



House of Commons  
Political and Constitutional  
Reform Committee

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**The work of the  
Committee in the 2010  
Parliament**

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**Twelfth Report of Session 2014–15**

*Report, together with formal minutes relating  
to the report*

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## The Political and Constitutional Reform Committee

[Mr Graham Allen MP](#) (*Labour, Nottingham North*) (Chair)  
[Mr Christopher Chope MP](#) (*Conservative, Christchurch*)  
[Tracey Crouch MP](#) (*Conservative, Chatham and Aylesford*)  
[Mark Durkan MP](#) (*Social Democratic & Labour Party, Foyle*)  
[Paul Flynn MP](#) (*Labour, Newport West*)  
[Duncan Hames MP](#) (*Liberal Democrat, Chippenham*)  
[Fabian Hamilton MP](#) (*Labour, Leeds North East*)  
[David Morris MP](#) (*Conservative, Morecambe and Lunesdale*)  
[Robert Neill MP](#) (*Conservative, Bromley and Chislehurst*)  
[Chris Ruane MP](#) (*Labour, Vale of Clwyd*)  
[Mr Andrew Turner MP](#) (*Conservative, Isle of Wight*)

The following Members were also members of the Committee during the Parliament:

[Mr Jeremy Browne MP](#) (*Liberal Democrat, Taunton Deane*)  
[Sheila Gilmore MP](#) (*Labour, Edinburgh East*)  
[Andrew Griffiths MP](#) (*Conservative, Burton*)  
[Simon Hart MP](#) (*Conservative, Camarthen West and South Pembrokeshire*)  
[Tristram Hunt MP](#) (*Labour, Stoke on Trent Central*)  
[Mrs Eleanor Laing MP](#) (*Conservative, Epping Forest*)  
[Yasmin Qureshi MP](#) (*Labour, Bolton South East*)  
[Stephen Williams MP](#) (*Liberal Democrat, Bristol West*)

### Powers

The Committee's powers are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in Temporary Standing Order (Political and Constitutional Reform Committee). These are available on the Internet via [www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmstords.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmstords.htm).

### Publication

Committee reports are published on the Committee's website at [www.parliament.uk/PCRC-publications](http://www.parliament.uk/PCRC-publications) and by The Stationery Office by Order of the House.

### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Martyn Atkins (Clerk), Edward Faulkner (Committee Specialist), Ami Cochrane (Legal Assistant), Tony Catinella (Senior Committee Assistant), Nerys Davies (Campaign Co-ordinator), James Camp (Committee Assistant) and Jessica Bridges-Palmer (Media Officer).

### Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee, Political and Constitutional Reform Committee, House of Commons, 14 Tothill Street, London SW1H 9NB. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 0737; the Committee's email address is [pcrc@parliament.uk](mailto:pcrc@parliament.uk).

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## Summary

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The Political and Constitutional Reform Select Committee was established in June 2010 to consider political and constitutional reform. Over the last five years the Committee has scrutinised the Government's programme of political and constitutional reform, including:

- The establishment of fixed-term Parliaments;
- Proposals for a power to recall MPs;
- The introduction of a register of third-party lobbyists;
- Proposed reforms to the House of Lords; and
- The implementation of, and transition to, Individual Electoral Registration.

The existence of a Committee dedicated to consideration of political and constitutional reform has brought additional parliamentary scrutiny to a substantial part of the Government's programme. Our scrutiny has resulted in significant changes being made to Government proposals and legislation, and has allowed for scrutiny of subjects which might otherwise have gone unexamined.

We have recommended that, should the next Government plan to take forward constitutional reform, a select committee be established to examine the Government's proposals, to keep the progress of any political and constitutional reform under regular review, and to continue the work this Committee has undertaken.

In addition to our scrutiny of the Government's programme of political and constitutional reform, we have also undertaken inquiries considering several issues of wider political and constitutional importance. These have included a five-year project looking at the possibility of a written constitution for the UK, ongoing work into local government and devolution across the UK, and a substantial inquiry—including a large-scale public consultation—into voter engagement in the UK.

One of our greatest achievements this Parliament has been the extent to which we have engaged the public with our work through consultations and increased use of social media, online surveys and informal events. This has been an extremely positive development which we encourage other Committees to adopt in the future.



# 1 Introduction

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1. The Political and Constitutional Reform Select Committee, a select committee of the House of Commons, was established in June 2010 to consider political and constitutional reform. The Committee was established under a temporary standing order for the duration of the 2010 Parliament, and was appointed with the same powers—to send for persons and papers, to undertake visits and report to the House—as departmental select committees.<sup>1</sup>

2. The Deputy Prime Minister, Rt Hon Nick Clegg MP, is responsible for leading the Government’s political and constitutional reform agenda, and when the House considered the establishment of the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee the then Deputy Leader for the House of Commons stated:

The Government have committed to establishing the Committee as quickly as possible and with cross-party support, to ensure that the House is able to scrutinise the work of the Deputy Prime Minister.<sup>2</sup>

We have held regular evidence sessions with the Deputy Prime Minister and with those Ministers who have had responsibility for various aspects of the Government’s programme of political and constitutional reform.<sup>3</sup>

3. The Coalition’s Programme for Government committed to substantial political and constitutional changes. The main commitments in this area were:

- Establishing fixed-term Parliaments;
- Providing for a referendum on the introduction of the Alternative Vote;
- Providing for the creation of fewer and more equal sized constituencies;
- Introducing a power to recall MPs;
- Considering reform to the House of Lords;
- Speeding up the implementation of Individual Electoral Registration;
- Bringing forward the proposals of the Wright Committee, for reform to the House of Commons, in full.<sup>4</sup>

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1 [Standing Orders of the House of Commons](#), HC (2013-14) 900

2 HC Deb, 7 June 2010, [col 137](#)

3 Ministers with responsibilities for political and constitutional reform: Mark Harper MP was Minister for Political and Constitutional Reform from May 2010 to September 2012, Chloe Smith MP was Minister for Political and Constitutional Reform from September 2012 to October 2013, Rt Hon Greg Clark MP was Minister of State for Cabinet Office (Cities and Constitution) from October 2013 to July 2014, and Sam Gyimah MP was Parliamentary Secretary (Minister for the Constitution) from July 2014. The Committee held evidence sessions on the Government’s programme of political and constitutional reform on 15 July 2010 ([HC 358-I](#), Session 2010–12), 12 May 2011 ([HC 358-II](#), Session 2010–12), 19 April 2012 ([HC 178](#), Session 2010–12), 13 December 2012 ([HC 834-I](#), Session 2012–13), 10 October 2013 ([HC 660-I](#), Session 2013–14), and 9 September 2014 ([HC 464](#), Session 2014–15).

Since this Committee was established in June 2010 several of these proposals for reform have been shelved or abandoned, including reform of the House of Lords, changes to parliamentary constituencies, and full implementation of the proposals of the Wright Committee for reform of the House of Commons.

