Justice Committee  
Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Repeal)  
(Scotland) Bill  
Written submission from Gregor Hall

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.

To repeal without either amending existing legislation or introducing new legislation sends entirely the wrong message to the country. Sectarianism remains a problem in Scotland generally, and in football in particular.

Those complaining loudly at present seem to be mainly followers of Celtic or Rangers, many of whose supporters are responsible for unacceptable behaviour that keeps people from attending games in this country. Supporters of other clubs are fed up with this and look to government to tackle it effectively and consistently to eradicate it from society.

2. Did you support the original legislation?

Yes.

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?

I'm not sufficiently knowledgeable to answer this question. In this review it is important to get views of police and the courts to seek their views as to the answer to this question.

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?

If Section 1 contains provision to bring charges which are not covered in other legislation, then it should remain, subject to the police and the courts being supportive of the current wording. If the current wording can be altered to make it more effective then that should happen.

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?
I’m not sufficiently knowledgeable to answer this question. In this review it is important to get views of police and the courts to seek their views as to the answer to this question.

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?

No view.

7. To what extent do you consider that the 2012 Act has assisted in tackling sectarianism?

The 2012 Act is absolutely a step in the right direction and is badly needed. After review, if it is decided that changes can be made to make the law more effective/workable, then make those changes.

Please, please do not give in to the bigots and repeal this law without replacing it with something better.

Gregor Hall
1 July 2017