



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba



25th Anniversary Regional Day

Latha Roinneil

25mh Ceann-bliadhna

A community conversation

Hosted by Voluntary Action Shetland

Monday 26 August 2024
Islesburgh Community Centre



Introduction

As part of our activities to mark the Parliament's 25th anniversary, we visited the Highlands and Islands region to meet with local people to chat about what the Parliament means to them. We were keen to get a 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 the event hosted by Voluntary Action Shetland at the Islesburgh Community Centre in Lerwick we had good discussions about issues like transport, social care and equal access to services for those with disabilities. We've had a really good, lively conversations.

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



Credit: Jenny Capon, More than Minutes

Scottish Parliament 25th Anniversary Regional Programme

The Presiding Officer is leading a regional programme of visits to each of the eight Scottish Parliamentary regions to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Scottish Parliament. This was the second visit of eight. The Scottish Parliament's Participation & Communities Team is developing a programme of community engagement in collaboration with communities. The approach is to involve communities in the development of activities and to hear from people in ways that suit them best. For the second regional day, we worked in partnership with Shetland Community Bike Project and Voluntary Action Shetland. 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 Shetland with Voluntary Action Shetland.

Attendees

Presiding Officer: Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP

Members of the Scottish Parliament: Ariane Burgess MSP, Edward Mountain MSP, Emma Roddick MSP, Beatrice Wishart MSP

Voluntary Action Shetland: Wendy Hand, Ayesha Huda, Lynn Tulloch,

Scottish Parliament Staff: Mark Brough, Stuart Buchanan, Sarah Campbell, Ewan Masson, Kate Smith.

Graphic Notetaker: Jenny Capon from More Than Minutes.

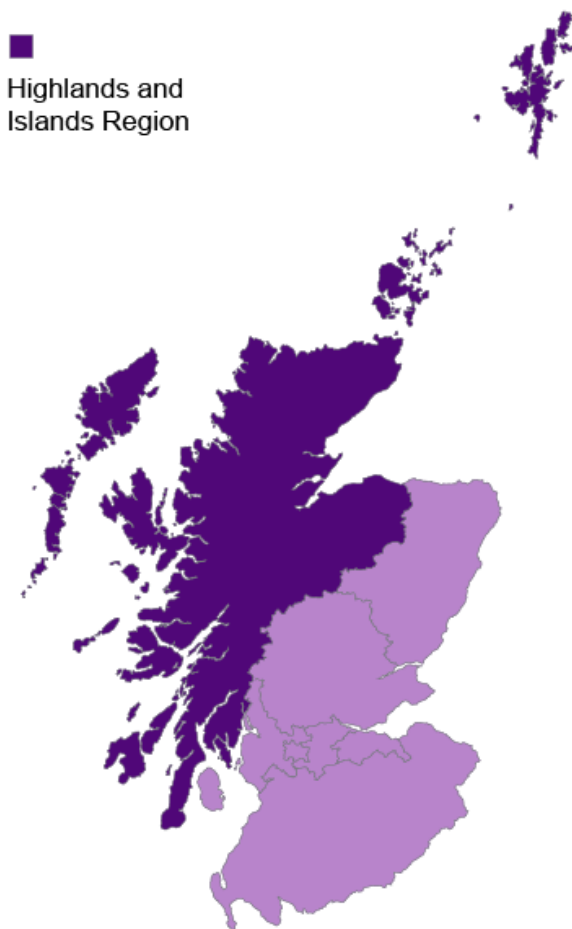
Participants: 41 people attended, including, service users/participants, carers/support people, two MSYPs, volunteers and staff.

Voluntary Action Shetland

Voluntary Action Shetland supports a local Third Sector Forum made up of organisations delivering services to the community. They invited participants supported by groups from the forum to attend the event and the organisations to showcase their projects. This included: Ability Shetland, Cope Ltd, Moving On Employment Project, Shetland Befriending Service (Tea & Cake club), Shared Lives, Shetland Carers, Shetland Community Connections, and local MSYPs.

Format of the Event

- Voluntary Action Shetland, the Presiding Officer and MSPs gave introductions.
- The event was marketplace style with stalls for organisations to showcase their projects and Parliament stalls with questions and interactive activities.
- A Graphic Notetaker captured what people said.



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 has the Parliament done in the last 25 years that means something to you?

- Free social care - The Community Care and Health (Scotland) Act 2002 – The introduction of free personal care was significant for my family as I have guardianship and am a carer for my adult daughter and it helped us support her.
- Community Care (Personal Care and Nursing Care (Scotland) Amendment 2018 petition – extension to include free personal care to those under 65.
- Equal Marriage – The Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act.
- Free Bus travel for under 22s – The National Concessionary Travel Scheme.
- Smacking ban – Children (Equal protection for Assault) (Scotland) Act.
- Free period products – The Period Products (Free provision) Scotland) Bill.

What is working well now?

- The Scottish Parliament is more impactful than Westminster.

What would you like to see in the future?

- Better publicity of cross party working.
- Free social care.

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

Transport

The majority of issues that people raised were around improvements to rural transport.

- The reliability and cost of air travel and ferries.
- Cheaper travel for students and extended free bus travel to over 22 students in full time education.
- Improvements to cycle paths.

Social Care

- Improvement and access to care and social services and in particular for older adults.
- Bring in a National Care Service that improves standards.

Health

- Improve NHS waiting times.
- Support for the Assisted Dying Bill.
- Improve IT systems and communication (sharing of information) in the healthcare system.
- Improvements in mental health support.

Education

- Address cuts to adult education.
- Improve University funding.

