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Commitment Drafting: Parliament

Lead steward(s) for this theme: Andy Williamson

About

This document has been created for collaborative drafting of proposed commitments for the third UK Open Government Partnership National Action plan. A lead group should use this document to:

1. Review existing commitment ideas proposed through the Open Government Manifesto and identify key elements of these to draw upon;
2. Draft between one and three commitments that should be put forward by civil society for inclusion in the next UK OGP National Action Plan;

These proposals will be discussed by the UK Open Government Civil Society Network, and then discussed with government through an open process.

Contributions to this document are welcome. You can:

-  Add comments
-  Use suggestion mode to propose text changes

Remember to include your name along with your comments / suggestions if it is not automatically displayed.

Jump to:

[Drafting space](#) | Commitment templates ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#)) | [Manifesto Ideas](#)

Remember to also check existing commitments [from the 2013-2015 National Action Plan](#) that may relate to this theme, and build on these where relevant.



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Drafting space

Use this space for draft notes about potential commitments. You might also use this space to make a log of how you have drawn upon manifesto ideas in creating your proposed commitments.

Note that this theme will translate into the NAP Public Accountability theme.



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Commitment Templates

A good commitment should be concise and clear. Aim for a maximum of 2 pages overall with all sections filled in.

Commitment 1: All parliamentary data is freely available

Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed

Parliamentary data is inconsistently available or not available at all.

Main Objective

The UK Parliament, Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly should make their data freely available and openly accessible to the public so that the public can download, re-use and re-share. This includes all documents, data, audio and video content.

No material should have its usage restricted through any unreasonable copyright restrictions and it is expected that at most the constraints would be Parliamentary Copyright (which allows for sharing and re-use).

Brief Description of Commitment (140 character limit)

Make all parliamentary data should be freely available for the public to download and/or re-use

Relevance

Briefly describe the way in which this commitment is relevant to further advancing OGP values of access to information, public accountability, civic participation, and technology and innovation for openness and accountability.

This addresses issues of civic participation and public accountability.

Ambition

Briefly describe the intended results of the commitment and how it will either make government more open or improve government through more openness.



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Milestones

Please outline the verifiable and measurable milestones to fulfill the commitment.

#	
1	Publishing UK Parliament Hansard data in near-real time machine readable format.
2	Publishing parliamentary record in near-real time machine readable format for Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly
3	Publishing all plenary and committee video in open and re-usable format for UK Parliament, Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly
4	Publishing in open data format in near-real time for UK Parliament, Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly list of members, register of members' interests, draft legislation, amendments to draft legislation, voting records, committee reports, standing orders (and related).



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Commitment 2: Greater Involvement for citizens in the legislative process

Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed

Bring citizens closer to the parliamentary process

Main Objective

The parliaments and assemblies of the UK should be encouraged to experiment with new ways that enable the public to contribute to the different stages of the parliamentary process. This would range from putting questions to ministers, addressing and commenting on committees and within the pre-legislative, legislative cycles and during post-legislative scrutiny. This can include further opportunities for remote hearings and public access to committees and debates and also the use of digital tools to make parliament more accessible to the public who would otherwise find it difficult to physically attend

Brief Description of Commitment (140 character limit)

Open up parliament so more people can contribute

Relevance

Briefly describe the way in which this commitment is relevant to further advancing OGP values of access to information, public accountability, civic participation, and technology and innovation for openness and accountability.

Those who take part in the parliamentary process shape the future, but all too often this is a narrow subset of the population and unrepresentative of the wider population. Digital tools allows our legislatures to step out beyond the chamber or committee room in new ways, whether it's taking the parliament out to the people or allowing people to come to parliament through new digital channels, this is about strengthening democratic participation and rebuilding trust as much as it is about enhancing public accountability.

Ambition

Briefly describe the intended results of the commitment and how it will either make government more open or improve government through more openness.



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More people will be able to contribute to what happens in their parliament, this helps legislations better reflect people's lives and makes parliaments more transparent and accessible.

Milestones

Please outline the verifiable and measurable milestones to fulfill the commitment.

#	
1	Develop a method for public questions and engagement during (or prior to) Westminster Hall debates in the House of Commons.
2	

Most thematic areas will only need to have one or two commitments. But if you feel three distinct commitments are needed, you can propose a third here.

