

Eco-congregation Report - A visit to the Scottish Parliament

On the 29th September 2016, around one hundred people across Scotland, from the Borders to the Highlands and Islands, gathered in the Scottish Parliament to meet up with their MSP's. The purpose of this mass lobby was to discuss Climate Change with our regional and constituency MSP's. Everyone in Scotland is represented by their constituency MSP (ours is Rona Mackay) and a further 7 who represent our region.

As we were ushered into Parliamentary Room 1 wearing our Parliament security passes there was a feeling of quiet, respectful anticipation and nervousness. Waiting there as the minutes ticked by we wondered if anyone would turn up. To my surprise and delight three of the MSP's I had arranged to meet appeared, namely, Neil Bibby (Labour) Maurice Gold (Conservative) and Rona Mackay (SNP). Lots of people joined in the conversations about Transport Emissions, Reducing Air Pollution and Congestion in city centres and Renewable Energy as well as Low Carbon Farming. Our task was to persuade the MSP's to write to the Government Minister responsible for these areas of concern and ask for his or her support to cut emissions and increase the forthcoming budget to achieve these aims.

Scotland is leading the UK on reducing greenhouse gas emissions but a recent report on Climate Change said we need to do more in the areas of transport, buildings and farming. As we listened, talked, debated, questioned and discussed together and stood in a huge circle around that magnificent room there was a real buzz of excitement and expectation. All of us felt encouraged and enlightened by the experience. The whole process was a learning curve in how the Scottish Parliamentary system operates. Afterwards we met in a small cafe and a loud wonderful cheer went up when we heard that after our meeting the leaders of the five Scottish Parties, Patrick Harvie (Green Party) Ruth Davidson (Conservative) Kezia Dugdale (Labour) Willie Rennie (Lib.Dems) and Nicola Sturgeon (SNP) had agreed to work together on positive Climate Change.

Let's hope they continue to do so.

The world belongs to God. We are the caretakers.

Katy Owen