Justice Committee

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

Written submission from the Scottish Football Supporters Association

The SFSA is the national fans organisation for Scotland and is part of the wider Football Supporters Europe movement that represents fans in our continent. We have over 69,000 members (individuals, fans groups and affiliates). We believe that all fans have rights and with those rights they have responsibilities to themselves, their fellow fans, to the club they follow and to the wider community. We accept that for some "fans" this concept of responsibility is a challenge.

We do not approve of any legislation that specifically targets one group of individuals, in this case football fans. It is our view that looking at this legislation in isolation would be an opportunity missed and potentially be counter-productive it is our view that an alternative solution is sought to address the problem. We believe that fans deserve a bigger say in what happens to the sport they love and that now is the time for serious issues such as this to be addressed through far more ambitious interaction with fans. There are already too many divisions in the game we love and something requires to put in place to show the ‘majority’ that we understand the problem and work together to resolve it. This should be out with party politics and be a cross party decision supporting whatever initiative is agreed by the group to try to resolve this problem and make football a community, friendly environment.

We are calling on the Scottish Government to work with us at the SFSA to show leadership to look beyond this specific legislation to produce a far reaching innovative long term solution that puts football supporters at the heart of the game and bypasses the many divisions that we currently have to endure. We also find it hard to believe that given the evidence from across Europe on the successful implementation of Strict Liability in reducing racism, sectarianism, homophobia etc that Scottish Football consistently refuses to adopt it.

Paul Goodwin
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