

[00:00:18.690] - VO

On the Engender, Scotland's feminist policy podcast.

[00:00:28.610] - Amanda Aitken

Hello, and welcome to On the Engender, Scotland's feminist policy podcast with me, Amanda Aitken, and my wonderful co-host, Alys Mumford. Hello.

[00:00:37.450] - Alys Mumford

That's me, hello.

[00:00:38.980] - Amanda Aitken

That's you.

[00:00:40.490] - Alys Mumford

I've also got Daisy on my lap. I don't know if you can hear purring? Probably she's quite close to the microphone.

[00:00:47.510] - Amanda Aitken

I can't -

[00:00:48.460] - Alys Mumford

If you can't hear the cat, that's fine. That's good.

[00:00:50.670] - Amanda Aitken

But I hope on listening back to it I will. I am cat-less in my home. But maybe that's something to look forward to this year. You never know.

[00:00:58.460] - Alys Mumford

Maybe, maybe. New year, new series. So yeah, as we've done for the last couple of years, we thought we'd start the year in a reflective mode, taking on board everything Yoga with Adrienne is telling us, about being thoughtful and mindful. Eilidh's not here to mention Yoga with Adrienne, so someone has to. Yeah, look back at the last year and what's coming up.

[00:01:21.250] - Amanda Aitken

Yeah, and you know as much as we probably want to look forward and forget about 2021, I feel like having a little moment and pausing to look back is important. A lot happened. We were just discussing it was a very long year. And for Engender personally, it was very difficult as we lost our Executive Director, Emma Ritch. And on top of that, a lot of people had their own personal losses and grievings as well. And so it has been, it's a very difficult, long year.

[00:01:50.500] - Alys Mumford

It's been a tough old year, and I think even, you know, yeah everyone, obviously at Engender and wider feminism have been very sort of shocked and saddened by Emma's death. But also everyone is dealing with either their own bereavements, but also just - we're actually still living in a pandemic, which is not the nicest place to be, obviously, people dealing with not being able to see family, particularly if they're abroad. Being forced into unsafe situations regarding work, regarding public health, feeling - you know, certainly we're seeing this week that people down south with long-term conditions or who are vulnerable to viruses are feeling completely shafted by decisions around sort of relaxing public health measures. So, yeah, I think we can't really underestimate the collective trauma that everyone has gone through and is still going through in 2021. So good riddance to it, in a way. But that said -

[00:02:53.470] - Amanda Aitken

Yeah, I feel like we should be saying, you know, yeah, we're recording this towards the end of January as we do this reflection. And yeah, much like how we opened the last year's reflective episode. Like you just said, COVID is still here. Still here. Slightly different, but it is still here. But besides you know, being boosted by the bells in 2021 as they say, what else happened, Alys? Some things that you

remember from 2021?

[00:03:26.430] - Alys Mumford

Oh, I should have prepared for this, shouldn't? I suppose, I mean, for Engender's policy work, it was a good year as things go. I was just reminding myself, looking back at everything we've published and, you know, we always do a roundup of the numbers of reports and things, and we've done so much to highlight the need for women's equality, the need for feminist policy in Scotland. And obviously a lot of that has been around COVID. So a huge amount of policy work has been looking at women's unpaid care, the massive increase in the work done by women. And that is something we've seen real recognition on, not necessarily action yet, but certainly recognition. I think it's pretty common knowledge now that the pandemic has impacted on women, and within that on Black and minoritised women, disabled women more - more than it has on men. So that's definitely been progress and hopefully allows us a really solid, tangible example to be able say this is what happens when you don't think about women at the start of a policy. So in 2022, hopefully we will see that lesson be sort of reflected in policymaking a little bit. How about you, Amanda?

[00:04:52.850] - Amanda Aitken

Within Engender, yeah also, we got to do some really fun podcasts, which we'll talk about in this episode, and have some clips from in this episode, which it was really nice to be able to still continue that and grow that over the past year. And then also in general, just like locally we had in Summer, I mean, COP26 came to Glasgow. That was huge. That had some big spotlight on Glasgow. And with that, there was some powerful moments of protest which would be nice to see, and collective action. And then also with that in mind as well, the Kenmure Street protest as well, and local acts of resistance. That's kind of the -

[00:05:32.170] - Alys Mumford

I was just trying to remember if that was this year, but it was this year, wasn't it?

[00:05:35.969] - Amanda Aitken

It was.

[00:05:36.590] - Alys Mumford

What is time?

[00:05:39.350] - Amanda Aitken

What is time. So there's been some good things. Yeah, like I try and think positively and think about that. And yeah, we got some freedoms afforded to us, so got to do some things and see some friends and family.

[00:05:51.040] - Alys Mumford

100%.

[00:05:52.320] - Amanda Aitken

So that was nice. In terms of podcasts, we covered so many topics in the past year.