4. In addition to scrutinising the policies set out in the Coalition Agreement, and others brought forward by the Government over the course of this Parliament, we have also considered several issues of wider political and constitutional importance. These wider inquiries have included a five-year project looking at the possibility of a written constitution for the UK, ongoing work into local government and devolution across the UK, and a substantial inquiry—including a large-scale public consultation—into voter engagement in the UK.

5. As this first fixed-term Parliament comes to a close, we considered it would be helpful to the House to be elected in May 2015 for us to set out the work we have done this Parliament. We hope these observations will prove helpful for any successor committee in the 2015 Parliament, as well as parliamentarians more generally and the next administration.

6. In addition to setting out the most significant inquiries we have undertaken during the 2010 Parliament, this report also assesses our effectiveness over the past five years. In November 2012 the Liaison Committee—which is made up of the Chairs of each of the select committees and is responsible for, amongst other matters, considering the work of select committees—proposed revised core tasks for departmental committees.<sup>5</sup> The revised tasks included focusing committee work on examining the strategy, policy, expenditure and performance of departments, and also contributing to the scrutiny of legislation before, during and after a Bill is considered by Parliament. These were agreed by the House of Commons on 31 January 2013.<sup>6</sup> Although we are not a departmental select committee, we have nonetheless found these core tasks a useful guide when considering and assessing our programme of work, and refer to them throughout this report. We have submitted three memoranda to the Liaison Committee in relation to its work on the effectiveness, resources and powers of select committees.<sup>7</sup> This report builds on those responses.

7. As we have noted in several of our reports, members of the Committee have not always been unanimous in their views on some of the subjects that we have considered. Although on many occasions we have been unanimous in our clear recommendations to the Government—particularly on those occasions when we have scrutinised legislation going through Parliament—on others we have produced reports to encourage further debate and consideration of an issue, without taking a side in the debate ourselves.

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4 [The Coalition: our programme for government](#), HM Government, May 2010

5 Liaison Committee, [Select committee effectiveness, resources and powers](#), Third Report of Session 2012–13

6 HC Deb, 31 January 2013, [cc 1467–7](#)

7 Memoranda from the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee to the Liaison Committee in relation to its inquiries into Select committee effectiveness, resources and powers [March 2012, [Ev w40](#), September 2013, [SCE 04](#), February 2015, [SCE 39](#)]

## 2 Our work during the 2010 Parliament

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8. Our work during this Parliament has been extremely wide-ranging, but we consider in this chapter our key areas of work, and in particular those which we believe merit further consideration in the next Parliament. These are:

- The possibility of codifying—or not codifying—the UK constitution;
- Voter engagement in the UK;
- The Government’s Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014;
- Government formation;
- Parliament’s role in conflict decisions;
- The future of devolution and local government;
- The transition to Individual Electoral Registration;
- Fixed-term Parliaments.

We also describe our more general work scrutinising the Cabinet Office and the work of the Deputy Prime Minister. A full list of the reports we have published over the course of the Parliament is available on page 28 of this report, and details of our other work—including visits, debates in the House and one-off evidence sessions—are available in the Sessional Returns for the House of Commons, which are published after each parliamentary Session.<sup>8</sup> A great deal more information—including published correspondence and transcripts of evidence—is available on our website: [www.parliament.uk/pcrc](http://www.parliament.uk/pcrc).

### The possibility of codifying—or not codifying—the UK constitution

9. Given that this Committee was established to consider political and constitutional reform, it is only appropriate that our longest-running inquiry has been into the possibility of codifying—or not codifying—the UK constitution.

10. In September 2010 the Committee, in a ground-breaking innovation, asked the Centre for Political and Constitutional Studies at King’s College London to collaborate on an inquiry entitled *Mapping the path to codifying—or not codifying—the UK’s Constitution*. At our request the Centre for Political and Constitutional Studies, under the direction of Professor Robert Blackburn, produced a series of research papers for the Committee, including a literature review and a comparative study of 23 international examples of constitutional codification. The last of these research papers, prepared to inform the

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8 [House of Commons Sessional Returns](#), Parliament website

Committee's inquiry and the policy debate on constitutional codification more widely, was delivered to the Committee in June 2014 and published as an appendix to the Committee's report entitled *A new Magna Carta?*.<sup>9</sup> The paper contained a number of elements:

- a chapter setting out arguments for and against a codified constitution;
- a chapter setting out the process that could be adopted in the preparation, design and implementation of a codified constitution; and
- three illustrative blueprints—a Constitutional Code, a Constitutional Consolidation Act, and a written constitution—which indicate how a codified constitution for the UK could take shape.

**11. Our partnership with the Centre for Political and Constitutional Studies at King's College London on the possibility of codifying—or not codifying—the UK constitution could be a model for other committees wishing to develop a sustained programme of work in a particular policy area.**

12. Our work in this area has been to inform debate on constitutional codification as the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Magna Carta and the 2015 general election approaches. As our report stated, “what we are publishing now represents the most comprehensive attempt so far to provide different detailed models of a codified constitution for comparison and consideration”. Following a consultation on our report, *A new Magna Carta?*, we produced a further report, *Consultation on A new Magna Carta?*, on 9 March 2015.<sup>10</sup> This follow-up report set out the responses we had received to our consultation, with a view to informing further debate on the subject. Annexed to this report was a draft of an accessible written constitution based on the UK's existing constitutional arrangements, together with options for reform.<sup>11</sup> This was produced in order to promote further debate on our constitutional arrangements and options for reform.

13. Related to our central inquiry on the possibility of codifying—or not—the UK constitution, we have also considered related matters such as the constitutional role of the judiciary if there were a codified constitution.<sup>12</sup> Our consideration of this issue included not just taking oral and written evidence, but also visiting the Supreme Court and meeting its President to discuss this issue.

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9 [A new Magna Carta?](#), Fourth Report of Session 2014–15, HC 463

10 [Consultation on A new Magna Carta?](#), Seventh Report of Session 2014–15, HC 599

11 This annex has also been published as a separate document: <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/political-and-constitutional-reform/The-UK-Constitution.pdf>

12 [Constitutional role of the judiciary if there were a codified constitution](#), Fourteenth Report of Session 2013–14, HC 802

## Voter engagement in the UK

14. At the 2010 general election almost 16 million registered voters did not turn out, and there were also estimated to be around 7.5 million people who were not correctly registered to vote. Together these two figures represent more people than voted for candidates of the two Coalition parties, and also the two largest parties. With those figures in mind, in January 2014 we launched an inquiry into voter engagement, to consider the reasons people did not engage with elections in the UK, as well as what might get them to do so.

15. We produced an interim report in November 2014, setting out a wide range of proposals for re-engaging the public with elections in the UK—such as online voting, making voting compulsory and making it easier to register to vote—and held a public consultation on the draft conclusions and recommendations we put forward.<sup>13</sup> This received an enormous response, with over 16,000 people responding to the consultation. We produced a final report, based on the consultation responses, which set out a series of reforms which political parties should consider for inclusion in manifestos, and called on the next Government to consider specific changes including automatic registration of voters, online voting and holding elections at the weekend.<sup>14</sup> We also noted the phenomenally high turnout for the Scottish independence referendum, in which 84.6% of registered voters participated, which was because the vote was one of significance, the public was engaged with the question being asked, and every vote was seen to matter. We concluded that if the electorate is to be re-engaged by UK elections, action needed to be taken to ensure that the same things can be said about every election held in the United Kingdom.

