a stint as a Communications Officer in the SNP Holyrood Group. Graduating in Law in 2021, she is the newest of the Special Adviser team.



Marco Biagi

Special Adviser

Marco Biagi provides strategic advice on political positioning and messaging for the First Minister and Cabinet. The former Edinburgh City Councillor, MSP for Edinburgh Central and Minister for Local Government, Biagi is a seasoned political strategist, previously working as a Public Affairs Consultant.



Comms.



Ross Ingebrigtsen

Head of Communications and Senior Political Spokesperson

Serving since 2014, Ingebrigtsen is a longstanding member of the Scottish Government's comms team, having served as a communications adviser to four First Ministers of Scotland. He leads on strategic media advice, accompanies the First Minister on high-profile overseas visits and leads on briefing the First Minister and Ministers ahead of television debates and key media appearances.



Sean McGivern

Deputy Head of Communications and Political Spokesperson

Appointed in 2023, Sean McGivern works on the First Minister's media and events.



Olaf Stando

Special Adviser

A digital communications adviser to the First Minister, Stando has worked on five election campaigns for the SNP, focusing on their social media presence.

Opposition spokespersons.

The SNP has formed a minority government. This means that collaboration, negotiation and concessions on a cross-party basis will be crucial in getting high profile or controversial policies and legislation through Parliament.

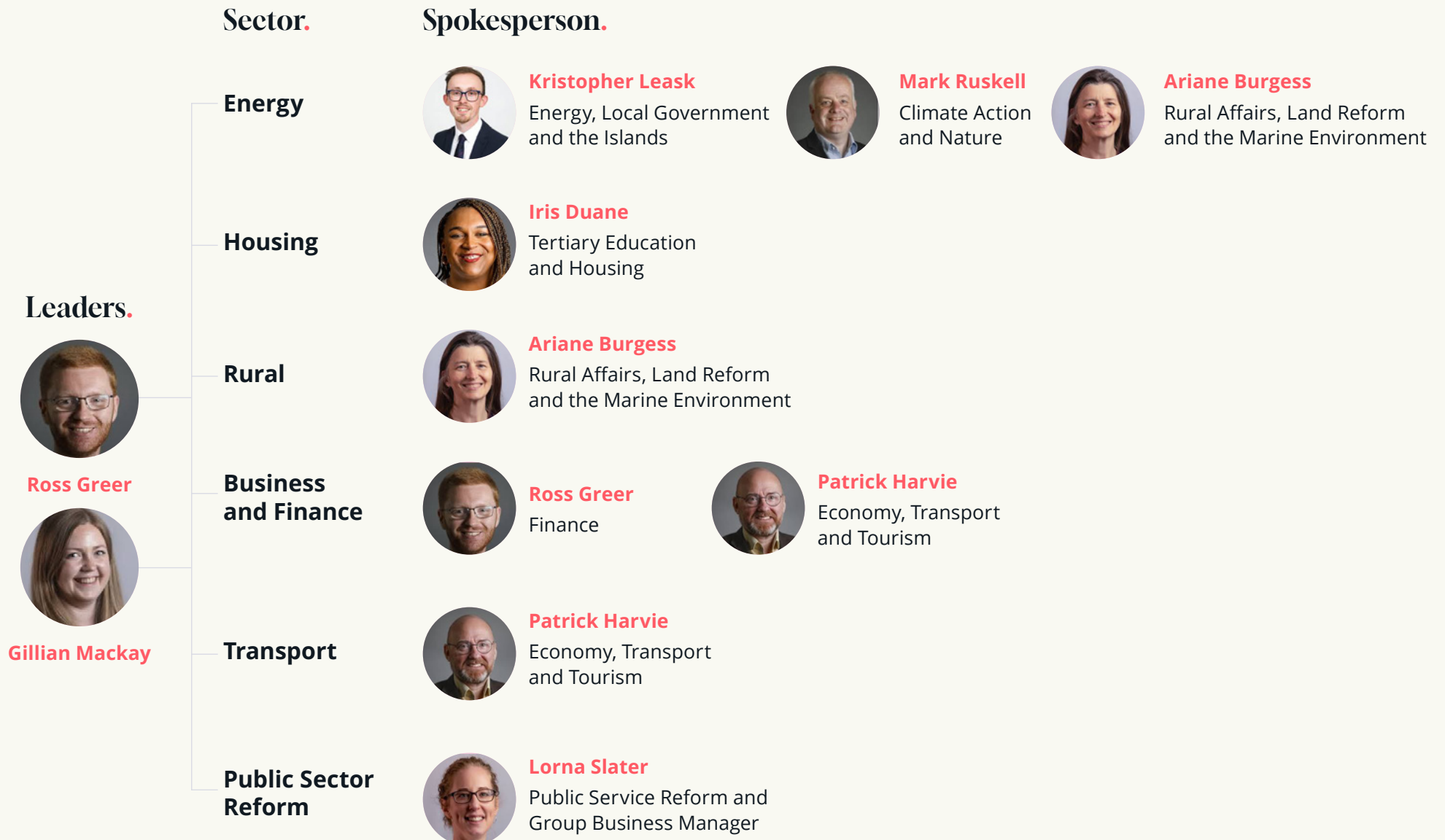
There will be some areas of policy where the SNP will generally be able to count on the support of other parties, such as the Scottish Greens on the constitution or climate-friendly initiatives, for example. Others, such as public sector reform, will present much greater parliamentary challenges for the Government to overcome, and it may find itself needing to make significant concessions in order to win enough cross-party support.

