PEWG Parliamentary Engagement 2026

Dear Friends,

I am writing to provide you an update on the work of the Parliamentary Engagement Working Group in the last year (October 2025-October 2026) which I have covered as your Parliamentary Engagement Officer (PEO).

Sarah Komashko (Sarahk@quaker.org.uk) is now back from her parental leave and I am leaving Quakers on 12 November 2026. Therefore, please direct all correspondence for the PEO to her from now on and contact Sarah if you don't already receive the PEO bi-weekly update and you would like to (*Parliamentary Opportunities and Events)*.

The following update explores how the Scottish election has dominated a lot of PEWG's work this year as we have sought to influence manifestos and build good relationships with new MSPs. We have also continued work across the 2026-2028 discerned advocacy priorities: climate justice, economic justice and peacebuilding.

On a personal note, I wanted to thank all of you for what has been an insightful and enjoyable year for me. It has been wonderful to get to know many of you and learn more about Quakerism. I have learnt a lot from you, I will definitely be taking forward the need to centre truth and integrity in all political engagement.

In friendship,

Lucy le Roux

Parliamentary Engagement Officer (October 2025-November 2026)

Scottish election/Post election planning

A particular highlight for me was coming to address a QiS meeting in February 2026, ahead of the election, to launch the materials developed by PEWG to help Friends engage with candidates and new MSPs. It was especially encouraging to hear afterwards how many of you used the candidate questions at hustings and in meetings with candidates. The MSP greetings cards, were very popular with hundreds being printed and sent to congratulate new MSPs and raise Quaker concerns. These materials remain a useful source of information on how to engage with MSPs and can be found on the Parliamentary Engagement part of the website.

PEWG worked in the early part of the year to influence manifestos including through some of the coalitions we work in including Stop Climate Chaos Scotland (SCCS) and the Scotland International Development Alliance (SIDA). Also, PEWG members sought to attend hustings hosted by a wide range of organisations to ask questions on Quaker concerns.

Since the election, PEWG has worked to develop a strategy for new MSP engagement, the basis of this was my comparison between Quaker priorities and the election manifestos and the Programme for Government.

After a slow start as MSPs took time to set up their offices I am pleased to report that PEWG is building relationships with a good range of new and returning MSPs through engagement by email and in meetings. In the past couple of months, I have met David Green (Lib dems) and Kate Nevens (Scottish Greens), written to Simita Kumar and Stephen Flynn (SNP Government Ministers) and been in email contact with a wide range of MSPs mainly around International Climate Justice.

It is very much a team effort to engage with MSPs; if an MSP has a good engagement with an individual who tells them they are a Quaker; then they are more likely to respond to an email the PEO sends! You don't have to be an expert on a topic; it's about starting a dialogue about something you are passionate about. Please do continue to share with Sarah any correspondence you have with MSPs on the topics that PEWG works on as this helps inform our ongoing advocacy.

Climate Justice

Scottish Government Consultation Responses

The last part of 2025 was dominated for PEWG by drafting a response to the Scottish Government consultation on the draft climate change plan which we did through a truth and integrity lens. I think that this was a really good example of how Quakers have something unique to add to policymaking because there are technologies like Carbon Capture Utilisation and Storage which are not talked about truthfully. This is problematic for so many reasons, including the national plan to achieve net-zero being built on false pretences, and in terms of keeping the public on side as we decarbonise.

PEWG also wrote a response to a consultation on Air Departure Tax/Private Jet Tax drawing on the desire to see fair and equitable mechanisms for addressing climate change.

National/People's Emergency Briefing

Many of you have hosted and attended screenings of the film which has been a great way to help people understand the climate emergency.

In addition to this, some members of PEWG have been engaging with their MSPs to push for a screening at Holyrood. In the end this did not happen in connection to us, but we were pleased to see it, it was well attended by MSPs, and John Swinney was very supportive. My thanks to the many Friends who responded to my call to email your MSPs to ask them to go.

Loss and damage/ International Climate Justice

Through our work with partners including Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, Oxfam, SCIAF and the Scotland International Development Alliance, we influenced the Scottish Government's 2026-31 Programme for Government, securing commitments for an increase to the Climate Justice Fund and support for loss and damage finance.

As chair of the SCCS International Climate Justice Group, I have been regularly engaging with civil servants and MSPs to shape Scotland's approach to COP31 and Scotland's ongoing climate finance. This has proved fruitful; the group managed to secure a debate on International Climate Justice and created a briefing shared with all MSPs.

