



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba



Join In
Gabh Pàirt

25th Anniversary Regional Day Latha Roinneil 25mh Ceann-Bliadhna

A community conversation

Monday 20 January 2025

Sauchie Resource Centre, Sauchie
Wimpy Park, Alloa
Bowmar Community Centre, Alloa



Introduction

As part of our activities to mark the Parliament's 25th anniversary, we visited the Mid Scotland & Fife region to meet with local people to chat about what the Parliament means to them. We were keen to get a good understanding of what their expectations are for the future and how we can better engage with local people. That's what the Parliament is here for - to improve the lives of people in Scotland. It's important that we hear from people directly.

We started the day with visits to the Chatty Latte Café, run by the Sauchie Community Group, and Wimpy Park, cared for by Wimpy Park Community Group. Then, at a community event at the Bowmar Community Centre we had good discussions about issues like local facilities, funding for communities and employment. We had really good, lively conversations.

The meetings have given us a much better understanding of what people expect and how we can carry these conversations on in the future to make sure the Parliament is delivering all it can for people. My thanks to everyone who took part.



Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP
Presiding Officer



Drawn by Jenny from MORE THAN MINUTES



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba



Credit: Jenny Capon, More than Minutes

Scottish Parliament 25th Anniversary Regional Programme

The Presiding Officer is leading a regional programme of visits to each of the eight Scottish Parliamentary regions to mark the 25th anniversary of the Scottish Parliament. This was the fifth visit of eight. The Scottish Parliament's Participation & Communities Team has developed a programme of community engagement in collaboration with communities. The approach is to involve communities in the development of activities and to hear from people in ways that suit them best. For the fifth regional day, we worked in partnership with the Forth Valley and Lomond Youth Led Local Action Group, Sauchie Community Group, Scottish Rural Action, and Wimpy Park Community Group to hold events which were friendly and inclusive and involved people who may not usually engage with the Scottish Parliament. We know that not everyone can easily engage with Parliament. We're exploring ways to connect with more people, so that they can have their say in the work we do.

This report outlines the visits to the Chatty Latte Café and Wimpy Park, and the event at the Bowmar Community Centre.



Attendees

Presiding Officer: Rt Hon Alison Johnstone

Members of the Scottish Parliament: Clare Baker MSP, Keith Brown MSP, Alex Rowley MSP, Mark Ruskell MSP, Alexander Stewart MSP.

Scottish Parliament Staff: Gillian Baxendine, Mark Brough, Sarah Campbell, Rachel Hunter, Wojtek Krakowiak, Eric McLeod, Emma Moller, Kate Smith, Michael Weir.

Graphic Notetaker: Jenny Capon from More Than Minutes

Participants:

35 took part in the Chatty Latte Café visit.

19 took part in the Wimpy Park visit and tour.

77 people took part in the community conversation in the Bowmar Centre. These were participants, staff and volunteers from local groups including: Forth Valley Youth Local Action Group, Wimpy Park Community Group, Sauchie Community Group, Fife Youth Local Action Group, The Gate, Clacks Youth Forum, Sauchie Active8, Clackmannanshire Economic Regeneration Trust, Alloa Boxing Club, Hawkhill Community Centre, Stirling Climate Ambassadors, LLAG, Crochet Crafts, Play Alloa, Hot KU, Borrouard, Dress to Waste Less, Pensioners group.

School pupils attended from: Alva Academy, St Modans High School.

Sauchie Community Group

Sauchie Community Group celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2022, having been launched in 1992 by a volunteer team of hard-working citizens who sought to improve the area around them. The group has been going from strength to strength since then, turning a former block of public toilets into Sauchie Resource Centre in 2000. Funds for a much-needed extension were secured in 2021 to almost double the renovated building in floor space size and increase the number of activities and people who could attend. Sauchie Community Garden, which sits beside the resource centre, has also been developed in recent years and the venue offers a large number of community clubs: Chatty Latte Café, Carpet Bowls, Film Club, Gardening Group, Music Sessions, Community Choir, Scatoosh singing group, Soup & a Sandwich, Tiny tots, Winter Warmers, as well as seasonal events such as the much-loved Christmas Extravaganza.

Chatty Latte Café is a weekly coffee morning style event, started to encourage socialising after lockdown and provide a free warm space for people to come and enjoy a cuppa and camaraderie.





