The Health Board Elections (Scotland) Bill [SP Bill 63] was introduced in the Parliament on 31 March 2006. Stage 1 evidence taking began on 24 October 2006 with the Health Committee as the lead committee. The Stage 1 (general principles) debate took place on 31 January 2007 but the Bill fell on a vote of 55 for and 64 against with no abstentions.

Purpose and objectives of the Bill

The objective of the Bill was to make provision for local public elections to National Health Service Boards in Scotland, with the intention of democratising Scotland’s Health Boards. The Bill aimed to allow the public to influence health service delivery in their local communities, and to ensure greater openness, transparency, and local accountability between board members and the communities they serve.

Provisions of the Bill

The Bill made provision to reserve a majority of publicly elected Health Board places (50% plus no more than two) over appointed members. The chair would still be appointed by Scottish Ministers, but elected members would have majority control of the Board. Elected members would receive no remuneration.

The proposed method of election was via a postal ballot using the ‘first past the post’ electoral system in the context of a multi-member constituency for a fixed four year term, with all the costs being met by NHS boards.

Parliamentary consideration

With the exception of one Member, who opposed the Bill, the majority of the Health Committee was either in favour or neutral on the general principles of the Bill. The Committee had three main concerns which, in their view, required further consideration:

- the electoral system should provide more equitable geographical representation
- the proportion of directly elected members on the board
- the addition of remuneration for directly elected board members
The Bill fell at the Stage 1 debate on a vote of 55 for and 64 against. There were no abstentions.