**16. We have concluded that the current level of voter engagement in the UK is not satisfactory, and that urgent action needs to be taken in order to pre-empt a crisis of democracy. We have recommended that political parties include plans, in their manifestos for the 2015 general election, for improving voter engagement. It is to be hoped that the next Parliament will have occasion to scrutinise a number of proposals recommended by this Committee, if and when they are brought forward by the Government.**

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13 [Voter engagement in the UK](#), Fourth Report of Session 2014–15, HC 232

14 [Voter engagement in the UK: follow up](#), Sixth Report of Session 2014–15, HC 938

## The Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014

17. The Government published, in January 2012, proposals for introducing a statutory register of lobbyists, with a view to increasing transparency between lobbyists and senior officials in government.<sup>15</sup> The consultation paper proposed a statutory register of third party lobbyists; those working in-house would be exempt. We considered the Government's proposals and recommended that the Government scrap its proposals for a statutory register of third party lobbyists.<sup>16</sup> Our view was that the proposals presented by the Government would do nothing to improve transparency and accountability about lobbying. We took the view that imposing a statutory register on a small part of the lobbying industry without requiring registrants to sign up to a code of conduct could paradoxically lead to less regulation of the lobbying industry.

18. Our initial report, which contained a thorough examination of the proposals in the Government's consultation paper, was published on 13 July 2012. We were extremely disappointed that not only did the Government take more than a year to respond, but, when we finally received a response, on 17 July 2013, it was in the form of a letter, just over one page long, which engaged with none of the detailed points in the original report.<sup>17</sup> Our report was intended to help the Government refine and develop its proposals. To respond to it in that way showed a lack of respect for both Parliament and the many people who contributed to our inquiry.

19. Contrary to our recommendation that the Government scrap its proposals, the Government published the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Bill on 17 July 2013, one day before the House of Commons rose for the summer adjournment. The Bill's Second Reading was scheduled for 3 September, one day after the House returned. In addition to the Government's plans for a register of lobbyists, the Bill also provided for changes to the rules for third-party spending during election periods and created a new obligation for trade unions to provide certain membership information on an annual basis.

20. We produced two reports scrutinising the Government's Bill during the period it was being considered by Parliament.<sup>18</sup> We deplored the lack of pre-legislative scrutiny and consultation, and the unnecessarily rushed way in which the Bill was being pushed through Parliament. We recommended that the Government withdraw the Bill and support a motion to set up a special Committee to carry out pre-legislative scrutiny and produce an improved Bill within six months. We also proposed several amendments to Parts 1 and 2 of the Bill, which we believed would improve it.

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15 [Introducing a statutory register of lobbyists](#), HM Government, Cm 8233, January 2012

16 [Introducing a statutory register of lobbyists](#), Second Report of Session 2012–13, HC 153

17 [Introducing a statutory register of lobbyists: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report of Session 2012–13](#), Sixth Report of Session 2013–14, HC 593

18 [The Government's lobbying Bill](#), Seventh Report of Session 2013–14, HC 601–I, and [The Government's lobbying Bill: follow-up](#), Tenth Report of Session 2013–14, HC 891

21. Since we last reported on this subject concerns have continued to be raised about the impact of changes to the rules for third-party spending during election periods.<sup>19</sup> As required by the 2014 Act, the Government appointed Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbots to conduct a review of the operation of the regulatory regime governing third parties at the 2015 general election.<sup>20</sup> In terms of the register of consultant lobbyists, the Government has now laid regulations providing for certain practical aspects of the register and registration process to take effect.<sup>21</sup> The newly appointed Registrar of Consultant Lobbyists has stated that she expects only 50 to 75 registrants.<sup>22</sup>

22. Related to the issue of transparency around money in politics, we have consistently called for the issue of party political finance—about which there is significant public concern—to be addressed.<sup>23</sup> The Government has failed to make any progress on this issue in the last five years.

**23. We have consistently questioned the usefulness of the Government’s register of lobbyists, and also raised concerns about the impact of new rules around third party spending during election periods contained in the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014. If there is a desire to increase transparency and reform political spending, the focus of reform should be on the funding of political parties, an area which we were disappointed to see no progress on over the course of this Parliament.**

## The Cabinet Manual and related matters

24. In 2011 we produced a report looking at lessons learned from the process of government formation after the 2010 general election.<sup>24</sup> We have more recently considered government formation in the context of preparations for the 2015 general election and the formation of any subsequent administration.<sup>25</sup> This work has focused on the need for clarity around the role of an incumbent Prime Minister and Government following an election which returns no clear majority, the subsequent appointment of a new Prime Minister, and the role of the civil service in supporting party talks about the formation of an administration. We have also looked at the role—or lack thereof—which Parliament and newly elected MPs will have in discussions about the formation of a new administration.

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19 [Impact of the Lobbying Act on civil society and democratic engagement](#), The Commission on Civil Society and Democratic Engagement, January 2015, [The Lobbying Act - A Waste of Time and Resources](#), nfpSynergy, February 2015

20 HC Deb, 28 January 2015, [HCWS229](#) [Commons written statement]

21 HC Deb, 26 February 2015, [HCWS314](#) [Commons written statement]

22 [Statement from the Registrar](#), Registrar of Consultant Lobbyists, February 2015

23 [Political party finance](#), Thirteenth Report of Session 2010–12, HC 1763

24 [Lessons learned from the process of Government formation after the 2010 General Election](#), Fourth Report of Session 2010–12, HC 528

25 [Government formation post-election](#), Tenth Report of Session 2014–15, HC 700

25. Related to our consideration of the process for Government formation has been our scrutiny of the Cabinet Manual—a document which sets out the main laws, rules and conventions affecting the conduct and operation of government.<sup>26</sup> We welcomed the creation of the Cabinet Manual, as it was a clear result of a desire to be more transparent about how Government works. We made some practical suggestions for specific improvements to the text, with a particular focus on the chapters covering government formation, Ministers and Parliament, and also recommended that reference to Parliament’s role in decisions on committing British forces to armed combat be included. We have more recently revisited this work, and recommended that the Manual be revised at least every Parliament, on the basis that a document which is not regularly updated to reflect relevant developments will lack authority.<sup>27</sup>

### Parliament’s role in conflict decisions

26. Over the course of this Parliament we have published a series of reports looking at Parliament’s role in conflict decisions.<sup>28</sup> The legal authority to commit armed forces to conflict abroad is provided by a prerogative power exercised by Ministers (and conventionally by the Prime Minister) on behalf of the Sovereign. There is no statutory requirement to involve Parliament in the use of this power, but in recent years a convention has developed that the House of Commons should have the opportunity to hold a debate on conflict decisions. The Government acknowledged this convention on 10 March 2011, and stated: “We propose to observe that convention except when there is an emergency and such action would not be appropriate. As with the Iraq war and other events, we propose to give the House the opportunity to debate the matter before troops are committed.”<sup>29</sup> The Foreign Secretary went further than this when, on 21 March 2011, he said that the Government would “enshrine in law for the future the necessity of consulting Parliament on military action”.<sup>30</sup>

