

Political Affairs Digest

A daily summary of political events affecting the Jewish Community

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

SCoJeC

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House of Commons Oral Answer

Topical Questions: Education

Wera Hobhouse (Liberal Democrat): In the light of the recent racist incident in one of our schools in Bath, does the Minister believe the safeguarding policies, procedures and processes in our schools are strong enough, and that the Ofsted inspection regime is adequate in respect of safeguarding?

Damian Hinds: I was truly shocked to read of the incident to which the hon. Lady refers. Such incidents, and racism in general, must of course have no place in our schools or our country. Schools have to have a policy setting out measures to encourage good behaviour, including the prevention of bullying, and where there are serious concerns, Ofsted has powers to inspect any school without notice.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-03-19/debates/4D2FE4FD-40B4-4AEF-8371-729005CD6948/TopicalQuestions#contribution-EFE70D9C-E66B-4D8E-AF1F-6724B0F2A284>

Information about the incident referred to above can be read at

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-somerset-43401500>

House of Commons Written Answers

Coroners

The following four questions all received the same answer

Jon Trickett (Labour) [132037] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has plans to increase the accountability of coroners to the public; and if he will make a statement.

Jon Trickett (Labour) [132038] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has plans to make changes to the system of complaints on the conduct of coroners; and if he will make a statement.

Jon Trickett (Labour) [132039] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has plans to make coroners subject to freedom of information requests; and if he will make a statement.

Chief Coroner

Jon Trickett (Labour) [132040] To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, whether he has plans to change the remit of the Chief Coroner; and if he will make a statement.

Philip Lee: We have no plans to change the remit of the Chief Coroner, nor to

amend the accountability of coroners, or the complaints procedures in relation to the conduct of coroners.

Judicial office holders, including coroners, must be independent and free from external influence in the exercise of their judicial functions. These are fundamental principles for the protection of the rule of law and the constitutional separation of powers.

Complaints against the conduct of a Coroner, as with any other judge, are considered by the Judicial Complaints and Investigations Office while a coroner's decision may be subject to challenge in the courts by way of a judicial review.

Judicial office holders are not a public authority for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and are therefore not subject to disclosure under that Act.

The Chief Coroner's role, defined in statute, is to provide national leadership for coroners, devise and deliver training and provide written guidance on various matters to ensure consistency of standards and approach. He is also required to produce an annual report for the Lord Chancellor, which the Lord Chancellor must then lay before Parliament.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-12/132037/>

and

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-12/132038/>

and

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-12/132039/>

and

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-12/132040/>

House of Lords Written Answer

Universities: Freedom of Expression

Baroness Deech (Crossbench) [HL6096] To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of protection of freedom of speech at universities, following the violent disruption at the King's College London Libertarian Society meeting on 5 March.

Viscount Younger of Leckie: Hatred, discrimination and violence have no place on our campuses. Universities have a clear responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to foster good relations between those who share protected characteristics, such as race or religion, and those who do not.

Free speech is protected in universities by law and plays a crucial role in generating rigorous debate, advancing understanding and allowing students to challenge conventional wisdom and discuss controversial subjects. Under the Education (No 2) Act 1986, universities have a duty to 'take reasonably practicable steps to ensure freedom of speech for staff, students and visiting speakers,' and this includes having a free speech code of practice. The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 extends this duty to all providers registered with the Office for Students (OfS).

The OfS will have an important role to play in championing free speech. Under our proposals they would also have a range of levers to intervene where issues arise. A principle relating to freedom of speech is also included in the recently published regulatory framework for OfS, see attached.

This government remains committed to freedom of speech within the law – this

does not include hate speech, incitement to violence or terrorism. We expect universities to take appropriate action, including involving law enforcement if necessary, in response to incidents such as those at Kings College on 5 March 2018.

Office for Students framework

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-03-06/HL6096/>

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

New government action to create stronger, more integrated Britain

... Britain is on the whole, a well-integrated society, with 85% of people reporting a feeling of belonging strongly to Britain. But the evidence, including [Dame Louise Casey's independent review into opportunity and integration](#), overwhelmingly points to a significant number of communities being divided along race, faith or socio-economic lines. This reduces opportunities for people to mix with others from different backgrounds, allows mistrust and misunderstanding to grow, and prevents those living in isolated communities from taking advantage of the opportunities that living in Britain offers. The strategy sets out a range of actions the government plans to take to bring divided communities together, including:

Boosting English language skills ...

