Scottish Parliament
Annual Report
2007 to 2008
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Foreword
by the Presiding Officer, Alex Fergusson MSP

As Presiding Officer and chair of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, I am delighted to provide this foreword for the Parliament’s Annual Report. The aim of this report is to provide feedback on how the Scottish Parliament has undertaken its role within the period 9 May 2007 to 8 May 2008. Inside, you will find information covering all areas of our day-to-day parliamentary life.

As I write this foreword at the end of the first year of our third parliamentary session, I am conscious of the hard work that has been undertaken by both members and staff, and of the support received from the Scottish public, in getting this new session up and running. As Presiding Officer, I would like to express my thanks.

At the event held to mark the start of our third parliamentary session, Her Majesty The Queen commented on how the Scottish Parliament had grown, and continues to grow, in confidence. I know this to be true and it is this very fact that has increasingly drawn international attention. Since May last year, the Parliament has received over 100 delegations, from the President of Croatia to parliamentarians from all around the world, all with an interest in our experience of devolution, and in our expertise in engaging with our people in an innovative manner.

This year we have made good progress in enhancing our reputation as a modern, participative democracy. We have tested initiatives such as a text messaging service, podcasts, and our own YouTube page. We have welcomed our 1.5 millionth visitor. We have held our third Festival of Politics – the first regular event of its kind in the world. We have also continued to host major participative events, such as the Business in the Parliament and the Our Environment, Our Future conferences, and successfully taken forward our educational programmes, reaching nearly 12,000 young people and teachers this year.

In addition, we have continued to support the Parliament’s Chamber business, where debates are held and decisions are made on a wide range of topics. Equally importantly, there has also been the ongoing work of our committees as they consult with the people across all of Scotland. In the last year, they have already conducted inquiries into important issues such as the effective use of police resources, affordable housing, ferry services, and child poverty.

I would encourage every member of the Scottish public to engage with this, your Parliament.
MSPs are elected to the Scottish Parliament.

Election results 2007


Allocation of seats through the voting system

Under the Additional Member System used for Scottish Parliament elections, voters have two votes each. One vote is to elect a constituency Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) and the other is cast for a list member of a political party or independent candidate within the voter’s region.

The Chamber

No party achieved an overall majority in the 2007 election. The Scottish National Party won most seats (47), followed by the Scottish Labour Party (46), the Scottish Conservative & Unionist Party (17), the Scottish Liberal Democrats (16) and the Scottish Green Party (2). One independent MSP was also elected. Representation from the smaller parties and independents fell significantly, from a total of 17 MSPs elected in 2003 to three in 2007.

The Parliament approved the nomination of Alex Salmond, the leader of the Scottish National Party, as First Minister on 16 May 2007. The Scottish National Party currently forms a minority government.

Chamber seating plan

- SNP
- Labour
- Conservatives
- Liberal Democrats
- Greens
- Independent

Constituency MSPs

129

73
Scottish Parliament election results 1999 – 2007

Constituency and regional MSPs by party, 2007

Percentage of seats won by party, 2007

Bashir Ahmad MSP takes the oath in the Debating Chamber, May 2007.

Regional MSPs

56
Your representatives

There are 129 MSPs elected to the Scottish Parliament. Of these, 73 are elected for a particular local area (known as a single member constituency) and 56 are elected to regional lists.

**Scottish National Party Constituency MSPs**
- Aberdeen North: Brian Adam
- Angus: Andrew Welsh
- Argyll and Bute: Jim Mather
- Banff and Buchan: Stewart Stevenson
- Central Fife: Tricia Marwick
- Cunninghame North: Kenneth Gibson
- Dundee East: Shona Robison
- Dundee West: Joe FitzPatrick
- Edinburgh East and Musselburgh: Kenny MacAskill
- Falkirk West: Michael Matheson
- Glasgow Govan: Nicola Sturgeon
- Gordon: Alex Salmond
- Inverness East, Nairn and Lochaber: Fergus Ewing
- Kilmarnock and Loudoun: Willie Coffey
- Livingston: Angela Constance
- Moray: Richard Lochhead
- North Tayside: John Swinney
- Ochil: Keith Brown
- Perth: Roseanna Cunningham
- Stirling: Bruce Crawford
- Western Isles: Alasdair Allan

**Scottish National Party Regional List MSPs**
- Central Scotland: Linda Fabiani
- Central Scotland: Jamie Hepburn
- Central Scotland: Christina McKelvie
- Central Scotland: Alex Neil
- Central Scotland: John Wilson
- Glasgow: Bashir Ahmad
- Glasgow: Bob Doris
- Glasgow: Bill Kidd
- Glasgow: Sandra White
- Highlands and Islands: Rob Gibson
- Highlands and Islands: Dave Thompson

**Scottish Labour Party Constituency MSPs**
- Aberdeen Central: Lewis Macdonald
- Airdrie and Shotts: Karen Whitefield
- Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley: Cathy Jamieson
- Clydebank and Milngavie: Des McNulty
- Clydesdale: Karen Gillon
- Coatbridge and Chryston: Elaine Smith
- Cumbernauld and Kilsyth: Cathie Craigie
- Cunninghame South: Irene Oldfather
- Dumbarton: Jackie Baillie
- Dumfries: Elaine Murray
- Dunfermline East: Helen Eadie
- East Kilbride: Andy Kerr
- East Lothian: Iain Gray
- Eastwood: Ken Macintosh
- Edinburgh Central: Sarah Boyack
- Edinburgh North and Leith: Malcolm Chisholm
- Falkirk East: Cathy Peattie
Glasgow Anniesland: Bill Butler
Glasgow Baillieston: Margaret Curran
Glasgow Cathcart: Charlie Gordon
Glasgow Kelvin: Pauline McNeill
Glasgow Maryhill: Patricia Ferguson
Glasgow Pollok: Johann Lamont
Glasgow Rutherglen: James Kelly
Glasgow Shettleston: Frank McAveety
Glasgow Springburn: Paul Martin
Greenock and Inverclyde: Duncan McNeil
Hamilton North and Bellshill: Michael McMahon
Hamilton South: Tom McCabe
Kirkcaldy: Marilyn Livingstone
Linlithgow: Mary Mulligan
Midlothian: Rhona Brankin
Motherwell and Wishaw: Jack McConnell
Paisley North: Wendy Alexander
Paisley South: Hugh Henry
Strathkelvin and Bearsden: David Whitton
West Renfrewshire: Trish Godman

