

## **Commission on Parliamentary Reform**

### **Your Parliament Your Voice Workshop – Arrochar**

**Saturday 11 March 2017**

#### **We asked: What are your experiences of engaging with the Scottish Parliament?**

##### **You said:**

- When campaigning on behalf of local issues you do not always receive a response from the Minister responsible. You tend to get an acknowledgement but nothing responding to your individual concerns.
- Due to the physical location of some of the smaller islands the Parliament does not visit very regularly. The lack of physical engagement with communities from these islands can make people disengage. The lack of internet infrastructure on the islands, coupled with the fact older generations tend to feel less comfortable communicating digitally means face to face engagement is vitally important for these communities. Poor infrastructure also makes it difficult for people to watch the Parliament online, and video conference isn't a practical option.
- When Parliament and MSPs have visited the Islands it is generally a really positive experience where their views and concerns are listened to.
- When Parliament comes out to speak to communities it is vitally important they speak to them about issues that affect those communities. Often smaller discussions can be more beneficial as it allows people more time to discuss their views. It was felt that it doesn't always need to be an MSP speaking to them, if a member of the Parliaments staff came out and spoke to them about how Parliament works that could be just as beneficial to empower people to get more involved.
- People were generally positive about the experiences of when the Scottish Government Cabinet meets throughout Scotland. Parliament should think about doing something similar.
- Attending cross party events at the Parliament can be beneficial in bringing different communities together to discuss their problems with MSPs.
- The number of consultations people are asked to give their views on can be overwhelming and put people off engaging. The format that many consultations come in are not very user friendly, with the person responding expected to read volumes of information before they are able to give their views.
- Engagement is only valuable if it is properly supported by Parliament as there is not the knowledge or expertise in many communities to make it a worthwhile exercise.
- Consultation documents should be provided in plain English with a summary and follow a standard template.
- With an aging population consideration should be given to ensuring documents are available in a variety of formats as not everyone has access to a computer or can read.
- There can also be confusion who exactly you are responding to as various different organisations are consulting with communities (Council, Government, Parliament etc.)
- The Parliament needs to get out of Edinburgh and into Communities where they meet – lunch clubs etc. This could be achieved through community champions who are there to promote the Parliament. There is an understanding MSPs can't be everywhere, therefore the Community Champions could assist them.
- When you do engage you don't always get feedback to say how you have impacted the decision making. Usually have to go looking for the information.
- People appreciated how accessible the Parliament is when visiting.