This gives opposition spokespersons significant influence, often greater than that exerted by their counterparts in Westminster. Understanding their needs, ways of working and personal priorities is crucial to influencing specific policy areas in Holyrood.

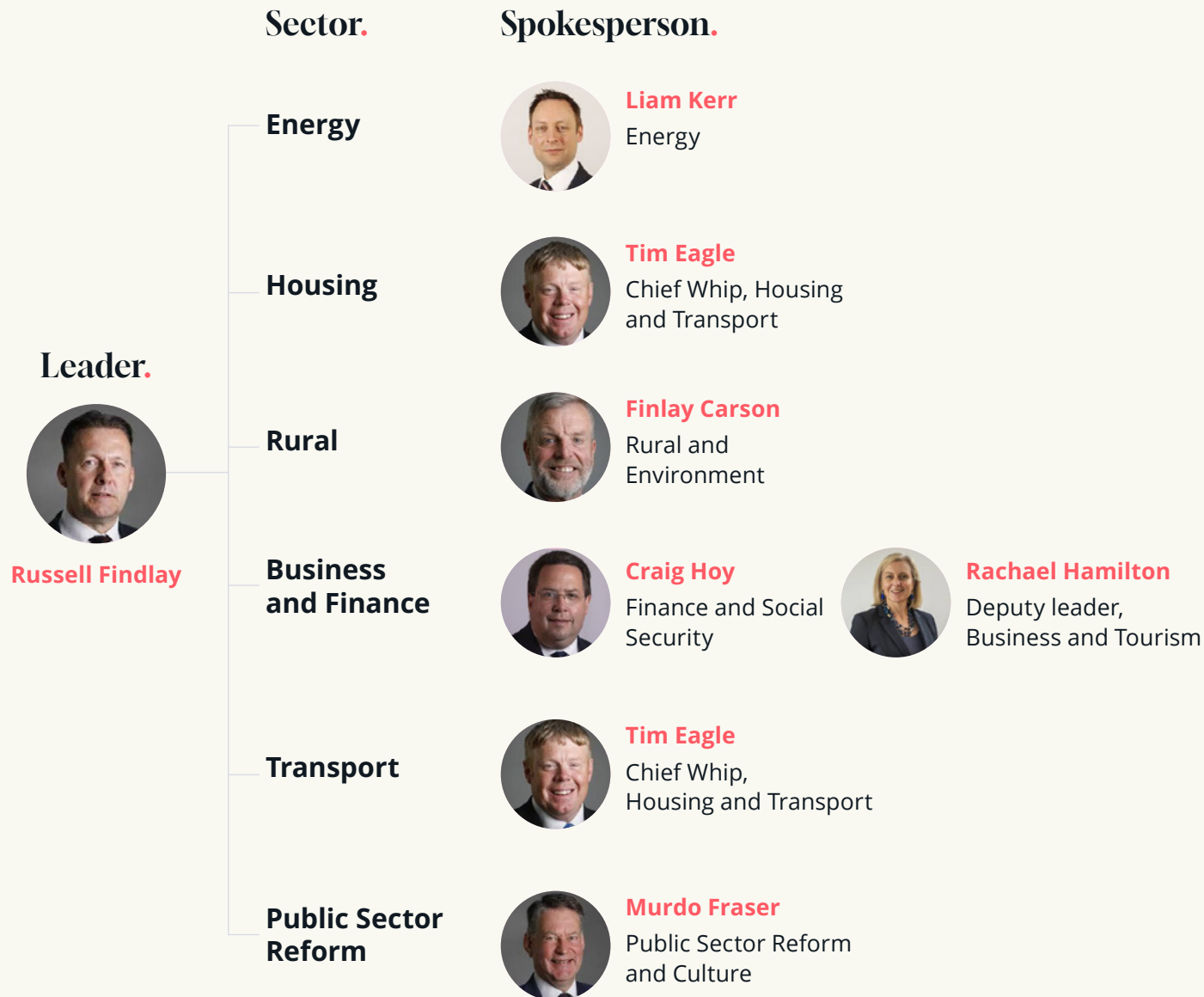
Labour.







