

Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

Director's Report **AGM 22 June 2008**

The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities may slumber, but it seldom sleeps! Recent weeks have been frenetic as three of our externally funded projects all reached crucial stages simultaneously, but the fact that those involved were split between Glasgow and Jerusalem actually helped by lengthening the working day! So we completed and edited the text, and then oversaw the design and production, of the new edition of *Scotland's Jews*, which will be launched at the AGM; we devised and produced a new leaflet designed to attract the attention of isolated Jewish people in remote parts of Scotland, and planned the detailed itinerary of the Scottish Multi-Faith Pilgrimage, in which we have a lead role.

These projects between them brought £40 000 to the Council, contributing to overhead costs and significantly raising our public profile. I should like to thank those involved, principally Kenneth Collins, Leah Granat, our designer Jaqueline Speyer, and our new temporary project worker Sharon Mail, for their contributions, which have enabled us to demonstrate our ability to deliver on significant projects, and should help us attract further funding in future.

At the same time, all the day-to-day political activity continued. We have had nothing as significant this year as our very own legislation, but because of the respect we have earned, we know that we were instrumental in heading off changes to fire regulations, water charges, and child protection issues, all of which would have seriously interfered with communal activities. We have also had to make representations on particular Jewish concerns such as shechitah and brit milah, and we have had very positive responses to our overtures about how to minimise the need for post mortems.

We brought the First Minister to Calderwood and to a meeting with a cross-section of the communal leadership; we arranged for the Lord Advocate to visit Giffnock synagogue; and the Communities Minister will launch *Scotland's Jews* after the AGM.

Unfortunately we have also had to raise the issue of antisemitism on a number of occasions, most dramatically to complain to both the *Scotsman* and the *Herald* about the vicious abuse they were hosting on their comment pages. We were very gratified by the support we received from many MSPs, but disappointed by the refusal of either paper even to respond to us, and dismayed by the Kafkaesque reasons the Press Complaints Commission gave for their inaction. However, even that cloud has a silver lining in that the matter is now in the public domain, and Ministers and police are considering how best to act.

Finally, I cannot end without mentioning the unique accolade I received in the New Year's Honours List. I simply cannot regard it as deserved by me alone, and can only see it as well-deserved recognition of the success of the Council in promoting the interests and the welfare of the Jewish Community. There are many who deserve a share of the award, but I hope they will permit me to single out Kenneth Collins, with whom it has been a privilege to work in many capacities over almost as many years, and Leah Granat, without whose commitment and efficiency we would not have attained a fraction of what we have been able to achieve.

Ephraim Borowski
Director