

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM REV CANON GERRY BOWYER C.A

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to contribute my views, as below, to the [Hate Crime and Public Order \(Scotland\) Bill Call for Views](#). I am responding as an individual and my details are at the foot of this email. Thank you for the invitation to contribute.

- I think that the idea of 'hate crime' is a misguided concept and should be removed from the statute books. I don't think it is the place of the State to be judging or penalising hate, rather it should focus on harmful actions and intent to cause harm.
- I think the current form of the Bill and existing legislation leaves far too much open to interpretation, such as defining a 'hate incident' as anything deemed by anyone to be 'hateful'.
- Abolition of the offence of blasphemy seems appropriate, however it seems that Hate Crime legislation is in effect replacing the offence of blasphemy with the offence of hate speech, which doesn't seem like a positive move for a healthy society as it will penalise those with different opinions from the mainstream.
- I can appreciate the intent to try and encourage more respectful interaction between people, however I don't think this proposed or existing Hate Crime legislation will lead to meaningful reform of people's attitudes but will rather lead to the creation of a more fearful and repressed society.

Regards,

Rev Canon Gerry Bowyer C.A.