

Document 1

Although no questions on the electoral system were asked in the Scottish Government's 2017 public consultation on reforming and modernising electoral processes in Scotland, published on 12 October 2018, some people who responded did mention the electoral system used at Scottish Parliament elections. You may therefore be interested in the section on "Reform of the Scottish Parliamentary electoral system" in annex 3 (page 93) of the Scottish Government's "Consultation on electoral reform: Analysis of responses". The complete analysis document is available online and can be found at:

[Electoral reform: consultation analysis - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot/consultations/electoral-reform-analysis)

Document 2

Letter from Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and Constitutional Relations to Ms Ruth Maguire MSP on SP voting system - Dated 15 March 2019

Cabinet Secretary for Government Business and
Constitutional Relations
Michael Russell MSP



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Ms Ruth Maguire MSP
The Scottish Parliament
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By email: ruth.maguire.msp@parliament.scot

Our ref: 2019/0006444

15 March 2019

Dear Ruth

Single Transferable Vote

Thank you for your letter of 19 February to Graeme Dey MSP, Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans on behalf of your constituent [Redacted] was suggesting that the single transferrable vote system should be used for Scottish Parliament elections. As the Minister with responsibility for electoral matters, I am responding to your letter.

As you will be aware, the Scottish Parliamentary and local government elections use different voting systems but both systems are forms of proportional representation and, as such, represent an improvement over the first past the post system used for other elections in the UK. Proportional representation is an electoral system in which the distribution of elected representatives corresponds closely with the proportion of the total votes cast for each party.

As you are aware, Scottish Parliament Elections, use the Additional Member System. This is a 'mixed member proportional' system – essentially a hybrid of First Past the Post and Single Transferrable Vote. This means that electors get 2 votes - one for their Constituency candidate and one for a Regional representative.

Scottish Local Government Elections, use a Single Transferrable Vote or STV, which is a proportional representation system where voting takes place in multi-member Wards. Electors get 1 vote but this can transfer from their first preference candidate to their next preference. This depends on voters opting to number their preferences on the ballot paper (1, 2, 3 etc.).

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Each of these systems has its own supporters and there is a lot of debate about the relative merits of different systems. It is matter of opinion as to which is best but obviously some form of proportional representation is favoured in Scottish elections.

In order to change the voting system for the Scottish Parliament, it would be necessary to achieve cross party support for any proposed change. This is because the voting system is a protected subject-matter under the Scotland Act and a super majority would be required to approve the change. A super majority is a requirement that at least two-thirds of MSPs vote in favour of the Bill at its final stage.

There has not been any cross party calls for a review of the voting system used for electing members of the Scottish Parliament and I am of the view that it would be difficult to achieve the necessary super-majority vote in favour of an electoral system change at this time. I therefore, at this stage, do not think it appropriate to bring forward any proposals for change.

I would be grateful if you would pass on this information to **Redacted**. I hope that it reassures him that while we do not have any plans at present, we will keep this matter under review.



MICHAEL RUSSELL

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Document 3

Extract from Ministerial briefing for use during the consideration of the Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill by the Scottish Parliament.

This briefing was provided to the Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans for his use during the parliamentary passage of the Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill in 2020.

The Minister provided evidence at the following sessions of the Parliament:

- Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee's consideration at Stage 1 on 05 December 2019;
- Stage 1 Plenary Debate on 6 February 2020; and
- Stage 3 General Debate, on 3 June 2020

The Official Report of the above meetings, including any statements which may have been made by the Minister are available on the Scottish Parliament website and can be found at:

[Meeting of the Parliament: SPPA/05/12/2019 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

[Meeting of the Parliament: 06/02/2020 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

[Meeting of the Parliament: 03/06/2020 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

[Meeting of the Parliament: 03/06/2020 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

Move to STV for Scottish Parliament elections

REDACTED

Background to AMS system

Scotland's civil society and most of the political parties formed the Scottish Constitutional Convention in 1989 to work on creating a parliament for a modern democracy, fit for the centuries ahead, not stuck in the past.

The Convention called for an electoral system that could make a break from the stale two-party politics of Westminster. It also helped pave the way for the establishment of the Scottish Parliament.

When the Scottish Parliament opened in 1999, the members were elected through the Additional Member System (also known as mixed-member proportional representation outside the United Kingdom). 73 Members of the Scottish Parliament are elected from constituencies (using First Past the Post), and a further 56 are elected from eight regional lists.

Seats are awarded from these party lists in order to ‘top-up’ the constituency seats – i.e. to make the final results more fairly reflect the proportion of votes cast for each party. (That’s because First Past the Post results in hugely disproportionate results on its own – millions of votes go to ‘waste’ if they aren’t cast for the winner or are cast for them after they have enough votes to win).

How proportional is the system in Scotland?

A way of measuring the proportionality of electoral outcomes is via the Deviation from Proportionality (DV) Index. The DV Index is calculated by adding up the difference between each party’s vote share and their seat share in each electoral area and dividing by two, giving a ‘total deviation’ score. The higher the score, the more disproportionate the result.

Westminster election results in recent years were in the 20s (2015: 24, 2010: 22.7, 2005: 20.7), the Scottish parliament has never had a result worse than 12.1.

Scottish Parliament Election	DV Scores
2016	8.3
2011	11.8
2007	10.2
2003	12.1
1999	10.3
Average	10.5

Source- Electoral Reform Society 2019

Scotland is therefore doing well under the current Additional Member system for Scottish Parliament elections in terms of making sure votes count.