27. Since these statements have been made there have been two occasions on which Parliament has been consulted on proposals to commit armed forces to conflict abroad. On 29 August 2013 there was an event of great significance for this convention, when the House of Commons considered a motion which included the possibility of taking military action in Syria.<sup>31</sup> The motion was defeated by 272 to 285,<sup>32</sup> and the Prime Minister told the House that the Government would act accordingly.<sup>33</sup> The Prime Minister’s decision to follow the views of the House in this matter was particularly significant: although the

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26 [Constitutional implications of the Cabinet Manual](#), Sixth Report of Session 2010–12, HC 734

27 [Revisiting the Cabinet Manual](#), Fifth Report of Session 2014–15, HC 233

28 [Parliament’s role in conflict decisions](#), Eighth Report of Session 2010–12, HC 823, [Parliament’s role in conflict decisions: an update](#), Eighth Report of Session 2013–14, HC 649, [Parliament’s role in conflict decisions: a way forward](#), Twelfth Report of Session 2013–14, HC 892

29 HC Deb, 10 March 2011, [col 1066](#) [Commons Chamber]

30 HC Deb, 21 March 2011, [col 799](#) [Commons Chamber]

31 HC Deb, 29 August 2013, [col 1425](#) [Commons Chamber]

32 HC Deb, 29 August 2013, [col 1547](#) [Commons Chamber]

33 HC Deb, 29 August 2013, [col 1555](#) [Commons Chamber]

Government has only acknowledged a convention that the House should have the opportunity to debate conflict decisions, on this occasion the Prime Minister not only gave the House the opportunity to debate the matter, but deferred to the view it expressed. On 26 September 2014 the House was recalled to consider a motion which included support for the use of air strikes, but not the deployment of ground troops, to support efforts against ISIL in Iraq.<sup>34</sup> The House of Commons supported the motion by a vote of 524 to 43.<sup>35</sup> On both of these occasions the convention to consult the House was followed, but the decision as to whether or not military action was taken was ultimately made by the Prime Minister.

28. We have consistently stated that there is a need to formalise and clarify Parliament's role in conflict decisions, and called on the Government to make a clear statement of how it intends to honour the Foreign Secretary's commitment to "enshrine in law for the future the necessity of consulting Parliament on military action". In our last report on this subject we considered formalising Parliament's role in conflict decisions via a parliamentary resolution, as an interim step towards enshrining Parliament's role in law, and produced a draft resolution for consideration by the Government.<sup>36</sup> To date the Government has not responded to our latest report on the subject, although in a Westminster Hall debate in June 2014 Rt Hon Greg Clark MP stated that the Cabinet Manual would be updated to include a reference to the events in the House of Commons on 29 August 2013.<sup>37</sup> This is an issue of the utmost importance, and one which we feel has not been given sufficient consideration by the Government.

**29. Although it is unambiguously the case that a convention has developed whereby the House of Commons should have the opportunity to hold a debate on conflict decisions before action is taken, unless there is an emergency, there is still no formal process through which the House of Commons is consulted, or legal requirement for consultation to occur. We have consistently called for this convention to be formalised, and for the Government to explain how it would fulfil the Foreign Secretary's statement of March 2011 that the Government would "enshrine in law for the future the necessity of consulting Parliament on military action". The Government has yet to respond to our latest report on this subject. *We recommend that the relevant Committee in the next Parliament consider how the convention on consulting Parliament on decisions regarding armed conflict has developed over the 2010 Parliament, and report on how, if at all, the convention should be formalised.***

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34 HC Deb, 26 September 2014, [col 1255](#)

35 HC Deb, 26 September 2014, [col 1360](#)

36 [Parliament's role in conflict decisions: a way forward](#), Twelfth Report of Session 2013–14, HC 892, Annex

37 HC Deb, 19 June 2014, [cols 157–8WH](#) [Westminster Hall]

## The future of devolution

30. There are few issues of greater constitutional significance than the distribution of power and funding across the United Kingdom, and the relationships between different levels of government. We have considered devolution and the role of local government extensively over the course of this Parliament, particularly focusing on how power and financial responsibility could be decentralised. We have considered the possibility of codifying the relationship between central and local government, looked at arrangements for local government abroad, and most recently have considered the future of devolution following the Scottish independence referendum.<sup>38</sup> As part of this work a draft code for the codification of the relationship between central and local government was produced by an academic, Professor Colin Copus, at the Committee's request.<sup>39</sup>

31. As one means of considering the future constitutional settlement across the UK, we have examined the possibility of holding a constitutional convention.<sup>40</sup> When we began the inquiry, few people were discussing whether there was a need for a constitutional convention, but by the time we reported there was much more interest in the matter, as reflected by the press coverage that our report received. Our work on a constitutional convention for the UK, and on the future relationship between central and local government, has been influential in shaping Government policy on devolution. The Leader of the House invited the Chair to submit a memorandum on the Committee's work in this field to the Cabinet Committee for devolved powers. In the Government's subsequent Command Paper on *The Implications of Devolution for England* the proposals by the Conservative Party on further devolution appear to recognise the possibility of a constitutional convention or commission after the general election.<sup>41</sup> The Liberal Democrat 2010 election manifesto included a commitment to set up a constitutional convention, and the party has stated more recently that the "the time is right for a Constitutional Convention".<sup>42</sup> Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP announced on 19 September 2014 Labour Party proposals for a constitutional convention for the UK, "to address the need for further devolution in England and political reform of Westminster".<sup>43</sup>

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38 [Prospects for codifying the relationship between central and local government](#), Third Report of Session 2012–13, HC 656–I, [The relationship between central and local government: international comparisons](#), Oral evidence taken on 27 January 2014, HC 977, Future of devolution after the Scottish referendum, Eleventh Report of Session 2014–15, HC 700

39 [Prospects for codifying the relationship between central and local government](#), Third Report of Session 2012–13, HC 656–I, Appendix: Illustrative draft code for central and local government

40 [Do we need a constitutional convention for the UK?](#), Fourth Report of Session 2013–14, HC 371

41 [The implications of devolution for England](#), First Secretary of State and Leader of the House of Commons, Cm 8969, December 2014

42 [Liberal Democrat Manifesto 2010](#), accessed 23 March 2015

43 [A Constitutional Convention for the UK: a dynamic new political settlement for England and for Britain](#), Labour Press, 19 September 2014

32. We have just completed an inquiry into the future of devolution after the Scottish independence referendum, as part of which we considered what the future constitutional settlement across the UK should look like in light of the result of the referendum.<sup>44</sup> This has involved visits to Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast: the evidence taken and the discussions held in the course of these visits has given us a broader overview of the Government's strategy for devolution across the whole of the UK. We have also conducted a short pre-legislative scrutiny exercise on several of the clauses for a draft Scotland Bill published by the Government on 22 January 2015,<sup>45</sup> producing a report which assessed their constitutional significance and made recommendations for any Bill to be introduced in the next Parliament.<sup>46</sup>

### The transition to Individual Electoral Registration

33. Electoral registration is currently in a state of transition. Great Britain is moving from a system of household registration—where eligible voters at the same address are registered by the head of the household—to a system of Individual Electoral Registration—where each eligible elector will need to register to vote individually. This is by far the most significant change that has been made to electoral administration during the course of the 2010 Parliament.

