



**OFFICIAL REPORT**  
AITHISG OIFIGEIL

# Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

**Thursday 14 November 2019**

**Session 5**



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Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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**STANDARDS, PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE**  
**20<sup>th</sup> Meeting 2019, Session 5**

**CONVENER**

\*Bill Kidd (Glasgow Anniesland) (SNP)

**DEPUTY CONVENER**

\*Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green)

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

\*Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab)

\*Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con)

\*Tom Mason (North East Scotland) (Con)

\*Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP)

\*Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)

\*attended

**THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:**

Revati Campbell (Scottish Youth Parliament)

Dr Alistair Clark (Newcastle University)

Professor Toby James (University of East Anglia)

Vonnie Sandlan (Equality and Human Rights Commission)

Willie Sullivan (Electoral Reform Society)

**CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE**

Katy Orr

**LOCATION**

The James Clerk Maxwell Room (CR4)



# Scottish Parliament

## Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Thursday 14 November 2019

*[The Convener opened the meeting at 09:32]*

### Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill: Stage 1

**The Convener (Bill Kidd):** Welcome to the 20th meeting in 2019 of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.

Item 1 is to take evidence on the Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill. With us today are Willie Sullivan, from the Electoral Reform Society, Dr Alistair Clark, from Newcastle University, and Professor Toby James, from the University of East Anglia. I welcome all three of you and thank you for coming. We will not take opening statements; we will just move straight to questions. Our first questions are on term lengths, and they are from Maureen Watt.

**Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP):** As you know, there has been quite a debate about term length, and the Scottish Parliament has already had different term lengths during its short life. What is your view on the proposal to move to fixed terms of five years for the Scottish Parliament and local government elections? What, if any, are the key advantages and disadvantages of the approach taken by the bill?

**Dr Alistair Clark (Newcastle University):** Thank you for the invitation to speak and for the question.

There are benefits and drawbacks to five-year terms. One benefit is stability in policy making at the parliamentary and local government level. My research suggests that, when elections clash because they are held concurrently, there can be problems with election delivery, and the quality of those elections can be problematic. It is therefore sensible to keep elections separate, as Scottish practice has been from 2007 onwards.

A four-year term remains possible but, if that is deemed to be of interest, I suggest that the elections should be held at different points during the year. For instance, September has precedent, given the date of the independence referendum back in 2014.

I have no objection to a five-year term. The issue is for voters. It is about not being able to

hold people to account and judge their performance within an appropriate time.

**Maureen Watt:** Why do you say that elections should be at different points? Other jurisdictions have presidential elections, parliamentary elections and council elections all at the same time.

**Dr Clark:** I base it on my research into the delivery of elections. I have Britain-wide evidence on the conduct of local and parliamentary elections at the same time. Local authorities that have run two elections together have shown that the delivery of those elections was a bit worse. If you talk to electoral administrators, they will explain the mechanics. It is about the pressure of delivering two polls at the same time. There are staffing pressures and organisational and logistical pressures and so on.

The reasons given for running the elections together are always to do with turnout and cost. Turnout often depends on other things, such as the political parties getting out to mobilise electors in the first place. Even if you run two sets of elections together, they still cost more than just running one, so the cost saving is not immediately obvious.

**Gil Paterson (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP):** Do you have any evidence of the undermining effect, which happens on two levels? The first is that two different systems are being combined in a single election. The second is whether anything happens to what the public might perceive as the less important local government election, although maybe it is the opposite way round; I do not know. Is there a differential in people's attitudes to the elections and in the messaging attached to the local government elections compared to that for the national elections or Scottish elections, whatever it might be?

**Dr Clark:** That is a good question, and I have two things to say in answer to it. First, the obvious issue is the potential clash with a United Kingdom general election. If that was held at the same time as a Scottish local government election, voters would be asked to do two very different things. They would have to mark a cross on the UK ballot paper while ranking candidates from one to five or whatever on the local government ballot paper. There is scope for confusion there. The last time that that kind of thing was tried in Scotland was in 2007, when the local government elections were held at the same time as the parliamentary elections. That led to the difficulties that were experienced with lots of ballots being rejected in the parliamentary election that year.

On the question whether one campaign overshadows the other, local government

elections are typically always overshadowed by the higher-level election. There are therefore good practical reasons why elections should be separated to enable people to make informed decisions.

**Willie Sullivan (Electoral Reform Society):** We made the point in our written submission that we do lots of polling on the issue and we find that people are often confused about the difference between democracy and elections. It is perhaps useful to separate the two. Democracy is about sharing power, giving agency to people and protecting people from the alienation that happens when they have no power over their lives. Elections are just one mechanism for trying to do that. We should hold that thought.

Elections are obviously important to elected officials. When I was a councillor, it was important to me to have the legitimacy of a decent turnout in the election. That is where legitimacy comes from. I did quite a bit of research on the issue and wrote a book called "The Missing Scotland: Why Over a Million Scots Choose Not to Vote and what it Means for Our Democracy". Lots of people choose not to give legitimacy to political institutions, including local government.

It is not enough to say that we will put elections together to increase turnout and give more legitimacy and then everything will be okay, because there are deeper questions about why people do not think that it is important to turn out at local government elections in Scotland. People turn out in many other European countries. There are also deeper questions about why people do not turn out in huge numbers to vote in Scottish Parliament elections.

To go back to the question, the difference between four and five-year terms is not that significant. Putting together elections only to increase the turnout at one or the other is not a good enough reason to have four-year terms. I do not think that the difference makes that much of an impact.

**Maureen Watt:** To be clear, are you saying that, so far, you cannot see any difference between the turnouts for four-year terms and five-year terms?

**Willie Sullivan:** I do not think that they make a difference to turnouts. Obviously, when elections are put together, that makes a difference to the turnout for the local government election. As Dr Clark said, there are lots of administration and resource reasons not to have elections running concurrently.

**The Convener:** I want to widen out the discussion. Professor James wants to say something.

**Professor Toby James (University of East Anglia):** Thank you for the invitation to the meeting and the great questions.

I agree with much of what Alistair Clark said. It is worth pointing out that electoral officials have been under a perfect storm of pressures in recent years because of financial reasons to do with the availability of resources, the significant changes in the move to individual electoral registration and the increasing complexity of electoral law. Holding multiple events with multiple electoral systems introduces risks to the system.

