



**Scottish Council of
Jewish Communities**

SCOJeC UPDATE OCTOBER 2008

SCOJeC owes much of its success to links that we have forged with MSPs and government ministers. Our Director, Ephraim Borowski, and Public Affairs Officer, Leah Granat, assiduously monitor the activities of the Scottish parliament, speaking to MSPs and officials whenever the opportunity arises. Our efforts also benefit other faiths and ethnic minorities since relevant information is passed on to them. When Ephraim recently received his well-deserved MBE, many of those congratulating him were from outside our community, showing the goodwill that accrues and greatly benefits our community.

You may not be aware of much of our work because it is focussed on Parliament and those who live outside the main centres of Jewish life in Scotland. However, as you will read, these activities are important for the continued welfare of the whole Jewish community in Scotland - and we need your moral and financial support to ensure the continuation of our success.

DR WALTER SNEADER, SCOJeC CHAIR



Community Minister Stewart Maxwell with SCOJeC Chair Walter Sneider and the authors, at the launch of Scotland's Jews.

Recent Activities

■ Countering threats to shechitah

There have been two attacks on shechitah this year, one in a parliamentary question, and the other a petition from a member of the public. SCOJeC briefed the relevant Scottish Government Minister, and also explained its importance to the Parliament's Public Petitions Committee. The petition was supported by a number of animal rights organisations, but the Committee decided that no action should be taken, and the Scottish Government has confirmed that shechitah is, and will remain legal in Scotland.



■ During a visit arranged by SCOJeC, the First Minister, Alex Salmond, went to Calderwood Lodge Primary School and also attended a meeting with leaders of communal organisations.

■ We are in discussion with the Home Office and UK Borders Agency about how to alleviate the detrimental effects of the new "points-based" immigration system on the Community.

■ SCOJeC's popular online Guide to Jewish Facilities in Scotland provides information about the community for people visiting Scotland.

<http://www.scojec.org/communities/guidebook.pdf>



www.scojec.org

■ Scottish Interfaith Pilgrimage



SCoJeC was instrumental in organising an interfaith pilgrimage to Israel as part of an initiative to increase understanding and friendship between communities in Scotland. The idea grew out of a conversation between SCoJeC Director Ephraim Borowski, and Rami Ousta, CEO of BEMIS, the umbrella organisation for minority community organisations

in Scotland, who were concerned that tensions in the Middle East may sometimes be an obstacle to the development of good relations locally.

More than thirty people from seven different faiths participated in the pilgrimage, which included a walking tour of the Old City stopping at the Western Wall, the Al Aqsa Mosque and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre; visits to the Baha'i Shrine in Haifa, Christian places of pilgrimage in the Galilee, and Yad Vashem; meetings with Israeli and Palestinian politicians in the Knesset and the Palestinian capital, Ramallah; prayers at the Great Synagogue, the Al Aqsa mosque, and the Scottish Church in Jerusalem; a Seudah Shlishit with Chief Rabbi David Rosen; and a remarkable panel of Jerusalem clerics from several faith traditions, who surprisingly had never before met. For more details see

http://www.scojec.org/events/2008/08vii_pilgrimage/menu.html

More of our recent activities....

■ *There is ample evidence that consultations are not merely paper exercises but do affect the direction of policy. Examples of particular interest to synagogues and other communal organisations that own premises, are significant improvements to proposed Fire Safety regulations that could have made communal activities virtually impossible, and the extension until 2014 of the water charge exemption which benefits small charities and faith community organisations.*

The first of these was due almost entirely to SCoJeC's intervention, and the latter due to the efforts of an informal coalition of voluntary sector organisations in which SCoJeC played a major role.

■ *By acting as the Registered Body for the entire community, SCoJeC continues to help communal organisations meet the requirements of Child Protection legislation, whilst enabling volunteers to work with communal organisations with the minimum of administrative red tape. We also act, at their request, for the Scottish Interfaith Council, BEMIS, and the Scottish-Iranian Association.*

More about SCOJeC

The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCOJeC) is the representative body of all the Jewish communities in Scotland comprising Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and Dundee as well as the more loosely linked groups of the Jewish Network of Argyll and the Highlands, and of students studying in Scottish Universities and Colleges. Its aims are to advance public understanding about the Jewish religion, culture and community. SCOJeC works with others to promote good relations and understanding among community groups and to promote equality, and represents the Jewish community in Scotland to government and other bodies on matters affecting the community.

For more information see

www.scojec.org

Contact SCOJeC:

0141- 638 6411

07887- 488 100

scojec@scojec.org

THE SCOTTISH COUNCIL OF JEWISH COMMUNITIES
(SCOJeC) IS SCOTTISH CHARITY SCO29438

SCOJeC has recently been awarded £100,000 by the Scottish Government to develop an ambitious three-year programme both within the Jewish Community and to promote good community relations. The grant can only be used for the projects the Government agreed to support, and not for our core activities. These are:

- continuing to produce MEMO, a weekly digest of information of relevance to ethnic minority communities;
- extending and developing the Outreach project, aimed at contacting and involving isolated Jewish individuals in rural Scotland;
- spreading the positive messages of the recent very successful Scottish Interfaith Pilgrimage, and the development of future such activities;
- developing a Scottish version of the Jewish Way of Life Exhibition to inform schools about Judaism.

SCOJeC recently published a new and greatly expanded edition of *Scotland's Jews* by Kenneth Collins with new material by Ephraim Borowski and Leah Granat. The book has forewords from the Chief Rabbi and the First Minister, and includes information about the contemporary community, Jewish issues in employment, health and other contexts, demography, and an illustrated guide to John Clark's celebrated stained glass windows which were commissioned for Queens Park Synagogue, and are now housed in Giffnock Synagogue.

AVAILABLE FROM SCOJeC, £6.00 INC P&P

