



## Department for Business & Trade

**Nigel Huddleston MP**  
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Our reference: **MCB2023/06158**

### **Mairi Gougeon MSP**

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform, and  
Islands  
Scottish Government

By email: [CabSecRALRI@gov.scot](mailto:CabSecRALRI@gov.scot)

### **Richard Lochhead MSP**

Minister for Small Business, Innovation, Tourism and Trade  
Scottish Government

By email: [MinisterSBITT@gov.scot](mailto:MinisterSBITT@gov.scot)

23 October 2023

Dear Mairi and Richard,

### **MEDIA REPORTS OF A POSSIBLE UK-USA 'TRADE PARTNERSHIP'**

Thank you for your letter of 10 October, to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and I, regarding media reports of a possible UK-U.S. trade partnership. The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has asked that I respond for both of us.

As you know, in June, the Prime Minister and President Biden announced the Atlantic Declaration, setting out our shared intention to lead together on the pressing economic issues of our time and deepening our close cooperation across the full spectrum of our economic, technological, commercial, and trade relations. The Atlantic Declaration included a commitment to explore ways to deepen our trade and investment relationship and discussions with the U.S. on what the next steps might be under this first-of-its-kind agreement are ongoing.

On 15 June, I wrote to Richard in his role as Minister for Small Business, Innovation, Tourism and Trade providing an update on the Atlantic Declaration and including the UK-U.S. Critical Minerals Agreement. My letter outlined how the Agreement will support the Government's programme to accelerate our domestic critical minerals capacity in line with the UK's mission to become an important international producer over the coming decades, with a substantial number of recycling, refining, and mining sites already operational or under development across the UK. I highlighted that the UK-U.S. Critical Minerals Agreement will provide a boost to projects across the whole of the UK – from rare earth magnet recycling in Northern Ireland to nickel production in Scotland and Wales and processing and recycling sites in Yorkshire and the West of England. Furthermore, I provided an update and reiterated benefits of the Atlantic Declaration and the Critical Minerals Agreement to the Devolved Administration Ministers at the Inter-ministerial Group for Trade on 7 September.

Under the renewed momentum of the Atlantic Declaration, we have continued to engage with the U.S. on how we might seek to deepen our trade relationship and build on the UK-U.S. Trade Dialogues held in Baltimore and Aberdeen last year. In Aberdeen, key Scottish stakeholders, including the Scottish North American Business Council and your then Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise Ivan McKee, attended a series of roundtable discussions with U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai and then Secretary of State for International Trade Anne-Marie Trevelyan to identify further steps to move forward our important UK-U.S. trade relationship and address our shared challenges and opportunities.

We have also continued to hold our biannual UK-U.S. SME Dialogues, with Edinburgh playing host last November. The Dialogue brought together small and medium-sized businesses on both sides of the Atlantic, including important Scottish stakeholders such as Seafood Scotland, Scotland Shop, and the Dundee & Angus Chamber of Commerce, to identify ways to strengthen collaboration and support companies from both countries to find new export opportunities in each other's markets. Cooperation was further strengthened at this year's UK-U.S. SME Dialogue in California this month. We recognise that SMEs are the backbone of the UK-U.S. trading relationship and have announced the launch of updated resources that provide advice and support for SMEs across the whole of the UK, including Scotland, to export to the U.S.

At the same time, I know that my officials routinely engage with yours across the full spectrum of trade matters, including the Atlantic Declaration and the Critical Minerals Agreement. Most recently, my officials have engaged with yours only this month. If our discussions with the U.S. reach a more formal stage, the Scottish Government will be engaged in line with constitutional expectations, political commitments, and in the spirit of collaboration which characterises our trade policy relations.

As you know we have been taking a twin-track approach to trade with the U.S., seeking ways to unlock barriers for businesses at the state level in addition to our regular engagement at the federal level. I have directly heard the values that our twin-track approach has provided, especially at the state level having met with Governors from Illinois, Colorado, Texas, Oklahoma, and Utah. The Secretary of State for Business and Trade, along with all her ministers, is determined to strengthen our economic and trading ties with the U.S. We especially welcome your continued engagement and contribution to our ongoing programme of Memoranda of Understanding with U.S. states, and we are pleased to note your shared commitment to ensuring that these arrangements deliver opportunities for business across the whole of the UK.

Your letter asked specifically about agriculture, and I wanted to reiterate the Prime Minister's commitment to ensure that British farming is at the heart of British trade, including ensuring that UK farmers and producers can access new markets by removing barriers outside FTAs. The Government's position remains that any deal that the UK agrees will include protection for the agricultural industry, will not unfairly undercut British farmers, and will not compromise our high standards either in agriculture or on food safety. As an independent trading nation, the UK decides how we set and maintain our own standards and regulations. My Department and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs are working in lockstep to ensure the long-term sustainable future for British farming, based on high standards, competitiveness, and productivity, which meets the growing demand for our world-class produce.

I remain committed to ensuring that my Department delivers both our constitutional responsibilities and on our broader effective collaboration to deliver a trade policy that works for all parts of the UK.

Thank you again for your letter. I look forward to seeing our constructive collaboration continue.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nigel Huddleston", enclosed in a light blue rectangular box.

**Nigel Huddleston MP**  
Minister of State for International Trade  
Department for Business and Trade

## FOI – 20230383239 – Extracts for release

### 1. Extract of Ministerial Letter - FTA stakeholders - NFUS – 011123 Letter from Minister for Small Business, Innovation, Tourism and Trade to Martin Kennedy, President of the National Farmers Union Scotland – 01/11/23

#### Proposed UK-U.S. Trade Partnership

On 10 October 2023, I, along with the Cabinet Secretary, wrote to the UK Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Minister for International Trade regarding media reports of a possible UK-USA Trade Partnership.

In that letter, we underlined the concern among our farming communities generated by those reports, given the domestic agricultural policy in the United States and any potential changes to consumer protections and production standards here in the UK. While an important destination for our food and drink produce, we have made clear that it is our reputation for safety and quality that makes our exports so highly sought after, and that it would be entirely counterproductive if we were to undermine those high standards and lose market access elsewhere, as the price of securing a trade deal with the United States.

