



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Festival of Politics 2022 update

30 June 2022

Reference: SPCB (2022) Paper 46

Executive Summary

1. The purpose of this Paper is to update the SPCB on the planning and preparations for the 2022 Festival of Politics, in particular the programme, partners and ticketing.

Background

2. At its meeting on Thursday 24 February the SPCB agreed this year's Festival of Politics would be in-person but building on the success of the two previous online Festivals would also include a number of online events. The SPCB also agreed that the Festival should revert to its original timing of August so will be held over three days from Thursday 11 to Saturday 13 August.
3. As with previous Festivals, the SPCB agreed an overarching partnership with the Parliament's think-tank Scotland's Futures Forum. The SPCB also agreed that we should build upon both internal and external partnerships and for 2022 seek suggestions from committees and Cross-Party Groups on possible panel sessions for the opening day, Thursday 11 August.
4. The 2022 programme has followed the same development model as previous years through discussions with the Presiding Officer and Clerk/Chief Executive.

Issues and Options

Programme

5. **Annex A** contains details of proposed Festival events that have been or are close to being confirmed. The 2022 Festival will respond to contemporary political issues and social affairs, including the cost-of-

living crisis; trust and politics; Ukraine and the weaponization of language; female political representation; migration; and the climate crisis. Additionally, *In Conversation with ...* events with well-known speakers including academic and philosopher, Professor A.C. Grayling; and footballer and commentator, John Barnes, will take place with the Presiding Officers as chairs in the Debating Chamber.

6. The opening day has been programmed with eight panel discussions generated by Cross-Party Groups and the Social Justice and Social Security Committee, all of whom responded to the Festival's open call to participate. These include Cross-Party Groups on End-of-Life Choices; International Development; Sport; Tibet; Towns and Town Centres; WASPI Women; and Wellbeing Economy. Members will chair all panels, according to their membership of the respective Cross-Party Group or Committee.
7. The Festival panels on Friday and Saturday will be chaired by a mix of Members who have specific committee knowledge of a panel subject area; or relevant partner organisations' Board members; or journalists.
8. As in previous Festivals, a range of panels will be selected for BSL translation by the BSL Facebook group in partnership with the Scottish Parliament's BSL development officer in order to increase accessibility. Likewise, the design and text for the online Festival programme will be edited to encourage greater accessibility by a wider range of Festival attendees.
9. Although the programme will develop over the next few weeks it is hoped that it will not change significantly before it is launched in early July; if there are any major amendments we will discuss and agree these with the Presiding Officer and the Clerk/Chief Executive.

Partnerships

10. As well as the over-arching partnership with Scotland's Futures Forum, individual partnerships with a range of universities and third-sector organisations including the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights; and the John Smith Centre will be secured for all the panels in order to maximise potential audience reach as indicated in the attached programme.
11. We are also pleased to confirm a partnership with the National Theatre of Scotland that means the Festival will stage the live world-premiere of *Holding/Holding On*, a rehearsed reading inspired by conversations with care experienced people and sector professionals and written by one of Scotland's best-known playwright's Nicola McCartney. Following the rehearsed reading, we will hold a panel discussion on the issues raised. Both the reading and panel discussion take place on Saturday 13 August.

12. In addition to the performance, we will also partner with National Theatre of Scotland on their LGBTI+ Elders and Social Dance Club project showcasing an exhibition of photographs and videos featuring members of the Club who are featured in places across Scotland that are meaningful to them. Group members talk about their lives, prejudice they have faced due to their sexuality; and finding places of peace and friendships in later life - *Portraits of an LGBTI+ Generation* will be exhibited as part of the Festival Café Bar. The Festival will also partner with the same National Theatre of Scotland LGBTI+ group on a panel discussion about the LGBTI+ elders' community and care provision being as inclusive as possible in ensuring a safe and respectful environment for all sexualities.
13. We are also partnering with two other organisations – the Court of the Lord Lyon and the Dandelion Festival – on two other visual arts exhibitions as part of this year's Festival. The first exhibition will mark the 350th anniversary of the Court of the Lord Lyon on designing heraldic devices and will appeal to adults and children alike. The second exhibition *Cubes of Perpetual Light* in partnership with the Dandelion Festival - an ambitious creative programme celebrating growing, music and community - will be sited in the Members' Garden. This installation combines miniature vertical farms with LED lighting and specially commissioned music, to encourage plant growth. The installation will take the form of two towers each featuring a stack of three, one-metred Cubes. Over 100 individual Cubes will appear in schools across Scotland to support a nationwide growing experiment.

