THE 5TH COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PARLIAMENT VISIT REPORT

Report by Emily Shaw MSYP for Shetland/SYP Trustee

Background Note

The purpose of this paper is to ask Members of the Branch Executive Committee to note the contents of the report submitted by Emily Shaw MSYP for Shetland. The report provides an account of her participation at the 5th Commonwealth Youth Parliament which took place in London from 4-7 December 2012.

A copy of the report is attached at Annex A.

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The 5th Commonwealth Youth Parliament 4-7th December 2012
Report by Emily Shaw MSYP for Shetland/ SYP Trustee

1. The Commonwealth Youth Parliament was an extremely valuable experience which saw like-minded young people from across the Commonwealth come together to discuss issues relevant to their generation. Personally, I enjoyed my time in London and found I benefited from it immensely.

2. The organisation of the event was fantastic and I felt supported in making my journey down to London. I stayed in the same hotel as the other Commonwealth Youth Parliamentarians (CYPs). As I was the only delegate for Scotland, meeting new people immediately helped me to feel confident in speaking during the sessions. After the first evening, which consisted of a buffet and introductions, it was clear that all the CYPs were as excited as I for the days to come.

3. The first day of the event saw the CYPs divided into their parties. These parties were fictional and had extremely different manifestos. Before the event, we were asked to prepare ourselves for several debates and to choose a fictional party. There was also the option to be an independent Member of Parliament. The party I chose formed the Government and as a result we had to select CYPs to take ministerial positions. It was challenging working with so many people who had so many different experiences of Parliamentary processes. Everyone had different ideas as to how to elect such a minister and due to time constraints, it was important we made quick decisions. After selecting our cabinet within our party, the CYPs attended several sessions as a whole group. It was fantastic to hear from individuals such as John Bercow MP and Ann Begg MP. Each day followed a similar format, consisting of interactive sessions within our parties, such as a 10 Minute Rule Bill and a Prime Ministers Question Time, as well as learning experiences where we were able to hear from members, civil servants and other experts. As well as learning about Westminster and the system of government here in the UK, we learned about the Commonwealth and the role of the CPA.

4. During the course of the event, I was privileged enough to be asked to sit on a panel and give a short presentation on the work of the Scottish Youth Parliament. Also members of the panel, concerning ‘engaging with young people’, were Lisa Nandy MP and Andrew Percy MP. I enjoyed this immensely and seemed to receive positive feedback from the CYPs. There were many questions about the way in which the SYP is elected, as this doesn’t happen in many Commonwealth countries. The strength of relationships between MSPs and MSYPs was also a point of interest, with many CYPs keen to take our learning experiences back to their countries.

5. The event concluded with a motion debated by both parties in the Robing room of the House of Lords. The motion was titled ‘Access to education; Should universal education be free?’. This was interesting and the
debating style of each CYP showed how differently parliaments operate in various countries across the commonwealth. The debate was heated at times but the way in which CYPs articulated themselves was inspiring.

6. For me, the highlight of the event was being able to share the work of the Scottish Youth Parliament with CYPs. I was shocked to hear how little youth engagement goes on in other countries and came away from the event feeling very privileged that I live in a country which values its young people the way Scotland does. Although there is still a lot of work to do, I am immensely proud of what SYP has achieved and the reputation and relationships it has developed in recent years. I felt that the event was very focussed on the benefit which could be reaped for the individuals concerned but not so much focus on what CYPs could actually take back to their countries. I was also very aware that many CYPs were simply selected to attend and therefore despite their interest in affecting change within their countries, did not have the mandate to do so. The event could be so much more than a stand-alone event. I am still in touch with many of the CYPs and two Australian Youth Parliamentarians recently visited Edinburgh where I took them to the Scottish Youth Parliament offices. There were relationships formed during the event and it would be great to see these developed after the Commonwealth Youth Parliament is over.

7. I would like to thank all involved in supporting me to attend this event, it was truly inspirational and a very worthwhile experience.