In the letter, we noted specific concerns about the potential impact this may have on vital UK-EU trade, and potentially increased costs for business, both directly and through increased scrutiny from our EU partners. In response to these media reports, we have therefore requested that the UK Government alleviate those concerns by clearly reiterating its opposition to any derogation of food safety and standards and animal welfare standards.

My officials and I will remain closely engaged with UK Government counterparts on this issue, and will continue to press the views and concerns of our agricultural stakeholders with regards to this proposed partnership.

#### 11. Extract of US Trade partnership FMQ - FMQ Style Briefing on the UK-US Trade Partnership (06/10/23)

##### Background

- **8 June 2023:** the UK and US governments announced the 'Atlantic Declaration for a Twenty-First Century U.S.-UK Economic Partnership', with its accompanying action plan, as the basis of a new type of innovative partnership across economic, technological, commercial and trade relations.
- **25 September 2023:** Over recent years the UK Government has been pursuing a programme of Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) with U.S. States. The 6<sup>th</sup> MoU in this programme, with the State of Washington, was signed on 25 Sep 2023.
- **3 October 2023:** Leaked press/other media reports in early October 2023, seem to indicate the UK and USA are looking to develop deeper level of

trade agreement , although still short of a full Free Trade Agreement, with work on this new agreement anticipated to begin in earnest in the New Year, and FTA negotiations with India remaining the UK's priority in 2023.

- X October: Cabinet Secretary Ms Gougeon and Trade Minister Mr Lochhead write jointly to UK counterparts seeking clarity on leaked reports.

## **12. Extract of Note to Minister for Small Business, Innovation, Tourism & Trade regarding media reports of UK-US Negotiations (04/10/23)**

### **MINISTER FOR SMALL BUSINESS, INNOVATION, TOURISM & TRADE**

#### **Background**

- In the last year, the UK Government has been pursuing a programme of Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) with U.S. States. [REDACTED]
- In June 2023, the UK and US governments announced the 'Atlantic Declaration for a Twenty-First Century U.S.-UK Economic Partnership', with its accompanying action plan, as the basis of a new type of innovative partnership across the respective economic, technological, commercial and trade relations. [REDACTED]
- Today's leaked reports seem to indicate the UK government will now seek a deeper level of trade agreement at a national level with the US, although still short of a full Free Trade Agreement, with work on this new agreement anticipated to begin in earnest in the New Year, and FTA negotiations with India remaining the UK's priority in 2023.
- Prior to the media reporting SG officials were not informed of developments with US negotiations and we have asked Department for Business and Trade officials for a response to the leaked reports and the lack of engagement beforehand, but have yet to receive anything.

#### **Agricultural Concerns**

- United States Trade Representative's (USTR) are reported to be pushing for agreement in a number of chapters including: agriculture, labour rights, the environment, supply chains, regulation of services and digital trade.

Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands  
Mairi Gougeon MSP



Minister for Small Business, Innovation, Tourism and Trade  
Richard Lochhead MSP

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Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
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Rt Hon Nigel Huddleston MP  
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Email: [huddleston.correspondence@trade.gov.uk](mailto:huddleston.correspondence@trade.gov.uk)

10 October 2023

Dear Thérèse and Nigel,

## **MEDIA REPORTS OF A POSSIBLE UK-USA ‘TRADE PARTNERSHIP’**

We are writing to highlight the Scottish Government’s serious concerns about recent media reports of the possibility of the UK Government negotiating a ‘foundational trade partnership’ with the United States of America. This prospective arrangement reportedly covers topics such as digital trade, labour protections and agriculture. It is particularly concerning that we are only hearing of this now from the media, and while the implications of this arrangement are not yet clear, the media reports will most certainly be of acute concern to our farming communities and so we have decided to write to you jointly about this issue.

The Scottish Government recognises the benefits to trade and investment of building relationships with United States and this is reflected in Scotland’s Vision for Trade, as well as our plan for growing Scotland’s exports, *A Trading Nation*, where the US is identified as

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[www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)



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Scotland's number one priority market. As a result, we have made clear the value we see in the Department for Business and Trade's Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) programme with US States, and we have engaged constructively so that Scotland might maximise any benefits that these state-level agreements offer. For example, the UK and Washington State MoU on trade cooperation, innovation, and clean energy, which the Minister for International Trade recently shared with us, is the most recent illustration of this close working relationship that our governments have worked hard to establish.

Given this close cooperation on US MoUs, along with our proven track record of engaging meaningfully and securely across the suite of UK free trade agreements, we would be extremely disappointed if it transpired that the UK Government had been working on plans to deepen the trading relationship with the United States without any indication, advance notification, nor involvement of Scottish Ministers, leaving us to learn of this purported development through the media.

However, it is the potential practical effects of such an arrangement on Scottish farming and food interests which concern us the most. As already mentioned, the Scottish Government, and many of our agricultural exporters, view the United States as an important destination for our food and drink produce, but we must not forget that it is our reputation for safety and quality that makes our exports so highly sought after in the first place. It would be entirely counterproductive if we were to undermine these high standards and lose market access elsewhere as the price to secure a trade deal with the United States. More specifically, we have concerns around any potential impact this may have on vital UK-EU trade, and potential increased cost for business directly and through increased scrutiny from our EU partners.

While, from media reporting, this deal appears to fall short of a Free Trade Agreement it could be viewed as a bridging step towards one. Working towards a quick deal, and in light of the well-known domestic agriculture policy in the United States, could lead to significant changes to consumer protections, production standards and the profitability of our vital agricultural sector if any trade deal enables US agri-food imports produced to lower standards to be imported into the UK. Language such as 'science-based' approaches or 'equivalent' standards is particularly concerning in light of the US use of such terms in other trade agreements; it would not allow us to protect our valued reputation for a clean and biosecure environment for agrifood products.

Specifically, any relaxing of our opposition to hormone treated beef, GM crops and chlorine washed chicken would be especially egregious when the red meat sector in particular is already facing substantial threat from the trade arrangements reached with Australia and New Zealand and in light of consumer opposition in Scotland to the use of such treatments. We would find this completely unacceptable. The UK Government should not be trading away the interests of Scottish agriculture, and other sectors, in order to secure a quick deal with the US, or any country.

