



PRESS RELEASE

Young people from the South West may soon make history, as part of Prime Minister Gordon Brown's drive to reconnect people to politics.

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Mr Brown called for Parliament to establish stronger links with its youth counterpart, suggesting that members of the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) could have annual access to the House of Commons chamber.

Speaking in the House of Commons, last week, as he unveiled his plans for constitutional reform, the Prime Minister focused on the need to listen to young people, as the Government attempted to reconnect the public with politics. UKYP was singled out as a key player in that process.

UKYP has been operating in the South West since its inception. Currently, 100% of local authorities take part, and over 59,000 of the region's young people took part in UKYP elections this year and cast their vote.

Sharon Adams, Regional Co-ordinator for UKYP in the South West based in Taunton, Somerset at the Regional Youth Work Unit of Learning South West, said: "This is fabulous news for all young people in the UK. In his drive to reconnect young people with politics, it is fitting that the Prime Minister should turn to Members of Youth Parliament, a fantastically diverse group of young people who have been elected by their peers and who remain rooted in the real issues that matter to young people throughout the UK.

"Everyone working on behalf of UKYP will of course continue to ensure that the voices of all young people – including those often denied a voice – are included in this process."

Signalling his intent to consider the historic possibility of Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs) having full access to the House of Commons chamber, Mr Brown said,

"Consultation will take place with you, Mr Speaker - and through the Leader of the House, this House - as to whether the Youth Parliament - and the Youth Parliament alone - should be invited here in this Chamber, once a year and on a non-sitting day."

Should it come about, this unprecedented move would ensure that the views of children and young people would have far greater prominence within the world of Westminster, and inspire many more to get involved.

Charles Hendry, co-chair of UKYP and Conservative MP for Wealden, said, "I'm very pleased that this idea has been raised. It would be an extremely good way of encouraging young people to take a greater interest in the affairs of Parliament. I look forward to hearing further details of how this exciting venture may be brought about."

The UK Youth Parliament, established in 1999, has grown year on year, and now boasts over 400 directly-elected Members of Youth Parliament throughout the UK. Nearly 400,000 young people take part in the election process every year.

To read the full speech, visit: <http://www.pm.gov.uk/output/Page12274.asp>.

Photo Caption:

South West Members of the Youth Parliament and their workers at the regional residential training weekend in Newquay 2007.

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