

# 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".)

Academic with expertise in a relevant subject

**Optional: You may wish to explain briefly what expertise or experience you have that is relevant to the subject-matter of the consultation.**

I am head of a university department of history & theory, dealing principally with visual culture.

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).

Nicholas Martin Oddy

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.**

One cannot reverse the actions of ignorance in the past, but one can try to mitigate them as best as one can. The 'crime' of witchcraft was treated sceptically at the time it was being pursued and was morally and ethically bankrupt in the terms of the religion that was involved in pursuing it. Not one of those convicted had ever consorted with the devil, the 'evidence' was entirely bogus. The whole sorry story is a huge embarrassment to the Scottish Nation; for each conviction all those connected with the convicted will have been negatively affected. The Scottish witch trials must have had impact on many thousands of people. The fact that the victims of what was State supported fraud have never been pardoned is tantamount to the State still supporting their validity, with all the implications that may have.

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.

No, at this distance there is no way that the damage done to those affected can be recompensed, but the State can acknowledge that the convictions it supported were corrupt and bogus. All those convicted were innocent of the 'crime' they were supposed to have committed. How can the State NOT pardon them in such a situation?

## 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?

Unsure

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

I find it worrying that a change in the law to acknowledge a historical wrong and to put to bed a 'crime' that never existed may not be enacted because of cost implication. It says a lot about the society we live in if this is really a valid question. Just by responding to this is 'costing' me time but that is no reason not to do something like this.

## 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**

Something like 85% of those accused of witchcraft were female, I have no figures as to how many of those had other protected characteristics, but given the bogus nature of the 'crime' and the sort of tortures (sleep deprivation in particular) used to extract 'confessions' I suspect it would look pretty damning. I think the

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gender imbalance alone is enough to suggest that the fact that as yet the State has not pardoned these people is tantamount to the state supporting gender bias in the present.

## 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?

It rights a long-term wrong that demonstrates the State is willing to strive towards a just society .

## 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)?

I find it quite surprising that there is any need for this sort of questionnaire, pardons should have been give many years before now and the fact we are still not there has very unpleasant implications as to the sort of society we live in.