

Proposed Right to Food (Scotland) Bill

Introduction

A proposal for a Bill to incorporate the human right to food into Scots Law The consultation runs from 24 June to 15 September 2020. All those wishing to respond to the consultation are strongly encouraged to enter their responses electronically through this survey. This makes collation of responses much simpler and quicker. However, the option also exists of sending in a separate response (in hard copy or by other electronic means such as e-mail), and details of how to do so are included in the member's consultation document. Questions marked with an asterisk (*) require an answer. All responses must include a name and contact details. Names will only be published if you give us permission, and contact details are never published – but we may use them to contact you if there is a query about your response. Please note that you must complete the survey in order for your response to be accepted. If you don't wish to complete the survey in a single session, you can choose "Save and Continue later" at any point. Whilst you have the option to skip particular questions, you must continue to the end of the survey and press "Submit" to have your response fully recorded. Please ensure you have read the consultation document before responding to any of the questions that follow. In particular, you should read the information contained in the document about how your response will be handled. The consultation document is available here: Consultation document Privacy Notice

I confirm that I have read and understood the Privacy Notice attached to this consultation which explains how my personal data will be used

About you

Please choose whether you are responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation. Note: If you choose "individual" and consent to have the response published, it will appear under your own name. If you choose "on behalf of an organisation" and consent to have the response published, it will be published under the organisation's name.

on behalf of an organisation

Which of the following best describes you? (If you are a professional or academic, but not in a subject relevant to the consultation, please choose "Member of the public".)

No Response

Please select the category which best describes your organisation

Third sector (charitable, campaigning, social enterprise, voluntary, non-profit)

Optional: You may wish to explain briefly what the organisation does, its experience and expertise in the subject-matter of the consultation, and how the view expressed in the response was arrived at (e.g. whether it is the view of particular office-holders or has been approved by the membership as a whole).

St Paul's Youth Forum (SPYF) works with young people and our local community to improve the lives of everyone in our community through a wide range of activities around the themes of Eating, Education and Exercise.

Please select the category which best describes your organisation

One of our main projects is 'Blackhill's Growing'. We work with our local community to tackle food poverty in a dignified way through food growing, cooking, sharing and eating. We run a weekly community meal using as much produce grown onsite as possible, a thrice-weekly Veg Barra selling fresh fruit and veg at wholesale prices, a weekly pizza night making fresh and healthy pizzas from scratch in our outdoor wood-fired pizza oven, and manage a community growing space with 3 polytunnels, raised beds, an orchard, a flock of laying hens and several beehives. During Covid-19 we have been delivering emergency food parcels and fresh cooked meals to up to 150 local households.

At SPYF we take a person-led approach, with staff supporting the local community to take control of the projects which are running and facilitating maximum participation in project decision making by local people.

Our response to this consultation has been written by the key staff members responsible for heading up Blackhill's Growing, in consultation with our Advisory Group of local people.

Please choose one of the following:

I am content for this response to be published and attributed to me or my organisation

Please provide your name or the name of your organisation. (Note: the name will not be published if you have asked for the response to be anonymous or "not for publication". Otherwise this is the name that will be published with your response).

St Paul's Youth Forum

Please provide details of a way in which we can contact you if there are queries regarding your response. Email is preferred but you can also provide a postal address or phone number. We will not publish these details.

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Aim and approach

Q1. Which of the following best expresses your view on enshrining the human right to food into Scots law?

Fully supportive

Please explain the reasons for your response.

The government has a duty to make sure that we have a functioning food system i.e. that everyone can afford and enjoy a healthy and sustainable diet, the people producing the food have safe working conditions and receive a fair wage, and food is produced in a way that respects animals and the environment.

The current Covid-19 crisis has highlighted the lack of coordinated planning in our food system, and emphasised the importance of taking a robust holistic approach to tackling its deep-rooted issues. Enshrining the right to food into Scots law would encourage the Scottish Government to prioritise the wellbeing of people & environment in their future decisions around our food system.

With growing social inequality across the country, the Scottish Government has a duty to protect those

Q1. Which of the following best expresses your view on enshrining the human right to food into Scots law?

most vulnerable in our society. Putting the right to food in law will help act as a safety net for these people. Poor diet directly impacts on social inequality: there is overwhelming evidence that children who do not receive adequate food perform worse in school, putting them at a significant disadvantage from an early age. This goes on to entrench a lack of social mobility, with the effects rippling through society for years to come.

Q2. Which of the following best describes your view on the creation of an independent statutory body with responsibility for the right to food?

Fully supportive

Please explain the reasons for your response

There are several key reasons why we believe an independent statutory body should be created, from a diverse range of stakeholders who work within our food system.

Firstly, given the complicated nature of our food system (i.e. it encompasses food insecurity, climate change, public health, biodiversity, workers' rights, animal welfare, access to land, and waste) it is vital that there is an independent body to take responsibility for assessing how this bill will impact on all of these areas, and protecting everyone's right to food.