34. We have scrutinised this change over the course of the Parliament, conducting pre-legislative scrutiny on the Government's White Paper and draft Bill on Individual Electoral Registration (IER) in 2011, holding a number of evidence sessions looking at the readiness for the transition to IER, and considering the ongoing transition process as part of our wider work on voter engagement.<sup>47</sup>

35. Under transitional arrangements the current electoral registers include both individuals registered under the new Individual Electoral Registration system, and also those registered under the previous household registration system.<sup>48</sup> The Electoral Administration and Registration Act 2013 provides for this to be the case until December 2016, but enables the Government to bring forward the end date for the transitional arrangements to December 2015 if it so chooses.<sup>49</sup> A decision to bring forward the end date would have to be made between the beginning of June and end of August 2015. The Electoral Commission has estimated that the 2014 electoral registers for England and Wales contained between 2 and

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44 The future of devolution after the Scottish referendum, Eleventh Report of Session 2014-15, HC 700

45 Scotland Office, [Scotland in the United Kingdom: An enduring settlement](#), Cm 8990, January 2015, p 11

46 [Constitutional implications of the Government's draft Scotland clauses](#), Ninth Report of Session 2014-15, HC 1022

47 [Individual Electoral Registration and Administration](#), Tenth Report of Session 2010-12, HC 1463, [Data-matching pilots for individual electoral registration](#), Oral evidence taken on 25 April 2013, HC 1109-I, [Readiness for Individual Electoral Registration](#), Oral evidence taken on 7 November 2013 HC 796, and [Individual Electoral Registration – April 2014](#), Oral evidence taken on 10 April 2014, HC 1188, [Voter engagement in the UK](#), Fourth Report of Session 2014-15, HC 232, [Voter engagement in the UK: follow up](#), Sixth Report of Session 2014-15, HC 938, [Individual Electoral Registration 2015](#), Oral evidence taken on 2 March 2015, HC 1024

48 Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, Part 2, [Schedule 5](#), Para 5

49 Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, Part 7, [Schedule 5](#), Para 28

2.5 million entries which would be removed when transitional arrangements end.<sup>50</sup> The Electoral Commission will be publishing a report in June 2015 which will provide advice to the Government on whether it considers it appropriate to bring forward the end date for transitional arrangements.

36. We have previously recommended that, unless the electoral registers are substantially more complete than at present by May 2015, the Government should not bring forward the end date for the transitional arrangements for IER. We have also recommended that the relevant select committee continue to scrutinise the ongoing transition to IER in the next Parliament.

***37. We recommend that the relevant select committee consider, when the Electoral Commission publishes its report in June 2015, the adequacy of the transition to Individual Electoral Registration at that point, and take a view on the appropriateness or otherwise of any steps taken by the Government to bring forward the end date for transitional arrangements to Individual Electoral Registration.***

## Fixed-term Parliaments

38. In September 2011 the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011 received Royal Assent. The Act set the date of the next general election for 7 May 2015 and provides for subsequent elections to take place on the first Thursday in May every five years. Provisions were made for early elections in the event that at least two-thirds of all MPs voted in favour of an early election, or if there was a vote of no confidence in Her Majesty's Government which was not followed, within 14 days, by a vote of confidence.<sup>51</sup> Fixing the term of the Parliament and removing the ability of a Prime Minister to call an election at a time of their choosing is a significant constitutional development. Nevertheless, the Government introduced the Fixed-term Parliaments Bill without publishing its proposals in draft for pre-legislative scrutiny.

39. In the absence of formal pre-legislative scrutiny, we undertook rapid scrutiny of the Bill, reporting in time to support the House's consideration at Second Reading.<sup>52</sup> Members of the Committee tabled amendments at Committee stage which generated debate on the proposed role of the Speaker in determining whether or not a decision of the House amounted to a vote of no confidence which might lead to an early Dissolution.<sup>53</sup> The Government subsequently did not contest a Lords Amendment re-wording clause 2 of the Bill to remove the Speaker from having to make such possibly contentious decisions.<sup>54</sup>

40. Although we had some criticisms of the way in which the Government legislated for fixed-term Parliaments, we have found the move to fixed-term Parliaments to be a positive

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50 [Analysis of the December 2014 electoral registers in England and Wales](#), Electoral Commission, February 2015

51 Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011, [Section 2](#)

52 [Fixed-term Parliaments Bill](#), Second Report of Session 2010–12, HC 436

53 [Committee of the Whole House Amendments as at 16 November 2010](#), [Committee of the Whole House Amendments as at 24 November 2010](#), [Committee of the Whole House Amendments as at 1 December 2010](#)

54 HL Deb, 16 May 2011, [cols 1146–78](#) [Lords Chamber]

development, though one which, perhaps, has not been taken full advantage of in this first instance. We have produced two “post-legislative” reports on the impact of the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011, considering the impact on both Government and Parliament.<sup>55</sup> As part of this work the Chair met several Permanent Secretaries informally to discuss the impact of fixed-term Parliaments. We found that the establishment of fixed-term Parliaments makes it easier for Governments to plan for the medium-term and might also facilitate better planning over longer timeframes than a single five-year Parliament. With respect to the impact on Parliament, the fixing of the normal parliamentary term now means that it is possible for the Liaison Committee, and every other select committee, to plan a programme of work over a number of Parliamentary sessions.

41. Our scrutiny on this subject not only held the Government to account in relation to its policy of fixing the term of the Parliament, and informed the legislative process of considering the relevant Bill, but also sought to inform future Governments and Parliaments so that more effective use can be made of fixed-term Parliaments in the future.

### Scrutiny of the Cabinet Office and Deputy Prime Minister

42. The Deputy Prime Minister is responsible for leading the government’s political and constitutional reform agenda, and the Civil Service office which supports this agenda—the Constitution Group—is part of the Cabinet Office. Although we have had occasion to work with a range of Departments on some of inquiries, particularly those into devolution and fixed-term Parliaments, it is the Cabinet Office with which we have had a closest relationship over the course of this Parliament.

43. We believe that our work has increased the accountability of Ministers, and, through them, civil servants in the Cabinet Office. One of our most important roles is our scrutiny of the policy responsibilities of the Deputy Prime Minister. We have taken evidence regularly from the Deputy Prime Minister, as well as other Ministers responsible for work on political and constitutional issues, to scrutinise the Government’s programme of political and constitutional reform, and also its strategy for making progress on its commitments.

44. To support our scrutiny of the Cabinet Office’s functions related to political and constitutional reform, we commissioned research from the National Audit Office on expenditure relating specifically to the Government’s programme of political and constitutional reform.<sup>56</sup> The bulk of the expenditure of the Constitution Group is accounted for by Individual Electoral Registration, which we have considered in detail over the course of the Parliament.

