SPICe Briefing
Pàipear-ullachaidh SPICe

The Scottish Parliament: how the Parliament building shapes the workings of the institution

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Research conducted by Kevin Orr, Professor of Management at the University of St. Andrews, and Sabina Siebert, Professor of Management at the University of Glasgow, looking at the main operational and strategic issues facing the Scottish Parliament building and how these are managed in order to deal with future developments and demands.

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Introduction

This report summarises the findings from our 18-month Scottish Parliament Academic Fellowship. "The Scottish Parliament: How the Parliament building shapes the workings of the institution" funded by the ESRC Impact Acceleration Account (ES/T501918/1), University of St. Andrews Impact Funding, and the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe). The project started in October 2019 and the data collection was completed in April 2021.

The views expressed in this briefing are the views of the authors, not those of SPICe or the Scottish Parliament.

The 20th anniversary of the Scottish Parliament offered an excellent opportunity to take stock of the work of Parliament and its wider impact. As business and management academics, we were interested in how the building of the Parliament shapes the workings of the institution. We posed a question – how do people shape the parliamentary spaces, how parliamentary spaces affect the practices, modes of working and people's interactions?

We investigated what the main operational and strategic issues bearing down on the building are and how these can be managed in order to deal with future developments and demands. Our investigation was carried out in the context of increasing footfall, the presence of five generations of users, the demands of zero carbon targets, technological changes, and possible governance changes at local, national and European levels.

In recent years, several social science researchers have attempted to answer the question about how the institution of Parliament is shaped by the building within which it operates. But Parliament is not only an institution, it is also a workplace. Our report focuses on the people who work in the parliamentary estate, how they experience Parliament as a workplace, and the strategic and operational issues that arise for the organisation.

Guided by the Scottish Parliament Workplace Strategy (2020), we present the findings from our research under four headings:

- physical space

- people

- technology and sustainability

- process.

Investigating the role of the building in preserving the workings, traditions and customs of Parliament is particularly timely given the shift to remote working enforced by the COVID-19 pandemic. We finish our report with a series of recommendations.

We would like to thank the Scottish Parliament for the award of the Academic Fellowships. In particular we would like to record our thanks to colleagues in Facilities Management and SPICe who supported and guided this project. Finally, thank you to everyone who made time to participate in this research.

Methodology

Our research spanned six months pre-pandemic and one year of the lockdown when we continued our research remotely. We were able to engage with the work of the building in both periods and map the emergent changes. Our research included three forms of data collection:

- standard interviews

- walking interviews

- field observations.

Standard interviews. We jointly conducted 21 standard interviews with various stakeholders in the Scottish Parliament. These included members of staff and politicians. We asked the interviewees to describe their experiences of working in the building. In total, 19 hours of interviews – lasting from 40 minutes to one hour – were recorded, transcribed, and analysed. After lockdown, these interviews were conducted via MS Teams.

Walking interviews. We conducted eight walking interviews. The interviewees were invited to take us to the places that mattered to them, that were particularly interesting. We were able to 'experience' the spaces, and observe people working in these areas. The participants chose the route and were thus able to convey their sense of what matters.

Field observations. We spent 15 full days plus several shorter visits as non-participant observers in the Scottish Parliament. We engaged in a wide range of activities, including:

- listening to debates in the public gallery of the Debating Chamber

- sitting in shared spaces (including the Restaurant and café)

- and observing the work and interactions in the Garden Lobby.

Whenever it was practical and in line with the code of conduct in Parliament, we engaged in informal conversations with building users – either asking for additional explanations or eliciting their reflections.

Physical space

The parliamentary estate is a network of interlinked buildings and spaces. It is a site of great national importance and of architectural prestige. There is almost universal pride in the building among those working there. However, since it opened in 2004, a number of issues have developed in relation to the capacity, usability and maintenance of the building. Changing working patterns during the COVID-19 pandemic [1] have revealed both opportunities and challenges for rethinking how the building can be best used, as well as accelerated the urgency of pre-existing questions about the management of the physical spaces.