Quote:

“...compared to Westminster, the Scottish Parliament is very proportional – seats match how people vote. That matters not just for how people feel represented and listened to, but will also make a difference to the diversity and range of issues that get heard.”

Willie Sullivan, Director of Electoral Reform Society Scotland
Blog post, 05 September 2019

Document 4

Extract from letter from Elections Team to a member of the public dated 23 January 2020 in response to a question about the SG’s preference for voting system

You ask which type of voting system is preferable: the Westminster Parliamentary Majority Voting System or the EU Qualified Majority Voting System. Clearly there can be a range of views about different voting systems and which is preferable. The Scottish Government favours the Single

Transferable Voting System for Local Government elections and the
Additional Member System for Scottish Parliament elections.

Document 5

Extract from letter from Elections Team to member of the public dated 14 June 2021
and in response to a question on electoral voting system

I would advise that there are no plans to change the electoral system for
Scottish Parliament elections. You may wish to contact an MSP to ask them
to raise the matter with the Scottish Parliament.

Document 6

Letter from Minister for Parliamentary Business to Mark Griffin MSP dated 29 June 2021 on the AMS system

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Mark Griffin MSP

Redacted

Our Reference: 202100214785
Your Reference: Holyrood Electoral System

29 June 2021

Dear Mark Griffin MSP,

Thank you for your email of 14 June 2021 in relation to the voting system used for Scottish Parliament elections and representations from your constituent.

As you know, the Additional Member System of voting (modified d'Hont) has been used at Scottish Parliament elections since the establishment of the Parliament in 1999. This is a 'mixed member proportional' system, which combines a vote for a constituency member of Parliament (using a First Past the Post vote) and a vote for a regional member, on a proportional basis. Electors get two votes - one for their preferred Constituency candidate and one for a preferred Regional representative. The idea behind the Additional Member System is to counteract the perceived limitations of the First Past the Post system by introducing an element of proportional representation via the regional vote. Background information on the voting system is available on the Scottish Parliament website: [Fact sheet \(parliament.scot\)](#)

Your constituent might be interested to note that the Electoral Management Board for Scotland has published the following summary of the results of the election, showing the split between constituency and regional seats, including the percentages for the vote share and the share of the seats. As your constituent notes, the Scottish Green Party did not field candidates in every individual constituency: [Full votes and seats by party etc - SPE21 – Electoral Management Board for Scotland \(emb.scot\)](#)

I note your constituent's suggestion that the calculation of additional members could instead be carried out using constituency votes alone. I accept that this would appear to be a simpler system to explain to voters, but I am not immediately persuaded that the other benefits suggested by your constituent would necessarily arise. In particular, the proposal would seem to rely upon all voters being able to vote for

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Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coitcheanachd (Alba) 2016. Faicibh [www.lobbying.scot](#)

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their preferred party in the constituency vote. Guaranteeing this would effectively oblige smaller parties to field a candidate in most, if not all, constituencies in order to maximise their overall number of votes. It could also disadvantage independent candidates and their voters. There is also no guarantee that the proposal would avoid tactical voting.

I would like to add that I appreciate your constituent's concern to improve turnout in Scottish Parliament elections and to minimise any confusion to voters. The turnout this year was a record for a Scottish Parliament election at 63.2% (an increase of 7.6% on 2016), but clearly we wish to encourage everyone to participate in the democratic process. The Electoral Commission play an important role in helping the public to understand the voting process and I am currently awaiting the Commission's report on the running of this year's election.

I hope that this response is helpful. Please pass on my thanks to your constituent for their thoughts on this matter.

Yours sincerely

GEORGE ADAM

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Document 7

Government response to petition PE1901 on changing the SP voting system.

On 16 September 2021, the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee of the Scottish Parliament sought the Scottish Government's views on petition PE1901.

This petition called on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to "Replace the voting system for the Scottish Parliament with a more proportional alternative". The Scottish Government responded to the Committee's request on 19 October 2021 and the response can be found on the Scottish Parliament website at: [PE1901 A Scottish Government submission of 19 October 2021 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

Document 8

Letter from Minister for Parliamentary Business to Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP dated 23 October 2023 on the SP electoral system

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Our Reference: 202300378231
Your Reference: SS8258

23 October 2023

Dear Shirley-Anne,

Thank you for your letter of 25 September 2023 to the Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture, Angus Robertson MSP, on behalf of your constituent, asking about the electoral system used at Scottish Parliament elections. I am responding because policy on elections is within my portfolio of responsibilities.

The Additional Member System of voting (modified d'Hondt) is used at Scottish Parliament elections. This is a 'mixed member proportional' system, which combines a vote for a constituency member of Parliament (using a First Past the Post vote) and a vote for a regional member, on a proportional basis. Electors get two votes - one for their preferred Constituency candidate and one for a preferred Regional representative. The idea behind the Additional Member System is to counteract the perceived limitations of the First Past the Post system by introducing an element of proportional representation via the regional vote. Views on the benefits of proportional representation also vary.

The Electoral Management Board for Scotland has published the following summary of the results of the last Scottish Parliament election in 2021, showing the split between constituency and regional seats [Full votes and seats by party etc - SPE21 – Electoral Management Board for Scotland \(emb.scot\)](#)

Further information on the voting system is available on the Scottish Parliament website: [Fact sheet \(parliament.scot\)](#)

Your constituent may be interested to know that the Welsh Government has recently introduced [a Bill into the Senedd](#) which proposes to move from the AMS system to an entirely closed list system which

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The Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Mairiannach fo chumhachan Achd Colteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh [www.lobbying.scot](#)

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