The flipside is turnout. There is an advantage in holding a local government election at the same time as a general election. People are more likely to vote in a local government election while they are voting in a general election. However, as Gil Paterson rightly pointed out, the campaign effects can be very confusing for voters. Local candidates will try to campaign on an important issue in their local ward, but that might be drowned out by some of the media effects.

The legislation in part seems to be designed to avoid conflict with a general election, with a view to there being one in 2022. We know from what has happened in the United Kingdom Parliament recently that the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011 does not quite work in that way. Fixing Scottish electoral law by trying to second-guess exactly what will happen in Westminster does not seem to be very strong ground to be on.

**Dr Clark:** I have a brief observation. We should be careful about assuming that there is a major difficulty with turnout in Scottish local government elections. The turnout for them is among the highest in the UK—it was 47 per cent for the 2017 local government elections. By comparison, when the English local elections are held on their own, the turnout is typically around a third—33, 34 or 35 per cent—of valid voters. Scotland does well in that regard.

**Willie Sullivan:** Do you know how that turnout compares with turnouts in other places in Europe?

**Dr Clark:** It is possibly low, but there are different systems and so on.

**Willie Sullivan:** I think that it is a mistake simply to compare with England. Places in Europe have turnouts of up to 60 to 70 per cent for local government elections. Let us aim high.

**Maureen Watt:** We will maybe come on to how to increase turnout later.

We are looking at the issue in terms of the voter. Have any of you done any research on the efficacy of legislation in four-year and five-year terms? From a Government perspective, if something in a manifesto has gone out to consultation and there are conflicting views on it, it

might have to go back again. Getting legislation on the statute book is a difficult process, so have any of you looked at whether four-year or five-year terms result in better legislation? For example, there could be a tendency to rush things in four-year terms so that you get worse legislation when compared with five-year terms.

09:45

**Dr Clark:** I have not done research on that, but I know that there is a strong argument for that being the case. It is about not just getting legislation on the statute book but delivering policies and showing a return on them. I am not against five-year terms. There is a strong enough case for them, and that is one of the reasons for that.

**Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):** I would like somebody to help with a point of clarity. We have fixed terms in the Scottish Parliament, but they do not necessarily apply if the Parliament takes a decision to change them. It is the same as the UK Parliament. Is that correct?

**Dr Clark:** Yes.

**Tom Mason (North East Scotland) (Con):** I want to raise two issues.

We have talked about four and five-year terms, but why not six-year terms? What is the logic and strategic argument for the term length?

What is the driver for other countries having higher turnouts?

**Willie Sullivan:** On term limit, Tony Benn said that we have to be able to kick people out. That is the basis of democracy: you have to go to the people fairly regularly to give them a say on whether legislators or councillors have been doing a reasonable job.

There has to be a balance. I agree that five years is probably a better term length for Parliament to be able to make legislation and deal with parliamentary business, because otherwise things will get rushed, fall off the agenda or be moved into the next parliamentary session. That has happened with quite a few issues in the Scottish Parliament—local government reform, for one.

Some societies just have better democratic political cultures, but they are not easy to achieve. We made the point in our submission that it is not just about the rules for elections. It is about the institutions at local levels and their involvement in people's lives, and whether people are active and engaged citizens who look out for and work with one another. It is about the political culture that is created from the top down and the values of that society. It is not an easy thing to describe or create.

I think that our representative democracy is struggling a lot and that, if radical cultural interventions need to be made with our institutions, it might be worth doing that. It is not just a matter of saving our democracy; it has to change into something much more relevant for this time.

**Professor James:** We would not want elections to be held too regularly but, over time, mandates begin to fade. Six years is quite a long time and circumstances change; therefore, as Willie Sullivan says, regular elections are important. However, I do not see too much difference between four and five-year terms.

Why do people not vote? There are lots of complex reasons. In regard to what is under the control of the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government, one aspect is the level of civic education and how, for example, we teach students in schools. Perhaps we can touch on that in response to other questions.

Another aspect, which I set out in my written evidence, is encouraging young people to register to vote while they are still in active education, particularly in school but also in university. That could be embedded as part of a wider curriculum that explains how a democratic system works.

**Dr Clark:** The lowest turnout in Scottish local elections is typically found in wards with a fairly transient, lower socioeconomic status population. There is work to be done in engaging people in such wards.

It is not always obvious that campaigns are going on, particularly in local government elections. Where are the posters on lamp posts, for instance? There has been an on-going controversy about that in Scotland over the course of this decade, whereas in Ireland, for example, there can be an obvious sense that a campaign is going on.

It is incumbent on political parties to get out there and mobilise people, and there is a lot of evidence that suggests that that matters in raising turnout.

**Willie Sullivan:** I did some qualitative research for my book with focus groups in the east end of Glasgow and in bits of Dundee comprising poorer people who did not vote. Many of them had made a conscious decision not to vote. They felt that, over the years, different parties had been in power and nothing had really changed in their lives. They knew people who were struggling, and they cared about those people deeply, but they did not think that the political system had anything to offer them. People knew that they were being asked to give their approval, support and legitimacy to something that they thought was not really doing anything for them. One guy said, "Do you think my

head is zipped up at the back? Do you think I'm going to give my approval to this if it hasn't really done anything for me?"

**The Convener:** Thank you for that.

I will just mention that Glasgow City Council banned using posters on lamp posts. One of my mates had nothing else to do during election campaigns, as that was his role: going up ladders and sticking things up. I personally think that that change lowered the whole tempo of elections, because people were not surrounded by the culture of the election. I know that there are still posters in other council areas, but I think that we have lost a wee bit of that culture in some places.

**Neil Findlay:** I would be interested to see whether there is any correlation between the prominence of posters and turnout. I suspect that there is not.

The point that Willie Sullivan makes is absolutely spot on. It should not come as a surprise to anybody that those in communities where people feel completely disenfranchised from the political system do not engage with it. That is as plain as the nose on your face. Indeed, why would people engage when they see that their community has been left behind? The recent evidence of the Brexit referendum and the Trump election campaign shows what people do when they have been left behind and they perceive that there is an opportunity for change. We are stating the obvious there, but it is perhaps a statement of the obvious that we do not get.

That was not a question—or I could ask: do you agree?