Secondly, by taking a systems-wide approach, this body will be able to act as a unifier between all the different actors present i.e. parts of Government, individuals and companies, who all have different priorities and goals.

Thirdly, certain actors and aspects tend to be prioritised and a statutory body could help to promote equality between different actors e.g. encourage issues around climate change and workers' rights within food production to be considered as part of the process, rather than just focusing on economic issues.

Finally, we need an independent organisation which is not the Government to review and question the Government's plans, provide guidance, gather evidence, and report on how well the Government is delivering on its duties. It is important that the Government is held to account over its obligations and an independent statutory body is an important part of ensuring this happens.

Q3. What do you think would be the main practical advantages and disadvantages of the proposed Bill?

It is important to enshrine the right to food into Scots law because everyone has the right to be able to eat well as part of a fair, healthy and sustainable food system. but in order to take a proactive approach it is important that a larger actor who is better placed to take a holistic view of food in our country takes responsibility for this.

Advantages

- The people we work with in Blackhill face a number of multiple deprivations. Blackhill is a 'food desert', with the nearest supermarket over a mile away. Access to healthy food is very difficult: around 70% of households within our immediate locale do not have access to a car and face high additional costs in order to access fresh food i.e. high cost of public transport to travel to the supermarket, and then potentially the cost of getting a taxi home with their shopping. As mentioned previously, we see the effects of diet on educational attainment, which has a life-long impact on social mobility. It also effects morbidity and mortality. Putting the right to food in law will encourage the government to address these issues.

- Taking a rights-based approach to our food system empowers citizens and gives them pathways to actively pursue a right to food. This more participatory approach promotes a respect between citizens and government and should help to future-proof our democracy by encouraging engagement.

Disadvantages

Q3. What do you think would be the main practical advantages and disadvantages of the proposed Bill?

- The consultation around this bill has been framed in the fairly narrow terms of 'food insecurity' rather than giving equal consideration to other vital aspects of the right to food, such as maintaining high food standards.

Q4. Which of the following expresses your view of enshrining a right to food into Scots law as a priority in advance of any further Scottish Government legislation on wider human rights?

Fully supportive

Please explain the reasons for your response.

Whilst we welcome a broader package of human rights legislation for Scotland, we are seeing the immediate impacts that a failing food system has on the poorest in our society. Food insecurity is an urgent and specific problem, and therefore should be made a priority and acted upon with the utmost urgency.

Furthermore Covid-19 has exposed the fragility of our food system, as well as worsening many of its challenges. It has also highlighted the importance of a functioning food system to public health over the long term.

Q5. What advantages or disadvantages would there be to establishing a statutory body with responsibility for the right to food?

No Response

Q6. Which of the following best describes your view of placing responsibility for guaranteeing the right to food on the Scottish Government?

Fully supportive

Please explain the reasons for your response.

The Scottish Government is the most appropriately placed actor to be able to guarantee the right to food for the citizens of Scotland.

Charities have been filling the gaps in the welfare system when it comes to growing levels of food poverty. These failings are government failings. They are a direct result of the mismanagement of money across society, with a failure to legislate to ensure a fair and equal distribution of wealth between citizens. In order to take a proactive approach to food insecurity, it is important that a larger actor takes responsibility for legislating on this.

Q7. What impact do you believe bringing the right to food into law would have on:

	Significant impact	Some impact	No impact
(a) Reducing food insecurity	X		
(b) Improving people's health	X		
(c) Workers in the food sector			

Please explain the reasons for your response

A) By clearly stating it is the Government's responsibility to tackle food insecurity the right to food should have a significant impact hopefully pushing for systemic changes in our benefits system to address the

Q7. What impact do you believe bringing the right to food into law would have on:

root causes of food insecurity. Currently we are in a position where charities such as ourselves are having to patch up holes in our benefit and asylum systems, and whilst we are able to get food out to people quickly and effectively it is not in a way that promotes individual choice and dignity, nor do we have the wide reach of statutory services to ensure people aren't falling through the gaps in our delivery. The right to food enshrined in law, alongside an independent statutory body to monitor our governments plans and decisions should be enough to make chronic food insecurity a thing of the past in Scotland.

B) In our community we see first hand the effects of our current food system, which is largely left to the hands of the market, on people's health. Many communities around the country are 'food deserts' with little or no local access to affordable nutritious, healthy food. As these are generally deprived areas car ownership is also low and public transport often poor and expensive, this means in order to purchase healthy affordable food people need to give up several hours of their day and pay bus fare and often (as due to poor access to healthy food we have high morbidity and poor health rates in these communities) a taxi hire back as the only way people can carry their groceries home. This has an enormous impact on people and families health and creates a cycle of poor nutrition and health as it affects the food people can provide their children, often undermining the work done within schools and nurseries to promote healthy eating. A robust food strategy, which prioritised public health in food planning, underpinned by the right to nutritious accessible food could go a long way to resolving this issue and potentially save the NHS and our economy millions by reducing the burden of diet related diseases.

