

# Scottish Disability Equality Forum

Leading Disability Equality in Scotland

## Consultation

### The Commission on Parliamentary Reform, Your Parliament, Your Voice

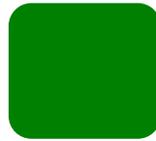
#### About Us

Scottish Disability Equality Forum (SDEF) is a member-led organisation, representing individuals with any type of impairment, disability organisations, groups and individuals who share our values. We work to ensure the voice of disabled people is heard and acted upon. SDEF is involved in a wide range of work on a local and national level. We work to bring real change to the lives of disabled people, to inspire and to motivate others to be inclusive and informed in their attitudes towards disabled people and to bring the message of equality to all.

Our aim is to ensure that our members and wider public are as informed as possible about the issues affecting disabled people in Scotland. SDEF has launched a series of online 'hubs' which include information and advice on Inclusive Communication, Inclusive Design and Accessible Travel.

SDEF actively engages with its members so that we understand what the key issues are for disabled people in Scotland and hold events to give advice on disability and access related issues.

SDEF is also the umbrella body for the national network of Access Panels in Scotland. Access Panels can be found in all regions and are



made up of groups of disabled volunteers who work together to improve physical access and wider social inclusion in their local communities. We offer support and training opportunities to help them operate efficiently, link together as a network and learn from each other.

We work to the principles of positivity, promotion, and partnership, working collaboratively with partners to promote best practice, and achieve awareness of disability equality across Scotland.

### **What we did?**

SDEF compiled an online survey which was circulated to our members. On viewing the responses, SDEF have noted that our members appear to have misunderstood a lot of the questions and had little understanding of what the consultation was trying to achieve. The responses were mostly personal opinions regarding the current Scottish Government policies, rather than the function and role of the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament. SDEF did receive a few comments which were of note regarding better engagement with community councils; how the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament engage with disabled people and how and why people have engaged with their MSP.

## **Part 1: Engagement**

### **Question 1**

#### **1A. Has the Scottish Parliament engaged effectively with the people of Scotland so far? Please give reasons for your answer**

- Yes, broadcasting of debates, frequent consultations and MSP's engaging with the public through their constituencies.
- No, disabled people are not reached and feel ignored particularly in Highlands and Islands.



**1B. Has the Scottish Parliament engaged better with some groups or on some issues better than others? Please give reasons for your answer.**

- Yes, with LGBT community, Gaelic community and cyclists. Those with large budgets.
- No, ignores the needs of those who are too disabled, especially those who live in areas where there isn't any public transport

**Question 2**

**What has been your experience of direct engagement with the Scottish Parliament?**

The majority of our respondents had engaged with the Scottish Parliament through contacting their MSP directly. Some had success in their enquiry, whilst most felt their issues had not been followed up. One respondent had felt it had not been easy to contact their MSP and when they did, staff had been busy and the respondent was taking up their valuable time. Another had attended functions at the Scottish Parliament, but felt they would only have had this opportunity as they volunteer for a group. The majority of our respondents had a negative experience when they engaged directly with the Scottish Parliament.

**Question 3**

**3A. How can the Scottish Parliament increase its engagement with people?**

Comments included:

- Create an online and fair petition process where not as many people are required to sign the petition to enable a parliament debate.



- Not to use formal consultations; instead meet with, talk to and listen to people with disabilities or long term health conditions. Parliament should be more accessible and transparent.
- Make it easier to understand what each committee does and how to observe debates and meetings.
- Take an interest in local issues and talk to local people.

### **3B. How can the Scottish Parliament engage with people who don't show any interest in the Parliament?**

Comments included:

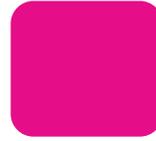
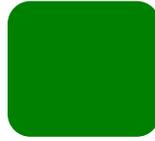
- Show respect to alternative media; have an efficient system where anyone can send a topic of debate to their MSP's where the debate must take place in a scheduled time frame. Invite speakers to discuss how Scotland can become a better society.
- Through partnerships with third sector organisations, community councils, community representative groups.
- Encourage and make it easier to stand for community council elections. Many people are not interested in parliamentary matters, but are interested in local issues.

## **Part 2: Distinct Identity**

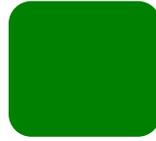
### **Question 4**

**4A. Is it important that the Scottish Parliament is seen as separate from the Scottish Government or the UK Parliament and UK Government? Please give reasons for your answer**

The majority of our respondents assumed that the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government are the same entity. There was confusion, frustration and lack of knowledge as to what matters are devolved and



where they are devolved too. It was noted that using phrases such as Holyrood, instead of Scottish Parliament or Scottish Government, could be particularly confusing for people who have learning difficulties.



### Question 5

**What should the Scottish Parliament do to strengthen its distinct identity?**

To be honest and to deal quickly and firmly with those that are not; for MSP's not to have slanging matches and for simpler language to be used.

## Part 3: Checks and balances

### Question 6

**Do any of the checks and balances need strengthened to allow the Scottish Parliament to hold the Scottish Government to account? Please give reasons for your answer.**

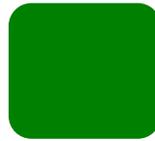
Comments included:

- Depends on what "bad" bills or policies are proposed.
- Scottish Government do not listen to professional sources; licensing of airguns is an example.
- Answers are often evasive and not challenged.
- Need an electoral system that does not discriminate against independent candidates. Elections should be held every 3 years, not 5.

### Question 7

**Where in the policy or legislative process is the Scottish Parliament likely to have the most influence or impact in terms of improving Government policy or legislation? Please give reasons for your answer.**

Respondents suggested public referendums should be held on major issues such as financing local government. Respondents also felt it was



important that new policy or legislation should be given more time for debate and that it should be scrutinised throughout the process.

## Question 8

**What other factors impact on the effective conduct of parliamentary business and how can these be addressed?**

- Slanging matches and nasty comments detract from serious debate and should not be allowed. Composure and decorum are more respected by the majority of the electorate, even if they do not agree with the views expressed.
- There should be a legal requirement that all polling stations must have disability access so that disabled people would have the same rights as others to attend polling station and cast their vote the same as other people.