It is a multi-purpose space used by a number of different stakeholders. These include Members, Ministers, the Scottish Government, Scottish Parliament staff, the media, contractors, visitors and constituents. We note that, prior to the pandemic, the number of passholders had been increasing year on year. However, the pandemic saw a decrease in the numbers and intensity of people on-site and it is likely that some of the patterns of usage established during that period will endure in the medium and longer term. Nonetheless, our interviews consistently identified pressure on space as a critical issue for the building. These pressures are linked with wider long-term questions about Scottish governance. For example, the repatriation of powers post-Brexit may impact on the responsibilities of the Scottish Parliament, to say nothing of the implications for the scale of the work of government raised by the possibility of an independent Scotland.

Spirit of collegiality in the allocation of spaces

Since 2004, there have been a series of relocations and changed use of different parts of the building. These processes reflect an organic and flexible approach to responding to emerging patterns of need and demand, and wider patterns of periodic organisational restructuring. We were impressed with work underpinning these changes, as well as the ongoing willingness to plan ahead and anticipate changes. We have also been struck by the culture of collegiality among staff and Members in co-creating solutions to issues as they have arisen. Similarly, the allocation of spaces following elections has been described as a smooth process based on the principles of collegiality and cooperation. This collaborative ethos will be important for the management of future changes. In assessing future relocations, it was suggested to us that some departments and staff groupings are very attached to their current locations and feel a somewhat territorial ownership of those spaces, which will need to be carefully addressed.

Flexibility of space

We identify a number of current constraints. These include a lack of on-site storage facilities. The voids in stairwells, for example, are often currently used for tables and chairs needed when hosting larger events. Currently these voids are covered only by makeshift screens at odds with the aesthetic of the building. The architectural design of the building means that the spaces are inherently inflexible. Furthermore, we appreciate the sound reasons why particular spaces should not be repurposed (e.g. the crèche, and the Dewar Room).

Pre-dating the opening of the current building in 2004, the Parliament had a history of using other spaces and venues, as well as subsequently accruing useful experience of taking committees 'on the road' to different parts of the country. In addition, the reconfiguration of spaces to offer flexible project-based working is a further consideration. Here the cultural aspects of the organisation – the meaning of "an office" or of part of a building, or the idea that particular spaces 'belong to' particular functions or departments – is significant in relation to the management of change. Even in its short history, however, there have been several significant reorganisations of space allocation which suggests that a degree of flexibility is already established in the organisational culture.

We understand that there are a significant number of accommodation "pinch points", where accommodation is very tight. Notably these include ministerial towers. As one participant told us:

> " Considerable work has been undertaken on the usage and demand management of meeting rooms, including, for example, interrogating the Facilities Management helpdesk system to see how many rooms are being booked, and the pattern of bookings across particular days, and the overall percentage of time that meeting rooms are booked out. We understand that at present it is not possible to determine the incidence of "no-shows" (i.e. when a meeting room is booked but the arrangement is changed). Here there may be scope to invest in technology that enables oversight of whether the room is being utilised."

In addition, across a range of organisations, it is sometimes felt that the pandemic has provided something of a break point or turning point which unfreezes aspects of the status quo or the taken for granted, and therefore creates a context which is conducive to innovation and change. It is likely that the shift to remote and agile working during the Covid-19 pandemic will have lasting impacts on people's patterns of work, including their preferred locations. An increase in remote working has the potential to lessen the pressure on space. However, it is not clear whether this is qualified by other factors, such as the significance of the core business days and traditional working arrangements and cultural expectations on staff to be in the building.

The convention of having three core business days concentrates the use of the building to the middle part of the weeks. This means that Monday, Fridays, weekends and recess are periods where the building has tended to be much quieter. It will be interesting to consider whether the question of different options about patterns of business for Members and for staff will be included as part of the strategic discussions as the Scottish Parliament emerges from the pandemic. There might be a case for better use of spaces by Parliament staff on Mondays and Fridays, especially with the push towards more flexible working.

Furthermore, we acknowledge the collaborative approach underway across different departments to work together to address space issues. For example, Facilities Management works closely with HR and office heads to map the numbers and profile of colleagues who work part-time/compressed hours and so on. This culture of collaborative working lends itself to the piloting of space planning innovations involving volunteer participants in support of innovation and trailing of new arrangements.

