Democracy in Scotland
Contents

1. Overview and recap........................................................................................................... page 3

2. How to participate in Scottish democracy........................................................................ page 4

3. Party policies.................................................................................................................... page 5

4. Campaigning.................................................................................................................. page 6

5. How are MSPs elected? The Additional Member System........................................ page 7


7. Roles within the Parliament............................................................................................ page 14

8. How the Scottish Parliament make laws........................................................................ page 17

9. Work of an MSP.............................................................................................................. page 21

10. Influence of the media on Scottish politics................................................................. page 27
1. **Overview and recap**
   In S2 you learned about the relationship between the UK and Scottish political systems, as well as the differences between them. Test your knowledge by writing a quick definition of the following terms:
   - Devolution
   - Reserved powers
   - Devolved powers

Sort the following into reserved or devolved powers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transport</th>
<th>Immigration</th>
<th>Currency</th>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Drug laws</th>
<th>Defence / National Security</th>
<th>Foreign Policy</th>
<th>Housing</th>
<th>Welfare benefits</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Reserved powers</td>
<td>Devolved powers</td>
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Discuss the following questions as a class:

1. If we already had a UK Parliament, why did we need a Scottish Parliament?
2. How was it decided there would be a Scottish Parliament?
3. Now that there is a Scottish Parliament, is the UK Parliament irrelevant to Scottish people? Give a reason for your answer.
4. Do the Scottish Parliament’s laws affect people outside of Scotland in the rest of the UK?
5. If Scotland votes for independence in 2014, what would happen?
2. **How to participate in Scottish democracy**

Democracy is about people being involved in decisions which affect their lives and their communities. List as many ways as you can of how people can do this. Leave some space when you are done as we will add to this when we have completed the unit.

Democracy is government by the people for the people. Since it is difficult for all people to directly govern, instead we elect representatives to govern for us. In Scotland we elect MSPs (Members of the Scottish Parliament) to make decisions on our behalf in the Scottish Parliament. This is one of the main ways of participating – voting.

The purpose of voting is to elect people with similar opinions to us into the Scottish Parliament where they have power to influence decision making and speak up for our interests. People with similar interests have tended to group together into political parties in order to give their interests the greatest support and therefore the greatest chance of influencing decision making. The 5 main political parties in Scotland are:

- Scottish National Party (SNP)
- Scottish Labour
- Scottish Conservatives
- Scottish Liberal Democrats
- Scottish Greens
Party policies
The following table shows the different parties’ main policies in 2011:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overview</th>
<th>Scottish National Party</th>
<th>Labour</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Liberal Democrats</th>
<th>Green</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continue council tax freeze in next parliament.</td>
<td>Abolish youth unemployment in next parliament and create 250,000 jobs by end of decade.</td>
<td>A continued freeze for council tax bills for all in 2012-13.</td>
<td>Create the conditions for 100,000 new jobs, supported by at least £1.5bn of investment freed up by selling Scottish Water debt, turning it into a “public benefit company”.</td>
<td>Focus on crime prevention and putting mediation and restorative justice at the heart of the system.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>£250m Scottish Futures Fund focussing on young people and early years, rolling out superfast broadband to rural areas, a “warm homes” initiative and transport fund.</td>
<td>Deliver a National Care Service within the lifetime of the next parliament to end postcode lottery for elderly care.</td>
<td>Pilot introduction of hard shoulder-running, initially on sections of M77 and M8.</td>
<td>Ensure local health services are protected against centralisation.</td>
<td>Ensure local health services are protected against centralisation.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bring forward independence referendum bill in next parliament.</td>
<td>Six-month mandatory minimum jail sentences for knife carrying.</td>
<td>Introduce variable university graduate fee, capped at £4,000 annually with the expectation of an average charge of £3,600.</td>
<td>Keep university education free, with no tuition fees and no graduate contribution.</td>
<td>Commit to large-scale ecosystem restoration projects, including the provision of dedicated funds for peatland restoration.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Maintain police numbers, including 1,000 extra officers delivered in last parliament.</td>
<td>Re-instate Glasgow Airport Rail Link.</td>
<td>Look into possible tourism investment bank, based on the Austrian model.</td>
<td>Protect free personal care.</td>
<td>Cancel second Forth crossing and the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Protect the NHS budget with extra £1bn over four years.</td>
<td>Specialised training for up to 1,000 teachers, to boost literacy and numeracy standards.</td>
<td>End Scottish government policy against new nuclear power – consider proposals for new stations but not on new sites.</td>
<td>Keep the Scottish bus pass, but progressively raise the age of entitlement to 65.</td>
<td>Back renewed convention on Scottish devolution, with the public and civic organisations in the driving seat.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>No university fees for Scottish students studying in Scotland, requiring additional funding of £93m a year.</td>
<td>Introduce a new Scottish Living Wage of £7.15 an hour, piloted in the public sector.</td>
<td>Reform the council tax using the powers in the Scotland Bill.</td>
<td>Reform the council tax using the powers in the Scotland Bill.</td>
<td>Land value tax to replace council tax and business rates and make use of the variable rate of income tax if the cuts continue.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increase domestic energy generation from renewables to 100% by 2020, ensuring 130,000 jobs delivered in low-carbon economy.</td>
<td>Freeze council tax for two years.</td>
<td>Establish a new creative industry fund.</td>
<td>Keep higher education free, if other parties work with us.</td>
<td>Keep higher education free based on ability to learn, not to pay.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Task
1. Which do you think is the single best policy?
2. Are there any policies you disagree with? If so which ones and why?
3. Overall which party would you be most likely to vote for and why?
Campaigning
There is a general election to the Scottish Parliament every 4 years where parties will put forward candidates, who will campaign locally to win people’s support by knocking on doors and speaking to people, delivering leaflets with their policies and opinions, and by making speeches and answering questions at local centres. At the same time the various parties will campaign nationally by releasing **manifestos** (pleads and reasons to vote that party) and television adverts known as Party Election Broadcasts.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03qqbns

