I wanted to highlight some recent action in this area the committee may be interested in.

At the beginning of August the Cabinet Secretary wrote to Ivan McKee MSP with regard to Blasphemy common law. It states the Government is undertaking a period of engagement with regard to the recommendations of Lord Bracadale's review with a view that this will inform a period of formal consultation later this year.

The last sentence notes that this engagement will inform if proposals relating the common law offence should feature in the public consultation. Humanist Society Scotland were present at the Scottish Government's first Hate Crime Stakeholder Group on the 15th August. I would like to highlight to the committee that Blasphemy was not part of any of the Government's written plans for forthcoming consideration action/consultations shared with attendees nor was it on the agenda for the meeting. We did raise it ourselves however if we hadn't it would not have been discussed. Therefore there are clearly no plans at the moment by the Government to take any action on this matter.

Clearly Humanist Society Scotland believe that this should be covered by the formal consultation but given the information at hand it would appear that it would be appropriate for the committee to continue the petition given the lack of commitment to a formal consultation at this stage.