

PARLIAMENTARY BUREAU

REFERRAL OF DRAFT PROPOSAL FOR THE WITCHCRAFT CONVICTIONS (PARDONS) (SCOTLAND) BILL

1. A draft proposal for a Witchcraft Convictions (Pardons) (Scotland) Bill was lodged on 22 June 2022 by Natalie Don MSP.
2. The proposal is for a Bill to pardon all those convicted under the Witchcraft Act 1563.
3. The draft proposal is accompanied by a consultation document which runs from 23 June to 15 September 2022.
4. In terms of Standing Orders (Rule 9.14.5) the Parliamentary Bureau is required to refer the draft proposal to a committee (or committees) within whose remit the subject matters falls.
5. This referral is for information only – there is no expectation that the committee will scrutinise or report on the draft proposal at this stage.
6. The proposal falls within the remits of the following committees.

Committee	Remit and relevance
Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee	<p>To consider and report on the following (and any additional matter added under Rule 6.1.5A)—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • matters relating to equal opportunities and upon the observance of equal opportunities within the Parliament • human rights, including Convention rights (within the meaning of section 1 of the Human Rights Act 1998) and other human rights contained in any international convention, treaty or other international instrument ratified by the United Kingdom • matters relating to civil justice within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans <p>The draft proposal relates to wrongful convictions, torture and executions, which is a human rights issue. The clear majority of those convicted were women, and the equalities element of the remit is also engaged.</p>

Social Justice and Social Security Committee	<p>To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government, excluding matters relating to local government, housing and planning.</p> <p>The draft proposal relates to convictions for witchcraft. The majority of those affected were women and girls.</p> <p>As the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government's remit includes violence against women and girls, the committee's remit is engaged.</p>
--	---

7. The proposal engages the remits of two committees mentioned above. It is considered that the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee has the greater interest in this Member's Bill proposal. As such it is recommended that the Bureau refer the proposal to the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee, for information only.

Recommendation

8. The Bureau is invited to refer the draft proposal on the Witchcraft Conviction (Pardons) (Scotland) Bill to the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee.

Non-Government Bills Unit
June 2022