Your teacher will show you some party election broadcasts by different parties. Complete the following table, filling it in as you go.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Do you find this PEB influential or not?</th>
<th>Why? Why not? Explain.</th>
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</table>

Today, candidates and parties are making more and more use of the internet and social media. All parties have websites and official Twitter accounts, and many individual candidates and MSPs use Twitter to communicate with people, especially the youth. People can then vote their preferred candidate or party so that their views are represented in Parliament.
3. **How are MSPs elected? The Additional Member System**

In order to understand how MSPs are elected to the Scottish Parliament, it is helpful to first understand some of the problems associated with the electoral system used to elect MPs to the UK Parliament. MPs are elected to the House of Commons using a straightforward voting system known as First Past the Post (FPTP). This is easy for voters to understand as it simply means voters mark an X next to their favoured candidate and in each **constituency** (voting area) the candidate with the most votes wins and is elected the MP for that area. There are no prizes for coming second and everyone is elected by 1 MP.

However, there are some problems with this system. Imagine there were just 3 constituencies in the UK, each with 1,000 people, and this is how they voted:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituency 1:</th>
<th>Constituency 2</th>
<th>Constituency 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservatives: 400 votes</td>
<td>Conservatives: 400 votes</td>
<td>Conservatives: 100 votes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour: 300 votes</td>
<td>Labour: 300 votes</td>
<td>Labour: 800 votes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democrats: 300 votes</td>
<td>Liberal Democrats: 300 votes</td>
<td>Liberal Democrats: 100 votes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now copy and complete the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total votes</th>
<th>Total seats (constituencies won)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democrats</td>
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</table>

Who would form the government if this were real?

What problems do you notice with FPTP?

Can you think how to improve this system?
The Additional Member System

Hopefully you will have noticed that while FPTP is easy for voters to understand, it is not proportional, i.e. the percentage of votes parties get is not necessarily equal to the percentage of seats they get in Parliament. When the Scottish Parliament was being created it was thought that it was very important to have proportionality so that all people’s votes counted and so that smaller parties could get some representation. A different electoral system is therefore used for elections to the Scottish Parliament; it is called the Additional Member System (AMS). AMS actually uses FPTP for one part of its vote, but not all of it. It is proportional, but it is not easy to understand; a voting system cannot be both!

The problem with FPTP is that when you only have 1 MP representing an area, that one MP represents 100% of the area, so it will always be disproportionate, as no other candidates are being represented, even although they will have won some of the share of the vote.