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55 [The role and powers of the Prime Minister: The impact of the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011 on Government](#), Fourth Report of Session 2013–14, HC 440, [Fixed-term Parliaments: the final year of a Parliament](#), Thirteenth Report of Session 2013–14, HC 976

56 [NAO briefing: Constitution Group](#), National Audit Office, April 2012

### ***Our relationship with the Cabinet Office***

45. As a Committee we have always tried to have a constructive relationship with the Government, and have undertaken to engage positively with those proposals which we have considered. That said, we have not always been entirely satisfied with the Government's approach to taking forward political and constitutional reform, or to engagement with this Committee. Two areas where our relations with the Government have been particularly unsatisfactory are its repeated failure to publish Bills in draft, for pre-legislative scrutiny, and also the unacceptable delays in responding to many of our reports.

46. The Government has stated that it is committed to simplifying and improving the quality of legislation, and that it would improve quality by publishing in draft for pre-legislative scrutiny where possible.<sup>57</sup> Our report on the quality of legislation concluded that pre-legislative scrutiny was one of the best ways of improving legislation and ensuring that it meets the quality standards that Parliament and the public are entitled to expect.<sup>58</sup> However, there have been several instances where we have had occasion to criticise the Government for failing to publish Bills in draft for pre-legislative scrutiny. A number of these Bills, such as the Fixed-term Parliaments Bill and the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill, provided for substantial constitutional change. In our report on the Fixed-term Parliaments Bill we stated:

The Fixed-term Parliaments Bill is ill-thought through, rushed and does not appear to provide a satisfactory solution, which ideally should be one around which there can be political consensus. It is unacceptable that a Bill of this legal and constitutional complexity has not been the subject of any prior consultation or pre-legislative scrutiny.

We took a similar view in relation to the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill.<sup>59</sup>

47. Government responses to select committee reports should be received within two months of a report's publication.<sup>60</sup> However, the Government has consistently taken far longer than this to respond to our reports, and on occasion has not responded at all. Our latest report on Parliament's role in conflict decisions was published on 27 March 2014 and we are yet to receive a response. The quality of the responses we have received from the Government has also been extremely variable. Some responses, such as the one to our interim report on voter engagement,<sup>61</sup> have responded helpfully to the recommendations

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57 HL Deb, 17 January 2011, [cols 2–3](#) [Lords Chamber]

58 [Ensuring standards in the quality of legislation](#), First Report of Session 2013–14, HC 85

59 [Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill](#), First Report of Session 2010–12, HC 422

60 [Departmental evidence and response to select committees: guidance](#), Cabinet Office, para 68

61 [Voter engagement in the UK: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report of Session 2014–15](#), Fourth Special Report of Session 2014–15, HC 1037

set out in our report, while others, such as the one to our report on introducing a statutory register of lobbyists,<sup>62</sup> can only be described as cursory and insubstantial.

**48. We have made every effort to have a constructive relationship with the Government, and particularly the Cabinet Office, during the 2010 Parliament. However, our ability to effectively consider political and constitutional reform has been restricted by the Government's failure to either consult fully on or publish in draft for pre-legislative scrutiny proposals for political and constitutional reform. We recommend that the next administration commit early in the next Parliament to making pre-legislative scrutiny of Bills a standard part of the legislative process.**

### ***Scrutiny of associated public bodies***

49. In addition to our scrutiny of the Cabinet Office and Government ministers, we have also monitored the work of the Electoral Commission and the Parliamentary Boundary Commissions. Over the course of this Parliament we have had occasion to take evidence from the Electoral Commission on a wide range of issues, including the transition to Individual Electoral Registration, voter engagement more broadly, and our scrutiny of the Government proposals for non-party campaigning. This has meant a considerably greater level of contact between the Electoral Commission and Parliament than has been the case in previous Parliaments. The Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission has remained responsible for oversight of the management of the Commission.<sup>63</sup> Jenny Watson, Chair of the Electoral Commission, told us on 2 March 2015 that our interest in the Electoral Commission's work and the wider health of our democracy had been "a very important point of accountability" for the Commission.<sup>64</sup> We have also had occasion to take evidence from the Boundary Commissions in relation to our recent inquiry into the future of reviews of parliamentary constituency boundaries.<sup>65</sup>

**50. The Electoral Commission has told us that our scrutiny of its work during this Parliament has been "a very important point of accountability". It is important that this is not lost during the next Parliament, particularly given the ongoing transition to Individual Electoral Registration. We recommend that in the next Parliament a Committee take responsibility for scrutinising the work of the Electoral Commission, and particularly the ongoing transition to IER. This should supplement the role of the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission.**

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62 [Introducing a statutory register of lobbyists: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report of Session 2012–13](#), Sixth Report of Session 2013–14, HC 593

63 The Chair of the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee is a member ex officio of the Speaker's Committee but has not taken up his position on that Committee.

64 Q1, [Individual Electoral Registration 2015](#), oral evidence taken on 2 March 2015, HC 1024

65 [What next on redrawing parliamentary constituency boundaries?](#), Eighth Report of Session 2014–15, HC 600

## Public appointments

51. Two public appointments which fall under our responsibility—the Chair of the House of Lords Appointments Commission and the Registrar of Consultant Lobbyists—have been made this Parliament and we have conducted pre-appointment hearings in relation to both. In July 2013 we held a pre-appointment hearing with the Government’s preferred candidate—Lord Kakkar—for the role of Chair of the House of Lords Appointments Commission. We were satisfied that Lord Kakkar had the professional competence and personal independence required for the post of Chair of the House of Lords Appointments Commission and supported his appointment.<sup>66</sup>

52. Following our scrutiny of the Government’s original plans for a statutory register of lobbyists, and our detailed examination of the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Bill, we held a pre-appointment hearing with the Government’s preferred candidate for the role of Registrar of Consultant Lobbyists, a post established under the legislation we had scrutinised. We set out our views on the suitability of the candidate, Alison White, and on the general inadequacy of the legislation, in our report, *Pre-appointment hearing: Registrar of Consultant Lobbyists*.<sup>67</sup>

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66 [Pre-appointment hearing: The Chair of the House of Lords Appointments Commission](#), Fifth Report of Session 2013–14, HC 600–I

67 [Pre-appointment hearing: Registrar of Consultant Lobbyists](#), Third Report of Session 2014–15, HC 223

### 3 Impact and support for the House

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53. Over the course of this Parliament we have informed the House’s deliberations in a wide range of areas, particularly in terms of consideration of legislation which we have scrutinised—either by way of formal pre-legislative scrutiny or, on those occasions when the Government has decided to introduce legislation without allowing prior scrutiny, by way of “mid-legislative” scrutiny. Significant amendments have been made to policy proposals (*Recall of MPs*) and legislation (*The Government’s lobbying Bill*) as a result of our work.