Working conditions

Some people spend long periods of time in office space which lacks daylight, windows and

fresh-air ventilation. The lack of ventilation – most notably the lack of windows that can be opened by building users – may be a particularly important issue as staff return to the building after the pandemic, depending on what is identified as ideal practice in terms of mitigating risks. Overall, interviewees were very positive about the building as a place of work, while at the same time being able to point to design features which were felt to present everyday challenges. People could feel by turns charmed and frustrated. The accessibility of the social spaces such as the Garden Lobby, the Restaurant, and the adjacent garden, are greatly valued and commonly identified as important resources which enhance their working conditions.

HR policies which allow staff to combine days in the building with remote or agile working are well established, even before the pandemic. In these respects the parliament has adopted forward-looking practices in support of modern working conditions.

Openness versus security

In light of the terrorist attack in Westminster in 2017, all parliaments, including the Scottish Parliament have been under pressure to increase security. Despite the presence of armed guards outside the building and tightened security at the new Visitor Entrance, the building still feels inviting and accessible. Members of the public enjoy remarkable proximity to Members in the Chamber. Unlike in Westminster where there are security screens in the Public Gallery, viewing in the Chamber is less restricted. We recognise that this is the subject of a debate between different stakeholders who have different attitudes to risk management and we can see that there are evident tensions between principles of openness and accessibility and security and safety.

The use of space

Our interviews and observations indicated that the building is important to cultivating social relationships. So, on the one hand, continued efforts are made to enable more efficient home-working and the use of video conferencing calls in meetings, but, on the other hand, the culture of communication still involves face-to-face interactions. The Garden Lobby, and to some extent the Restaurant, are a popular meeting space. This design feature of the building is clearly well regarded and well used by Members and staff. The nature of that space reflects the Scottish Parliament's wider values of openness. It is a very major hub of the life and work of the building where Members and staff members from across a range of services and departments co-mingle in a collegiate, sociable and productive way.

Because the building is already under considerable space pressure, our research participants emphasised the shortage of meeting rooms that can be easily booked at short notice, and felt that more spaces are needed to facilitate interaction including social spaces, such as quiet cafés. Providing more meeting spaces could also help co-operation between different offices and departments.

The reality of organizational life at times requires a quiet space for "difficult conversations", not only in the sphere of politics but also everyday HR contexts (such as job interviews, or disciplinary meetings) or to offer pastoral support. Provision of more closed rooms would not go against the ethos of transparency and openness that many stakeholders in Parliament embrace and are proud of.

Our research participants also emphasised the lack of storage spaces and the recent challenges of social distancing, which impact on the configuration of open plan offices, social spaces, and how condensed people, desks and seating can be. In the time of the pandemic, Facilities Management staff are under additional pressure to make provision of safe working spaces. As one respondent put it to us: "I think it'll be a very long time, if ever, that we go back to the old days of people thronging out of the chamber, and into the Garden Lobby. Sadly."

We note that patterns of demand for meeting spaces, especially during the core business days of the Scottish Parliament, significantly outstrips room capacity. We were impressed with the diligence and efficiency with which Facilities Management staff manage the room bookings system. Nonetheless we identify a critical capacity issue for the building. We return to IT in later in the report, but note here that the IT infrastructure in the meetings rooms is felt by many staff to be dated and sometimes the location and dimensions of the hardware itself puts further constraints on how effectively these (often already tight) spaces can be used. The need to have bulky screens, monitors and keyboards in these rooms has been overtaken by new technologies, such as personal tablets and other mobile, networked devices.

It is admirable that the Parliament offers space for contemplation or for breastfeeding (the importance of such provision was discussed by Sarah Childs in her 2016 report) [2] , though these spaces do not have the best location, and they are not a substitute for quiet rooms for private meetings.

People

Organizational culture

We were struck by the development of a largely egalitarian culture in the Parliament. This is both symbolised and enacted through the ways in which the common spaces are shared in non-hierarchical ways by staff and Members. There is only one area (the small café bar) which is restricted during certain times for Members-only use. The main restaurants are open to all and there is no fast track of preferential treatment given to Members. People in the Parliament enjoy the freedom to approach others, regardless of their position or their rank. These practices are in contrast to the delineation of spaces and more pronounced sense of hierarchy in Westminster.

