

Discussion card 1

Choosing Scotland's Future
A National Conversation

*"We in the Scottish Government are ambitious for the future of Scotland. We also believe that sovereignty in our country lies with its people. As a sovereign people, the people of Scotland – and we alone – have the right to decide how we are governed."
(Page v)*

What do you think it means to say that sovereignty lies with the people of Scotland?

Discussion card 2

Choosing Scotland's Future
A National Conversation

"The establishment of the Scottish Parliament under the Scotland Act 1998 gave the people of Scotland a direct democratic voice in decisions across a wide range of government activities already administered in Scotland." (Page vii)

Do you agree that the Scottish Parliament has given you a greater say in decisions that affect your life?

Discussion card 3

Choosing Scotland's Future A National Conversation

(Read information card: Devolved matters)

The Scottish Government can pass laws on these devolved matters: health, education, justice, local government, agriculture and fisheries.

The UK Government is responsible for these reserved matters: social security, health and safety, tax collection, employment and business law, the Head of State and constitution, citizenship, foreign affairs (including representation at the European Union), security and defence." (Page 3 summarised)

Do you think the present division between devolved and reserved powers is sensible, or confusing, or what?

Discussion card 4

Choosing Scotland's Future A National Conversation

"Further devolution to the Scottish Parliament of individual reserved areas (eg taxation, fiscal and economic policy; trade and industry, including employment; social security and pensions; energy; transport; equal opportunities; broadcasting; and other societal issues such as abortion and misuse of drugs) would enable the Parliament to come to its own decisions on each, better reflecting any differences in views between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom – and within Scotland – on important policy areas." (Page 9)

Are there any of these reserved areas which you think Scotland should decide for itself?

Why?

Discussion card 5

Choosing Scotland's Future
A National Conversation

"A wealthier Scotland ... a safer Scotland ... a fairer Scotland ... a healthier Scotland ... a greener Scotland ... a smarter Scotland ... a stronger Scotland." (Pages 10-16)

Would any of these aims be easier to attain if the Scottish Parliament had more powers?

Would any be harder?

Discussion card 6

Choosing Scotland's Future
A National Conversation

"During the 20th century, over 150 new independent states were created, a large proportion through de-colonisation and the break up of the former Communist states in central and eastern Europe. Independence has therefore become a normal constitutional position for countries like Scotland in Europe and world-wide, and the nature and status of independent, sovereign countries are well understood" (Page 19)

Do you see yourself as Scottish, or British, or both (one more than the other)?

Discussion card 7

Choosing Scotland's Future
A National Conversation

"Independence and responsibility in the modern world." (subtitle) :

"Independence for Scotland in the 21st century would reflect the reality of existing and growing interdependence: partnership in these Islands and more widely across Europe." (Page 24)

Would an independent Scotland be more or less likely to recognise its responsibilities in the wider world?

What are some of these responsibilities?

Discussion card 8

Choosing Scotland's Future
A National Conversation

(Read information card: National Conversation)

"There is no consensus on the next steps that should be taken to develop Scotland's constitutional position, and the parties elected to the Scottish Parliament made a range of proposals. It is also clear that the support of the people of Scotland is necessary to make changes for the future. Hence the Scottish Government proposes a national conversation to allow the people of Scotland to explore and understand their options and to decide their own future." (Page 37)

Do you think a referendum - with choices of (a) independence, (b) the present position, and (c) a measure of further devolution - would be helpful for Scotland's future?

Discussion card 9

Choosing Scotland's Future
A National Conversation

"The significance of the questions raised in this national conversation requires the fullest participation possible, and the Scottish Government intends that as many people in Scotland as possible should take part." (Page 38)

Do your answers to these questions, and the discussion around them, have anything to do with your faith?

Discussion card 10

Choosing Scotland's Future
A National Conversation

What would be your vision for the future of Scotland?

What constitutional set-up would help us get there?

**Information card:
Devolved Matters**
Choosing Scotland's Future
A National Conversation

1.5 The Scotland Act 1998 devolved to the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government (known as the Scottish Executive) all matters that are not specifically reserved to the United Kingdom Parliament and the United Kingdom Government. In practice, the areas devolved largely corresponded to those matters that had previously been assigned to the Scottish Office under the responsibility of Scottish Office Ministers (members of the United Kingdom Government), and administered in Scotland by officials from the Scottish Office. The areas devolved included health, education, justice, local government and agriculture and fisheries.

1.6 The reserved areas were areas in which United Kingdom Government Departments had been and remained responsible for services in Scotland, such as social security, health and safety, and tax collection, or areas in which it was considered important to have a common regime across the United Kingdom, such as employment and business law. In addition, the Act reserved matters considered fundamental to the United Kingdom as a state, such as the Head of State and constitution, citizenship, foreign affairs (including representation at the European Union), security and defence."

**Information card:
National Conversation**
Choosing Scotland's Future
A National Conversation

First Minister Alex Salmond launched a "national conversation" on Scotland's future. This conversation may pave the way for a referendum on various options for our future – independence, more powers for the Scottish Parliament, or the position we have now.

You can find the full document and further information about the conversation, on the internet at www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/a-national-conversation.

The churches in Scotland have no official views on the options, but the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office believes it is important for church members to be part of this conversation about our future. We plan a national gathering in the spring to hear your responses.

Information card:
Using these discussion cards

Choosing Scotland's Future
A National Conversation

The quotations from "Choosing Scotland's Future A National Conversation" are printed in italics and are followed by the page numbers they refer to in that document.

The cards could be used by:

- small groups where individuals pick a card each and start off a discussion based on their question(s)
- a large group divided into smaller groups who discuss a few cards each then come together with the main outcomes

Produced by the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office in partnership with the Church of Scotland. www.actsparl.org

Information card:

Choosing Scotland's Future
A National Conversation

**What do the present political parties
think of the issues in the National
Conversation?**

The Scottish National Party, and the Green Party, support independence for Scotland.

The Labour, Liberal Democrat and Conservative Parties have proposed a "constitutional commission" to look at what further powers the Scottish Parliament should have, while remaining within the United Kingdom.