

## **JUSTICE COMMITTEE**

### **HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL**

#### **JOINT SUBMISSION ORGANISED BY THE HUMANIST SOCIETY**

We represent a diverse group of individuals and organisations concerned about the impact on freedom of expression of the proposed Hate Crime and Public Order Bill as currently drafted.

We welcome the provisions to consolidate existing aggravated hate crimes and the repeal of the blasphemy law.

However, the Bill creates stirring up offences without any intent being examined; merely that the words, action, or artwork might do so. This offence could even be applied to being in possession of materials produced by someone else, where sharing the material could stir up hatred.

The unintended consequences of this well meaning Bill risk stifling freedom of expression, and the ability to articulate or criticise religious and other beliefs. As currently worded, the Bill could frustrate rational debate and discussion which has a fundamental role in society including in artistic endeavour. The arts play a key part in shaping Scotland's identity in addition to being a significant economic contributor.

The right to critique ideas, philosophical, religious and other must be protected to allow an artistic and democratic society to flourish.

Fraser Sutherland, *Chief Executive, Humanist Society Scotland*

Andrew Copson, *Chief Executive, Humanists UK*

Scottish PEN

Index on Censorship

Chris Brookmyre, *Novelist*

Val McDermid, *Writer*

Elaine C Smith, *Actor and Comedian*

Dame Seona Reid, *Arts Administrator*

Alan Bissett, *Playwright and Novelist*

Ruth Wishart, *Journalist and Broadcaster*

Andrew Panton, *Artistic Director Dundee Rep / Joint CEO Dundee Rep & Scottish Dance Theatre Ltd*

Prof. Maggie Kinloch, *Theatre Director & Chair Humanist Society Scotland*

Ariane Sherine, *Comedian and Journalist*

Joan Smith, *Journalist, novelist, and human rights activist*

Peter Tatchell, *Director, Peter Tatchell Foundation*

Rowan Atkinson, *Comedian*

Prof. A C Grayling, *Philosopher and Author*  
Prof. Timothy Garton Ash, *Historian and author of Free Speech*  
Nick Ross, *Television and Radio Presenter*  
Terry Anderson, *Executive Director, Cartoonists Rights Network International*  
Gary McLelland, *Chief Executive, Humanists International*  
Michael Connarty, *Former MP and former Chair of Parliamentary Humanist Group*  
Dr Evan Harris, *Former MP and former Vice-Chair of Parliamentary Humanist Group*  
Quilliam Foundation

12 August 2020