**The Convener:** The witnesses can answer, but they do not need to.

**Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green):** Is there a correlation between the number of elected representatives and faith in democracy? We might go into some communities and find that nobody living there is an elected representative. Are people actually meeting their elected representatives? We have a relatively low proportion of them compared with other European countries. Alternatively, is there a lack of faith because people are meeting their elected representatives but do not like what they are doing? Do people see that they are not genuinely representative of their communities and not present there?

**Willie Sullivan:** There is definitely a correlation between the numbers of representatives in European states and levels of turnout. I am not saying that it is necessarily a cause, but I am reflecting on my experience as a local councillor and my work as a policy person in local government over the years, taking into account the

size of the wards. In one case, there were 23,000 people. Some of those who are here today are also councillors. I am sorry if I am just sharing my own experience, but I think that it does apply a little bit.

Let me take up the point. How can one person in a part-time job represent 23,000 people? How can they be part of that community? If we consider somebody who represents a few hundred people, say in Parkneuk in Dunfermline, who does a couple of hours a week but is really part of that community and does not have to turn into a semi-professional politician in order to do the job, we can understand that that level of representation and connection between the local authority and people's representation is much better.

A representative is someone who is like us, as well as an advocate. We need people from communities to go and speak on behalf of them. Representatives should not be seen as separate from them. However, the impression that I get is that councillors and representatives are a separate group from the people they are representing.

**Dr Clark:** I will say something slightly different. Local government in Scotland and in the UK as a whole is at a larger scale than we find in continental Europe. If we compare Scotland with Denmark, for example, we see that councils in Denmark typically represent far smaller communities. In a city the size of Glasgow—I think that I am right in saying that Glasgow has the second largest local authority in the UK—there would probably be several councils and not just one. That larger scale is a difficulty, because research shows that the smaller councils are, the more engaged people feel with them and the more they feel that they have a degree of belonging. It is not necessarily about ward structures, although the things are related. It is about the scale at which we do local government in this country to begin with.

**Willie Sullivan:** I entirely agree with that. Maybe I was not particularly clear. However, within a larger number of smaller local authorities, we would want smaller ward sizes with more representatives per head of population.

**The Convener:** We have had a good kick at the ball on that subject, but I will let Tom Mason finish up on it.

**Tom Mason:** I have a question about the proposal to increase the number of councillors to five in some wards. I declare an interest as I am a local councillor at the moment. What do the panel members think about the suggestion of allowing two-member wards in some areas and five-member wards in others? My view is that the multimember ward does not work very well.



**Willie Sullivan:** The issue—again—is that we do not have enough local representatives. If we stick with the same number of councillors but our system also argues for better proportionality, we will come up with bigger ward sizes with more members because that gives us better proportionality. However, that is to come at this in the wrong way. We should be looking at having more local councillors and more local authorities. Having five members for what would be quite a big ward would not be such a problem, because we could have five members in quite a small ward, where they could know virtually everybody.

**Dr Clark:** I agree. When the Kerley commission set out the single transferable vote, one of its original aims was to achieve proportionality. To do that, having six or seven members per ward probably allows the closest fit between votes and seats.

The three and four-member wards in the Scottish system restrict proportionality quite a lot. I expect the five-member proposal to be used fairly sparingly, but it is probably welcome because, as Willie Sullivan pointed out, wards are bigger than they used to be and, of course, there are differences in public opinion within those wards, so I think that it is right for there to be a number of representatives who voters can go to.

**Willie Sullivan:** In Scottish local government and in Scotland as a whole, we have a multiparty democracy, and it works quite well because we have adopted electoral systems that allow that to flourish. In the general election, we are seeing a multiparty democracy trying to break through, but it is being constrained by the first-past-the-post system, which means all sorts of party pacts and tactical voting as electorates have become more educated, aware and able to get information. That is really distorting the system.

In the general election, voters in many constituencies will not get a chance to vote for the party that they want to vote for, despite that party existing. Scotland has moved way beyond that and it should continue to do so because, with proportionality, the seats reflect the votes, and people connect to that. We should continue to keep that as a strong principle of our electoral system and develop it as much as possible.

10:00

**Tom Mason:** However, there is no accountability in the multiward council system, because four or five members are accountable to up to 19,000 people. There is no identification with the area and no identification with a representative.

**Willie Sullivan:** That is to do with the size of wards rather than the number of councils. Even

when we had single-member wards, the wards were too big. Some people knew who their local councillor was and some did not. However, that issue can be addressed. If we want to hold on to proportionality for the reason that I gave—it is a good principle to have in a modern democracy—the way to address unaccountability in multimember wards would be to reduce their size by creating more of them.

**Tom Mason:** Do you not think that a system of representation based on Scotland's additional member system, in which there would be identification with a constituency, would work better for proportionality?

**Willie Sullivan:** That system, having bedded down, works well for the Scottish Parliament. The single transferable vote definitely works best for local government.

**Tom Mason:** Yes, but nobody understands it.

**Willie Sullivan:** People understand that they cast their vote and they get a representative on the basis of the preference that they put on the ballot paper. They do not understand the count but, if we look at the vagaries and imbalances across the first-past-the-post system—

**Tom Mason:** I am not suggesting the first-past-the-post system. I am suggesting a system in which there is identification with an area and there is somebody who is accountable to that area.

**Willie Sullivan:** If there is a four, five or six-member ward that is a small village, for example, and all those members come from that village, it would be fine. It is about the size of the wards.

I think that we make a strong argument in our submission, where we say that the balance between the number of electors and the identifiable community should be reworked. At present, we think of a representative as someone who represents so many thousand electors, but why is that not balanced by the need for representatives for individual communities? The European Union has qualified majority voting and each country has an equal weight. Why should a village or a community not have a more equal weight, rather than it just being to do with the number of electors? Is that clearer?

**The Convener:** Do you want to add to that, Alistair?

**Dr Clark:** I will say two things. First, we are getting hung up on ward sizes, which is the wrong thing to get hung up on. We have mentioned the figure of about 19,000, but that is very much the extreme. The average ward size is about 12,000, which is a much smaller number. We should be thinking about the fact that voters now have three or four representatives, whereas before they had only one, and that one representative may have

been from a party that they did not vote for. Proportionality tends to mean that people can go to a party representative that they are more closely aligned to. The ward size issue is, to be frank, a red herring; the issue is representation.

