

Stay strong in battle against abortionist bigots, says Katie

Former president of University College Dublin Student Union, Katie Ascough, has urged those who suffer unjust discrimination because of their beliefs to "stay strong".

She made her comments at the Ceremony of the Westminster Award for Human Life, Human Rights, and Human Dignity.

As reported in last week's *Universe*, Ms Ascough was awarded the 2018 Westminster Award in recognition of her extraordinary work and achievements in safeguarding the dignity and right to life of human beings.

At the Westminster Award event, representatives of student groups, right-to-life organisations, press, politicians and the general public watched her receive the award from Fiona Bruce MP, chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Pro-Life Group and Patron of Right To Life.

"I am so truly grateful for this Award bestowed on me by Right To Life, and the All-Party Parliamentary Pro-Life Group," said Ms Ascough.

"I accept it not only on behalf of myself, but of all students and right-to-lifers more generally who suffer unjust discrimination because of their beliefs, in the teeth of bigotry and illiberalism from abortion advocates on campus or in wider society.

"I urge such people to stay strong, and to follow the courage of their convictions. It may be difficult, but ultimately, I can assure them, it's absolutely worth it."

Ms Ascough was impeached last year as president of the University College Dublin Student Union for refusing to publish illegal information about abortion in the fresher's magazine.

Lord David Alton was among a host of well-wishers offering their congratulations to Ms Ascough, as he heralded



Pictured from left, Chris Whitehouse, Katie Ascough, Baroness Nuala O'Loan, Fiona Bruce and Lord David Alton

her actions as an "inspiration to us all".

"She is an amazingly brave and courageous young woman, whose refusal to be bullied into doing the opposite of what she believes is an inspiration to us all," he told *The Universe*.

He said she had been pictured in Westminster Hall with prominent pro-lifers at the same location where Sir Thomas More, Speaker of the House of Commons and Lord Chancellor, stood trial for insisting on following his conscience.

Lord Alton also said it was appropriate that she had been pictured with Baroness Nuala O'Loan – "another brave woman...who recently introduced her Conscientious Objection (Medical Activities) Bill to protect women, like the Scottish midwives who were sacked for refusing to carry out abortions," he said.

"Coercion of this kind is a disgrace and we can only be grateful for the leadership and example of women who combine conscience and compassion – and are politically courageous rather than politically correct."

Priest on call gets hospital parking fine

A Catholic priest has branded parking authorities "callous" after he received a parking fine while on an emergency call to a hospital patient.

Fr Paul Fox, parish priest of Our Lady of Ransom, in Rayleigh, told BBC Radio Essex that while he was on a call-out to Southend Hospital he had put a note on his car window informing parking officials that he was "a Catholic priest on emergency call".

However, upon his return, Fr Fox discovered he had received a £40 fine.

"I challenged the fine, and appealed against it. About a week later I got a letter saying my appeal was rejected," Fr Fox said.

"I feel quite angry in a way because you're trying to do God's work and bring God's mercy and love and compassion to people and someone out there decides to fine you."

The priest explained this is the first time this has happened to him.

"I was going to see a parishioner who was quite unwell. I think it's just wrong. It just shows how callous and cold some people can be."

Fr Fox warned priests to be careful when parking in hospitals.

Southend Hospital told BBC Radio Essex they were looking to resolve the matter with Fr Fox.

CCA call to keep EU animal law

A Catholic welfare group has called on all Parliamentarians to ensure current EU legislation protections for animal sentience is enshrined in UK law from day one of Brexit.

Catholic Concern for Animals (CCA) has expressed its concern about any "watering down" of animal welfare legislation following Britain's departure from the European Union, scheduled for March 2019.

"CCA is worried about any negative effects on animal welfare legislation and animal welfare policy and practice when the UK leaves the European Union next year," Chris Fegan, CCA chief executive, told *The Universe*.

"We have been working with colleagues in other animal welfare organisations within the UK to produce documents outlining our jointly agreed positions.

"I am delighted that there is almost

unanimity within UK animal welfare groups, including CCA, on what the situation should look like after March 2019.

"This work is now continuing in trying to make our views known in detail to Environment Secretary of State Mr Gove and the Government."

Mr Fegan said that the animal welfare group shared the concern outlined by many, including senior MPs that the Government "should not under any circumstance water down or even worse remove the current EU position that animals are 'sentient beings'".

He continued: "CCA is party politically neutral and does not involve itself in 'party politics' but we call on all Parliamentarians of all traditions and in both Houses to ensure that the current EU legislation is not only transferred into UK law from 'day one' of Brexit but is en-

shrined in UK law and is not only retained but indeed is improved upon for the sake of all animals."

CCA raised concerns after MPs recently voted down a new clause to put protections for animal sentience into Brexit legislation, despite fears the Government's plans will not come into effect quickly enough.

Green MP Caroline Lucas said her "belt and braces" approach would provide legislative certainty as she warned MPs that plans from Environment Secretary Michael Gove may not be on the statute book before Britain leaves the bloc.

However, the new clause was defeated by 320 votes to 297 last month, a majority of 23.

Mr Gove has since tabled a draft Bill enshrining animal sentience into UK law post-Brexit and introducing jail sentences of up to five years for animal abusers.

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