If the Prime Minister's commitment made to farmers earlier this year is to be honoured, we would not expect to see any concessions like this in agriculture.

While we are well aware that the UK Government has a policy of not commenting on leaks to the media, it is important to recognise that the content of those reports have nonetheless already created considerable concern in the agricultural sector. We therefore suggest that you alleviate those concerns by clearly reiterating your government's opposition to any derogation of food safety and standards and animal welfare standards.

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The Scottish Government remains committed to engaging constructively throughout any negotiation with the United States, and will continue to do so with regards the MoU programme. However, this engagement can be too easily undermined when questions are raised through media reporting of this kind, particularly if there is any degree of truth to the story. To avoid this, I ask that you and your officials now commit to involving Scottish Ministers and officials fully with regard to the UK Government's plans for improving trading conditions with the United States going forward, and so that the veracity of any media reports can be gauged without creating undue concern between our administrations.

It is vital that we receive an early response to this letter and so look forward to receiving clarity from you about this issue as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,



**MAIRI GOUGEON**



**RICHARD LOCHHEAD**

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

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### Which could be the biggest barriers?

- Impact on education
- Wellbeing and safeguarding concerns
- Hours and managing staff
- Travel and location
- Capabilities and life experience of you...

23 responses

Ranking

### Which could be the biggest benefits?

- Diverse representation and better dem...
- Greater focus on the policy impact of ...
- Young people more engaged with poli...
- Young people have the option and can...
- Role models

22 responses

Ranking

### Does this get your vote?

Both Scottish Parliament and Local Government elections	28%
Scottish Parliament elections only	0%
Local Government elections only	28%
Neither	11%
Only if other changes were made	33%

Vote

# Barriers

idea that yp are naive - what is this lack of experience in - is it relevant to parliament? (related to sitting exams) - but if you manage to get elected your clearly are not

young people aren't always taken as seriously (they should be) so they may struggle to represent adults who don't want to be represented by them

needs to be clear it's not something that can be balanced with education

Is it fair to ask young people to stand if there is not the cultural support for them to win?

Life considerations

The impact on mental health - social media means that yp can't go home and separate from the hate they receive and could lead to more mental health issues

School has sort of become a political playground with a lot of strikes happening. Young people are becoming more exposed to politics more than ever.

yp have life experience - seen drugs deaths etc - can't dismiss yp - learn from parents, teachers, colleagues

support for MSPs (not just at SYP)

disadvantage of people who stand but aren't elected

Many legal restrictions concerning age

Can trap people into this culture for life which they may not be prepared for

the inability to drive to work but being expected to represent hundreds of constituents

Current training is designed for adults

would have to be real safeguarding measures in place - impact of criticism and conversation themes (distress)

yp are experts in their own experience

No support workers or staff members to fully support a young person in Parliament

YP not seen as 'full' MSPs or councillors because of their age

Councillor might be different in times of hours and education commitments - can be done part time - is this realistic?

Office management, e.g. emails from constituents

Time put aside to be elected but not succeed (culture of support for being young and elected) - impact on education

Lack of experience and knowledge

safeguarding and welfare is my biggest concern - would make me most apprehensive - amount of scrutiny and criticism and bullying

yp don't have the same qualifications as other MSPs - but having MSP experience will be useful in the future for applying to jobs

Nievity - could be easily influenced?

impacts on mental health - impact on quality of work - need support - people don't realise the intensity of this

people need to be informed about what they're signing up for

Mental Health Support - this is too much for a young person to take on and they might not be able to handle all of the pressure

in scotland - you're allowed to leave school at 16 to enter employment - why would parliament be different

People giving up other opportunities to stand - but not succeeding

People may have weaker relationships with family as they'll spend an unprecedented amount of time away from home

Perhaps the so-called 'lack of experience' could remove biases that adults have accumulated over their lives. As a result, they would listen to constituents to guide them in decisions

don't just need direct experience - other learning and knowledge can help you decide on things - learning socially and from other people

Nat 5 and highers not completed - won't be good impact on education

SYP support people to stand? SYP purpose is to improve representation and participation - help with political knowledge

Education not for everyone - might want to spend their time on this

# Barriers

**safeguarding concerns will put people off from standing**

why has society reached a point where young people have to stand for politics to make sure young people are heard?

international attention (only place in the world) - anticipated in safeguarding measures

**experience of young women and safeguarding**

MSPs doing normal teenage stuff - going to the pub etc - impact on social life and perception by the press

Safeguarding is my biggest concern but what I hope also happens is this will make politicians, media and the public reconsider how they treat those in these decision making positions

Safety of young people overall - is our society really safe for every young person?

**campaign period - need safeguarding for that period**

**lowest age to stand is 17 in north korea**

some adult politicians don't understand their role of duty and honour

**brutal attacks on MPs recently - murdered**

16 year olds can join the ambulance service etc - yp can be in distressing jobs already, where they are putting themselves at risk to help others

Race and gender and the intersectionality of it

**Society has a long way to go in tackling stigma towards age / gender / sexuality / etc**

young MSPs will have a higher profile because of the fact they are young - needs to be serious consideration (bear in mind MSPs get death threats)

Are young people still developing? In scotland we have accepted yp are capable of this job though

Recent resignations and brutality of politics - adults are saying this - is it right for young people?

Unless the law and our society as a whole changes, I don't think we would be able to have a 16 year old in that position

**need universal protection - not differing party to party**

want people to have this opportunity - but only with appropriate safeguarding measures - need further consultation on what they should be

Might be good to look at the other roles that would be possible for an MSP. Should it be possible for a young person to have such a public role like FM or a cabinet minister even if this is unlikely.