AMS has a solution; instead of areas being represented by just 1 representative, make the areas larger, but have them represented by several representatives, according to their share of the vote in that area! As a result, everyone in Scotland is actually represented by 8 MSPs in total. How they are elected is quite confusing.....

Voters in Scotland have 2 votes. For the first vote they are voting as part of their constituency and this vote uses FPTP, just like UK elections. There are 73 constituencies in Scotland and the first vote elects 73 constituency MSPs in total. For instance, the constituency MSP for the constituency of Rutherglen is Clare Haughey of the SNP.

MSP Clare Haughey (SNP)
The second vote is where it gets confusing. For the second vote, you are no longer voting simply as part of your constituency, but as part of a much larger region. Regions are usually made up of between 8 and 10 smaller constituencies. For instance, for the second vote the constituency of Rutherglen joins up with other constituencies to form the Glasgow region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Constituencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Glasgow Anniesland</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Glasgow Cathcart</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Glasgow Kelvin</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn</td>
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<td>5. Glasgow Pollok</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Glasgow Provan</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Glasgow Shettleston</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Glasgow Southside</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Rutherglen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Glasgow region (elects a further 7 ‘additional mebers’ to represent the entire region)


**How are the regional MSPs allocated?**

The regional 2nd vote is where the proportional aspect of AMS is achieved. Voters vote for a party and a mathematical formula is applied through 7 rounds of scoring. At the end of each round the party with the highest score gets 1 regional MSP elected to represent the region. There are 8 regions in Scotland. Each region elects 7 regional MSPs, so there are 56 regional MSPs. Added to the 73 constituency MSPs, there are 129 MSPs in the Scottish Parliament in total.

The formula is:

\[
\frac{\text{Number of regional votes}}{\text{Number of seats already won (constituency and regional) + 1}}
\]
Round 1 has been done for you. As you can see, after round 1 Labour have the highest score. Labour had put Anas Sarwar top of their Glasgow party list so he is elected to represent Glasgow as a regional MSP. You will now need to update the ‘Regional MSPs’ box to show a tally mark, as this will change their formula for Round 2. Complete the rest of the table, each time noting which party had had an MSP elected. Remember the number of regional votes never changes.

Number of regional votes

 equally divided by 6

Number of seats already won (constituency and regional) + 1
You should have found that Glasgow elected 4 Labour MSPs, 2 Conservative MSPs, and 1 Green MSP:

Anas Sarwar (Labour)  
Johann Lamont (Labour)  
James Kelly (Labour)  
Pauline McNeill (Labour)  
Adam Tomkins (Cons)  
Annie Wells (Cons)  
Patrick Harvie (Green)  

2016 results:
A helpful mnemonic when thinking about what makes voting systems good or bad is the following sentence: **PCLEC**: Purple Cats Like Eating Chocolate. These letters stand for the following:

- **Proportional**: Is a party’s support at the vote fairly represented in Parliament? i.e. does the % of votes gained roughly equal to the % of seats won?

- **Choice**: do voters have choice, both in terms of when they are voting, and who to speak to about their problems when their representatives have been decided?

- **Link**: Is there a clear and direct link between the constituents (you) and your representatives? Do you know who to speak to if you have an issue?

- **Ease**: Is the system easy for voters to understand and use?

- **Coalition**: is the system likely to result in a coalition government? Is this a good or bad thing?

Complete the following table on AMS. The first one is done for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Advantage / Disadvantage</th>
<th>Explanation / Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proportionality</td>
<td>Advantage</td>
<td>A mathematical formula is applied to the second regional vote to redress the imbalances FPTP created in the first vote. This achieves proportionality. For example in the 2016 election, Labour got 19% of the vote, and 19% of the seats, which is fair.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The Scottish Parliament and Government

At general elections we elect the members of the Scottish Parliament. It is then for the Parliament to decide who the Scottish Government will be. The 2016 election resulted in the following Parliament:

SNP: 63
Conservatives: 31
Labour: 24
Greens: 6
Liberal Democrats: 5

The SNP are just short of a majority, but they form a minority government and should be able to pass through laws quite easily with the support of just 2 additional MSPs. This may involve some compromises but should be fairly straightforward, especially with the Greens, who are fairly similar to the SNP on many issues.