Wimpy Park Community Group

Wimpy Park is a green space within a walled garden situated within the Bowmar Estate in Alloa. The site is one of historical significance, as prior to 1962 it was part of the Mar Estate and was a formal garden within the grounds of Alloa House with the Hothouse, Orchard, Maze and Lawns used by the Mar family and by the local community.

The Wimpy Park Community Group are working hard to regenerate Wimpy Park for the community. Since 2017 they have arranged for local council, prison, fire, rotary, horticultural, education, commercial, and private sectors, alongside students and volunteers, to come together to establish a heritage orchard, wild garden, raised beds, compost bays, a woodland walk, social seating, sensory garden, children's play area and amphitheatre within the park.

In addition to working with partners and community to develop the regeneration of the park the group hosts 3 annual community events in the park, with attendance often reaching 1,200 people including local families, plus Christmas events for pensioners and children in the nearby Bowmar Community Centre.



Forth Valley and Lomond Youth Local Action Group

Forth Valley and Lomond YLAG members come from across the Stirling and Clackmannanshire council areas. They are part of a growing family of Youth Local Action Groups (YLAGs) organised in rural regions across Scotland, originally inspired by the EUROPARC Youth Project in rural Europe. They involve young people between the ages of 16 and 30(ish) who care about the local area and hope to improve rural living for young

people, now and in the future. They support local youth voices and ideas to enable solutions and ambitions.

Scottish Rural Action

SRA is a charity that works to create a vibrant and connected rural and island communities which have control over their future, and which contribute to building a society that is inclusive, just and sustainable.

SRA works with members and partners at national, regional and community levels to:

- build a grassroots-led rural movement in Scotland that connects rural and island communities with each other to share learning and expertise;
- collectively develop a cross-sectoral, locally-informed understanding of rural Scotland's economy, society and culture that shapes local practice and national policy;
- deliver the biennial Scottish Rural and Islands Parliament.



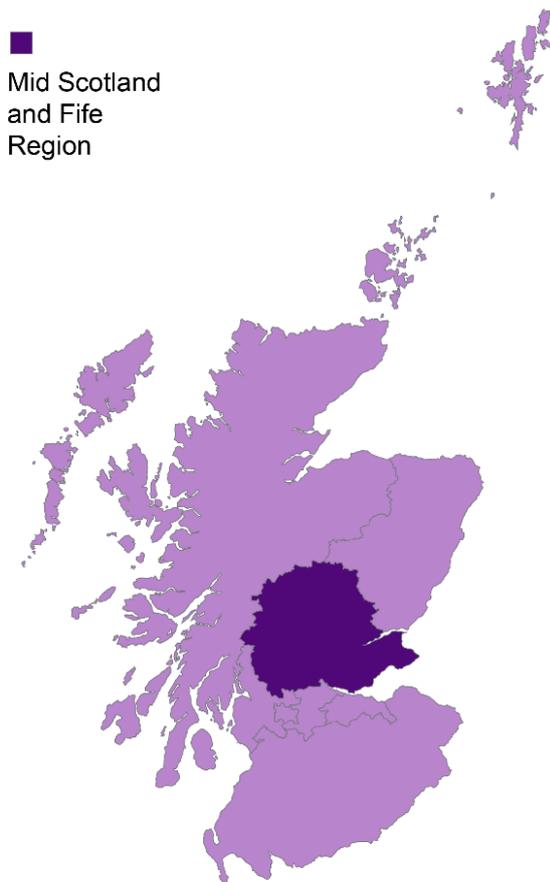
Format of the Visit

Visits

- Coffee at the Chatty Latte Café.
- Guided tour of Wimpy Park.

Community Event Lunch at the Bowmar Community Centre.

