

Political Affairs Brief

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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UK Parliamentary Questions

Christian Worship

6. Mr. Desmond Swayne (New Forest, West) (Con): If he will bring forward proposals to restrict the circumstances under which schools may apply for an exemption from the requirement to hold a regular act of worship of a broadly Christian character; and if he will make a statement. [312582]

The Minister for Schools and Learners (Mr. Vernon Coaker): Schools can apply to their local standing advisory council on religious education for a determination under which their daily act of collective worship need not be of a broadly Christian character. We have no plans to change that arrangement which, while still requiring such an act, allows the backgrounds of pupils to be taken into account.

Mr. Swayne: What precisely are the criteria used by local authorities when deciding to grant a determination?

Mr. Coaker: I think that the criteria are fairly obvious. For example, if a school was virtually 100 per cent. Muslim or Hindu, notwithstanding the fact that we are a Christian country, the school's head teacher, with the governing body, may think it appropriate to say to the standing advisory council on religious education that the school wished to have an act of daily worship, but that it would be more appropriate if that took account of the background, culture and religion of its pupils. I think that most people in this country would think that that was eminently sensible.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100125/debtext/100125-0002.htm#1001251600020>

Sex Education (Faith Schools)

3. Mr. Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): What recent representations he has received on teaching about homosexual relationships in faith schools. [312579]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families (Ms Diana R. Johnson): We are not aware of any specific representations from faith schools on teaching about homosexual relationships, although we are aware that it is of concern to some. We will be consulting on revised guidance to schools on sex and relationships education that makes it clear that schools have the flexibility to tailor their SRE provision to reflect the ethos of the school, but that teaching should be presented in a balanced way and should include other perspectives.

Mr. Bone: I am grateful to the Minister for that response. Do the Government agree with the leader of the Liberal party that schools should be forced to teach that homosexuality is normal and harmless?

Ms Johnson: Many faith schools are already teaching SRE very well. Schools have to teach within the context of their faith and their beliefs. They must present the accurate facts on homosexuality and do so fairly, and they can then, of course, talk about their faith, ethos and beliefs, too. They must also talk about tolerance, diversity and respect for all people who live in our communities and about the importance of rights and responsibilities.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100125/debtext/100125-0001.htm#1001251600017>

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Holocaust

Department for Culture, Media and Sport

Margaret Hodge marks Holocaust Memorial Day with grants to The Jewish Museum and The Wiener Library

Culture Minister Margaret Hodge today announced two grants to The Jewish Museum and The Wiener Library to help meet relocation costs. Each institution will receive £100,000 from DCMS resources made possible by under-spends identified elsewhere.

Prime Minister Gordon Brown said: "We are delighted to support the Jewish Museum and the Wiener Library with their unique collection of pictures, stories and objects from Jewish communities. This funding will help bring all these important artefacts and dynamic exhibitions to a wider audience, giving visitors an invaluable understanding of Jewish heritage and a powerful reminder of why we must continue to fight prejudice and intolerance in all its forms."

The Jewish Museum, set to re-open on 17 March after a major redevelopment project, explores Jewish heritage and identity as part of the wider story of Britain. ...

The Wiener Library, formed in 1933, plans to relocate in 2011 to Russell Square in London. It is one of the world's leading and most extensive archives on the Holocaust and Nazi era. ...

Margaret Hodge said: "These two institutions play a vital part in ensuring that people are aware of what the Jewish community have given to this country and the world – and that we never forget the terrible wrongs suffered during the Nazi era last century. A mature and compassionate understanding of the past can teach us so much about the present, while helping us address issues in the future. ...

To read the full press release see

http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/media_releases/6596.aspx

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Israel

UK Parliamentary Question

Palestinians: International Assistance

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what Government policy is on the legality under international law of the blockade of Gaza; and if he will make a statement. [311402]

Mr. Ivan Lewis: While there is no permanent physical Israeli presence in Gaza, given the significant control that Israel has over Gaza's borders, airspace and

territorial waters, we consider Israel to retain obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention as an occupying power. The Fourth Geneva Convention is clear that an occupying power must co-operate in allowing the passage and distribution of relief consignments.

We have made our concerns about Israeli restrictions very clear and will continue to press the Israeli Government to ease them.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmhansrd/cm100125/text/100125w0017.htm#10012543000020>

Northern Ireland Assembly

Debate following Ministerial Statement on Economic Development Policy

The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment: ... we have big choices to make about the sort of economy that we want for Northern Ireland. For my part, I want an innovative economy that is based on research and development. I have seen the difference that research and development has made to the economies of countries such as Israel, and I think that it can do the same for our economy and do it very well. ...

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/record/reports2009/100125.htm>

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Relevant Legislation ** New or updated

UK Parliament

** Children, Schools and Families Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2009-10/childrenschoolsandfamilies.html>

Notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmbills/008/amend/pbc0082601m.103-109.html>

** Constitutional Reform and Governance Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2009-10/constitutionalreformandgovernance.html>

Notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmbills/004/amend/pbc0042601m.483-489.html>

** Crime and Security Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2009-10/crimeandsecurity.html>

Public Bill Committee: Notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmbills/003/amend/pbc0032601m.11-17.html>

** Equality Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2009-10/equality.html>

Committee Stage, House of Lords

includes discussion re the definition of "an organised religion" and employment issues in relation to faith communities. Three votes on proposed amendments to the Bill took place, and the Government defeated on all three amendments.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100125-0002.htm#1001252000287>

and

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldhansrd/text/100125-0013.htm#10012546000189>

Fifth marshalled list of amendments to be moved in Committee

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldbills/020/amend/ml020-v.htm>

Equality Bill: Making it work Policy proposals for specific duties: *Policy Statement*

http://www.equalities.gov.uk/pdf/psdresp_GEO_MakingItWork_acc.pdf

The Equality Bill: Duty to reduce socio-economic Inequalities: *A guide*

<http://www.equalities.gov.uk/pdf/Socio%20Economic%20pre-guidance%20guidancev2%2008012010.pdf>

**** Flood and Water Management Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2009-10/floodandwatermanagement.html>

Notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmbills/053/amend/pbc053250110a.529-530.html>

Scottish Parliament

End of Life Assistance Bill

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/bills/38-EndLifeAssist/index.htm>

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Other Relevant Information

New British Social Attitudes Survey published today

<http://www.natcen.ac.uk/pzMedia/uploads/EntityFieldFile/bfb5ba46-e545-4ea4-9c60-2fb18fabecf4.doc>

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Consultations

** new or updated

**** closes in 7 days**

Protection of Vulnerable Groups Implementation: Consultation on Significant Draft Secondary Legislation, Guidance and Regulatory Impact Assessment (Scotland only) (closes 2 February 2009)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/children-families/pvglegislation/Consultation09>

Communities and Local Government: Creating a Single Equality Scheme for 2010 – 2013 (closes 28 February 2010)

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/corporate/pdf/987402.pdf>

Proposal to amend the Licensing Act 2003 to simplify the procedures for Licensing Statements; Interim Authority Notices; and Temporary Event Notices (closes 9 February 2010)

http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/consultations/6498.aspx

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