Secondly, I return to voter confusion. I have done research into how voters use the single transferable vote system. Between 2007 and 2012, voters tended to use STV in a similar way to Irish voters, who have much longer experience of using it. The average number of preferences was three. Some people—although, I grant, not many—filled in the whole ballot paper. People have used the preference transfers to do two things. One is to transfer between party candidates where the party has a team of candidates. Sometimes, people have done something different and chosen candidates that they may want.

STV weakens the hold of parties to a degree, and that may be something that voters want in this anti-politics and anti-party age. I am not so sure about the idea that voters are confused by having to put 1, 2, 3 and 4 on the ballot paper. The statistics suggest that they use the system in a not dissimilar way to people in countries with much more experience of the system.

**The Convener:** I want to link that to electronic voting, which might be relevant. The bill does not provide for electronic voting pilots, but it contains enabling provisions for electronic voting to be introduced. What range of international practices could fall under the banner of electronic voting? Do you have examples of countries where electronic voting has been trialled or is used?

**Professor James:** As set out in the bill, electronic voting is a broad term. There are advantages to that, because the idea is that we look ahead to systems that might be envisaged or invented in the future.

Of the mechanisms that exist, one is remote internet voting. The most obvious example of the use of that is Estonia, where citizens can use their national identity card—to make the system work, it is important that people have such a card—to vote remotely, even on the day of an election. That was piloted in the UK in the early 2000s—as I say in my written submission, many other mechanisms were piloted simultaneously.

Internet voting is one option for electronic voting. Another is to allow people to vote using electronic machines in polling stations. They still have to physically turn up, but they can press a button on a screen to cast their vote. There are lots of variations of that, but international best practice points to the use of machines that produce voter-verified, auditable paper ballot papers. The voter presses a button to vote and a

clearly marked ballot paper comes out, which goes into a box. The voter can see that, so they are not left with uncertainty about whether their count was correctly recorded. That is seen as the main option for the electronic machine mechanism.

As it stands, those are the two variations. However, as I said, electronic voting is set out broadly in the bill, which allows flexibility for the evaluation of different systems in the future.

**The Convener:** Does the Electoral Reform Society have a view on that?

**Willie Sullivan:** We are interested in pilots. That is the way to develop systems such as the one that Toby James described, which produces a paper receipt. That is important because the voter can see it and it is checkable.

**Neil Findlay:** I was an observer at the presidential election in Venezuela in 2012. Please do not believe all that you read in the newspapers about the voting system in Venezuela, because the Carter Center democracy programme said that it is the most sophisticated voting system in the world. It is an electronic system that has 12 internal audits.

The system was interesting. When people went into polling stations, they gave their thumbprint and indelible ink was put on their pinkie to say that they had voted and could not vote again. There were terminals where they voted electronically and received a ballot paper, which they put in a box. They then signed to say that they had voted. The interesting part was that, at 52 per cent of polling stations, as soon as polling closed, all the party observers stood round a table, the boxes were opened in front of them and every vote was shown to them and ticked off on a list. That was tallied with the buttons that had been pressed on the electronic voting system, and if they matched, the vote went to the central polling station.

If we compare that with two sheets of plywood, a piece of string and a pencil, it puts our system into perspective. We can learn a lot from other countries, and particularly those that have developed their own electronic systems that have been internationally verified and accredited. Have you looked at such systems?

**Professor James:** I have not looked at Venezuela's in particular.

**Neil Findlay:** What about any others?

**Professor James:** We talked earlier about low voter turnout and the groups that are less likely to vote, including—above all others—young people. The use of new technology to explore and address that problem would be welcome. Given that there are security threats with internet voting, it should not be used for high-level votes such as general elections and independence referendums, but it is

worth considering at a local level, where turnout is still low.

Many of the procedures that have been developed in the UK have Victorian origins, but democracy has spread since then and international best practice has moved on. We do not have the opportunity to audit elections in Scotland, for example, which is possible in other jurisdictions, even where paper systems are used. There is scope to look at that.

**Neil Findlay:** What about all-postal ballots?

**Professor James:** In the early 2000s, we had some UK-wide pilots with a view to increasing voter turnout. They included the use of new mechanisms such as internet voting and mobile phone voting, but the one that produced a major increase in turnout was postal voting. Automatically sending out postal votes to constituents resulted in an enormous boost in turnout. Since then, concerns have been raised about fraud, although some security provisions have subsequently been put in place. If you are looking for a single measure that could lead to a major increase in turnout, all-postal elections is it.

**Neil Findlay:** Would you recommend that?

**Professor James:** It is worth considering it in more detail.

**Dr Clark:** I will address electronic voting rather than all-postal voting. What is proposed in the bill is unacceptably wide. It seems to me to be a bit of a blank cheque. As Toby James mentioned, all sorts of things fall under the banner of electronic voting: it can include internet voting, voting machines and so on. The committee would be wise to talk to the Scottish Government about what it intends. Pilots are fine, but there are a range of cost, commercial and, in particular, security implications, even for the use of voting machines in polling stations.

Countries have adopted electronic voting and then gone back from that. For example, in 2002, I think, Ireland trialled the use of voting machines in three or four constituencies, but it mothballed its machines immediately afterwards and it has never resurrected them. The Federal Constitutional Court in Germany has, in effect, banned electronic voting on the ground that, without specialist knowledge—in other words, specialist computer science or computer programming knowledge—it is difficult for the ordinary person to understand how votes have been converted into seats. That important ruling is sometimes forgotten.

There are potential applications, but there are issues that should give us pause for thought. I am thinking in particular of the security and cost considerations.

**Professor James:** One way of increasing transparency is to use software that has open source availability so that other programmers can check, for example, how the machines tally the votes. There was a discussion about that very issue in New South Wales in Australia.

**The Convener:** That is good to know.

I want us to move on to the list order effect. I have mentioned the hopefully mythical constituent called Aaron Aardvark. It is important that we talk the issue through, and Gil Paterson has some questions on it.

**Gil Paterson:** I will begin with a straightforward question. In the list system, is there an advantage to having a name that is higher up the alphabet?