Increasing economic opportunity, particularly for women ...

Ensure that every child receives an education that prepares them for life in modern Britain ...

Further measures included as part of the Integrated Communities Strategy:

Building stronger leadership ...

Supporting recent migrants to integrate into the community ...

Respecting and promoting equal rights ...

Building vibrant communities ...

To read the full press release see

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-government-action-to-create-stronger-more-integrated-britain>

Airdrie Sheriff Court

Markus Meechan, who filmed himself training a pet dog to give Nazi salutes in response to the phrase "Gas the Jews" and then put the footage on YouTube, has been convicted of the contravention of section 127(1)(a) of the Communications Act 2003, and of the religious and racial aggravations libelled along with the charge. The Sheriff described the contents of the video to be "grossly offensive".

Sentence has been deferred by the court to 23 April 2018.

Information not yet available online

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House of Commons Written Answers

Gaza: Borders

Richard Burden (Labour) [132485] To ask the Secretary of State for International

Development, what recent assessment she has made of the (a) social, (b) economic and (c) humanitarian effects of the ongoing Israeli naval blockade on Gaza.

Alistair Burt: The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) assesses that the restrictions on access to fishing waters in Gaza is a key factor discouraging investment and perpetuating high levels of unemployment, food insecurity and aid dependency. The fishing industry is important for the social and economic wellbeing of Gaza and we want to see an increase in the fishing zone, in line with the limit of 20 nautical miles stipulated in the Oslo accords. The UK has consistently called on the Government of Israel to ease movement, including at sea, and will continue to do so.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-14/132485/>

Occupied Territories

Richard Burden (Labour) [132497] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, what classification of fragility her Department uses for the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Alistair Burt: The Department for International Development (DFID) assesses fragile states against three categories, reflecting higher, medium and lower levels of fragility. The last assessment found that the Occupied Palestinian Territories overall results met the criteria of the lower fragility category.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-14/132497/>

Gaza: International Assistance

Richard Burden (Labour) [132615] To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether the Government was represented at the US-led meeting at the White House on 13 March 2018 on the humanitarian crisis in Gaza; and if he will make a statement.

Alistair Burt: Officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Department for International Development and our Embassy in Washington attended this meeting. The UK remains gravely concerned about the humanitarian situation in Gaza. We welcome all practical steps to improve conditions as a matter of urgency.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-14/132615/>

Palestinians: International Assistance

Richard Burden (Labour) [132631] To ask the Secretary of State for International Development, whether her Department supports the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Occupied Palestinian Territories Humanitarian Response Plan.

Alistair Burt: The UK is providing £1.9 million to support the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Gaza urgent funding appeal which was part of the 2017 Occupied Palestinian Territories Humanitarian Response Plan. This is being delivered through the UN Children's Fund and is helping to provide clean water and rehabilitate sanitation facilities to stop the spread of disease, benefitting up to 1 million Gazans. DFID is currently carrying out a Resource Allocation Round to confirm 2018/2019 financial year budgets.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-03-14/132631/>

House of Lords Written Answers

Israeli Settlements

Lord Hylton (Crossbench) [HL6024] To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to make representations to the government of Israel about encroachments into the land of the occupied West Bank, for example around the illegal settlements of Adi Ad and Ahiya, and about the impact on the people of Gaza.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The UK's position on settlements is clear. They are illegal under international law, present an obstacle to peace, and threaten the physical viability of a two-state solution. We are also clear that Israeli outposts in the West Bank, illegal under international law and Israeli law, should be removed entirely. The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa issued a statement on 7 February 2018 strongly condemning the Israeli Government's decision to establish a second new settlement in the West Bank in less than a year, which could involve the retroactive "legalisation" of the outpost of Havat Gilad.