We also noted the absence of a drinking culture in the building. Though it is available to purchase in the restaurants and the small bar, in practice it was rare to see any alcohol being consumed on the premises, with the exception of evening events when it was part of the hospitality for guests. Our earlier report (Siebert, 2020) [3] expressed concern about patterns of alcohol consumption on the Westminster estate, with a link being drawn between alcohol and misbehaviour on site. As management academics, we suggest that the absence of drinking in the Scottish Parliament has had positive impacts on organisational culture, appropriate to modern workplaces.

We also found the culture to be warm, respectful and welcoming of us as two 'outsider' researchers, and we appreciated the ways in which people engaged with us as part of our project. Even if some of the spaces have their quirks and drawbacks, people also take pride in working in such an iconic building. There is very evident pride on the part of staff to be working for the Scottish Parliament, and a recognition of the way in which their collaborative efforts underpin the work of democracy. We saw many examples of staff having a clear focus on how they can best support the Members. Openness to the public is also part of the organisational culture and a clear value is put on the guided tours, accessibility, and education and outreach activities.

Many staff are active in creating networks to connect with each other on issues of common interest and mutual support as well as practical policy innovations. We saw examples of groups on

- mental health

- LGBT+

- equality and diversity

- sustainability.

These activities and groups also speak to a culture of collaboration and constructive engagement with the continuous enhancement of the Parliament as a workplace. In a period where remote working may increase, it is important that such networks are supported and maintained. Indeed their insights about how best to develop practices in this new era of work will be invaluable to the Parliament as part of the co-creation of ways forward.

Given the likelihood of further reorganization of the building (including re-allocation of space, relocations for staff, and so on) it is important that these processes are managed in collaborative and collegiate ways and that the decision processes do not unsettle aspects of the collegiate culture that the organisation has built up over many years. In some interviews we heard hints that there may be hierarchies of space. For some, Queensbury House is perhaps perceived as something of an epicentre of seniority, and we know in all organisations that spaces can carry meanings that are not always intended. Rooms with daylight are at a premium in the building, especially when so many are housed in the basement levels. The development of clear and defensible criteria for space allocation should be a priority, and these criteria should include questions such as fairness at work.

Remote working

Even before the Covid-19 pandemic the Scottish Parliament had developed some progressive flexible working policies. The flexibility to choose a blend between coming into the building and working remotely is something that many staff have appreciated. Like many workplaces, the pandemic has had major implications for patterns of working in the Parliament. Though a small core staff have been on site, the vast majority have been carrying on their work from home, facilitated by MS Teams and related ICT. Even as we ease our way out of the restrictions of the pandemic it is not unlikely that forms of social distancing may be required in public building. In addition, it may be that the past year has accelerated some already-developing trends in terms of changing patterns of work. In part, a greater incidence of homeworking will ease some of the pressures on space in the building. On the other hand, the health and safety measures in place post-COVID-19 may in some ways make the use of space less 'efficient'.

There is ample evidence that the move to remote working for Parliament staff has been successful. Our interviewees appreciated the support they were given by Facilities Management, IT, and so on to help them in the early weeks and months of the pandemic.

The increase in homeworking since March 2020 was an externally imposed rather than planned-for development. Because it coincided with school closures and the shutting of child care facilities it also brought additional and intensive pressures for staff. We know that the burden of caring responsibilities is gendered and therefore the impacts of the situation will have been felt differentially across the workforce. For some who had been incorporating a period of remote working prior to the pandemic, the change also involved a sudden and unexpected shift to a five days a week set up. For others, the experience of homeworking has been largely positive and, in common with wider patterns in other workplaces, there is increasing interest in maintaining elements of remote working post-lockdown. In that respect this trend supports and gives momentum to the Scottish Parliament's pre-existing workplace strategy which had been developing remote working policies.

However, there are also reasons to be cautious. Although working from home brought some benefits, some of our interviewees complained about the lack of spontaneous social interaction with colleagues. One person said:

> " My last year in there has been marked by the absence of interaction with the public and the everyday sort of buzz and hubbub of parliament that makes it a lively and vibrant place. It's been a pretty desolate place to work without the community and public interaction."