**Dr Clark:** There are alphabetical advantages on all ballot papers, whether we are talking about first past the post, the single transferable vote or whatever. That has been shown by research. The difficulty that has been raised in Scotland is not one that has affected all parties; it has been raised in relation, in particular, to parties that offer more than one candidate. Specifically, that means that the Scottish National Party and the Labour Party have arguably been affected by the issue. There are effects; what you do about them is less obvious. Robson rotation was talked about at one point, but it is remarkably complex, and we have rowed back from that to far less complex ideas such as drawing straws in wards. That might well be possible.

To reiterate, one of the big difficulties with the 2007 problem, when lots of ballot papers were rejected, lay in the change to the Scottish Parliament ballot papers. Any ballot paper where there has been a reordering or something of that sort needs rigorous testing to ensure that something of that sort does not happen again. I know that the Electoral Commission has been doing some work on that. There is certainly an effect, but my advice would be to proceed with caution. The last thing that we want to do is increase any voter confusion when the issue really only affects a couple of parties.

10:15

**Professor James:** I agree that the research shows that alphabetical order has an effect. I agree with the points that Alistair Clark has made about the Scottish context. The Australian workaround is to have a draw—a bit like the FA cup draw—in which we can see exactly who will be located in each position. That is an option. I would add that it would also have an effect on the electoral administrators. Any draw would have to be done quite early, so that they could get ballot papers printed—assuming that we are using a paper system—and the electoral timetable could

become very narrow as a result. You have to be mindful of that. The order has an effect, and it is an unfair advantage for, say—I forget the name of the candidate you referred to.

**The Convener:** Aaron Aardvark.

**Gil Paterson:** I should have declared an interest, as a person called Paterson who has always been at the back of the queue. I always thought that the order should be determined by the candidate's first name—but that is another story.

**Neil Findlay:** Mark Ruskell was kind enough to remind me of the election a few years ago when one party was branded as “Alex Salmond for First Minister” to get priority on the ballot paper. We very much need to address the issue, and it is a serious one, which affects our democracy. We would be neglecting our duty as a committee if we did not at least raise it in our report as a very serious issue that people, including our witnesses, have raised. We should consider how to address it, rather than just skimming over it.

**Willie Sullivan:** There is an effect, although I would not overplay it and say that it is as much as a threat to our democracy. There is a small effect in local government. I would amplify everything that the other two witnesses have said, in that we have to be careful that the cure is not worse than the problem. There are issues of accessibility and audit, and there is the question of how difficult it will be if there is randomisation of papers to recheck them after the election. Piloting is a good approach.

In Ireland, the parties seem to be much better at vote management, and the order does not seem to be much of an issue. If parties can get their vote management better in some areas, the alphabetisation or list order effect would probably be reduced substantially.

**Dr Clark:** I agree with what Willie Sullivan has just said. To come back on Neil Findlay's point, which is an interesting one, the question that arises is whether the Scottish Government should consider randomisation for Scottish Parliament ballot papers, for both the list and the first-past-the-post parts of the system. That is a broader question.

**Gil Paterson:** There is another aspect to this. Someone might expect the list to be in alphabetical order. The amount of money that is spent on cornflake adverts since the war is phenomenal, but it is the same box and the same message and they keep saying the same thing. How do we get over to the public that you have changed the system and that they might need to look further down the list because they person they are looking for is not at the top of the list where they would normally expect them to be? Maybe I am answering my own question. How do

you feel about that aspect for people who have a disability, or for older people who have no disability but throughout whose lives the order has always been alphabetical?

**Willie Sullivan:** I had a meeting with the Government's elections unit to talk about that. List order is a big concern for the society and it is a part of the single transferable vote that could cause a problem. Some of the disability organisations expressed concerns about accessibility. We must be careful not to cure the problem with something that affects voters more negatively.

**Dr Clark:** You can randomise local government ballot papers, and then get the Scottish Government to look at Scottish Parliament ballot papers, but the Scottish Government has no control over UK general election ballot papers, which would still continue to be in alphabetical order. There is therefore still potential for confusion at another level, if not in local government elections.

**Professor James:** The Electoral Commission did a study on the issue for the Scottish Government that did not find that voters found it difficult to locate the candidates. The committee should probably look at that study.

**Maureen Watt:** My question follows on from that. Are we not placing too much emphasis on randomisation? People do not normally vote for candidates; they vote for parties. The candidate has very little influence on the outcome. People seek out parties rather than the names of the candidates. When I studied politics way back in the 1960s and 1970s, there was a book by someone called Blondel that said that the candidate is probably worth only 1,000 votes. I think that John Curtice would say that the maximum is 3,000 votes. Little has changed in all that time.

**Willie Sullivan:** That is a good point. The question is whether the voter is getting what they want. Do they just want a representative from a particular party or do they want a particular representative from that party?

**Dr Clark:** There is a clear effect, but it is worth remembering—and it is an important point—that there are other sources of advantage and disadvantage. One of those might be party and another might be incumbency. People might vote for the local councillor because they know his or her name and he or she has been of service to the community. We just do not know how some of those things would disentangle themselves. Different issues play into all this.

**The Convener:** Mark Ruskell has questions on the prohibition on voting more than once and on electoral registration in more than one area.

**Mark Ruskell:** That is pretty much the question. Do you agree with the prohibition on voting in more than one area on one day? Related to that is the whole principle of being on multiple electoral registers. There are a couple of by-elections in Fife today, for example. If you are a young person who grew up in Dunfermline but has moved to Edinburgh, you might want to vote in the council elections here on council election day but, if you were still registered back home in Fife, would you also want to vote in a by-election there on a different day? The principle of being on two electoral registers is one thing; the principle of prohibition against voting early and voting often on election day is something else. Your thoughts on both of those issues would be useful.

**Professor James:** It is difficult to argue against changing the law so that people cannot vote twice. It is probably a given that that should be amended. The question then is whether anyone who has done so can be easily identified. We have multiple electoral registers, so that is difficult. Many people have advocated a move to single electoral registers as a way of possibly preventing that. I do not think that there is much evidence that that problem is widespread. Two of us on the panel are university lecturers, and we know that our students have a very mixed sense of identity. Some of them have an identity where their university is and others have an identity back home, and it is understandable and right that they are able to choose between them.

**Willie Sullivan:** I agree. Wales is trialling the use of a single register, so it might be worth looking at how it gets on with that, because such a system would address some of those issues.

