



Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Contents

Home Affairs
Israel

Relevant Legislation
Consultations

Home Affairs

House of Commons Oral Answer

Business of the House

Stephen Doughty (Labour Co-op): ... I have heard that there are significant delays proposed to the online harms Bill, which comes on the back of the “Online Harms” White Paper. Will he explain what the Government’s plans are to bring that forward? As we heard in a group meeting with the all-party group against antisemitism this week, many extreme right-wing organisations that have antisemitic, racist, Islamophobic and homophobic ideology are organising, recruiting and grooming new followers online.

Jacob Rees-Mogg: There is a full legislative programme, as the hon. Gentleman knows, and Bills are being brought forward and processed rapidly by the House. We are doing well at achieving our constitutional obligations. In relation to the online harms Bill, the absence of the Bill does not remove the responsibility from the providers of these services to ensure that they are run and provided properly and that antisemitic material has no place on any properly run website.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2020-07-09/debates/20070911000001/BusinessOfTheHouse#contribution-20D299CE-16E8-4591-A7B3-E2089CFCD0F4>

The White Paper referred to above can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/online-harms-white-paper/online-harms-white-paper>

House of Commons Written Answers

Hate Crime

Bambos Charalambous (Labour) [52339] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many (a) schools and (b) young people have received Stand Up! workshops since her Department’s document titled, Action Against Hate: The UK Government’s plan for tackling hate crime – ‘two years on’, was published in October 2018.

Kit Malthouse: In the period between October 2018 and July 2020 ‘Stand Up! Education Against Discrimination’ has told us it has run workshops in 86 schools

covering 17,227 young people in 45 Local Authorities. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) provided £160,000 in funding to Stand Up! up until March 2019. Further details can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748138/Hate_crime_refresh_2018_Actions_updates_FINAL_WEB.PDF

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-01/52339/>

The action plan referred to above can be read at

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/748175/Hate_crime_refresh_2018_FINAL_WEB.PDF

Places of Worship Security Funding Scheme

Imran Hussain (Labour) [66879] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many places of worship in the (a) UK and (b) City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council area have applied for funding under the Places of Worship Protective Security Scheme since its introduction; and how much funding has been allocated under that scheme to places of worship in the (a) UK and (b) City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council area.

Kit Malthouse: Data on Places of Worship is collated by geographic region.

In the first three years of the scheme (2016-2019), we received 431 applications across England and Wales. For the fourth year of the scheme (2019-2020), we received 531 applications, of which 377 met the minimum requirements for consideration. We have awarded approximately £3.4 million to places of worship across England and Wales.

Over the past four years we have received 124 applications from Yorkshire and Humber, and we have allocated £665,524 in funding to that region.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-30/66879/>

Information about the Places of Worship Security Funding Scheme, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/places-of-worship-security-funding-scheme>

The following two questions both received the same answer

Places of Worship Security Funding Scheme

Imran Hussain (Labour) [66880] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much funding each faith has applied for under the Places of Worship Protective Security Scheme since its introduction.

Imran Hussain (Labour) [66881] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how much funding has been allocated to each faith under the Places of Worship Protective Security Scheme since the introduction of that scheme.

Kit Malthouse: In the first three years of the scheme (2016-2019), £800,000 was available each year. In the fourth year (2019-2020) this was doubled to £1.6 million. All faiths, apart from the Jewish faith, are eligible to apply for funding under this scheme. The Jewish community has access to a separate funding scheme.

Over the last four years, we have allocated £1,643,732 to mosques, £869,858 to churches, £210,989 to temples, and £676,115 to gurdwaras.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-30/66880/>

and

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-30/66881/>

Information about the Places of Worship Security Funding Scheme, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/places-of-worship-security-funding-scheme>

Information about the Jewish community security funding scheme, referred to above, can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-office-grants-14-million-funding-for-security-at-jewish-institutions>

Religious Buildings: Security

Imran Hussain (Labour) [66882] To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department has taken ensure stakeholder engagement with her Department's consultation entitled, Protecting places of worship consultation, issued on 15 March 2020.

Kit Malthouse: The Home Office met with a number of stakeholders representing various faiths and organisations in order to shape and develop the consultation before launch. These included, but were not limited to, the Community Security Trust (CST), Tell MAMA, Church of England and City Sikhs, as well as interfaith organisations including Strengthening Faith Institutions.