We are not aware of any significant impact on the people of Gaza from the construction of settlements in the occupied West Bank.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-03-05/HL6024/>

Gaza: Egypt

Lord Hylton (Crossbench) [HL6025] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they intend to make to the government of Egypt about permanently reopening the Rafah crossing.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Officials from our Embassy in Cairo make representations about the Rafah Crossing to the Government of Egypt on a regular basis. Officials last discussed this matter with the Egyptian Government in February 2018. We are concerned about the closure of the Rafah crossing and its impact, particularly on urgent medical and other priority cases in Gaza, and continue to call on the Government of Egypt to show maximum flexibility in opening the Rafah Crossing.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-03-05/HL6025/>

Yassin al-Saradih

Baroness Tonge (Non-affiliated) [HL6076] To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations, if any, they have made to the government of Israel in regard to reports that Yassin al-Saradih was shot and subsequently beaten before dying in Jericho.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: While we have not raised this specific case with the Israeli authorities, we are closely following developments. The Israeli Military Police have launched an investigation and we encourage full transparency into the incident concerned.

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Lords/2018-03-05/HL6076/>

UK Parliament Early Day Motion

Richard Burden (Labour) (1069) Residency rights of Palestinians in East Jerusalem – That this House expresses concern that the Israeli Knesset has passed an amendment to the Entry Into Israel Law 1952 which gives the Interior Ministry unrestricted powers to revoke the residency of Palestinian Jerusalemites; condemns any and all violations of international humanitarian law, specifically the forcible transfer and deportation of Palestinians from East Jerusalem; further condemns efforts on the part of the Israeli

Government to solidify a demographic hold over Occupied East Jerusalem; reaffirms the position that under international law East Jerusalem remains occupied and that the final status of the city is to be determined by negotiations; and calls on the Government to take all positive steps and apply all due diplomatic pressure to ensure that Israel adheres to its obligations under international law, which includes the protection of the civilian population of East Jerusalem and throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

<http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2017-19/1069>

Department for International Trade & Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Updated Guidance: Overseas Business Risk - The Occupied Palestinian Territories

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overseas-business-risk-palestinian-territories/overseas-business-risk-the-occupied-palestinian-territories>

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Alistair Burt: Sunday's fatal stabbing in Jerusalem's Old City is awful news. The people in this Holy place deserve peace, not terror. My thoughts are with the family of the victim.

<https://twitter.com/AlistairBurtUK/status/976063397975478273>

European Commission

Hope for Gaza: EU creates broad international coalition to provide drinking water to 2 million people in Gaza

... the EU hosted a pledging conference on the Gaza Central Desalination Plant & Associated Works Project in Brussels. The conference, co-chaired by the EU and the Palestinian Authority, mobilised financial support of €456 million to this biggest ever infrastructure project in the Gaza strip, which will provide a minimum of 55 million m³ of safe and clean drinking water per year to the people in dire need.

Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn said: "This project will meet the most urgent water needs in Gaza, providing drinking water and at the same time contributing to economic growth, environmental sustainability and stability. I'm proud that the EU pledged €70 million for the desalination plant plus €7.1 million for management costs. Today's successful pledging conference takes us a step closer to making a reality of this project and to improve living conditions in Gaza, and remove obstacles to economic development there. Palestinian Prime Minister Hamdallah said: "This conference carries a message of hope to our people in Gaza, stressing that the international community is not neglecting their suffering, but diligently working to design interventions to address the dire water situation in Gaza. The project will contribute to the political stability of the region as water scarcity can have grim repercussions and spark further tensions". ...

To read the full press release see

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-2081_en.htm

United Nations

Gaza requires changed political reality, renewed commitment to avoid total collapse

"The UN and partners will continue to highlight the key concerns and areas for

intervention, but the parties need to make the difficult choices and compromises to achieve a long overdue resolution to this conflict,” said the report compiled by the office of the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. ...

The report notes that Gaza – an occupied Palestinian enclave – continues to present the greatest risk of escalation alongside an acute humanitarian crisis with the potential for a complete breakdown in service delivery.

To properly address the issues facing Gaza, the report suggests:

First, the humanitarian crisis must be addressed to ensure hospitals and health clinics function, essential drugs are available, sewage and water treatment is provided, and the electricity situation is immediately improved.