Scottish Labour Party Regional List MSPs
Highlands and Islands: Rhoda Grant
Highlands and Islands: Peter Peacock
Highlands and Islands: David Stewart
Lothians: George Foulkes
Mid Scotland and Fife: Claire Baker
Mid Scotland and Fife: John Park
Mid Scotland and Fife: Richard Simpson
North East Scotland: Richard Baker
North East Scotland: Marilyn Glen

Scottish Conservative & Unionist Party Regional List MSPs
Central Scotland: Margaret Mitchell
Glasgow: Bill Aitken
Highlands and Islands: Jamie McGrigor
Highlands and Islands: Mary Scanlon
Lothians: Gavin Brown
Mid Scotland and Fife: Ted Brocklebank
Mid Scotland and Fife: Murdo Fraser
Mid Scotland and Fife: Elizabeth Smith
North East Scotland: Alex Johnstone
North East Scotland: Nanette Milne
South of Scotland: Derek Brownlee
West of Scotland: Jackson Carlaw
West of Scotland: Annabel Goldie

Scottish Liberal Democrats Constituency MSPs
Aberdeen South: Nicol Stephen
Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross: Jamie Stone
Dunfermline West: Jim Tolson
Edinburgh South: Mike Pringle
Edinburgh West: Margaret Smith
Orkney: Liam McArthur
Ross, Skye and Inverness West: John Farquhar Munro
Shetland: Tavish Scott
Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale: Jeremy Purvis
West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine: Mike Rumbles

Scottish Liberal Democrats Regional List MSPs
Central Scotland: Hugh O'Donnell
Glasgow: Robert Brown
North East Scotland: Alison McInnes
South of Scotland: Jim Hume
West of Scotland: Ross Finnie

Scottish Green Party Regional List MSPs
Glasgow: Patrick Harvie
Lothians: Robin Harper

Independent Regional List MSP
Lothians: Margo MacDonald

* Alex Fergusson remains a Constituency MSP but on election as Presiding Officer took voluntary suspension from the Scottish Conservative & Unionist Party.
Parliament at work

The Chamber

The Chamber is at the centre of parliamentary business, hosting important and topical debates on a wide range of political issues, policy proposals and legislation. Weekly Question Time sessions, where members hold the First Minister and other Scottish Ministers to account on high-profile current issues, tend to generate particularly lively debate.

190 debates held in the Chamber
Post-election events

Following a general election, the Parliament undertakes a number of procedures to ensure that the new parliamentary session is established in accordance with the rules set out in its standing orders. Every person who is elected as an MSP is required to take an oath of allegiance to Her Majesty The Queen, or to make a solemn affirmation. Accordingly, all members did so on 9 May 2007, at the first meeting of the Parliament following the general election. Out of the 129 MSPs, 42 were newly elected to the Parliament, including:

- five members of the Scottish Conservative & Unionist Party (one of whom had been a member in the first session and most of the second)
- nine members of the Scottish Labour Party (three of whom had been members in the first session)
- five members of the Scottish Liberal Democrats
- 23 members of the Scottish National Party (four of whom had been members in the first session).

The first meeting of the third session of the Parliament also saw the election of a new Presiding Officer and two Deputy Presiding Officers. Alex Fergusson was elected to the position of Presiding Officer and Alasdair Morgan and Trish Godman were elected to the posts of Deputy Presiding Officer.

At the second meeting of the Parliament following the general election, the process for the selection for the Parliament’s nominee for the post of First Minister took place. The candidates for the appointment of First Minister were:

- Annabel Goldie (Leader of the Scottish Conservative & Unionist Party)
- Jack McConnell (Leader of the Scottish Labour Party)
- Alex Salmond (Leader of the Scottish National Party)
- Nicol Stephen (Leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats).

After two rounds of voting, Mr Salmond was endorsed as the Parliament’s nomination, and his appointment was subsequently approved by Her Majesty The Queen.

The third meeting of the session saw the Parliament vote to approve new Scottish Ministers and junior Scottish Ministers nominated by the First Minister. Current ministerial office holders are:

- Nicola Sturgeon (Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing)
- Fiona Hyslop (Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning)
- Richard Lochhead (Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment)
- Kenny MacAskill (Cabinet Secretary for Justice)
- John Swinney (Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth)
- Bruce Crawford (Minister for Parliamentary Business)
- Fergus Ewing (Minister for Community Safety)
In addition, MSPs elected four members to the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (SPCB).

Under the terms of the Scotland Act 1998, the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body provides the buildings, staff and services needed by the Parliament to carry out its work. These responsibilities include the employment of all parliamentary staff, the maintenance of the Holyrood building, and managing contracts for goods and services.

The SPCB is chaired by the Presiding Officer. Four other members are elected by the Parliament from among MSPs. The new corporate body held its first meeting on 30 May 2007.

The SPCB has agreed portfolio arrangements whereby individual MSPs take a lead interest in specific issues. These members are currently as follows:

- **Alex Johnstone MSP** – Directorate of Technology & Facilities Management including building maintenance, IT and local office support.
- **Tom McCabe MSP** – Resources & Governance Directorate covering the Procurement, Allowances and Finance Offices.
- **Tricia Marwick MSP** – Access & Information Directorate covering visitor services, events, public information, education and outreach, the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe) and the editorial content of the website and intranet, as well as broadcasting and the broader aspects of media relations.
- **Mike Pringle MSP** – Corporate issues (including governance, equalities and Personnel issues) and Office Holders/Commissioners.
Another key element of the Parliament’s decision-making processes, the Parliamentary Bureau, was also re-established with new members in May 2007.

The Parliamentary Bureau proposes the agenda for each meeting of the Parliament in what are called business motions. It also proposes the establishment of committees. Chaired by the Presiding Officer, the other members of the Bureau are representatives nominated by each party or group with five or more members. The current membership is:

- Alex Fergusson MSP (Presiding Officer)
- Robert Brown MSP (Scottish Liberal Democrats)
- Bruce Crawford MSP (Scottish National Party)
- David McLetchie MSP (Scottish Conservative & Unionist Party)
- Michael McMahon MSP (Scottish Labour Party).


On 7 June, the Parliament also agreed a motion of the Parliamentary Bureau for the establishment of a range of parliamentary committees. It subsequently agreed, on 27 June, to the establishment of an ad hoc committee to inquire into and report with recommendations for a committee bill on a replacement for the Scottish Parliamentary Pension Scheme rules.

