



Scotland Office

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Dear Consultee

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS MAY 2007: BALLOT PAPER DESIGN

Purpose

1. This letter invites you to submit views on the case for re-design of the ballot paper for next year's Scottish Parliament elections. Results of the consultation will help inform Scotland Office Ministers' response to the recommendation in the Arbuthnott Commission Report ("Putting Citizens First: Boundaries, Voting and Representation of Scotland") which put forward a proposal to this effect. Both the Secretary of State for Scotland and the First Minister favour in principle the move to a single page ballot paper.

Background

2. As part of its consideration of issues around the voting system for the Scottish Parliament, the Arbuthnott Commission recommended that consideration should be given to possible re-design of the ballot paper in order to improve voter understanding of the Additional Member System. The relevant section of the Report is attached at **Annex A** to this letter for ease of reference. At the time of publication of the Report, the Secretary of

State for Scotland indicated his intention to set out the Government's response in due course. This consultation exercise is part of that process.

Existing Arrangements

3. Under the existing arrangements, the ballot paper for Scottish Parliament elections comprises two pages; one sets out the names and Party affiliations of all those standing in the constituency elections where candidates are selected on the basis of a first past the post calculation. The second page comprises the list of Party organisations putting forward candidates for election through the Regional List system. The ballot paper will also include the names of the Parties' candidates for such seats. At present the voter is entitled only to signal which Party he or she wishes to select for Regional List purposes.

4. A copy of the existing ballot paper with fictional entries is attached at **Annex B**.

Re-designed ballot paper

5. The case for moving to a re-designed ballot paper is set out in the Arbuthnott extract at Annex A. The basic format is a single page listing on the left hand side the names of political parties entered for the Regional List seats and on the right hand side, the names of individuals with Party affiliation, standing for the Constituency seats. The heading to the ballot paper sets out voter information about the significance of the two types of vote to be exercised.

6. A re-designed ballot paper with fictional entries is attached at **Annex C**, based on the format reproduced in the Arbuthnott Commission report.

Considerations

7. There are a number of considerations that must be borne in mind if a move to a re-designed ballot paper is to be taken forward. The first point is that there is likely to be electronic counting of ballots at the 2007 combined elections. Although no final decisions have been taken about the commercial aspect of e-counting, the currently approved contractor for this purpose has been asked for its expert view on whether or not a re-designed ballot paper could be accommodated within the e-counting software.

8. DRS have given assurances to the Scotland Office and to the Scottish Executive that a form on the lines of the one reproduced in Annex C can be scanned for electronic purposes, provided that the overall size and shape is broadly standard. Processing of the paper may also be faster than the existing 2 page ballot form.

9. A further important consideration arises from the need to take account of special interest groups in devising ballot paper forms. At present the two page ballot paper is compatible with a number of aids and devices for those with disabilities, including the partially sighted or those without sight. A number of adjustments might be necessary, mainly of a practical nature, to ensure that such aids and devices can continue to work where the ballot paper is in a single page format. The font size required may entail some changes such as dropping candidates' names from the Regional List and restricting that side of the ballot paper to political parties only

10. The special interest groups included in this consultation will no doubt have particular points to make on this aspect of the re-designed paper.

Questions for Response

11. In order to assist our analysis of the responses to this consultation, it would be helpful if you would use the following questions in letting us have views.

**Do you support a single page form, as currently produced in Annex C to this letter?
If so, please give reasons**

On the design of the paper, the Annex C illustration follows an alphabetical order for both parties and individuals. However You will wish to note that Scottish Ministers are considering a possible layout for the Local Government ballot paper that aims to help voters see the political groupings of candidates more clearly. The Parliamentary ballot paper could include parties on the Regional list in alphabetical order where a party has a constituency candidate and those candidates listed in order of their party affiliation. Parties without constituency candidates would follow on the Regional list alphabetically and candidates without parties would be listed immediately after party candidates. Your views are invited on this or any other design feature.

Do you support retention of the existing two page format as reproduced at Annex B to this letter? If so, please give reasons.

Even if you have no strong preference either way, please let us have views on any factors that you believe should be taken into account in Ministers' reaching a final decision on the case for moving towards a re-designed single page ballot paper for Scottish Parliament elections.

Timetable for Responses

12. It would be very helpful if you could send your responses no later than **Friday 4 August**. The consultation period is less than the Government's recommended 12 weeks due to parliamentary timetabling, as any changes made to the ballot paper would require legislation.

13. Consultation responses should be sent to:

ballotpaperconsultation@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

or,

Ballot Paper Re-design Consultation
Elections Branch
Scotland Office
Room 1/2
1 Melville Crescent
EDINBURGH EH3 7HW

14. If you have any queries relating to this consultation please contact Anna Wallace on 0131 244 9005.



SHEILA SCOBIE

Head of Elections and Social Policy Branch

RECOMMENDATION FROM ARBUTHNOTT COMMISSION REPORT

Extracted from:

Putting Citizens First: Boundaries, Voting and Representation in Scotland

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- 4.52 We also recommend redesigning the ballot papers to reflect more accurately the way mixed member systems work and to counter perceptions that the regional vote is less important. In mixed member systems it is the list vote, not the constituency one, which is key to deciding the overall share of seats in the Parliament and the election of the government. This is reflected in the design of the New Zealand ballot paper, which puts both votes on one paper, with the party list vote given primacy. The voter is also helpfully informed that *“This vote decides the share of the seats which each of the parties listed below will have in Parliament.”*
- 4.53 While we recognise that such a ballot paper might be more complicated following our proposed change from closed to open lists, we believe a paper could be designed which incorporates the greater choice which open lists would provide, while conveying better the way the voting system operates.