Also, management literature also warns of the downsides of home working. A recent report from the CIPD [4] noted that increases in productivity among homeworkers is often achieved through work intensification. Remote working can also diminish team-working practices and cultures, and it can be harder to manage flows of knowledge across the organisation. While many people have welcomed the removal of commuting from their lives, for others it can act as a buffer or decompression zone at the beginning and end of work, as well as demarcating 'work-life' boundaries, negatively affecting employees' health. Finally, research indicates that there are important equality and diversity issues inherent in these questions. For example, visibility in the building (as opposed to participation via video conferencing) is linked to promotion prospects and career success.

On balance these interviewees opted for the hybrid model for the future – a mixture of remote and office work. This finding is in line with management literature on home working during the pandemic which suggests that employee demand for homeworking is here to stay. Effective homeworking requires trust. The egalitarian aspects of the organisational culture in the Scottish Parliament are conducive to trust creation, but those in charge of new HR policies in relation to remote and hybrid working should be mindful of recent research on equality and diversity principles to ensure that some groups of employees are not disadvantaged.

Hybrid debate

As much as remote and hybrid working for Parliament staff was largely a success, there was a degree of scepticism among our interviewees about remote debating in the Chamber. MSPs commented on the problems with technology (poor broadband, or the choice of the most appropriate video conferencing application), and teething problems in managing the meetings, but by far the most common complaint was a loss of the spirit of "coming together". One MSP said:

> " I'm really worried about that. I don't like the calls that we're now getting from some people that say "oh it should always be like this, we should always do it remotely, it saves people travelling." I still think there's a place in our democracy for the coming together of people and the electorate seeing people coming together in a parliament."

Another MSP expressed concerns about the dynamic of the debate:

> " It is possible to do it with people voting remotely, but I think if you're a government minister answering questions or there's a big debate, you can't intervene in somebody in hybrid [debate]. If you're remote and they're remote and I think you definitely lose something from that. The key players in any big debate, if they possibly can, should be in the chamber. Not everybody that's in the chamber speaks, (…) but that ability to intervene, challenge what they're saying, you just can't do it with a hybrid version."

The same MSP expressed a view that a passionate debate requires face-to-face participation and that unscripted persuasive speeches are not as effective on zoom. Also problematic was the principle that MSPs joining the debates from home were not given opportunities to intervene in the debates: "So if someone was speaking you couldn't ask them a question, you couldn't counter one of their points or ask for a point of clarification and that really restricted debate."

Most of our interviewees supported remote participation in the event of emergencies such

as an illness, but a concern was expressed that it will be used as an excuse:

> " There's a danger in that in that people become just used to it and it becomes a reasonable excuse for just staying at home, which is not the kinda essence of what the parliament should be about. There's ways in which that can be done from time to time but I think if it became the norm then we would lose a great deal of what parliament's about."

Remote working was successful in what was described as "the fringe round the parliament", for example in cross-party parliamentary working groups. Remote meetings in these groups "made people think a lot differently about the potentials of working, if not entirely remotely but having an acceptable mixture."

Technology and sustainability

Information technology might be the solution to the lack of office space, but some members of staff are very attached to their office accommodation:

> " Technology is the biggest challenge - how the building can maintain the appetite for new technology but still remain true to the Miralles' design and what it was originally built. […] There's stresses and pulls and there's demand for more people to support the parliamentary service but where do you put them all? I am a traditionalist I like to come in, I like to go to my desk and sit at my desk and do my work even though I might not be at my desk for most of the day."

A concern was also expressed that new technological solutions might interfere with architectural design, for example the original conduits for wiring may not accessible, and new cabling throughout the building will be on display detracting from interior design.

In terms of technology development, the Parliament custodians are reluctant to be leading edge in technology, and want the Parliament to be "behind the curve".

> " We always look at the curve and we don't want to be at the trailblazing end of the curve; we might just want to be behind the curve where we've got established technologies that we know but, what do you do? […] It's that relationship between changing and technology and maintaining the building as custodians of the building because it is such a fantastic building."