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Commitment 3: Enshrine Parliamentary Openness

Status quo or problem/issue to be addressed

Enshrining openness at the heart of our parliaments

Main Objective

The UK Parliament, Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly should formally adopt The Declaration of Parliamentary Openness.

This sets out 44 principles for advancing parliamentary openness, grouped under four headings:

Promoting a Culture of Openness:

Parliamentary information belongs to the public. Parliamentary information shall be able to be reused or republished by citizens with any limited restrictions narrowly defined by law. To enable a culture of parliamentary openness, parliament must enact measures to ensure inclusive citizen participation and a free civil society, enable effective parliamentary monitoring, and vigorously protect these rights through its oversight role. Parliament shall also ensure that citizens have legal recourse to enforce their right to access parliamentary information. Parliament has an affirmative duty to promote citizen understanding of parliamentary functioning and share good practices with other parliaments to increase openness and transparency. Parliament shall work collaboratively with PMOs and citizens to ensure that parliamentary information is complete, accurate, and timely.

Making Parliamentary Information Transparent:

Parliament shall adopt policies that ensure proactive publication of parliamentary information, and shall review these policies periodically to take advantage of evolving good practices. Parliamentary information includes information about parliament's roles and functions, and information generated throughout the legislative process, including the text of introduced legislation and amendments, votes, the parliamentary agenda and schedule, records of plenary and committee proceedings, historical information, and all other information that forms a part of the parliamentary record, such as reports created for or by parliament. Parliament shall provide information on the management and administration of parliament, parliamentary staff, and comprehensive and detailed parliamentary budget information. Parliament shall provide information about the backgrounds, activities and affairs of members, including sufficient information for citizens to make informed judgments regarding their integrity and probity, and potential conflicts of interest.

Easing Access to Parliamentary Information:

Parliament shall ensure that information is broadly accessible to all citizens on a non-discriminatory basis through multiple channels, including first-person observation, print media, radio, and live and on-demand broadcasts and streaming. Physical access to parliament shall be provided to all citizens, subject to space and safety limitations, with clearly

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defined and publicly available policies for ensuring access by media and observers. Parliamentary information must also be available free of charge, in multiple national and working languages, and through tools, such as plain language summaries, that help ensure that parliamentary information is understandable to a broad range of citizens.

Enabling Electronic Communication of Parliamentary Information:

Parliamentary information shall be released online in open and structured formats that allow citizens to analyze and reuse this information using the full range of technology tools. Parliamentary information shall be linked to related information and be easily searchable, as well as downloadable in bulk to encourage the development of new technologies for its exploration. Parliamentary websites enable communication with citizens even in societies with limited Internet penetration, by facilitating information access to intermediaries, which can further disseminate the information to citizens. Parliamentary websites shall seek to use interactive tools to engage citizens and offer alert or mobile services. Parliament shall give preference to the use of non-proprietary formats, and free and open-source software. Parliament has a duty to ensure technological usability of parliamentary information, while guaranteeing the privacy for those accessing the information.

Brief Description of Commitment (140 character limit)

The Declaration of Parliamentary openness was launched in 2012 as a way for national and sub-national legislatures to recognise and promote openness and transparency in all that they do.

Relevance

Briefly describe the way in which this commitment is relevant to further advancing OGP values of access to information, public accountability, civic participation, and technology and innovation for openness and accountability.

Signing the declaration is a commitment to openness and transparency and therefore is a way to hold the parliament to account for its actions (or non-actions)

Ambition

Briefly describe the intended results of the commitment and how it will either make government more open or improve government through more openness.



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The Declaration is only a document but recognising the commitments within are important for driving a cultural change within legislatures as they move towards being more open and focussed on serving the wider public as well as members.

Milestones

Please outline the verifiable and measurable milestones to fulfill the commitment.

#	
1	Members of the House of Commons, the House of Lords, Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland Assembly formally adopt the Declaration of Parliamentary Openness.

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Open Government Manifesto Ideas

The following ideas were submitted through face-to-face events and online engagement for the [Open Government Manifesto](#) project.

Not all manifesto submissions will be able to feature within the commitments: but many will include important ideas that could feature within milestones, pre-amble or other places.

