

## **PE1737/C**

Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office submission of 17 October 2019

The Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office is made up of 11 Christian denominations for the purpose of facilitating churches' engagement with the Parliamentary process. It should be noted that SCPO does not usually work with other faith groups so we can only respond from our own experience. Two of these 11 denominations offered specific comments in response to the Public Petition on the review of hate crime legislation and security funding in Scotland.

### 1. The Church of Scotland contribution to Petition 1737

People should be able to worship in safety, free from hate crime attacks. Whilst the security of our congregations and churches is important we would also want to ensure our places of worship are open and welcoming to worshippers and visitors. We realise that the openness we value as a worshipping community is a privilege as well as a principle. It is acknowledged that religiously aggravated Hate Crime can be directed at buildings and places of worship and that for those affected the possibility of increased security is important. If, as a society, we are to reduce the incidence of hate crime in Scotland we must reflect deeply on how our response goes beyond treating the symptoms of hate, to removing the root causes altogether.

### 2. The Quakers in Scotland contribution to the Petition 1737

In the past Quakers found themselves persecuted, jailed, tortured, reviled, denied education and employment because their beliefs were considered "heretical" by society.

After many hundreds of years we find ourselves in the privileged position of being mainly accepted by those around us and part of the fabric of the countries in which we live. However we do not forget our early suffering and we will wholeheartedly support the right of any religious or faith group to be able to worship without fear of violence or reprisals against them.

We believe it is in the interests of everyone that people from other faiths are not just tolerated, but actively seen as a vital part of our communities. The faith of others, even if we do not agree with all aspects of it, deserves respect.

We would encourage the Scottish Government, Police Scotland, and other relevant agencies to work to make sure that people who live in Scotland are not afraid to express their faith or attend worship.

The SCPO would be pleased to discuss this Petition further if that was useful to the Committee.