**Debates**

In the past year, the Scottish National Party Government led debates on a wide range of social, political and economic issues, including:

- EU reform treaty
- Economic strategy
- The spending review and the Budget Bill process
- Energy
Annual sea fisheries negotiations
• Drugs misuse
• National food policy.

Seventeen half-days were allocated to debating non-Government business in the Chamber in this parliamentary year. Once this time has been divided among the non-Government parties by the Bureau, it is for those parties to propose the topics and motions for debate. These have included the following issues:

• Sustainable public transport systems (Scottish Labour Party)
• Skills and vocational education (Scottish Labour Party)
• Free personal care (Scottish Conservative & Unionist Party)
• Prisons policy (Scottish Conservative & Unionist Party)
• Civil liberties (Scottish Liberal Democrats)
• Fuel poverty (Scottish Liberal Democrats)
• Carbon offsetting (Scottish Green Party).

Committee debates
Committees can request debating time in the Chamber to bring issues raised in reports they have published to the attention of a wider audience. The Justice Committee, for example, led a debate on its report on its Inquiry into the Effective Use of Police Resources on 16 April 2008. (Please refer to pages 14-27 in this report for fuller details of the work of committees.)

Ministerial statements
Ministerial statements are used to inform the Parliament of urgent matters or to make announcements on policy. These statements are normally between 10 and 15 minutes long and are followed by time for questions from members. Statements are made by the First Minister and his ministerial colleagues. In the last year, the First Minister made nine statements on the following topics:

• Government Priorities
• International Judicial Co-operation
• Council of Economic Advisers
• Scottish Government’s Programme
• Scottish Elections Review
• 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow
• Effective Government
• British-Irish Council
• Scotland Week.

Fifty ministerial statements have been made on a wide variety of topics, including:

• Local Government finance settlement
• NHS waiting times
• Future of the Post Office
• Climate change
• Accident and emergency reviews
• Snaring.

Members’ business
Members’ business is held at the end of each meeting of the Parliament. This allows individual members from any party or group, excluding ministers, to highlight issues that would not necessarily be given prominence in main proceedings. Members’ business is often used to raise a particular constituency or regional matter, or to highlight a commemorative or awareness-raising event. Examples of such debates held during the past year include:

• Organ donation
• Choices for people coming to the end of terminal illness
• Council of Europe Convention on action against trafficking in human beings
• Standing united with Glasgow’s Pakistani community
• Scottish wheelchair users and their human rights
• Proposed closure of rural schools
• Maximising migrants’ opportunities
• Beauly Denny public inquiry
• Air ambulance service in Orkney.

Time for Reflection
Business in the Chamber begins each week with Time for Reflection, giving people of different faiths and beliefs the chance to share their thoughts with the Parliament. Representatives from a wide range of religious groups and faiths and of no faith have taken part in Time for Reflection this year, including:

• Marian Docherty, Head Teacher, St David’s High School, Dalkeith – 7 November 2007
• Imam Mustaqeem Shah, UK Islamic Mission – 14 November 2007
• The Right Reverend Sheilagh Kesting, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland – 30 January 2008
• Suzanne Dance, the Edinburgh Theravada Buddhist Group – 6 February 2008
• His Excellency, Archbishop Faustino Sainz Muñoz, Apostolic Nuncio – 12 March 2008
• Tony Benn – 19 March 2008.

Parliamentary questions
Parliamentary questions can be oral or written. MSPs have the opportunity, on a weekly basis, to ask oral questions directly to the First Minister and his ministerial colleagues. Written questions may be lodged at any time and receive a written answer.
Six topical questions, put forward by party leaders and backbench MSPs, are selected by the Presiding Officer and are asked during First Minister’s Question Time each Thursday. MSPs can also enter their names for a ballot to ask general and themed questions to Scottish Ministers. Thirty MSPs, randomly selected in the ballot, submit their questions in advance each week. At General and Themed Question Time the relevant minister provides an answer to the published question and normally also to a related supplementary question about which no notice is given.

Any question not reached by the end of the time allocated for oral questions receives a written answer. These are published daily, along with answers to written questions, on the Parliament’s website and printed in a weekly Written Answers Report.

Parliamentary questions answered from 9 May 2007 to 8 May 2008:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Time</th>
<th>Answered in Chamber</th>
<th>Received written answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Minister’s Question Time</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General and Themed Question Time</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>307</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12,815 questions were also lodged for written answer in the same period and 762 for First Minister’s Question Time. First Minister’s questions not selected by the Presiding Officer are not published and do not receive an answer.

Motions

MSPs use parliamentary motions for a number of purposes: to highlight an issue or event, to generate support for a cause, or to stimulate debate on a subject. Motions lodged by MSPs appear in the following day’s Business Bulletin along with the names of other members who support their terms.

Motions for debate in the Chamber are lodged on the basis of the business programme agreed by the Parliament. Amendments to these motions can also be lodged and it is for the Presiding Officer to select which amendments will be debated. However, the vast majority of motions are not intended for debate.

2,150 motions and amendments were lodged this year on a range of topics. Those lodged but not debated dealt with a wide variety of issues, including:

- Post Office closures
- Scotch whisky industry
- Sporting achievement
- Hospital car parking charges
- European Shark Week.
**Legislation**

Draft laws (known as bills while they are being considered by the Parliament) typically take several months to be dealt with by the Parliament. Three bills introduced since 9 May 2007 have so far completed their parliamentary passage and become Acts of the Scottish Parliament. A further five are at various stages of the legislative process.

Three are currently being examined at stage 1, which involves the subject committee for the bill hearing evidence from interested organisations and individuals and preparing a comprehensive report on the bill for debate by the whole Chamber. One bill is going through its amending stages, which involve detailed scrutiny by both the relevant committee and the full Chamber, while another has been passed by the Parliament but is awaiting royal assent.

One of the bills introduced is a member’s bill, which had to be consulted on and obtain a certain level of support from other members before it could be introduced. The remaining seven bills were introduced by the Scottish Government, many following substantial public consultation.

The areas covered by Government bills include the abolition of tolls on the Forth and Tay road bridges, preparatory steps for the hosting of the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games and an update of the legal framework for responding to public health threats. The member’s bill would create a Scottish register of tartans.