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CURRENT SCOTTISH PARLIAMENTARY BALLOT PAPER

Scottish Parliament Constituency
Aberdeen Central

VOTE FOR ONE CANDIDATE ONLY	
ASHRIF Tariq 56 Camelia Crescent, Linford, LN8 3DK Party A	A
CAMPBELL Fiona 9 Heaven's Gate, Clifftop, LN18 4XS Party B	B
FAIRWEATHER Skye 14C Love Lane, Linford, LN1 4PD Party C	C
FERGUSON Maeve Diedre 12 Gordon Crescent, Aberdeen, AB8 1HC Party D	D
GRANT Lachlan 398 Murray Mount, Aberdeen, AB1 8WQ Party E	E
JONES Charles 24 Wallace Walk, London, LN4 98Y Party F	F

Scottish Parliament Region: North East Scotland Region

MARK YOUR X IN A BOX

<p>PARTY A</p> <p align="right">A</p> <p>(Ann Archer, Donald Smith, Gordon Grant, John Wallace, Brian Scott, Eric Pender, Ali Abraham, Melanie Scott, Colin Brown, Frances Smart)</p>	
<p>PARTY B</p> <p align="right">B</p> <p>(Philip Loudon, Stuart Grantham, Sandy White, Heather Jackson, Anita Brown, Ben Nicol, Robert Wallace)</p>	
<p>PARTY C</p> <p align="right">C</p> <p>(John McGregor, Ellen Jackson, William Sommerville, James McWilliam, Scott Fowler, Anita Patel, Helen McKenzie, Linda Johnston, Andrew Cunningham)</p>	
<p>PARTY D</p> <p align="right">D</p> <p>(Paul Williams, Neil Firman, Frank Selkirk, Steven Scott, Roy Rown, Emma Sinclair, Robert Dunbar, Fiona Fawcett, Hugh McWilliams, George Ross)</p>	
<p>PARTY E</p> <p align="right">E</p> <p>(Callum McMaster, Lionel O'Connell, Saeed Khan, Philip Knox, Jack Sword, Liam Johnstone, George Wilkie, Gordon Marr, Lynsey Lines, Sonia Wilson)</p>	

PROPOSED RE-DESIGNED SCOTTISH PARLIAMENTARY BALLOT PAPER

Election of the Scottish Parliament
You have **two** votes

This vote decides the share of seats which each of the parties listed below will have in the Parliament for the North East Scotland Region. Vote by putting a cross in the box immediately after the party you choose.

This vote decides the candidate who will be elected Member of Parliament for the Aberdeen Central constituency. Vote by putting a cross in the box immediately before the candidate you choose.

Regional Member		Vote once only (X)	Aberdeen Central Constituency Member	
A	Party A		ASHRIF, Tariq 55 Camelia Crescent, Linford, LN8 3DK Party A	A
B	Party B		CAMPBELL, Flora 9 Heaven's Gate, Giffop, LN18 4XS Party B	B
C	Party C		FAIRWEATHER, Skye 14C Love Lane, Linford, LN1 4PD Party C	C
D	Party D		FERGUSON, Maeve Deldre 12 Gordon Crescent, Aberdeen, AB8 9HC Party D	D
E	Party E		GRANT, Lachlan 398 Murray Mount, Aberdeen, AB1 8WQ Party E	E
F	Party F		JONES, Charles 24 Wallace Walk, Linford, LN4 9BY Party F	F
G	Party G		LUCAS, Anthony The Old Millhouse, Riverside, LN36 4WV Party G	G
H	Party H		MACGREGOR, Angus Donald Fardach, Robertson Avenue, Aberdeen, AB2 8SW Party H	H
I	Party I		MUNRO, Finlay Gordon Flat 6, 28 Ross Street, Aberdeen, AB9 3BK Party I	I
			SMITH, David 386 Burns Drive, Linford, LN5 7RF Party J	J
			SUTHERLAND, James Fritlay Farm, Swallowtail Hill, LN22 8TV Party K	K

LIST OF PRINCIPAL CONSULTEES FOR LETTER ON RE-DESIGN ON SP BALLOT PAPER

General Secretary, Scottish Labour Party

General Secretary, Scottish Liberal Democrats

General Secretary, Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party

General Secretary, Scottish National Party

General Secretary, Scottish Green Party

General Secretary, Scottish Socialist Party

Scottish Senior Citizens' Unity Party

Margo MacDonald MSP

Dennis Canavan MSP

Brian Monteith MSP

Campbell Martin MSP

Jean Turner MSP

Scottish Parliament Presiding Officer

Electoral Commission, Office for Scotland

All Returning Officers

Association of Electoral Administrators

Scottish Assessors Association

SOLAR

Capability Scotland

Royal National Institute for the Blind

Enable Scotland

Disability Rights Commission

Scottish Consumer Council

Electoral Reform Society

Convention of Scottish Local Authorities

Fairshare

Scotland Office
June 2006