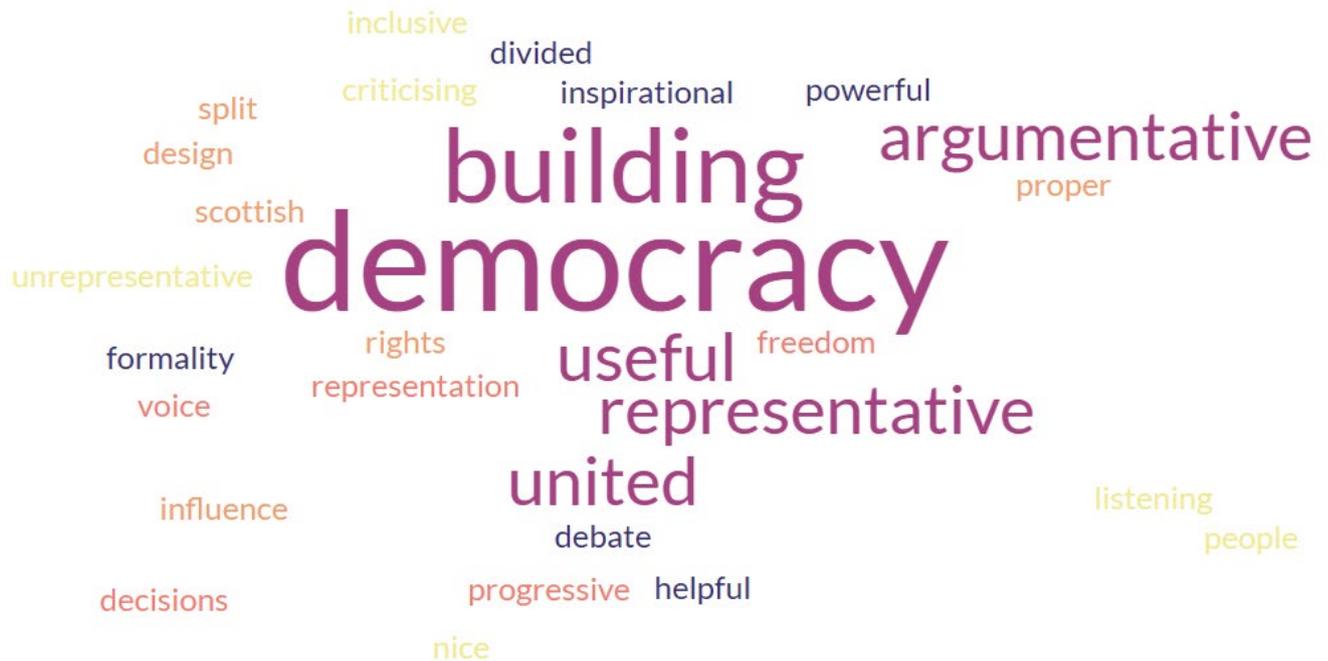
- Mark Mitchell from Wimpy Park Community Group; Michaela Scott from FVL YLAG, the Presiding Officer and MSPs gave introductions.
- The event was marketplace style with stalls with questions and interactive activities.
- A Graphic Notetaker captured what people said.



You can [view a short video](#) from the day on X

What we Heard

Participants were asked to name one word they think of in relation to the Scottish Parliament.



What we asked

What has the Parliament done in the last 25 years that means something to you?

- 2000 – Adults with Incapacity Act
 - Beneficial but is in need of a review.
- 2000 – Repeal of Section 28
- 2002 – Free social care
- 2003 – Land reform
 - Grateful to be free to explore Scotland, but lots more to do around land reform.
- 2005 – Smoking ban
- 2005 – Gaelic Language Act
 - Gaelic language should be a school subject
- 2009 – Climate Change Act
 - Strongly support it but lots more to do especially around achieving the targets.

- 2012 – MUP for alcohol
 - Alcohol price increase should fund hospitals and services not alcohol companies. (x2)
- 2015 - Votes at 16
 - Allowed discussions in high school - informed debates and better understanding of politics.
 - Allowed young people to have a voice.
- 2014 – Equal Marriage
 - Everyone should have the right to marry who they want.
 - Equal marriage made communities safer and prouder.
- 2015 – life prolonging bowel cancer drug prescribed across the NHS (result of 2008 petition)
- 2015 – Community Empowerment Act
 - Community Empowerment Act was positive, but community halls are closing and budget cuts are having a negative impact.
- 2020 – Equal Protection from Assault
- 2021 – Free period products
 - This reduces stigma and barriers for young girls on low income.
- 2022 – Pardon for miners
- 2022 – Free bus travel
 - Bus passes for under 22, helped me travel to school and work while living on low income.
 - It helped me develop my future.
 - Phenomenal!
- UNCRC incorporated into Scots Law



What has not worked?

- Where are and what happened to social inclusion partnerships?
- Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000 and the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003 need to be reviewed.

What would you like to see in the future?

Funding

- More funding for education and schools.
- Priority on spending money with more focus on Scotland.
- More funding for local groups and authorities without strings attached or restricted funding. Listen to what locals have to say.
- More funding for communities especially to deliver services that have been cut.
- Need to be able to plan on more than just an annual basis – long term funding.
- More funding for community groups, less red tape. More investment in grassroots community groups.
- Funding for kids whose education has been impacted by COVID.