1 MSP became the speaker of the chamber; Ken McIntosh. He does not vote unless there is a tie.

Tasks:

1. What is the difference between the Parliament and the Government?
2. ‘Scotland does not directly elect the government’. What is meant by this statement?
3. How many seats are needed to have a majority in the Scottish Parliament?
4. What gave the SNP the right to form a government in 2011?
5. What happens when no party has a majority after an election?
6. What might be the difficulty with this situation?
7. What evidence is there that the Conservatives are less popular in Scotland than in the UK as a whole?

New tasks
Roles within the Scottish Parliament

- **First Minister**
  The First Minister is the leader of the party that holds power in the Parliament, and so they are leader of the Scottish government. This is currently the SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon. He has the power to promote MSPs from within his party to become Ministers or Secretaries in ‘the Cabinet’ and run government departments, and he can replace any Ministers he is not happy with. He chairs weekly meetings of the Cabinet where he sets the agenda, and he is responsible for overseeing their work as well as for the development, introduction and implementation of government policy. The First Minister is also the face of the Scottish government and promotes and represents Scotland abroad.

- **The Cabinet**
  The Cabinet is a group of around 20 MSPs, chosen by the First Minister to run specific government departments. This is a promoted post and so these MSPs are also known as ‘Ministers’ or ‘Cabinet Secretaries’. For example, the Deputy First Minister is Nicola Sturgeon, the Cabinet Secretary for Education is Mike Russell, and the Cabinet Secretary for Health is Alex Neil. Most ‘bills’ (motions to become law) are introduced by the relevant Cabinet Secretary. The Cabinet meets every Tuesday at Bute House, Edinburgh, the official residence of the First Minister. The First Minister is also part of the Cabinet and he leads these meetings. MSPs who want to be promoted to the Cabinet will be expected to be loyal to their leader and party. The Cabinet is the innermost circle of decision makers in the Scottish government.

**The Opposition**

The largest party not in government are known as ‘the opposition’. This is currently Labour, and their leader in the Scottish Parliament is Johann Lamont. She has her own ‘shadow cabinet’; MSPs from her own party who ‘shadow’ the work of the Cabinet, make sure they are doing a good job and criticise and hold them to account if they are not. The shadow cabinet are ready to step in and be the government without problem after a new election. The Opposition question the Government in Parliament and usually make the case that they would be a better Government than the current one. The main chance for them to do this is at First Minister’s Questions (FMQs) which takes place on Thursdays between 12 and 12.30. FMQs is an opportunity for the Opposition leader and other MSPs to try to politically point score against the First Minister. This event gets a lot of media attention and performances during it can affect the public’s attitudes and voting intentions.

**Backbench MSPs**

These are unpromoted MSPs who are not in the Cabinet or shadow Cabinet, and not junior Ministers. Backbench MSPs can be from the party in government or any other party. Most MSPs are backbenchers. Although they don’t have the same power as the Cabinet to introduce legislation, they have a chance to make speeches, speak up on behalf of constituents, contribute to debates, question the First Minister or Cabinet Secretaries, and they have a vote on all bills. Votes usually take place at ‘Decision Time’ around 5pm on days Parliament is sitting. MSPs vote electronically by pressing a ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ button at their desks, so results are known within seconds. Backbench MSPs can introduce 2 ‘Members’ bills’ in each parliamentary session. For instance, a backbench MSP is the Green’s Ross Greer. He is the youngest MSP ever elected, at the age of 21.

**Presiding Officer**

The Presiding Officer, or Speaker, controls debates and voting procedures. During debates she selects who has a chance to speak and informs them of how much time they have. She ensures debates do not go over time and generally keeps order in the chamber. The current Presiding Officer is Labour MSP Ken McIntosh. Upon being elected to this post by her fellow MSPs, he effectively becomes a neutral MSP and does not take part in votes unless the vote is tied, in which case he would cast her vote not to change the law.
**Tasks**

1. Describe 2 powers of the First Minister.
2. Why do you think many MSPs are loyal to their party leader?
3. What influence does the Cabinet have in decision making in Scotland?
4. Describe the checks on the power of the Scottish Government.
5. Why is it important to have this check?
6. What powers do backbench MSPs have?
7. Why might people’s voting intentions occasionally change as a result of First Minister’s Questions?
8. Why is it important to have a Presiding Officer?
9. Your teacher will show you highlights of a recent FMQs. Note down one question the Opposition leader asks the First Minister, and briefly note his response.
10. An example of a Members’ bill is independent MSP Margo McDonald’s Assisted Suicide of Bill introduced in 2012 to make assisted suicide for terminally ill people legal. She is hoping to decriminalise certain actions taken by others to provide assistance to people incapable of taking their own life. What are your thoughts on this?

