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Jim McHarg
Grand Master
Grand Orange Lodge of Scotland

[redacted]

24 March 2021

Dear Grand Master – Jim,

It was good to talk on 22 March. I hope that you found the meeting as helpful as I did.

I was appalled to hear about the recent graffiti which appeared on the Irvine Orange Hall mocking the tragic deaths of those killed in the 1971 Ibrox disaster. Graffiti and vandalism are distasteful at the best of times, but this was particularly repugnant. Exploiting tragedy and death which can alarm and distress others is completely unacceptable. I would like to reassure you that we take all instances of graffiti very seriously and fully support Police Scotland to take whatever action is needed to apprehend those responsible.

It is particularly disappointing that this incident appears to be one of series of similar incidents which have led to graffiti appearing on a number of Orange Halls across Scotland. I appreciate how frustrating this must be for you and your members and can assure you that this kind of behaviour has no place in the multi-faith and multicultural Scotland that we aspire to be.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued positive approach to the COVID effort. I can assure you that your voluntary suspension of these events has helped considerably in controlling the spread of the virus and I hope that the many sacrifices that we have all had to make means that we will be able to get back to some level of normality in the near future.

I look forward to our continuing engagement as we move out of restrictions.

HUMZA YOUSAF

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RECORD OF MEETING	
Issue:	Meeting between the Cabinet Secretary for Justice; Grand Orange Lodge of Scotland; and Police Scotland
Date:	Monday 22 March 2021
Time:	12:30
Venue:	Teams Meeting
Participants:	Humza Yousaf, Cabinet Secretary for Justice
	Grand Orange Lodge of Scotland (GOLoS): • Jim McHarg, Grand Master [redacted]
	Police Scotland (PS): [redacted]
	Centre for Good Relations (CfGR): [redacted]
	Scottish Government (SG): [redacted]

Key issues raised/discussed

1. The Grand Master set out key issues for discussion:
 - Vandalism on Orange Halls and a perceived lack of moral support or condemnation from the SG.
 - The formation of a stakeholder group to discuss issues such as hate crime vandalism.
 - Funding to assist with remedial action following damage caused by hate crime attacks to property.
 - The importance of resuming meetings in Orange Halls.
 - Resumption of marches and parades.
 - Correspondence to the SG which was awaiting responses.

Vandalism on Orange Halls

2. The Cabinet Secretary condemned the graffiti on the Orange Hall in Irvine which mocked the 1971 Ibrox disaster where 66 people died.
3. The Cabinet Secretary explained that his strong social media presence meant he was frequently asked to comment on a wide range of issues, and it was not possible to do so.
4. ACC [redacted] confirmed that PS take all hate crime seriously and that he would ensure that the Irvine investigation was considering all angles.

Action: PS will check on how the hate crime graffiti on Irvine Orange Lodge was recorded and acted upon and will get back to the Grand Master.

Action: PS will check that the individual Glasgow incidences to ensure that they have been thoroughly investigated.

Formation of a stakeholder group

5. The Cabinet Secretary was interested to hear the Grand Master's ideas about the formation of a stakeholder group. Further discussion was required to fully explore the options.

Action: SG to consider options for wider discussion.

Funding for remedial action following hate crime attacks to property

6. It was felt that there were a number of difficulties in taking this idea forward, and therefore further consideration was needed to assess whether there was scope for taking this idea forward.

Action: SG to consider options for wider discussion.

Lodge meetings

7. The Grand Master expressed his concern that there was no indicative date of when Lodges can open and have their meetings. As a minority faith group there was discussion about the scope for Orange Halls to be classed along similar lines as places of worship.

Action: SG will consult colleagues leading on places of worship.

Marches and Parades

8. GOLoS had been giving consideration to how the Boyne commemorations could take place through events that were smaller than normal, and which minimised travel. Discussions were underway with Glasgow City Council and PS.

9. It was hoped that outdoor gatherings of some description could take place by 12 July. Also that revised guidance on all restriction levels will be published soon.

Action: SG to ask Jason Leitch to meet with GOLoS to discuss the risks associated with marches and other events.

Action: SG will consult with public health officials to consider whether restrictions on marches remain appropriate.

Correspondence with Scottish Government

10. The Grand Master also highlighted two letters that had been sent to the First Minister about vandalism of Orange Halls and the Northern Ireland Protocol and noted he had not received a reply.

Action: SG will investigate the delay.

Close

11. In conclusion, all agreed that this had been a constructive and informative meeting and emphasised the need for constructive dialogue going forward.

Scottish Government
Note Finalised on 7 April 2021