

What's Happening at Holyrood? Anderson Strathern Parliamentary Bulletin Tuesday 8 May 2007

This weekly Parliamentary Bulletin, detailing business at the Scottish Parliament, is composed of 3 sections: [Bills in progress](#), [Chamber Business](#) and [Committee Business](#)

The text highlighted in red signifies the developments that have taken place since the last Parliamentary Bulletin on 2 April 2007. The full text of each Bill as introduced can be read by clicking on the title of the Bill below.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The second session of the Scottish Parliament ended on 3 April 2007 upon dissolution of Parliament. The Scottish General Election took place on 3 May 2007. The results in terms of seats in Parliament are as follows:

- Scottish National Party: 47 seats
- Scottish Labour Party: 46 seats
- Scottish Conservative Party: 17 seats
- Scottish Liberal Democrats: 16 seats
- Scottish Green Party: 2 seats
- Margo MacDonald (Independent): 1 seat

The turnout on the constituency vote was 51.7% and on the regional vote 52.4%, compared with a turnout on both votes in 2003 of around 49.4%.

There continues to be some controversy about the extremely high number of rejected ballot papers, estimated to be in the region of 100,000 across Scotland. The arrangements for the elections, including the format of ballot papers, which has been described as confusing, is the responsibility of the Scotland Office and is a reserved matter. The Scotland Office has announced a review of the arrangements for the elections. Others have called for an independent judicial inquiry. Suggestions have also been made that there may be legal challenges to the result, although none have yet been commenced.

The SNP, as the largest party in the Parliament, is currently negotiating with other parties to ascertain whether it will be possible to enter into arrangements for co-operation in order to form a Government, either by way of a coalition agreement or looser co-operation arrangements. The Lib Dems have refused to enter formal talks until the SNP drops its manifesto commitment to a referendum on independence. The Greens are currently negotiating the terms of their co-operation.

It is possible that failure to secure an overall majority by co-operation will result in the SNP governing by minority, as there is no requirement in the Scotland Act to formalise coalition arrangements.

However, the Scotland Act 1998 and the Scottish Parliament's standing orders require that the Parliament votes to approve a First Minister within 28 days of the election.

The first meeting of the new Parliament must take place within 7 days of the General Election, not including weekends and public holidays. The deadline is therefore 15 May 2007. The meeting is due to take place on Wednesday 9 May 2007, with MSPs to be sworn in.

The Presiding Officer must be elected at the first meeting of a new Parliament. Although originally proposed that the election of a Presiding Officer and Deputy Presiding Officers take place on 9 May 2007, the newly sworn in MSPs will now be asked to approve a motion on 9 May that the first meeting of the Parliament be adjourned until Monday 14 May for the election of the Presiding Officer and the two Deputy Presiding Officers, effectively a continuation of the meeting on 9 May.

Until the new Presiding Officer is elected, the current Presiding Officer George Reid will preside, although he is no longer an MSP.

BILLS IN PROGRESS

Key: (Ex) = Executive Bill; (M) = Member's Bill; (C) = Committee Bill; (P) = Private Bill.

[Airdrie-Bathgate Railway and Linked Improvements Bill \(P\)](#)

A Bill to authorise the construction of new railways between Drumgelloch and Bathgate, including new stations at Caldercruix and Armadale, the use of land for relocated stations at Drumgelloch and Bathgate, and related improvements to the existing railways between Airdrie and Drumgelloch, and Bathgate and Edinburgh. The Bill also regularises the operation of certain legislation relating to the existing railway which is affected by the works.

Current status:

The Bill was introduced into the Scottish Parliament on 30 May 2006 by Network Rail Infrastructure Limited as the Promoter. The Bill was passed by the Parliament at the Final Stage debate on 28 March 2007. A transcript of the debate is available in the [Official Report](#). **The Bill received Royal Assent on 8 May 2007, becoming the [Airdrie-Bathgate Railway and Linked Improvements Act 2007](#).**

[Aquaculture and Fisheries \(Scotland\) Bill \(Ex\)](#)

A Bill to make provision in relation to fish farms and shellfish farms; in relation to the parasite *Gyrodactylus salaris*; in relation to salmon and freshwater fisheries and sea fisheries; in relation to payments connected with aquaculture and fisheries; and for connected purposes.

Current Status:

The Bill was introduced into Parliament on 29 June 2006 by Ross Finnie, Minister for Environment and Rural Development. The Bill was passed by the Parliament at Stage 3 on 1 March 2007. A transcript of the debate can be viewed [here](#). **The Bill received Royal Assent on 5 April 2007, becoming the [Aquaculture and Fisheries \(Scotland\) Act 2007](#).**

[Christmas Day and New Year's Day Trading \(Scotland\) Bill \(M\)](#)

A Bill to prohibit the opening of large shops on Christmas Day and New Year's Day for the purposes of retail trading.

