

Political Affairs Brief

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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UK Parliamentary Questions

Church Repairs (VAT)

Miss Anne McIntosh (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): What recent representations the Church Commissioners have received on the rates of value added tax applicable to church repairs. [3389]

Tony Baldry: The General Synod at its February meeting made it clear how important it feels the listed places of worship scheme is. The scheme has managed to rebate some £12 million back to listed churches each year, and that is particularly important when a system has not yet been found for the European Union to remove VAT on repairs to listed places of worship.

Miss McIntosh: ... Will my hon. Friend look at removing the anomaly between the high rate of VAT on church repairs and the zero rate of VAT on new buildings? Will he, indeed, campaign for a lower rate of VAT throughout the European Union ...

Tony Baldry: ... each year the Church of England spends £110 million on repairing and renovating listed churches. The vast majority of that money comes from church congregations and local communities, and, even in these straitened times, we have to come to a collective view on whether we are going to maintain that very important part of our national fabric and heritage.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100622/debtext/100622-0003.htm#10062245000044>

Listed Places of Worship

... **Jessica Morden:** I have had many representations from local churches whose congregations are struggling to meet the cost of repairs and are dependent on this scheme continuing. In his discussions with the Government, will the hon. Gentleman emphasise that the beauty of the scheme ... is that it applies to all listed places of worship, not just those that are eligible for things such as the heritage lottery grant?

Tony Baldry: ... as a society we have to take a decision about how we maintain what is a very important part of our national built heritage. There are 16,000 parish churches throughout this country. English Heritage estimates that it would cost £800 million a year to maintain them properly; at present, we are spending only about £100 million, most of which comes from local communities and congregations.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100622/debtext/100622-0004.htm#10062245000047>

Vetting

Dr Julian Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans she has for the elimination of need for British citizens who have successfully been Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checked in respect of one area of activity to be CRB-checked for other areas of activity; and whether the concept of a portable CRB clearance is to be introduced in the near future. [2835]

Lynne Featherstone: A criminal records disclosure provides an employer or volunteer organiser who is considering placing an individual in an eligible post with current criminal records and related information. As such the information contained on it is valid at the time the disclosure is issued and in the case of any local police information, will be that information considered relevant for a particular position.

A disclosure certificate is a sensitive document and is restricted from being passed between organisations by the terms of Part V of the Police Act 1997 subject to certain exemptions, primarily where the applicant has provided their consent.

The Criminal Records Bureau is considering the feasibility of updating criminal records information provided to employers and others. The Government have announced its intention to review the criminal records regime. Terms of reference are currently being developed and this issue will be taken into account.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100622/text/100622w0010.htm#10062269000040>

Prisons: Religion

Philip Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what information his Department holds on the number of people who have converted to (a) Islam, (b) Christianity, (c) Buddhism, (d) Hinduism, (e) Judaism and (f) Sikhism whilst in prison in the last five years. [3093]

Mr Blunt: The data held centrally, as recorded on the prison IT system, only includes information on prisoners' current declared religion, not any previously declared religion. Therefore, it is not possible to identify how many prisoners have changed their religion while in prison.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100622/text/100622w0006.htm#10062263000011>

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Israel

UK Parliamentary Questions

Palestinians: Human Rights

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he plans to take at the United Nations in response to allegations of human rights abuses by members of Hamas in Gaza; and if he will make a statement. [2971]

Alistair Burt: The UN Security Council discusses the situation in the Middle East on a monthly basis including the urgent need for Hamas to renounce violence. UN Security Council Resolution 1860 was clear in its condemnation on the use of violence by all parties. We continue to call for its full implementation.

More widely we call on Hamas to take immediate and concrete steps towards the Quartet principles, unconditionally to release Gilad Shalit, who has been held in captivity for four years, and to end its interference with the operations of non-governmental organisations and UN agencies in Gaza.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100622/text/100622w0003.htm#10062247000032>

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Relevant Legislation ** New or updated

UK Parliament

Academies Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/academieshl.html>

Identity Documents Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/identitydocuments.html>

Scottish Parliament

End of Life Assistance Bill

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/bills/38-EndLifeAssist/index.htm>

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Consultations ** new or updated

Reform of the coroner system (closes 1 July 2010)

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/consultations/reform-coroner-system.htm>

Identity Documents Bill (Committee consideration to be completed by 8 July)

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2010/06/identity-documents-bill-committee-issues-call-for-evidence/>

Equality Act: obtaining information in potential discrimination and equality of term cases (closes 13 July 2010)

http://www.equalities.gov.uk/news/new_streamlined_procedure_for.aspx

Amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001 (closes 15 July 2010)

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/cons-2010-pathogens-toxins/consultation-paper2835.pdf?view=Binary>

Welsh Assembly Review of Standing Orders (closes 16 July 2010)

http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-other-committees/bus-committees-third-bc-home/bus-committees-third-bc-comm/bc3_inq_so.htm

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