

Street sex pests 'should feel the force of new law'

Campaigners urge Scottish ministers to launch a clampdown on wolf-whistling and other sexual harassment in public places

Mark Macaskill

Scottish ministers are being urged to consider legislation to make street harassment of girls and women – such as wolf-whistling, ogling and catcalling – an offence in Scotland.

Girlguiding Scotland, which has more than 50,000 members, said more should be done to prevent “widespread” sexual harassment in public and in schools.

Campaigners point out that on-the-spot fines can be handed out in the UK for dropping a cigarette on the street but not for harassing and intimidating a young girl on her way to school. Last year, the law was changed in France to make street harassment an offence and more than 700 fines have been handed down.

“Our research shows that sexual harassment is a very real problem for girls as they go about their daily lives,” said Carolyn Fox McKay, policy manager at Girlguiding Scotland. “Girls and young women have told us they often feel unsafe in their communities and when using public transport.

“We know other European countries have created a specific offence on street harassment and we would encourage the Scottish government to consider how this might work in Scotland.”

Data compiled by the organisation suggests that a third of women have been a victim of at least one incident of sexual harassment by the time they reach their mid-twenties. A survey of 500 members in Scotland found that 33% of girls and young women aged 12 to 25 had experienced sexual harassment such as sexist comments, jokes, unwanted attention or touching while in public spaces. Almost a fifth (19%) reported that harassment took place on public transport, and 13% of girls and women aged seven to 25 cited bullying and sexual harassment as one of the “worst” aspects of being female.

A campaign south of the border to change the law, Our Streets Now, has won support from celebrities such as the actress Emma Watson, while an online



Girlguiding Scotland found that 33% of females aged 12-25 had been harassed

petition to make street harassment illegal in the UK has attracted over 166,000 signatures. Hundreds of testimonies from girls as young as eight have been shared with the campaign on Instagram.

Sandy Brindley, from Rape Crisis Scotland, said sexual harassment on the street and on public transport is an “everyday reality for many women and girls as young as primary school age”.

“**Girls and young women have told us they often feel unsafe in their communities**”

She added: “We need to send a clear message that this kind of behaviour is not acceptable. The law plays an important role in setting out what kind of behaviour society thinks is unacceptable, and we should be considering whether legislation could make a difference in deterring this type of intrusive and harassing conduct.”

Girlguiding Scotland has been campaigning for compulsory sex and relationships education in schools covering consent, online abuse, gender equality and healthy relationships. “Legislation is only part of the solution,” said McKay. “We need more action to create a real shift in attitudes and cultural change so that we can have a safer and more equal world for girls and women.”

A Scottish government spokesman said: “No one in Scotland should feel unsafe or experience harassment or abuse in public places. Threatening or abusive behaviour is a criminal offence and, working with local authorities, we are delivering the Equally Safe strategy, which has more than 100 commitments to tackle and prevent violence against women and girls.”

WINNING SMILE



Participants in the family mile pictured in Glasgow's George Square yesterday, one of the Super Saturday races at the Bank of Scotland's Great Scottish Run

NEWS IN BRIEF

Charity turns sour on Cadbury link

National Trust members will vote on ending a 12-year partnership with Cadbury, which sponsors its annual Easter Egg hunt, at its annual meeting next month. Some members are concerned by the company's use of palm oil, which they say is helping to drive some animals to extinction.

Steelworks blast victims named

Two men who died in an explosion at a former SSI steelworks in Middlesbrough have been named. Families paid tribute to John Mackay, 49, from Edinburgh, and Tommy Williams, 65, from Warwickshire, who died at the site 10 days ago while working near a gas holder.

Rehab bell tolls for Metallica singer

Metallica have postponed a tour of Australia and New Zealand after vocalist James Hetfield, who has been struggling with addiction “on and off for many years”, had to “re-enter a treatment programme”, the US band said yesterday. All tickets will be refunded.

Two men shot in east London

Two men are in a critical condition after a shooting in east London early yesterday. Armed officers and ambulance crews had found the pair, in their twenties, with gunshot injuries in a residential street in Ilford at just after midnight, Scotland Yard said.

Clwyd, 82, to stand down as Labour MP

The veteran Labour MP Ann Clwyd will stand down at the next general election after 35 years in parliament. Clwyd, 82, was first elected as MP for Cynon Valley in a 1984 by-election and held front-bench posts in opposition, including shadow Welsh secretary. “I will continue to fight for the Labour Party,” she said.

Scottish leaders criticise PM for ‘toxic rhetoric’

Lucy Christie

Senior Scottish figures from across academia, politics and the arts have joined forces to condemn prime minister Boris Johnson for “undermining democracy” and to call for an extension to article 50.

Former defence secretary Lord Robertson of Port Ellen, the historian Sir Tom Devine and actor Brian Cox are among the 22 signatories to an open letter, who all express concern at what they call the political crisis engulfing the country.