**Homework**

Take a note of the following website on the Scottish Cabinet:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-36321659

Note down in your jotter which Cabinet Secretary would be responsible for the following:

a) Introducing a new curriculum and exam structure to Scottish schools.
b) Moving Scotland’s separate police forces into one national force.
c) Monitoring the work social services do for vulnerable young people.
d) Building links between Scotland and countries in need of development and aid.
e) Introducing a bill to introduce a display ban on cigarettes in shops.
f) Introducing a new scheme to boost youth employment and apprenticeships.

New examples?
How the Scottish Parliament makes laws

Much of the work of MSPs do in the Scottish Parliament is done by committees.

Committees are groups of between 5 and 15 MSPs who meet together regularly, usually on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday morning, to consider current and ongoing bills and issues. Membership of committees has to be agreed on by the whole Parliament, and they will usually involve MSPs from different parties sitting on the same committee. Most MSPs are members of at least one committee, and some are members of more than one. Constituency MSP for Rutherglen James Kelly is currently a member of the Referendum bill Committee, whose role is to scrutinise the legislation that will enable a referendum on Scottish independence in 2014. The Committee will seek to find out opinions on the date of the referendum, the wording of the proposed question on the ballot paper, the campaign rules, and the proposed limits on funding for campaigning organisations and political parties. It plans to report its findings to Parliament in September 2013. Committee meetings are filmed and available to view on the Parliament’s website. Journalists and the public are welcome to attend them free of charge. There are currently 19 committees.

What do Committees do?

Committees are important because the MSPs are regularly discussing and passing laws on matters that affect a very wide range of things; health, medicine, education, science, childcare, housing, transport, engineering, business, legal matters. The background of MSPs is usually in politics. While they may be very experienced politicians and skilled at making persuasive speeches and winning elections, they are not doctors, scientists, engineers or lawyers, and so they need the
help of experts in these fields when considering bills on these matters. This is where committees come in.

Away from the more theatrical arena of the debating chamber which is mainly for the purpose of the viewing public, committees are where bills (draft laws) are discussed more maturely and in a less party political way. They scrutinise proposed bills and make amendments where they feel necessary to be sent back to the Government to consider. They need to know that bills will work in practise and seek out the advice of different groups of people to help them. They can take evidence by letter or email, invite witnesses to give evidence in person before the committee, and the committee members can even travel to external locations on fact-finding visits to gather information first hand from groups, organisations and businesses. For instance, when the Health Committee was recently considering the Government’s proposed bill in 2009 to have a minimum price per unit of alcohol, they requested evidence and advice from NHS professionals, The British Medical Association, the National Union of Students, whisky and brewing companies, supermarkets, the police, local councils and members of the public. The Committee used this consultation to write a report to the Government, noting any recommendations, which the Government usually take their findings seriously. In 2011 the bill was passed by Parliament and becomes an Act of the Scottish Parliament, or a law. Committees can also carry out enquiries into the work of the Government and call other MSPs and Cabinet Secretaries before them, especially if there is an area of public concern, such as if there was a scandal involving poor care at care homes for the elderly. In this way committees act as another check on the power of the Government as the Government are accountable to them.
Tasks:

1. What do we mean when we say committees are less ‘party political’ than events in the debating chamber?

2. Why are committees necessary? Take notes under the headings:
   - Scrutinising legislation
   - Gathering evidence from witnesses
   - Conducting enquiries

3. The Health committee took evidence from the following groups when considering the bill to set a minimum price per unit of alcohol:
   a) NHS professionals
   b) the National Union of Students
   c) Whisky and brewing companies
   d) Supermarkets
   e) The police, local councils
   f) Members of the public

   For each one, state what you think the committee would have wanted to find out from them.

4. In what way do committees act as another check on the power of the Scottish government?

5. Imagine you were an MSP sitting on the following committees:
   a) A Health committee set up to consider the proposed smoking ban in public places.
   b) An Equal Opportunities committee set up to consider the proposal to legalise same sex marriage.
   c) An Education committee set up to consider the introduction of the new Curriculum for Excellence in Scottish schools.
   d) A Justice Committee considering allowing the use of cameras in Scottish courts.
   e) A Welfare Reform committee, set up to investigate how Scotland will be impacted by cuts to welfare and benefits being implemented by the UK Government (this is a reserved power).

