

Justice Committee

Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill

Letter from the Convener to Rt Hon Lord McCluskey

I write in response to your email to the Justice Committee on 24 January reiterating your request to give evidence to the Committee on the proposed abolition of the requirement for corroboration.

The Committee understands that this issue is controversial and that it is vitally important to ensure that the Parliament, as a whole, scrutinises the Government's proposals. The Committee recognises your experience and expertise in this area and welcomes the continuing debate on the abolition of corroboration both inside and outside of Parliament, to which you are making a valuable contribution.

The Committee discussed your email at its meeting on Tuesday 23 January. We would have been happy to have received a written submission from you on the subject while we were taking evidence, and we would have been able to draw upon it when drafting our report. Furthermore, we could have discussed the possibility asking you to give evidence in person had we received your request to do so earlier. However, in our view, there has been ample opportunity for anyone to provide evidence to us. We are currently discussing and agreeing our Stage 1 report and to reopen the evidence at this stage is therefore not possible.

I note that you have particular concerns about the evidence provided by the Cabinet Secretary to the Committee on 14 January. It might be helpful to explain that it is customary for the Cabinet Secretary or Minister in charge of a Bill to provide the final evidence session of a Committee's Stage 1 inquiry. This enables the Committee to use the evidence it has gathered, in the previous sessions and in writing, to question and scrutinise the Government. This is not, however, the last opportunity to scrutinise the Bill and I am sure that there will be robust debate at every stage of its passage through Parliament.

I have noted previously that we may take further evidence on the Bill at Stage 2 and if it covered the areas of policy that you are particularly concerned about, we would welcome your input.

Christine Grahame MSP
Convener
30 January 2014