Conservatives.



Liberal Democrats.

Leaders.



Alex Cole-Hamilton

Sector.

Spokesperson.

Energy



Sanne Dijkstra-Downie

Climate, Environment and Energy

Housing



Morven-May MacCallum

Housing, Social Security and Local Government

Rural



Andrew Baxter

Rural Affairs

Business and Finance



Liam McArthur

Economy, Finance and Tourism

Transport



Willie Rennie

Transport

Public Sector Reform



David Green

Public Sector Reform, Europe, External Affairs and Culture



Committees.

These are crucial to the day-to-day work of the Scottish Parliament and wield more power than committees in Westminster

Featuring members from all parties, these bodies scrutinise the Government's workings. In the House of Commons, there are 'Select Committees' that scrutinise the policy, operations and external affairs of each department and Public Bill and Delegated Legislation Committees that scrutinise bills. Committees in the Scottish Parliament do both.

They were designed to take the place of an upper chamber in Scotland, which makes this the primary arena for checks and balances on the Scottish Government, in addition to MSP interventions in the main Chamber. Committees will suggest amendments, and the debate surrounding these can often be where the finer details of Government bills are worked out. Their members are therefore a critical stakeholder group for those that have a stake in ongoing legislation. Committees can also produce influential reports on policy, conduct inquiries and initiate legislation.

There are 16 Committees in total, with SNP MSPs convening, or leading, half of them. The rest are divided up between the parties in opposition. This Parliamentary term, Labour, Reform and the Greens convene two Committees, Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats one.

Committees.

Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments

(the parliamentary procedures, MSP conduct, public appointments and the regulation of lobbying)



Convener: Jenni Minto
SNP

Members:

- Jackie Baillie, Labour
- Tim Eagle, Conservative
- David Linden, SNP
- Mark Simpson, Reform

Finance and Public Administration

(public revenue and expenditure, Budget Bills)



Convener: Clare Haughey
SNP

Members:

- Alan Brown, SNP
- Liam Kerr, Conservative
- Michael Marra, Labour
- Liam McArthur, Lib Dem
- Kim Schmulian, Reform
- Pauline Stafford, SNP

Public Audit

(accounts, reports by the Auditor General for Scotland, financial control and audit in relation to public expenditure)



Convener: Neil Bibby
Labour

Members:

- Dawn Black, SNP
- Miles Briggs, Conservative
- Alan Brown, SNP
- David Kirkwood, Reform

Europe, External Relations and Culture

(EU legislation, the Scottish Government's international activities, culture and the creative industries)



Convener: Patrick Harvie
Green

Members:

- Colin Beattie, SNP
- Senga Beresford, Reform
- Keith Brown, SNP
- David Green, Lib Dem
- Pauline Stafford, SNP
- Jenny Young, Labour

Committees.

