1. Do you agree with the proposal in the Bill to repeal the 2012 Act? What are your reasons for coming to this view?

No. The social issues addressed by the original bill do require to be tackled, and review and possible amendment including extension is more appropriate. Repeal without adequate replacement, given the 'grey areas' ref other legislation and whether same suitably addresses these social issues, would be counter-productive. Material danger of mixed messages impeding the sought after attitude changes. The arguments for possible extension of the Act, and in particular possible incorporation in the upcoming review of hate-crime legislation, have greater merit.

2. Did you support the original legislation?

Yes, since some form of executive action was clearly required.

3. Do you consider that other existing provisions of criminal law are sufficient to prosecute offensive behaviour related to football which leads to public disorder? If so, could you specify the criminal law provisions? Or does repeal of section 1 risk creating a gap in the criminal law?

Unclear, potential for 'gaps' or continuing uncertainties.

4. Do you have a view on the focus of section 1 of the 2012 Act, which criminalises behaviour surrounding watching, attending or travelling to or from football matches, which may not be criminalised in other settings?

The arguments for possible extension of the Act is worthy of review.

5. Do you consider that other existing provisions of criminal law are sufficient to prosecute threats made with the intent of causing a person or persons fear or alarm or inciting religious hatred? If so, could you specify the criminal law provisions? Or does repeal of section 6 risk creating a gap in the criminal law?

Unclear.

6. Do you have a view on the proposed transitional arrangements in the Bill: that there should be no further convictions for section 1 and 6 offences from the date on which the repeal of those offences takes effect; and that the police will cease issuing fixed penalty notices at least from the point at which the Bill is passed?
7. To what extent do you consider that the 2012 Act has assisted in tackling sectarianism?

I believe that it has been helpful, at the very least at a symbolic level, in addressing an obvious issue of attitudes and behaviours and by default norms, which are not generally acceptable or which may cause alarm or fear, and impact negatively on the ability of the public especially families to enjoy sporting events in the very same manner as is defined within the codes and principles which apply to the participants themselves and their coaches eg sports coaching code of ethics.

Peter Dunford
1 July 2017