



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## **Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee**

Gail Ross MSP  
By email

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Dear Gail

Thank you for your recent email about remote voting in the Scottish Parliament.

As you know, consideration of any changes to Chapter 11 of Standing Orders, which relate to voting, are a matter for the SPPA Committee.

The Committee recently discussed your email and gave careful consideration to the question of remote voting.

The Committee acknowledges your comments that remote voting could allow Members to spend more time working in their constituency, while still participating in parliamentary business.

The Committee felt that it was important to establish, as a first step, whether remote voting would be technologically feasible, before making any changes to the Parliament's rules. Having looked into this further, we have identified several practical concerns in this respect.

The Committee understands that the current parliamentary voting system does not have the technical capabilities to support remote voting. In addition, any remote voting system would be dependent on secure and uninterrupted connectivity.

While there is a project underway to replace the sound and voting system, the technology currently available is not sufficiently advanced to offer the robustness and resilience required to ensure the functionality of the system.

The Committee also observed that remote voting seems to be a relatively untested technology. We were not able to identify any legislatures or Parliaments which have introduced remote voting.

Given these practical restrictions, the Committee did not think it would be feasible to pursue further work on rule changes to allow for remote voting at this time. Nevertheless, the Committee has made a commitment to further consider the potential for proxy voting in response to correspondence on this matter.

I should emphasise, however, that the Committee did have considerable sympathy with the position of Members who represent constituencies and regions some distance from Edinburgh, and who regularly face challenges in balancing their constituency and parliamentary work.

The Committee observed that some of these difficulties may arise from decisions about the timetabling of parliamentary business and the current format of the parliamentary week. For example, if Decision Time is delayed beyond 17.00, this can impact on Members' ability to make public transport connections back to their constituencies. The scheduling of Stage 3 of bills may also impact on when Members are required to be present in the Chamber. The Committee noted that the Parliamentary Bureau is responsible for proposing the Parliament's programme of business and you may wish to make representations on these issues to your representative on the Bureau.

I hope this letter is of some assistance in outlining the Committee's thinking about remote voting. I am placing the letter on the Committee's webpage as it may be of wider interest.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Kidd MSP". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Bill Kidd MSP  
Convener  
Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee