

To the Scottish Government,

I fully support the libel reform analysis of the welcome progress in reforming libel law in Scotland.

Public interest defence is essential in science and medicine reporting, and requires protections for the individual from excessive corporate power to suppress and harass fair comment and analysis. Look to the cases that led to reform in England and ensure that Scotland ensures parity and equity. The public interest defence is weaker than in the Defamation Act 2013. The public interest defence is new to Scots law, so it's fantastic to see its introduction, but it must be robust.

Corporations must not have the right to sue. Defamation law was designed to protect the rights of individuals: corporate bodies do not have a private life, personal identity or psychological integrity. Corporations also have other means to defend themselves, such as malicious falsehood and laws governing advertising, competition and business practices - they do not need protection under defamation law and any law which allows the mighty to suppress public interest and analysis by virtue of deeper pockets is fundamentally unjust. Libel is a personal matter and we must not allow vast corporations to attack individuals in this manner when other remedies are available to them.

Defamation law in Scotland needs to be as strong - or stronger - than the Defamation Act 2013 and protect the citizens of Scotland. It would be a dereliction of duty to frame a law for Scotland that doesn't meet at least that standard.

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