

Welcome to Confidence Kingdom!

A Different Democratic Future
2024



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Haggis the Highland Cow is a valued member of Confidence Kingdom. He works on his bicycle every day to deliver information between adults and children, who work together to make this community.

About the Project

Context

Following the first phase of the Local Governance Review (2021), Scottish Government has asked communities from across Scotland to engage in further conversations based on the new Democracy Matters material: 'Imagining a different democratic future.' Communities have been asked to consider how power and resources should be shared between local and national government. Children's Parliament was commissioned by Scottish Government to seek the views and opinions of children. Using a children's rights approach, Children's Parliament explored:

- children's understanding of local democracy across Scotland
- what local democracy looks and feels like for children
- local democracy through the lens of children's rights
- methods of involving children in decision-making in local communities.

What we did

In November 2023, Children's Parliament invited our Children's Human Rights Defenders – Members of Children's Parliament from across Scotland with whom we work regularly - to engage in the Democracy Matters project through online workshops and a three-day residential. During their residential they built their own imaginary town, Confidence Kingdom. In the initial sessions undertaken online, the children shared their thinking about what their communities currently look and feel like.

During the residential, Members of Children’s Parliament considered how to engage in local decision-making processes, what this should look like in their everyday life, and how adults can support them. The residential included a sharing event with Tom Arthur MSP, who attended with representatives of Scottish Government and had a tour of Confidence Kingdom.

Our Members of Children’s Parliament

This project would not have been possible without our wonderful Children’s Human Rights Defenders, who shared their amazing views, ideas and opinions to develop Confidence Kingdom.

These Members of Children’s Parliament, age 9-14, are from upper primary and lower secondary schools in: Aberdeen, Clackmannanshire, Dundee, East Lothian, Edinburgh, Fife, the Highlands, Perth & Kinross, and the Western Isles. Thank you to schools, parents and carers for supporting their children to participate in this project.

A special thank you to:

Amber, Cara, Ella, Eva, Evie, Flynn, Hamza, Kati, Lewis, Margaret, Michael, Millar, Rida, Sam, Tate and Waldah.
We are so proud as always of the impressive work you do!

All quotes included in this report are attributable to our Members of Children’s Parliament.

Members of Children’s Parliament built their own heart shaped town where everyone’s human dignity is important.





Before Confidence Kingdom...

Reflections on children's current experience of community.

People

Members of Children's Parliament agreed that they enjoy being surrounded by people they know and trust, and who make them feel safe. They felt that having positive relationships with adults in their community is important. They appreciate communities celebrating special occasions together, such as Hallowe'en, and places to go where neighbours know and support each other.

Community is "people you can trust,
you know they will help you and
keep you safe".



Places

Members of Children's Parliament shared what places are important to them in their communities. Their homes and those of family and friends, schools, shops, meeting places and leisure facilities were key. Similarly, there was an appreciation for being able to enjoy the outdoors, like rivers and beaches where they can swim, or green spaces and parks offering freedom to play.

"Everything I do is my local
community."



Decision-making

Members of Children's Parliament discovered that they didn't know much about decision-making in Scotland, locally or nationally. They didn't know or understand what decisions were being made, by whom and where. Some Members of Children's Parliament had a clearer sense of where adults might listen to children, but this was limited to pupil voice groups - activities in schools and local sports groups - the effectiveness and inclusiveness of which varied.

"There is a group from all years who represent children in the school and tell adults what is important to children."

What needs to improve?

Members of Children's Parliament felt it is important for all adults and children across Scotland to know about children's rights. If adults understood this, they could work with children to find out in what ways children would like to have a say. It would help children feel equal to adults, and in turn give children clear mechanisms of engagement, and the confidence to share their ideas.



"Adults think our lives are not as difficult as theirs, they assume a child's life is easier."

Members of Children’s Parliament felt that adults often don’t seek out children’s ideas or take those ideas seriously when children do speak up. Members of Children’s Parliament shared that adults could have pre-conceptions about their abilities and don’t always consider children’s ideas as equal. Adults often neglect to inform what will happen as a result of children’s involvement.