Financial Implications

Q8. Taking account of both costs and potential savings, what financial impact would you expect the proposed Bill to have on:

	Significant increase in cost	Some increase in cost	Broadly cost-neutral	Some reduction in cost	Significant reduction in cost	Unsure
(a) Government and the public sector			X			
(b) Businesses		X				
(c) Individuals				X		

Please explain the reasons for your response

a) Implementing the right to food would definitely lead to an initial increase in public spending and investment, however when you consider the enormous burden of diet-related illness on our NHS and Social Care and our economy (people having to leave the workforce early due to poor health) the initial costs could be recouped in long-term savings, with potential net-gains to Scotland's economy and public purse. This is particularly true when you think of the impact on our developing young people, the impact childhood diet has not only on long term health patterns but also on educational attainment is massive and well documented, by addressing poor diet in our young people we could increase educational attainment leading to a greater skilled workforce bringing in more money to the economy and public purse, whilst also helping to tackle our countries woeful lack of social mobility particularly around access to higher education.

b) When it came to tackling some of the root causes of food insecurity higher wages may mean a slight increase of cost to businesses, similarly addressing issues around the environmental costs of food production would mean businesses would need to invest in changing their structures to lower their environmental impact. However again the long-term benefits of this could easily outstrip this initial investment. There has been much research to suggest that higher wages lead to increased consumer spending on behalf of workers with more cash in pocket, starting a virtuous cycle of business growth and investment. Similarly the cost of moving to greener models of production should pale in comparison to the costs of worst-case scenario environmental degradation and climate change, as we are seeing increasingly with flooding in the UK and the huge costs it has to households, local councils and businesses

Q8. Taking account of both costs and potential savings, what financial impact would you expect the proposed Bill to have on:

affected.

c) Individuals, particularly people at the bottom of our society, should see a reduction in costs from a properly implemented right to food. Firstly, by addressing the root causes of food insecurity people on benefits and in low wage and underemployment should no longer be living constantly on the breadline unable to save up buffer funds to support them in crisis. Secondly better local food planning should ensure that people no longer have to pay additional costs to access affordable nutritious food (such as public transport and taxis) as it should be provided locally.

Q9. Are there ways in which the Bill could achieve its aim more cost-effectively (e.g. by reducing costs or increasing savings)?

Most definitely not. The importance of this bill lies in its long-term implications, by putting the investment, time and political energy into fixing our food system now we should see long term benefits and long term saving that will benefit our economy and public spending for decades to come. If we miss this opportunity and instead try to find low-cost quick fixes to the systematic issues this bill seeks to address - environmental degradation, climate change, poor health as a result of diet, and food poverty and insecurity - they will continue to be the extremely costly long-term burdens that they are currently. We have now seen a decade of austerity and it has done little to boost our national economy or address any of the long-term problems mentioned above, whilst the fragile state it has left our country in has been highlighted in the enormous human and economic damage coronavirus has wreaked upon Britain and Scotland comparative to other countries. If anything this has shown us that we need bold and ambitious approaches to public policy and the right to food is a fantastic example of this.

Equalities

Q10. What overall impact is the proposed Bill likely to have on equality, taking account of the following protected characteristics (under the Equality Act 2010): age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation?

Positive

Please explain the reasons for your response.

It is widely recognised that people within many of the protected characteristics are much more likely to face food poverty and insecurity (e.g. disabled and older people, BAME communities, single mothers, etc) so addressing this issues should have a broadly positive impact on their lives.

Q11. In what ways could any negative impact of the Bill on equality be minimised or avoided?

The most important check that could be put upon the Bill is ensuring that a statutory body is set up to monitor and advise the government's implementation of the Right to Food in Scotland. This body should be representative of as wide a range of stakeholders and experts as possible; food bank users, charities, farmers, businesses, food workers and scientists. It is also important that those with protected characteristics are widely represented in the body to ensure it is promoting equity and equality throughout society.

Sustainability

Q12. Do you consider that the proposed Bill can be delivered sustainably, i.e. without having likely future disproportionate economic, social and/or environmental impacts?

Yes

Please explain the reasons for your response.

Yes if implemented properly this Bill should be sustainable in a number of ways. Firstly it should be promoting sustainable environmental and social practices for businesses addressing and reversing many of the long-term environmental problems we have in Scotland, soil erosion and poor water management, overfishing, low-wage economics, lack of long-term secure emplacement, etc. I also believe that it's long term economic impacts will be sustainable as the initial costs of implementing the Right to Food in Scotland should be recouped in savings made to the NHS and Social Care through lowering the diet related disease burden, savings made to the public purse by reducing the risks of flooding and other environmental risks associated with climate change and poor land management, whilst also gains in taxation due to higher wage earners paying more into the system and the virtuous cycle of economic growth brought about by greater consumer spending via a higher wage economy.

General

Q13. Do you have any other comments or suggestions on the proposal?

I believe that the Right to Food would be based implemented as part of the Good Food Nation Bill as both are seeking to address the long-term systemic issues within our food system and both would massively benefit and be augmented by integration with one another.