**Mark Ruskell:** Does that system allow people to be registered in different electoral districts or wards? Does it mean that someone has just one place of residence, or can people switch?

**Willie Sullivan:** I am not entirely sure. I guess that people would be registered in one place. Having a single register does not really address that point.

**Professor James:** The broader problem is that, in the electoral register in general, there are huge issues with duplicate registrations and accuracy. An even greater issue is that people are missing from the electoral register entirely. Having a single electoral register instead of a patchwork of multiple registers would allow administrators to check for those issues. One proposal is the creation of an "Am I registered?" website to enable people to check online whether they are registered. That would probably need to be UK-wide, so I do not know how such an initiative would be possible in Scotland. Ownership of a person's individual record is important, because there are major issues in that regard.

**Dr Clark:** One infrastructural issue feeds into such issues. In Scotland, four different electoral management software systems are used to maintain the electoral register. Getting those systems to talk to one another, so that the things that we have been talking about could happen, would be an important step.

**Mark Ruskell:** Do you have any other comments on the bill? Is there anything missing from it? In relation to electoral reform, I was particularly struck by what was said about how we deal with by-elections and proportionality. It would be useful to hear any other points that are within the scope of the bill.

**Willie Sullivan:** The point about by-elections is key. The move to an alternative vote referendum can upset proportionality in wards and councils—in fact, at one point it shifted the administration at Dundee City Council. Everybody who has been involved in a by-election will have seen the unfairness in the representation of one party being completely wiped out because of the weight of another party's votes in the whole of the ward, as opposed to what would have happened under a proportionality system.

**Professor James:** I think that two things are missing from the bill, as I said in my written evidence. The first is a complaints process for citizens. A citizen can go through a judicial process to overturn an election result but, in most cases, that is not what they are after. Usually, they just want to flag up an issue or provide useful information for electoral services, so that the election can perhaps be run better next time. The Electoral Management Board for Scotland could run such a process, or the Electoral Commission could have a single point on its website where someone can flag up an issue. There were problems earlier in the year with European Union citizens not being able to vote in the European elections. There was huge confusion about whether it was a case of just a few people making a lot of noise on social media or whether the issue was more widespread. Such a process would help to identify whether there was an issue, so that is something that the committee could recommend.

The other issue is underregistration, which we have already touched on in part. The Electoral Commission's research identified that between 630,000 and 890,000 Scottish citizens who are eligible to vote are missing from the electoral register. We are looking to change the franchise, and the bill will enable the registration of attainees, who are one of the main groups that are underregistered because of the move to individual electoral registration. Parents used to be able to add them to the electoral register.

The bill does not have any solutions to that problem. I have mentioned some of the written

evidence, but the issue could be addressed in schools. Schools could be required to introduce citizenship classes and explain how to register to vote. That could be done periodically or in advance of an election. There are direct ways of trying to automatically register citizens, but there are potential legal and privacy issues to be considered. There is nothing in the bill to fix the problem, so the committee could recommend something to address it.

**Dr Clark:** Most of my recommendations are in my written evidence, but I want to stress two things, both of which are about the Electoral Commission and the enforcement of electoral law, which has become increasingly important in recent years.

First, the reporting of donations for Scottish Parliament elections is out of sync with what is expected, for example, in a UK general election. Weekly reporting of donations is required in UK general elections, but only quarterly reporting is required for Scottish Parliament elections. There is a strong case, in the interests of transparency, for reporting requirements to be brought into line and certainly for more regular public reporting of donations.

The second point relates to something that the Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations said last week in the debate on the Referendums (Scotland) Bill. He is going to lodge amendments to the bill to allow the Electoral Commission to increase fines from £10,000 to £500,000. There is an argument for trying to get a degree of consistency in relation to referendums and in Scottish electoral law generally.

**The Convener:** I thank our witnesses—our guests—very much indeed for their attendance. The session has been extremely helpful. We have taken a lot of notes, which we can follow up on.

10:32

*Meeting suspended.*

10:34

*On resuming—*

**The Convener:** I thank members and the previous panel for the discussion that we have had so far. I am sure that the next panel discussion will be equally enlightening and helpful.

I welcome Vonnice Sandlan, public affairs manager at the Equality and Human Rights Commission, and Revati Campbell, convener of the Scottish Youth Parliament's equalities and human rights committee. Thank you both for coming in today.

As with the previous discussion, we will not be having an opening statement; we will just go straight to questions, if that is all right with you.

As you will know, Revati, the Scottish Youth Parliament, as part of its response to the Scottish Government's consultation on electoral reform, asked young people whether they thought that the Scottish Government should introduce electronic voting. From that, do you think that there is support for electronic voting in Scotland?

**Revati Campbell (Scottish Youth Parliament):** In our response to the Scottish Government's consultation, 51 per cent of our respondents supported the idea of having some form of electronic voting. It is interesting that, in another consultation that we conducted, our young people still preferred to vote in person at a polling station. However, electronic voting should be an option.

The main rationale behind having electronic voting was that it would ease the voting process and make it more accessible for people with disabilities, such as those with eyesight problems, those who are quadriplegic and those who have cerebral palsy.

**The Convener:** This is just guesswork, but do you think that, because the use of electronic machines is much more common now than it ever has been and younger people have more access to computers and electronic machinery and are more used to using them for accessing all sorts of things, electronic voting would become natural, rather than be something that people would have to think a lot about or be trained in?

**Revati Campbell:** I think that the electronic side of things is more important leading up to an election, as young people can learn more about the political process through that. When it comes to the actual voting, we found that our young people prefer voting in person, because it makes the voting feel more important to them.

The main rationale behind not supporting electronic voting was based on a large lack of trust or confidence in the voting process. We found mass concerns about hacking and what would happen with the votes. One side said that electronic voting would, as I said, make the process more accessible; the other side said that it would not make it more accessible for people who are autistic, for whom it would be overly stimulating and would actually prevent them from voting. That was interesting.

**Mark Ruskell:** I want to move on to the subject of barriers to people voting. In your written submission, Vonnice, you indicated particular barriers for people with incapacity and trans people. Will you talk through what those barriers are and how we might be able to overcome them?

