



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Katy Clark MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for West Scotland Region

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Angela Constance MSP  
Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs  
Scottish Government  
St Andrew's House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh  
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Our reference: GPUP-JR

### **Greenock Prison HMIPS Report**

Dear Angela,

I am writing following the publication of HM Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland's (HMIPS) full inspection report of HMP Greenock for the dates 27 February to 3 March. I believe the findings of the report regarding the prison's condition again illustrates why the Scottish Government urgently needs to accelerate plans for a replacement prison in Inverclyde.

As I am sure you are aware, the prison has a superb workforce. HMIPS concludes in its report that staff-prisoner relationships are "excellent", with staff treating prisoners in "a caring and compassionate manner", and that those working at all levels at the prison are taking a "pro-active approach to health and safety". There is no doubt that from prison officers to managers to administrations to health professionals, staff are working collaboratively to develop an excellent prison culture in difficult circumstances. These conclusions only reinforce my own perceptions from visiting the prison earlier this year.

Nevertheless, several of the conclusions in the report are alarming. The HMIPS report finds solutions to ongoing leaks and ventilation issues have "not been secured", with a number of cells still unfit for habitation, and reiterates that HMP Greenock is "in essence a Victorian prison ill-suited to the demands of a modern prison system". In a response to a letter I sent Keith Brown, the former Justice Secretary, in December, he suggested that "given the current significant financial and operational pressures", the Scottish Government had to "prioritise capital investment on areas of highest need". Given the report's conclusions and the comments of Chief Inspector Wendy Sinclair-Gieben, who describes the working conditions at the "appalling" buildings as "almost impossible", would the Scottish Government accept that HMP Greenock has clearly passed the threshold to be considered of "highest need"?

Furthermore, in light of the terrifying warnings Ms Sinclair-Gieben made to the Criminal Justice Committee only a few months ago, in which she suggested that budgetary conditions could result in "human rights breaches" and "Covid-style lockdowns" in cells, it is increasingly



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clear that your predecessor's indication that the SPS will be unable to commence work on any HMP Greenock replacement before 2025/26 is now untenable.

I would therefore urge the Scottish Government to urgently consider revising the projections made in its infrastructure investment programme, ensure there are contingency plans put in place if the prison is regrettably caused to close, and model what impact the transfer of any prisoners to separate institutions would have on the justice system in this scenario.

I believe there is a cross-party consensus on the need to urgently secure a new, modern replacement for HMP Greenock fit for the 21st century, based in Inverclyde with the excellent staff fully retained. As you will know the site is already available. The dramatic physical deterioration at the prison means this development cannot wait any longer. I would be very happy to meet to discuss these issues in more detail.

I look forward your response.

Yours sincerely,

**Katy Clark MSP**  
**West Scotland Region**  
**Scottish Labour Spokesperson for Community Safety**