

# Proposed Witchcraft Convictions (Pardons) (Scotland) Bill

## Introduction

A proposal for a Bill to pardon all those convicted under the Witchcraft Act 1563.

The consultation runs from 23 June 2022 to 15 September 2022

All those wishing to respond to the consultation are strongly encouraged to enter their responses electronically through this survey. This makes collation of responses much simpler and quicker. However, the option also exists of sending in a separate response (in hard copy or by other electronic means such as e-mail), and details of how to do so are included in the member's consultation document.

Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) require an answer.

All responses must include a name and contact details. Names will only be published if you give us permission, and contact details are never published – but we may use them to contact you if there is a query about your response. If you do not include a name and/or contact details, we may have to disregard your response.

Please note that you must complete the survey in order for your response to be accepted. If you don't wish to complete the survey in a single session, you can choose "Save and Continue later" at any point. Whilst you have the option to skip particular questions, you must continue to the end of the survey and press "Submit" to have your response fully recorded.

Please ensure you have read the consultation document before responding to any of the questions that follow. In particular, you should read the information contained in the document about how your response will be handled. The consultation document is available here:

[Consultation Document](#)

[Privacy Notice](#)

I confirm that I have read and understood the Privacy Notice which explains how my personal data will be used.

On the previous page we asked you if you are UNDER 12 YEARS old, and you responded Yes to this question.

If this is the case, we will have to contact your parent or guardian for consent.

If you are under 12 years of age, please put your contact details into the textbox. This can be your email address or phone number. We will then contact you and your parents to receive consent.

Otherwise please confirm that you are or are not under 12 years old.

*No Response*

## About you

Please choose whether you are responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation.  
Note: If you choose "individual" and consent to have the response published, it will appear under your own name. If you choose "on behalf of an organisation" and consent to have the response published, it will be published under the organisation's name.

an individual

Which of the following best describes you? (If you are a professional or academic, but not in a subject relevant to the consultation, please choose "Member of the public".)

Member of the public

Please select the category which best describes your organisation

*No Response*

Please choose one of the following:

I am content for this response to be published and attributed to me or my organisation

Please provide your Full Name or the name of your organisation. (Only give the name of your organisation if you are submitting a response on its behalf).  
(Note: the name will not be published if you have asked for the response to be anonymous or "not for publication". Otherwise this is the name that will be published with your response).

DJ Johnston-Smith

Please provide details of a way in which we can contact you if there are queries regarding your response. Email is preferred but you can also provide a postal address or phone number.

We will not publish these details.

## **Aim and approach - Note: All answers to the questions in this section may be published (unless your response is "not for publication").**

Q1. Which of the following best expresses your view of the proposed Bill? (Please note that this question is compulsory.)

Fully supportive

### **Please explain the reasons for your response.**

Despite its relative size in comparison to other nations, Scotland has long prided itself on its perceived notion of its inherent "democratic intellect", its notion of a tradition of collective intellectual thought and a

Q1. Which of the following best expresses your view of the proposed Bill? (Please note that this question is compulsory.)

standard of educational enlightenment that sets the country apart from (and, for some, above) many of its neighbouring countries. Its historic failure to adequately address the hideous legacy of the wholly excessive "witch" persecutions that took place in the 16th, 17th and early 18th century, give the lie to such opinions.

This proposed bill will address an historic wrong, from a less progressive age, and provide a powerful message to those contemporary sub-cultures across the globe that retain belief in witchcraft and sorcery, that there is no such thing, and to those that use the underlying misogynist messaging of the traditional witchcraft narrative as a means of coercive control, that such behaviour will no longer be deemed acceptable in an enlightened society.

Q2. Do you think legislation is required, or are there other ways in which the proposed Bill's aims could be achieved more effectively? Please explain the reasons for your response.

This legislation is very much required for the reasons given in my previous answer. Given the sheer scale of the charges and convictions and the paucity of detailed and useful court records, an Act of the Scottish Parliament that universally pardons all those convicted under the 1563 Witchcraft Act would be the most prudent, cost-effective and quickest way to do this.

## Financial Implications

Q3. Any new law can have a financial impact which would affect individuals, businesses, the public sector, or others. What financial impact do you think this proposal could have if it became law?

no overall change in costs

**Please explain the reasons for your answer.**

I don't believe that this new law would have any significant negative financial impact on anyone in the country. Any related parliamentary costs would be subsumed within other ongoing parliamentary work.

## Equalities

Q4. What overall impact is the proposed Bill likely to have on equality, taking account of the following protected characteristics (under the Equality Act 2010): age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation?

Positive

**Please explain the reasons for your response including the impact on people with particular protected characteristics**

Historic notions of "witches" have coloured misogynist narratives that have poisoned our society for centuries. An official Act of Parliament that exposes the roots of these unenlightened traditions and formally pardons those that paid the ultimate price for church, state and societal sanctioned violence can only be a positive step in encouraging the divestment of those related, lingering cultural vestiges of misogynistic attitudes, outlook and opinion.

## Sustainability

Q5. Any new law can impact on work to protect and enhance the environment, achieve a sustainable economy, and create a strong, healthy, and just society for future generations.

Do you think the proposal could impact in any of these areas? (If you do not have a view then skip to next question)

Please explain the reasons for your answer, including what you think the impact of the proposal could be, and if there are any ways you think the proposal could avoid negative impacts?

There can be little doubt that the successful passage of this Act will have a positive impact on furthering a just society in Scotland as it feeds into new narratives that address the historic wrongs and injustices committed against these innocent individuals and reduces contemporary belittling of those injustices.

Some communities might also benefit from indirect economic benefit from the renewed attention brought to this aspect of their local history with new interpretation boards, museum displays, school projects and other initiatives.

## General

Q6. Do you have any other additional comments or suggestions on the proposed Bill (which have not already been covered in any of your responses to earlier questions)?

*No Response*