**Bills introduced [8]**

The eight bills introduced to the Parliament between 9 May 2007 and 8 May 2008 are listed below in order of the date of introduction:

- *Abolition of Bridge Tolls (Scotland) Bill* [Government] 3 September 2007
- *Graduate Endowment Abolition (Scotland) Bill* [Government] 22 October 2007
- *Scottish Register of Tartans Bill* [Member’s] 25 March 2008

**Acts [3]**

Four weeks after a bill is passed, it receives royal assent and becomes an Act of the Scottish Parliament. Three bills received royal assent during the year, all of them Government bills:

- *Abolition of Bridge Tolls (Scotland) Act 2008* [Government]
- *Graduate Endowment Abolition (Scotland) Act 2008* [Government]
- *Budget (Scotland) Act 2008* [Government].

8

bills were introduced between 9 May 2007 and 8 May 2008.
Audit Committee

Remit
To consider and report on:
(a) any accounts laid before the Parliament;
(b) any report laid before or made to the Parliament by the Auditor General for Scotland; and
(c) any other document laid before the Parliament concerning financial control, accounting and auditing in relation to public expenditure.

Report
The Audit Committee scrutinises public expenditure. It holds to account those who are charged with spending taxpayers’ money and helps to ensure that public funds are spent wisely. The major focus of the committee’s work is examining reports produced by the Auditor General for Scotland. The committee has considered more than 20 reports from the Auditor General this year.

The committee undertook a wide-ranging inquiry into the 2006–07 audit of NHS Western Isles. The committee held an evidence session in Stornoway which enabled members to engage more directly with those affected by the inquiry. The committee heard from witnesses including the Chair and Acting Chief Executive of NHS Western Isles and the Chief Executive of NHS Scotland. This inquiry demonstrates the committee’s capacity to investigate the specific factors which lead individual public bodies to experience financial difficulties.

The committee has also taken oral evidence from the accountable officers for various public bodies who have responsibility for ensuring that the financial resources of those bodies are used appropriately. The committee held evidence sessions on Scotland’s health and NHS performance in 2006–07, on police forces’ management of calls made by the public, and on the treatment of young offenders by the justice system.

The committee took evidence on the Western Isles Health Board Inquiry at the offices of the Western Isles Council/Comhairle nan Eilean Siar in Stornoway; Audit Scotland report; delegates from the Federal Parliament of Ethiopia met with Murdo Fraser MSP, deputy convener of the committee, in December 2007.
Economy, Energy and Tourism Committee

Remit
To consider and report on the Scottish economy, enterprise, energy, tourism and all other matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth apart from those covered by the remits of the Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change and the Local Government and Communities Committees.

Report
The first year of this new session has already been a busy one for the committee. Its members have launched an inquiry into the viability of meeting the target of increasing tourism revenue by 50% by 2015 and the efforts that will be required to do this. This inquiry will be followed by one focusing on the future of Scotland’s energy supplies. The committee will deliver these inquiries not only through formal committee meetings in Edinburgh and Aberdeen but also by extensive use of informal meetings, fact-finding visits, videoconferences and other means of gauging the views of interested parties.

Outwith the committee’s inquiries, members have been engaging with key stakeholders such as the business community, trade unions and academic experts. In January 2008, the committee jointly hosted a seminar with the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) looking at the productivity challenge and this was followed by the fourth Business in the Parliament Conference on 21–22 February, which the committee hosts along with the Scottish Government. The latter event brought together over 250 business people, ministers and parliamentarians to discuss how to grow Scotland’s economy.

Finally, the committee is also taking an ongoing interest in the development of the new enterprise network and the changes to public policy on economic development, skills etc., through a series of hearings.
Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee

Remit
To consider and report on:
(a) further and higher education, lifelong learning, schools, pre-school care, skills and other matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning; and
(b) matters relating to culture and the arts falling within the responsibility of the Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Culture.

Report
The Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee was established on 7 June 2007. Since then, it has scrutinised two Scottish Government bills and collected evidence and information on key aspects of its remit.

The Graduate Endowment Abolition (Scotland) Bill, which provided for the abolition of the graduate endowment for students who graduated on or after 1 April 2007, was introduced on 22 October 2007. The bill was passed by the Parliament on 28 February 2008.

The Creative Scotland Bill was introduced on 12 March 2008. It seeks to establish a new national cultural development body.

The committee decided not to undertake any inquiries during its first year. Instead, it held focused evidence-taking sessions to support its scrutiny of the Scottish Government’s actions and plans on subjects including creative industries, curriculum for excellence and school estates.

In November 2007, as part of its investigations into higher and further education funding and governance, the committee visited Cumbernauld and Coatbridge Colleges.

The committee has considered 12 items of subordinate legislation and one legislative consent memorandum. Four petitions have also been referred by the Public Petitions Committee. Finally, the committee reported to the Finance Committee in January 2008 on areas of the Scottish Budget 2008–09.
Equal Opportunities Committee

Remit
To consider and report on matters relating to equal opportunities and upon the observance of equal opportunities within the Parliament.

Report
The committee has, as a first priority, staged evidence sessions intended to hold Scottish Government ministers to account on the progress made in implementing the recommendations contained in the previous Equal Opportunities Committee’s disability inquiry report. This was in an effort to ensure that this important report remained a ‘live’ document.

The committee also decided to address a greater variety of equal opportunity issues. To this end, round-table discussions, with a wide range of participants, were held on age, on unpaid carers and to mark the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All (EYEOA). Key equal opportunities challenges, including those relating to employment issues, were also discussed, providing excellent follow-up material. The convener also attended the official EYEOA closing ceremony in Portugal.

Panel evidence sessions were held on female offenders in the criminal justice system, on the 2011 Census, on the Commissioner for Public Appointments in Scotland’s proposed equal opportunities strategy, and on a report outlining the nature and extent of discriminatory attitudes in Scotland.

The committee was also pleased to welcome the Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP, Minister for Equalities and Women, to the Scottish Parliament to give an informal briefing on the Discrimination Law Review.
European and External Relations Committee

Remit
To consider and report on:
(a) proposals for European Communities legislation;
(b) the implementation of European Communities legislation;
(c) any European Communities or European Union (EU) issue;
(d) the development and implementation of the Scottish Administration’s links with countries and territories outside Scotland, the European Communities (and their institutions) and other international organisations; and
(e) co-ordination of the international activities of the Scottish Administration.

