

## SCPO March Newsletter

### RECENT EVENTS



#### **Meeting with Katharina von Schurbein from the European Commission**

On Thursday 3 March, Chloe Clemmons from SCPO hosted a group of ecumenical and interfaith partners for a meeting with Katharina von Schurbein, European Commission coordinator at Dialogue with Churches, religions, philosophical and non-confessional organisations, to hear about her work on interfaith dialogue across Europe and to share our experiences of interfaith engagement in Scotland. The European Commission seeks to hear from faith representatives as part of their normal policy setting processes and the visit was a welcome opportunity to be part of that dialogue.

#### **Public Decision Making, Scottish Government and Democracy Society Event**

On Wednesday 9 March, Chloe Clemmons attended an event to explore the implementation of the Community Empowerment Act - thinking about the role public participation could play in decision making by public bodies. The event was opened by Marco Biagi, Minister for Local Government and Community Empowerment, who is stepping down in the forthcoming Scottish Elections.



### **Meeting on Scotland's National Action Plan on FGM**

On Monday 21 March, Irene MacKinnon from SCPO with Iain Whyte, General Secretary of The Guild at the Church of Scotland met with Bruce Sutherland, part of the Gender LGBT Equality and Violence Against Women team in the Scottish Government buildings at Victoria Quay, Edinburgh.

It was a useful meeting to discuss Scotland's National Action Plan on FGM and the work that the Guild are doing to support the Feed the Minds project in Kenya. We were invited to a third sector workshop to further explore the plan on 3 May in Glasgow. The government are undertaking a community based consultation to consider the effectiveness of the Serious Crime Act 2015 legislation.



### **Meeting with Churches Together in Britain and Ireland**

On Tuesday 22 March, Irene MacKinnon went to London to a Consultation on the European Referendum in the UK, organised by CTBI. There were representatives from groups across the UK and Ireland including ACTS, JPIT, the Salvation Army, Quakers, Faith in Europe and others.

The discussion focused on what individual groups were doing in the lead up to the EU referendum in June and what, if anything had been planned post referendum. SCPO is supporting an EU resource compiled by JPIT, and this along with other resources will be made available on the CTBI website.



### **Think, Pray, Vote – EU referendum resource for churches**

On 23 June we will be asked the question, "Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?" But how do we begin to make sense of this information and how does our faith impact on this important issue?

A resource entitled "Think, Pray Vote", written by JPIT and supported by SCPO, will explore some of the issues surrounding the referendum such as sovereignty, the single market, freedom of movement, and the environment – providing information and the opportunity for theological reflection.

The resource will be available in April on the [SCPO](#) and [JPIT](#) websites.