# Benefits

what it means to be yp is constantly changing - people grow out of this bracket - yp voices can't be replicated

would UNCRC be taking so long if yp were in parliament?

new opinions, new voices, new perspectives

They are the only people at that time who have first hand experience of what young people are facing so their voices can't really be replicated

Young people get to voice their opinions, be listened to and speak on issues that nobody else might not know about or care about as much

16 years olds might lack confidence - being elected could be good for their mental health

low voting numbers - yp feel disenfranchised by politicians who don't care about yp issues.

young people have freshness, energy, and drive to do this - we have capable members of SYP

visibility of young people's issues

More problems with accessibility of motions to young people would be discussed

Young people don't see people in Parliament/Council that are their age and they don't feel represented

16 year old can vote, choose gender, etc - we should be consistent that 16 years old are capable

yp see issues that older people don't experience or see in the same way we do - yp will get to speak on topics that matter to yp

so much of SYPs work is asking to be involved - if 16-17 year olds were elected, we wouldn't have to

We'd be able to legislate for our future

hearing directly from yp would bring yp into the conversation and make points more impactful

20 yr olds would be seen as more experienced - could lower normalised standing age

stigmas around young people will be broken down

benefits for people standing - experience and skills learnt

# Benefits

**It'll build life  
and job  
experience**

**Some young  
people may  
know more  
than others**

**Young people bringing  
new perspectives and  
someone to pull focus  
onto young people's  
experience and how  
this would impact  
them**



FOI reference number: **202300383239** – David Walker  
Scottish Daily Express political reporter

1. *All correspondence received and sent by the Scottish Government, including internally, about plans to reduce MSP ages to 16, between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023, and the date of this FOI [1st November 2023].*

## Description of information

Exchanges between 24/01/23 to 12/05/23 internally in SG and with Young Scot on candidacy rights

**From:** [Withheld](#) under s.38(1)(b)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 25, 2023 9:50 AM  
**To:** [Withheld](#) under s.38(1)(b)  
**Cc:** [Withheld](#) under s.38(1)(b)  
**Subject:** RE: Links to Scottish Government consultation on electoral reform for YoungScot website engagement - 24 January 2023

Hello [[Withheld](#) under s.38(1)(b) ], thanks so much for this. I've spoken to the team and we will get this added to Young Scot Rewards and will promote using paid media on our social channels.

Am very happy to chat about using further social options to promote. There's a good chance we will use polls to generate interest in the post – so I can keep you updated on that. I am back on 6<sup>th</sup> Feb – what's your diary looking like during that week?

Thanks,

[Withheld](#) under s.38(1)(b)  
**From:** [Withheld](#) under s.38(1)(b)  
**Sent:** 24 January 2023 19:00  
**To:** [Withheld](#) under s.38(1)(b)  
**Subject:** Links to Scottish Government consultation on electoral reform for YoungScot website engagement - 24 January 2023

Good evening [[Withheld](#) under s.38(1)(b)] ,

Thank you very much for our discussion today, and for agreeing to take forward promotion of our consultation on the YoungScot website.

With apologies for the delay, please find links below to our easy read version of the consultation, as well as the full version (which some of your respondents might find preferable – note this also includes BSL translation videos)

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/electoral-reform-consultation-easy-read/>

<https://consult.gov.scot/constitution-and-cabinet/electoral-reform/>

We agreed that you would also separately explore social media related options, gauging user opinion on the topic of changing the minimum age of candidacy in Scottish Elections. Grateful if we could discuss this idea further – perhaps we could arrange a call when you return from leave?

Very happy to discuss anything further

Regards

[Withheld](#) under s.38(1)(b)  
Senior Policy Adviser  
Elections Team  
The Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG

Notes from workshop held with the Scottish Youth Parliament

**From:** [Withheld](#) under s.38(1)(b)  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 1, 2023 9:30 AM  
**To:** [Withheld](#) under s.38(1)(b) **Subject:** SYP Consultation Workshop - electoral reform

Hi Everyone,

Hope you're all well!

Here are the resources from the workshop. Obviously, young people have a lot to say on this topic, so it's great that these discussions can be included in the consultation process! I said to [Withheld](#) under s.38(1)(b), I think the workshop could have easily lasted a whole day.

[Withheld](#) under s.38(1)(b) will be sharing a chance to provide feedback on the workshop soon, and of course, if you have any questions in the meantime you can just give me a shout.

Best,

[Withheld](#) under s.38(1)(b) Policy and Public Affairs Officer | [@OfficialSYP](#) |

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Attachments: see 'Q1 Annex A' and 'Q1 Annex B'

Note for Minister for Parliamentary Business for roundtable with Young People on 22 February 2023

Material withheld under Section 38(1)(b) – Personal data and Section 30- Prejudice to effective conduct of public affairs (b)(l), with the exception of:

**Agenda (up to 1 hrs 30 mins)**

1. Welcome and opening remarks (see Annex B) – Chair – Mr Adam (5 mins)
2. Discussion on specific topics within the consultation (approx. 50 mins)
  - a. Candidacy (approx. 20 mins)
  - b. Registration (approx. 15 mins)

c. Accessibility of elections (approx. 15 mins)

3. General discussion of the 2023 electoral reform consultation (approx. 15 mins)
4. Stakeholder reflections on young people's participation in Scottish elections (approx. 15 mins)
5. Close (5 mins)

## ANNEX D

### **BACKGROUND: SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT ELECTORAL REFORM CONSULTATION**

The SG [consultation](#) launched on 14 December and will close on 15 March 2023. It:

- Considers extending candidacy rights to 16 and 17 year-olds and to foreign nationals with limited leave to remain
- Highlights possible changes to assist candidates in Local Government elections, such as freepost communications and the presentation of candidate address information.
- Seeks views on how to increase voter registration
- Seeks views on how to improve accessibility in elections, to ensure all people can vote independently and in secret. This includes work to explore alternatives to the Tactile Voting Device (TVD) that could be made available in polling places to assist people with sight loss to vote in person, such as ballot papers with tactile additions.
- Considers the small number of people resident in Scotland without voting rights, such as asylum seekers and people detained under mental health legislation.
- Looks at options for rearranging scheduled elections in response to exceptional circumstances.
- Considers further changes in relation to the Electoral Commission, the EMB and Boundaries Scotland.
- Addresses questions arising from the UK Elections Act 2022, including the possible adoption for devolved elections of measures on campaign finance, undue influence, intimidation and notional spending.

- Discusses the implications of the Elections Act overriding Scots law on digital imprints and asks if any elements of the Scottish system should be retained.

We have had 392 responses as of 20 February.

The consultation was debated in the Scottish Parliament on 1 February. Candidacy rights for 16 and 17 year olds was one of the most debated issues, and the parliamentary motion was amended to “acknowledge that the safeguarding of young people must be at the heart of any proposal”.

