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

Yes, it has caused a lot of bad tension between those who attend matches and the police. The most worrying thing is the majority of the people who this Act has affected have been young men who no longer trust or respect the police. Otherwise law-abiding citizens have now been drawn into the criminal justice system, with some facing the risk of losing jobs or causing unrest with parents, partners and in some cases even their children. Dawn raids on houses causing alarm to all of the above.

2. Did you support the original legislation?

No.

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?

Yes there are already legislations in place that could deal with offensive behaviour related to football such as common law, Breach of the Peace and also hate crime laws. These laws are more than sufficient to cover the issues at football matches.

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?

There shouldn't be laws that only apply to criminalise football fans when it could be argued that there is more disorder at rugby matches and concerts.

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?

Section 6 has hardly been used in the whole period since it was enacted as well as the police and prosecutors are regularly using another legislation eg Communications Act, 2003.

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?

The act should cease to be used against football fans with immediate effect, with cases that are not concluded been dropped.

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

It hasn't assisted as it was never there to stop sectarianism. As mentioned previously there are already sufficient laws in place that could be used in these cases. More focus could be aimed at educating in schools to try and stop sectarianism

Ross Gallagher
17 August 2017