



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba



25th Anniversary Regional Day

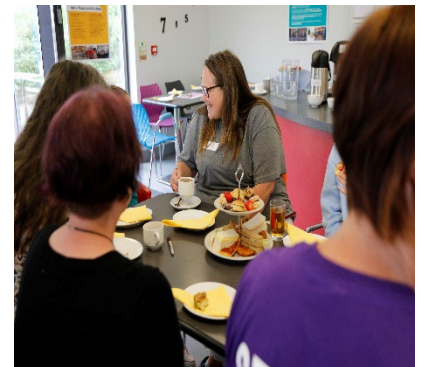
Latha Roinneil

25mh Ceann-bliadhna

A community conversation

Hosted by Burnfoot Community Futures
and supported by the Development
Trust Association for Scotland

Monday 20 May 2024
Burnfoot Community Hub, Hawick



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 Burnfoot, we had good discussions about lots of issues - education, housing, transport, affordability and access to sports 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

The first of eight regional conversations

HOUSING
 WAITING TIMES
 LACK OF SOCIAL CARE
 IMPACT OF LACK OF SOCIAL CARE
 CHILD CARE
 CLIMATE CARE
 UPKEEP GREEN SPACE
 PARKS + PLAYSACES
 LACK OF FACILITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
 EAST TO WEST
 IMPACT OF OUT OF TOWN SHOPPING

EDUCATION
 HEALTH
 MENTAL HEALTH
 COST OF LIVING
 WHAT ARE THE KEY ISSUES IN YOUR AREA THAT YOU FEEL SHOULD BE ADDRESSED?
 HOW DO WE CONTACT THE PARLIAMENT?
 WHO CAN HELP ME?
 MORE REPRESENTATIVE M.S.Ps
 WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN THE FUTURE?
 FREE TRAINY TRAVEL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE
 HOW DO I CONTACT THEM?
 MAKE INFORMATION EASY TO FIND
 HOW ACCESSIBLE ARE WE REALLY?
 UNDERSTAND PARLIAMENT EARLY
 EDUCATION IN POLITICS
 REGIONAL DAY IN PARLIAMENT
 IMPROVE CONNECTIONS
 TRANSPARENT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOCAL AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENT
 WHO DOES WHAT?
 KNOW WHO LOCAL REPS ARE

TRANSPORT
 BORDERS RAILWAY
 IMPROVE CONNECTIONS
 DIGITAL
 NEED BETTER LOCAL INDUSTRY
 HELP US UNDERSTAND DIFFERENT POWERS
 DON'T ASSUME THAT PEOPLE HAVE A CAR
 TRANSPARENT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOCAL AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENT
 WHO DOES WHAT?
 KNOW WHO LOCAL REPS ARE

INCLUSIVITY
 WHAT IS WORKING WELL NOW?
 IMPROVED INCLUSIVITY
 WE WANT YOU TO UNDERSTAND OUR COMMUNITY BETTER.
 THIS IS THE BEST COMMUNITY.
 SHARE OUR POSITIVE WORK
 WHAT HAS THE PARLIAMENT DONE IN THE LAST 25 YEARS THAT MEANS SOMETHING TO YOU?
 WE'VE HAD CHALLENGING TIMES, ESPECIALLY RECENTLY.
 PANDEMIC RESPONSE

GRASSROOTS
 ENGAGE WITH GRASSROOTS GROUPS
 PEOPLE AT THE HEART OF COMMUNITY PLANNING
 HOW CAN WE IMPROVE HOW LEGISLATION WORKS IN PRACTICE?
 EDINBURGH CAN FEEL FAR AWAY
 HOW CAN WE CONSULT EFFECTIVELY AND INCLUSIVELY?
 INTRODUCTION MINOR AILMENTS
 COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT ACT
 FREE PRESCRIPTIONS
 VOTES AT 16
 FREE SCHOOL MEALS
 BSL ACT
 REPRESENTING THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE OF THE SCOTTISH BORDERS

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COMMUNITY
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 INDEPENDENCE REFERENDUM
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PANDEMIC RESPONSE
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 PANDEMIC RESPONSE

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT 25th Anniversary Community Conversation
 SOUTH OF SCOTLAND
 GALASHIELS

Drawn by Jenny from MORE THAN MINUTES

Borders
Community Action

BURNFOOT
Community Future

Development Trusts Association Scotland
A Thriving Community-led Network

The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

25 YEARS - BLADHNA

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 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 Burnfoot.

Attendees

Presiding Officer: Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP

Members of the Scottish Parliament: Rachael Hamilton MSP, Colin Smyth MSP

Burnfoot Community Futures: Carly Jeffrey

Development Trust Association for Scotland: Lynne Molleson

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: 28 people attended - 18 adults and 10 young people - including individuals, families and young people from the local area, staff and volunteers who are involved in the hub.

