SUBMISSION FROM ELECTORAL COMMISSION SCOTLAND

This questionnaire is being sent to those organisations that have an interest in, or which may be affected by the Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill FM.

In addition to the questions below, please add any other comments you may have which would assist the Committee’s scrutiny of the FM.

Consultation

1. Did you take part in any consultation exercise preceding the Bill and, if so, did you comment on the financial assumptions made?

The Electoral Commission has been involved in ongoing discussions with both the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament officials in relation to the provisions in the Bill which relate to the Commission’s accountability to the Scottish Parliament.

2. If applicable, do you believe your comments on the financial assumptions have been accurately reflected in the FM?

3. Did you have sufficient time to contribute to the consultation exercise?

Costs

4. If the Bill has any financial implications for your organisation, do you believe that they have been accurately reflected in the FM? If not, please provide details.

As set out in the Financial Memorandum (FM), the Bill provides for the financing of the Electoral Commission to transfer from the Speaker’s Committee of the UK Parliament to the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body in respect of our costs for our work on Scottish Parliament elections. There will be a subsequent transfer of funds from the UK Government to the Scottish Parliament to meet these costs. We support these proposals as it is an important principle that the legislature which is responsible for the activity the Commission undertakes should fund that activity directly.

To protect the fundamental principle of independence of the Commission the Commission must be funded by the relevant legislature rather than government. We therefore welcome the fact that he Bill also provides for responsibility for funding the Commission’s work on Scottish local Government elections to transfer from the Scottish Government to the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body.

The Commission is in regular contact with Scottish parliament officials to discuss the how the reporting, accounting and auditing provisions in the Bill will work in practice.

5. Do you consider that the estimated costs and savings set out in the FM are reasonable and accurate?
6. If applicable, are you content that your organisation can meet any financial costs that it might incur as a result of the Bill? If not, how do you think these costs should be met?

FCC/S5/SER/03

We do not anticipate any significant additional costs arising as a result of the change in our accountability arrangements. The on-going additional work in identifying and accounting for the costs of activity in relation to Scottish devolved elections will be accommodated within the Commission’s planned resources.

7. Does the FM accurately reflect the margins of uncertainty associated with the Bill’s estimated costs and with the timescales over which they would be expected to arise?

Wider Issues

8. Do you believe that the FM reasonably captures any costs associated with the Bill? If not, which other costs might be incurred and by whom?

9. Do you believe that there may be future costs associated with the Bill, for example through subordinate legislation? If so, is it possible to quantify these costs?