   For each one, list who you might wish to call as witnesses (general or specific), what you might ask them, and what you would be looking to find out from them.

Homework

Look at the following list of current committees:

http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/help/Committees.aspx

Choose one that interests you. Find out:

- Its members and the party they belong to
- What the committee’s purpose is (under ‘about the committee’)
- One thing the committee is currently looking into (under ‘current business’)

19
**Passage of a bill through Parliament**

First, a bill (draft law) is proposed, usually by a Cabinet Minister (Executive bill), but bills can also be proposed by MSPs who are not members of the Government (Members’ bills). Committees themselves can initiate bills (Committee bills), although they rarely do, and individual people, groups or companies can introduce ‘private’ or ‘personal’ bills, sometimes not seeking a general change in the law but for obtaining particular powers that are in addition to or in conflict with the general law. For instance, in 2007 Strathclyde Passenger Transport had a private bill passed by the Parliament that authorised the construction of a railway through a public space. Members of the public or pressure groups can also raise an issue with the Parliament by starting a petition or by adding their signature to a current one. For instance, the Smoking ban in public places, which became law in 2005, was first raised as a public petition.

When the bill is introduced, we are at stage 1.

Stage 1: The appropriate parliamentary committee(s) calls witnesses and takes evidence on the bill and produce a report on its general principles. A meeting of the Parliament then considers the report and debates whether to agree to the bill’s general principles. Parliament will debate and ultimately vote on whether the bill should proceed. If it agrees, the bill progresses to stage 2.

Stage 2: The bill is considered in more detail, and the precise wording of it is scrutinised line by line by a committee to ensure there is no unclear or careless wording that would cause legal difficulty if passed into law. The committee can recommend the relevant Cabinet Minister makes amendments at this stage. If so, the bill is re-drafted and moves on to Stage 3 with Parliament’s approval.

Stage 3: Parliament debates the re-drafted bill and final adjustments can be made to it. Parliament votes on the bill. If a majority of MSPs vote to pass it, the reigning Monarch signs it. This is known as Royal Assent. At this point, the bill becomes an Act of the Scottish Parliament, and becomes law. The entire process between a bill being proposed and it becoming law is usually over a year.

**ICT task**

http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/610.aspx

Choose one previous bill that interests you and find out the following:

- Who introduced the bill to the Parliament and when.
- What type of bill is it (Executive, Members’, Committee or Private)
- What the bill was trying to achieve
- Which was the lead committee considering the bill
- If and when the bill received royal assent and became law.

Homework: Take a note of the link below: look for one of the ‘latest petitions’ and take a note of who started it, what it is calling on the Parliament to do, and how many signatures it currently has, and one comment at the bottom you agree / disagree with or find interesting.

www.scottish.parliament.uk/gettinginvolved/petitions/
Work of an MSP

As representatives of their constituents, MSPs must be contactable. There are several ways to contact your MSP to discuss an issue with them or ask them to raise an issue in the Parliament on your behalf.

Look at the following page from the Parliament’s website showing the contact details of your constituency MSP, James Kelly:

1. Note down 5 different ways a constituent can contact James Kelly.
2. How often does James Kelly hold a surgery?
3. Why do these surgeries take place within the local constituency and not in his office within the Parliament in Edinburgh?
Look at the following diary of an MSP. Draw a storyboard explaining and drawing some of the work an MSP does each day in a typical working week.
An MSP’s Surgery

SETTING

Cambuslang Town Hall - It is 11am on a cold Saturday morning, and the local MSP is holding his weekly surgery for his constituents

CHARACTERS

Janice Hughes- Constituency MSP (very politely spoken and well mannered)

Mr. McGlinchy – Quietly spoken man, who is dominated by his wife!!

Mrs. McGlinchy – Very talkative and does not really listen to anyone.

Mr. Robertson – having problems with ‘neds’. Very roughly spoken and opinionated.

Miss Burke – A mother of three children, she is determined not to let her local library close.

First in are the McGlinchey’s

JH: Good morning, please take a seat.