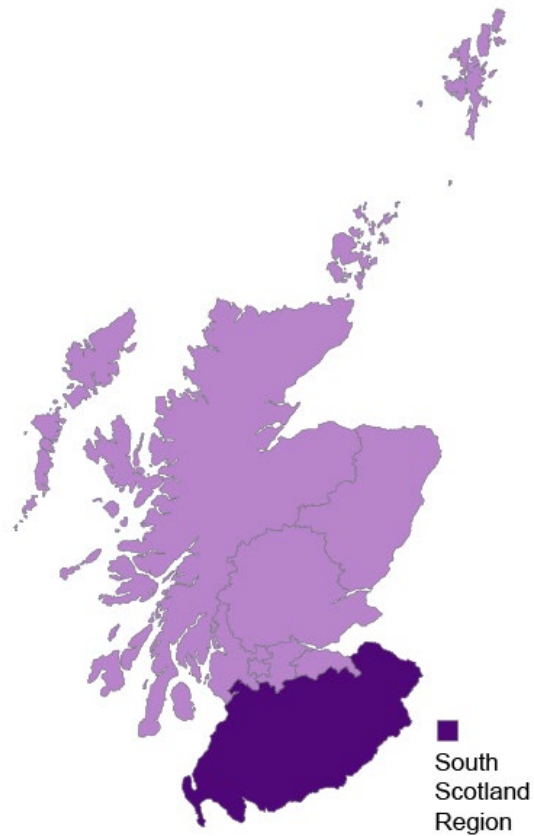
Format of the Event

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



People enjoyed afternoon tea, soft play and activities for young people. The Presiding Officer, MSPs and staff facilitated small table conversations.

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

From the past 25 years what has changed for you because of the Parliament?

- Smoking Ban.
- Free prescriptions.
- The right to roam - key piece of legislation for people in Borders.
- Minor ailment service in pharmacies.
- Child Payments.
- Gender Reform Act - showed Scotland's will for change.
- Mental Health Act – ahead of its time.
- Minimum pricing for alcohol – positive impact on addiction services.
- Free bus travel – young people.
- British Sign Language Act.
- Free school meals.

What is working well now?

Policies

- Education matters
- Green spaces especially parks and playparks.
- Better health care than in England.
- Referendum generated a lot of debate but is quite divisive.
- The Parliament was front and centre of the Covid response.

Democratic wellbeing

- Holyrood means a lot, feels more accessible than Westminster. It's important to have a Scottish Parliament.
- The Scottish Parliament means there's a chance of a better future.
- There is pride in the Scottish Parliament. Covid was example of leading the way.

What would you like to see in the future?

People would like to see more information and accessibility to Parliament:

- People need more awareness of who MSPs are, need to communicate not just during elections.
- Know how to get in touch with MSPs – but not necessarily what issues MSPs might be responsible for. What are the powers of SP as opposed to Westminster or council?
- Aware of the petitions can be raised but not what happens with it.
- Aware that parliament is open to schools and to go for a visit– but it's too expensive to travel, and more for school groups.
- Committees should better engage with communities and grass roots groups, rather than just national organisations – build connections & make them aware of issues the Parliament is dealing with.
- Parliament needs to show ultimately, evidence that we have made a difference.

Other changes that people would like to see:

- Health care improvements – hospital beds, care in the community.
- Waste – better recycling, more waste bins, deal with dog mess.
- Interact with young people better and in appropriate ways - kids and young people. lost out in education during Covid.
- Better public transport service.
- Not currently communicating to new Scots.
- Standards of living – Bedroom tax.

What are the obstacles/barriers?

- Local lack of vision.
- Different needs of different towns/communities in the Borders are too much for the local authority council to deal with.
- Funding: lack of finance/investment from Government; lack of investment in infrastructure to encourage industry/business into town; short termism in funding, 3rd sector fills the gaps.
- Out of town shopping centre and big supermarkets have too much power re traffic flow etc – take away from high street businesses.
- Costs: cost of living crisis, transport & fuel costs; cost of healthy food, affordability of green solutions like solar panels, insulation.
- Delivering services over large geographic area.
- Health and travel e.g. cost/distance = inaccessibility.
- Digital exclusion.

- Lack of local information e.g., transport

Barriers to contacting the Scottish Parliament

- Needs more clarity of responsibility between local authority, Scottish Parliament and Westminster issues.
- People don't feel confident about contacting SP. Never even been inside: "is there a public gallery? I wouldn't know how to find out what's going on".
- More likely to contact local councillors.
- Would a direct way to contact SP be helpful for young people? Maybe the school could co-ordinate.

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

Local community

- Burnfoot is forgotten – as a community it has as many people as Hawick but none of the amenities – edge of Hawick, which is on edge of Borders.
- People used to come to Hawick, it used to be a real hub – what's Hawick's USP? It has lost its identity (used to be about textile).
- Café in Burnfoot has shut down and was huge resource for local people to meet, for employability, for young people. Cost of running it was too much. Terrible loss after so much energy was put into it by volunteers.
- Need a more positive mindset but morale has plummeted, no jobs. Young people leave.
- Stigma around Burnfoot – poverty and deprivation, but also anti-social behaviour.
- Funds for the community groups are needed. Lack of multi-year funding and lack of support for core costs like energy or existing projects – usually just new initiatives.
- We want to share the positive changes that have been made – there is a lot of good in communities like Burnfoot so we need to showcase them.

