



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

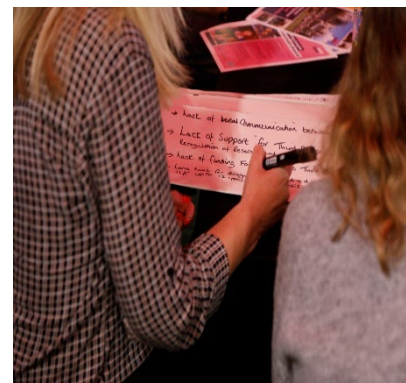


Join In
Gabh Pàirt

25th Anniversary Regional Day Latha Roinneil 25mh Ceann-bliadhna

A community conversation
Hosted by Borders Community Action

Monday 20 May 2024
MacArts Centre, Galashiels



Introduction

As part of our activities to mark the Parliament's 25th anniversary, we visited the South of Scotland region to meet with local people to chat about what the Parliament means to them. We were keen to get a really good understanding of what their expectations are for the future and how we can better engage with local people. That's what the Parliament is here for - to improve the lives of people in Scotland. It's important that we hear from people directly.

During our visit to Galashiels, we had good discussions about lots of issues - education, housing, transport, affordability, inclusion and access to services for young people. We had a really good, lively conversation.

The meetings have given us a much better understanding of what people expect and how we can carry these conversations on in the future to make sure the Parliament is delivering all it can for people. My thanks to everyone who took part.



Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP
Presiding Officer



Drawn by Jenny from
MORE THAN MINUTES

Borders
Community Action

BURNFOOT
Community Futures

Development
Trusts Association
Scotland
A Thriving Community-led Network

The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

25
-YEARS-
BLIADHNA

Credit: Jenny Capon, More Than Minutes

Regional Programme of Community Engagement

The Presiding Officer is leading a regional programme of visits to each of the 8 Scottish Parliamentary regions to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Scottish Parliament. This is the first visit of 8. The Scottish Parliaments Participation & Communities Team is developing the programme of community engagement alongside community organisations. A day of events will be held in each region throughout 2024 and 2025. The approach is to involve communities in the development of activities and to hear from people in ways that suit them best. For the first regional day, we worked in partnership with Borders Community Action, Burnfoot Community Futures and The Development Trust Association for Scotland. Activities were developed collaboratively aiming to hold events which were friendly and inclusive and involved people who may not usually engage with the Scottish Parliament. We know that not everyone can easily engage with Parliament. We're exploring ways to connect with more people, so that they can have their say in the work we do.

This report outlines the event in Galashiels.

Attendees

Presiding Officer: Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP

Members of the Scottish Parliament: Christine Grahame MSP, Craig Hoy MSP, Colin Smyth MSP

Borders Community Action staff: Juliana Amaral, Margaret Bennet, Fiona Benton, Corrine Downie, John Evans, Shirley Horne

Scottish Parliament Staff: Laura Black, Mark Brough, Sarah Campbell, Hayley Forrester, Jennifer Griffin, Emmanuelle Le Coz, Kirsty Rimmer, Kate Smith

Graphic Notetaker: Jenny Capon from More Than Minutes

Participants: 36 people attended from:

Community & Third Sector:

Borders Additional Needs Group, Live Borders, Peebles and District Citizens Advice Bureau, Peeblesshire Food bank, CELCA Cranshaws, Ellemford and Longformarcus Community Church, Dementia Friendly Tweeddale, Riddell Fiddlers, Galadean Fairydean Rivers, Galashiels Men's Shed, Hawick Men's Shed, Earlston Community Council, the local Ukrainian community, Parentspace, Beyond Earlston, Scottish Borders Council Community Learning & Development Services

Scottish Youth Parliament:

Alex Waterson Law MSYP, Tweeddale Lauderdale, Midlothian South & Anna Vause MSYP Ettrick, Roxburgh & Berwickshire.