Report
The committee has conducted two major inquiries over the past year. On the EU side of its remit, the committee has published a report on its inquiry into the transposition of EU directives. As part of this inquiry, committee reporters visited Germany, Belgium and Spain to look at the roles played by regional governments and regional parliaments in those countries in considering EU issues. With regard to external relations, the committee is continuing with its inquiry on international development issues, which includes a conference for S5 and S6 school pupils invited to consider some of the principal issues arising from the inquiry.

The committee also continues to work closely with several external partners and has welcomed a number of visiting delegations to the Parliament. These have included both the Portuguese Ambassador to the UK and the Slovenian Ambassador to the UK, whose visits provided opportunities for discussing their respective EU Presidencies.

The committee has also introduced a Brussels Bulletin which provides regular updates from the European Officer on the Parliament’s EU priorities and is available on the Scottish Parliament’s website.
Finance Committee

Remit
To consider and report on any proposal for public spending from the Scottish budget.

Report
The committee has had a busy year scrutinising proposed public spending. As well as considering the 2008–09 budget and the financial implications of five bills, the committee has launched a major inquiry into the funding of capital investment projects and a review of the budget process.

The committee’s main role is leading the Parliament’s response to the Scottish Government’s spending proposals through the annual budget process. Although the process this year was particularly time-pressured, the committee protected time for parliamentary scrutiny by agreeing a revised timetable with the Scottish Government.

As well as examining the overall budget, the committee decided to focus its scrutiny on the impact of the budget on local government and on sustainability. In order to gauge local views on the budget, the committee held an external meeting in Dundee in December 2007.

The committee’s report on the budget was published in January 2008. Alongside a series of recommendations on the provision of budgetary information, the committee put forward two alternative spending proposals, recommending that the Scottish Government examine ways to increase police numbers and accelerate proposed cuts in business rates. The proposals were accepted by the Scottish Government, and amendments to the Budget Bill were subsequently agreed by the Parliament.

Members of the committee before the external meeting at the Discovery Point, Dundee, December 2007; an evidence-taking session at Holyrood in 2008.
Health and Sport Committee

Remit
To consider and report on:
(a) health policy and the NHS in Scotland and other matters falling within
the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing;
and
(b) matters relating to sport falling within the responsibility of the
Minister for Communities and Sport.

Report
The new Health and Sport Committee set itself an ambitious programme,
agreeing to undertake inquiries into health inequalities, the balance of
health care, mental health services and Pathways into Sport. While formal
evidence-taking commenced on two inquiries, preliminary scoping work
was taken forward on the others.

Focusing specifically on cardio-vascular disease, the committee heard from
prominent academics as part of its health inequalities inquiry. Its ongoing
work will concentrate on implementation of the forthcoming
recommendations of the ministerial task force on health inequalities.

In the first phase of its Pathways into Sport inquiry, the committee
discussed personal pathways with Olympic curler Rhona Martin, former
world champion distance runner Liz McColgan, and Inverness Caledonian
Thistle FC player-manager Craig Brewster.

In addition, the committee completed stage 1 scrutiny of the Public Health
etc (Scotland) Bill and adopted an innovative approach to its consideration
of the budget. As well as considering the overall budgets for health and
sport, it held a unique session on the drugs and alcohol budget involving
the cabinet secretaries for health, local government and justice, along with
members of the Local Government and Communities Committee and the
Justice Committee.

Committee meeting, April 2008; convener Christine Grahame MSP congratulates pupils from Aboyne
Academy at the World Schools Orienteering Championships, Holyrood, April 2008; committee members
in evidence session, April 2008.
Justice Committee

Remit
To consider and report on:
(a) the administration of criminal and civil justice, community safety, and other matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Justice; and
(b) the functions of the Lord Advocate, other than as head of the systems of criminal prosecution and investigation of deaths in Scotland.

Report
This year the committee had the opportunity to initiate its own work as a consequence of its limited legislative commitments. Its most significant initiative was an inquiry into the effective use of police resources. This focused primarily on the management and deployment of police officers. Amongst other things, the committee concluded there should be an independent review of the role and responsibilities of the police in Scotland.

In the course of the inquiry, members expressed concern at the absence of a commonly agreed approach to community policing in Scotland, and agreed to undertake a more detailed inquiry into this area of police activity. The committee has launched this inquiry and has so far conducted fact-finding visits to Dundee and the Scottish Borders.

This year the committee concentrated its scrutiny of the Scottish Government’s draft budget on policing and prisons. The committee recommended that the Scottish Government revise its budget to make funding available to recruit sufficient police officers in order to deliver its commitment to increase the number of serving officers by 1,000. This recommendation was accepted by the Scottish Government.

In terms of legislative work, the committee considered the Judiciary and Courts (Scotland) Bill, which sought to unify the judiciary under the Lord President and to strengthen judicial independence.
Local Government and Communities Committee

Remit
To consider and report on:
(a) the financing and delivery of local government and local services and planning; and
(b) housing, regeneration, anti-poverty measures and other matters (apart from sport) falling within the responsibility of the Minister for Communities and Sport.

Report
In the year 9 May 2007 to 8 May 2008, the committee has undertaken the statutory scrutiny of several items of subordinate legislation and of the Scottish Government’s budget proposals for 2008–09, and was the lead committee for the scrutiny of the Glasgow Commonwealth Games Bill, which completed its stage 3 consideration by the Parliament on 30 April.

When developing its work programme for the session, the committee discussed potential areas of work at an away day on 4–5 September 2007. The committee has since taken evidence and is committed to investigating the issues of fuel poverty, child poverty and affordable housing. The committee has also taken evidence by videoconferencing from Ron Gould in Ottawa on his report for the Electoral Commission on the Scottish elections 2007 and will shortly publish a report on its findings. A round-table meeting on child poverty was held in Glasgow with agencies working with children, with a view to undertaking an inquiry later in the year. Much of the committee’s time in 2008 was given to its inquiry into the planning processes surrounding the Menie Estate application from the Trump organisation. The committee’s two-volume report was published on 14 March and debated by the full Parliament on 24 April.
Public Petitions Committee

Remit
To consider public petitions addressed to the Parliament in accordance with these Rules [the standing orders] and, in particular, to:
(a) decide in a case of dispute whether a petition is admissible;
(b) decide what action should be taken upon an admissible public petition; and
(c) keep under review the operation of the petitions system.