Economic Justice

Our advocacy on economic justice in the past few years has mainly been linked to climate justice, so it has been good to diversify content through QiS joining the Tax Justice Scotland coalition. This brings together organisations working for a fairer and more equitable

Scotland. Tax Justice Scotland has been a useful source of information as PEWG have drafted Scottish government consultation responses, including the already mentioned air departure tax/private jet tax and one on new high level council tax bands 'mansion tax.'

The coalition has decided to focus primarily on improving the fairness of council tax in the coming year, so PEO had a chance to engage with MSPs at a parliamentary event they ran on this topic in October 2026.

Peacebuilding

Scottish Enterprise

On Scottish Enterprise, we have been doing some joint advocacy with Oxfam and Amnesty International to push for greater transparency on human rights checks of arms companies in Scotland making components being sold to conflicts around the world.

You may recall that there was a Scottish parliament debate in February 2025, and a further announcement in September 2025 by John Swinney that new Scottish Enterprise grants would not be awarded to defence companies linked to Israel. Scottish Enterprise has now completed its review. But they did so privately, and the findings and recommendations have not been made public.

We therefore wrote to Stephen Flynn the Minister for Economy in July 2026 asking for the findings to be made public. We then subsequently had opportunities through meetings organised by the Scotland International Development Alliance to meet with David Green MSP (Lib Dems) and Kate Nevens MSP (Green) and spoke to them about this issue, prepping them both to enable them to put in parliamentary questions and speak in a debate in September 2026 on Boycott, Divest and Sanctions. There was also a piece in the media which Pleasaunce Perry was quoted in.

Eventually, Scottish Enterprise did publish their human rights due diligence procedure in September 2026. It was good that a few things we had asked for are mentioned, such as an annual review and that it is more than self-reporting and broader than arms companies. However, the procedure doesn't allow for any outside scrutiny so there is no improvement in transparency, and it is still not clear which companies have been excluded or where the red lines are. We are therefore now working with Amnesty and Oxfam on next steps of how to respond to this.

Peacebuilding coalition work

Just Peace Coalition

We have worked with other churches to launch the Just Peace Coalition in Scotland. Palestinian Christians have called on the global Church to respond not with silence or despair, but with courage, compassion, and action. The Just Peace Coalition brings together churches and Christian organisations across the UK to respond to that call. You can add your name as an individual and also as a meeting house.

As PEO, I have kept an eye on this work, and I have done some coordinating between QiS/QiB but PEWG will not be involved moving forward unless the coalition work involves advocacy.

Faith and peacebuilding events

A group of faith organisations are holding a series of events on faith and peacebuilding, which has been funded by the Scottish Peace Platform. Quaker's reputation precedes them as the main feedback from the Scottish Peace Platform to the group was to involve Quakers

in the plans. Quakers are therefore involved, I have done some coordinating of our engagement including promoting the events, the next one is focused on the Middle East and features EAPPI, it is on the 24 November, sign up here. The PEO is playing a more active role in the final event scheduled in February 2027 because it is a parliamentary event.

As Sarah mentioned in her 2025 update, the Scottish Peace Platform has now formed but doesn't have an advocacy function so PEWG just tends to promote their events to other Friends in Scotland.

Scottish Churches Parliamentary Officers Forum

We continue to be members of the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Officer's Forum, where we share info with other churches on our parliamentary work. The most useful engagement in the past year has been to discuss how to respond to the rise of the far right and Christian nationalism. This provided Callum Sutherland, from Glasgow meeting, and I the chance to attend a very insightful conference.

Coalition working

Several coalitions that we are part of have been named in this update including Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, Scotland's International Development Alliance and Tax Justice Scotland. These coalitions do take up some of the PEO's time, but engagement is very worthwhile. They provide us with opportunities to meet MSPs, to shape political discourse, to hear about and put the QiS name to shared letters on relevant topics, to build good relationships with others and to attend conferences and other events. They also enable Quakers to be known and approached by other organisations for joint work. Relationships with others including NGOs and MSPs are absolutely critical to effective advocacy. Also, on a personal level it has been an enjoyable part of the job to have had 'colleagues' from other organisations working on similar topics.

PEWG membership

The current members of PEWG are Ed Tyler (Argyll LM), Katie Aspinwall (Ayr LM), Gareth Rae (Central Edinburgh LM), Carol Jennings (South Edinburgh LM)- Deputy Convenor, Neil Barton (Glasgow LM), Lesley Morrison (Tweeddale LM)- Convenor, Tara Smith (Ayrshire LM).

Compiled by Lucy le Roux, PEO, November 2026