Galashiels Academy:

First and second year pupils from the Pupil Council

Format of the Event

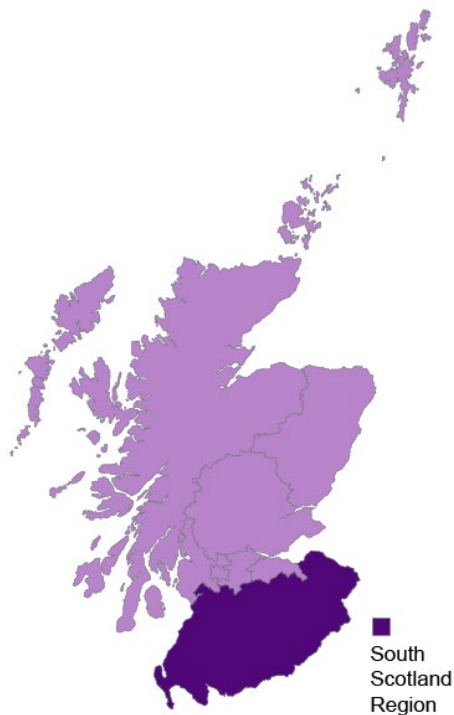
- The Presiding Officer, MSPs and staff facilitated small table conversations.
- Additional activities for participants displayed around the room.
- A Graphic Notetaker Jenny Capon captured what people said.



were

People explored a range of questions and shared ideas in small table conversations facilitated by the Presiding Officer, MSPs and staff. After the workshop everyone enjoyed sharing lunch together, catered by Café Recharge.

You can view a [short video](#) from the day on X.



What we Heard

Participants were asked to name one word they think of in relation to the Scottish Parliament.



What we asked What is working well now?

Policies

- Family related –e.g., free school meals, Scottish Child Payment.
- Education – free tuition at universities, digital access/iPads at schools, new school buildings, curriculum extension
- Health e.g., free prescriptions, smoking ban.
- Environmental e.g., ban on single use plastics.
- Travel e.g., buses free with Young Scot card and for over 60s, Borders railway.
- Social support e.g., autism bill, bigger better conversation about mental health.

Democratic wellbeing

- (The Scottish Parliament is) the voice of the people.
- Protecting rights e.g., feels safer for LGBTQ people.
- Approachable/accessibility of MSPs, people who listen to lived experience.
- Committees at the centre of the Scottish Parliament - in touch with reality through consultation.
- Better representation including voting at 16.
- Schools access to Parliament.

What would you like to see in the future?

Policies

- Digital – better connectivity, support and training to end digital exclusion, including for older people.
- Schools, – rights respecting schools – hearing children’s voices, more ambition for inclusion, countering bullying & effect of social media, schools teaching citizenship & life skills, better transition primary to secondary, improve school food (more fruit & veg).
- Further/higher education – more local further/higher education to encourage young people to stay, access to more options from rural areas.
- Young people – investment in youth work, support neurodiverse young people into work.
- Health – fair access to services including for young people, neurodiverse people, shorter waiting times, better mental health services, improved care homes. Policies to address smoking, vaping, alcohol use by young people.
- Disability – simpler and quicker access to diagnosis, benefits and community groups. Lack of support for refugees e.g., translation.
- Economy – impact of cost of living, strategy for investment in local economy covering all areas, counter urbanization and impact of railway, better support for local tourism, more action from SOSE (South of Scotland Enterprise),
- Third sector – longer term funding & more collaborative approach, recognition of vital services third sector is picking up,
- Transport – more frequent reliable & affordable public transport, free train travel for young people; east-west travel routes not just north-south,
- Local community – address vandalism, littering, anti-social behaviour, abuse of right to roam, impact of cost of living,

Democratic wellbeing

- Parliament needs to help people understand its role: what is devolved, how decisions are made and where (Parliament compared to local authority), and how to engage with Parliament to get views heard e.g., which MSPs to talk to, how to use petitions.
- Needs to be a conversation – listening not just talking to.
- More citizenship education/information about Parliament at schools & for everyone.
- Attracting a wider range of people + skills to be MSPs.
- Simplify information – less complex/inaccessible language, make website accessible & suitable for neurodivergent people, bills aren’t accessible at all.
- Legislation: important to review if bills are working well, think through unintended consequences, work out routes to deliver policies, make use of existing legislation (fewer better bills).