Report
The public petitions system provides members of the public with direct access to the political, scrutiny and legislative process and the opportunity to achieve real change through the development of policy. The existence of the Public Petitions Committee, dedicated to the consideration of petitions, allows petitioners to raise issues of concern directly with the Parliament.

During the period of this report, 103 new petitions were lodged (in addition, 26 were lodged during dissolution), and the committee heard oral evidence in respect of 38 new petitions and considered 231 ongoing petitions. It welcomed the continued effectiveness and positive impact of many petitions and the work of petitioners in raising important issues which it took forward with the Scottish Government and other public bodies. For example, petitions highlighted the need for medical guidance on certain conditions to be made available or updated, and for planning policies and guidance to be revised. In response to one petition, the committee commenced an inquiry into the availability on the NHS of cancer treatment drugs.

The committee indicated it will take forward an inquiry in the parliamentary year 2008–09 on increasing public awareness of, and participation in, the petition process.

The e-petitions system continued to be influential, with around half of all petitions being lodged in this form. There is continuing worldwide interest in the e-petitions system and in the work of the committee in embracing the principles of engagement and participation and sharing of power.
Rural Affairs and Environment Committee

Remit
To consider and report on agriculture, fisheries and rural development and other matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment.

Report
The Rural Affairs and Environment Committee’s first major inquiry has been on flooding and flood management. As well as taking evidence from a wide range of organisations, members visited Elgin and parts of Glasgow previously affected by flooding, and saw flood defences and sustainable flood management schemes in Perthshire. The committee’s report will help influence the Scottish Government’s forthcoming bill on flooding, which the committee expects to scrutinise later in 2008.

A second inquiry on rural housing is under way, examining affordability, land supply and infrastructure, among other issues. The remit was informed by a seminar held in Aviemore in December, and a programme of oral evidence-taking and visits began in April.

Other work conducted during the committee’s first year includes scrutiny of the Crown Estate, sea fisheries and the pig industry. The committee has considered a large number of statutory instruments, and has published reports on several that raised issues of concern.

In all its work across a varied remit, the committee aims to combine its fortnightly formal meetings with visits throughout Scotland and an innovative approach to engaging with stakeholders.
Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee

Remit
To consider and report on:
(a) the practice and procedures of the Parliament in relation to its business;
(b) whether a member’s conduct is in accordance with these Rules [the standing orders] and any Code of Conduct for members, matters relating to members’ interests, and any other matters relating to the conduct of members in carrying out their parliamentary duties;
(c) the adoption, amendment and application of any Code of Conduct for members; and
(d) matters relating to public appointments in Scotland.

Report
The Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee was established in September 2007 following a merger of the former Procedures Committee and the Standards and Public Appointments Committee.

The committee’s standards work has included consideration of two reports and two direction requests from the Scottish Parliamentary Standards Commissioner. The committee has published its views on a draft memorandum of understanding between the Standards Commissioner and Procurator Fiscal Service and on including the Standards Commissioner within freedom of information legislation. The committee has also approved the establishment of 55 Cross-Party Groups. The committee is undertaking a review of section 8 (Volume 2) of the Code of Conduct for MSPs.

With regard to procedures, the committee completed an inquiry by recommending a change to standing orders to extend the period for Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body elections from 10 to 20 days following an election. The committee is undertaking other inquiries concerning such matters as the mainstreaming of equal opportunities in committee work, the procedures for scrutiny of the Scottish budget and the use of points of order.

The committee has reported its views on the Commissioner for Public Appointments in Scotland’s consultation document Diversity Delivers. The committee’s report was debated in Parliament in March 2008 as part of the Parliament’s consultation response.

Committee meeting, May 2008; The Code of Conduct
Subordinate Legislation Committee

Rermit
To consider and report on:
(a) any –
(ii) subordinate legislation laid before the Parliament;
(ii) Scottish statutory instrument not laid before the Parliament but classified as general according to its subject matter, and, in particular, to determine whether the attention of the Parliament should be drawn to any of the matters mentioned in Rule 10.3.1;
(b) proposed powers to make subordinate legislation in particular bills or other proposed legislation;
(c) general questions relating to powers to make subordinate legislation;
(d) whether any proposed delegated powers in particular bills or other legislation should be expressed as a power to make subordinate legislation.

Report
The committee has continued to examine the rules and regulations that are laid before Parliament by the Scottish Government. Many of these have had a significant impact on the daily lives of Scots: for example, the committee scrutinised Scottish statutory instruments relating to the abolition of bridge tolls, the phased abolition of NHS prescription charges, and the placing of restrictions on the movement of livestock as a result of foot-and-mouth disease.

The committee has also scrutinised powers to make secondary legislation contained in bills, for example the Glasgow Commonwealth Games Bill and the bill to modernise the organisation of the judiciary in Scotland. The committee plays a vital role in ensuring that a proper level of parliamentary accountability and control is maintained in relation to legislative proposals.

The committee published a report on its inquiry into the regulatory framework in Scotland in March 2008. It believes its recommendations will streamline and improve the scrutiny of secondary legislation, and simplify a process that it considers unwieldy and complex at present. The committee has indicated a willingness to work with the Scottish Government to deliver a modern and effective system and has recommended that the Scottish Government should introduce a bill to give effect to the committee’s proposals.
Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee

Remit
To consider and report on matters relating to transport, infrastructure and climate change falling within the remit of the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth.

Report
The committee examined the Abolition of Bridge Tolls (Scotland) Bill, which aimed to remove tolls on the Forth and Tay road bridges. This was the first bill of the new session and was endorsed by the majority of the committee. However, the committee made strong recommendations on the need to address the anticipated negative environmental impacts and increase in traffic congestion resulting from this change.

The committee began a major inquiry into ferry services in Scotland. It plans to hold seven committee meetings to gather evidence, including meetings in Oban and Shetland. The committee received over 320 responses to an online survey of ferry users and plans to report on the inquiry before summer 2008.

Other work included scrutiny of the Scottish Government’s budget for 2008–09 where views from a wide range of interested parties, including key rail industry figures, were heard.

The committee considered two petitions this year, one on rail links to Caithness and another on the decision to build a replacement Forth crossing.

Other business included scrutiny of the water industry during evidence sessions with Scottish Water and the Water Industry Commission for Scotland.

