

**SUBMISSION TO THE COMMISSION ON PARLIAMENTARY REFORM
FROM ITV BORDER****ABOUT ITV BORDER AND THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT**

ITV Border has a permanent office in Holyrood with six full time staff. The Political Unit produces a nightly half hour programme, Representing Border, broadcast on Tuesdays to Thursdays when Parliament is sitting. The programme aims to report on the business of the Parliament with particular reference to how decisions impact on people in the South of Scotland.

The unit consists of a Political Editor, two reporters, a producer, cameraperson and film editor.

The unit also produces news packages and live reports for ITV Border's news programme Lookaround.

EXPERIENCE OF ITV BORDER IN THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

The ITV Border Political Unit receives considerable and welcome support from the Parliamentary authorities and staff. The programme is filmed daily in and around the Parliamentary estate and all staff are extremely flexible and helpful in allowing this filming to take place. In particular the media and broadcast offices provide much advice and assistance - guiding our staff through parliamentary business and providing feeds of Parliamentary business in the chamber and committees. Two members of the ITV Border unit worked for a number of years in Westminster and both observe that the accessibility and openness in Holyrood is greater than in the House of Commons. This is very welcome

The Media Relations Office provides daily briefings on the planned Parliamentary business and is always available to explain procedure. The office also assists in making Committee Rooms available for filming, often at short notice. Again this willingness to assist us, and indeed the other Holyrood media is much appreciated by the ITV Border staff.

Under the new Presiding Officer the openness and accessibility has further increased. We have been allowed to film in the Chamber and to broadcast from the Chamber floor. The Presiding Officer has given his permission to be interviewed in the Chamber to explain his plans for reform. That access and openness has certainly enhanced our viewers understanding of the working of the Parliament.

Taken together the support we receive from the Parliamentary staff allows ITV Border to report on the business of Holyrood, and consequently to increase the engagement of South of Scotland residents with the Parliament.

SOME SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY AND ENGAGEMENT

INTERVIEWS ON THE PARLIAMENTARY ESTATE

While access to MSPs within the Parliamentary estate to conduct interviews in the public areas works well, the restrictions on non MSP interviews can be limiting. Recently we've had to interview visiting UK cabinet ministers and MPs outside the building, sometimes in poor weather even though the Westminster politicians have been visiting Holyrood and meeting MSPs inside the building.

We would recommend that the rules on non MSP interviews are relaxed to allow us to conduct interviews in the public areas with anyone attending the Parliament. We believe this would increase engagement with wider civic Scotland, particularly those attending committees or observing debates in the gallery. We believe it would enhance the democratic process and scrutiny of committee witnesses if they could be interviewed on the estate.

COMMITTEE COVERAGE

The work of the committees is an important part of Parliament and usually features in our nightly political programme. While the camera feeds from the committees are always made readily available the quality of picture and sound is on occasion variable. While we understand the constraints of space and lighting we would ask that as far as possible higher profile committees likely to attract greater media attention are accommodated in larger committee rooms with a range of camera angles. Where shots are limited and restricted committee proceedings can appear visually dull.

CONCLUSION

ITV Border would like to thank the Presiding Officer and the Commission for seeking our views and we hope the work of Parliamentary reform will continue to enhance the openness and accessibility of the Parliament.