54. Our reports have been “tagged” as relevant to a wide variety of debates in the Chamber—including consideration of the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Bill, the Recall of MPs Bill, a Backbench Business debate on repeal of the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011, several debates on reform to the House of Lords, and debates on the future of devolution after the Scottish referendum.<sup>68</sup>

55. Our effectiveness and reputation have also been enhanced by the election of the Chair by the membership of the House as whole, and of other members of committees by their parties. This reform has generally increased the independence of Committees, and legitimacy of Chairs, by distancing them from party control. We regret the failure of the Government to pursue the full implementation of the proposals of the Wright Committee for reform of the House of Commons.<sup>69</sup>

#### Work planning

56. We have made an effort to plan our own work strategically, so as to maximise the value of our work and the impact it has on Government policy. This has included ensuring that reports are produced in a way which best supports the House’s ability to scrutinise the Government and legislation being considered by Parliament, and also following up on work where additional scrutiny is necessary.

**57. Our experience is that effectively planning a Committee’s programme over the course of a Parliament—whilst allowing for the flexibility which is necessary to scrutinise emerging issues—has substantially increased our ability to both influence the Government’s programme of political and constitutional reform, and also undertake substantial projects of our own. This working method has been made possible by the fixing of the term of a Parliament, which provides some security against Committee work being disrupted by an early general election.**

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68 Debates to which the Committee’s reports have been tagged are listed in the [House of Commons Sessional Returns](#).

69 [Revisiting Rebuilding the House: the impact of the Wright reforms](#), Third Report of Session 2013–14, HC 82

## 4 Engagement and innovation

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58. Our core task this Parliament has been to consider political and constitutional reform, and we have pursued this through many different avenues. These have included the many traditional tools at a Committee's disposal, including taking oral and written evidence, publishing reports and holding debates in the House. We have also undertaken several more innovative practices, including hosting online consultations, holding seminars and conferences, recruiting a staff member as a Campaign Co-ordinator and meeting informally with members of the public. All of these activities have better enabled us to consider matters of political and constitutional reform, to scrutinise the Government's work in this area, and to inform wider debate.

59. Our work on a written constitution and on voter engagement in the UK, in particular, has involved substantial public consultation, including informal meetings with members of the public, hosting online surveys, engaging debate on social media and inviting more traditional written contributions to our work. Our work on voter engagement benefited substantially from the many discussions with members of the public we held at a meeting in Sheffield organised by Parliamentary Outreach and the University of Sheffield, where we explored the reasons why people do not vote. Throughout our voter engagement inquiry we made a particular effort to hear from witnesses other than the "usual suspects", in line with the recommendation on public engagement made by the Liaison Committee; we heard from a range of campaign groups including Bite the Ballot, Operation Black Vote, Mencap and 38 Degrees, and took evidence from a number of local organisations when we visited the University of Sheffield. Live Twitter chats have enabled the Chair to engage with the public more directly, and Twitter and Facebook channels have enabled the promotion of the Committee's work to the public in a more accessible way.

60. The response we received to our consultations on a written constitution and voter engagement—with over 19,000 people giving their views in the form of written evidence, comments on social media and survey responses—demonstrates that there is an appetite for public discussion on political and constitutional issues. We nevertheless continue to welcome the contribution from the many experts in the field of political and constitutional reform with whom we have developed relationships over the course of this Parliament.

**61. We have been particularly proactive at involving the wider public and organisations other than the "usual suspects" with our work. This has been beneficial both to our scrutiny of the Government's programme of political and constitutional reform, but has also helped to achieve the broader goal of better engaging the public with Parliament and issues of constitutional significance.**

62. We consider that there is greater scope for select committees to consult the public on matters which directly affect them, such as voter engagement and the health of our democracy. For some inquiries, seeking the views of the public through non-traditional means, such as surveys and online discussions, may ensure that a greater and more representative range of views is taken into account when a committee formulates its recommendations to Government. We hope that the new ways of working we have taken forward with a view to increasing engagement will facilitate those committees which wish to make similar efforts in the next Parliament.

## 5 Scrutiny of political and constitutional reform in the next Parliament

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63. This Parliament has seen significant changes to the UK's constitution, not least by fixing the term of the Parliament—thereby removing the Prime Minister's authority to call elections at a time of their choosing—and bringing forward plans for devolution to various parts of the UK. It is likely further changes to the UK's constitution—particularly in terms of further devolution to Scotland and Wales—will be taken forward in the next Parliament.

64. The creation of the Political and Constitutional Reform Committee has improved the coherence and comprehensiveness of the House's scrutiny of political and constitutional matters. There is no doubt that the creation of this Committee has brought an additional parliamentary focus to a substantial part of the Government's programme.

**65. This Committee was established to consider political and constitutional reform for the lifetime of the present Parliament. The establishment, or re-establishment, of a committee with an express remit to examine such issues in the 2015 Parliament will depend on the will of the House which is to be elected on 7 May. *Should the next Government plan to take forward constitutional reform, we strongly recommend that a select committee be established to examine the Government's proposals, to keep the progress of any political and constitutional reform under regular review, and to continue the work this Committee has undertaken. If such a committee is not established, we recommend that our work on political and constitutional reform, and the continuing debate on the UK's constitution, be taken up by the select committee with a remit to examine the work of the Government department with responsibility for constitutional policy.***

## Conclusions and recommendations

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### Our work during the 2010 Parliament

1. Our partnership with the Centre for Political and Constitutional Studies at King's College London on the possibility of codifying—or not codifying—the UK constitution could be a model for other committees wishing to develop a sustained programme of work in a particular policy area. (Paragraph 11)
2. We have concluded that the current level of voter engagement in the UK is not satisfactory, and that urgent action needs to be taken in order to pre-empt a crisis of democracy. We have recommended that political parties include plans, in their manifestos for the 2015 general election, for improving voter engagement. It is to be hoped that the next Parliament will have occasion to scrutinise a number of proposals recommended by this Committee, if and when they are brought forward by the Government. (Paragraph 16)
3. We have consistently questioned the usefulness of the Government's register of lobbyists, and also raised concerns about the impact of new rules around third party spending during election periods contained in the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014. If there is a desire to increase transparency and reform political spending, the focus of reform should be on the funding of political parties, an area which we were disappointed to see no progress on over the course of this Parliament. (Paragraph 23)
4. Although it is unambiguously the case that a convention has developed whereby the House of Commons should have the opportunity to hold a debate on conflict decisions before action is taken, unless there is an emergency, there is still no formal process through which the House of Commons is consulted, or legal requirement for consultation to occur. We have consistently called for this convention to be formalised, and for the Government to explain how it would fulfil the Foreign Secretary's statement of March 2011 that the Government would “enshrine in law for the future the necessity of consulting Parliament on military action”. The Government has yet to respond to our latest report on this subject. *We recommend that the relevant Committee in the next Parliament consider how the convention on consulting Parliament on decisions regarding armed conflict has developed over the 2010 Parliament, and report on how, if at all, the convention should be formalised.* (Paragraph 29)
5. *We recommend that the relevant select committee consider, when the Electoral Commission publishes its report in June 2015, the adequacy of the transition to Individual Electoral Registration at that point, and take a view on the appropriateness or otherwise of any steps taken by the Government to bring forward the end date for transitional arrangements to Individual Electoral Registration.* (Paragraph 37)

