

Bridgend Farmhouse Volunteer Forum 15 June 2022

Background and participants

Bridgend Farmhouse

Bridgend Farmhouse is a space for learning, working and growing together to develop a flourishing community and place.

Five people took part in an in-person meeting hosted by Bridgend Farmhouse.

The volunteer forum includes people who have experience of a disability and/or living on a low income.

Sociocratic Decision Making

Bridgend Farmhouse Volunteer Forum have introduced a method of working with the group called Sociocratic decision making. The aim of this is to fairly and equally, hear everyone in the groups voice and to share their views and opinions. Two members of the group will lead the session and ask the group to answer to the two main questions. The aim is that the group will discuss and come to a consensus, making a decision, in a “fair” and inclusive way.



Members of Bridgend Farmhouse Volunteer Forum

The group used the ‘sociocratic’ method to discuss the questions posed by the Citizen Participation

and Public Petitions Committee and to agree on a series of recommendations. The group discussed the questions, put forward proposals and discussed and agreed the proposals.



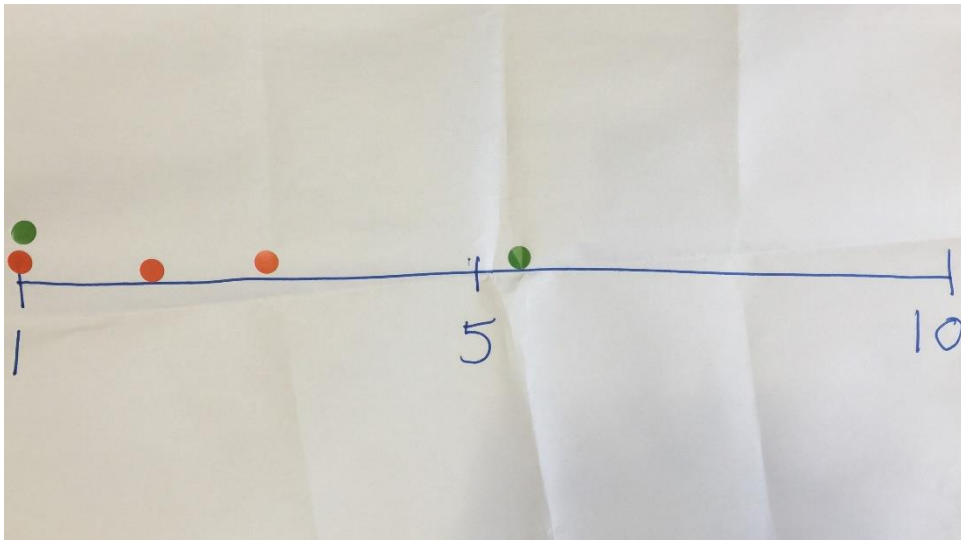
Discussion

Tell us your name and if you could describe the Scottish Parliament in one word?

- Engaged (but no follow up communication)
- Not Listening (dismissed)
- Abstract (don't feel connected)
- Bureaucracy
- Information (lack of)
- Accessible

How connected to the Scottish Parliament do you feel?

(If 1 is not connected at all and 10 was very connected).



Two people had previously engaged with the Scottish Parliament. One was invited by an MSP to take part in a Cross-Party Group on dyslexia. They found this a positive, but intimidating, experience.

Another person had taken part in a session with an organisation that supports adults caring for an adult with a learning disability. They had liked being part of the event and being invited into Parliament. They had also sought support from an MSP (on carers allowance) and said the MSP had been misinformed and they had lost trust.

Both people felt that there had not been enough follow up and that it had made a difference.

Three individuals had never engaged with the Scottish Parliament before. They felt disconnected from the Scottish Parliament and were not sure how they could get involved or what they could come in to watch or take part in.

Is there anything that the Parliament is currently doing that would put you off getting involved?

“What puts me off, you don’t feel you are being heard. If you don’t think it matters, if you already have issues with public speaking, it is very difficult to put yourself forward.”

“The only way I can see to get involved with the process is to be a part of a political party, you need connections. One lone person does not have the possibility of accessing a committee. A general member of the public could not access a committee or get involved.”

“My perspective as a foreign person is that I don’t know what my rights are. I don’t even know what they are doing in the Parliament. Can I vote, where can I vote? What are my rights. As a singular individual person, I don’t even have an idea of where to start. It makes more sense to come as a representative of an organisation.”

“If I wanted to find something in Parliament I would go. If I wanted to find anything I would go. I’d just go. You do get invited to things.”

“I wouldn’t even think of that. I wouldn’t know where to go. But seems like a battle to be heard unless you were a big group or had lots of money.”

How can we change to make you more likely to get involved? What would encourage you to take part?

Recommendation 1

People get involved when they have an issue on any level. It depends on your conviction. Depends on your willingness to see it through. It’s about the strength of your conviction and if you are to see it through to the end. That’s the part that needs to change. To be encouraged to not bring your stick but to bring you voice.

Allow people in a scenario (a safe space where people can bring individual issues but can think together as a group), like this, a community like this, to meet and get heard. We could have a group, using sociocratic methods. In a safe, transparent space you feel trusting in the full knowledge that the people can take things forward for you. Given support to find your words in an accessible non-judgemental, non-intimidating way.

Consented: 5 voted in favour of this recommendation.

Recommendation 2

Can we find a way for people with a quieter voice or who don’t have influence without having all the framework? Is there a way that that could be done? So that

they feel they have just as much influence. Somewhere for individuals to engage? It always seems to be about groups. How can you do that on your own?

Could we have a 'Citizens committee' where people can communicate/email in there and get heard. Not just organisations. A more direct route for an individual to be heard. To bring forward proposals and things that are important. With a liaison officer that supports people to go through this process. A clear route and point of contact and raising of issues and ideas for individuals not just groups. That could lead to issues being led and debated in the chamber. Transparency. Ground level access.

Consented: 5 voted in favour of this recommendation.

Recommendation 3

One concern with this is that people on the outside may think that going down that road means that you are skipping the queue. Everyone in Scotland would have the same access.

Provide more information such as links to Parliament tv and how and where to go to visit.

More communication and information about what you can do in Parliament.

Consented: 5 voted in favour of this recommendation.

Recommendation 4

Things like you are doing. For people like me. People more proactively coming and starting conversations. The work you are doing is refreshing maybe like an open surgery. Once a month to a different community centre, and they can hear what is happening. And make sure there is follow up.

Community link workers, working in the community.

Consented: 5 voted in favour of this recommendation.