The committee prepared for the forthcoming Scottish Climate Change Bill by visiting London and Brussels, travelling only by sustainable transport, to discuss climate change with Members of the UK Parliament and Members of the European Parliament.

Committee members return from a fact-finding visit to speak with ferry users on Arran, March 2008; formal committee meeting to hear views of ferry users held in Oban, March 2008; committee members visit the ferry terminal in Oban to see facilities available to ferry users, March 2008.
Influence at home and abroad

During the period of this report, the Scottish Parliament welcomed 117 parliamentary delegation visits from the UK and around the world, with the United States, Australia, Germany and Canada sending the most delegations. Visiting parliamentarians took part in programmes of meetings that saw them exchange knowledge and experiences with MSPs, enabling mutual learning and thus feeding into further improvements in policies and parliamentary procedures. The visits also enhanced the profile and reputation of the Scottish Parliament internationally by showing the workings of devolution and the manner in which the Holyrood building is used to meet the Parliament’s aim of being open and accountable to the Scottish people.

High-profile international visitors this year included the President of Croatia, Stjepan Mesic, who visited in October 2007 to promote stronger trade links between Scotland and Croatia and to confirm the establishment of a new Croatian Honorary Consulate for Scotland. The Vice-President of the European Commission, Jacques Barrot, visited the Parliament in May 2008 and met parliamentarians to discuss transport regulations in relation to ferry contracts.

From the wider world the Parliament also hosted political delegations from, among many other countries, Gabon, Cuba, the Dominican Republic and the People’s Republic of China. The 19th Commonwealth Parliamentary Seminar from Monday 29 October to Friday 2 November 2007 saw the Parliament play host to 34 parliamentarians from Commonwealth legislatures ranging from Canada to Tasmania. The Seminar offered a range of meetings and keynote speakers, all considering ways in which the processes underpinning parliamentary democracy might be strengthened.
The Scottish Parliament continued to prioritise developing relationships with the other devolved legislatures in the UK. In February 2008 the Rt Hon Dr Ian Paisley MP MLA and Martin McGuinness MP MLA, the First Minister and Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland, visited the Scottish Parliament as part of a wider visit to Scotland. They met with the Presiding Officer Alex Fergusson MSP, and the Chief Executive, Paul Grice. The Parliament also welcomed visits during the year from the Presiding Officers of the Northern Ireland and Welsh Assemblies, the First Minister of Wales, and several UK Cabinet ministers.

As well as hosting the many visiting delegations, the Parliament also sent several outward delegations to other legislatures, seminars and conferences.

In September 2007, Jamie Stone MSP and Margaret Mitchell MSP attended the 53rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) in New Delhi, the theme of which was Delivering Democracy and Sustainable Development. During the seminar, Mr Stone MSP was lead speaker on the workshop on financial scrutiny and also represented the British Islands and Mediterranean Region during the CPA Executive Committee meetings. Ms Mitchell MSP also attended the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians meeting.

In February 2008, a delegation from CPA Scotland Branch visited Malawi. The delegation visited health and education projects funded by the Scottish Government as well as meeting with members of the National Assembly of Malawi’s International Relations Committee and Women’s Caucus. The visit was part of the Parliament’s ongoing commitment to its relationship with Malawi, and specifically to working with the National Assembly of Malawi in helping strengthen democratic structures.

The Presiding Officer led a Scottish Parliament cross-party delegation to North America for Scotland Week 2008, marking the 10th anniversary of the US Senate’s Tartan Day Resolution, which honours the many shared connections between Scotland and America. The delegation visited the Ontario Legislative Assembly in Toronto and the Canadian House of Commons in Ottawa in order to build links with Canadian parliamentarians and explore opportunities for future co-operation. While in the US, the Presiding Officer jointly hosted, with the First Minister, a reception on Capitol Hill for Congress and Senate supporters of the Friends of Scotland Caucus. The Scottish Parliament and Government delegations also took part jointly in the 10th Annual Tartan Day Parade in New York as the culmination of a successful week promoting Scotland in North America.
The Scottish Parliament actively seeks to engage with the people of Scotland and provides a range of opportunities for participating in and learning about the Parliament’s work and activities. The following pages highlight activities designed to bring the public and the Parliament together in the last year.

From May 2007 to May 2008, the Scottish Parliament welcomed more than 330,000 visitors, around 75% of whom were people currently living in Scotland. More than 1.5 million visitors have now passed through Holyrood’s doors since it opened in 2004. People come to the building for a wide range of reasons – as official guests, to meet MSPs, to observe business in the Chamber and committees, to attend events, for meetings such as those of the Cross-Party Groups, for educational sessions or guided tours, or simply to have a look around and learn something about the Parliament, its MSPs and how it works. Services for general visitors include an exhibition and information leaflets as well as the public café, crèche and shop.

Of the total number of visitors, more than 75,000 people attended exhibitions at Holyrood or participated in over 300 events, conferences and public debates held throughout the year, including a number of major public events. Exhibitions and events have provided a valuable opportunity for organisations and individuals from across Scotland and elsewhere to engage directly with MSPs on specific issues relevant to them, to the Parliament and to Scotland.

A tour of the Parliament takes in the floor of the Debating Chamber.
Events to mark the new parliamentary session took place on Saturday 30 June, with thousands of people lining the Royal Mile and joining guests in the landscaped gardens to watch and participate in the proceedings.

The day included an Address to Parliament by Her Majesty The Queen, and a riding down the Royal Mile featuring over 1,200 people from every constituency and region in Scotland – participants included ‘local heroes’ nominated by MSPs in recognition of their important contributions to the lives of other people living in Scotland, at local or national level. Bands and performers added to the occasion and included the Scottish Youth Theatre, the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, the Red Hot Chilli Pipers, Te Pooka and Lung Ha’s Theatre Company. The day finished with a free open-air concert showcasing traditional, contemporary, multi-cultural and international music and dance headlined by Scottish rock band, Idlewild. Coverage of the event was broadcast in Scotland and to America, Israel, Belgium, Holland and Africa, placing Scottish politics and culture firmly on the international stage.
The award-winning Festival of Politics, held on 24–26 August, set out to emulate the success of previous Festivals by inviting the public into the Parliament to engage in a range of politically-themed events. It featured a number of high-profile participants who brought discussion, debate and drama to the Parliament’s Debating Chamber.