“Everywhere
where an
adult is
making
decisions,
affects us.”

When building Confidence Kingdom, the children considered what they liked and valued about the places they live and made sure these were incorporated into their vision of a happy, healthy and safe town.



A 'book swap',
somewhere children
and adults can
share knowledge
and understanding
in the community.



Welcome to Confidence Kingdom!

Confidence Kingdom is a happy, peaceful, calm place, where everyone feels safe.

Relationships & Connections

“This community is amazing, but what makes it really amazing is the people.”

Confidence Kingdom puts people first. It thinks carefully about how adults and children can connect with one another. In Confidence Kingdom, everyone knows everyone. Members of Children’s Parliament agreed it is important to have a neighbourhood around you; it makes you feel comfortable, known and safe.

“We want the houses in the same place, like a neighbourhood.”

Confidence Kingdom is built in the shape of a heart, it’s all about love and fun. It has prioritised the protection of green spaces as all Members of Children’s Parliament highlighted this as an important aspect of their community. There are places to play, relax and have fun with friends across generations, and as a family – with places to go and activities to do.

“We made this town feel like a home for everyone.”



Members of Children's Parliament realised that the emotional infrastructure of a space can be a barrier to local democracy. By considering relationships and connections, and the feeling a town can create, Members of Children's Parliament have built a town that is designed for everyone.

Equality and Urban Design

Members of Children's Parliament planned the layout of the spaces and buildings with relationships and easy connections as a priority, where there was less need for cars as transport.

“Right beside the homes, we've got the school, the offices and the hospital (...) The offices are right by the school so any parents can go to the school, get their children and they can just walk back home. There's also a medical centre so that if any child gets hurt, they can just walk there.”



In Confidence Kingdom, it is important that everyone has equal access to places, resources and opportunities. Children have a say in their community; they help design it so that it works for everyone.

“The reason we put the church and the mosque next to each other is to show it's a respectful community.”

Adults and children work together and are representatives in the town. Being involved in decision-making is “not just having a voice heard, it's hearing each other too.”

How decision-makers support children in Confidence Kingdom

To ensure adult decision-makers are accountable to the children of Confidence Kingdom, they need to first learn about children's rights and meaningful participation; what this looks and feels like.

Listeners

"If no one is listening, you'll never get to have a say."

Adult decision-makers ask the children of Confidence Kingdom for their opinions, listen to their views without interruption and include their ideas, especially in decisions related to their lives.



Unfearties

Adult decision-makers in Confidence Kingdom are brave and honest. They make sure children are involved, their ideas are taken seriously and always go back to children to let them know how things are progressing.

"Be honest, [tell us] this is what happened so far, [tell us] it's not done yet."

Unfearties support children to learn about how their local democracy works, in order to include their views in decision-making.

“If we learn more about voting, children will be able to make informed decisions.”

Respect

Adults in Confidence Kingdom are kind, understanding and encouraging. They are playful and fun, and offer a comfortable space at home, school and in the community for children to express their views freely and share their worries. In Confidence Kingdom, everyone’s human dignity is important.

“Children need to feel confident to share their ideas.”

Members of Children’s Parliament came up with these qualities for adults with responsibility in the community, but they also believed this is how all adults should behave.





Children created the Museum of Children's Rights, "where adults and children can go to learn about children's rights."



How children are involved in decision-making

In Confidence Kingdom, children have different ways to participate in local decision-making and to find out what is going on in their community.

“The choices that are made in this town are by children and adults, and they get an equal chance to do everything.”



Some thought-provoking ideas from Members of Children’s Parliament:

Post-boxes on public buildings, for children to share any ideas and feedback. “You can say anything you think is good or should change.” The letters will be collected every day, and responses will be posted to the children via delivery person on a bicycle. “The feedback has to be honest and meaningful.”

