

66 Hanover Street
Edinburgh EH2 1EL

Secretary of State for Scotland
1 Melville Crescent
Edinburgh EH3 7HW

29 June 2020

Dear Secretary of State for Scotland, The Rt Hon Alister Jack MP

Constitution, Rights and Democracy Commission

The Human Rights Consortium Scotland is a network of organisations committed to protecting and promoting human rights. Our members come from all over Scotland, as well as from across civil society. We view the human rights statutory framework as a vital protection for our most disadvantaged individuals and communities, as well as for all of us. We welcome the UK Government's repeated commitment to uphold human rights internationally and the rule of law.

We write in the context of significant public and civil society support for maintaining and strengthening our human rights framework. For example, the Scotland Declaration on Human Rights supported by approx. 200 organisations, calls on 'law and policy makers to take all possible steps to protect our rights and to make Scotland a world leader in both rights protection and implementation'. Over 40% of the Scottish public support human rights, and we know that the more someone knows about our human rights framework, the more that they support it.

The Queen's Speech included the establishment of a Constitution, Rights and Democracy Commission to restore trust in our institutions and in how our democracy works. It has been indicated that this Commission will include looking at issues such as the role of the courts, details of the Human Rights Act 1998, and how our constitution works.

Scotland has particular complexities around the interaction of devolved law and its implementation, with the UK and international human rights framework. Any consideration of the future of human rights in the UK must take full cognisance of the diversity and differences of devolution. Given this, **we are writing to ask that there should be at least one Scotland representative on this Commission who can speak authoritatively on the context, direction and protection of human rights in Scotland.**

Furthermore, we welcome the commitment by the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice Rt Hon Robert Buckland QC, that this Commission will take

evidence from civic society. It is essential that this fully includes evidence from civic society in Scotland and **we ask that you raise the engagement of Scottish civic society with the Lord Chancellor.**

We also request a meeting with you to discuss these areas of concern, and more generally to discuss the protection of human rights in Scotland in the work of this Commission and beyond.

We look forward to hearing from you

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Snowden', written in a cursive style.

Mhairi Snowden

Coordinator, Human Rights Consortium Scotland

cc. Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, Europe and External Affairs, Michael Russell
MSP