Equalities and Human Rights and Civil Justice

(equal opportunities, human rights and civil justice matters)



Convener: Katie Hagmann

SNP

Members:

- Holly Bruce, Green
- Meghan Gallacher, Conservative
- Amanda Lindsay, Reform
- Fulton MacGregor, SNP
- Carol Mochan, Labour
- Collette Stevenson, SNP

Public Petitions

(the handling of petitions lodged with the Parliament and the operation of the petitions system)



Convener: Paul Sweeney

Labour

Members:

- Julie MacDougall, Reform
- Cara McKee, Green
- Marie McNair, SNP
- David Torrance, SNP

Delegated Powers and Law Reform

(technical scrutiny of subordinate legislation, delegated power provisions in Bills, consideration of Scottish Law Commission Bills and Consolidation Bills)



Convener: Calum Kerr

SNP

Members:

- Amanda Lindsay, Reform
- Q Manivannan, Green
- Colm Merrick, SNP
- Paul Sweeney, Labour

Climate Action



Convener: Stuart McMillan

SNP

Members:

- Claire Baker, Labour
- David Barratt, SNP
- Ariane Burgess, Green
- Martyn Day, SNP
- Sanne Dijkstra-Downie, Lib Dem
- Douglas Lumsden, Conservative*

* To be replaced following his election as Westminster MP for Aberdeen South

Committees.

Criminal Justice



Convener: Alyn Smith
SNP

Members:

- Amanda Bland, Reform
- Maggie Chapman, Green
- Stephen Kerr, Conservative
- David Linden, SNP
- Marie McNair, SNP
- Pauline McNeill, Labour

Economy, Tourism and Energy



Convener: Duncan Massey
Reform

Members:

- Gary Bouse, SNP
- Kate Campbell, SNP
- Martyn Day, SNP
- Rachael Hamilton, Conservative
- Daniel Johnson, Labour
- Kristopher Leask, Green

Education and Gaelic



Convener: Karen Adam
SNP

Members:

- George Adam, SNP
- Duncan Dunlop, Lib Dem
- Patricia Gibson, SNP
- Laura Moodie, Green
- Angela Ross, Reform
- Katherine Sangster, Labour

Health, Care and Sport



Convener: Helen McDade
Reform

Members:

- Heather Anderson, SNP
- Adam Harley, Lib Dem
- Kayleigh Kinross-O'Neill, Green
- Joe Long, Labour
- Paul McLennan, SNP
- Jack Middleton, SNP

Committees.

Public Service Reform



Convener: Bob Doris
SNP

Members:

- Max Bannerman, Reform
- Michelle Campbell, SNP
- Joe Fagan, Labour
- Murdo Fraser, Conservative
- Alex Kerr, SNP
- Lorna Slater, Green

Rural Affairs



Convener: Mark Ruskell
Green

Members:

- Andrew Baxter, Lib Dem
- Dawn Black, SNP
- Finlay Carson, Conservative
- Jamie Langan, Reform
- Laura Mitchell, SNP
- Emma Roddick, SNP

Social Justice, Housing and Local Government



Convener: Craig Hoy
Conservative

Members:

- Steven Bonnar, SNP
- Gary Bouse, SNP
- Kate Campbell, SNP
- Mark Griffin, Labour
- Thomas Kerr, Reform
- Morven-May MacCallum, Lib Dem

Transport



Convener: Willie Rennie
Liberal Democrats

Members:

- Iris Duane, Green
- Zen Ghani, SNP
- Donald MacKinnon, Labour
- Lloyd Melville, SNP
- Graham Simpson, Reform
- Collette Stevenson, SNP

A week in

Holyrood.

At the start of this parliamentary term, the new Presiding Officer announced a shake-up of how the Scottish Parliament operates, with more time given to interrogate the work of the Government.

Parliament is generally in session on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, with Monday and Friday kept free for constituency business. Parliamentary debates tend to take place in the afternoon, with Committee meetings in the mornings.

First Minister's questions, which operate much like the Prime Minister's Questions in Westminster, will now be held twice a week, with a 30-minute slot on Tuesdays for backbenchers to question John Swinney and another 30 minutes on Thursday for party leaders to interrogate the First Minister. In an effort to avoid scripted responses and enhance accountability, no questions to be put to the First Minister will be published in advance. All will be taken from the floor of the Chamber.

The party fielding the first three questions as the main opposition will alternate each week between Labour and Reform – which tied on 17 seats after the recent election.

