

Report from the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (PEWG)

1 Note on outcomes of Westminster Meeting House police raid in March, its relevance for Scottish Quaker advocacy

- Joe Cox (interim Public Affairs and Media Manager for QiB) updates PEWG at each of our meetings; when we met in May he spoke of some of the positive outcomes of the police intrusion at Westminster MH, e.g. an interfaith letter calling for repeal of the draconian anti-protest provisions within the UK's Public Order Act 2023 and the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022. QiB are continuing to respond and to discern how to make best use strategically of this opportunity to seek reform of anti-protest law and how to bring out the links with the overarching concern on "truth and integrity in public life". Public awareness of Quakers has of course been impacted and members of the PEWG group have noticed more 'recognition' of the existence of Quakers and what we do since the Westminster MH police intrusion. And although this has taken place in an English legal context, Scottish Friends have been writing to their representatives .
- This is all part of the context in which we do our advocacy, particularly in the context of asking for greater truth and integrity in public life, as below.

2 Letter to the First Minister about the new Programme for Government

The Scottish Government's new **Programme for Government** (PfG) was published on 6 May. We have written to FM John Swinney in response. (the letter will be circulated by our Parliamentary Engagement Officer to those on her email list). We welcomed the FM's commitment on issues of social justice, particularly child poverty, but raised concerns that

- although 'tackling the climate emergency' had been identified as one of the Scottish government's four priorities, it was barely represented in the PfG
- we hope, as an election approaches, with concerns about far-right pressures, climate policy can be communicated as positive change that rises above partisan politics

The letter was also informed by the Quaker Truth and Integrity Group (QTIG)'s Meetings for Worship (worldwide online) in April, when Quakers reflected on the political environment globally, the current state of dialogue in public life, and the seemingly fragile state of democracy. Some themes that emerged were included in our letter to John Swinney:

- Fear for the future which needs to be recognised, and addressed with hope and action
- Younger people need the experience of the elders, but also their positive hope

3 Time for Reflection 13 May

Richard Raggett gave his “Time for Reflection” on Tuesday 13 May; as it happened this was the day of the major debate (and free vote) on the proposed Assisted Dying Bill. So Richard’s message about more honesty and integrity in listening and speaking, and finding kinder ground in debate, proved timely and in fact was referenced during the debate. You can watch Richard’s Time for Reflection on [Parliament TV](#) or read the transcript in the [Official Report](#)

4 PEO/PEWG meetings with party manifesto writers for the 2026 Scottish election

Input from Area Meetings about PEWG priorities for 2026 to 2028 (to be discerned by GM Scotland in November) has helped us draw up a forward-looking outline for these meetings. We aim to meet with Scottish Labour, SNP, Scottish Greens and the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party. (Alba has only one MSP and Reform none), So far ...

- The PEO and three PEWG members met with **Scottish Labour** Policy Forum officials on 15 May. The presence of two Community Justice Working Group members strengthened the discussion on restorative justice (PEWG are working closely with the CJWG on manifesto advocacy). On these matters and on climate the officials expressed their appreciation of a ‘holistic’ and ‘values-driven’ approach of Quakers but also expressed concern about handling press reaction on divisive issues. The meeting was wide-ranging and interesting: if you’d like to read the summary please contact the PEO.
- The **Scottish LibDems** have asked us to send them our manifesto briefing note
- We are meeting with the **Scottish Greens** on 29 May.
- The **SNP** have not responded to our request; we have reiterated it in our letter to the FM
- The **Scottish Conservative and Unionists** have not responded to our request

5 Peacebuilding and Peace Education (including report on IDEAS)

- **Correspondence with Scottish Enterprise (SE) and Richard Lochhead MSP (Minister for Business)** on enhancing human rights checks governing SE’s grants to arms companies and also strengthening SE’s push to support the transition to Net Zero via its grants programmes. The Minister has confirmed that SE has been asked to review the human rights checks in accordance with the Parliament’s request arising from a Parliamentary debate in February. This is only an internal review however. Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP lodged 5 written questions on this to the Government: the replies were far from satisfactory. Sarah has met with Amnesty International following its (Feb 2025) briefing “Scottish Enterprise Funding for Arms Companies” and it is planned that we will collaborate to push on the human rights aspect (AI have commissioned a report on what adequate HR checks would be).
- **Peace Education:** there will be a “Call for Views” on the Restraint and Exclusion in Schools (Scotland) Bill: this could be an opening for advocacy on the effectiveness of peace education in reducing exclusions. Michelle Thomson (MSP)

(who sponsored the Peace at the Heart events at the Parliament in September 2023) has expressed willingness to initiate a Members' Business Debate on Peace Education timed for the anniversary of the end of WWII. Our PEO has supplied an initial draft motion to Michelle Thomson's office.