Support for people who are deaf

- Improve the lack of Deaf awareness.
- Access to mental health support for BSL users.

Energy

- Address the cost of heating.
- Address cuts to the winter fuel payment.
- More renewable energy.

Equality for people with disabilities

- Proactive signposting and advocacy for adults with autism spectrum disorder and learning disabilities.
- Adults with learning disabilities living rurally don't get the opportunity or access to vote.

Improvements in the Scottish Parliament structure

- Scottish Parliament should hold local authorities to account.
- A gender balance in politics.
- Progressive social policies.

Housing

- Housing – a shortage of single person housing.
- Increase social housing.

Other issues

- Reliable third sector funding.
- Health & safety in the home.
- The environment and the climate crisis.
- Improve arts funding.
- Keep tourist information offices open.
- Fixing the sharp urban/rural disparity with opportunity for today's youth.
- Cope soap shop should continue.
- Winter fuel payment.
- Faith.
- Less cuts to public services.
- Scottish Independence.

What are the obstacles/barriers to getting involved?

Distance

- The most common thing people said was the distance they felt from Parliament: distant, remote and isolation.

Knowledge and understanding

- Understanding the difference between the UK and the Scottish Parliament.
- Lack of knowledge.
- Knowledge of who MSPs are.
- Not knowing how to access Parliament.

Communication

- Miscommunication and misunderstanding for non—English included BSL users.
- BSL communication and no communication access.
- A breakdown in communication.
- Difficult to talk to politicians.

Confidence

- Lack of confidence.
- Don't know what to say if I'm getting involved.

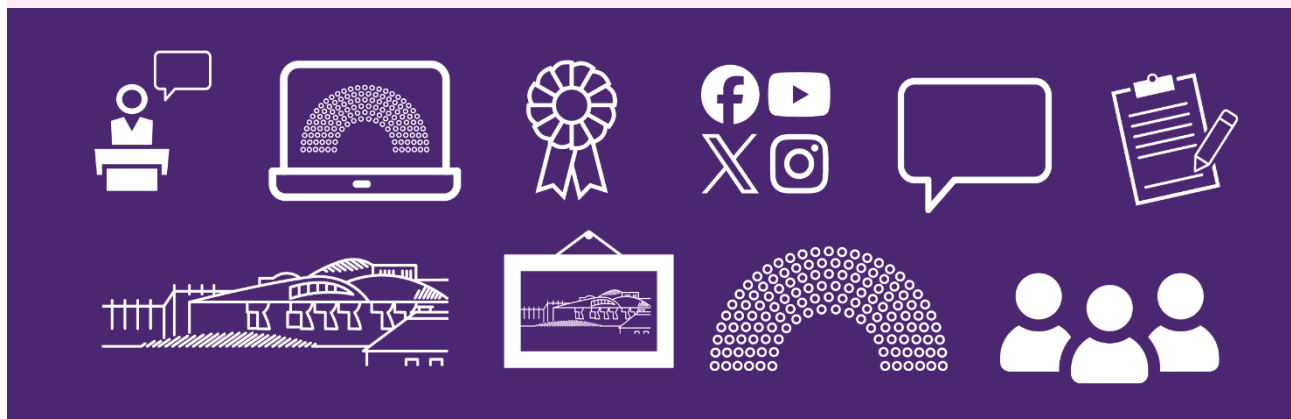
Other things that people said:

- The feedback loop.

- Childcare at the Parliament.
- MSPs expected work hours.
- A toxic environment.

Have you ever been involved in the Scottish Parliament?

Activity	Number of people
Watched a debate or committee at Holyrood or on TV/online.	5
Visited the Scottish Parliament website.	6
Visited the Scottish Parliament.	7
Followed the Scottish Parliament on social media.	3
Spoken to or contacted one of their MSPs.	9
Signed a petition.	6
Has a family member who has attended an education session at Holyrood or in school.	4
Given views to a committee.	1
Attended an exhibition or event at the Parliament.	3
Attended a Scottish Parliament event in my Community.	8



How would you like to get involved and raise the issues that matter to you with the Parliament?

Activity	Number of people
Giving their views to a Committee either verbally or in writing.	2
Visiting the Scottish Parliament.	3
Attending a Scottish Parliament event in their community.	3
Attending an event or an exhibition in Parliament.	1
Watching a debate or committee at Holyrood or on TV/online.	2
Visiting the Scottish Parliament website.	3
Speaking to or contacting on of their MSPs.	2
Follow the Scottish Parliament on Social Media.	2



As an organisation, how do you involve and engage people?

Social media

- Social media; Tik Tok, Facebook.

Meeting with people

- Participants meetings, reviews and including carers.
- Face to face meetings.
- Meeting people where they are at.
- Invite people to come.
- Volunteer work.
- By providing help.
- Support for older and vulnerable people.
- Question and answer sessions (which are open to the public).
- Spend time talking to young people.



Going Forward

The learning from the programme will be used to improve how the Parliament involves people.

We will do this by:

- Reviewing the issues raised and the outcomes from the programme at the Participation and Communities Team Communities Conference in spring 2025/2026.
- Producing a Community Engagement Strategy by autumn 2025.
- Feeding into the review of the Scottish Parliament Public Engagement Strategy in 2025/26.

The Graphic Notes produced at each of the events will be displayed in the Parliament in 2025.

The reports, videos, graphic notes and resources from the programme can be viewed on the [Participation and Communities Team page on the Scottish Parliament website](#).

For further information please contact PACT@parliament.scot

Feedback

Feedback was taken in person at the end of the event with 23 people out of the 41 who attended completing a sticky dot evaluation.