The Greens, on 15 seats, will also get three questions, while the Liberal Democrats and Conservatives, who returned 10 and 12 MSPs respectively, will receive two each.

There will be two portfolio question times back-to-back each week, where the Cabinet Secretaries are quizzed on their respective briefs.

General questions, where any MSP can ask questions to any Minister, will take place every Tuesday and Thursday, before First Minister's questions.

Members Business', where any member of the Scottish Parliament can put forward a debate, has also changed. While cross party support is still needed for a debate to take place, now only two parties need to support it, instead of three to five in the previous Parliament. This lower threshold gives greater opportunity for opposition parties to hold the Scottish Government's feet to the fire.

Persuading an MSP to use a question in any of these forums on a particular policy, sector or topic requires diligent groundwork, planning and advocacy. Though the question and response exchange may only last a couple of minutes, or even a few seconds, getting an issue of concern on the record in this very public way is a highly effective advocacy strategy.

Tuesday.

Morning: Committee meetings

14:00: Business begins, General questions, followed by backbench FMQs

17:30: Decision time, where votes on legislation take place

18:00: Members Business, where any MSP can put forward a debate

Wednesday.

Morning: Committee meetings

14:00: Business begins, Portfolio questions, statements and debates

17:30: Decision time

18:00: Members Business

Thursday.

Morning: Committee meetings

13:30: General questions

14:00: Leaders FMQs

14:30: Parliamentary Motions

17:00: Members Business'

Civil Service.

The civil service in Scotland is structured into directorates, which are each responsible for putting government policy into action.

There are over 50 of these directorates, working on a specific government policy brief, such as offshore wind, cladding remediation, tax and planning. This is different to Westminster, where the UK civil service is structured into much larger departments with responsibility for an overarching policy area, like home affairs. Knowing the right Directorate to engage and how they operate is vital to get discussions moving within the government apparatus.

The Directorates are overseen by Directors, who themselves are overseen by their corresponding Ministers and seven Director-Generals. These Director-Generals are:



Joe Griffin

Permanent Secretary

Joe Griffin has served as Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government since April 2025, acting as the most senior civil servant in Scotland and principal policy adviser to the First Minister. Having worked within the Scottish Government since 2004, he has held a range of senior roles including Director-General for Strategy and External Affairs and Director-General for Education and Justice, before taking up the top post. Griffin is ultimately accountable for the functionality, effectiveness and finances of the Civil Service, and is required to be across all policy areas.

Communities and External Affairs.



Kenneth Hogg

Director General (Communities and External Affairs)

Kenneth Hogg has served as Director-General for Communities and External Affairs at the Scottish Government since March 2026, with responsibility for areas including social security, housing, social justice, equalities, human rights, and tackling child poverty.

Responsibilities:

- Culture and External Affairs Directorate
- EU Directorate
- Equality, Inclusion and Human Rights Directorate
- Local Government and Housing Directorate
- Social Security Directorate
- Tackling Child Poverty and Social Justice Directorate

Strategy and Performance.



Shona Riach

**Director-General Exchequer,
(Strategy and Performance)**

Shona Riach has served as Director-General for Exchequer, Strategy and Performance at the Scottish Government since March 2026, a role which brought together the previous Strategy and External Affairs portfolio with wider fiscal and delivery responsibilities. She oversees work on government strategy, performance, public service reform and financial sustainability, supporting Ministers to deliver priorities in a fiscally sustainable way. She and her team will be integral to Ivan McKee's efforts to make the public sector more efficient and streamlined.

Responsibilities:

- Constitution Directorate
- Parliamentary Counsel Office
- Performance, Delivery and Resilience Directorate
- Public Service Reform Directorate
- Strategy Directorate

Economy.



Gregor Irwin

Director-General (Economy)

Gregor Irwin has served as Director-General (Economy) at the Scottish Government since March 2023, leading the development and delivery of economic policy across areas including, business regulation, jobs, trade and investment, and planning. This Government wants to prioritise sound financial management and open dialogue with the business community. Irwin will be pivotal to both.

Responsibilities:

- Business and Better Regulation Directorate
- Chief Economist Directorate
- Economic Development Directorate
- International Trade and Investment Directorate
- Jobs and Wellbeing Economy Directorate

Net Zero.



