



Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

Petition Number: [PE1521](#)

Main Petitioner: George Eckton and Jane O'Donnell

Subject: No more Page 3 in the Scottish Sun and Scottish Parliament

Calls on the Parliament to urge the editorial team of the Sun and Scottish Sun to voluntarily remove the page 3 feature permanently.

Furthermore, until the Sun/Scottish Sun ceases its page 3 feature we request the Scottish Parliament no longer stock/sell The Sun or Scottish Sun newspaper given its objectification of women and gender stereotyping both seem at odds with the Scottish Parliament's equalities framework.

Background

The [No More Page 3 campaign](#) began in the summer of 2012 when Jessica Ennis won an Olympic gold medal, and yet the most prominent female image in The Sun was of a topless young woman on page 3. This frustrated Lucy Ann Holmes, who wrote to the then editor Dominic Mohan.

On the campaign website, Lucy reads extracts from her letter to Dominic Mohan, which requests that he 'drop the bare boobs' from the paper. She refers to Home Office statistics that 300,000 women are sexually assaulted and 60,000 women are raped each year, and questions the message that Page 3 sends out to society.

The No More Page 3 campaign also has an [online petition](#) at Change.org that has achieved over 190,000 signatures (at 29 April 2014).

The campaign has received support from a number of organisations including: the National Assembly for Wales, UK Girlguiding, Mumsnet, the NUT and UNISON. Most recently, the Scottish Government has indicated its support, see below, as well as [Police Scotland](#) via Assistant Chief Constable Malcolm Graham.

In February 2013, [Rupert Murdoch](#), in response to a tweet about Page 3 being old fashioned, suggested he was considering whether to remove Page 3 and replace it with a 'halfway house with glamorous fashionistas'.

David Cameron has said he would not back a ban on Page 3¹ and in response to a question from Caroline Lucas MP about removing The Sun from the parliamentary estate until Page 3 has been removed, he said that members should be able to read all newspapers on the parliamentary estate².

This petition focuses the campaign on the Scottish Sun, and requests that the Scottish Parliament stops stocking the Sun until Page 3 has been removed as it is at odds with Parliament's equalities framework.

Scottish Parliament Action

A members' debate ([S4M-07500](#)), led by Jackie Bailie MSP, on the issues raised by the No More Page 3 campaign took place on 6 November 2013. The debate garnered cross-party support. Members debated the impact of Page 3 images on Scottish society and the connection between sexualised images and the reinforcement of sexist attitudes, harassment, abuse and violence towards women.

During the debate, Hanzala Malik MSP discussed boycotting newspapers like The Sun and continued, "I am sure that the Scottish Parliamentwill be one of the first organisations to take steps to cancel that newspaper if it continues to produce such photographs."³

Equalities Framework

In the [foreword](#) on the Equalities Framework, the Presiding Officer and the Clerk/Chief Executive state,

"As one of the Parliament's four founding principles, equality is at the heart of our organisation. The SPCB recognises that everyone should have an equal opportunity and where there are barriers to participation, the SPCB will take steps to remove these so that no one is excluded from the activities of the Parliament and that people from all walks of life have the opportunity to engage, freely without discrimination, with its Members and staff."

There are two key drivers in the framework:

- 'The importance of having a culture where everyone feels valued and respected and can contribute freely without fear of being judged because of a personal characteristic'.
- 'The need to deliver accessible services, by recognising the diversity of people's needs so that everyone can experience, and take part in the activities of the Parliament'.

¹ The Guardian (22 July 2013) '[Cameron refuses to back ban on Sun's Page 3 topless images](#)' and again, The Huffington Post (22 November 2013) '[David Cameron will not back ban on the Sun's Page 3 despite campaign against online porn](#)'

² BBC news online (19 June 2013) '[Lucas and Cameron on Sun and page three pictures](#)'

³ Scottish Parliament [Official Report 6 November 2013](#) (col 24135-24136)

Scottish Government Action

The Scottish Government has sent a [letter of support](#) to the No More Page 3 campaign, signed by an official (March 2014).

