



# Quakers in Scotland Parliamentary Engagement 2025

Dear Friends,

This is a slightly early round-up of the year as I prepare to embark on an adventure of a year's parental leave. I leave you in good hands though, with Lucy ([LucyR@quaker.org.uk](mailto:LucyR@quaker.org.uk)) here to help resource and equip you in this coming Scottish election year. Before I step away, I wanted to reflect on the work that the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (PEWG) and I have undertaken on your behalf in 2025 to date.

This year we been going through a discernment process to help consider our priorities as PEWG for engaging with the Scottish Parliament. This allows us to focus our time and efforts on the key concerns and leadings of our Quaker community, shaped also by insight into where there are opportunities to make an impact. Our proposed 2026-28 priorities will be brought before Quakers in Scotland meeting in November.

I enjoyed meeting in person with those at WSAM and SESAM area meetings at the start of the year, and continue to be encouraged by emails from Friends across Scotland about what you are doing in your own personal or group capacities in terms of engaging with your MSPs. Remember that while the PEO's focus is on the PEWG's priorities as discerned by Quakers in Scotland corporately, we are also happy to help when we can in terms of any specific questions you have about political engagement or how best you might be able to interact with your MSPs.

With the Scottish election coming up next spring – and with around 1/3 of MSPs already having announced they will be stepping down regardless of the result – there will be a great opportunity to be engaging with your representatives from the very start of their political journey as candidates. **If you don't want to miss hearing about specific opportunities for engagement, please email [LucyR@quaker.org.uk](mailto:LucyR@quaker.org.uk) to be added to the fortnightly PEO email.**

Earlier in the year I spoke with Margery from Glasgow, who shared this excerpt from a poem by Drew Dillinger with me. I found it very powerful, and it reminded me of the special place and opportunity that Quakers have when engaging with our political representatives, for hope, creativity, plain speaking, and persistence. MSPs are people too, and connecting with them on a personal level can have impact beyond what we may see. Over and above specific policy hopes and aims that PEWG has, it is so important to retain the humanity in relationships with our representatives, and encourage them to act with truth and integrity.

When you're next reaching out to an MSP, I wonder whether you'd consider making the communication more personal, or including an inspiring quote?

*"It's 3:23 in the morning  
and I'm awake  
because my great great grandchildren  
won't let me sleep.  
my great great grandchildren*

*ask me in dreams  
what did you do while the Planet  
was plundered?  
what did you do when the Earth  
was unravelling?  
surely you did something  
when the seasons started failing?  
as the mammals, reptiles, birds were all dying?  
did you fill the streets with protest  
when democracy was stolen?  
what did you do  
once  
you  
knew?"*

## **Peacebuilding**

### Arms Industry Funding

Throughout 2025, we have continued to engage in dialogue with the government about Scottish Enterprise (SE)'s funding of arms manufacturers. With the current crisis in Palestine, along with others such as Amnesty International we focused concerns on the human rights checks which don't disqualify companies from receiving public funds if the company supplies components which are then used by countries like Israel which are accused of human rights abuses. Last summer we spoke with SE directly on this topic.

This work resulted in a debate in February 2025 in which MSPs voted for a review of SE's human rights filters, and some provisionally promising recommendations about increasing the 'teeth' of the checks, and increasing their frequency. We are continuing to speak to SE about how this will be implemented.

There was a further update in September 2025 in which it was announced that Scottish Enterprise / Scottish National Investment Bank will *"pause new awards of public money to arms companies whose products or services are provided to countries where there is plausible evidence of genocide being committed by that country."*

While this is welcome, the new criterion only explicitly excludes countries where there are concerns about genocide, rather than wider criteria of any human rights abuses. In the same speech, the First Minister also confirmed a change in policy that will allow these agencies to give support to produce munitions (rather than the previous policy of only investing in arms companies' other projects).

We will continue to work with Amnesty International and other allies like Campaign Against the Arms Trade to maintain pressure about this.

### Peace Education

Ellis Brooks from Quakers in Britain continued to build on our network in Scotland, and co-hosted the official launch of [EIS](#) (The Educational Institute of Scotland, the nation's largest teachers' union) [Peace Education guidance](#) to teachers at their conference on the 17-18 January in Glasgow. You can read the policy at <https://www.eis.org.uk/policiesandguidance/educationforpeace>.

Quakers in Britain have worked with the Open University to produce a free course on [Principles and Practice of Peace Education](#), drawing lots on the work done in Scotland. It's around 12 hours of self-directed study and explores how children and young people might be empowered to build peace with themselves, their communities, and the wider world. The course is relevant for educational practitioners and school communities but will also be useful for anyone working with children and young people in informal and community settings.

### Scottish Peace Platform

Beyond Borders were announced as the winners of the Peace Platform pilot funding, and we have engaged with their consultation process about what shape this initiative should have. It is good to see lobbying work in this area paying off, after the engagement of the previous PEO Andrew Tomlinson on the Peace Institute report, and subsequent work continuing to press MSPs to keep this initiative alive, and to provide the requisite funding!