Mrs Mc: Ta, we’ve been waiting ages to see you, and it’s baltic oot there.

JH: Yes the constituency has many people in it, so the surgery is always busy. What can I do for you?

Mrs Mc: I’m Mrs McGlinchy, and this is my husband (points to Mr McGlinchy).

We’re having a few problems with the CSA (Child Support Agency).

JH: So what seems to be the problem?

Mrs Mc: Well it started a few months ago; basically the CSA are saying that Bob here has a daughter, and they’re threatening to take £30 a week from his wages every week to pay for maintenance. It’s no’ true.

Mr Mc: Honestly it’s no’ true!! I havnae touched another women since I married Isabel here.

Mrs Mc: I don’t know how many times Bob’s been on the phone to them and written them letters, but they just won’t listen. I’m fed up of trying to get this sorted oot. We’re decent people who are being hassled for no reason. It’s no right. We can’t afford to pay £30 a week for no reason.

JH: I’m very sorry to hear that, Mrs McGlinchy. When did all this happen?

Mr Mc: I received a letter saying that I owed £3,000 in maintenance for a daughter I don’t have. They also included a National Insurance number in the letter that isn’t mine and an address that I haven’t lived at for 20 years. The CSA said they couldnae really dae anything. I got a letter last week saying that their records were correct, and they would have to
start taking money from my wages to cover the maintenance.

JH: There certainly appears to be some sort of misunderstanding here. It’s not the first time that one of my constituents has come to me with a complaint about the CSA and mistaken identity. I’ll try my best to get it sorted out for you. Firstly, what I will do is write to the........(gets cut off)

Mrs Mc: Huh, that’s what we just did lassie!! Are you no listenin??

JH: With all respect, if you would let me finish. I will write to the Chief Executive of the CSA about your case and get some answers. I should get a reply from him quite quickly, and although as an MSP I have no power of social security, I will write to the Minister for Social Security at Westminster informing...

Mrs Mc: Fat lot of good that will.....

Mr Mc: Gonnae shut up Isabel and let the wummin speak!!

(Mrs Mc looks at her husband shocked!!)

JH: As I was saying, in the Scottish Parliament we have no power of matters to do with social security, but I will write to the minister at Westminster for you. Don’t worry we will sort it oot!!

Mr Mc: Thanks Miss Hughes

(They leave, with Mrs Mc still looking aghast at her husband for his outburst!!)

Mr Robertson is next in to the surgery

JH: Good Morning, Mr Robertson how can I help you today?

Mr R: You can help by wiping that smug smile aff yir face. I voted for you because when you came roon the doors looking for votes, you telt me that you wid take care of aw the neds making my life hell.

JH: We have helped decrease crime in this area by 25% sir in little under a year.

Mr R: Whit goods tae me? I cannæe sleep at night, cannæe take the dug for a walk without them harrasin’ me. My life is hell.

JH: It saddens me to hear that you are having such problems. If you write down the exact details of your problem then I will ensure that the local police station are made aware of it. I will ask them to make more regular patrols of the area so we can cut out this problem.

Mr R: No doubt Ill see you next month Miss Hughes – You bloomin’ politicians don’t have a clue at times!
Miss Burke is next into the surgery.

JH: Hi Miss Burke

MB: Hi there. I wanted to make sure you are aware of the closure of the local library.

JH: Yes I am. It is sad but I did investigate it and the local council say they can no longer afford to fund it.

MB: I think that is outrageous. How are our children supposed to get their books now? We cannot afford to buy them a book every week.

JH: I understand where you are coming from. If I had my way then I would have as many libraries as possible. Are there many of you that feel the same way?

MB: Yes, there are many of us on the Parents committee at school who feel the same way, not to mention countless other people I have heard complaining about it.

JH: Well why don’t you all get together and sign a petition to present to the Council. If they do not take notice then submit it to the Scottish Parliament and they will review the closure. Just make sure you get as many signatures as possible.