A Democracy Day, where children can learn about and be involved in voting processes within the town, so they can have a say on improving the town and making it a happier place. The children plant their votes into the ground and dance around it to help them grow. The tree that is grown will have the decision engraved in the bark. It’s a celebration, “it is a very special day.”

A Museum of Children’s Rights, “where adults and children can go to learn about children’s rights.” The museum is split in half –

one side shows children's rights being respected and the other shows you what happens if you don't respect children's rights.

A Gala Day where children are involved in the planning and have a budget to spend on activities "that would be really fun, and children would love it." The Gala Day would include a graffiti wall for children to share their ideas about how to improve the community.

A TV show run by the council called 'You Said, We Did.' It is shown once a week and is all about how councillors are going to use children's ideas. "Councillors have to be very honest and say exactly what they've done or what they're going to do."

An eco-community which is all about looking after the town, keeping it green and beautiful. Children and adults volunteer to run it every Saturday, working together across generations. There are rewards for the volunteers for keeping the town beautiful.

Pupil councils/Parliaments that are fair and equal in their participatory approaches, where the ideas shared are taken seriously and raised with leaders in the school and wider community (e.g., headteachers sharing ideas at community council meetings).

In Confidence Kingdom, children are involved in the recruitment of adults to roles where they have responsibilities to children; there are regular progress updates on community actions and activities shared with children in different ways; and there are opportunities for children and adults alike to learn about children's rights. Adults and children work creatively and collaboratively on activities that support children in having a say. These activities don't just happen in one place, in one way; they are embedded throughout the buildings, spaces and people in the town.

Key Messages



Confidence Kingdom is not like other places. It is a town where children and adults are equal. Children's views are included in local decision-making and their life experiences are considered and respected. For Confidence Kingdom to be realised, the following needs to be considered:

- 1 Children's understanding of local decision-making:**
Children, especially younger children, lack an understanding of when and where decisions are made in Scotland, and who makes them. They need an opportunity to learn about these processes in a supportive environment, and to have opportunities to share ideas about new ways that adult decision-makers can hear from children.
- 2 Fun ways for children to participate:**
For Members of Children's Parliament, it was clear that there are limited ways to take part in their local community. If adults and children are to work together, there need to be creative and fun structures in place to do so – where children can feel comfortable, engaged and supported.
- 3 Children's need for a community:**
When considering what they liked about the places they live, and when building Confidence Kingdom, it was clear that Members of Children's Parliament prioritised the emotional relationships between people. They want to live in a place where they feel safe, surrounded by people who know one another. The emotional infrastructure of a community needs to be considered, to ensure it is designed in a way that supports intergenerational participation.

4

Engaged Decision-Makers:

Decision-makers and community representatives need to have a knowledge and understanding of children's rights, and how to bring them alive in their work. They need to confidently engage with children in their role as representatives, ensuring children's meaningful participation. Decision-makers also need to hold a level of accountability to ensure children receive feedback on what progress is being made about the issues children have raised.

