

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).

Joanne Moss

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.

The only way we can move forward as a society is to embrace our heritage, it is what our being has been established on. If that heritage is no longer complimentary to today's thinking, this shows how much we

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

have progressed, but we still need to be able to acknowledge the wrong and endeavour to do something to put it right.

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.

Yes - despite the length of time which has elapsed since the last conviction in Scotland, there persecution of women and men for alleged witchcraft continues. Introducing legislation will show the world our resilience to opposing such persecutions. What some may see the pardon request as frivolous, but lives were lost because of people who saw making such accusations a means of getting what they wanted on a personal level.

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.

There is no expendable action required on the private, public or voluntary sectors in putting through this bill.

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

It is evident that what is now seen as protected characteristics were amongst the reasons/evidence for accusation and subsequent conviction. Age, disability, race, religion, belief, sex, pregnancy. We are better educated and have greater understanding of human characteristics to know that such accusations would have no legal basis, at least in the UK. Alas this can not be said for African countries.

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?

Yes - positive impact to show how Scotland has evolved in its understanding of a just society and an inclusive society. That Scotland accepts the errors of our forebearers and advocates for justice for all.

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)?

The passage of time brings greater understanding to us all on many things. As a Paisley buddy I was aware of the Paisley witch trials from Primary School. Trying to reconcile this "on your doorstep" story of witches with the likes of Jill Murphy's "Worst Witch" and classic tales such as "Snow White" was tricky, esp. as I quite liked the thought of being Maud or Mildred. As the years advanced and I have learned more about the Paisley Trials, of how Christian Shaw's accusation of witchcraft saw seven of the 21 she accused burned at the stake. In adulthood Ms Shaw went on to introduce the weaving loom to Paisley. Did this make up for the actions of her childhood?

I have also learned of my grandfather's during his time in West Africa saved the lives of twins born to a woman in a remote village. This was around 1920 and the community consider the woman to be a witch because she was carrying twins, alas such thinking still exists in some areas of Africa with woman either banished from the village or executed along with the unborn children. Mixed blessing for my grandfather, convinced the village elders to allow the children to be delivered (by my Gran!) and looked after, alas the mother was banished from the village.

At the root of all of this is fear of the unknown, many relied on the uninformed or downright lies of the community's elders and/or the clergy. The latter seeing any challenge to them or outspokenness as a threat.

Retribution has been sought for many in recent times, the fact that these individuals left us many centuries ago makes no difference. They were mothers/fathers, daughters/sons, aunts/uncles, sisters/brothers, friends, neighbours – they were "just folk".