MB: That is a great idea. I didn’t think of that. I will whip up as much support as possible. I will get a petition that will ensure that the Council cannot ignore her. Thanks very much Miss Hughes!!
Tasks

Copy and complete the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituent</th>
<th>The issue they are raising with their MSP</th>
<th>What the MSP says she will do about the issue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The McGlincheys</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Robertson</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Burke</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Write your own short script similar to those above, about a constituent who visits their MSP’s surgery to raise a matter with them, and the MSPs efforts to help.
Influence of the media on Scottish politics

The vast majority of information the public consumes about politics and current affairs comes from the media. We will consider the following types of media:

- Newspapers (print media)
- Television (Broadcast media)
- Internet (Electronic media)

In recent years advancements in electronic media have meant the Internet, and especially social media such as Facebook and Twitter, have overtaken newspapers as people’s main news source.

Newspapers

In Scotland the press is free, meaning their content is not censored by the Government. Newspapers can try to influence the Government by printing stories that are critical of them, or by supporting high profile campaigns. For instance, in 2012, the Daily Record launched a campaign to publicise the cost to the taxpayers of methadone, a drug used for people trying to tackle addiction to heroin. The paper claimed the SNP government were not keeping enough data on whether the replacement drug was working or not. As a result of pressure from the newspaper, Parliament debated the issue and the Government were forced into ordering a probe into the effectiveness of methadone treatment.

http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/daily-records-methadone-campaign-tops-1426584

Newspapers are free to be biased and openly support or criticise certain individuals or political parties, and they often do. This can affect the way the public think and even vote. For instance, the most widely read paper in Scotland is the Scottish Sun. 330,000 Scots buy it every day, and it will probably be read by about 3 times that number. In the run up to the 2011 election, they supported Alex Salmond and the SNP, and urged their readers to vote for them. The SNP won the election and formed the first majority government in Scottish history. Clearly there are other factors which affected people’s votes, but having the backing of the Sun could not have done the SNP any harm.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-13128712
However, some people think newspapers simply respond to and reflect the public mood, rather than create it. Certainly, we should not exaggerate the influence of newspapers, as in the 2007 election, both the Scottish Sun and the Daily Record urged voters to vote Labour, not SNP, and yet the SNP won more seats than Labour, so people were evidently being influenced by factors other than the newspapers.

**Task**
Your teacher will give you a newspaper. Find a current political story which you find to be biased in some way, either for or against certain individuals or political parties. Take a note of this story. Write down how a different newspaper might report the story differently.

**TV**
Broadcast media is strictly controlled by law so TV news has to be politically neutral and cannot therefore influence the Government in the same way as newspapers can. However, they are an important news source for many people.

- **Reporting Scotland** is BBC Scotland’s national TV news programme. Its main news bulletin is between 6.30pm and 7pm on BBC 1 Monday to Friday.

- BBC Scotland also air **Newsnight Scotland**, which covers topical and political issues on BBC 2 Scotland between 11pm and 11.20pm.

- The **STV News at Six** covers news in Central Scotland, airing between 6pm and 6.30pm Monday to Friday on STV (Channel 3).

- STV also air **Scotland Tonight** between 10.30pm and 11pm Monday to Thursday.

Although TV media has to be balanced in its reporting, it can still influence goings on in Scotland. By choosing to investigate or report certain stories, they may force the Government to act in response. They also hold the Parliament and Government to account as politicians regularly appear in TV interviews accounting for their actions.

Homework: Find one news story or interview concerning politics in Scotland from one of the above 3 TV news sources. In what way might this coverage affect the actions of Parliament or Government?
Internet

Today many more people are getting their news from the internet – blogs, online editions of newspapers, and through social media such as Facebook and Twitter. All major political parties have their own websites which they regularly update, and many politicians including your constituency MSP James Kelly and First Minister Alex Salmond, have Twitter accounts which they use to regularly communicate with people. Twitter is also a very useful way for political campaign groups to discuss, debate share ideas, graphics and video clips. For example, in the run up the referendum on Scottish independence on 18th September 2014, both the ‘Yes Scotland’ (pro-independence) and ‘Better Together’ (anti-independence) have been campaigning heavily on Twitter.

As we have already seen, people can also use the internet to sign petitions on the Scottish Parliament website. Look back at your homework from page 18 as an example of how the internet might influence the Parliament or Government in this way.

Homework:

Find an interesting ‘tweet’ by an MSP, political campaign group trying to influence Scottish politics, or anybody commenting on Scottish politics. Do you think this tweet will influence decision making in Scotland in some way? Do you agree or disagree with the tweet?

Having completed the unit, re-read it and now complete the task you started on page 4 – ways to participate in Scottish democracy.