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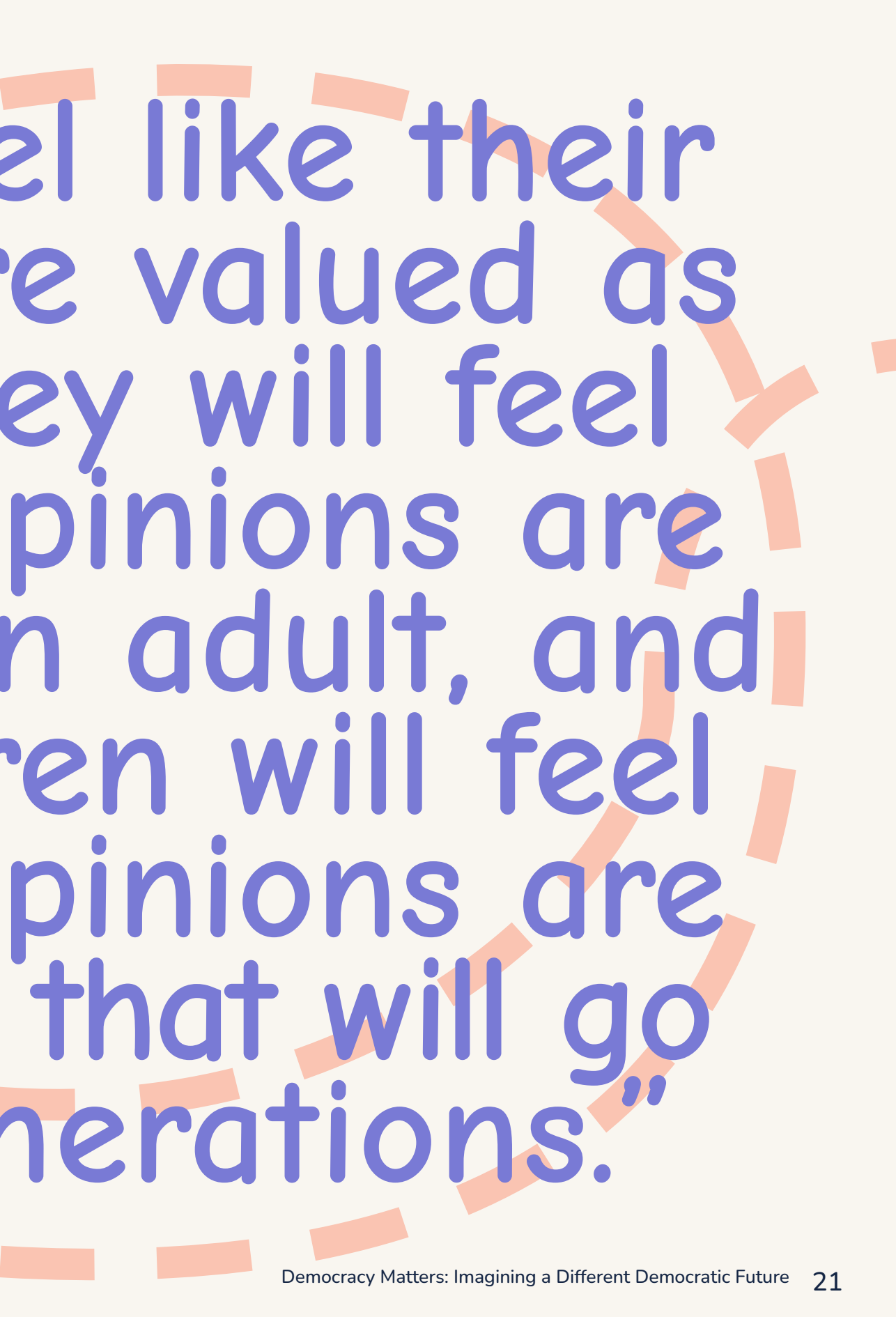
Children have good ideas:

Being involved in local decision-making excites children and they would like opportunities to work with adults in their community to influence what happens around them. As an example of their potential for positive contribution, through the design of Confidence Kingdom, children have shared imaginative ideas that would benefit the whole community. Importantly, our Members of Children's Parliament are keen to work alongside adults to build a better local democracy, one that can work for everyone.



“If they feel
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More about Children's Parliament

Our dream is that children grow up in a world of love, happiness and understanding. Our mission is to inspire greater awareness and understanding of the power of children's human rights and to support the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) across Scotland.

Find out more about the work we do:
www.childrensparliament.org.uk

Thank you to Tom Arthur MSP for his time and his team's engagement with the children during their sharing event.



Huge congratulations to our wonderful Members of Children's Parliament. It's been a pleasure working with you!



Confidence Kingdom is a happy, peaceful, calm place, where everyone feels safe.

A Children's Parliament report capturing children's voices, enabling children to share their ideas and experiences so that they can influence positive change in their lives.

Report created March 2024 for the Scottish Government.