At the Festival, the Rt Hon Charles Kennedy MP – former UK leader of the Liberal Democrats – talked about the issues that motivated him politically. Broadcaster and cook Clarissa Dickson Wright and chef and restaurateur Tony Singh discussed hot topics concerning the food we eat and how it is produced. The Rowan Tree Theatre Company gave an acclaimed performance of Judy Steel’s play *The Journey of Jeannie Deans*. The importance of the Commonwealth and Olympic games in regenerating the cities that host them was debated in an event chaired by Nick Barley, Director of the Lighthouse, Scotland’s Centre for Architecture and Design. Acclaimed journalist Kate Adie shared her experiences of reporting conflicts from around the world and renowned photojournalists Harry Benson and Kieran Dodds discussed how technological advances are changing the face of photographic journalism.

Relevant, thought-provoking exhibitions have provided further opportunities for the Parliament to engage with new audiences. In August, for a second year, the Parliament hosted the acclaimed World Press Photo exhibition, the premier competition for photojournalists. Containing images of people, places and issues around the world, it attracted over 42,000 visitors during its three-week run.
Working in partnership with the National Archives of Scotland, the House of Commons and House of Lords, the Parliament developed the Making the Act of Union 1707 exhibition to mark the 300th anniversary of the Union. Displayed first in the House of Lords and then the Scottish Parliament, this engaging exhibition featured the original Acts and Articles of Union, along with other important documents. While exhibitions of this kind provided an opportunity for reflecting on the past, an exhibition featuring new work made by Highland-based artists and craftspeople as part of Highland Year of Culture 2007 in December provided an opportunity to think about the future. Meanwhile in the Main Hall, the permanent exhibition about the Scottish Parliament was refreshed to include more images and audio-visual elements. Together with an increased range of materials for people with disabilities, this has made information about the Parliament more accessible to all.

A large number of schools continue to visit Holyrood to take part in the visits programme (more than 6,300 teachers and young people came this year) or to enjoy a guided tour. In addition, a range of seminars and workshops have provided opportunities for teachers and young people to develop their understanding of Scotland’s past and engage with the issues shaping its present and future.

A major partnership programme themed to the 300th anniversary of the Act of Union was run in conjunction with a number of national public bodies, and workshops were held with Historic Scotland, the National Archives of Scotland and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. Participants enjoyed a session at Edinburgh Castle on the pre-1707 Parliament, before following an architectural trail down the Royal Mile to visit Holyrood where they learnt about the modern Scottish Parliament.
An educational highlight in February 2008 was the Our Environment, Our Future event. Over 120 young people from across Scotland attended the day, which explored a number of topics of environmental concern including climate change, the future of Scotland’s energy supplies, and promoting renewable energy. These are all matters that are to be considered by the Parliament during the current session, and a report from the event will be submitted to four parliamentary committees. The day included workshops with a number of external agencies and individuals – the WWF, the John Muir Trust, the Ecology Centre, Ruth Dawkins (on her work in the Arctic) and the Scottish Wildlife Trust. Schools presented their own work, for example as pioneer eco-schools. A discussion platform was hosted on the Parliament website for schools to continue the debate, including schools that did not attend the event but wished to engage with the Parliament on these topics.

MSPs in Schools entered its third year as the Parliament’s flagship outreach education programme. This was developed with the Hansard Society Scotland, and the Parliament has continued to work with them and with Learning and Teaching Scotland. The programme reached more than 130 schools this year, with presentations sometimes being given to more than one class at a time. MSPs visit the schools for a second session to discuss topics chosen by the young people. These are presented in a wide range of creative ways, including drama as well as debates.

In March 2008, 120 young people from every constituency in Scotland attended the Scottish Youth Parliament at Holyrood. The event comprised an awards ceremony honouring the achievements of the young people, a formal opening and panel session in the Debating Chamber chaired by the Presiding Officer, and a series of training sessions and subject committees covering a range of topics including education, justice, social justice, transport, the environment and rural affairs, as well as a poverty budgeting exercise.
The Parliament has continued to work to extend its reach to those who are unable to attend its debates or take part directly in events. News and information is regularly updated on the Parliament’s website. All Chamber and committee room business and major events are filmed and pictures are sent to broadcasters for use in news and current affairs programmes. The website www.holyrood.tv has developed this year with the addition of several new features, including updated short biographical films of MSPs. The Holyrood Highlights web programme at www.holyrood.tv provides viewers with a snapshot of what is happening in the Parliament and covers general business, Members’ business, the Public Petitions Committee and events that take place at Holyrood. The monthly archive of all Chamber and events business is now available to external viewers for downloading. To further extend audience reach, a Scottish Parliament page was launched on YouTube, and this will also appear on their UK Politics page. An SMS text messaging service was successfully trialled in the autumn, providing members of the public with a quick and convenient way of accessing information about the Parliament and MSPs. The weekly electronic bulletin providing information on forthcoming parliamentary business grew in popularity over the year and now has more than 1,500 subscribers.

The Scottish Parliament continues to seek new ways of engaging with its public. This year education and outreach services were reviewed and new programmes are being developed, which will be introduced next year. This will see an increase in the number of visits to the Parliament and the number of outreach visits on offer, as well as the introduction of free school tours. A range of new partnerships will also be developed to support engagement with key sectors that are currently under-represented in the Parliament’s work.
Gaelic

Bòrd na Gàidhlig, the national development agency for Gaelic, included the SPCB in the first six public authorities asked to draw up a Gaelic Language Plan under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005, which seeks to establish equal respect for Gaelic with English.

A draft Plan was issued for public consultation in November 2007. The Presiding Officer launched it live on air on BBC Radio nan Gaidheal during the BT National Gaelic Schools debate event, held in Parliament. Thirty-four written responses were received – an encouraging response rate that compared well with the feedback received by other public bodies.

The SPCB approved the final Plan in February 2008 and it was submitted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig for their approval ahead of schedule. It is expected to finalise the Plan with Bòrd na Gàidhlig and launch it in autumn 2008.

This is a five-year development plan covering the years 2008 to 2013. It aims to build on the wide range of services that the SPCB provides for Gaelic speakers. Key developments include:

- introduction of a bi-lingual corporate identity
- providing additional signage
- producing a wider range of publications and information materials
- providing Gaelic awareness training for front-of-house staff
- purchase of equipment to facilitate translation at public meetings.

The SPCB received funding from Bòrd na Gàidhlig to implement some of the key recommendations from January to March 2008. This included awareness training for over 70 staff.
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