The Peace Platform does not intend to have an advocacy role going forward, so the PEWG / PEO's involvement with the Platform will be minimal, but at an inception day workshop that I attended the organisers were clear on Quakers' relevance to and interest in peace work in Scotland. At a minimum, the platform looks to be a useful place to share the peace education resources that colleagues at Quakers in Britain have created. Individuals and organisations are able to sign up to the platform via the website: <https://scottishpeaceplatform.org/>.

## **Climate and economic justice**

### Work with SCCS

We have continued to work closely with SCCS this year, joining with them in consultation responses and in supporting their mass lobbying event in September 2025. I was involved in organising this as well as giving training beforehand online and on the day in person about how to target which MSP or MP you can speak to most effectively.

Over 250 people attended, and 27 MSPs were there to speak to their constituents. Some meetings were more fruitful than others, given the discrepancies between the number of MSPs and constituents in each region, but overall it was a significant moment to show the amount of support that climate action still has in Scotland, and we hope that MSPs who are 'friendly' to the cause felt encouraged to see the strength of feeling. Some Edinburgh Friends and I were able to meet Jeremy Balfour MSP, who couldn't attend on the day, as a follow-up to the Lobby Day, so there are wider ramifications and conversations happening!

This year, SCCS have also been focused on links with the Poverty Alliance, and the opportunities there are for climate action to reduce social inequalities. A good factor for us to bear in mind and emphasise in our work on climate justice.

### Speaking to the Scottish Government on loss and damage and heat in buildings

In the spring/summer we wrote to First Minister John Swinney about a number of issues in his Programme for Government, and particularly noted our concern about loss and damage funding and the heat in buildings bill. As a consequence he invited us to meet with his policy delivery team on these two issues.

At the meeting, I, Carolyn and Richard were encouraged to see the care and concern from the officials on the importance of these two topics. They specifically thanked us for the work we are doing in keeping bringing them up with MSPs and Ministers, as it helps the officials to show their importance to the public – a great validation for the work that we've been doing and continue to do.

While the team cannot confirm loss and damage funding for next parliamentary session – it will be down to whoever wins the Scottish election – they are currently gathering best evidence from the projects that have been undertaken so far using the funding and using it to encourage both the Scottish Government and other sub-national states as to the significant effect that well-targeted funding can have.

### COP30 Motion

In news hot off the press, we have secured a [motion](#) and Members Business Debate on COP30 and the importance of loss and damage funding, led by Nicola Sturgeon and scheduled to take place on 5 November. Lucy will be writing to the GM mailing list with details of how you can be involved to ask your MSP to support this motion, and speak up about the importance of loss and damage as a climate justice issue.

### Health and Climate

It's been interesting this year to see an increased focus on the health benefits of climate action – following on from our event last year on the subject, which now seems quite ahead of the curve! There have been various briefings and debates on this, and Friend Lesley Morrison and I had a good meeting with Paul Sweeney MSP in April about health and climate links particularly in relation to housing. Paul Sweeney was one of the MSPs that came to the Climate Lobby and was engaged on the issues being discussed there.

Health and Climate is a good reminder of the 'win win' policies that are attractive to politicians due to their benefits for everyone.

### **Manifesto engagement**

As parties look towards the next Scottish Election, they have been preparing to write their manifestos. We engaged with them at an early stage, sending our own short policy proposal documents both for the [work of PEWG](#) and also of the [Community Justice Working Group](#). We were able to meet with the Scottish Greens, Scottish Labour, and the SNP to discuss our proposals in greater detail, and have also sent on the documents to all other political parties represented as of May 2025 in the Scottish Parliament with requests for meetings.

### **Times for Reflection**

As part of Quaker witness, individual Quakers have the opportunity to offer a Time for Reflection to open the Scottish Parliament each Tuesday. Contributions are sought from different faith groups (and those of no faith), and it is a nice way to interact with MSPs and

provide them some food for thought as they start the business in the Chamber each week. This year, Friend Richard Raggett gave a really thought-provoking reflection calling for "[listening, respect, and kinder ground](#)" in May, and Friend Neil Crabtree spoke in June about "[a contemporary rite of passage](#)".

We've had a really good run of contributions from Friends over the past few years, and invite you to consider whether you might have a short thought to share with MSPs? Listening or reading to past submissions may help spark some inspiration and ideas for what to say, and Richard Raggett has some guidelines to help you structure your talk.

The PEWG currently includes: Carolyn Burch and Richard Raggett (NSAM; Co-Convenors), Ed Tyler and Katie Aspinwall (WSAM), and Gareth Rae and Carol Jennings (SESAM). If you would like to find out more about how we work and what we are doing, please get in touch with us. Click [here](#) for copies of our consultation responses, statements and information about our other work.

In Friendship,

Sarah Komashko

Parliamentary Engagement Officer