



Scottish Council of
Jewish Communities

SCOJEC UPDATE

SEPTEMBER 2010



Meeting with the First Minister

At the end of last year, a delegation from SCOJEC met the First Minister, Alex Salmond, to discuss a wide variety of issues of concern to the community. The First Minister was appalled by the use of the SNP's name in antisemitic graffiti at Glenduffhill cemetery in Glasgow, and described it as "deranged". He was pleased to hear that a prosecution was pending relating to vicious antisemitic messages on a newspaper website, and said he would write to editors to remind them of their responsibility for what appears on their websites.

Mr Salmond expressed interest in our project to bring the *Jewish Way of Life* educational resource to Scotland, and recalled his support for our earlier initiative to send a copy of *Scotland's Jews* to every school and public library. He made it clear that racism and antisemitism should be challenged by education and, where necessary, in the courts.

JWOL



The Jewish Way of Life is an interactive resource for upper primary and lower secondary schools developed by the Pears Foundation, that has been very successfully distributed to every school in England. On the advice of Learning and Teaching Scotland, we decided not to go down this

route, but to make it available on the internet, and with their help it is now available on our website at <http://www.scojec.org/resources/resources.html>.

It provides accurate information about Judaism that reflects the diversity of the Jewish community, and has received an enthusiastic welcome from teachers. It will be formally launched in Scotland during Interfaith Week in November, when the Jewish Way of Life Exhibition will also be on display at Giffnock Synagogue.

◆ SCoJeC condemns attempt to stir up racial tensions

Following invitations from a number of Muslim groups to participate in opposition to a Scottish Defence League demonstration outside Glasgow Central Mosque last November, SCoJeC issued the following statement in support of the Muslim community:

“The Jewish Community of Scotland shares the concerns of the Muslim community about the self-styled Scottish Defence League and its planned activities. We dissociate ourselves unreservedly from their message of hate, no matter what symbols they misappropriate in order to cause maximum offence to as many as possible. We deplore any attempt to stir up racial tension, and express our solidarity with all those who are the target of their warped views.”

The SDL have announced their intention of demonstrating again this month, and we have reiterated this condemnation.

◆ Racism on the Internet

The Solicitor General reiterated the commitment of Government and the Procurator Fiscal Service to taking effective action against antisemitic crime, and in particular the use of the internet to spread hatred. The police and Crown Office continue to take antisemitic incidents very seriously, and a case concerning virulently antisemitic comments on the *Scotsman* website is due to be heard later this year. We have also been advised that the Procurator Fiscal is currently considering evidence regarding an antisemitic email sent at the time of the “Gaza flotilla”.

◆ Child & Adult Protection

The current system of Disclosure checks for people working with children and vulnerable adults will shortly be replaced by the new Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme. SCoJeC will continue to act as an umbrella to facilitate these checks for communal organisations, and will organise policy briefings before the end of the year.

◆ Nostra Aetate

To celebrate the 45th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, the historic document promoting good relations between the Catholic and Jewish communities, SCoJeC and the Archdiocese of Glasgow will host an interfaith seminar on 6th October. This will be addressed by international experts Chief Rabbi David Rosen and Prof Fr John Pawlikowski. There will also be public meetings in Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Aberdeen.

◆ Hate Crime Conference

SCoJeC Director Ephraim Borowski was one of the invited speakers at a Conference organised by the Solicitor General and ACPOS, to mark the commencement of new legislation creating a statutory aggravation for hate crime.



LEFT: IAN LATIMER, CHIEF CONSTABLE,
NORTHERN CONSTABULARY.
RIGHT: FRANK MULHOLLAND QC,
SOLICITOR GENERAL

◆ Interfaith Lunch

Community representatives and faith leaders, including SCoJeC Director Ephraim Borowski and Rabbi Moshe Rubin, were invited to lunch in St Mungo's Museum by the then Secretary of State for Scotland, Jim Murphy MP, to discuss what faith communities could do to soften the effects of the recession.