Andy Kerr

Director-General (Net Zero)

Andy Kerr has served as Director General for Net Zero at the Scottish Government since November 2025, leading policy to deliver Scotland's target of reaching net zero emissions by 2045 across areas including energy, transport, agriculture and forestry, whilst overseeing agencies such as Transport Scotland, Forestry and Land Scotland and Scottish Forestry. This important remit will make Kerr and his team primary stakeholders for firms seeking to invest in Scotland's growing renewable energy sector, which faces opposition from those concerned about the impact of new infrastructure on local communities and landscape, concerns often amplified by vocal right-wing politicians.

Responsibilities:

- Agriculture and Rural Economy Directorate
- Energy and Climate Change Directorate
- Environment and Forestry Directorate
- Marine Directorate
- Offshore Wind Directorate

Education and Justice.



Neil Rennick

Director-General (Education and Justice)

Neil Rennick has served as Director-General Education and Justice at the Scottish Government since September 2023, with responsibility for education and the safety and justice system across Scotland.

Responsibilities:

- Children and Families Directorate
- Early Learning and Childcare Directorate
- Education Reform Directorate
- Justice Directorate
- Learning Directorate
- Lifelong Learning and Skills Directorate
- Safer Communities Directorate

Health and Social Care.



Caroline Lamb

Chief Executive of NHS Scotland and Director-General (Health and Social Care)

Caroline Lamb has served as Chief Executive of NHS Scotland and Director-General Health and Social Care since January 2021, providing strategic direction to NHS Scotland and overseeing delivery of safe, effective and person-centred services.

Responsibilities:

- Chief Medical Officer Directorate
- Chief Nursing Officer Directorate
- Chief Operating Officer, NHS Scotland Directorate
- Digital Health and Care Directorate
- Health Workforce Directorate
- Health and Social Care Finance Directorate
- Mental Health Directorate
- People, Appointments and Governance
- Population Health Directorate
- Primary Care Directorate
- Social Care and National Care Service Development

Directorates.

Housing

Local Government and Housing Directorate



Sean Neill
Director of Local Government
and Housing

Cladding Remediation Directorate



Dr Stephen Lea-Ross
Director Cladding Remediation

Planning, Architecture and Regeneration
Directorate



Dr Fiona Simpson
Chief Planner

Energy

Energy and Climate Change Directorate



Kersti Berge
Director of Energy
and Climate Change

Environment and Forestry Directorate



Dr David Signorini
Director of Environment
and Forestry

Marine Directorate



Iain Wallace
Director of Marine

Offshore Wind Directorate



Michelle Quinn
Director of Offshore Wind

Rural

Agriculture and Rural Economy Directorate



George Burgess
Director of Agriculture
and Rural Economy



Sheila Voas
Chief Veterinary Officer

Directorates.

Business

Business and Better Regulation Directorate



Frances Pacitti
Director for Business and
Better Regulation

International Trade and Investment Directorate



Richard Rollison
Director of International Trade
and Investment

Chief Economist Directorate



Gary Gillespie
Chief Economist

Jobs and Wellbeing Economy Directorate



Aidan Grisewood
Director of Jobs and Wellbeing
Economy

Economic Development Directorate



Colin Cook
Director of Economic
Development

Digital Directorate



Geoff Huggins
Director of Digital



**Professor Calum
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Chief Scientific Adviser



Conclusion

The Scottish Parliament's devolved powers range across a variety of policy areas, from agriculture to housing, the environment, health and justice. As the First Minister and many in his Cabinet have already made clear, this Government will continue to push for more policy responsibilities to be devolved from Westminster. For now though, the policies in Holyrood's remit are clear.

With the dust having settled on the May 2026 election, we now know who in Government has oversight and decision-making powers over these policies, alongside those in the wider parliamentary ecosystem who will be taking a keen interest in their decisions.

Understanding how best to navigate this ecosystem and influence the players within it, whether they are political or official, media-savvy Ministers or civil servants working behind closed doors, is critical to any group, sector or business that has a Scottish policy problem or proposal.

Cavendish can help you to connect with the right people, and critically, in the right way to get your voice heard. Whatever you want to achieve, we can help you get there.

Get in touch.

For further information, or to discuss how your organisation can engage effectively, get in touch with our Head of Government Relations in Scotland, Peter White today.

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