Justice Committee

Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Repeal) (Scotland) Bill

Written submission from Stacey Pringle

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

I agree definitely that the Act should be repealed. It has been detrimental to football in Scotland and to Scottish law. I very rarely attend football matches now and that is largely down to the act and the way it has been policed and enforced. My friend’s family life was turned upside down after her partner was arrested and charged under the act. Their children had to watch their father being taken from the house by police officers and he then missed more than a few days at work which caused financial hardship to their young family. He was found not guilty but their family had to endure over a year of stress before the court process was complete.

2. Did you support the original legislation?

No, I didn’t support it but didn’t really have any objections to it because I didn’t really understand the legislation or its implications.

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 believe there were already adequate laws in place such as breach of the peace and the section 38 law, which covers aggravation.

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?

I think it’s terrible that you can be criminalised for something at a football match that doesn’t appear to be a criminal offence anywhere else.

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 understand that section 6 of the Act is rarely used by prosecutors or police and that other laws were and still are sufficient.

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?

All cases should be dismissed immediately as soon as the act is repealed.

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

It has done nothing to counter sectarianism in Scotland and has been a complete waste of time.

Stacey Pringle
18 August 2017