



Sir Bob Neill MP
Chair of the Justice Select Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

27 July 2022

Dear Sir Bob,

THE BILL OF RIGHTS AND VICTIMS OF JOHN WORBOYS

I am writing in response to a question raised by Laura Farris MP, at my appearance, and that of Victoria Atkins MP, in front of the Justice Select Committee on Tuesday 28 June, regarding whether or not the victims of John Worboys would have had an alternative route for securing justice, had the Human Rights Act (HRA) not been in place.

Firstly, I would like to restate both the Government's, and my own, personal commitment to tackling violence against women and girls. The case of John Worboys was particularly abhorrent, and I wish to express both disgust at these crimes, and also my heartfelt sympathy to the victims. I would also like to thank the Justice Select Committee for its important work; I always welcome scrutiny, and firmly believe that non-defensive transparency is essential to work on addressing violence against women and girls.

The case in question here is *Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis v DSD* from 2018. As you will appreciate, predicting how litigation would have turned out in different circumstances – in this case, the absence of the HRA from the last two decades of our law – is a hypothetical question to which I cannot give a certain answer, as it would not least be subject to the courts' determination. However, I do wish to make it expressly clear that the Bill of Rights will not remove existing protections for victims, and nor will it prevent similar cases to this one from being brought in the future.

Indeed, the Bill of Rights will strengthen our protection of victims by making it more difficult for foreign criminals to use human rights claims to frustrate deportation, and by requiring the courts to give great weight to the importance of reducing the risk to the public from those who are subject to a custodial sentence. I also wish to reiterate that this Government is committed to remaining in the European Convention on Human Rights and protecting all the rights set out in the Convention.

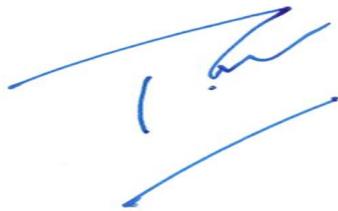
The Victims Bill and accompanying measures will amplify victims' voices in the criminal justice process, improve the support victims receive, and strengthen oversight of criminal justice agencies. They will help victims to have confidence that there is the right support available and that if they report a crime, the criminal justice system will treat them in the way they should rightly expect. I know that the best outcome is ensuring that victims feel that justice has been served in the first instance.

Of course, it is vital that public authorities, including the police, are held to account. If a member of the public is dissatisfied with the service they have received from the police, there is a formal police complaints process, set out in legislation, through which they can raise their concerns. Reforms implemented by the Government in February 2020 increased the independence and accountability of the police complaints system by enhancing the role of Police and Crime Commissioners and through further powers for the Independent Office for Police Conduct. Complaints against the police must be responded to in a way that maintains public confidence, and allows lessons to be learned. Depending on the circumstances, members of the public may also be able to bring claims relying on other courses of action outside of the Bill of Rights framework.

I wish to thank you again for your work scrutinising the Victims Bill, as well as the Bill of Rights. I believe that both Bills will put victims firmly at the heart of the criminal justice system, complementing work across Government to pursue perpetrators, and protect the public.

With best wishes,

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tom Pursglove', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial 'T'.

TOM PURSGLOVE MP