



women want a scotland
designed to deliver equality



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Scotland is a world leader in establishing fair and effective representation for women in politics. In 1999, equalities were firmly built into the new institutions, and this was endorsed by the people of Scotland. A new voting system for the Parliament and party action opened the door to better representation of women. We now have a new opportunity to deliver a Scotland designed to deliver equality.

scotland leading the way

Scotland's Parliament has been a trailblazer for women's representation: at 39% Scotland is behind only Wales, Rwanda and Sweden in the world league table. Scotland also leads the way with family-friendly working practices at Holyrood.

equal scotland

Whatever the voting system, elected representatives should as far as possible reflect the communities that they serve. Half our councillors and MSPs should be female to ensure women's needs and experiences are at the heart of Scottish politics.

elected women make a difference

The impact of women MSPs on decisions has been clear, for example in prioritising domestic abuse. Women MSPs have helped change the style of debate and improved women's access to the political process. The Gender and Constitutional Change project at Edinburgh University has identified the impact made to the policy agenda by women in the Parliament.

women's votes makes a difference

Women make up 52% of the electorate in Scotland. Without appealing to women it is difficult for parties to make electoral gains. The Electoral Commission found that turnout among women voters increased by 4% where a woman incumbent was standing. Women voters are more likely to identify with a party with visible women leaders and candidates who talk about their priorities. Past Scottish and UK elections have shown that women's votes can be decisive to the election.

unfinished business

It has been very hard to consolidate the advances women have made, while other groups have yet to gain representation. Only 22% (or about 1 in 5) of our councillors are women: 7% below the UK average. In Westminster and Europe too, Scotland's representatives are mostly men: 50 out of our 59 MPs and 5 out of our 7 MEPs are male. In many areas more gender sensitive policy is needed. As the tables show, each party has progress to make.

PARLIAMENT % OF WOMEN MSPs		SCOTTISH COUNCILLORS % OF WOMEN	
Labour	56%	Liberal Democrats	33%
SNP	36%	SNP	25%
Greens	29%	Conservatives	24%
Conservatives	18%	Labour	20%
Liberal Democrats	12%	Others/Independents	15%
Others/Independents	60%		

While the Scottish Parliament has been at the forefront of women's representation, no party has sufficient numbers of female councillors in Scotland. The decisions and services of local councils impact on women's lives every day in many important ways. It is vital that more women are returned in the first STV election.

positive action





Evidence points to the need for positive action, in particular quotas, to ensure continuing progress towards gender balance and 'finish the business'. New parliaments and new voting systems are not necessarily strong enough to make changes solid enough to ensure sustained equality.

With a new STV voting system for local government plus the retirement of a number of sitting councillors, there is an opportunity to make our councils more representative. Analysis of the last elections to the Scottish Parliament suggested it was chance, not design that increased the number of women MSPs. The new intake will not be gender balanced and the situation could even worsen unless political parties continue to take positive steps to promote women candidates.

celebrating success, building for the future

International Women's Day is an opportunity to celebrate our record and to look forward to May's elections and what we can do to ensure women continue to develop their leadership role.

2007 IS A KEY YEAR FOR WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION:

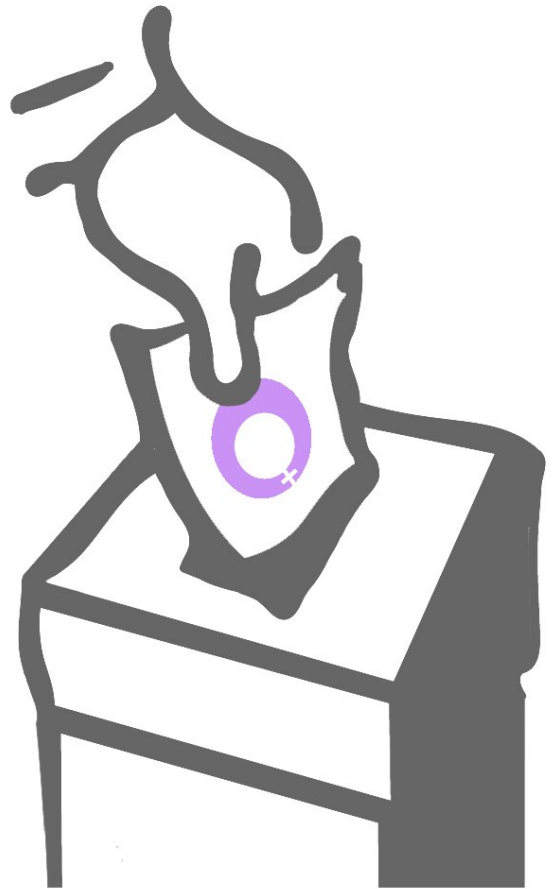
-  Elections to the Scottish Parliament: we need to make sure the number of women stays high and that political platforms address women's concerns.
-  Elections to local councils, the first under the STV voting system: we must ensure that the change means a boost in the number of women on councils and that woman voters are empowered to use the new system.
-  Media coverage of elections: women's priorities must be reflected in the campaign, women candidates must be visible and women voters must feel confident their voices will be heard.
-  European Year of Equal Opportunities for All takes place in 2007: a key theme is the right to equal representation and participation in decision-making.

a scotland designed to deliver for women

It is vital that political parties demonstrate that they are committed to strong women's representation in Scottish politics at every level.

COMMITMENTS NEEDED FROM MSPs ARE:

- Ensure your party takes specific actions in order that gender balance is built in by design in councils and the Parliament
- Put women at the forefront of your election campaigns
- Promote the importance of gender balance to the electorate
- Link with women's groups in your constituency and make sure women are informed and empowered to use the new voting system
- Encourage women to vote in both elections on 3 May



EMPOWERING WOMEN VOTERS TO PLAY THEIR PART

In 2007, ERS and Engender are undertaking a number of activities to empower and encourage women to vote. Particularly with a new voting system for local government, we will be focusing on training women to use the system to express their views.

With partners in the women's sector, we will inform as many women as possible so they are able to play a full role in the elections on 3 May.

Engender is running the Not Half Enough! Campaign to highlight that women's representation in decision-making bodies should be 51%, as it is in the Welsh Assembly.

The Electoral Reform Society campaigns for a fair, representative voting system that gives voters a meaningful choice. ERS is undertaking a series of activities to ensure Scotland makes the most of new voting system in 2007.



let's get there by design, not by chance
WE DESERVE A SCOTLAND DESIGNED TO DELIVER