

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

Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): If he will discuss with the Chancellor of the Exchequer the merits of extending the listed places of worship grant scheme beyond 2011. [18946]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport (John Penrose): I am sure that my hon. Friend will remember that the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his comprehensive spending review statement last week that the listed places of worship grant scheme is to continue. I am delighted, as I am sure all hon. Members are, that that is the case. We have had to make some small reductions, and it will now go back to its pre-2006 status, but other than that, it will continue. I hope that my hon. Friend and others will join me in praising that decision.

Mr Hollobone: I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on doing his bit to save the scheme, which many of my constituents were worried was going to be cut altogether. Will he expand on what "pre-2006" actually means for those churches applying for funds?

John Penrose: I would be delighted to. Basically, it means that local community groups raising money to repair the fabric of their church will continue effectively to be able to claim grants equivalent to the value of the VAT on the works that are done. The only difference will be that some categories of work—primarily, professional fees, bells, organs and the like—will be excluded in the way they were before 2006, but everything else will continue to be claimable.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101025/debtext/101025-0001.htm#1010254000024>

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Israel

UK Parliamentary Questions

Israel and Palestine

Lord Turnberg: To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they will make to the Palestinian Authority to take up the offer by Israel to freeze settlement building in response to a recognition by them of Israel as a Jewish state.[HL2750]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Howell of Guildford): We believe that successful negotiations leading to a two-state solution are in the long-term interest of both parties. We continue to urge Israel to freeze all settlement activity so that talks can continue. Settlement activity in the Occupied Palestinian Territories is illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace. My right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary discussed these issues with Israel's ambassador to the UK on 19 October.

We are not making representations to the Palestinian Authority on the specific issue above. However the Foreign Secretary spoke to President Abbas on 8 October. He was impressed by his resolve to return to direct negotiations if possible and welcomed the significant progress achieved by the Palestinians in recent years on their road map obligations with regard to security and institution building.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/101025w0001.htm#1010258000376>

Gaza

Lord Hylton: To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the supply of basic medicines to Gaza, with a view to preventing minor illness becoming serious or chronic.[HL2623]

Baroness Verma: We have recently received information from the World Health Organisation (WHO) that although the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH) in the West Bank sends deliveries of drugs to the central drug store in Gaza at irregular intervals, there is an average of 80 to 100 items out of stock of 480 essential drugs at any one time. WHO is in the process of procuring out-of-stock items with funding from the Islamic Development Bank, and reports that the next consignment of 17 truckloads of drugs and consumables from the MoH is awaiting clearance from Israel.

Many donors and international non-governmental organisations also provide drugs to the Ministry of Health in Gaza, although the ministry reports that approximately 20 per cent of these drugs cannot be used for a variety of reasons—for example, because their expiry dates have passed. The UK Government do not provide drugs to the Ministry of Health in Gaza.

Lord Warner: To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they have taken to reduce the damage being done to the healthcare system in Gaza, especially in relation to children, by the Government of Israel's restrictions on the importation of essential medical equipment and supplies (including repairs) and on the free movement of doctors (particularly specialists) to maintain their medical expertise.[HL2679]

Baroness Verma: The UK is funding the UN Access Co-ordination Unit (ACU) which works with the Government of Israel, the Palestinian Authority and aid agencies to facilitate the transfer of goods including medical equipment and supplies. The ACU works closely with the World Health Organisation which monitors the levels of drugs, disposable items and medical equipment in Gaza, and co-ordinates the delivery of donations to try to ensure sufficient levels of essential drugs are maintained. According to WHO, relaxation of restrictions by Israel has reduced the need for time-intensive negotiations over the import of basic medical items and WHO intervention is now only needed for specific items which have been classified dual-use.

The UK continues to call for full, safe and unhindered access into and out of Gaza including the free movement of people.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/101025w0001.htm#1010258000368>

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Relevant Legislation ** New or updated

UK Parliament

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>

Fixed Term Parliaments Bill

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

Identity Documents Bill

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

**** Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill**

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

Notice of amendments

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/063/amend/pbc0632510a.889-890.html>

Committee Stage, House of Commons

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm101025/debtext/101025-0001.htm#1010254000002>

Proceedings

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/063/pro0632510p.103-109.html>

Bill as amended in Committee

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/098/2011098.pdf>

and showing changes made in Committee

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmbills/098/2011098.pdf>

Scottish Parliament

Certification of Death Bill

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/bills/58-CertDeath/index.htm>

End of Life Assistance Bill

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

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Consultations ** new or updated

**** closes in 3 days**

Consultation on the change to policy direction for the Big Lottery Fund

(closes 29 October 2010)

<http://www.culture.gov.uk/consultations/7313.aspx>

Equality Act 2010: The public sector Equality Duty: Promoting equality through transparency (closing date 10 November 2010)

http://www.equalities.gov.uk/pdf/402461_GEO_EqualityAct2010ThePublicSectorEqualityDuty_acc.pdf

Certification of Death (Scotland) Bill (closes 18 November 2010)

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/hs/inquiries/CertificationOfDeathBill/CallForEvidence.htm>

Equality Duty: Detailed Proposals - Consultation on Public Sector Equality Duty Draft Regulations and Order (Scotland) (closes 26 November 2010)

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/324431/0104438.pdf>

Charity Commission: Proposed withdrawal of paper forms for Annual Returns, Registration applications, and forthcoming Charitable Incorporated Organisations (closes 2 December 2010)

[http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/About us/About the Commission/ols_consultation_intro.aspx](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/About%20us/About%20the%20Commission/ols_consultation_intro.aspx)

Equality Act 2010 - Performance of the Public Sector Equality Duties in Wales

(closes 17 December 2010)

<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/equality/equalityact2010/?lang=en>

Equality and Human Rights Commission: Draft Code of Practice on Further and Higher Education (closes 31 December 2010)

http://live.ehrc.precedenthost.co.uk/cgi-bin/generate.pl?page_id= sx0666i4b&save=screen

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