Housing/local infrastructure

- Housing stock needs repair, need bigger houses for families - but also some bigger houses occupied by only one person – system is not working to allow/support people to move to bigger or smaller properties. Social houses have been bought up. Lack of availability of houses to rent.
- Rent capping for housing, there are so many new investors buying cheap property and rents have gone up.
- Make commercial landlords more accountable for better use of buildings for local economy - commercial rents in Hawick are too high because landlords are not local.
- Lack of accessible housing. Long waiting lists for people with disabled children etc not just elderly people.
- Every new property should have climate conscious aspects.
- Upkeep of green spaces.

- No running track – poor facilities for young people in sport. Have to run (train) in the park.

Health

- Very difficult to get a doctor's appointment since COVID.
- Access to mental health support is limited.
- Long waiting lists.

Transport

- Public transport is an issue – a lot of people in Burnfoot don't have access to a car.
- Increase the frequency of the local bus service e.g., Hawick to Galashiels bus service doesn't work for young people going to College in Gala; no direct service or evening service from Hawick to Borders General Hospital.

Policing

- Excellent community policing team who are always at community events. But a feeling that there aren't enough of them, not always getting a response when you contact them – they seem less visible.
- A lot of anti-social behaviour. Big issue with lack of police resources, lack of funding to repair e.g local bus stop got vandalised and won't be fixed.

Families

- Childcare – there is no after school service in Burnfoot and no travel those areas that have after school. There are no childminders in Burnfoot.



MSPs meeting with event guests.

Left: Rachel Hamilton MSP

Right: Colin Smyth MSP

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.	4
Visited the Scottish Parliament.	4
Followed the Scottish Parliament on social media.	3
Spoken to or contacted one of their MSPs.	3
Attended a Scottish Parliament event in their community.	3
Signed a petition.	2
Has a family member who has attended an education session at Holyrood or in school.	1
Given views to a committee.	0
Attended an exhibition or event at the Parliament.	0



We asked young people attending what matters to them in their area.



Young people said that the issues that matter to them are:

- Hospital & healthcare.
- Environment – trees and clouds for rain.
- Parks and places to play.
- Food & water.
- Fire brigade and police.
- Swimming pool, library, school, job centre, railway station and bus stops.
- Small cinema.
- Food and water

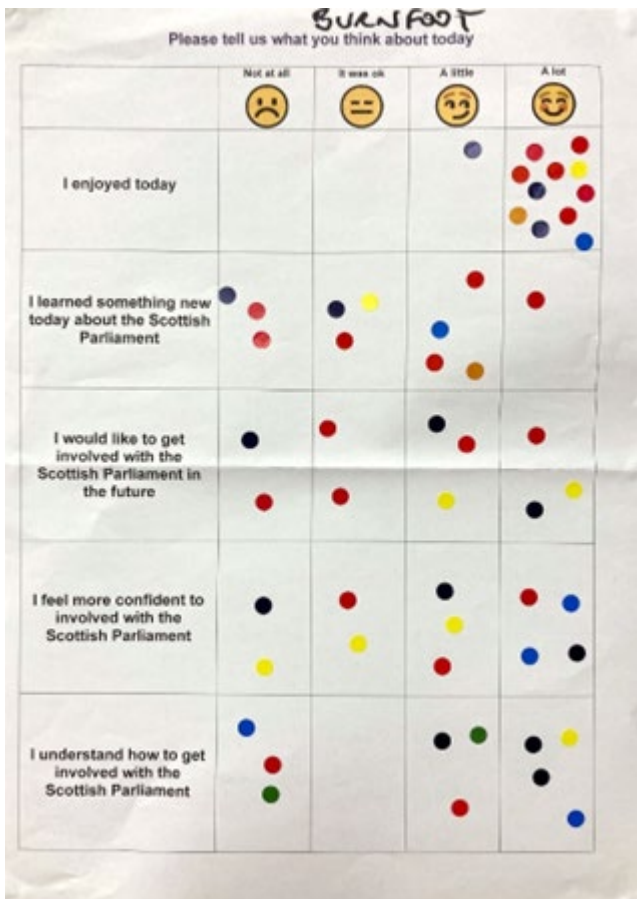
How would you like to get involved and raise the issues that matter to you with the Parliament?

Activity	Number of people
Giving their views to a Committee either verbally or in writing.	4
Visiting the Scottish Parliament.	3
Attending a Scottish Parliament event in their community.	3
Attending an event or an exhibition in Parliament.	2
Watching a debate or committee at Holyrood or on TV/online.	2
Visiting the Scottish Parliament website.	2
Speaking to or contacting on of their MSPs.	2



Feedback

Feedback was taken in person at the end of the event with 12 people out of the 28 who attended completing a sticky dot evaluation.



100% enjoyed the event.

42% learned something new about the Parliament.

50% would like to get involved with the Parliament in the future.

58% feel more confident to get involved with the Parliament.

58% better understand how to get involved with the Parliament.