Second, increased efforts are needed to finalize the reconstruction of physical damages from the 2014 conflict, and simultaneously to revive Gaza’s moribund economy ...

Third, investment in longer-term infrastructure projects ...

The report also stresses the need for a changed political reality on the ground, including the resumption by the Palestinian Authority of its full responsibilities for the people, governance and infrastructure of Gaza.

Hamas, a Palestinian faction, must cease its military build-up, including the construction of tunnels and the firing of rockets towards Israel, while Israel’s closure regime must fundamentally change to allow for the recovery and development of the Strip through movement and access of people and goods.

To read the full press release see

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/03/1005212>

**Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process
Office of the United Nations: Report to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee**

https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/unsco_ahlc_report_-_march_2018.pdf

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

UN rights expert decries desperate state of right to health in Occupied Palestinian Territory

Israel has failed to uphold its obligations under international law to ensure the health and welfare of the Palestinian population under its control, said an independent expert mandated by the United Nations to monitor human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Michael Lynk, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, stated in a report delivered to the Human Rights Council in Geneva that the healthcare system for Palestinians living in Gaza was on the edge of collapse.

“The right to health is one of the most fundamental and widely recognized of human rights, touching upon everything that we do as humans, and its robust promotion is one of the most effective tools available to reduce the scourges of social and economic inequalities, gender disparities, discrimination and poverty,” he said.

“Israel’s occupation of the Palestinian territory – with characteristics such as the expanding settlement enterprise, the annexation of territory, the confiscation of private and public lands, the pillaging of resources, the publicly-stated ambitions for permanent control over all or part of the Territory, as well as the Territory’s fragmentation – has had a highly disruptive impact upon health care and the broader social determinants for health for Palestinians in the occupied territory.”

Lynk noted with great concern increasing delays or denials in exit permits for those seeking needed medical treatment outside of Gaza, concluding that “Israel’s byzantine and opaque exit permit system imposed upon patients who require treatment outside of Gaza is but one element which demonstrates that Israel’s obligations as occupying

power to the residents of Gaza remain far from fulfilled”.

The Special Rapporteur also drew attention to the impact of occupation, and associated violence, uncertainty, and regular violations of human rights, on the mental health of Palestinians, describing a mental health system that is increasingly ill-equipped to provide greatly needed support and resources. ...

The Special Rapporteur recommended that Israel “ensure regular and reliable access, at all times, for all Palestinian patients who require specialized health care outside of their jurisdictions, consistent with genuine Israeli security concerns” and to “comply fully with its obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law with respect to fulfilling the health needs of the protected population”, among other recommendations.

Lynk highlighted other human rights issues, noting that the decision by the United States to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel resulted “in a feeling of hopelessness among Palestinians which cannot be overstated, and it is against the background of 50 years of occupation that this announcement, and current concerns with respect to human rights, must be viewed”

To read the full press release see

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22854&LangID=E>

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967

http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session37/Documents/A_HRC_37_75_EN.docx

Human Rights Council holds interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967

... Israel was not present to take the floor as the concerned country. State of Palestine, speaking as the concerned country, condemned Israel’s lack of cooperation with the Special Rapporteur and relevant United Nations mechanisms. Israel was in contempt of its international obligations and continued its illegal settlement policy. Since United States President Donald Trump’s illegal declaration that Jerusalem was the capital of Israel, Israel had become emboldened in its settlement policy. Israel continued to maintain an illegal, inhumane blockade against Gaza, flouting the human dignity of Palestinians. Israel was seriously violating the right to health of Palestinians, including the mental health of Palestinian children. Barbaric detention of children continued and children were daily targets of beatings and threats. ... In the interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur, speakers condemned the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. In particular, they were deeply concerned about the violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by Israel on the Palestinian children, including their enjoyment of the right to physical and mental health, education and an adequate standard of living and the right to life. They condemned the continued incarceration of hundreds of children, and called upon Israel to lift the blockade on Gaza, to allow the free movement of goods, and to stop the demolition of houses and the building of settlements. They called on the international community not to implement the decision by the United States to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. They also condemned Israel for using deprivation of health and starvation as a means to an end, in flagrant violation of international law. While some condemned the act of imperial arrogance on the part of Israel and its refusal to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur, others questioned the credibility of the Special Rapporteur, stating that he had links to terrorist organizations and was biased against Israel. ...

