

Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP
Leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats

Via email only: Alex.Cole-Hamilton.msp@parliament.scot

17 July 2024

Dear Mr Cole-Hamilton,

Meeting invitation: Scottish Human Rights Commission

Ahead of the new Parliamentary session, the Scottish Human Rights Commission (the Commission) would like to meet with you to discuss Scotland's progress and challenges on human rights.

The Commission is Scotland's human rights watchdog and its independent National Human Rights Institution (NHRI). As Scotland's NHRI, the Commission's vision is a fairer Scotland where human rights are respected and understood, and where there is justice when things go wrong.

In our [Strategic Plan 2024-2028](#), we have committed to focus on four priority areas and will deliver reports to Parliament on these key issues over the next four years:

- The impact of poverty on human rights in Scotland
- Human rights in places of detention
- Access to justice for human rights
- The rights of specially-protected groups.

In the months ahead, the Commission will also engage with the legislative process for the Scottish Government's planned Human Rights Bill. The Bill is widely viewed as promising to extend effective access to remedy for human rights breaches in Scotland and we have written to the First Minister asking for urgent clarification on the Government's proposals and timetable for the Bill. It would be helpful to meet with you to explore the position of your parliamentary colleagues on this proposed legislation and other key developments in Parliament this year.

The Commission would also welcome the opportunity to brief you that, whether via a Human Rights Bill or another route, we believe the statutory mandate of the Commission must now be strengthened. Gaps in our current mandate preclude our supporting individuals, raising legal proceedings and undertaking investigations – all of which undermine the Commission’s ability to strengthen effective human rights accountability in Scotland. We recently [communicated our specific concerns in this area to the Parliament’s Finance and Public Administration Committee](#).

We would welcome a discussion with you and your team on the issues raised above.

To arrange this, we invite your office to contact the Commission’s Executive Director: jan.savage@scottishhumanrights.com to make the necessary arrangements.

Yours sincerely,



Jim Farish

Member of the Commission

On behalf of the Scottish Human Rights Commission