Where possible, include a note in your 'Drafting space' on the Manifesto ideas you have drawn upon.

Manifesto idea #4 - Implement the recommendations of the Digital Democracy Commission

Submitted by: OpenGovManifesto -

<http://www.opengovmanifesto.org.uk/ideas/implement-the-recommendations-of-the-digital-democracy-commission>

The report of the Digital Democracy Commission sets out thirty-four recommendations for opening up Parliament to citizens. These recommendations should be adopted in the UK's OGP National Action Plan. The following have been identified by members of the UK Open Government Network as a particular priority:

NaN.

Parliament should make its audio-visual coverage of debates and committees freely available for anyone to download and re-use without unreasonable copyright restrictions by the end of 2015.

NaN.

The new parliamentary digital service should focus on providing tools to help people to track Parliament's activities on specific issues. These should be easy to find and register for.

NaN.

The House of Commons should experiment with new ways to enable the public to contribute to different stages of the law-making process, primarily by digital means.

NaN.

The House of Commons should experiment with new ways of enabling the public to put forward questions for ministers.

NaN.



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All Parliamentary information in the public domain should be made available to the public as downloadable data in formats which make them easy to re-use. Hansard and the register of MPs' interests should be made available as open data by the end of 2015, followed by bills.

Legislative openness is an essential element of open government. As the OGP Legislative Openness Working Group states:

"Greater openness of the legislative process enables citizens to engage more effectively in the policymaking process by providing citizens access to information about the laws under consideration, as well as opportunities to influence legislative deliberations."

In his foreword to the report of the Digital Democracy Commission, the Speaker states:

"Over the past 25 years we have lived through a revolution – created by the birth of the world wide web and the rapid development of digital technology. This digital revolution has disrupted old certainties and challenged representative democracy at its very heart. With social media sources such as Twitter, blogs and 24/7 media, the citizen has more sources of information than ever before, yet citizens appear to operate at a considerable distance from their representatives and appear 'disengaged' from democratic processes. The jargon and practices of the House can be alienating and the sheer weight of information about politics, now available, can act as a wall, keeping the citizen out of the mysterious world of Westminster."

Manifesto idea #33 - Better accountability of elected representatives during their term of office

Submitted by: leedsopengov -

<http://www.opengovmanifesto.org.uk/ideas/better-accountability-of-elected-representatives-during-their-term-of-office>



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Produce clear job description for elected representatives (comparable to other jobs).

Citizen oversight committee in each constituency (randomly selected from electoral roll) which is non-compulsory.

Elected representatives report to committee, whose role is to publicise and report on MPs to constituents.

Link to right to recall (triggered by breach of terms and conditions or petition of 25% of constituents.

This commitment was developed by attendees of the Opening up Government workshop held in Leeds on March 24th. The workshop was co-hosted by the UK Open Government Civil Society Network and Voluntary Action Leeds. Notes from the workshop are here.

Manifesto idea #67 - Adopt the Declaration of Parliamentary Openness

Submitted by: OpenGovManifesto -

<http://www.opengovmanifesto.org.uk/ideas/adopt-the-declaration-of-parliamentary-openness>

The Declaration of Parliamentary Openness sets out 44 principles for advancing parliamentary openness, grouped under four headings:

Promoting a Culture of Openness

Parliamentary information belongs to the public. Parliamentary information shall be able to be reused or republished by citizens with any limited restrictions narrowly defined by law. To enable a culture of parliamentary openness, parliament must enact measures to ensure inclusive citizen participation and a free civil society, enable effective parliamentary monitoring,



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and vigorously protect these rights through its oversight role. Parliament shall also ensure that citizens have legal recourse to enforce their right to access parliamentary information. Parliament has an affirmative duty to promote citizen understanding of parliamentary functioning and share good practices with other parliaments to increase openness and transparency. Parliament shall work collaboratively with PMOs and citizens to ensure that parliamentary information is complete, accurate, and timely.