The letter condemns the Johnson’s “failure to apologise for his unlawful prorogation of parliament” and “attacks from the government front bench on parliament”.

The figures, who also include former chief medical officer for Scotland Sir Harry Burns, Lord Menzies Campbell and artist Richard Demarco – call for an extension to article 50, a general election and a second referendum. The letter states: “We welcome the Supreme Court’s unanimous judgment defending parliamentary

democracy against an executive acting improperly and thereby potentially avoiding scrutiny. We also condemn attacks from the government front bench at Westminster on parliament itself.”

“Like many others, we are also deeply concerned at the inflammatory and toxic language used by some. We call on Mr Johnson urgently to set an example by ending his, and his colleagues’, populist and inappropriate rhetoric and to act from now on to defend, not undermine, our democratic institutions.”

Food poisoning strikes more Scots

Jason Allardyce

Cases of the most common kind of food poisoning, which can cause long-term and severe health problems for some people, are increasing in Scotland.

About 80% of incidents of campylobacter food poisoning are caused by contaminated poultry, especially chicken.

Food Standards Scotland (FSS) said human cases of campylobacteriosis rose from 5,296 in 2016-17 to 6,006 in 2017-18 and 6,872 in 2018-19 – an increase of nearly 30%. Most people who fall ill

with campylobacter food poisoning recover quickly but it can cause serious problems in children under five and older people.

Symptoms can include vomiting, diarrhoea and severe stomach cramps. In extreme cases it can cause paralysis.

Human infection is often caused by eating or handling raw or undercooked poultry but the bacterium can also be found in red meat, unpasteurised dairy products and untreated water. It is also spread through contact with infected animals, including pets and farm animals.

This month Britain’s top nine supermarket companies published test results which showed that, on average, 3.6% of chickens tested positive for the highest level of campylobacter contamination.

Cases of E. coli O157, which led to 21 Scottish deaths in the world’s worst outbreak in Wishaw in 1996, rose from 163 in 2017/18 to 173 in 2018/19.

Jacqui McElhiney, head of food protection science and surveillance at FSS, said the reasons for the increases were “unclear” and that the agency was working with

other health bodies with responsibility for controlling human illness.

“It is essential that everyone follows good food safety practices” and highlighted the hygiene information given at foodstandards.gov.scot. Consumers are advised not to wash raw chicken and to minimise handling and cross-contamination,” said McElhiney.

The FSS annual report also shows that cases of norovirus, one of Britain’s most common stomach bugs, increased last year from 1,115 to 1,273.

Union call to give dog law more bite

Dog owners in Scotland should automatically face prosecution if their pet bites a human being, according to a union that claims a rise in attacks is “a national crisis”, writes Mark Macaskill.

The Communication Workers Union (CWU), whose members include postal workers and broadband installers, insists an unwritten rule exists in Scotland that means owners are rarely held to account if their dog commits a first-time offence. It believes a “one free bite” policy is “alive and kicking” in Scotland and wants the loophole closed.

The call comes ahead of a parliamentary debate this week on a hard-hitting report by the public audit and post-legislative scrutiny committee

that concluded the Control of Dogs (Scotland) Act 2010 has failed to reduce dog attacks in Scotland and is “not fit for purpose”.

The CWU has written to Ash Denham, the community safety minister, urging her to act. It claims that police and prosecutors deny that a one free bite rule exists, but point to a disparity between dog attacks and prosecutions as evidence.

Evidence presented to MSPs shows that about 4,000 people, including children, are taken to hospital after dog attacks every year, across the health boards of Glasgow and Clyde, Tayside, Grampian, Forth Valley, Ayrshire and Highland.

Yet between 2010 and 17, just 32 owners across

Scotland were convicted under the 2010 act and not one animal was destroyed.

“The interpretations by the courts in Scotland have the effect of allowing at least one free bite by the dog before reasonable apprehension is established,” said Dave Joyce, CWU’s health, safety and environment officer.

“If the dog is passed to a new owner, the dog is allowed another free bite. Our members, and members of the public including children, are suffering horrific injuries at an alarming rate.”

The CWU wants dog licences to be mandatory, meaning that about £8m would be generated from Scotland’s 800,000 dog owners, with the money ring-

fenced for dog control enforcement.

Last December, Jon Diggle, 60, a postman, was savaged by a rottweiler on his round in Kelloholm, Sanquhar, Dumfries and Galloway.

He was taken to hospital and unable to work for three months, after the animal tore a chunk from his left arm. The animal was destroyed and its owner ordered to pay £600 in compensation to Diggle, who said the fine did not reflect the gravity of the attack.

“I still have tissue damage. The owner can’t afford to pay me in full so I get £10 per month. I think that if you want to own an animal that can cause damage, then you need to take responsibility and have insurance.”

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