The intention is to bring forward legislation on electoral reform to be in force before the 2026 Scottish Parliament elections.

Bid for Scottish Youth Parliament workshop submitted on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2023

Covering email:

**From:** [\[Withheld under s.38\(1\)\(b\)\]](#)

**Sent:** Wednesday, January 11, 2023 12:41 PM

**To:** [\[Withheld under s.38\(1\)\(b\)\]](#)

**Subject:** SYP Spring Gathering 2023 Scottish Government workshop bid.

Dear [\[Withheld under s.38\(1\)\(b\)\]](#),

I'm [\[Withheld under s.38\(1\)\(b\)\]](#) I work in the Scottish Government's Elections team. Please find attached our bid for a workshop at the upcoming Scottish Youth Parliament Gathering.

If I can be of any further assistance please get back in touch.

Best Wishes,

[\[Withheld under s.38\(1\)\(b\)\]](#)

*Bid text:*

Does This Get Your Vote?

Having led the way on voting for 16- and 17-year-olds, the Scottish Government is considering whether the next step should be for 16- and 17-year-olds to have the right to stand as candidates for local council and Scottish Parliament elections. This proposal forms part of a live [consultation](#)

on electoral reform. The workshop will enable those taking part to shape a policy which is directly relevant to them.

The workshop will explore the arguments for and against expanding candidacy rights to 16- and 17-year-olds.

- Issues might include:
  - Safety - online and in person
  - Working hours and impact on education
  - Implication of living and working away from home
- How could issues be overcome?
- Would it be appropriate for 16 and 17 years olds to be able to become councillors but not MSPs or the reverse?
- How could young people be supported to stand for election?

Notes on a radio discussion Click on the link to open 'Good Morning Scotland on 16–17-year-old candidacy rights - Friday 03 February 2023'

From [Withheld under s.38(1)(b)]>

Sent: Friday, February 3, 2023 3:22 PM

To: [Withheld under s.38(1)(b)]

Cc: Penelope Curtis <Penelope.Curtis@gov.scot>

Subject: Good Morning Scotland on 16-17 year old candidacy rights - Friday 03 February 2023

Some coverage on Good Morning Scotland this morning on 16-17 year old candidacy rights:

Jan Eichhorn said it would make Parliament more representative. He suggested it would mobilise people to get involved in politics and referenced his research. He thought arguments that young people are too immature was unconvincing, citing the research. On safeguarding, he noted restrictions on what young people can do and the need for careful consideration. He could not identify anywhere elsewhere with a 16-17 year old age for candidacy but said there were debates ongoing on lowering age limits.

Gillian Mackay described it as opening up a conversation. She noted that young people would bring a different experience. She wanted to involve young people in the debate. She wanted to extend the franchise to people with other migration status. She mentioned that an increasing number of events in parliament didn't have alcohol.

**Should MSP age limit be reduced to 16?** The Scottish Government is consulting over the age at which a person can stand to become an MSP. Should the age be reduced to 16, and how practical could it be?

GMS 0812

*Interview* Dr Jan Eichhorn (University of Edinburgh)

*Interview* Gillian Mackay MSP (Scottish Greens)

[Withheld under s.38(1)(b)] Elections and FOI Division | Scottish Government | Area 2 West | St Andrews House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG

'For info Social Media Video for Electoral Reform Consultation' – 2-3-23

**From:** [Withheld under s.38(1)(b)]

**Sent:** Thursday, March 2, 2023 2:52 PM

**To:** zzzMinister for Parliamentary Business 2021 to 2023

<zzzzMinisterPB@gov.scot>

**Cc:** [Withheld under s.38(1)(b)] Communications Justice and Home Affairs

<CommunicationsJusticeAndHomeAffairs@gov.scot>

**Subject:** For info: Social Media Video for Electoral Reform Consultation

PO for Minister Parliamentary Business,

As previously requested I wanted to share with Mr Adam the finalised video on the Electoral Reform Consultation for information.

[It can be viewed by following this link.](#)

This will be shared on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter at 1800 this evening. It will be accompanied by previously cleared copy:

Our electoral reform consultation ends March 15 2023.

We want to hear from you on a range of issues including:

● Expanding candidacy rights to 16 and 17 year olds

● Measures to improve the accessibility of voting

Take part at <http://bit.ly/Electoral-Reform>

ENDS

Many thanks

[Withheld under s.38(1)(b)] Social Media Manager: Social Content Hub

**Please note that I am currently working remotely. You can reach me on email or Teams.**

'Electoral Reform Consultation - Draft stakeholder meetings schedule' Monday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2023

During-consultation - stakeholder meeting schedule - 2022/23 Electoral reform consultation

Date (suggested)	Status	Organisation
Sat 25 Feb 2023	confirmed date	Scottish Youth Parliament

Document on candidacy and voting rights of Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> September 2023 – withheld under section 29(1)(a), but aspects otherwise accessible in terms of section 25 FOISA, available at: [Electoral Reform Consultation Analysis - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

Electoral Reform Consultation - Tweet' from Monday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023 -

Available online in terms of section 25 of FOISA at : [Scottish Government on X: "Our electoral reform consultation is now open. We want to hear from you on a range of issues including: ● Expanding candidacy rights to 16 and 17 year olds ● Measures to improve the accessibility of voting Take part at https://t.co/xSrwOTbocm https://t.co/CMsUmDyiuu" / X \(twitter.com\)](#)

Discussion on SYP meeting 10-1-23

**From:** [Withheld under s.38(1)(b)]

**Sent:** Tuesday, January 10, 2023 11:31 AM

**To:** [Withheld under s.38(1)(b)] Dornan B (Brian) <Brian.Dornan@gov.scot>;

**Subject:** RE: SYP discussion

Thanks – we are currently preparing a bid for a SYP workshop in relation to our Electoral Reform [consultation](#). We expect most of the debate to focus on candidacy rights for 16 and 7 year olds, but the consultation also seeks views on ways to encourage voter registration. Very happy to discuss!

[Withheld under s.38(1)(b)] |Elections and FOI Division| Scottish Government | Area 2 West |St Andrews House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG | Mobile: [Withheld under s.38(1)(b)] [remainder of email chain redacted as not relevant]

Discussion on engaging with young people 19-1-23

**From:** [Withheld under s.38(1)(b)]

**Sent:** 19 January 2023 11:07

**To:** [Withheld under s.38(1)(b)]**Subject:** RE: Constitutional Consultation

Hi [Withheld under s.38(1)(b)]

Hope you are well today?