Domestic abuse and sexual assault

- Fight against domestic violence and abuse.
- Work on sexual assault and rape conviction rates in Scotland.

Mental health

- Suicide awareness in communities.
- More funding for mental health and suicide prevention.

Other

- Swimming classes in schools and training for competitions.
- Human rights – treat people with dignity.
- More systematic support for individuals who are grieving, government support for parents, children and siblings.
- More help for kids with additional support needs.
- Free bus pass age cap increased.
- Every school should have a nutritionist and all food should be fresh.
- Improve access to housing for all.
- More work done on LGBTQ+ rights, specifically work to improve lives of trans people in education.
- Brief distress intervention available to all communities.
- Better access to specialist doctors.
- More input from younger people.
- Take women's health more seriously.



What are the key issues in your area that you feel should be addressed/prioritised?

People suggested their priorities and voted on other suggestions.

Local facilities

- Closure of local halls, we only have the one central hub.
- Threat of the Bowmar Centre closure. No locally funded sports facilities, only private ones i.e. Pure Gym. No swimming pool anymore.
- Due to the facilities being privately run, there is no scope for a low-income membership or Young Person membership so is unaffordable for many.
- Also means you can't pay by use and excludes young people as there is a minimum age for entry or have the ability to set up a direct debit – 1 more vote in agreement
- No forward plan for the running or funding of local facilities

Employment

Barriers to employment include:

- Lack of mental health services.
- Limited childcare outwith school hours.
- Transport system.
- Parental responsibility not being equal.

Transport

- Lack of buses to connect rural areas – limits independence of young people and the opportunities we can access.
- Address speeding in Sauchie main street.

Health and Social care

- Women's health needs to be taken more seriously, and more research done into it.
- Lack of GP and dentist appointments.
- Poor treatment of those with disabilities in hospitals and no advocacy support for them.
- Hospitals need more funding.

Funding

- Lack of long term funding for projects e.g. YLAG.
- More funding for YLAG and local groups to support rural and local young people.
- Grants to local authorities. – lots of jobs being lost and leading to an overstretched third sector.
- Council waste money on other projects instead of needed ones.

Other

- Not enough community engagement in areas of deprivation.
- Opportunities for young people.
- More homes built but no investment in schools, doctors, roads, etc.
- Disabilities and inclusion.
- Student debt and lack of opportunity for young people (with and without a degree).

What are the obstacles/barriers to getting involved?

- Where to start? It is complex.
 - Don't understand clearly who does what and what processes to follow when. Can you create a simple route map?
 - Not feeling understood as a young person.
 - The language barrier.
 - Lack of response, prejudgement, Will you be listened to?
 - Lack of confidence as a young person.
 - Hostile and no opportunities.
 - Lack of trust.
 - All talk no action.
 - Lack of knowledge and opportunity.
 - It is not connected to the local level.
 - No access to internet or social media.
 - Media myths clouding judgement.
 - Not feeling empowered.
 - Feeling like its and uncomfortable environment/not listened to/not able to make change.
 - Trust/ time/ hard to make changes when no funds to spend.
 - Large charities have a voice but not the small ones. (x2)
 - Lack of meaningful, non-tokenistic engagement.
 - Transport to parliament.
 - Too argumentative/hostile.
- Perception of it being a tick box exercise or already decided – show they're listening.



Have you ever been involved in the Scottish Parliament?

Activity	Number of people
Watched a debate or committee at Holyrood or on TV/online.	3
Visited the Scottish Parliament website.	1
Visited the Scottish Parliament.	3
Followed the Scottish Parliament on social media.	2
Spoken to or contacted one of their MSPs.	6
Signed a petition.	3
Has a family member who attended an education session at Holyrood or in school.	1
Given views to a committee.	0
Attended an exhibition or event at the Parliament.	5
Attended a Scottish Parliament event in my Community.	1



How would you like to get involved and raise the issues that matter to you with the Parliament?

Activity	Number of people
Giving their views to a Committee either verbally or in writing.	4
Visiting the Scottish Parliament.	1
Attending a Scottish Parliament event in their community.	8
Attending an event or an exhibition in Parliament.	1
Watching a debate or committee at Holyrood or on TV/online.	1
Visiting the Scottish Parliament website.	0
Speaking to or contacting on of their MSPs.	4
Follow the Scottish Parliament on Social Media.	4
Sign or submit a petition	1



Other involvement ideas:

- Through local councillor
- Through my trade union
- A hub to connect local communities – e.g. help to get past bureaucratic hurdles
- Voting
- Posters and information in schools
- Online platform to ask MSPs questions to answer in their own time

As an organisation, how do you involve and engage people?

