

STANDARDS, PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE

SCOTTISH ELECTIONS (FRANCHISE AND REPRESENTATION) BILL

SUPPLEMENTARY WRITTEN EVIDENCE FROM SCOTTISH REFUGEE COUNCIL

1. We invite members of the Committee to meet with representatives from refugee communities who would be enfranchised by the Scottish Elections (Franchise and Representation) Bill.

The Scottish Refugee Council would welcome the opportunity to facilitate an informal session where Committee members can hear directly from refugees and people seeking asylum about what enfranchisement means for them and their communities.

2. We encourage the Committee to consider good practice in countries like Ireland and New Zealand when considering the expansion of the franchise and opportunities for political education.

Ireland has an expansive franchise for local elections, whereby individuals must be ordinarily resident to vote or stand (enfranchised under Electoral Act 1992, S2.10, and supported by S.I. No 175/2004 Electoral (Amendment) Regulation 2004). The primary legislation (Electoral Act 1992) defines that a qualifying voter must be over 18 and, on the date of registration, ordinarily resident in that area.¹ The statutory instrument stipulates what documentation people can use to register to vote. This includes documents issued to people seeking asylum such as a Temporary Registration Card.² New Zealand has produced accessible online resources for people to engage communities in conversations about voting rights and elections.³

3. In order for this Bill to achieve its aims of improving participation and empowering all communities resident in Scotland, we recommend that the Committee:

- Ensures that the extension of the franchise includes people who are resident in Scotland with an outstanding asylum claim;
- Ensures that the relevant Bill provides for sufficient political education and awareness raising for newly enfranchised voters, including targeted interventions for particularly disenfranchised or marginalised communities.

¹ Electoral Act 1992, S2.10:

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1992/act/23/section/10/enacted/en/html#sec10>

² S.I. No 175/2004 Electoral (Amendment) Regulation 2004:

<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2004/si/175/made/en/print>

³ New Zealand's Electoral Commission Website: <https://vote.nz/> ; Downloadable educational resources available at: <https://elections.nz/assets/Community-learning/your-voice-your-choice-learning-units.pdf>

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SCOTTISH REFUGEE COUNCIL
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