One such example of staying behind the curve is fingerprint technology at the entrance points – it is innovative but not ground-breaking in its novelty. Similar decisions are made in relation to technological solutions used to support the sustainability agenda.

Sustainability

Since the Scottish Parliament has passed legislation designed to put Scotland at the forefront of the sustainability agenda, Facilities Management are under obligation to make the parliamentary estate "green". The original design by Miralles does not always align with energy efficiency guidelines (for example, through the use of energy inefficient lighting) so difficult questions are faced by staff on how far the original design can be adapted to suit the modern-day standards without negatively affecting the original concept. The Parliament's laudable and ambitious corporate commitments to being carbon neutral, and to invest in low carbon technologies, have implications on both a strategic and operational level. It is clear too that staff feel a keenness of responsibility to act as a leader in these agendas given the flagship status of the building.

The broad ambition is net zero by 2030. The Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body has identified strategic investment priorities which will help to transition towards low carbon heat sources in the future. There are already significant streams of work in train. A project is underway to assess the feasibility of a district heating network, and the Parliament has developed a Sustainable Development Impact Assessment tool which is used to assess the positive or negative impacts of work undertaken. We understand that this tool is being adopted by a number of committees in the assessment of their work.

The biggest challenges in terms of sustainability mentioned in our interviews were:

- replacement heat sources

- improving the efficiency of the cooling systems (by using that cold air to cool areas rather than having the chillers)

- reducing energy consumption

- introducing low carbon or zero carbon alternatives.

These actions are to mitigate against climate change. Another challenge relates to extreme weather events and the resilience of the building to loss of power, which can be mitigated by back-up generators. Greater energy efficiency can be achieved by "turning stuff off that doesn't need to be on when it's not needed." This includes looking at occupancy times of the offices, regulating temperature through intelligent control strategies.

Like with the information technology solutions, "conservative" and safe choices are made in relation to energy saving solutions:

> " There's quite a lot of technology that has been trialled but it's still early days and it's still risky. Some of the latest technology thinking we wouldn't be in a situation where we were leading edge we just wouldn't take that risk so leading edge or as close to leading edge maybe but not, not taking risks we would want to know that the alternatives for us in terms of heating and cooling sources would be, have been trialled and proven."

There are tensions between the political message of adopting new technology because it is seen to be "green" in situations where this technology is not suitable for the building. One such example is the solar panels where the feasibility of these onto the roofs is a twenty-four year payback period.

Tensions are likely to emerge when replacements of furniture and fittings are considered – to what extent to follow new standards, and to what extent to stay true to the original design both in terms of quality and environmental sustainability.

> " They were halogen lamps they took ages to light up, they gave off a lot of heat when they were in so the room heated up significantly so we decided would we change them, when we were changing them would they be like-for-like? No, we decided to go with quite a different design so we have these kind of leaf shape lights with the bottle shapes on them, there's a hundred and twenty-nine bottles on there each representing each member but they're far more efficient lights."

Members and staff spoke positively about the support from IT colleagues during the pandemic. Such support included the issuing of hardware and kit to enable remote working, and training and support for people working with new platforms. This was supported by staff from Facilities Management who helped with delivery of desks and chairs and so on. The Broadcasting team had to revolutionise its provision. It went from being strictly a support service to taking on a more 'lead' role in navigating the possibilities of remote and online parliamentary business.

The pandemic may have raised the profile of services which hitherto worked in the background. As one respondent from Facilities Management said to us, "It used to be if we ever became visible that was a bad thing. It would mean that we'd messed up." Over this period, support services such as IT have come to the fore, working closely with members

and staff across the organization. One interviewee commented on the shift of broadcasting to being "a critical service":

> " Normally we just follow business and we serve a function to meet business demand. Suddenly when no one was allowed into the building there was a big pressure on us then to provide [expertise] how meetings could be held virtually. That took a lot of engineering effort. The hardware side of it and the engineering side of it was fairly straightforward, we knew what we had to do. What was the most challenging point was learning about how it was going to work because no one had done anything like this before. […] So the big change was actually a human change about how we manage other people and how we bring together teams that had probably in the past been fairly disparate. Normally we were a service and we just follow business and we scrabble under the surface to work out how we're going to make things happen, but then it's flipped on its side and suddenly the broadcasters were telling the parliament about how parliament would run and what business we could have. Previously we'd been an invisible service and suddenly we were the face of it. We were checking people's connections, about welcoming them in, about saying can you change your background, can you move your lighting around, you don't sound very good. So there's an element of face-to-face professionalism that we had to brush up."