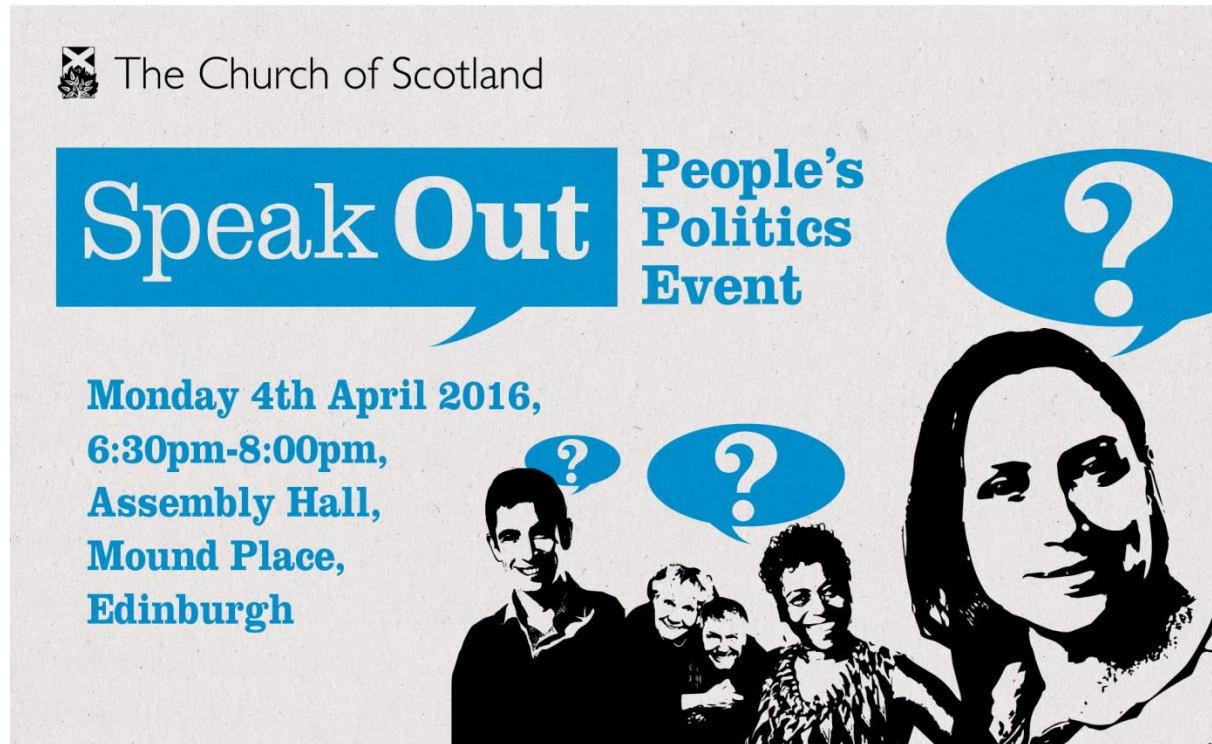


### **Salvation Army Scottish election resource**

The Salvation Army have produced a Scottish Parliament election resource which includes background information on the election, how to get involved in the campaign, details of the Video Manifesto project, worship resources for the Sundays prior to the election and draft letters to MSPs following the election. It also includes five policy briefings on homelessness, care for older people, alcohol misuse, employability, and debt.

The resources pack and the policy briefings can be downloaded [here](#)

## INVITATIONS



The Church of Scotland

**Speak Out** **People's Politics Event**

**Monday 4th April 2016,  
6:30pm-8:00pm,  
Assembly Hall,  
Mound Place,  
Edinburgh**

The poster features a group of five people (three men and two women) in a black and white style, with blue speech bubbles containing question marks above them. The text is in blue and black on a light grey background.

On Monday 4 April, leaders from Scotland's main political parties will respond to voters sharing their experiences and concerns about the state of the nation ahead of the Scottish Parliament elections on 5 May at Speak Out: People's Politics.

Deputy First Minister John Swinney of the SNP, Scottish Labour Party leader Kezia Dugdale, Scottish Liberal Democrat leader Willie Rennie, Scottish Greens co-convenor Patrick Harvie and former Scottish Conservative leader Annabel Goldie are taking part in the event, which will be chaired by Moderator of the General Assembly the Right Rev Dr Angus Morrison.

To register for free tickets please click [here](#)

The event will also be live streamed via the Church of Scotland website.  
[www.churchofscotland.org.uk](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk)

### **European Movement in Scotland – referendum events**

The European Movement in Scotland is planning a series of “town hall” style events around Scotland intended to inform people about European facts and the issues which are at stake. With a working title of “Why Vote? Bring your questions to this public meeting”, the exact format will vary by locality and available speakers.

One date firmed up is 25 May in Dundee in collaboration with the University of Dundee. Events will also take place in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Perth, Hawick, Skye and Fife - keep up to date with the schedule at [www.euromovescotland.org.uk](http://www.euromovescotland.org.uk)

## PARLIAMENTARY NEWS

The Scottish Parliament elections take place on Thursday 5 May 2016. From Thursday 24 March, the Parliament is dissolved and there is no parliamentary

business. The first meeting of the Scottish Parliament after the elections is scheduled for Thursday 12 May 2016.

SCPO's collection of topical briefings – 'Explore' - designed for Scottish church groups who are planning an elections meeting/hustings event, along with guidance on running such an event, remains available for download at [www.actsparl.org](http://www.actsparl.org)

## **Scotland**

**Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Bill** – Passed on 22 March 2016.

A Bill to make provision about abusive behaviour; and to make provision about sexual harm including provision about directions to be given to juries in sexual offence cases, and provision about orders to prevent future sexual harm.