Making Parliamentary Information Transparent

Parliament shall adopt policies that ensure proactive publication of parliamentary information, and shall review these policies periodically to take advantage of evolving good practices. Parliamentary information includes information about parliament's roles and functions, and information generated throughout the legislative process, including the text of introduced legislation and amendments, votes, the parliamentary agenda and schedule, records of plenary and committee proceedings, historical information, and all other information that forms a part of the parliamentary record, such as reports created for or by parliament. Parliament shall provide information on the management and administration of parliament, parliamentary staff, and comprehensive and detailed parliamentary budget information. Parliament shall provide information about the backgrounds, activities and affairs of members, including sufficient information for citizens to make informed judgments regarding their integrity and probity, and potential conflicts of interest.

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Parliament shall ensure that information is broadly accessible to all citizens on a non-discriminatory basis through multiple channels, including first-person observation, print media, radio, and live and on-demand broadcasts and streaming. Physical access to parliament shall be provided to all citizens, subject to space and safety limitations, with clearly defined and publicly available policies for ensuring access by media and observers. Parliamentary information must also be available free of charge, in multiple national and working languages, and through tools, such as plain language summaries, that help ensure that parliamentary information is understandable to a broad range of citizens.

Enabling Electronic Communication of Parliamentary Information

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Parliamentary information shall be released online in open and structured formats that allow citizens to analyze and reuse this information using the full range of technology tools. Parliamentary information shall be linked to related information and be easily searchable, as well as downloadable in bulk to encourage the development of new technologies for its exploration. Parliamentary websites enable communication with citizens even in societies with limited Internet penetration, by facilitating information access to intermediaries, which can further disseminate the information to citizens. Parliamentary websites shall seek to use interactive tools to engage citizens and offer alert or mobile services. Parliament shall give preference to the use of non-proprietary formats, and free and open-source software. Parliament has a duty to ensure technological usability of parliamentary information, while guaranteeing the privacy for those accessing the information.

The Declaration sets out the following reasons for adoption:

NaN.

Inclusive, accountable, accessible and responsive parliaments and legislative institutions are the key to democratization because of their constitutional responsibilities to enact legislation, represent citizens and oversee executive policy implementation and performance, and reflect citizen interests;

NaN.

Parliamentary openness enables citizens to be informed about the work of parliament, empowers citizens to engage in the legislative process, allows citizens to hold parliamentarians to account and ensures that citizens' interests are represented;

NaN.

The rights of citizens to participate in governance and access parliamentary information are established in international human rights frameworks and in international benchmarks and norms for democratic parliaments adopted by the international parliamentary community; and [...] international institutions have laid a strong foundation for openness online;

NaN.

The onset of the digital era has altered fundamentally the context for public usage of parliamentary information and the expectations of citizens for good governance, and whereas emerging technology is empowering analysis and reuse of parliamentary information with enormous promise to build shared knowledge and inform representative democracy.

NaN.

Variations in traditions, experience, resources and context may influence the approach parliament takes to improving openness, they do not undermine the importance of improving parliamentary openness and transparency;

NaN.



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The need for parliamentary openness is complemented by the need for broader governmental openness and [...] many governments are collaborating with civil society through such initiatives as the Open Government Partnership to develop monitorable commitments to achieve more transparent, effective and accountable governments;

NaN.

A growing number of civil society parliamentary monitoring and support organizations seek to play a meaningful and collaborative role in strengthening the democratic accountability of parliaments and require access to parliamentary information to play this role effectively, and [...] there are numerous precedents for strong collaboration between parliaments and parliamentary monitoring organizations (PMOs) that can inform efforts for greater openness of parliamentary information.

This commitment was developed by attendees of the Open Government Network Strategy Discussion held in London on June 4th.

Manifesto idea #77 - Citizen Assembly on voting reform

Submitted by: leedsopengov -

<http://www.opengovmanifesto.org.uk/ideas/citizen-assembly-on-voting-reform>

Randomly select a Citizens Assembly of 650 citizens to undertake a year long process of recommending a set of electoral reforms to consider e.g. proportional representation, right of recall, re-open nominations.

The assembly must be transparent, well-publicised and open to dialogue with wider citizens, to build trust.

Binding referendum on the recommendations.

You can't have accountability if you can't express your views on your representatives with your vote.



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Because FPTP needs to be more open.

This commitment was developed by attendees of the Opening up Government workshop held in Leeds on March 24th. The workshop was co-hosted by the UK Open Government Civil Society Network and Voluntary Action Leeds. Notes from the workshop are here.