Public Engagement Strategy

14. The Festival meets the Parliament's Public Engagement Strategy through engaging and partnering with a diverse range of organisations and audiences to create panel discussions and events such as the National Theatre of Scotland's rehearsed reading and panel discussion with care experienced people. Further, the National Theatre of Scotland's partnership panel idea on care for the older LGBTI+ community, was generated by their own LGBTI+ Elders group who are the subjects of the *Portraits of an LGBTI+ Generation* exhibition in the FoP Café Bar.
15. Equally, the Festival Team are working with colleagues in the Participation and Communities Team (PACT) to involve members of the Open Book Group at the Grassmarket Recovery Project to engage and attend specific Festival panel discussions with the help of PACT colleagues. The cost of getting to the Parliament is cited as a barrier to engagement more generally. This is being assessed as part of the Public Engagement Strategy and would benefit from a wider discussion at the SPCB. For the purposes of the Festival, we are working internally with colleagues in PACT and externally with Elect Her – one of this year's Festival partners – both to identify those audiences and allocate

additional resource in supporting attendance at the National Theatre of Scotland's performance and panel discussion; and the Elect Her panel events to ensure as wide a reach as possible.

Ticketing

16. As agreed with the SPCB, the 2022 Festival of Politics will offer a mix of free online and paid-for in-person events, with ticketed in-person prices staying at their 2019 levels. Each Cross-Party Group will be allocated a 10 per cent share of their venue capacity as complimentary tickets to ensure that audiences who may be unable to pay for a ticket, can still attend.
17. The Festival will also take forward the SPCB's suggestion in offering a free tea, coffee, or cold refreshment as part of the ticket price for each Festival attendee to enjoy post-event. In addition to this we are further recommending on this occasion to pilot a discounted ticket scheme that will allow festivalgoers to purchase additional tickets at half-price on the same day as purchasing one full price ticket. For example, a festivalgoer purchases a full price ticket (£4.00/£6.00) for a session on Friday morning they can then purchase subsequent tickets for that day at half-price (£3.00/£2.00). Events that would be exempt from this discounted scheme would be the *In conversation with ... events*, the National Theatre of Scotland's Holding/Holding On rehearsed reading and the subsequent panel session as these two events are part of separate discounted ticket scheme (please see below).
18. While the Festival has worked to keep costs as low as possible and mitigate financial barriers but offering a discounted scheme as well as offering a percentage of complimentary tickets to Cross-Party Groups and partner organisations, there are additional costs to holding the National Theatre of Scotland's production Holding/Holding On which means we will have to charge a slightly higher ticket price. However, the Festival and National Theatre of Scotland have worked together to agree on a combined two event deal price covering both the performance and the panel discussion at £14.00/£12.00 which is comparable to other ticket prices for two events. Ticketing for the performance only is proposed as £12.00/£10.00; and tickets for the post-reading panel discussion would be the same as all other Festival panels at £6.00/£4.00.

Communications

19. A communications plan will be produced to promote this event and encourage attendance. Alongside our marketing plan, we will aim to capitalise on existing networks and ensure that we are ensuring that those interested in a particular topic know about the Festival events.
20. The overall messaging will be to encourage people to attend, but we also want to position the Festival as a key event within the August programme

of events where people can have their say on the issues that matter to them.