This shift has the potential to cement their role as central to the business of the Parliament. It also puts a premium on 'customer service' skills and orientations. Culturally, services which have always been in reality the engine room of the Parliament, may be seen in a new light and their work more widely appreciated.

Process

Political changes

The Parliament exists within a changing political environment, one characterised by contested questions about constitutional change, including, for example, the impact of Brexit on the allocations of powers and responsibilities, and the possibility of independence for Scotland. In these different scenarios, and to different extents, new responsibilities may mean new business streams, new Members, and new staffing resources which would need to be accommodated. We found staff and managers to be well attuned to these elements of the strategic environment and thoughtful about their implications for the building and how it can be used. We heard a range of views about the capacity of the building to absorb new or increased demands. Many feel a degree of confidence that there is flexibility and scope to integrate new elements. Here our interviewees point to the judicious scenario planning that was undertaken in advance of the independence referendum in 2014.

It is our understanding that this process identified, for example, scope for extra seating in the Chamber. Others pointed to the footprint of the estate and suggested that there is room for extensions or annexes if needed. In addition it was widely felt that there are some significant areas of the building, notably the media tower, which are under-utilised and which could be repurposed as part of dealing with a growing Parliament. Part of these conversations also led to some people suggesting that a move away from the concentration of business into three days would also enable the building to be used more flexibly.

Transparency and openness

Throughout our research we were told that the building and the institution of Parliament were designed with a principle of transparency in mind as one of our interviewees said:

> " That design that the media tower is right next door to the chamber that the broadcast interview spot is the first spot that an MSP would step thorough as they come out the chamber that is, that design makes clear that the media has an important place, it belongs here, it has a duty here that reinforces that whatever the decisions are that you're taking that there has to be transparency here you're not going to get away with trying to suppress information and keep it under wraps."

One employee suggested to us that this approach to parliamentary transparency served as a model in Westminster:

> " It shaped Westminster as well because the BBC immediately went this is great and they went down to Westminster with a show reel saying this is what accessibility looks because prior to that broadcasters weren't allowed to do live interviews inside the Palace of Westminster."

The issue of transparency recurred in the study not only in relation to press scrutiny. The design of the building includes numerous glass walls, glazed doors and open spaces. There is a suggestion that open and transparent spaces might reduce the incidence of

bullying and harassment, [5] [6] though some of our interviewees noted that a vast majority of contemporary organizational misbehaviour such as bullying and harassment takes place in the online space (email or text communication). Politically, openness sends a powerful message of rejection of secrecy, which is cherished by the stakeholders in Parliament.

Gathering Place

We were impressed with the ethos of openness and public engagement that runs through the culture and practices of the Parliament. It is clear that this founding ethos plays an important and meaningful role for the institution. The educational work and resources are impressive and, daily, the building acts as a hub for a wide range of visits and groups. The educational spaces are lively and welcoming. The Parliament has also developed some superb tours, with different themes and focal points, where visitors can benefit from expert staff who guide them through the stories and work of the parliament. In addition, staff have become adept at transforming areas into hospitable spaces for the hosting of events. It is clear that such opportunities and usages are greatly valued by Members, either in terms of the support to host an event, or due to the serendipitous opportunities to meet visitors or campaigners who are raising awareness of particular issues through small temporary exhibitions or presentations. More widely it is evident that public access and openness is established at a very profound level into the culture of the institution.

