

# Standing for Office: Time-Off Entitlements and Encouraging Civil Engagement

## February 2009

### Introduction

The Federation of Small Businesses is Scotland's largest direct-member business organisation, representing almost 20,000 members. The FSB campaigns for an economic and social environment which allows small businesses to prosper. We welcome the opportunity to submit a response to this consultation.

### **Q1. Do you agree with the analysis of the benefits of undertaking civic roles?**

While we do agree with the benefits to the community of having a diverse representation on the suggested bodies, the FSB would debate both the skills acquired and the benefits of the corporate social responsibility (CSR) role that is being suggested.

While public relations opportunities around CSR may be important to the public image of large companies, the benefits to small and micro firms are likely to be more limited. It is unlikely that most small firms would promote themselves in this way and very few would have the PR or marketing budget to do so. CSR is not a term that will be widely understood or appreciated in the small business community.

The skills gained through public duties are unlikely to be recognised as formal training and an employee would not want to forego formal training to take part in these activities. There is some evidence that people who volunteer are more likely to take on roles where they have existing skills and experience. This limits the training and personal development potential for business of these roles.

The FSB agrees that flexible working can be beneficial for working arrangements and increase productivity. However, agreeing to flexible working arrangements, where an employee makes up any time lost through different hours, or a reduced salary, is very different to unpaid leave. There is already enough misunderstanding surrounding flexible working among small businesses and we would not want to see the Scottish Government add to this by including it in this consultation.

As we feel that many of the skills gained from undertaking these public roles are similar to ones gained by involvement in the workplace, the FSB would recommend working with the Department of Work and Pensions to advertise these posts to people who are not currently in work.

**Q2. Do you agree with the estimation of costs and the assumptions made in calculating the overall costs to employers from the UK consultation impact assessment?**

It is almost impossible to calculate the cost to any business of losing a member of staff for any amount of time. In a firm with four employees, that is a quarter of the workforce who could regularly be out of the office, factory or workshop. That could have a significant impact beyond simple wage costs.

We also believe that the training and productivity benefits have been over assessed.

The potential costs of employment tribunals may also have been over estimated as we do not believe, on existing evidence, that extending the list of roles under section 50 of the Employment Rights Act will massively increase take up of these roles.

**Q3. Are there local Criminal Justice, Local Government or other local civic roles which should be considered?**

The FSB would prefer not to see an extension of the roles under Section 50 of the Employment Rights Act 1996.

**Q4. Do you agree with our proposal that these roles (any member of a TMC Board, an RSL Board or an RTO Committee) should be added to the list of roles under Section 50 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 entitled to time off work? Are there specific issues that should be considered?**

The FSB would prefer not to see an extension of the roles under Section 50 of the Employment Rights Act 1996.

**Q5. Do you agree that this proposed entitlement should cover the main TMC Boards, RSL Boards, ad RTO Committees only rather than members of other governance committees below TMC Board, RSL Board or RTO Committee level?**

Yes.

For further information on any of the points raised in this submission, please contact Martyn McIntyre, Policy Officer, on [martyn.mcintyre@fsb.org.uk](mailto:martyn.mcintyre@fsb.org.uk) or 0141 221 0775.