What are the key issues in your area that you feel should be addressed/prioritised?

Community Spaces

- Lack of community space (affordability, access, unsuitable, poor condition).
- People need to be involved in community planning.
- Repair unused buildings to be used for the community.
- Digital only is excluding people – not everyone can get online.

Transport

- Transport must be improved to help with isolation, to travel around rural areas.
- Accessible transport & access to support.

Education

- Change Education Act.
- Stop buying iPads (get lost & broken, damage family relationships).

Funding

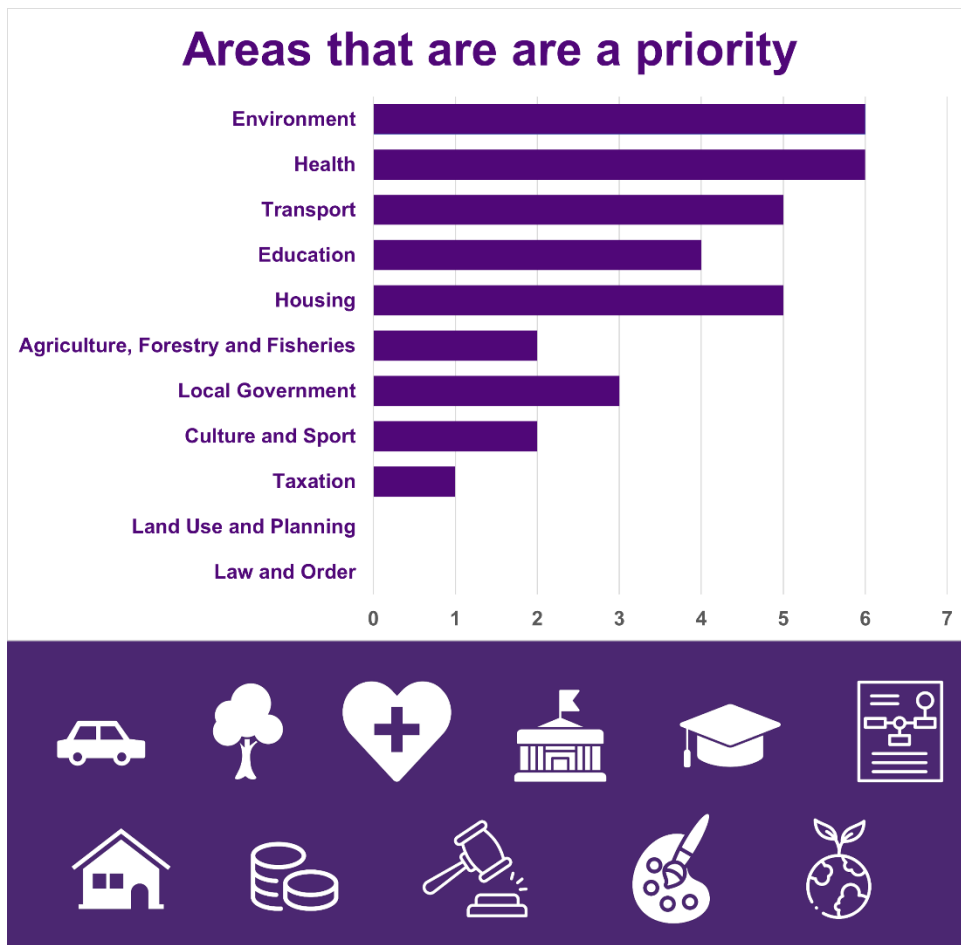
- Multiyear funding needed.
- Applications too long – help with forms.

Other

- Potholes.
- Housing.
- Mental Health.



What are the key issues in your area?



Feedback

Feedback was taken in person at the end of the event with 21 people out of the 36 who attended completing a sticky dot evaluation.



- 81%** enjoyed the event.
- 81%** learned something new about the Parliament.
- 62%** would like to get involved with the Parliament in the future.
- 67%** feel more confident to get involved with the Parliament.
- 57%** better understand how to get involved with the Parliament.