To read the full press release see

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22850&LangID=E>

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UK Parliament

**** European Union (Withdrawal) Bill**

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/europeanunionwithdrawal.html>

Committee Stage, House of Lords

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-03-19/debates/F578FC44-1C41-4D89-9A17-8A3CBD13EF54/EuropeanUnion\(Withdrawal\)Bill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-03-19/debates/F578FC44-1C41-4D89-9A17-8A3CBD13EF54/EuropeanUnion(Withdrawal)Bill)

and

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-03-19/debates/47210FF1-A5B4-4CC6-895D-8F4C1838316D/EuropeanUnion\(Withdrawal\)Bill](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2018-03-19/debates/47210FF1-A5B4-4CC6-895D-8F4C1838316D/EuropeanUnion(Withdrawal)Bill)

Notice of amendments

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/lbill/2017-2019/0079/18079-IX.pdf>

**** Holocaust (Return of Cultural Objects) (Amendment) Bill**

<https://services.parliament.uk/Bills/2017-19/holocaustreturnofculturalobjectsamendment.html>

Bill as introduced

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/2017-2019/0182/18182.pdf>

Explanatory Notes

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/2017-2019/0182/en/18182en.pdf>

First Reading, House of Commons

[https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2018-03-13/debates/CBE9618C-3363-4465-8081-F06124F9BAFF/Holocaust\(ReturnOfCulturalObjects\)\(Amendment\)#contribution-051F3511-9C5E-4359-B9EE-7163AE0DA286](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2018-03-13/debates/CBE9618C-3363-4465-8081-F06124F9BAFF/Holocaust(ReturnOfCulturalObjects)(Amendment)#contribution-051F3511-9C5E-4359-B9EE-7163AE0DA286)

Scottish Parliament Legislative Consent Motion

<http://www.parliament.scot/SPLCM-S05-15.pdf>

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/marriageact1949amendment.html>

Organ Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2017-19/organdonationdeemedconsent.html>

Scottish Parliament

**** Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Repeal) (Scotland) Bill**

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/105269.aspx>

Stage 2 consideration of amendments, Justice Committee

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11386&i=103492#ScotParlOR>

Bill as amended at Stage 2

[http://www.parliament.scot/Offensive%20Behaviour%20at%20Football%20and%20Threatening%20Communications%20\(Repeal\)%20\(Scotland\)%20Bill/SPBill19AS052018.pdf](http://www.parliament.scot/Offensive%20Behaviour%20at%20Football%20and%20Threatening%20Communications%20(Repeal)%20(Scotland)%20Bill/SPBill19AS052018.pdf)

Stage 3: Notice of amendments

[http://www.parliament.scot/Offensive%20Behaviour%20at%20Football%20and%20Threatening%20Communications%20\(Repeal\)%20\(Scotland\)%20Bill/SPBill19AMLS052018.pdf](http://www.parliament.scot/Offensive%20Behaviour%20at%20Football%20and%20Threatening%20Communications%20(Repeal)%20(Scotland)%20Bill/SPBill19AMLS052018.pdf)

Revised explanatory notes

[http://www.parliament.scot/Offensive%20Behaviour%20at%20Football%20and%20Threatening%20Communications%20\(Repeal\)%20\(Scotland\)%20Bill/SPBill19AENS052018.pdf](http://www.parliament.scot/Offensive%20Behaviour%20at%20Football%20and%20Threatening%20Communications%20(Repeal)%20(Scotland)%20Bill/SPBill19AENS052018.pdf)

Stage 3 consideration of amendments

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11421&i=103785#ScotParlOR>

Stage 3 debate

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11421&i=103786&c=2073933#ScotParlOR>

Vote: Bill passed

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11421&i=103788&c=2074008#ScotParlOR>

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Consultations

** new or updated today

Creating a Parliament for Wales (closing date 6 April 2018)

<http://senedd.assembly.wales/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?ID=292>

**** Integrated Communities Strategy green paper** (closing date 5 June 2018)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/integrated-communities-strategy-green-paper>

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The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (SCoJeC) is Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC029438