6. We have made every effort to have a constructive relationship with the Government, and particularly the Cabinet Office, during the 2010 Parliament. However, our ability to effectively consider political and constitutional reform has been restricted by the Government's failure to either consult fully on or publish in draft for pre-legislative scrutiny proposals for political and constitutional reform. *We recommend that the next administration commit early in the next Parliament to making pre-legislative scrutiny of Bills a standard part of the legislative process.* (Paragraph 48)
7. The Electoral Commission has told us that our scrutiny of its work during this Parliament has been "a very important point of accountability". It is important that this is not lost during the next Parliament, particularly given the ongoing transition to Individual Electoral Registration. *We recommend that in the next Parliament a Committee take responsibility for scrutinising the work of the Electoral Commission, and particularly the ongoing transition to IER. This should supplement the role of the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission.* (Paragraph 50)

### Impact and support for the House

8. Our experience is that effectively planning a Committee's programme over the course of a Parliament—whilst allowing for the flexibility which is necessary to scrutinise emerging issues—has substantially increased our ability to both influence the Government's programme of political and constitutional reform, and also undertake substantial projects of our own. This working method has been made possible by the fixing of the term of a Parliament, which provides some security against Committee work being disrupted by an early general election. (Paragraph 57)

### Engagement and innovation

9. We have been particularly proactive at involving the wider public and organisations other than the "usual suspects" with our work. This has been beneficial both to our scrutiny of the Government's programme of political and constitutional reform, but has also helped to achieve the broader goal of better engaging the public with Parliament and issues of constitutional significance. (Paragraph 61)

We consider that there is greater scope for select committees to consult the public on matters which directly affect them, such as voter engagement and the health of our democracy. For some inquiries, seeking the views of the public through non-traditional means, such as surveys and online discussion, may ensure that a greater and more representative range of views is taken into account when a committee formulates its recommendations to Government. We hope that the new ways of working we have taken forward with a view to increasing engagement will facilitate those committees which wish to make similar efforts in the next Parliament. (Paragraph 62)

### Scrutiny of political and constitutional reform in the next Parliament

10. This Committee was established to consider political and constitutional reform for the lifetime of the present Parliament. The establishment, or re-establishment, of a committee with an express remit to examine such issues in the 2015 Parliament will depend on the will of the House which is to be elected on 7 May. *Should the next Government plan to take forward constitutional reform, we strongly recommend that a select committee be established to examine the Government's proposals, to keep the progress of any political and constitutional reform under regular review, and to continue the work this Committee has undertaken. If such a committee is not established, we recommend that our work on political and constitutional reform, and the continuing debate on the UK's constitution, be taken up by the select committee with a remit to examine the work of the Government department with responsibility for constitutional policy.* (Paragraph 65)

# Formal Minutes

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**Monday 23 March 2015**

Members present:

Mr Graham Allen, in the Chair

Tracey Crouch  
Mark Durkan  
Paul Flynn

Duncan Hames  
Fabian Hamilton

Draft Report (*The work of the Committee in the 2010 Parliament*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 65 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the Twelfth Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

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[The Committee adjourned.]

# List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

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All publications from the Committee are available on the Committee's website at [www.parliament.uk/PCRC-publications](http://www.parliament.uk/PCRC-publications).

The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

## Session 2010–12

First Report	Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill	HC 422
Second Report	Fixed-term Parliaments Bill	HC 436 (Cm 7951)
Third Report	Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill	HC 437 (Cm 7997)
Fourth Report	Lessons from the process of Government formation after the 2010 General Election	HC 528 (HC 866)
Fifth Report	Voting by convicted prisoners: Summary of evidence	HC 776
Sixth Report	Constitutional implications of the Cabinet Manual	HC 734 (Cm 8213)
Seventh Report	Seminar on the House of Lords: Outcomes	HC 961
Eighth Report	Parliament's role in conflict decisions	HC 923 (HC 1477)
Ninth Report	Parliament's role in conflict decisions: Government Response to the Committee's Eighth Report of Session 2010–12	HC 1477 (HC 1673)
Tenth Report	Individual Electoral Registration and Electoral Administration	HC 1463 (Cm 8177)
Eleventh Report	Rules of Royal Succession	HC 1615 (HC 586)
Twelfth Report	Parliament's role in conflict decisions—further Government Response: Government Response to the Committee's Ninth Report of Session 2010–12	HC 1673
Thirteenth Report	Political party finance	HC 1763

## Session 2012–13

First Report	Recall of MPs	HC 373 (HC 646)
Second Report	Introducing a statutory register of lobbyists	HC 153 (HC 593)
Third Report	Prospects for codifying the relationship between central and local government	HC 656 (Cm 8623)
Fourth Report	Do we need a constitutional convention for the UK?	HC 371 (Cm 8749)

## Session 2013–14

First Report	Ensuring standards in the quality of legislation	HC 85 (HC 611)
Second Report	The impact and effectiveness of ministerial reshuffles	HC 255 (HC 1258)
Third Report	Revisiting Rebuilding the House: the impact of the Wright reforms	HC 82 (HC 910)

Fourth Report	The role and powers of the Prime Minister: the impact of the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011 on Government	HC 440 (HC 1079)
Fifth Report	Pre-appointment hearing: The Chair of the House of Lords Appointments Commission	HC 600
Sixth Report	Introducing a statutory register of lobbyists: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report of Session 2012–13	HC 593
Seventh Report	The Government's lobbying Bill	HC 601 (HC 801)
Eighth Report	Parliament's role in conflict decisions: an update	HC 649
Ninth Report	House of Lords reform: what next?	HC 251 (HC 1079)
Tenth Report	The Government's lobbying Bill: follow up	HC 891 (HC 535)
Eleventh Report	Impact of Queen's and Prince's consent on the legislative process	HC 784 (HC 224)
Twelfth Report	Parliament's role in conflict decisions: a way forward	HC 892
Thirteenth Report	Fixed-term Parliaments: the final year of a Parliament	HC 976 (HC 874)
Fourteenth Report	Constitutional role of the judiciary if there was a codified constitution	HC 802

#### Session 2014–15

First Report	Role and powers of the Prime Minister	HC 351
Second Report	A new Magna Carta?	HC 463
Third Report	Pre-appointment hearing: Registrar of Consultant Lobbyists	HC 223
Fourth Report	Voter engagement in the UK	HC 232 (HC 1037)
Fifth Report	Revisiting the Cabinet Manual	HC 233
Sixth Report	Voter engagement in the UK: follow up	HC 938
Seventh Report	Consultation on A new Magna Carta?	HC 599
Eighth Report	What next on parliamentary constituency boundaries?	HC 600
Ninth Report	Constitutional implications of the Government's draft Scotland clauses	HC 1022
Tenth Report	Government formation post-election	HC 1023
Eleventh Report	The future of devolution after the Scottish referendum	HC 700
Twelfth Report	The work of the Committee in the 2010 Parliament	HC 1128