21. The launch of the programme will take place in early July, which will coincide with our marketing campaign. We will look to target our engaged audiences that have attended previously, alongside new audiences, such as those identified in the public engagement strategy mentioned above.

Publication Scheme

22. This Paper and annex should not be published until the 2022 Festival of Politics programme is announced in early July.

Next Steps

23. The programme for 2022 Festival of Politics will continue to be developed by parliamentary officials in consultation with the Presiding Officer and Clerk/Chief Executive and will be launched early July.

Events and Exhibitions Team
June 2022

THURSDAY 11 AUGUST

End of Life Choices – Personal is political

10:30am – 12noon

The Holyrood Room

£6.00 /£4.00

A YouGov poll in 2021 reported that three-quarters of British people supported doctor-assisted suicide for patients suffering from a terminal illness. For many, the issue of end-of-life choice remains one of the last of those social responsibilities alongside divorce, abortion and sexuality in the box titled ethically and morally fraught. For others, end of life choice is part of the social continuum that resulted in legislative change on the thorny topics above. Join the panel to discuss what role the media plays alongside personal politics in the politics of social change.

Chair: Collette Stevenson MSP, member, Cross-Party Group on End-of-Life Choices

Panellists:

- Rt Hon Ruth Davidson, writer, broadcaster and member of House of Lords
- Kezia Dugdale, Director, John Smith Centre, University of Glasgow
- Liam McArthur MSP
- Alex Grenwich MP, New South Wales Legislative Assembly, Sydney ONLINE

A Sporting Chance – open schools to community access

10:30am – 12noon

Fleming Room

£6.00 /£4.00

Sport is universally acknowledged as one of the keys to life-long health, happiness and mental well-being, not forgetting the social benefits. So, with Scotland still rated as one of the unhealthiest and overweight countries in Europe, what is stopping communities accessing local, inclusive and affordable facilities on their doorstep in the form of school estates boasting green fields; indoor and outdoor courts; and a bonanza of facilities? Join the panel to discuss how we can cut through red tape; respond to local authority pressures on staffing to health & safety; and work out how to open doors to healthier communities.

Chair: Jeremy Balfour MSP, Deputy Co-Convener, Cross Party Group on Sport

Panellists:

- Steve Walsh OBE, Chief Executive, High Life, Highland
- Gillian Lithgow, Deputy Chief Executive and National Programmes Director, Youthlink Scotland
- Blane Dodds, Chief Executive, Tennis Scotland
- *Kayleigh Haggio, world-record frame runner and boccia athlete; and Active Schools Co-ordinator with South Ayrshire Council and tutor for Scottish Disability Sport*

Prostitution – the buyers and sellers

12:30pm – 2:00pm

The Holyrood Room

£6.00/£4.00

Prostitution is a hidden activity, and we rarely hear the stories of those most involved. This panel discussion and part-dramatized reading brings into a public forum the words of those who sell and buy sexual services. Join a panel of front-line service providers and prostitution survivors to discuss the reality of commercial sexual exploitation and the role played by the industrial growth of online pimping websites; and how these are impacting both the buyers and sellers of sexual services. Support workers will be in the room.

Chair: Ruth Maguire MSP, Co-Convener, Cross-Party Group on Commercial Sexual Exploitation

Panellists:

- Linda Thompson, Encompass Network
- Diane Martin CBE, Survivor and Chair of A Model for Scotland
- Michael Conroy, Founder/Director, Men at Work
- Four actors/people in the audience who will voice words of buyers/sellers

Whose Town is it Anyway?!

12:30pm – 1:30pm

Online

FREE

Who holds the power in town centres - is it the developer, the chain stores, or the investors? Do they really have the town centre interest at heart or does the profit margin supersede community? How can the community and independent retailers take control and does by free parking at out-of- town centres trump local community any day? Join the debate on how we build in climate, social inclusion and health and well-being to every town centre in Scotland.

