

Scottish Government Consultation on Electoral Reform

Background

1. At its meeting on 4 December 2017 the Commission received an update from Scottish Government officials on its planned consultation on electoral reform. The consultation was launched on 19 December and runs until 12 March. The full consultation paper is available on the Scottish Government website <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00529431.pdf> and the News Release issued to accompany the launch is at Appendix A.

Discussion

2. The consultation covers a number of areas of direct interest to the Commission and which it would be appropriate for the Commission to submit views on. These areas and a proposed response for the Commission are at Appendix B.

Conclusion

3. The Commission is invited to consider the draft response to the consultation paper at Appendix B and offer any comments. The final response must be submitted by 12 March

Secretariat
February 2018

Scottish Government Electoral Reform Consultation: News Release 19 December

Democracy in action: Electoral reform consultation launched.

Voters in Scotland are being asked to have their say on how they choose their political representatives at Holyrood and in local government elections.

Among other things, the Electoral Reform Consultation will seek views on the duration of a parliamentary term, who is in charge of the voting process and opinions on electronic voting.

The consultation, launched today by the Scottish Government, also asks for the public's opinions on accessibility of anonymous registration, votes for non-EU citizens resident in Scotland and moves to make elected office more accessible.

Minister for Parliamentary Business Joe Fitzpatrick said:

"Our voting systems have remained broadly unchanged for over 100 years and now is a good time to think about modernising and innovation. We already have electronic counting for local government elections - is it the time to introduce electronic voting? Could this make voting more inclusive and increase turnout?"

"Next year is the centenary of women's suffrage, yet only 35% of MSPs and 29% of councillors are women. It is fair to say that elected representatives do not reflect Scottish society. Our [Access to Elected Office Fund](#) helped 15 disabled candidates from a range of parties and across Scotland get elected to local government this year, but we want to hear about new ways to break down the barriers to standing for election.

"Scotland has led the way internationally by lowering the voting age to 16. We now seek to extend the opportunity to vote to all who are legally resident in Scotland. It seems only fair that those who have the right to live here, whether from EU countries or elsewhere, have the right to vote.

"This consultation truly is democracy in action."

The Scottish Government will use the results of this consultation process to develop policy proposals that may be taken forward in future legislation.

BACKGROUND

<https://beta.gov.scot/news/tackling-the-disability-employment-gap/>

The Scotland Act 2016 gave the Scottish Parliament and Government new powers and responsibilities relating to elections to the Scottish Parliament. These complement the existing responsibilities for local government elections.

Respondents to a joint consultation by the Law Commissions of Scotland, England and Northern Ireland in 2015 largely agreed with their view that 'electoral law in the UK has grown to be complex, voluminous and fragmented'. A [joint interim report](#) published in February 2016 highlighted a number of areas for reform, some of which are covered in this consultation.