**Quakers in Scotland Parliamentary Engagement 2022**

Dear Friends,

I hope that this letter finds you all in fine fettle. As we begin 2023 I wanted to offer a round up of the work that the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group (PEWG) and I undertook on your behalf in 2022.

Sadly this will be my last round up as Parliamentary Engagement Officer as I will soon be moving on to take up a role working for Christian Aid. I want to offer my heartfelt thanks to you all for your continued support and engagement as I have undertaken this role, particularly the members of the PEWG both past and present who are all wonderful individuals and have been so brilliant to work with. I hope that you will hold them, and my successor, in the light as they continue to take this work forward.

As you will see, 2022 saw some notable successes, some disappointments and some continued work in progress. All in all I hope that this round up will encourage you that progress has and is being made and strengthen your resolve that there are more opportunities for change that we can seize over the months ahead.

**Peacebuilding**

Scottish Peace Institute

In its 21/22 Programme for government, the Scottish government announced its intention to establish a Scottish peace institute by the end of 2022. We approached the Cabinet Secretary for the Constitution, Culture and External Affairs about this and were invited to engage with the expert working group that were advising the government on their plans. Our engagement with the working group was extremely positive and we were able to see and comment on some of their draft recommendations, and were referenced a number of times in their final report to government. However, after the recommendations were submitted to government there has been very little progress or communication. We have written to the cabinet Secretary and received a polite but uninformative response. Similarly, we have worked with opposition MSPs to ask written and verbal questions in the parliament about the progress of the initiative and when the expert working group’s recommendations will be made public. The responses to these questions have been equally uninformative. As of the end of 2022 the Scottish government have not established a Scottish peace institute and there is little publicly available information about their intentions. We will continue to try to engage with the government and opposition parties on this issue.

Peace Education

In May of last year colleagues in Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) launched [“Peace at the Heart”](https://www.quaker.org.uk/documents/peace-at-the-heart) a report on the state of, and case for, peace education in Britain. Working with colleagues in QPSW we met with a number of MSPs to discuss the report. This work culminated in Paul McLennan MSP placing a [motion](https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/S6M-04587) in the parliament commending the report. This motion was signed by over a third of all MSPs in the parliament and we are now working with Paul’s office to hold an exhibition in the parliament on Peace Education. In addition to this work we submitted a response to the Scottish government’s consultation on education reform where we again made the case for further integration of the principles of peace education within the curriculum.

Childrens Rights and proposals for a new Human Rights law

On behalf of General Meeting for Scotland, the PEWG remains a member of Together Scotland, a coalition an alliance of charities concerned about Children’s Rights in Scotland. As many of you will know, through Together, we campaigned for the incorporation of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child into Scots law, and a Bill to this effect was unanimously passed in 2021. However this was subsequently subject to a legal challenged by the UK government, who had concerned that it would place duties on UK Ministers and would therefore be out with the competence of the Scottish parliament. The Supreme court ruled in the UK government’s favour, and Together have subsequently been trying to work with Scottish ministers to amend the Bill so that it can be introduced while not falling foul of further legal challenge. Our understanding is that there have been detailed conversations between the Scottish and UK officials and there had been hope that the Bill would be introduced before Christmas. That didn’t happen and we are waiting for more information.

Many of you will also remember from my 2021 roundup that we were involved in a preliminary consultation on a new Human Rights Bill for Scotland that would incorporate additional international Human Rights treaties directly into scots law. The progress on this Bill has been slowed by the legal challenge to the UN convention of the Rights of the Child Bill. Through Together I have met with the civil servants working on this potential new Bill three times and the expectation is to see something introduced within the next year.

**Economic Justice and Land Reform**

Land reform consultation

In September of this year the Scottish government consulted on a new Land Reform Bill. Working with a group of interested Friends we were able to respond to this consultation, welcoming the draft proposals for the Bill while also saying that the proposals were insufficient to meet the stated ambition for the Bill.

Wellbeing economy, doubling Scottish child payment

In November this year Elizabeth Allen, on behalf of General Meeting for Scotland, signed up to an open letter from the Wellbeing Economy Alliance to the First Minister setting out a vision for a wellbeing economy. Elizabeth also signed an open letter to the First Minister calling for the Scottish child payment to be doubled and was part of a statement from Scotland’s faith leaders on poverty in Scotland, during Challenge Poverty week.

**The Climate and Ecological Crisis**

Finance for the global south for loss and damage caused by climate change

At COP27 of this year the Scottish government announced that it would increase its contribution to loss and damage finance to £7 million. This came off the back of intense engagement with the Scottish government from our colleagues in Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS). SCCS is a coalition of over 60 NGOs in Scotland who are concerned about climate change. In my role as PEO I currently chair SCCS’ policy and advocacy group. Following this announcement we wrote to Màiri McAllan, Minister for Environment, Biodiversity and Land Reform to ask for more information. From our correspondence it appears that while this money is welcome, and symbolically significant, it is not additional money from the Scottish government as it will be coming out of it’s already existing climate justice fund.

Decarbonising domestic Heat

This year the PEWG met with Patrick Harvie, Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights to discuss the new Heat in Buildings strategy. We expressed our support for the overall strategy and our concern for the huge task that the government has in delivering it. We have had similar conversations with civil servants working on the strategy, inviting one of them to speak to the PEWG, and will continue to explore ways to support and challenge the government on this issue.

The fourth national planning framework (NPF4)

One behalf of General Meeting for Scotland the PEWG submitted a response to a consultation on the fourth national planning framework for Scotland (NPF4). NPF4 is significant as it will set the parameters for local development plans and local planning in Scotland up until 2045 and so will have a significant bearing on Scotland’s ability to meet its ambitious climate targets. We were able to produce quite an extensive response, and working with partner organisations we were able to get some significant changes to the proposals: the amended draft taking on board a number of our recommendations.

Climate Change Committee progress report

In December of 2022 the Climate Change Committee, the official advisor to the UK and Scottish governments on climate change, published it’s annual progress report for Scotland. The report highlighted a significant gap between Scotland’s ambitious targets and what is managing to deliver, and stated that without a detailed delivery plan Scotland’s targets risked becoming largely irrelevant. This is something that we have been concerned about for some time now and through SCCS I contributed to a statement responding to the report, and was interviewed on the BBC Politics Scotland show giving a response.

Beyond Oil and Gas

Through SCCS we were involved in producing a briefing on phasing out North Sea oil and gas. Thank you to a number of you who have subsequently shared this briefing with your MSPs and asked them to encourage Scotland to sign up to the Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance. It has been helpful for me to see the responses that you have received from MSPs. As always Friends engaging directly with their MSPs can often unlock conversations that it is harder for us to do, so we are very grateful for your engagement and continued support.

I hope this is a helpful summary. There are things that I haven’t been able to include for brevities sake, but I hope this gives you a sense of the work. For copies of our consultation responses, statements and information about our other work you can go to <https://www.quakerscotland.org/documents/468> , and if you have any questions or would like to discuss any of the above then please do get in touch.

In Friendship,

Andrew Tomlinson

**Parliamentary Engagement officer**