The building also provides a physical focal point for Scottish politics. It is perhaps a sign of how established the Parliament has become that is has become a 'Gathering Place' for people to come together as part of wider engagement with political questions. Here we have in mind marches, protests or public gatherings at times of political significance. In this respect we pose the question of the extent to which the architecture of the precincts supports and enables such public political engagement at this site. We understand the significance of the original design and vision for these public areas. However, we have also seen how, especially on a dark evening, the environs may be somewhat hazardous for those gathering. The low walls, kerbs and water features – despite their aesthetic and symbolic merits – do not necessarily lend themselves to this area acting as a space in which the public can come together as a democratic expression. We acknowledge the efforts that go into making the space as risk free as possible – for example, the use of temporary lighting rigs. We know that the lack of toilet facilities contributes to the need for clean up operations the next morning. Clearly too there are security considerations that may govern the design and layout of this area and the general proximity of the public to the building. The question of how or whether this part of the estate could or should work as a space in which people convene in these communal ways encompasses political, strategic and operational facets. It appears that there is public desire to convene at the Parliament at times of national or political significance in ways which manifest the founding vision of the Parliament as a Gathering Place. Here we pose the question of whether this extends only to the interior of the building and the work that goes on there, or whether there might be more scope to consider the ways in which the exterior grounds might support the vision of the Parliament.

Concluding remarks

The role of the building as a material "anchor" for institutions is recognized in research, but how this effect is achieved is not well understood. We asked our interviewees "is parliament a parliament without a building?" and "To what extent the Parliament is a gathering of people deliberating and making decisions, and to what extent a physical building legitimizes the institutions and becomes a symbol of democracy". One of our interviewees argued:

> " I think we need the symbol. I think our society is such that we still need the symbol. I usually go over to Isle of Man in July where they have their Tynwald which is their historic parliament gathering once a year on Tynwald Hill. […] It still binds people together and brings the whole island together. People do need symbols, societies need symbols. So yes, I think we need the symbol and I don't want it to become a mausoleum."

In our time in the Scottish Parliament we saw many traditions in practice, and we experienced, and were welcomed into, a warm and professional organizational culture. The Parliament building is of enormous symbolic, cultural and architectural significance in Scotland. It has continued to develop as a venue for debate and decisions in Scottish political life. Alongside this, the building has played a part in promoting education, citizenship and national and international visitor engagement. Staff as the custodians of the building are deeply engaged in the maintenance and development of the institution and in its founding values. Though the balance between continuity and change, or tradition and innovation, is always a delicate one, we encountered staff who are committed to translating these values in thoughtful and responsible ways to meet the evolving demands on the Parliament.

Recommendations

This report captured the key themes that emerged from our research. Based on our findings, we put forward the following recommendations:

1. Anticipating an increase in remote working after the pandemic, it is important that employees are well-supported and HR policies develop in line with the current research, especially in relation to health and safety, employee well-being, career progression and equality and diversity.

2. Numerous positive aspects of organizational culture in the Scottish Parliament (for example collegiality and egalitarianism) were evident in the period before the pandemic. It is important that these aspects are not lost through redesign of working practices, modes of communication.

3. Although it may take time for the communal areas of the Parliament Building to be "back to normal", the environment for social interaction should be enhanced by creating more meeting rooms for private conversations, and alongside this meeting spaces/tables in the communal areas.

4. Services (such as Facilities Management, Broadcasting, and IT) which previously had more of a background role have been at the forefront of supporting the work of the Parliament during the pandemic. We recommend that the corporate culture recognises these as critical services and that they are adequately supported as their new roles become embedded.

5. The Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (the SPCB) should consider the scope for measures to enhance the suitability and usability of the outdoor estate to act as a safe and conducive gathering place for public assemblies, subject to security and architectural integrity.

6. The Parliament should continue its important strategic work in relation to preparedness and scenario planning for the usage and capacity of the building including in relation to health crises, security concerns, and political change.

7. The SPCB should continue to develop its capacity for inter-parliamentary learning, not least about changing practices during the pandemic, so that key institutions can share their insights and innovations with each other in a systematic way.

8. In a context where more remote working is likely, it is important that the Parliament considers how best to ensure that its examples of networks of shared interest within the Parliament (e.g. on sustainability, LGBT+, mental health, and so on) continue to flourish and to act both as forums for social engagement and as a basis for knowledge which can improve policy and practice.

9. The drivers for change identified in this report point to the vital importance of effective change management and therefore the need to invest in the organisation's strategic capacity to manage change effectively, including the skills of front-line managers.

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