Current Status

The Bill was introduced into Parliament on 20 March 2006 by Karen Whitefield MSP. The Bill was passed by the Parliament at Stage 3 on 7 March 2007. An Executive amendment to the Bill at Stage 3 to allow opening on New Year's Day, provided the stores and the unions could agree on a code of conduct to prevent staff being pressurised into working, was accepted by the Parliament. A transcript of the Stage 3 debate is available in the [Official Report](#). **The Bill received Royal Assent on 13 April 2007, becoming the Christmas Day and New Year's Day Trading (Scotland) Act 2007.**

Custodial Sentences and Weapons (Scotland) Bill (Ex)

A Bill of the Scottish Parliament to restate and amend the law relating to the confinement and release of prisoners; to make provision relating to the control of weapons; and for connected purposes.

Current Status

The Bill was introduced into Parliament on 2 October 2006 by the Justice Minister, Cathy Jamieson. The Bill was passed by the Parliament at Stage 3 on 15 March 2007. A transcript of the debate is available in the [Official Report](#). **The Bill received Royal Assent on 19 April 2007, becoming the Custodial Sentences and Weapons (Scotland) Act 2007.**

Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Bill (P)

A Bill to authorise the construction of new railways to link Edinburgh Airport to the national rail network and to make provision concerning planning agreements and developer contributions relating to the railway.

Current Status:

The Bill was introduced into the Parliament on 16 March 2006, with **tie** Ltd as Promoter. The Bill was passed by the Parliament at the Final Stage debate on 14 March 2007. There were no amendments to the Bill at Final Stage. A transcript of the debate is available in the [Official Report](#). **The Bill received Royal Assent on 19 April 2007, becoming the Edinburgh Airport Rail Link Act 2007.**

Prostitution (Public Places) (Scotland) Bill (Ex)

A Bill to amend the law in relation to prostitution in public places; and for connected purposes.

Current status:

The Bill was introduced into the Scottish Parliament on 15 September 2006. The Bill was passed by the Parliament at Stage 3 on 28 February 2007. A transcript of the debate is available in the [Official Report](#). **The Bill received Royal Assent on 5 April 2007, becoming the Prostitution (Public Places) (Scotland) Act 2007.**

Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Bill (Ex)

A Bill to bar certain individuals from working with children or certain adults; to require the Scottish Ministers to keep lists of those individuals; to make further provision in relation to those lists; to establish a scheme under which information about individuals working or seeking to work with children or certain adults is collated and disclosed; to make provision about the sharing of information relevant to the protection of children; to amend Part 5 of the Police Act 1997; to amend the meaning of school care accommodation service in the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001; and for connected purposes.

Current Status

The Bill was introduced into Parliament on 25 September 2006 by Robert Brown MSP, Deputy Minister for Education and Young People. The Bill was passed by the Parliament at Stage 3 on 8 March 2007. The transcript of the debate is available [here](#). The Bill received Royal Assent on 18 April 2007, becoming the [Protection of Vulnerable Groups \(Scotland\) Act 2007](#).

[Rights of Relatives to Damages \(Mesothelioma\) \(Scotland\) Bill \(Ex\)](#)

A Bill to amend the law concerning the right of certain relatives of a deceased person to claim damages in respect of the death of the deceased from mesothelioma.

Current Status

The Bill was introduced into Parliament on 27 September 2006 by Hugh Henry MSP, Deputy Justice Minister. The Bill was passed, unanimously, by the Parliament at Stage 3 on 21 March 2007. A transcript of the debate is available in the [Official Report](#). The Bill received Royal Assent on 26 April 2007, becoming the [Rights of Relatives to Damages \(Mesothelioma\) \(Scotland\) Act 2007](#).

[Schools \(Health Promotion and Nutrition\) \(Scotland\) Bill \(Ex\)](#)

A Bill to make provision about the promotion of health in certain schools and certain school hostels; and to amend the law in relation to the provision of food and drink for certain pupils.

Current status:

The Bill was introduced by Peter Peacock MSP on 8 September 2006. The Bill was passed by the Parliament on 14 March 2007 at Stage 3. A transcript of the debate is available in the [Official Report](#). The Bill received Royal Assent on 19 April 2007, becoming the [Schools \(Health Promotion and Nutrition\) \(Scotland\) Act 2007](#).

CHAMBER BUSINESS

Wednesday 9 May 2007

9.30 am Members' Oaths and Affirmations

2:30 pm Election of the Presiding Officer – motion to be put that the first meeting of the new Parliament be adjourned until 3pm on Monday 14 May 2007 and the election of the Presiding Officer and Deputy Presiding Officers be postponed until that time.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

There will be no Committee business in the week beginning 8 May 2007.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have any queries in respect of the information in this Parliamentary Bulletin or require advice on the parliamentary process or legislative drafting, please contact: [Fiona Killen](#) on 0131 625 7296 or [Alison Presly](#) on 0131 625 8156.