1. The Referendum (Scotland) Bill Committee has been established to consider the legislation relating to the forthcoming referendum on independence. Its first task is to scrutinise the draft section 30 Order that was laid before the UK Parliament and the Scottish Parliament on 22 October, and which provides the legal basis for the Scottish Parliament to legislate for a single-question referendum.

2. The draft Order – the Scotland Act 1998 (Modification of Schedule 5) Order 2013 (and accompanying policy note) – is available under [here](#).

3. The purpose of the Order is to extend the devolved competence of the Parliament to allow it to legislate for a referendum on independence, subject to certain conditions – in particular that the referendum:
   - is held before the end of 2014 and
   - offers voters only two responses.

4. The Order also provides for certain rules about referendum campaign broadcasts and mailshots to apply to the referendum.

5. The terms of the Order reflect key issues agreed between the Scottish and UK Governments in the “Edinburgh agreement” signed on 15 October by the First Minister and the Prime Minister, together with the Deputy First Minister and Secretary of State for Scotland.

**Timetable for Committee scrutiny**

6. The draft Order requires approval by the Scottish Parliament and by both Houses of the UK Parliament before it can be made. Under the Scottish Parliament’s standing orders, the Referendum (Scotland) Bill Committee must report to the Parliament on the draft Order by Friday 30 November.

7. The Committee agreed at its first meeting (on 25 October 2012) to invite the Deputy First Minister (Government Strategy and the Constitution), Nicola Sturgeon MSP, and the Secretary of State for Scotland, Michael Moore MP, to give oral evidence to the Committee.

8. The Committee also agreed at its first meeting to invite written evidence on the draft Order. Written evidence received will be taken into account alongside oral evidence before the Committee finalises its report on the draft Order.

9. At this stage, the Committee is inviting evidence only on the draft section 30 Order and not on wider issues within its remit, nor on the general merits of independence (or other options for Scotland’s constitutional future). There will be opportunities later for witnesses to submit evidence on the two Bills that the Scottish Government proposes to introduce in 2013 which concern the detailed arrangements for a referendum.
Expressions of interest in giving oral evidence

10. Individuals and organisations who would be interested in giving oral evidence to the Committee (probably on 8 or 15 November, between approximately 9.30 and 11.30 am) are invited to contact the Committee clerks at the earliest opportunity, and in any case no later than Wednesday 31 October.

Written evidence

11. Written evidence should be submitted, if possible, by Friday 9 November (for consideration by the Committee at its meeting on Thursday 15 November). Evidence submitted later may still be considered, but it may be more difficult for the Committee to take it fully into account in its report.

12. Written evidence should normally not exceed 6 pages in length and should, if possible, be submitted electronically (preferably in MS Word format) to the Committee clerks at referendum.committee@scottish.parliament.uk. It may also be posted to Clerk to the Referendum (Scotland) Bill Committee, Room T2.60, Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP.

13. All witnesses should read the Parliament’s policy on the treatment of written evidence before submitting written evidence. Any queries should be directed to the Committee clerks, whose details are available on the Committee’s web-page.