Response to the Proposal on Extending the Women's Only Shortlist

Engender, making equality a reality…

Engender is a third sector organisation for individual women and organisations working on women's issues. We have been active in Scotland for more than 12 years to ensure that women have more effective voices, better representation and more decision-making power in our own lives, our communities and our country.

Engender improves women's lives by tackling inequality and addressing gender issues. We:
- make information about women in Scotland more widely available through research, gender briefings, newsletter, email groups, web
- develop gendered policy through research, analysis and dialogue between women, policy makers and academics
- press for equal representation of women at all levels of government and in public life

Working Together on Equalities

Engender strongly welcomes the thrust from Government to tackle inequalities and wishes to be as constructive as possible to work with Government to push this agenda forward. We welcome the move towards a single act, and the proposals on extending balancing provisions. Periods of change and the establishment of new structures and processes are an ideal time to support *strong positive action* on women's representation.

Positive Action

Positive action is needed, not because women are not able to succeed on merit, but because discrimination in the selection process means that they are less likely to be given the opportunity to try. We also understand how hard it is even where positive action has been allowed, but not actively enough used by political parties nor understood by the public. We need strong measures and Engender wishes to see more positive action.

Engender welcomes the proposed extension of provisions for women-only shortlists to **2030** and proposes that this should be reviewed again after another three general elections and extended again if necessary. We would hope that a further extension would not be necessary but hold that the provision needs to be available for as long as it takes to achieve its aim.