



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

A Brief History

13th century – Earliest written records of a Scottish Parliament

1707 – The Treaty of Union merged the parliaments of Scotland and England

1979 – Referendum failed to deliver a Scottish Assembly

11 September 1997 – Referendum held – 74.3% vote YES for a Scottish Parliament

19 November 1998 – Scotland Act passed by UK Parliament.

“There shall be a Scottish Parliament”

6 May 1999 – First election to the Scottish Parliament

12 May 1999 – First day of business in the Parliament

1 July 1999 – Official opening of the Parliament



What does the Scottish Parliament do?

The Scottish Parliament considers proposals for new laws by:



Debating



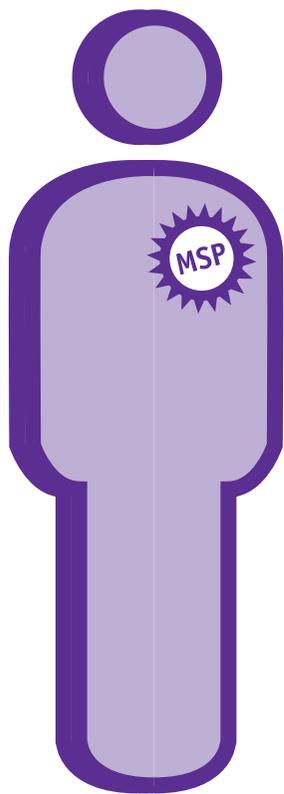
Working in Committees



Voting



The Work of a Member of the Scottish Parliament



- Represent the people who live in the region or constituency
- Answer letters, e-mails and enquiries
- Attend Parliament debates
- Attend Party business – both in Parliament and in the constituency
- Propose Members' Bills
- Work in Committees
- Work with other MSPs and MPs
- Ask questions to Scottish Government Ministers about their work



The Scottish Parliament and the Scottish Government



The Scottish Parliament
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The Scottish Parliament is made up of
129 Members of the Scottish Parliament.



73 Constituency MSPs
and **56** Regional MSPs

The Scottish Parliament scrutinises the Scottish Government, scrutinises Bills and passes laws.



The Scottish Government

The Scottish Government is made up of about
16 MSPs from the biggest party or parties.



First Minister, Cabinet Secretaries,
Ministers and Law Officers

The Scottish Government suggests the majority of new Bills and is responsible for government departments and spending.



Devolved Matters

The Scottish Parliament has law-making powers over many issues which affect our lives. Here are some of them:

- Education
- Justice
- Housing
- Food Standards
- Fisheries
- Local Government
- Training
- Health
- Police/Fire Services
- Social Work
- Environment
- Agriculture
- Transport
- Tourism, Culture and Sport



Reserved Matters

Only the UK Parliament can pass laws on reserved matters. Some of the powers which are reserved to Westminster are listed opposite:

Foreign Affairs

Defence

National Security

Laws on the misuse of drugs

Trade and Industry

Social Security

Broadcasting

Equal Opportunities

Electricity, Gas, Coal and Nuclear Energy



What do committees do?

The committees of the Scottish Parliament are made up of small groups of MSPs from different Parties. There are mandatory committees and subject committees.

Committees:

- carry out inquiries
- report to the Parliament
- closely examine Bills
- suggest Bills
- can question Scottish Government Ministers
- closely examine the work and financial proposals of the Scottish Government





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The Stages of a Bill - making a law

1

Bill as
introduced



The relevant Committee considers the general principles of the Bill
The Bill is then debated by the Parliament
The Parliament decides whether the Bill should go to Stage 2

2



The Committee considers the Bill in detail (line by line)
and can make amendments

3

Bill as
passed



The Parliament can make further amendments and decides whether
to pass the Bill
Once the Bill has passed and it receives Royal Assent, it becomes an
Act of the Scottish Parliament



The Scottish Parliament
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Word bank

Act: A law passed by the Scottish Parliament that has received Royal Assent, i.e. which has been signed by the Queen.

Bill: A set of proposals that might become a law, if Parliament agrees to it.