- Collaborations across organisations. Each organisation has something to offer from growing things to baking cakes.
- Meet people where they are, it creates space to genuinely listen.
- Consultation on budget proposals.
- By giving access to decision members, e.g. councillors and ensuring feedback from senior staff.
- Council run groups with young people, they give me a feeling of really being listened to.



For MSPs, how do you involve and engage people?

- Encouraging orgs and groups to attend Holyrood. (x2)
- Listening and understanding the life experience of others (the experts).
- Having meaningful consultations and demonstrate you have listened.



Going Forward

The learning from the programme will be used to improve how the Parliament involves people.

We will do this by:

- Reviewing the issues raised and the outcomes from the programme at the Participation and Communities Team Communities Conference in spring 2025/2026.
- Producing a Community Engagement Strategy by autumn 2025.
- Feeding into the review of the Scottish Parliament Public Engagement Strategy in 2025/26.

The Graphic Notes produced at each of the events will be displayed in the Parliament in 2025.

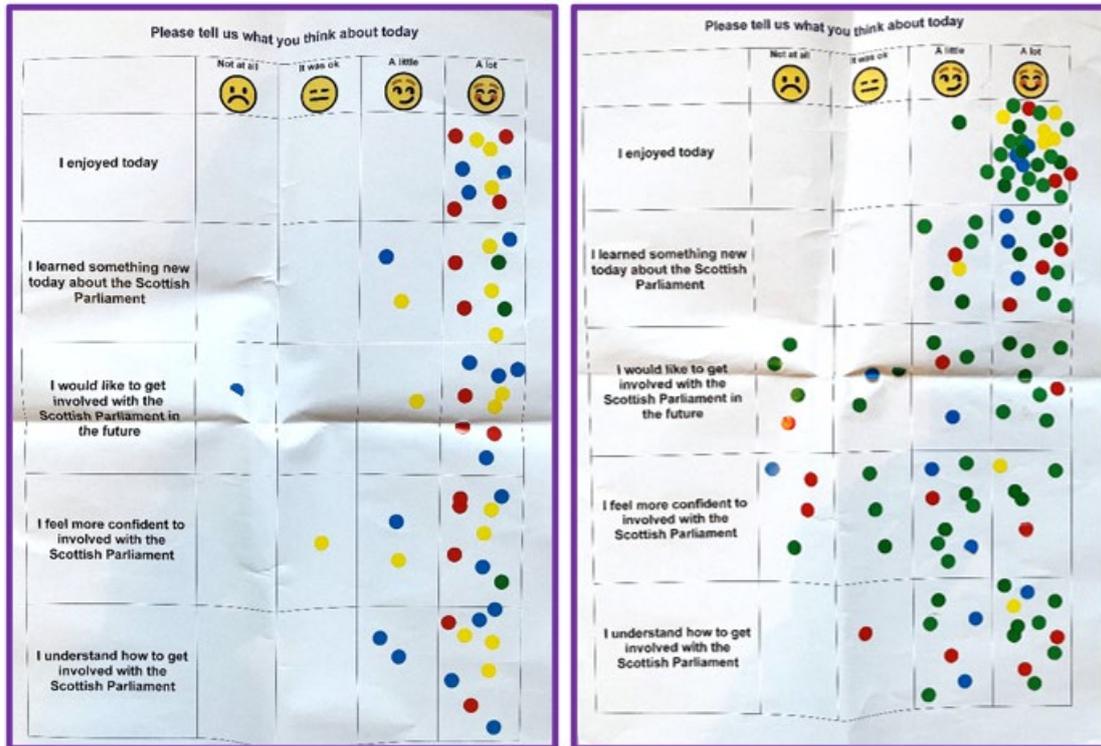
The reports, videos, graphic notes and resources from the programme can be viewed [on the Scottish Parliament website](#).

For further information please contact PACT@parliament.scot



Feedback

Feedback was taken in person at the end of the event with 41 people out of the 77 who attended completing a sticky dot evaluation.



- 41** enjoyed the event.
- 41** learned something new about the Parliament.
- 22** would like to get involved with the Parliament in the future.
- 24** feel more confident to get involved with the Parliament.
- 27** better understand how to to get involved with the Parliament.