Chair: Siobhian Brown MSP, Convener, Cross-Party Group on Towns and Town Centres

Panellists:

- Lesley Riddoch, broadcaster, journalist
- Phil Prentice, CEO, Scotland's Towns Partnership
- Emma Mackenzie, Head of Asset Management & ESG at New River and Board Member at High Streets Task Force
- Michaela Sullivan, Head of Service for Development, East Lothian Council

WASPI Women - Righting a wrong

2:00pm - 3:30pm

Fleming Room

£6.00/£4.00

Almost four million UK women born in the 1950s were left unprepared and financially disadvantaged when the Department of Work and Pensions failed to give enough notification that the state pension age for women was rising by six years. The campaigning group Women Against State Pension Injustice are still battling for a one-off compensation payment as millions continue to suffer financial hardship as a result of the communication error that compounded the on-going issue of women retiring with a fraction of men's pensionable savings. What is the state of play with WASPI and how do we ensure that such errors do not occur in the future?

Chair: Siobhian Brown MSP, Deputy Convener, Cross-Party Group on Women Against State Pension Injustice

Panellists:

- Agnes Tolmie, Scottish Women's Convention
- Dr Angela O'Hagan, Women's Budget Group, Glasgow Caledonian University
- SallyAnn Kelly, Chief Executive Aberlour Child Care Trust

Disability and the Future of Work

In partnership with the Social Justice and Social Security Committee and Scotland's Futures Forum

3:00pm – 4:00pm

Online

FREE

As society gets to grips with the continuing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, the future of work remains uncertain. While technological innovation has brought about increased flexibility of working for many people, structural problems like inequality and low pay endure. In this context, what is the working future for Scotland's disabled people? With a disability employment gap that refuses to shift, what can Scotland do to harness the trends shaping our future working lives and use them to support more disabled people into work?

Chair: Paul McLennan MSP, member, Social Justice and Social Security Committee

Panellists: TBC

Information and disinformation: Controlling the narrative as a tactic of war – and peace

In partnership with Scotland's Futures Forum

3:00pm – 4:30pm

The Holyrood Room

£6.00/£4.00

It is often said that the first casualty in war is truth. In Ukraine, competing narratives of the current conflict play out on social media throughout the world. With this comes a greater international awareness of the impacts of the war than ever before. What does the Ukrainian Government's approach tell us about the way we share information? What can we learn from conflicts in history? And what implications does this have for our democratic future? This event will consider the use of information and disinformation in armed conflict, as well as the role of citizen journalism and digital communication in our world today.

Chair: Ross Greer MSP, Co-Convener, Cross-Party Group on Tibet

Panellists:

- Dr Tsering Topgyal, Lecturer in International Relations, University of Birmingham
- Dr Joanna Szostek, Lecturer in Political Communications, University of Glasgow
- *Marianna Spring, BBC specialist on disinformation*

Solving the global cost of living crisis: Is a Wellbeing Economy part of the answer?

5:00pm – 6:30pm

The Holyrood Room

£6.00/£4.00

In Scotland, people are choosing between eating and heating. Elsewhere in the world, some have less choice. The global cost of living crisis is fuelling growing calls for a fairer economic model. How can Scotland live up to its global responsibility and build an economy that is both fair to those in Scotland and elsewhere? Join the panel to discuss whether a global Wellbeing Economy can help meet the challenge.