Annual report on our work with IDEAS (International Development Education Association Scotland)

Ellis Brooks from Quakers in Britain has continued to work with the IDEAS group on their advocacy and activities around peace and global citizenship education in Scotland. The group has become a subgroup of Scotland's International Development Alliance (SIDA) and as a result of this (as well as work on corporate accountability), Quakers in Scotland have joined SIDA. Over the course of the year, the Educational Institute for Scotland (EIS) has been working on peace education guidance, and Ellis joined the EIS conference to co-host the official launch of this guidance in January. We are also pleased to see EIS activists passing motions and setting up networks for peace education, and Peace Education Scotland will be represented at their conference.

6 Other updates

- **Human Rights Bill news:** Scottish Government is planning a consultation on a Human Rights Bill in preparation for a Bill to be brought forward after the May 2026 election.
- **Scotland's Peace Platform:** Sarah has contacted Beyond Borders seeking the chance to input as they work to establish the planned Peace Platform, and we await a response.
- **Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS):** please see final page of this report which is an annex on our work with SCCS and their upcoming initiatives to try to relaunch the narrative on climate policy.
- **Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office (SCPO):** new SCPO arrangements (fewer meetings, but face-to-face) aim at more effective and efficient collaboration. PEWG will be represented at these.
- **Membership of PEWG:** Tanya Jones, PEWG member since 2022, has been appointed as Climate Justice lead at Quakers in Britain (maternity cover), starting 23 June. Sadly this means she will have to step down from PEWG, but QiB's gain is not entirely our loss because we will still be colleagues working together on Climate Justice; plus we are delighted that QiB will have the benefit of Tanya's experience and knowledge.

However ... This leaves us with no representation from East, and as of January there is none from North. New members are needed from any AM. No in-depth political expertise needed, only a willingness to contribute on your own concerns within our work!

Carolyn Burch (PEWG CO-Convenor) May 2025

Annex to PEWG report to GM 7 June 2025: Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS)

To request additional funding for additional event and actions in 2025

Introduction: SCCS is PEWG's main ally for general advocacy for climate action. SCCS is a broad-based coalition of 74 organisations which collectively represent hundreds of thousands of members, for example Friends of the Earth, Oxfam, and RSPB. Its financing comes largely from membership fees which cover staff costs, admin costs and a small activities budget. In 2025 QiS membership was £230, increased from £180 in 2024 by allocating the £50 membership fee of Together Scotland to SCCS. In 2023 QiS contributed £500 in addition to the membership fee.

PEWG has been active in SCCS for a number of years now through our membership of its political advocacy working group which our PEO attends and contributes to. We have been involved in an SCCS sponsored seminar training people on how to approach and speak with MSPs on climate matters.

Context: Government delivery of climate policy seems to have hit the buffers. The latest Government statements have been back tracking in spite of the First Minister's repeated statements that climate is central to his Government. Time is running out fast. Climate advocacy has to do something different. SCCS recognises this and is developing a public engagement work plan. It sees the 2026 election in Scotland as critical, a campaign in which there will likely be an anti-climate-action narrative which will need to be challenged.

Aims: SCCS wishes to amplify, and provide MSPs with, solid evidence that the public supports strong, pragmatic climate action which will also address the inequalities plaguing our society. For example, improving health by reducing urban pollution; improving the efficiency of domestic heating systems....at the same time as moving away from fossil fuels.

Proposed actions in 2025: the first proposed action is a mass lobby of MSPs on Thursday 18th September in Holyrood, and Friday 19th September across local constituencies, at which citizens meet their MSPs to explain in their own words why meaningful, rapid climate action is so important to them. A working group has been established to make this happen, drawn from coalition members. Our PEO and/or a PEWG member have attended the early meetings.

Request to GM: SCCS has secured £5,000 towards the project's budget of £8,000. Donations are being discussed with two other SCCS members. **PEWG asks GM to consider a donation of £500 (a repeat of the 2023 extra donation); this would bring donations within touching distance of the £8,000 budget target for this project.**

Follow-up action: ultimately, the success of this project depends upon the success of SCCS members inspiring their memberships to seek meetings with their MSPs, in short to make the lobby a “mass lobby”. PEWG will keep AMs up to date and provide communications to be shared with their LMs telling what the action is, how to get involved etc. as the detail of the project firms up. We will need to encourage as many Scottish Quakers as possible to take part.

Richard Raggett (PEWG Co-convenor)

20 May 25