PHOTOGRAPH © PAUL MCSHERRY

◆ Post Mortems

Bereavement is traumatic enough without the added distress of delays caused by unnecessary post mortem examinations. Last year we discussed the use of non-invasive methods with both the First Minister and Lord Advocate, and in June SCoJeC organised a meeting with the Crown Office, an MSP, a forensic pathologist, a consultant radiologist, a Procurator Fiscal, and representatives and medical experts from both the Jewish and Muslim communities, to discuss alternatives.

Last month, we also met the Solicitor General, Frank Mulholland QC, to discuss the practicalities. He assured us that Crown Office are aware of the importance of this to both the Jewish and other minority communities, and are committed to encouraging the use of the non-invasive “view and grant” procedure.

Crown Office will shortly issue new guidance to Procurators Fiscal and pathologists reminding them that “view and grant” is not an alternative to post-mortem but is itself an acceptable form of post-mortem, and should always be used in appropriate cases.



MEETING THE SOLICITOR GENERAL (CENTRE) AND OFFICIALS AT CROWN OFFICE

◆ Dundee BBQ

Four members of Tayside Police joined a very enjoyable summer barbecue sponsored by SCoJeC at Dundee Synagogue.



YOUTH ACTIVITIES



◆ ACT Now

“Insightful,” and “a really great way to inform minority groups about police activity,” are how participants described “ACT Now”, which SCoJeC organised for Glasgow youth leaders, in association with Strathclyde Police and Maccabi Scotland. “ACT Now” is part of the national counter-terrorism “Prevent” programme, and is intended to involve communities in discussing community safety issues and how police and community react to times of tension.

“It’s an excellent

means of raising awareness of sensitive community issues surrounding a terrorist incident,” said Sean Burke of Strathclyde Police, who led the session, “and provides participants with the opportunity to discuss them in a safe environment.”

The youth leaders agreed, saying the session had increased their understanding of how the police deal with threats of terrorism, and was very effective as a means to develop good communications between police and communities.

◆ Young Scot

In collaboration with the Scottish Government agency, Young Scot, SCoJeC are running a project involving young people aged 16 to 25 from all of Scotland’s Jewish Communities. They will plan and deliver a research topic on an issue that interests them as Jews growing up in Scotland.

The Kosher Ceilidh



Everywhere they went, SCOJeC's "Kosher Ceilidh" tour of Scotland inspired people to jump up and start dancing!

They played to more than 1000 people, taking in venues as far apart as Maybole, Lochgilphead, Skye, St Andrews, and Aberdeen, as well as Edinburgh and Glasgow.

At Calderwood Lodge the whole school was

soon on their feet. The audience in Lochgilphead was moved to tears as they joined in singing Yiddish songs and recalled their grandparents singing them.

At Portree on the Isle of Skye, where 25 people enjoyed the music, many discovered for the first time that they were not, as they had thought, the only Jewish person living on the island, and, even as the musicians were packing up after the event, they were making arrangements to meet up again.

"I often feel like an outsider" said one of the audience in Lochgilphead, "but tonight I feel part of a community."

"Events like this make me feel that I belong" said another, adding that "Four Corners (SCOJeC's quarterly newsletter) does that too."

Their enthusiasm was matched by non-Jewish people who also attended some of the events, such as the Christian pastor who takes people from his church on a trip to Israel each year, the couple who spent time working on a kibbutz 45 years ago, and a woman who treated the audience to a rendition of a Gaelic folk song that she had recently sung at the Tel Aviv folk music club. The tour really connected people, and many said they wanted more Jewish events in remote parts of Scotland.



Visit our new updated website to find out more about what we do!
www.scojec.org

◆ Being Jewish in Scotland

SCOJeC and the Scottish Government Community Safety Unit are discussing a project to find out about Jewish people's experiences of living in Scotland. The project is intended to be as inclusive as possible, involving Jewish people throughout Scotland.

To contribute to the research by sharing your experiences, please contact us (details below).