This panel is a joint event between the Cross-Party Groups on the Wellbeing Economy and International Development

Chair: Paul McLennan MSP, Convener, Cross-Party Group on Wellbeing Economy

Panellists:

- Miriam Brett, Director of Research and Advocacy at Common Wealth
- Thobile Chittenden, Members Lead at the Wellbeing Economy Alliance ONLINE
- Gemma Bone-Dodds, Director of Insights and Policy at the Scottish National Investment Bank and Trustee of WEAll Scotland

In Conversation with Professor A.C. Grayling

In partnership with Scotland's Futures Forum

6:00pm – 7:30pm

Debating Chamber

£8.00/ £6.00

Join Professor A.C. Grayling CBE, one of the UK's most prolific philosophers and authors, in conversation with **Deputy Presiding Officer Liam McArthur MSP** to discuss Professor Grayling's timely book, *For the Good of the World: Is Global Agreement on Global Challenges Possible?* which discusses the three most urgent challenges facing the world today: climate change, technology and justice. As Master of the New College of the Humanities, and a published author of over 30 books, Professor Grayling dissects both the threats and the inspiring solutions, if human beings are to collectively agree on a set of values to save the planet from extinction.

FRIDAY 12 AUGUST

Twenty-first Century Migration and Asylum Policies

In partnership with Scottish Refugee Council

10:30am - 12noon

The Holyrood Room

£6.00/£4.00

With Ukrainian refugees constituting the greatest migration numbers since World War II, it is time to challenge the often-polarised negative rhetoric that often accompanies any discussion of asylum seekers and migrants? Should we look at the economic benefits of migration to nations facing a demographic time-bomb on working generations; and inclusive ways of integration that benefit Scotland, the UK and Europe?

Chair: TBC

Panellists:

- Dr Sabir Zazai, Chief Executive, Scottish Refugee Council
- Dr Sarah Kyambi, Migration Policy Scotland
- Dr Dan Fisher, Research Associate, University of Glasgow

Are the Strongmen of Politics Killing Democracy?

In partnership with Global Affairs Institute Scotland

12:30pm – 2:00pm

The Holyrood Room

£6.00/£4.00

Are we witnessing the return of strong-man politics, where democratically elected leaders from around the globe became ever more authoritarian under a veneer of liberal democracy? The playbook of centralising power; cracking down on opponents and the media; nationalists and social conservatives who despise global elites and offering domestic voters' simple popular responses to complex geopolitical situations. So, who and how do we keep authoritarians in check and how worried should democracy be?

Chair: TBC

Panellists:

- Professor Peter Jackson, Chair in Global Security, University of Glasgow
- Professor Luke March, Chair of Post-Soviet and Comparative Politics, University of Edinburgh
- Dr Samantha May, Politics and International Relations, University of Aberdeen

The Climate Crisis Hasn't Gone Away

In partnership with St Andrews University

1:00pm – 2:15pm

Online

FREE

While the war in Ukraine understandably dominates the headlines, COP26 in Glasgow can seem a very long time ago. Yet, the most recent report from the IPCC world's leading climate scientists (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) is stark in its assessment of the current and impending crisis 3.5 billion are already facing, with half the world population suffering water shortage at any time during the year; and 1:3 facing deadly heat stress. Where is the action on pledges made in Glasgow and what will COP27 in Egypt achieve later this year?

Chair: *Fiona Hyslop MSP, Deputy Convener, Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee*

Panellists:

- Dr Keith Bell, co-Director of the UK Energy Research Centre
- Lucy Stanfield-Jenner, Climate 2050
- Prof Ali Watson, Head of School of International Relations, St Andrews University; Third Generation Project

Cost of living crisis - food and fuel as legal human rights?

In partnership with the University of Aberdeen

2:15pm – 3:45pm

Fleming Room

£6.00/£4.00

The United Nations sets out the right to food provision as a basic human right, while increasing numbers of pressure groups believe the right to nutritious food and ability to heat our homes should also be legally enforceable human rights. Could any country actually afford this subsidy and exactly how could it work?; and how would the right to food and fuel join the existing protections and rights on privacy, freedom, and ability to challenge unfairness?

