



**Equality and
Human Rights
Commission**

Dr Hywel Francis MP
Joint Committee on Human Rights
Committee Office
House of Commons
7 Millbank
London SW1P 3JA

Our Ref: OON/NJ/331francis
Date: 21 November 2012

Dear Dr Francis

Many thanks for your letter dated 7 November.

In this letter, you asked for my assurances that I am satisfied with the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill, insofar as it applies to the Commission.

As you will have seen in the Commission's briefings to Parliamentarians on the Bill, on balance, our analysis concludes that the changes proposed are unlikely to have a significant adverse impact on our work. However, we have made clear, in our response to the government's consultation on our reform in 2011, that we oppose any reduction in our remit.

Moving to our specific views on the repeals proposed:

- In relation to clause 3, we agree with Sir Bob Hepple QC that the inclusion in our founding legislation of a unifying principle to bridge equality and human rights is important. However, on balance, the Commission is not of the view that preserving clause 3 will be of great practical significance. We note that Lord Lester of Herne Hill took a similar view on 14 November in the second reading debate on the Bill.

- On removal of the good relations duty (clause 10), again we have previously opposed this. However, subject to a satisfactory outcome of the public sector equality duty review, the requirements of this duty, coupled with the Commission's powers and duties elsewhere in the Act, mean repeal of this clause is unlikely to have a significant adverse effect on our work.
- Finally, in relation to the other functions that the government is removing from our remit, including the helpline, grants, the air travel complaints service, and conciliation and mediation services, we have said these functions play an important role in ensuring people are able to access the protections of equality and human rights law. For the Commission, who provides these functions is less important than ensuring they continue to be provided.

As you correctly state, the Commission very much hopes to build an ever closer working relationship with your Committee. To this end, I would welcome the opportunity to have an early informal discussion with you as proposed in December if diaries permit. At this meeting, as well as the issues identified in your letter, I hope we will have an opportunity to consider the emerging priorities for the Commission's 2013/14 business plan and ways of working together going forward.

We will be in touch shortly to arrange this meeting.

Yours sincerely



Baroness Onora O'Neill
Chair