I've had a bit of a chat internally and in terms of the electoral reform approach we could potentially look at a mix of social media engagement and also direct engagement with young people in Feb and March – to fit the timescale.

We carried out a similar exercise with the Education/National Conversation consultation whereby we took some of the key questions and used native tools on social media (polls/Q&A functions) to get top level engagement and also shared the full consultation via our membership platform:

- Create as an activity (full consultation) on Young Scot Rewards and allocate points to encourage participation. Promote to Young Scot Hive #YSHive volunteers and on our social channels.
- Use native tools in Instagram and TikTok to ask key questions from the consultation, potentially: 'Do you think that 16- and 17-year-olds should be able to stand for election?' (multiple choice responses removed to make a single question) 'Do you have any comments about 16- and 17-year-olds standing for election?' These social posts can be promoted using paid media.
- Our Young Scot Innovators panel (who you met with at our last engagement session around UNCRC) is meeting in both February and March. Key questions from the consultation could be posed to the young people during this session – and responses shared with yourselves.

Let me know if this is in line with your thinking and we could perhaps arrange a chat early next week to progress?

Kind regards

[Withheld under s.38(1)(b)] **Young Scot**, Caledonian Exchange, 19A Canning Street, Edinburgh, EH3 8EG  
**From:** [Withheld under s.38(1)(b)]  
**Sent:** 18 January 2023 12:04  
**To:** [Withheld under s.38(1)(b)] **Subject:** Constitutional Consultation

Hi

Hope all is well.

I wondered if you have the capacity to get involved in a piece of consultation by the Constitution Unit which we are supporting? They are currently running a consultation into whether 16 and 17 year olds should be allowed to stand for elections in Scotland. As you can imagine it's a sensitive topic but we think it could offer an interesting insight into how the public feel about the role and position of young people in Scotland. More info can be found here: [Electoral reform consultation opens - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/electoral-reform-consultation-opens)

The team are really keen to ensure the consultation reaches YP and they are able to engage with it. They are delivering a workshop with SYP and we are exploring opportunities to get them into schools.

I wondered if you would have the capacity to take this on as a project?  
[redacted as not relevant to request] I'm aware the timescale is not great – deadline for the consultation is the end of March. I don't think it's a large piece of work and open to your expertise and capacity. In its most simplest form it could be promotion via your social media channels. We could also look at things like a focus group, round table, meeting with the Minister, etc. Do you have any groups that would like to deliberate this question?

Let me know your thoughts and happy to set up a chat to discuss more.

Speak soon

[Withheld under s.38(1)(b)] Empowered Children and Young People – Programme Lead

Children's Rights Unit | Children and Families Directorate | Scottish Government  
Mobile [Withheld under s.38(1)(b)]

\*Please note that I am currently working remotely from home\*

Ministerial speech and Government motion – parliamentary debate on electoral reform consultation – otherwise accessible - available at: [Meeting of the Parliament: 01/02/2023 | Scottish Parliament Website](https://www.parliament.scot/Meeting-of-the-Parliament-01-02-2023)

Elections - Minister for Parliamentary Business - Roundtables – example Thank you letter to participants – 23 March 2023 (names in actual sent copies redacted as personal data in terms of s.38(1)(b) of FOISA)

Dear **NAME**,

## Roundtable on Electoral Reform 2023

I wish to thank you for your participation in our recent online roundtable on electoral reform.

As you know, the Scottish Government has been consulting on proposals to update the rules on how elections are run in Scotland, as well as ways to remove barriers to voting.

The events we held in February and March, to discuss electoral reform with young people and improving the accessibility of elections, were designed to ensure that lived experience and community perspectives are fully reflected in the policies we develop.

I am grateful for your enthusiastic engagement on these important topics. I enjoyed taking part in the lively discussions. I was impressed by the range of ideas and suggestions made by all participants. We have recorded these and they will be taken into account as policies are taken forward.

The public consultation on electoral reform has now closed. All responses will be published on the Scottish Government website. We expect the report analysing the responses to be ready in the summer and we will then also set out next steps. We will let you know when it is available.

Meanwhile, thank you again for your participation in the roundtable. If you have any questions, please contact the Elections Team [ElectionsTeam@gov.scot](mailto:ElectionsTeam@gov.scot).

Yours sincerely,

**George Adam MSP**  
**Minister for Parliamentary Business**

Quick notes from SYP workshop chat - 02 Feb 2023

**From:** [\[Withheld\]](#) under s.38(1)(b)]

**Sent:** Thursday, February 2, 2023 11:19 AM

**To:** [\[Withheld\]](#) under s.38(1)(b)]

**Subject:** RE: Quick notes from SYP workshop chat - 02 Feb 2023

Hi [\[Withheld\]](#) under s.38(1)(b)]

Great note thanks. It was a good meeting and many thanks for leading the discussion and thanks to [\[Withheld\]](#) under s.38(1)(b)]for contributing too.

Cheers

[\[Withheld\]](#) under s.38(1)(b)]Elections Team

Elections and FOI Division  
Scottish Government

**My working pattern is Tuesday to Thursday and alternate Mondays**



**From:** [\[Withheld\]](#) under s.38(1)(b)]

**Sent:** 02 February 2023 10:56

**To:** [\[Withheld\]](#) under s.38(1)(b)] **Subject:** Quick notes from SYP workshop chat - 02 Feb 2023

Hi all,

Some quick takeaways from our chat with the SYP this morn. Quite a productive meeting, they are taking forward planning and will be in touch with questions and a draft session outline in the next couple of weeks.

Regards

[\[Withheld\]](#) under s.38(1)(b)]

SYP Consultation Workshop Initial Meeting – 02 Feb 2022

[\[Withheld\]](#) under s.38(1)(b)] Points to note/action points

- SYP will draft up a session plan, have a meeting on process, then get the plan to us in the next couple of weeks for approval
- Two available time slots on the day – 13:30-15:00 or 15:15-16:45 on Sat 25<sup>th</sup> Feb.