In addition, the Home Office consulted with other government departments including the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department of Education. Key stakeholders were also supplied with an early version of the consultation and the draft was reviewed based on their feedback.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-06-30/66882/>

Information about the consultation referred to above (now closed) can be read at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/protecting-places-of-worship-consultation>

House of Lords Oral Answers

Covid-19: Churches and Places of Worship

Lord Black of Brentwood (Conservative): To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of the restrictions in place to address the COVID-19 pandemic on the financial sustainability of churches and places of worship. ...

The Minister of State, Home Office and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (Lord Greenhalgh): As of 4 July, places of worship were allowed to reopen with social distancing in place. We are engaging with faith groups to understand the pressures they are facing during Covid-19, and we continue to listen to and understand the ongoing impact of the loss of income. Faith organisations can apply for a range of government-backed financial packages to support charities and businesses at this time.

Lord Black of Brentwood: My Lords, churches and places of worship are not simply where we go to pray. They bring the joy of music, support tourism, offer significant community provision and, importantly, are custodians of our heritage. All are essentially self-funding and require a sustainable income, which has simply evaporated as a result of lockdown, leaving many in extreme difficulty. Does my noble friend the Minister agree that ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of our churches should be a strategic priority of the Government? ...

Lord Greenhalgh: My noble friend is right that churches and all places of worship play a crucial role in the cultural, as well as spiritual and moral, life of our country. Where possible, we should therefore seek to support as a priority the long-term sustainability of places of worship. ...

The Lord Bishop of St Albans: My Lords, legislation has not kept up with the practice of public giving or developments in technology, especially now, when, as a result of the pandemic, cash carries the risk of infection. Charities, including churches, can currently claim only on cash and contactless gifts—not on online gifts and donations. Will the Government consider allowing online donations to qualify for gift aid, as part of the gift aid small donations scheme?

Lord Greenhalgh: We have given guidance to churches on the safe handling of cash, which can continue, and we encourage contactless where possible. We will certainly look to see whether we should extend this to small gift aid donations online. In the meantime, we encourage churches to get people to register, so that the whole amount of their donation can be claimed.

Lord Glenarthur (Conservative): ... Does my noble friend the Minister agree that, at least in our cathedrals and larger parish churches, the financial stability of churches includes the financial stability of their musicians? Organists are at last now able to play their instruments, but recitals cannot be given, thus denying funds for the churches and fees for the organists—and singing in church is not allowed. Can my noble friend tell the House what progress is being made on research into viral transmission through singing? If this is not swiftly resolved, Britain's great choral tradition is in considerable peril.

Lord Greenhalgh: ... Public Health England is looking into and researching how we can minimise transmission through singing and chanting, as this is such an important part of faith practice. ...

Lord Griffiths of Burry Port (Labour): My Lords, apart from cathedrals and larger parish churches, what about the ordinary street-corner churches? These offer community services, and in the case of the one I attend, concerts and cultural events, visits to care homes, accommodation for rough sleepers during the winter months, and art classes, with some 10% of the income it raises given away to charities. Will the Government recognise that if, as the Minister says, there are indeed avenues of help available, they must be well enough known for those in need to take advantage of them?

Lord Greenhalgh: My Lords, my department, MHCLG, is making that information available to all faith communities and places of worship. It should be noted that the Prime Minister has asked Danny Kruger to look into how we can support those that provide many of the community services referred to by the noble Lord, and the social action that has been so helpful during the recovery phase of Covid-19.

Lord Shutt of Greetland (Liberal Democrat): My Lords, churches and places of worship have suffered during the pandemic because of the lack of giving on the plate or in the collection bag, and from the lack of fundraising events. Since 1922, the state has had an involvement with places of worship through the deed of covenant scheme, replaced in 1990 by gift aid. Would it not be a wonderful thing if the Government were to double gift aid in the tax year 2020-21? Will the Minister speak to the Chancellor accordingly?

Lord Greenhalgh: My Lords, that is obviously something that would have to be considered as part of the comprehensive spending review that will take place this autumn. We recognise the importance of gift aid in supporting the financial sustainability of our places of worship.

