

David McGill
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Edinburgh
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2 May 2025 (by email only to: David.McGill@parliament.scot)

cc the SPCB Supported Bodies Landscape Review Committee
(SSBLR.committee@Parliament.Scot)

Dear David

FAO the SPCB: Public sector portal web page

I am writing to you on my own behalf and on behalf of all of the other SPCB supported officeholders. We are writing to you to ask if the current Scottish Parliament webpage on officeholders could be revised to include more information on our respective functions, including linking to each of our websites. The reasons for this request are set out below.

You will doubtless be aware of the review currently being undertaken by the SPCB Supported Bodies Landscape Review Committee.

I provided evidence to the Committee on 30th January and also provided supplementary written evidence on 20th February. On both occasions I referred to preliminary discussions that I and my fellow officeholders had had about the scope for us to collectively establish a standalone web page or site – a public sector portal of sorts – to make accessing our services more accessible for members of the public.

At our latest meeting, the officeholders agreed that it would not, after all, be practicable or beneficial for us to do so. The primary problem with our taking such an approach is that it may lead members of the public to think that, by way of example, their first port of call would be to contact the SPSO if they have a complaint about public services. The reality is that they must first exhaust a public authority's own complaints handling procedure before complaining to the SPSO. In effect, our establishment of such a web page or site may cause or exacerbate some of the problems that we were hoping to avoid, such as members of the public having to contact more than one organisation in order to identify the right one to deal with their concerns.

Each of the officeholders currently have their own arrangements in place to signpost members of the public to the appropriate authority if they have contacted us in error. I note also that SPICe has subsequently provided a helpful briefing paper to make it easier for members of the public to identify the correct authority to approach with their concerns:

<https://spice-spotlight.scot/2025/02/20/navigating-complaints-a-guide-to-ombudsmen-and-commissioners/>

I and my fellow officeholders feel that this could helpfully be linked to on the web page of the Scottish Parliament's site which refers to our offices:

<https://www.parliament.scot/about/how-parliament-works/parliament-organisations-groups-and-people/officeholders>

We would also be happy to provide supplementary information on our respective roles and functions for that same page if that would be considered helpful.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or if I can be of any further assistance to you or to the SPCB.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Bruce', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Ian Bruce
Ethical Standards Commissioner