

MSP's fury at sauna licence decision by Edinburgh City Council

RHODA GRANT wants paying for sex to be made illegal in Scotland and questioned how sauna licensing could remain workable when Scotland has a national police force.

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AN MSP last night condemned Edinburgh's decision to continue to license sex-for-sale saunas.

Rhoda Grant, who wants paying for sex to be made illegal in Scotland, said brothels had no place here.

The Highlands and Islands MSP said: "One of the biggest reasons against is the harm it causes women. If you are looking for an equal society you can't allow women to be bought and sold as a commodity."

She also questioned how sauna licensing could remain workable when Scotland has a national police force next year.

Grant said: "Lothian and Borders currently turn a blind eye to the licensing of brothels but the national police force would have to follow a nationwide policy. There can't be little pockets of illegality."

The Labour politician is behind the Criminalisation of the Purchase of Sex (Scotland) Bill which aims to make buying the services of prostitutes illegal.

Consultation for the Bill closes in two weeks.

Her main concern is the women's safety, despite fears closing saunas will make it riskier for prostitutes.

She said: "If you drive it underground so no one can find it, it wouldn't survive."

The Scottish Government have stated they consider prostitution an "act of violence" against women, so Grant considers it ludicrous a local authority are allowed to condone it.

The Government have also acknowledged that there is evidence to suggest



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that trafficked women have been kept in saunas.

She said: "Who brought these women into the country? Can we be sure that women who can't speak English are not being trafficked with no option of a way out?"

"It is not acceptable to have vulnerable women open to exploitation in this way."

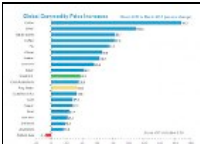
Grant added that the policy of licensing saunas makes Edinburgh an attraction for sex tourism. She said: "That is no good for Edinburgh, its citizens or the women."

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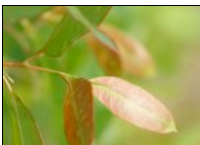
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