

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 Question

VAT: Churches

Jim Dowd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has for the future of the Listed Places of Worship scheme. [4254]

John Penrose: The Listed Places of Worship (LPW) scheme, which makes grants equivalent to the VAT incurred in making repairs to listed buildings in use as places of worship, is expected to make grants of around £15 million UK-wide in 2010-11. I acknowledge the scheme's significant role in helping to keep our listed ecclesiastical buildings in a good state of repair. A decision on the scheme's future beyond the end of 2010-11 can only be made as part of the 2010 spending review, and will be publicised as soon as is possible.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100630/text/100630w0008.htm#10063037000115>

Cabinet Office

Your Freedom website launched: Nominate laws and regulations you would like to see abolished.

... The Your Freedom website at www.hmg.gov.uk/yourfreedom is an opportunity for anyone to suggest ideas on restoring liberties that have been lost, repealing unnecessary laws and stripping away excessive regulation on businesses. ... [it] asks the public to consider three questions:

- Restoring civil liberties: which current laws would you like to remove or change because they restrict your civil liberties?
- Cutting business and charity regulations: which regulations do you think should be removed or changed to make running your business or organisation as simple as possible?
- Repealing unnecessary laws: which offences do you think we should remove or change and why?

... users of the site will be able to comment and rate their favourite ideas. ... The aim is that the Government will roll back the unnecessary regulation that really matters to people. There will be a Freedom Bill in the autumn that will take into account the views expressed on Your Freedom, and departments will consider every suggestion.

To read the full press release see

http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/newsroom/news_releases/2010/100701-yourfreedom.aspx

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Relevant Legislation ** New or updated

UK Parliament

Academies Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/academieshl.html>

**** Daylight Saving Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/daylightsaving.html>

**** Face Coverings (Regulation) Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/facecoveringsregulation.html>

**** Identity Documents Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/identitydocuments.html>

Notice of amendments, Public Bill Committee

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/001/amend/pbc0010107a.11-14.html>

Scottish Parliament

**** End of Life Assistance Bill**

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

Written submissions

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/endLifeAsstBill/evidence/ela-submissions-alph.htm>

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Other Relevant Information

European Court of Human Rights

Contrary to parents' right to educate their children in line with their convictions and to children's right to freedom of religion

... The applicant alleged, in her own name and on behalf of her children, that the display of the crucifix in the State school attended by the latter was contrary to her right to ensure their education and teaching in conformity with her religious and philosophical convictions, within the meaning of Article 2 of Protocol No. 1. The display of the cross had also breached her freedom of conviction and religion, as protected by Article 9 of the Convention. ...

Decision of the Court

The presence of the crucifix – which it was impossible not to notice in the classrooms – could easily be interpreted by pupils of all ages as a religious sign and they would feel that they were being educated in a school environment bearing the stamp of a given religion. This could be encouraging for religious pupils, but also disturbing for pupils who practised other religions or were atheists, particularly if they belonged to religious minorities. The freedom not to believe in any religion (inherent in the freedom of religion guaranteed by the Convention) was not limited to the absence of religious services or religious education: it extended to practices and symbols which expressed a belief, a religion or atheism. This freedom deserved particular protection if it was the State which expressed a belief and the individual was placed in a situation which he or she could not

avoid, or could do so only through a disproportionate effort and sacrifice.

The State was to refrain from imposing beliefs in premises where individuals were dependent on it. In particular, it was required to observe confessional neutrality in the context of public education, where attending classes was compulsory irrespective of religion, and where the aim should be to foster critical thinking in pupils.

The Court was unable to grasp how the display, in classrooms in State schools, of a symbol that could reasonably be associated with Catholicism (the majority religion in Italy) could serve the educational pluralism that was essential to the preservation of a “democratic society” as that was conceived by the Convention, a pluralism that was recognised by the Italian Constitutional Court.

The compulsory display of a symbol of a given confession in premises used by the public authorities, and especially in classrooms, thus restricted the right of parents to educate their children in conformity with their convictions, and the right of children to believe or not to believe. The Court concluded, unanimously, that there had been a violation of Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 taken jointly with Article 9 of the Convention.

To read the full press release see

<http://cmiskp.echr.coe.int/tkp197/view.asp?item=10&portal=hbkm&action=html&highlight=30814/06&sessionid=56206625&skin=hudoc-pr-en>

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Consultations

** new or updated

**** closes today**

Reform of the coroner system (closes 1 July 2010)

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/consultations/reform-coroner-system.htm>

Identity Documents Bill (Committee consideration to be completed by 8 July)

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2010/06/identity-documents-bill-committee-issues-call-for-evidence/>

Equality Act: obtaining information in potential discrimination and equality of term cases (closes 13 July 2010)

http://www.equalities.gov.uk/news/new_streamlined_procedure_for.aspx

Amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001 (closes 15 July 2010)

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/cons-2010-pathogens-toxins/consultation-paper2835.pdf?view=Binary>

Welsh Assembly Review of Standing Orders (closes 16 July 2010)

http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-other-committees/bus-committees-third-bc-home/bus-committees-third-bc-comm/bc3_inq_so.htm

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