Chair: TBC

Panellists:

- Zara Mohammed, General Secretary, Muslim Council of Britain and human rights lawyer
- Emma Congreve, Deputy Director, Fraser of Allander Institute, University of Strathclyde
- Pete Ritchie, Nourish Scotland
- Professor John Skagen, Chair in Economics, University of Aberdeen

Elect Her

in partnership with Elect Her

2:30pm - 4:00pm

Debating Chamber

£6.00/£4.00

While a storm of accusations of sexual impropriety, bullying, and blatant misogyny circles over politicians; and Scotland's First Minister discusses horrific online abuse targeted at female politicians, it's no surprise that many women decline to join the gladiatorial race for political office and goal of achieving 51% representation the UK. So, what makes a woman step up to become a political agent for change; and what kind of support, inspiration and motivation can they expect from their local community to national political platforms? Join the panel to hear about the challenges and the solutions from those on the journey.

Chair: Presiding Officer

Panellists:

- Dr Meryl Kenny, University of Edinburgh and on Presiding Officer's Board
- Talat Yaqoob, independent consultant and researcher
- Pheona Matovu, social entrepreneur and Director of Radiant and Brighter
- Sophie Reid, Chair, Scottish Youth Parliament

Scotland, racism and the legacy of a transatlantic slavery trade

In partnership with CRER and Scotland's International Development Alliance

4:15pm – 5:30pm

The Holyrood Room

£6.00/£4.00

The relationship between the industrial revolution and the wealth accumulated through Scotland's role in the transatlantic slavery trade - still visible in our 19th buildings and streets - makes for uncomfortable exploration. Join the panel to discuss the legacy of Scotland's role in this historical injustice: from acknowledging its impact on the issue of racism today; to Scotland's place in the world as a result of its role in the transatlantic slavery trade; and what part reparative justice might play in addressing this.

Chair: Professor Nasar Meer, Personal Chair of Race, Identity and Citizenship, University of Edinburgh and Director of RACE.ED

Panellists:

- Dr David Alston, historian and author of *Slaves and Highlanders*
- Sheila Asante, Project Manager for Empire, Slavery and Scotland's Museums
- *Professor Verene Shepherd, University of West Indies, Kingston, Jamaica. Vice chair of Caricom reparations commission and vice-chair of UN Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination ONLINE*
- Nelson Cummins, Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights

In Conversation with John Barnes

In partnership with Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights

6:00pm – 7:30pm

Debating Chamber

£8.00/£6.00

Join England football legend and former Celtic FC manager, **John Barnes** in conversation with the **Presiding Officer** to discuss his eloquent and thought-provoking book, *The Uncomfortable Truth About Racism*. Drawing on his personal playing experiences as well as historical and intellectual arguments on slavery and colonialism, Barnes provides the structure for the uncomfortable conversations he believes must take place if society is to address the pervasive racism that endures in contemporary UK society.

There will be a book signing immediately after this event in the Festival Café Bar

SATURDAY 13 AUGUST

LGBTI+ Elder Care

In partnership with the National Theatre of Scotland

10:30am – 12noon

Fleming Room

£6.00/£4.00

It's never a decision anyone takes lightly but for older LGBT+ people who have already lived through an era of hard-won freedoms and criminalisation of their sexuality, the thought of moving into a retirement community or a care home can be even more complex. Many elderly LGBT+ people fear a return of having to hide their true self in fearing discrimination from more conservative peers when they move into shared living space. How is the care profession addressing this; and does the UK offer models of LGBT+ inclusive care communities that offer a safe and respectful environment for all sexualities?

This panel is linked to the Portraits of a Generation exhibition in the Festival Café Bar

Chair: Emma Roddick MSP, Co-Convener, Cross Party Group on LGBTI+

Panellists:

- Rebecca Crowther, Policy Coordinator, Equality Network,
- Karen Hedge, Deputy CEO, Scottish Care
- *Jennifer Hall, training Officer and LGBTI+ champion, Alzheimer's Scotland*
- Colin Mitchell, NTS LGBT+ Elders group

NTS rehearsed reading of Holding/Holding On

1:00pm – 2:00pm

The Holyrood Room

£12.00 £10.00

Join the world premiere of this rehearsed reading from the National Theatre of Scotland, as scripted by Nicola McCartney in collaboration with care experienced people and those within the care system. With a cast including *River City* actress Maureen Carr, this is a powerful reading that has at its heart, the intersection where care, class and poverty meet. It examines what care really means in contemporary Scotland. What if instead of ever more complicated systems we can increase support, compassion and most importantly – love?

