

Four religious representatives appointed to Hebrides education committee

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The Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, the local authority for the Hebrides, has appointed four religious figures to its education committee, as it is required to do by law.

The National Secular Society has criticised the legal requirement for one third of education committee places to be reserved for religious representatives, and last year the Scottish Secular Society launched a petition calling for an end to unelected church officials being handed seats on education committees.

Local media [reported](#) that the officials appointed are from the Church of Scotland, the Free Church of Scotland, the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church.

The Scottish Secular Society petition said that the appointees are "immune from electoral scrutiny and do not even have to declare their outside interests.

"They sit and vote on these important Committees whether the elected Councillors want them or not, and hold the balance of power on 19 of Scotland's 32 Education Committees."

It said religious figures should be free to contribute to the committees like anybody else, but should not have a privileged and automatic place.

In England local authorities are required to appoint a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE). SACREs are responsible for advising local authorities on RE and Collective Worship. SACREs are dominated by religious appointments. There is no automatic non-religious representatives and where Humanists are appointed to represent the non-religious, they are the only non-voting representatives. The NSS is [campaigning](#) to overhaul this system, and to create a nation entitlement to a 21st century religion and belief education for all.

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