Violence against women and girls

During the Scottish Parliament debate, Shona Robison, the Minister for Commonwealth Games and Sport, said that the Scottish Government was developing a strategy for Scotland to tackle violence against women, that it would be the first such document in Scotland, “and it will shape the way in which we tackle violence against women in the years ahead.”⁴ An outline of the [strategy to address Violence Against Women and Girls](#) (VAWG) was published on 17 January 2014, with a view to publishing the strategy in the summer 2014.

Press regulation

During the debate on No More Page 3, Shona Robison made reference to press regulation. She stated:

“We know that one of the principles enshrined in the new framework of press regulation is that it remains for newspapers themselves to determine their content. That framework has received cross-party support.

The decision of the Privy Council to approve the royal charter on press regulation is an extremely welcome one and, following the Scottish Parliament’s unanimous decision to support the charter earlier this year, we have secured amendments that ensure that it properly reflects Scottish circumstances.

I am sure that everyone here would agree that getting the framework right for establishing an effective system of independent self-regulation of the press, including cultures and practices, is an important step forward. In my view, getting a framework that can properly respond to concerns about the portrayals of women in the press is the most important priority”⁵.

The [Royal Charter on the self-regulation of the press](#) was published on 30 October 2013.

UK Government

The UK Government commissioned Dr Linda Papadopoulos to research the [Sexualisation of young people](#). This report is often cited as showing a connection between the portrayal of sexualised images with violence towards women and girls. It refers to existing research when it concludes that ‘sexualising children prematurely places them at risk of a variety of harms’.

⁴ Scottish Parliament [Official Report 6 November 2013](#) (col 24139)

⁵ Ibid. (col 24138)

However, it also says that further empirical evidence is needed from large scale longitudinal studies that would look at the effects on boys and girls across their development. The report has received some criticism for lacking empirical evidence and for not defining the term 'sexualisation'⁶.

UN Commission on the Status of Women

The petitioners refer to the UN Commission on the Status of Women and its [latest report](#) (March 2014) on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls. The report states that, "almost 15 years after the Millennium Development Goals were adopted, no country has achieved equality for women and girls and significant levels of inequality between women and men persist..."

Specific reference is made to paragraph B (xx):

"Recognise the important role the media can play in the elimination of gender stereotypes, and to the extent consistent with freedom of expression, increase the participation and access of women to all forms of media, and encourage the media to increase public awareness of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Millennium Development Goals, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls".

UN Special Rapporteur

Rashida Manjoo, UN Special Rapporteur, has said that sexism in the UK is more 'in your face' than in other countries and raised concerns about the portrayal of women in the media (BBC news online 15 April 2014⁷). Manjoo said that there was a 'more visible presence of sexist portrayals of women and girls' and a 'marketisation of women's and girls' bodies' in the UK, which was more pervasive than elsewhere (Guardian 15 April 2014⁸). The full report is expected to be published later this year, and presented to the UN human rights council in June 2015.

Research on sexual violence

The European Union Agency on Fundamental Rights has recently published research on [violence against women across the EU](#). The research was based on face-to-face interviews with 42,000 women. For the UK it estimates that 8% of women (aged 18-74) in the 12 months before interview had experienced physical and/or sexual violence. Using current population figures, this translates as 1.8 million women⁹.

⁶ Robbie Duschinsky (2010) [The 2010 Home Office review on the Sexualisation of Young People: A discursive policy analysis](#) and Clarissa Smith (2010) [Review: Papadopoulos, Linda: Sexualisation of Young People Review](#), in Journal of Audience and Reception Studies (Volume 7, Issue 1)

⁷ BBC news online (15 April 2014) [UN Special Rapporteur Rashida Manjoo says UK has 'sexist culture'](#)

⁸ Guardian (15 April 2014) [UN special rapporteur criticises Britain's 'in-your-face' sexist culture](#)

⁹ ONS (August 2013) Annual mid-year population estimates, 2011 and 2012

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