**Vonnie Sandlan (Equality and Human Rights Commission):** Thank you for that question. In our submission, we discussed individuals with incapacity. An issue arose around the pledge that one has to take in registering to vote. An individual may be eligible to vote but another person may have power of attorney for them. The Electoral Commission's guidance states that the person with power of attorney does not have the right to register the individual to vote. In our opinion, that guidance has perhaps been incorrectly interpreted from the legislation, and we hope to see that matter clarified in a way that seeks to enfranchise people who are deemed to be with incapacity.

The EHRC does not have a particular position on whether implementing electronic voting is or is not a good thing. For any process that is developed, we would want any new systems to be co-designed and co-produced with disabled people to ensure that they are fully accessible. Any system that further enfranchises disabled people would be welcomed by the commission, but it has to take into consideration the points that there is no one state of disability, that disability is a spectrum and that different disabled people experience challenges and barriers in different ways. That has to be given the fullest possible consideration.

**Mark Ruskell:** What about the barriers for trans people?

**Vonnie Sandlan:** Sorry—you asked about that as well.

Our written evidence points out that, in the run-up to the 2017 general election, trans people reported difficulties with registering to vote online. That is because trans people who have registered a gender identity certificate or registered themselves in their new identity use their national insurance number for verification, and their national insurance record is then locked for privacy reasons. The rationale for that is admirable, but an unintended consequence is that those individuals have to register in person in order to vote in their new name. For obvious reasons, trans people may not be comfortable talking about their previous name and identity and how that relates to their personality and identity now.

That is just one of those well-intended things that was done in creating a new system to respond effectively to change. The unintended consequence has been to add an extra barrier for trans people. That issue could quite easily be alleviated.

**Mark Ruskell:** Is there also a barrier for people who are intersex?

**Vonnie Sandlan:** The particular barrier that we identified is for people who have changed their sex

using a gender identity certificate or through self-declaration. I would not want to make a specific reference to intersex people.

**Gil Paterson:** I am interested in Vonnie Sandlan's points about power of attorney. How would that work with someone who has no capacity? Who would actually vote? Would it be the person with power of attorney, who could vote for their own preference? In effect, the person with power of attorney would have two votes because, clearly, the person without capacity would not know how to vote.

**Vonnie Sandlan:** That gets into the specifics of individual cases. It would need to be given serious and thoughtful consideration. As you will know from talking to various adults who are deemed to have incapacity, there is a spectrum. Some people might still be able to make a decision that reflects their beliefs. For others, the person with power of attorney may serve as a proxy voter. In that situation, we would expect that the person with power of attorney would know the wishes and perspectives of the individual sufficiently well to be able to vote for them.

**Neil Findlay:** I have a question about information for voters and what the best format for that is. When I worked as a teacher, I found that young people were very informed about elections and voting—although I was a modern studies teacher so, obviously, they were interested in the issue. Are there any ways in which we can expand the information that goes out? What would be the best format to help young people—indeed, everyone—to understand issues such as electoral systems and the voting process?

**Revati Campbell:** The Scottish Youth Parliament has the policy that all secondary schools should have some form of compulsory political classes. That might not necessarily be modern studies classes, but it would be some form of classes to educate young people about political systems and how voting works so that they can make an informed decision. That would be the best way to give young people their first look into engaging with politics. One good approach is to run sessions with youth workers, who know the best way to engage with young people.

We run a mass consultation survey called "What's your take?", which is distributed across Scotland. It has found that 58 per cent of young people feel ready to vote at 16 and that those who do not feel ready to vote feel that way purely because of lack of knowledge and competence around the political system. That is why it is really important that young people are educated in the process.

As you said, young people are informed. They have opinions about issues, but applying those to

the political system is more of a grey area. They are not 100 per cent sure how to approach that.

10:45

**Mark Ruskell:** We are also looking at the Scottish Elections (Franchise and Representation) Bill. In addition to voting rights, should candidacy rights be extended to 16-year-olds? If so, how might that feed into education? People in high schools could stand for election.

**Revati Campbell:** The Scottish Youth Parliament has a policy on that issue. We believe that candidacy rights should be lowered to 16. If someone can vote at 16, they should be able to stand for election, too. Young people might feel disengaged from politics because they do not feel that their opinions are valued or that they have a say in the process. Lowering the candidacy age would be a big way of showing that you want our input.

**Mark Ruskell:** Does that view apply across Scottish Parliament and local government elections, or to local government elections only? Are there any arguments about how that could or should be restricted?

**Revati Campbell:** I do not know what level of elections the policy refers to. I think that local elections are the best option. Through the consultations that members of the Scottish Youth Parliament do in their local authority areas, we find that constituents often have lots of thoughts about their communities. Local elections would be the best elections for young people to get involved in.

**The Convener:** That is useful. Gil Paterson has a question about allowing voter registration from the age of 14.

**Gil Paterson:** Yes—it is a fairly straightforward question. The bill proposes that people from the age of 14 should be eligible to be added to the electoral register. What are your thoughts on that? Would that be a benefit? Is that too young an age for registration?

**Revati Campbell:** I definitely think that that would be a benefit. It would mean that young people could get involved. They would have two years between the ages of 14 and 16 to educate themselves, learn about the process and learn about political parties, what they represent and whether they fit into their ideologies.

Would that encourage young people? That takes me back to what I said previously. If young people do not know about the system, would they be encouraged to register for that? I am not 100 per cent sure about that, but having that as an option is important.

**Vonnie Sandlan:** The commission does not have a position on early enfranchisement. Age is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. As the regulator of that act, we see the value in having that earlier registration for younger people, particularly if they are still in full-time education, given the opportunities that exist in school to empower young people to understand the power of their vote and how to participate in democratic processes. We would support anything that expands the participation of young people in democratic processes.

**Gil Paterson:** You have second-guessed my next question. Presently, the engagement on elections starts nearer the age of 16. Would that possibly lower the threshold? The engagement process would start at 14, which would give people two years to really think about what it means to vote.

**Revati Campbell:** Sorry, but could you explain that a bit more?

**Gil Paterson:** If the age of registration is lowered, people's engagement with the political process would start at 14 rather than at 16. Perhaps that would not matter in any way.

**Revati Campbell:** I think that people are engaged even before the age of 14. The age range of members of the Scottish Youth Parliament is 12 to 25. There is also the Children's Parliament. Young people care about the countries and communities in which they live from a very young age—that does not just start at 14. I hope that that answers your question.