Spice briefing - **SB 16-31** Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Bill

**Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill** – Passed on 22 March 2016.

A Bill to consolidate the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985, the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1993, Part 1 of the Bankruptcy and Diligence etc. (Scotland) Act 2007, Part 2 of the Home Owner and Debtor Protection (Scotland) Act 2010, the Bankruptcy and Debt Advice (Scotland) Act 2014, the Protected Trust Deeds (Scotland) Regulations 2013 and related enactments.

Spice briefing - **SB 16-29** Bankruptcy (Scotland) Bill

**Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Bill** – Passed on 22 March 2016.

The bill will modernise and update 100 year-old legislation – introducing a definition of ashes, standardising forms and record-keeping across Scotland, clarifying the process for instructing the disposal of human remains (including pregnancy loss) and placing a duty on burial authorities to maintain the safety of burial grounds.

It also contains provisions to give Scottish Ministers the powers to introduce a licensing scheme for funeral directors. It will also regulate private burials (i.e. burials at home or in a private family burial ground) and introduce measures to address the issue of pressure on available burial land in Scotland.

Spice briefing - **SB 16-32** Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Bill

**Land Reform (Scotland) Bill** – Passed on 16 March 2016.

A bill to establish the Scottish Land Commission and what it does; provide information on owners and controllers of land, and about engaging communities in decisions relating to land.

Spice briefing - **SB 16-24** Land Reform (Scotland) Bill

**Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Bill** – Passed on 17 March 2016.

A Bill to make provision about private rented housing - in particular to establish a new type of tenancy to be known as a private residential tenancy.

Spice briefing - **SB 16-25** Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Bill

**Carers (Scotland) Bill** – Received royal assent on 9 March 2016.

A Bill to make provision about carers, including the identification of carers' needs for support through adult carer support plans and young carer statements; the provision of support to carers; the enabling of carer involvement in certain services; the preparation of local carer strategies; the establishment of information and advice services for carers; and for connected purposes.

**Education (Scotland) Bill** – Received royal assent on 8 March 2016.

A Bill to impose duties in relation to reducing pupils' inequalities of outcome; to modify the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 and section 70 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980; to make provision about Gaelic medium education, about the provision of school meals, for appointing Chief Education Officers and in relation to registration of independent schools and teachers in grant-aided schools; to extend the duty to provide early learning and childcare to certain children; and for connected purposes.

**Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Bill** – Passed on 8 March 2016.

A Bill to make provision about the composition of and appointment to the governing bodies and academic boards of higher education institutions; and to revise provision about the academic freedom of various persons carrying out activities at higher education and certain other institutions.

**Land and Buildings Transaction Tax (Amendment) (Scotland) Bill** – Passed on 8 March 2016. A Bill to amend the Land and Buildings Transaction Tax (Scotland) Act 2013 to make provision about an additional amount of tax to be chargeable in respect of certain transactions relating to dwellings.

**Lobbying (Scotland) Bill** – Passed on 10 March 2016.

A Bill to make provision about lobbying, including provision for establishing and maintaining a lobbying register and the publication of a code of conduct.

**Scottish Fiscal Commission Bill** – Passed on 10 March 2016.

A Bill to establish the Scottish Fiscal Commission and to provide for its functions.

## **UK**

### **The Scotland 2015-16 Bill**

The Scotland 2015-2016 Bill was passed and given royal assent on 23 March 2016. The bill includes a number of new powers for the Scottish Parliament including full devolution of income tax rates, Air Passenger Duty, management of the Crown Estate and around £2.6 billion of devolved welfare benefits.

A briefing on the Scotland Bill will soon be available on the SCPO website **here**.

## **CHURCH RESPONSES**

Church responses to legislation going forward in the Scottish and UK Parliaments can be viewed at <http://www.actsparl.org/official-responses.aspx>

## **APPEAL FOR ARTICLES**

We would like to invite denominations to contribute articles for future monthly newsletters. Please contact SCPO at [info@actsparl.org](mailto:info@actsparl.org) if this is something that you would be interested in doing. It could relate to an issue that is politically current or tie in with events highlighting a specific area.

## **STAY IN TOUCH**

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Keep up to date with news and briefings on our website at [www.actsparl.org](http://www.actsparl.org)

You can also sign up to receive a copy of the newsletter free of charge on the website. If you would like to receive a postal copy, please call us on 0131 240 2276.