

Finance and Public Administration Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

By email: FPA.committee@parliament.scot

10 May 2024

Dear Members of the Committee,

Scotland's Commissioner Landscape: A Strategic Approach

On behalf of the Scottish Human Rights Commission, I was pleased to give evidence on Tuesday 30th April to the Finance and Public Administration Committee's inquiry *Scotland's Commissioner Landscape: A Strategic Approach*.

I would like to take this opportunity to give you further insight into the Commission's work in the period ahead.

In our new [Strategic Plan 2024-28](#) we have detailed our ambition to lead the organisation out into communities; to talk, to listen and find out how well human rights are being realised in Scotland. This will inform our decisions on how we will use our powers and resources over the next four years.

As Scotland's human rights watchdog, our key strategic priorities will be:

- Poverty and human rights
- Human rights in places of detention

Bridgeside House, 99 McDonald Road, Edinburgh, EH7 4NS
0131 297 5750

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- Access to justice for human rights violations
- Groups whose rights are most at risk

In the coming months, we will be publishing reports on these and other issues, including:

- Economic, social and cultural rights in the Highlands and Islands.
- Human rights in Scottish prisons.
- Scotland's progress in ending the deinstitutionalisation of people who have learning disabilities and autism.

We have also set three broad priorities for the period 2024-28:

- To use and extend our powers to make sure there are stronger human rights protections for everyone in Scotland. This means we can hold those responsible to account when things go wrong.
- To engage more people in communities across Scotland in our work, so that everything we do is informed by people's direct experience of human rights issues.
- To monitor and report on how human rights are being experienced in Scotland and play our part in creating a stronger human rights culture.

As we enter the first year of our new Strategic Plan, the Commission is strong, focused and well-governed. We have a robust operational and governance framework in place, working with the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body to ensure full scrutiny and assurance.

We are also pleased to demonstrate our accountability to the Scottish Parliament via annual engagement with the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee and through the presentation of Annual Reports.

In our new Strategic Plan, we have also committed to delivering an annual State of the Nation report to the Scottish Parliament. This will

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provide an overview of our key findings and recommendations of the United Nations and Council of Europe for human rights in Scotland. We would be keen to see this established on a statutory basis.

In the period ahead, we wish to ensure that, as a Commission, we have the powers and duties to do the best job we can in upholding human rights. We would welcome discussion about how we may further evolve to meet some of the calls for new public bodies in Scotland, for example, by developing our mandate to allow stronger enabling powers and an increased number of Members of the Commission.

Whatever the next steps decided by the Scottish Parliament, we remain focused on our core mission as we deliver our work to strengthen accountability for human rights across Scotland.

If you would like more information on any of our work, please contact our Executive Director Jan Savage (jan.savage@scottishhumanrights.com) who will be happy to arrange further discussions, or to provide you with any insight you require.

Yours sincerely,

Claire Methven O'Brien

Member of the Scottish Human Rights Commission

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