**ACTION – Get in touch to advise which slot would suit us better**

- Preference for fewer adults in the room – there is also the possibility a DG may be attending, so perhaps better to limit our team joining, even as observers
- withheld under s.30(b)(ii) – free and frank exchange of views
- Most common format is a 10min presentation, giving an outline of the topics, then a discussion and various forms of contribution (mini-surveys etc)
- All seemed pretty engaged with the topic and enthusiastic for the session – MYSPs have expressed a lot of interest in the topic already

[\[Withheld\]](#) under s.38(1)(b)] Senior Policy Adviser

Elections Team

The Scottish Government

St Andrew's House, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG

Information from 25th Feb SYP Workshop on candidacy - 02 March 23

Withheld under section 30(b)(ii)

**From:** [Withheld under s.38(1)(b)]

**Sent:** Thursday, March 2, 2023 11:09 AM

**To:** EFD : Elections <DLCEABEFDE@gov.scot>; [Withheld under s.38(1)(b)]

**Cc:** Curtis PS (Penelope) <Penelope.Curtis@gov.scot>

**Subject:** Information from 25th Feb SYP Workshop on candidacy - 02 March 23

Morning all,

[Withheld under s.38(1)(b)] is working up a precis briefing from the attached material, but I thought you might like to see the full data from our candidacy workshop event with SYP.

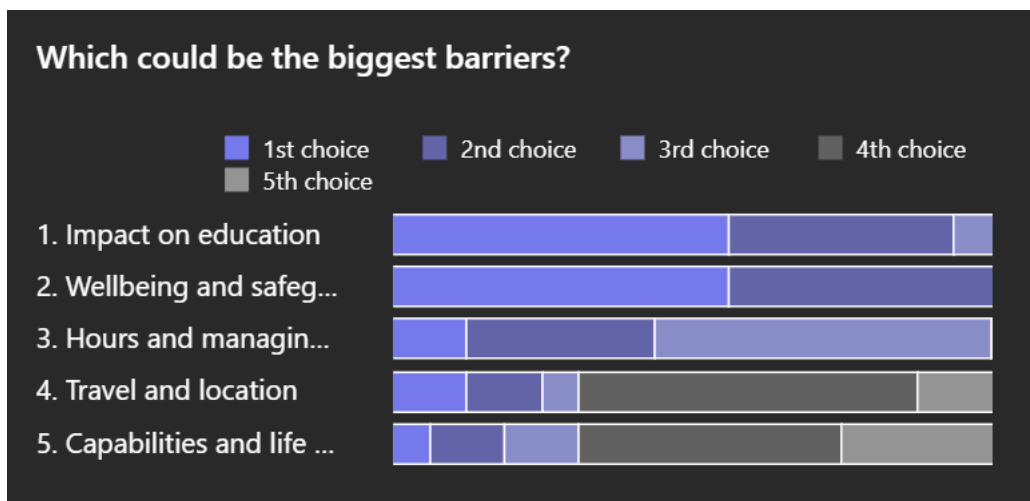
Very happy to discuss further, perhaps at a team meeting?

Annex B (jamboard) provided separately

Further attachment withheld under s.30(b)(ii) – effective conduct of public affairs.

Regards

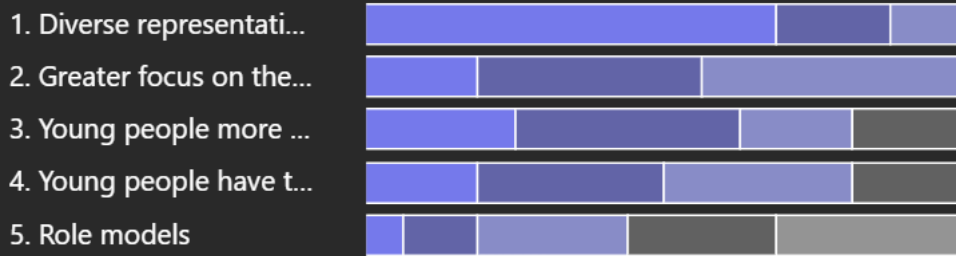
[Withheld under s.38(1)(b)]



	First choice	Second choice	Third choice	Fourth choice	Fifth choice
Impact on education	39.1%	26.1%	34.8%	0	0
Wellbeing and safeguarding	39.1%	34.8%	13%	13%	0
Hours and managing staff	8.7%	21.7%	39.1%	17.4%	13%
Travel and location	8.7%	8.7%	4.3%	39.1%	39.1%
Capabilities and life experience of Yp	4.3%	8.7%	8.7%	30.4%	47.8%

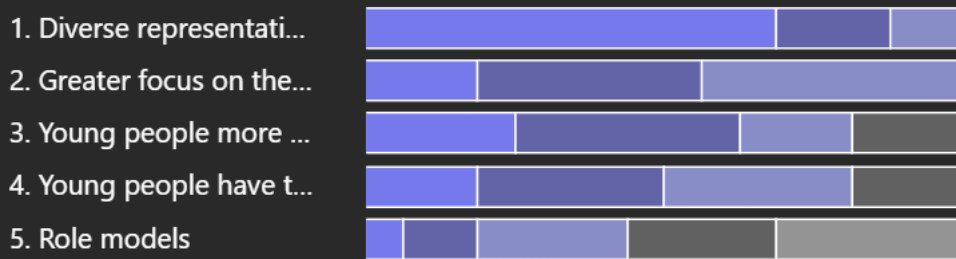
### Which could be the biggest benefits?

