

A Nation of Opportunity, Not a State of Fear

A progress report to the
Summit on Sectarianism
February 2005



one
scotland
SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Tackling sectarianism in Scotland

Scotland is a great country, with a proud history and an exciting future.

But there are still some aspects of our national life that hold us back, not least the sectarianism which has been a shameful fact of Scottish life for generations.

In December 2002 the First Minister, Jack McConnell, signalled the government's determination to stamp out the bigoted behaviour and attitudes that characterise sectarianism in Scotland.

When launching the report of the Cross Party Working Group on Religious Hatred he said:

“Modern Scotland must challenge bigoted attitudes and bigoted behaviour wherever they are found.

“I want Scotland to be a society where we respect cultural differences and celebrate our rich and diverse religious traditions. I want all Scots to be proud of the Scotland we live in today.

“We need to put sectarianism in the dust-bin of history. Scotland must play a full part in Europe and the global economy, so we cannot allow ourselves to be dragged down by the deadweight of religious hatred and sectarian bigotry.”

Since then the government has made significant progress towards realising the First Minister's ambitions.

Taking the lead, changing the law

Ending sectarianism will not be easy. It will take strong national leadership and, where necessary, changes to the law as well as cultural shifts.

- 1 The government has consulted on, and taken forward, 12 recommendations from the Cross Party Working Group on Religious Hatred which was launched in December 2002. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/society/trhr.pdf>
- 1 Legislation came into force in June 2003 which makes specific provision for offences aggravated by religious prejudice (section 74 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003). If someone commits an offence which is motivated by religious prejudice, Scottish courts must take this into account and state any extra element of the sentence which they are giving for the aggravation.
- 1 We have a robust system in place to monitor charges with religious aggravation. Between June 2003 and September 2004 there were 450 charges that included section 74 aggravations submitted in reports by the police to Procurators Fiscal. Proceedings commenced in 404 of these.
- 1 Government alone will not be able to end sectarian attitudes, which is why we have funded voluntary groups to support innovative, community-based projects tackling sectarian attitudes at grass-roots level, including Nil by Mouth, Sense Over Sectarianism and YouthLink Scotland.

Promoting mutual understanding

The solutions to ridding our country of the negative effects of bigotry will not be found from one section of civic life. We need to promote mutual respect and understanding between all religions and faiths, as well as those of no faith.

- 1 The government has granted the Inter Faith Council £300,000 over three years to advance knowledge and mutual understanding of different faith communities in Scotland and to support the work of the Scottish Interfaith Youth Forum.
- 1 The Core Liaison Group, chaired by the government and including church and faith groups, has been set up to inform faith communities so that they can participate fully in policy discussions and consultations.

A better future through education

Young people are the future of Scotland and we cannot betray their future by condoning or ignoring the actions and words of bigoted adults. Our education work with young people is crucial to achieving our goals.

- ¹ In April 2004 we hosted a conference: “Anti-Sectarianism in Scotland – Working with Young People”. This looked at the role education can play in tackling sectarianism and to share examples of good practice.
- ¹ We have commissioned the Centre for Education for Racial Equality in Scotland to develop educational material in partnership with key organisations including Nil by Mouth, the Scottish Human Rights Centre, Sense Over Sectarianism, Rangers and Celtic. We piloted some of the materials in schools in Dundee, West Dunbartonshire, North Lanarkshire, Dumfries and Galloway, and the Highlands and Islands, where they proved successful. The resource was launched nationally in March 2005.

Kicking bigotry into touch

Sadly, we continue to see unacceptable expressions of religious intolerance at our football grounds, where some supporters use different clubs' traditions as a vehicle for violence and bigoted behaviour.

- 1 We support the work that the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS) and football clubs have been doing to tackle sectarian behaviour, including protocols to make it easier to share information about so-called fans who have been involved in acts of sectarianism. This protocol has so far been implemented by Strathclyde Police with Rangers and Celtic, Lothian and Borders Police with Hearts and Hibs, and Grampian Police with Aberdeen.
- 1 We strongly welcome the work done by the Scottish Football Association, Scottish Premier League and Scottish Football League clubs in putting in place clear anti-racism and anti-sectarian policies as part of the National Club Licensing Scheme.
- 1 The government, working with local authorities and the police, have cracked down on the problem of the sale of sectarian and paramilitary goods outside football grounds. In December 2002 the then Minister for Local Government, Andy Kerr, wrote to all Scottish local authorities to suggest that street traders should be licensed and prevented from selling such goods. Local authorities responded positively and spot checks by police have reported significant improvements.
- 1 The consultation on the Police Bill published in early February proposes the introduction of football banning orders. This will give police and courts greater powers to take action against those both in Scotland and when Scottish teams play abroad.

Marching with respect

Scotland has a rich tradition of marches and parades, but we cannot ignore the fact some people use parades and marches as an excuse for abusive and sectarian behaviour.

- 1 The government asked Sir John Orr to carry out an independent review of the arrangements for all marches and parades, and in January this year we accepted all 38 of his recommendations presented in his report, “The Review of Marches and Parades in Scotland”.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/society/rmpsm-oo.asp>

- 1 We have already started work to implement his recommendations through consulting on those which may need legislation as part of “Supporting Police, Protecting Communities: Proposals for Legislation”. We have set up a working group of police and local authorities to take forward those recommendations which do not need legislation. And we are in discussion with the Accounts Commission and Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary to develop robust monitoring arrangements.

But more needs to be done

Scotland's first national sectarian summit was an event unprecedented in our history. Never before had so many diverse and influential groups and individuals sat down together to discuss how best we can rid Scotland of the bigotry that has held us back for generations.

The fundamental shift in attitudes and behaviour we all strive for will not happen overnight. But working together we can build one Scotland. A country based on the enduring values of community, mutual understanding and respect. A nation of opportunity, not a state of fear.

© Crown copyright 2005

This document is also available on the Scottish Executive website: www.scotland.gov.uk

Astron B40222 4/05

Further copies are available from

Blackwell's Bookshop, 53 South Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1YS

Telephone orders and enquiries: 0131 622 8283 or 0131 622 8258

Fax orders: 0131 557 8149

Email orders: business.edinburgh@blackwell.co.uk

ISBN 0-7559-4546-8

