

# Realgrassroots

PE1319/S

Monday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2010

Mr. Fergus Cochrane,  
Clerk to the Public Petition Committee,  
TG.01,  
The Scottish Parliament,  
Edinburgh.  
EH99 1SP

## **PUBLIC PETITION PE1319**

In respect of the aforementioned petition and the responses received thus far, Mr. Willie Smith and I would like to comment as follows.

We acknowledge the written reply from the Rt. Hon. Henry McLeish and we would comment that many, if not all of his answers lack detail and substance. Indeed it is interesting to note he immediately mentions that he met the petitioners at Stirling and received some comment. We wish to be clear that this was a chance meeting at a public conference; we approached and spoke to him in an attempt to agree a future meeting. Mr. McLeish did not acknowledge or respond to subsequent attempts to hold such a meeting.

It is pleasing to note that his review contains, in Recommendation No. 8, an acknowledgment of the issues we highlight in our Petition. We welcome such a review group, but would share the concerns of some of the Petition's Committee that this group needs to be transparent and engage with external stakeholders to ensure the 'duty of care' for young people is properly addressed.

We were pleased to receive a response from the Child Law Centre and in particular would question if the contract/registration procedures satisfy European and Scots Law. Are these procedures reasonable and fair? The centre correctly highlights serious concerns regarding the restrictions placed on young people, i.e. preventing participation in schools football and other normal childhood play and activities.

The response from the Child Law Centre is very much in tune with the replies previously received from the STUC and Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People.

Given the consistent replies provided by these organisations, not to mention the Scottish Youth FA (responsible for around 40, 000 children and young people) we are disappointed by the response received from the Scottish Government's Head of Sport, Derek Grieve. Given the grave concerns detailed by the STUC, the Commissioner and now the Child Law Centre, the Scottish Government appear unwilling to tackle the issue.

Whilst we acknowledge that football matters are the concern of the governing body, we would like to have seen the Scottish Government, when faced with several documented concerns from stakeholders, take some immediate action to ensure that the children across the country are being treated fairly and their rights are being protected.

Is the Government of Scotland accepting that the Scottish FA can act out with the laws of the land as well as European Law because that young person is engaged in football?

The petitioners seek to continue the petition and again respectfully suggest that the issue of breaches of law be referred to the Justice Committee for consideration.

It may be useful to take evidence from the leading figures within the football community and invite the President of the Scottish FA George Peat and Chief Executive of the Scottish Premier League, Neil Doncaster to Holyrood to ascertain what steps they have taken to ensure Scotland's youngsters are afforded the protection and rights they are entitled to.

The petitioners would take this opportunity to advise the Committee that both chief executives Martin Bain of Rangers FC and Peter Lawwell of Celtic FC would be prepared to give evidence to the petitions committee if so desired.

Finally, we would note that several questions posed in our previous correspondence have as yet not been addressed. These were aimed at the Scottish FA, SPL, Glasgow City Council, The City of Edinburgh Council and North Ayrshire Council.

Kind regards,

***Scott Robertson & William Smith***  
(On behalf of Realgrassroots)