



Pardons Bill

Call for Evidence – Equalities Committee

Humanist Society Scotland is Scotland's national charity representing and providing ceremonies to Scotland's Humanist community. Humanist Society Scotland have over 15,000 active members and provide training and support for a network of over 125 celebrants carrying out weddings, funerals and naming ceremonies. In addition the society campaigns and educated on issues of importance to Humanists such as equality, democracy, secularism and human rights.

Following the founding principles of Humanism as expressed in the Amsterdam Declaration of personal liberty and human rights, Humanists have long stood for equal rights for LGBT people in law. We believe that the pardons and disregards bill starts to making of amends for past wrongs for discrimination against individuals based on their sexuality by the state.

We welcome the draft bill and its intention to apply pardons to all those convicted of discriminatory offences against gay men. The Society also warmly welcome the statement made by the First Minister in November 2017 to apologise for past convictions on behalf of the government.

It is welcome that this bill avoids some of the much criticised concerns with similar pardon legislation in the rest of the UK. For example where this bill proposes automatic pardons will apply to everyone affected, not just those who have died before a set date. We also welcome the widening of offences covered to include 'importuning' for example.

We support the draft bill proposal to allow for disregards of these past convictions from records on application. While clearly a method of automatic disregard would be preferred, it is clear from that it would be impossible to analyse all past convictions to be able to achieve this. Therefore we support the bills intention to apply disregards on the basis of applications.

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