Lord Polak (Conservative): My Lords, this morning, I attended morning prayers at Marble Arch synagogue. It was good to be back, although the new regulations will take some getting used to. At my synagogue in Borehamwood, Rabbi Alex Chapper explained some of the challenges going forward as synagogues reopen—especially financial ones, as synagogues generally raise funds by voluntary contributions from members, many of whom are facing financial uncertainty. I am grateful to my noble friend the Minister that he has reached out to many communities, including the Jewish community. Is he able to update the House on those discussions?

Lord Greenhalgh: I thank my noble friend for his kind words. I have had discussions as recently as last week with representatives of all Jewish

communities, including the Orthodox community that he refers to. I am pleased to see that many synagogues are reopening, and that people are taking the appropriate decisions to keep their staff, volunteers and congregations safe, in line with public health advice.

Lord Kilclooney (Crossbench): ... Will the Government consider relaxing VAT on the repair and reinstatement of our churches and cathedrals? Will they ensure that any support goes to all faiths? For example, the Islamic religion is increasing at a rate at which it may become the main religion in England, and the evangelical and reformed churches have already replaced the Roman Catholic Church as the second largest in this country.

Lord Greenhalgh: I refer noble Lords to the fact that there is in place a listed places of worship scheme, which supports the refund of VAT on repairs and maintenance. This will be in place until March 2021; whether it will be extended is a matter for the spending review. ...

Baroness Sherlock (Labour): ... I have seen churches and places of worship working flat out in the pandemic, supporting the sick and bereaved, feeding the hungry, and caring for the homeless and the lonely. Our communities need them to survive the pandemic. Have the Government considered the request that has been made specifically for an equivalent to the small business grant fund for charities and places of worship? These are often the heart of our communities; we need them to be there on the other side of Covid.

Lord Greenhalgh: I looked at the suggestion of a small business grant fund with my colleague and noble friend Lady Barran, and we have already had a bilateral on this to see how we can move forward. It should be noted that the charity support fund provided by the National Lottery fund is open to places of worship that are registered charities, and that is some £200 million. ...

To read this question and answer session in full see

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2020-07-09/debates/F621FEEB-EF4F-4110-A1AE-35213917710B/Covid-19ChurchesAndPlacesOfWorship>

TOP

Israel

House of Commons Written Answers

Gaza: Humanitarian Aid

John Howell (Conservative) [68306] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, whether UK funding to the UN's Access Coordination Unit is used to ensure access for humanitarian personnel and goods into Gaza from Egypt.

James Cleverly: The UK remains deeply concerned about the restrictions on movement and access that affect Gaza. DFID is providing £1.3 million (2018-21) to support the UN's Access Coordination Unit (ACU), which works with all relevant parties to ensure humanitarian access to Gaza for UN and NGO workers. The ACU works with the Egyptian authorities to facilitate access through the Rafah crossing.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-07-02/68306/>

Gaza and West Bank: Overseas Aid

Damien Moore (Conservative) [68418] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what steps her Department is taking to ensure UK Official Development Assistance allocated to projects in the West Bank and Gaza is not facilitating terrorism in that region.**James Cleverly:** DFID works through a limited number of partners in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and has robust controls against fraud and the diversion

of aid. We select our partners for the strong safeguards they have in place, which reduces risk and ensures the maximum impact of UK aid for Palestinians. DFID's funding agreements commit partners to understand and comply with UK and international counter terrorism legislation. Each programme also undergoes an audit of funds to assure that UK Aid was spent in line with agreed project activities.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-07-02/68418/>

TOP

Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

UK Parliament

Assisted Dying Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/assisteddying.html>

Education (Assemblies) Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/educationassemblies.html>

Genocide Determination Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/genocidedeterminationbill.html>

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/marriageact1949amendment.html>

Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Bill

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2019-20/marriageandcivilpartnershipminimumage.html>

Scottish Parliament

Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill

<https://beta.parliament.scot/bills/hate-crime-and-public-order-scotland-bill>

Post-mortem Examinations (Defence Time Limit) (Scotland) Bill

<https://beta.parliament.scot/bills/post-mortem-examinations-defence-time-limit-scotland-bill>

TOP

Consultations ** new or updated today

Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill (closing date 24 July 2020)

<https://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/115038.aspx>

Legislative proposals for religion, values and ethics [Wales] (closing date 28 July 2020)

<https://gov.wales/legislative-proposals-religion-values-and-ethics>

TOP