■ 1st choice   
 ■ 2nd choice   
 ■ 3rd choice   
 ■ 4th choice  
■ 5th choice



### Which could be the biggest benefits?

■ 1st choice   
 ■ 2nd choice   
 ■ 3rd choice   
 ■ 4th choice  
■ 5th choice



	First choice	Second choice	Third choice	Fourth choice	Fifth choice
Diverse representation	50%	13.6%	13.6%	9.1%	13.6%
Greater focus on the policy impact on Yp	13.6%	27.3%	31.8%	22.7%	4.5%
Yp more engaged with politics	18.2%	27.3%	13.6%	27.3%	13.6%
Yp can make the choice themselves on whether they run	13.6%	22.7%	22.7%	22.7%	18.2%
Role models	4.5%	9.1%	18.2%	18.2%	50%

## Does this get your vote?

Both Scottish Parliament and Local Government elections	28%
Scottish Parliament elections only	0%
Local Government elections only	28%
Neither	11%
Only if other changes were made	33%

Overall Poll

[[Withheld](#) under s.38(1)(b)] Senior Policy Adviser  
Elections Team  
Directorate for Constitution  
Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG

Media Query - Electoral Reform Consultation 8-8-23  
[LINK](#)

[[Withheld](#) under s.30(b)(ii) and s.38(1)(b)]

An SG spokesperson said:

"We are grateful to all those who responded to the Government's consultation on electoral reform. We are considering the responses to the consultation and the analysis and will publish a formal response in due course."

**Media Query** – withheld under s.30(b)(ii) – effective conduct of public affairs.

The Scottish Government's analysis of responses to the electoral reform consultation shows that 77 per cent of respondents disagreed with the proposal to extend candidacy rights to 16 and 17-year-olds.

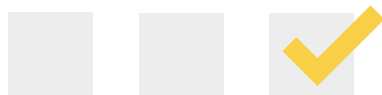
I'd appreciate any response to these findings. Does the Scottish Government still intend to consider legislating on this aspect of the consultation?

# Electoral Reform Marketing Report

March 2023

Have your say on  
changes to the law on  
elections in Scotland

Complete the  
Electoral Reform  
Consultation

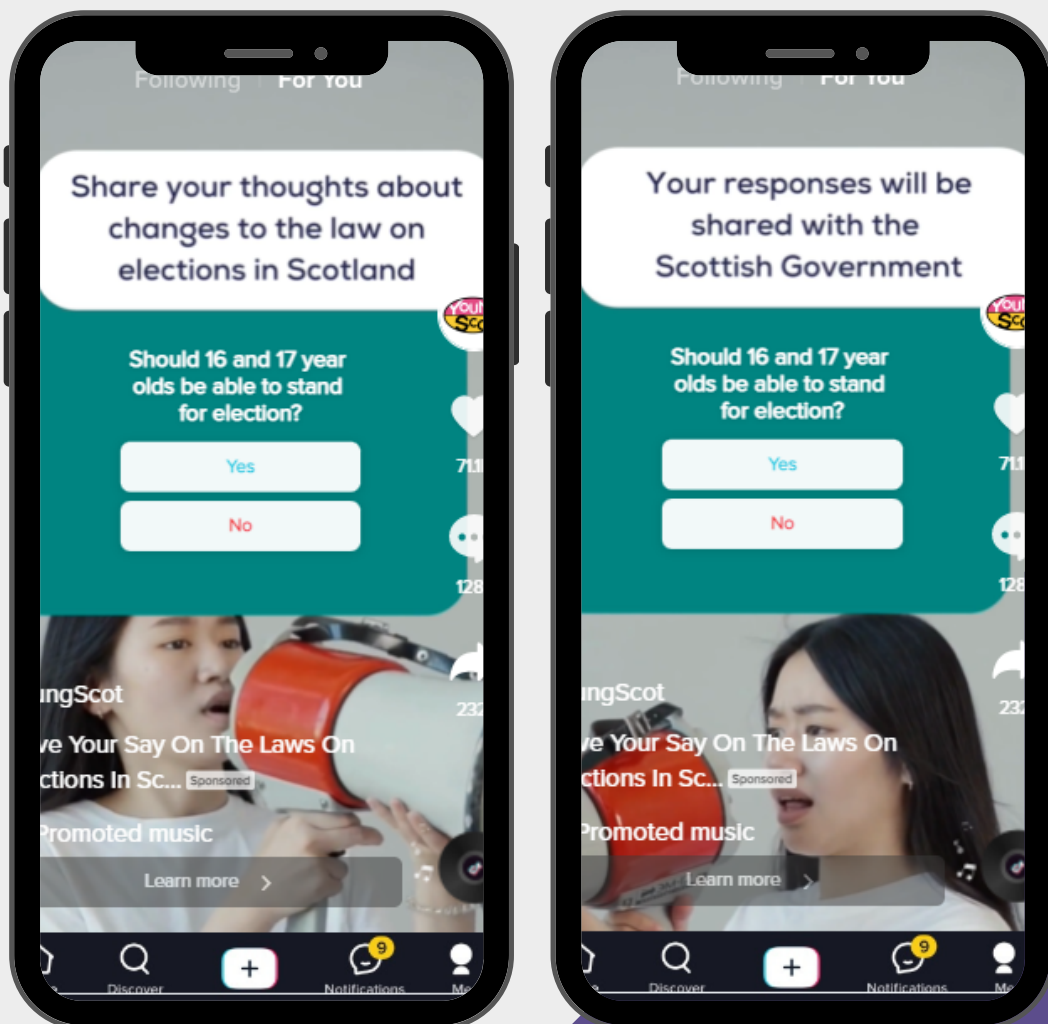


# Campaign Goals

- Build awareness around the Scottish Government's Electoral Reform consultation
- Drive traffic to the Scottish Government's Electoral Reform consultation
- Gather data from 13-24 year olds on a key question from the Scottish Government's Electoral Reform consultation

# Marketing Content

A short video was created and promoted via TikTok. The advert utilised the poll feature to gather 13-24 year old's answer to the question: *"Should 16 and 17 year olds be able to stand for election?"*



# Campaign Results

The campaign ran from 12th to 17th February 2023. The results of the campaign were measured through digital analytics tools.

- Build awareness around the Scottish Government's Electoral Reform consultation

The advert helped to build awareness around the consultation by achieving a total reach of **55,471** and impressions of **134,873**.

- Drive traffic to the Scottish Government's Electoral Reform consultation

The advert linked to the Scottish Government's Electoral Reform Consultation via a 'learn more' button. During the campaign, this received a total of **193** clicks.

- Gather data from 13-24 year olds on a key question from the Scottish Government's Electoral Reform consultation

The advert used a poll to collect 13-24 year old's answers to the question:

"Should 16 and 17 year olds be able to stand for election?"

The results of the interactive poll were:

- Total clicks - **2,235**
- 'Yes' responses - **1,388**
- 'No' responses - **847**