**Vonnie Sandlan:** Again, the commission does not have a position on that issue. However, over the past few years, schools have talked about rights-respecting schools, embedding pupil democracy and encouraging young people to participate in the life of their school. It is clear from that approach that the political process—and being involved in it—is being introduced to young people outside modern studies classrooms. Any opportunity that supports schools to build on their activity to encourage young people's participation will be positive.

**The Convener:** Maureen Watt has some questions about term lengths.

**Maureen Watt:** The term length of a member of the Scottish Youth Parliament is two years. The purpose of that is probably to get sufficient turnover and to get more people involved. Different legislatures have different term lengths, but they are usually four or five years. Do you have views on what the term length should be?

**Vonnie Sandlan:** The Equality and Human Rights Commission does not have a particular perspective on what the term length should be. As



with any other issue that we would comment on, what is important is how any changes are communicated and how the electorate are involved in the discussions, to make sure that they are fully informed of what those changes will mean for people's ability to access their democratic rights.

**Maureen Watt:** I suspect that, in giving that answer, you were coming at the issue from the point of view of voters, but do you have a view on it as an organisation that is consulted by Government—I am not sure whether you are consulted by local government—on policy making? It sometimes takes a long time to work up a bill. Even the consultation can throw up things that had not been thought about by civil servants or the party in question when it was drawing up its manifesto. Often, it is necessary to consult again.

From that point of view, is there an argument for a term length of four years rather than five, or vice versa?

**Vonnie Sandlan:** I would like to go back and have conversations with colleagues about that. Particularly as we are a Great Britain-wide organisation, our thinking on the issue has not been focused from that perspective.

The calling of an early general election at Westminster has meant that some bills have fallen, so I can understand the appeal of having fixed terms. However, given that this will be the third general election in what would have been a single fixed term, even if we were to have a four or a five-year fixed term, that could still be changed by the party in power or the Opposition parties to enact political change.

I am not sure whether I am answering your question very clearly; I guess that my response would be that the fixed term almost does not matter if it can still be changed during the course of that term.

**Maureen Watt:** That might say more about whether Governments respect the legislation that they pass.

Revati, what do you think?

**Revati Campbell:** The Scottish Youth Parliament does not have a strict policy regarding term length. On a personal level, I think that it would be interesting to investigate that issue. As you said, the term length of MSYPs is only two years. It would be interesting to investigate what young people think are the pros and cons of particular term lengths.

One of the main benefits of a term length of two years is the range of experience that people can have, because our age range is from 12 to 25. Someone could become an MSYP at 14 and leave at 16. Committee members will know from

experience that those are very different life points and that the people at those different life points will have different life experience, will have made different decisions and will have different perspectives on what they think that communities look like. That is why it is so important that we have a constant turnover of young people. We want to make sure that all young people are represented. When someone leaves the SYP, they will be a different person. By having that constant turnover, we can bring different skill and knowledge sets to the young people in our communities.

**The Convener:** Thank you very much—that was interesting.

**Neil Findlay:** That was a very strong point. On the back of that, do you think that there should be restrictions on the number of times that MSPs can stand for re-election? MSYPs do a two-year term, after which they might move on. Do you think that MSPs should be able to do only two or three sessions, as happens in the United States?

**Revati Campbell:** I could not give the Scottish Youth Parliament's view on that. I think that the restriction is being implemented in the coming session for MSYPs; we now have a strict two-term limit to ensure that we get sufficient diversity in the people who come in.

On a personal level, I think that there should be such a limit on MSPs, for the same reason. It is necessary to have a constant stream of new ideas coming through Parliament.

**The Convener:** That brings me on to whether anything else needs to be included in the bill. Does it strike you that anything has not been addressed?

**Vonnie Sandlan:** In our response to the Scottish Government's consultation, we said:

"The Commission recommends that the Scottish Government builds on current initiatives and uses the general positive action provisions under s.158 of the Equality Act 2010 to take action to tackle barriers"

to elected office

"and build confidence",

particularly among women and

"those from all under-represented groups interested in standing for elected office."

For any system change to maximise participation in democratic processes, we encourage a co-design and co-production approach, which must involve the people whom it will affect. In particular, as I mentioned earlier, it must involve disabled people; people with a spectrum of different impairments must be represented to ensure that all are covered in any future considerations.

On digital inclusion and intergenerational digital approaches, any transition to a new system has to be a gradual one that supports generations that are perhaps not digitally included at the moment, so that we can ensure that they are included in democratic processes in the future.

**The Convener:** That makes sense.

**Revati Campbell:** One of the mass views that was expressed by the young people whom we consulted was that all legal residents in Scotland and the UK should be able to vote. I am an Australian citizen and I am allowed to vote because I come from a Commonwealth country, but many immigrants who come to Scotland and the UK are not from Commonwealth countries and, as a result, cannot vote. We have had MSYPs who were refugees or asylum seekers and could not vote. It is ironic that they could be part of an influential body such as the Scottish Youth Parliament, but were not eligible to vote in elections that affected the young people whom they represented.

**The Convener:** It is interesting to hear your viewpoint on that issue. It is addressed in the franchise bill that we have been working on.

**Revati Campbell:** On the question about whether 14-year-olds should be able to register, the Scottish Government recently ran a pop-up consultation at the SYP's October sitting in Dunfermline, and the majority of MSYPs agreed that young people should be able to register at the age of 14 and that that would encourage young people to vote. However, as I said earlier, the majority also agreed that without the education element, registering at 14 might not make that much of a difference.

**The Convener:** The educational side—understanding the importance of elections and why people should take part in them—is important.

**Revati Campbell:** The important thing—this falls slightly into Vonnie Sandlan's remit—is having education not just on the political system, but on bias, diversity and other issues that affect not only the individual. The issues that affect Vonnie are different from those that affect me, for example. It is important that when a voter makes a decision about what political party or candidate to vote for, they think about how it will affect other people and not just themselves.

**The Convener:** That is worth saying—thank you.

I thank our witnesses. The session has been very useful to us and a number of notes have been taken on the issues that have been brought up. What has been said has also reinforced some things that we have already been thinking about,

while bringing in two or three new angles. That was great.

10:58

*Meeting continued in private until 11:12.*

This is the final edition of the *Official Report* of this meeting. It is part of the Scottish Parliament *Official Report* archive and has been sent for legal deposit.

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