Care, love and understanding?

in partnership with the National Theatre of Scotland

2:15pm – 3:30pm

The Holyrood Room

£6.00/ £4.00

Join the post-performance discussion for the National Theatre of Scotland's rehearsed reading, **Holding/Holding On**, that explores the way society treats and views young people and adults in the Scottish care system. What roles do class and poverty play in the care system? Where do love, support and compassion come on the priority list; and where are the lines drawn between childcare and child protection for the care staff trying to get it right for everyone?

Chair: MSP, *Cross-Party Group on Care Leavers*

Panellists:

- Nicola McCartney, playwright, *Holding/Holding On*
- *Claire Burns*, Director of Centre for Excellence for Children's Care and Protection
- Kenneth Murray, NTS community collaborator
- Fiona Duncan, Chair, *The Promise*

Data vultures destroying democracy

In partnership with Scotland's Futures Forum

2:30pm - 4:00pm

Fleming Room

£6.00/£4.00

Discussion on the data harvesting that happens from the moment we wake and access our phones to household computers, everything from our habits, likes, medical issues and relationships is collected and shared without our awareness or permission by data gathering companies, governments and data vultures. Who is regulating this mass surveillance and how can we protect our privacy and democracy from a trend that is undermining equality for all?

Chair: *Board member, Scotland's Futures Forum*

Panellists:

- *Professor Rachel Gibson*, Manchester University,
- *Ken Macdonald*, Head of ICO Regions, Information Commissioner
- Sam Fowles, barrister and author of *Overruled: our vanishing democracy in 8 cases*

Do You Trust Politicians?

In partnership with John Smith Centre

4:00pm – 5:30pm

The Holyrood Room

£6.00/£4.00

A 1944 Gallup poll reported that over a third of the UK population thought their leaders were largely selfless. Since then, trust in politicians has declined to a point where the electorate question the ability of their representatives to make decisions that will improve the voting public's lives. Without trust as a cornerstone of a functioning democracy we are left with a weaker public service and widening inequalities. Why are we in this position; and does the proximity of power between politicians and the electorate play a role – and what are the solutions to build a healthier democracy?

Chair: Presiding Officer

Panellists:

- Resham Kotecha, Board member, John Smith Centre, University of Glasgow
- Brian Taylor, Herald columnist and former BBC Scotland editor
- *Darren McGarvey, writer, commentator, author of *The Social Distance Between Us: proximity to power and politicians**
- *Jennifer Wallace, Director, Carnegie Trust UK*

The State of the UK Union

In partnership with Centre on Constitutional Change, University of Edinburgh

6:00pm - 7.30pm

The Holyrood Room

£6.00/£4.00

According to an IPSOS MORI poll (23 March 2022) more than three in five Scots expect the demise of the UK within the next ten years. With 61% of Scots predicting constitutional change; does the UK's current constitution still work? Given a planned Scottish independence referendum in 2023; the outcome of Brexit; and the handling of COVID-19 pandemic by each country; the pressure on the devolution settlement has never been greater. What is the state of the UK union, and would further devolution proposals help the union modify and survive?

Chair: TBC

Panellists:

- Professor Nicola McEwen, Director, Centre on Constitutional Change, University of Edinburgh
- Professor Michael Keating, University of Aberdeen
- Dr Lisa Whitten, Queens University, Belfast
- Philip Rycroft, former senior civil servant in Whitehall and Scottish Government