Coalition: An arrangement between more than one political party or group. This would usually happen when no party wins more than half of the total number of seats in the Parliament.

Committee: A group of MSPs from different parties. Each committee deals with a specialised topic, e.g. Health, Transport or Education.

Constituency: Scotland is divided up into 73 local areas for elections. Each local area is called a constituency. The people in each constituency elect an MSP to represent them.

Constituency MSPs: The MSPs elected to represent one particular constituency, or local area in Scotland. There are 73 of them and they are elected by the 'first-past-the-post' system.

Debate: A discussion that takes place between MSPs which will often lead to a vote. Debates are usually held in the Debating Chamber.

Debating Chamber: A large meeting area where all the MSPs meet to discuss issues and vote.

Democracy: This means 'rule by the people'. In other words, everyone in the country should have a say in what happens and what is decided. In a democratic country, there are elections where the people have a choice of who they want to be in charge, they are entitled to their own opinions, and they have the right to criticise the Government.

Devolution: Where the power to do things moves closer to the people who are affected. The Scottish Parliament was established in 1999 to give Scotland more control over its own affairs. This is an example of devolution.

Devolved matters: The issues that are decided upon in Scotland. The devolved matters are the areas where the Scottish Parliament has decision-making power, such as Health and Education.

Elections: Everyone over the age of 18 usually gets the chance to vote in an election. We choose our representatives (MSPs) during the Scottish Parliament elections.

Government: The most successful party or parties in an election forms the Government, which takes charge of important areas of policy, and puts forward new Bills. The Scottish Government is made up of the First Minister, Cabinet Secretaries, Ministers and Law Officers.

Laws: These are rules deciding what can and cannot be done in a country. The Scottish Parliament can pass laws on devolved matters.

Legislation: The process of making new laws.

Mandatory: Required by law.

Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs): The people elected to represent us in Scotland. There are 129 MSPs.

Ministers: MSPs who are also members of the Scottish Government.

Minority Government: A government formed by a party who does not have the support of over half the total number of seats in the Parliament.

Overall Majority: When a political party or group has more than half of the total number of seats in the Parliament.

Parliament: A parliament is a group of elected representatives that debates and decides upon new laws.

Participation: The idea of 'taking part'. You can participate by voting in an election, standing for election, joining a political party, or taking part in a campaign to change something you feel strongly about.

Parties: Sometimes called political parties, these are the different groups of people who try to get elected to Parliament. They have their own set of ideas about what they think is most important, and what they want to do if they get elected.

Policies: These are the ideas and proposals that the different parties have for changing things that they do not like, or improving things they are in favour of.

Presiding Officer: The Presiding Officer makes sure that the business of the Parliament is carried out on time, fairly, within the rules and in an orderly manner. There are also two Deputy Presiding Officers.

Referendum: A referendum is held when a government wants to find out what the people think about a particular subject. In 1997 a referendum was held in Scotland on whether there should be a Scottish Parliament.

Region: Scotland is divided into local areas or constituencies for elections. It is also divided into 8 larger areas called regions. Seven regional MSPs are elected for each parliamentary region.

Regional MSPs: There are 56 Regional MSPs in the Scottish Parliament. They have the same responsibilities as Constituency MSPs, although they cover a larger area. These MSPs are elected by the additional members system.

Representation: To act on behalf of someone else. MSPs represent the people living in the area where they were elected. They do this in many different ways, such as holding surgeries in their constituencies where people can raise problems with them, asking questions in Parliament, and even proposing new laws to change things.

Reserved matters: The issues that are still decided at UK level (in 'Westminster'), such as Defence, Foreign Affairs, Employment Law, and Social Security.

Royal Assent: When a Bill has been passed by the Scottish Parliament, the Queen is asked for her approval. When it has been signed by her, it becomes an Act of the Scottish Parliament.

Scrutinise: When MSPs question and keep an eye on the Government. They also scrutinise all Bills going through the Parliament by looking at them in detail.

White Paper: A report outlining a set of proposals, which is published and discussed before a Bill is created.