**Quakers in Scotland Parliamentary Engagement 2021**

Dear Friends,

I hope this letter finds you well. As we begin 2022 I wanted to thank you for your continued encouragement and support for the work I and the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (PEWG) undertake to articulate Quaker views to politicians and civil servants in Scotland; and to support Quakers to work within the Scottish political scene. I recognize that it is the witness of local Friends faithfully living out the testimonies that gives authenticity to the work we do with parliamentarians. Whether it be protesting against nuclear weapons; providing practical support to refugees or those in prison; or meeting, or writing to your MSP, the actions of Friends gives depth and weight to our calls for a more just, peaceful and sustainable world. Here I wanted to give you a brief overview of some of the work that has been done by the PEWG on your behalf over the last year, I hope this will both encourage you that work has been done and progress made, while also strengthening your resolve that there is still much to bid for in the weeks and months ahead.

**Human Rights**

All our Rights in Law

At the start of the Year we were involved in the National Human Rights Taskforce’s [“All our Rights in Law”](https://www.allourrightsinlaw.scot/) consultation: a process advising the government on the incorporation of further human Rights treaties into Scots law. This would include the right to food, the right to adequate housing, and the right to a healthy environment, among others. We held a very fruitful online discussion with Scottish Friends. You can read our input into this consultation [here](https://www.quakerscotland.org/sites/quakerscotland.org/files/documents/QiS%20submission%20to%20All%20Our%20Rights%20In%20Law%20consulatition%20Final.pdf), and the final report to the government (in which we were quoted twice) [here.](https://hrcscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/HRCS_all-our-rights_report_48pp_web_single-pages.pdf) The commitment to bring a new Human Rights Bill before the Scottish parliament was in the Scottish Government’s program for government and we expect the Bill process to begin later this year.

Incorporation of Children’s Rights

Alongside the Children’s Rights charity Together Scotland we actively campaigned for the [incorporation of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child into Scots law.](https://www.togetherscotland.org.uk/about-childrens-rights/monitoring-the-uncrc/incorporation-of-the-un-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child/) The relevant Bill was passed unanimously within the Scottish parliament, but was subject to a legal challenge from the UK government. The legislation has now returned to the Scottish parliament for amendment and, through Together Scotland, we are working to ensure that the Bill proceeds in its strongest possible form. The Bill has many strengths and we see it as an important tool in enabling young people to recognize and question military involvement in the education system.

**The Climate and Ecological Crisis**

In a year that Scotland hosted the UN Climate Conference COP26, it was obvious that 2021 offered a significant opportunity to progress Scotland’s response to the climate and ecological emergency. In February we responded to the [consultation on Scotland’s Land Use Strategy](https://www.quakerscotland.org/sites/quakerscotland.org/files/documents/Land%20Use%20Strategy%20response.docx). And in the run up to the election we worked closely with Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS) to lobby candidates and parties to commit to [doubling Scotland’s Climate Justice Fund](https://www.stopclimatechaos.scot/media-statement-scottish-government-climate-justice-funding/) and speaking out in favor of Loss and Damage finance for the global south. This involved meetings with Manifesto writers, workshops to encourage people to lobby their candidates, and a workshop with new MSPs. Lastly in September SCCS hosted a series of [dialogues between the Scottish Government and representatives from the global south](https://www.stopclimatechaos.scot/campaign/glasgow-climate-dialogues/#:~:text=The%20Glasgow%20Climate%20Dialogues%20were%20planned%20by%20a%20task%20force,decisions%20on%20content%20and%20processes.). This initiative eventually led to [the Scottish Government taking a firm stance in favor of loss and damage finance](https://www.gov.scot/publications/foi-202100252499/). While Scotland’s ambition to tackle the climate and ecological crisis is commendable, it has frequently been criticized for not providing a clear plan for how it will achieve its emissions reductions. In late January I, along with members of SCCS will meet civil servants responsible for producing the Scottish government’s next Climate Change plan to discuss this.

**Peacebuilding**

Scottish enterprise and the conflict in Yemen

Following the Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT) report [Made in Scotland](https://caat.org.uk/publications/made-in-scotland/), we arranged to meet with Ivan McKee MSP, Minister for Business Trade Tourism and Enterprise, to raise concerns that tax payers’ money was funding companies that were profiting from the conflict in Yemen. Mr McKee, who has spoken against the sale of armaments to Yemen, was sympathetic to our concerns but stated that Enterprise Scotland did not fund the manufacture of munitions, and that the projects it had funded had civilian purposes. We have pressed Mr. McKee to explore whether further conditionality might be applied to Enterprise Scotland to exclude certain markets. The conversation is ongoing.

Peace Institute

In September, in its programme for government, the Scottish government announced its intention to establish a Peace Institute by the end of 2023. We have written to the First Minister expressing Quakers’ interest in this and asking for further information, and have received a response inviting us to be part of a roundtable to discuss the plans.

Peace Education

We have also been actively talking with partners about ways in which we might promote peace education to teachers, Local Authorities, and the Scottish government. So far this has involved conversations with QPSW, the Education Institute of Scotland, Peace and Justice Scotland, The Church of Scotland, and the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission. I hope to do more work on this in 2022.

**Supporting Friends to engage**

Lastly, within our capacity we have tried to support Friends to engage with Scottish politics. This has involved guides for holding a hustings or election meeting, issues briefings and information about relevant motions in parliament that friends may wish to contact their MSPs about. In November we supported a representative from South Edinburgh Meeting to give [evidence to the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee.](https://www.scottishparliament.tv/meeting/equalities-human-rights-and-civil-justice-committee-november-2-2021) We have also had direct enquiries from local Friends about a number of issues such as the treatment of victims of human trafficking in the penal system, and proposals for new firing ranges in Dumfries and Galloway, and have tried to offer support and advice where appropriate. In this coming year we hope that Friends locally will continue to engage with Scottish politics and we have produced some briefings to assist those who might wish to lobby their MSPs on the three Priority areas set by General Meeting for Scotland: [the climate crisis](https://www.quakerscotland.org/sites/quakerscotland.org/files/documents/Climate%20and%20ecological%20emergency%20briefing%20January%202022.docx), [peace building,](https://www.quakerscotland.org/sites/quakerscotland.org/files/documents/Peacebuilding%20Briefing%20January%202022.docx) and [economic justice](https://www.quakerscotland.org/sites/quakerscotland.org/files/documents/Economic%20Justice%20Briefing%20January%202022.docx). We are also glad to be building a connection with the newly formed Scottish Quakers Community Justice Working Group.

In Friendship,

Andrew Tomlinson

**Parliamentary Engagement officer**