[00:05:57.250] - Alys Mumford

I'm not going to give the pandemic too much credit, but people are a lot more familiar with doing stuff online now, which is very helpful for podcast making if you can't all get in the same room. So that's been really nice. Yeah it's given us opportunities to speak to folk we might not otherwise been able to speak to.

[00:06:11.970] - Amanda Aitken

Yeah, definitely. So we ended the last year with an episode on PSED. We had an episode with One Parent Family Scotland and the Young Parent Penalty. And also we had an episode on participation in policymaking.

[00:06:26.250] - Alys Mumford

We did. And just at the tail end of last year, you mentioned the PSED podcast. We got a really nice tweet about it. Thank you to whoever that was, saying they were really pleased that we were covering such perhaps niche feminist policy interests, which obviously we don't think PSED is niche. We think it should be the first thing on everyone's lips in the morning. But yeah, like it's really nice that people are - you know, the podcast gives us the opportunity to delve into these sort of slightly techy policy issues and have some great guests on to talk about them as well, which you'll hear in these clips.

[00:07:19.110] - Kirsty McNeil

Equality duties like this really should be some of the most potentially powerful tools that we have in driving change in people's lives. And there does really need to be a move from producing paperwork to producing an actual difference to people's everyday lives.

[00:07:19.690] - Marie Spalding

The thing about universal credit, certainly for young parents who for the first time, their first experience of any benefit is Universal Credit. Having to wait those five weeks and taking advanced payment means that the very first steps into independent life begin with debt. That debt that comes off over the following -

[00:07:39.590] - Eilidh Dickson

And reduces their income over time as well.

[00:07:41.190] - Marie Spalding

So they're not only disadvantaged by the penalty, they're then disadvantaged again by starting off in debt.

[00:07:49.410] - Ethan Young

Talking about consultation fatigue, we really see that in the disabled people's movement. We've been consulted for years and years, and often we get re-consulted on the same thing and people turn up and say, "we spoke about this five years ago, why are we getting the same questions?" And that's why we really need to see disabled people and underrepresented groups in decision-making positions, where we're creating policy, we're not being consulted, we're actually creating the policy.

[00:08:19.420] - Alys Mumford

I really enjoyed those episodes and getting to hear from folk that work on some of the same things as Engender, but from a slightly different angle. And just yeah, a chance to dig into some of those issues, particularly there looking at participation in decision-making and policymaking, and I'm sure you could tell that that was a long episode for Amanda to have to edit because I just kept being like, oh yeah, what do you think about this? And what do you think about this? [Laughter]. Sorry Amanda. But participation was a bit of a theme of the year because obviously back in May we had the Holyrood elections.

[00:08:55.930] - Amanda Aitken

Yeah, we had the Holyrood elections and with that we did a parliament election special. And following the election we did what do the election results mean for women in Scotland? Which was a very interesting episode.

[00:09:09.120] - Eilidh Dickson

I think we saw in manifesto's quite a lot of consensus actually, about what the issues are when it comes to women's equality. Even if the detail of the responses the parties were proposing was quite different, I think we will see some cross-party action quite quickly on things like women's human rights. Probably the government had committed to that before the election. So I think we'll start to see some conversations about CEDAW incorporation -

[00:09:32.040] - Alys Mumford

Wahoo! Very exciting.

[00:09:34.250] - Eilidh Dickson

Which appeared in three of the five manifestos. And there was also quite a big focus within the manifesto of the parties that were elected on violence against women and misogyny. So I would expect us to see a little bit of action around that quite quickly. Parties were talking a lot about social care and the SNP is obviously committed to a National Care Service. So there might be some interesting discussions between opposition parties about how they want to influence that reform agenda.

[00:09:58.920] - Amanda Aitken

And yes, it was so important to have these episodes to really discuss and delve into the importance of diversity in politics and also in the analysis of that with the media. We did a collab before the election with Gender Equal Media Scotland on gender inequality in the media. But also in the summer, we had a mini series with Pass the Mic, where we quite literally passed the mic.

[00:10:26.100] - Toni Hastrup

We definitely need to stop this narrative of exceptionalism. I mean I love - love, love, love Scotland, but I think it does have a lot of the same problems as anywhere else where race has been an ordering principle, and in that sense, it's not that unique. So a lot of the focus has very much been within the realm of politics, but we need to think about it in all of our other institutions as well. So you know, I spoke earlier about higher education, for example. And of course, we know that this requires investment. It requires, you know, investment in practical terms, time, resources, actual funding to think about what are the implications of these different types of inequality on the sort of country, the sort of nation that we want to build. And of course, that really does mean that we do need to engage with those people who are currently historically excluded, who tend to sit on the margins of society because, you know, this space is important for them, too.

[00:11:32.860] - Alys Mumford

Yeah, I was so excited to listen to those episodes, and so pleased we were able to, as you say, Amanda, pass the mic over. Do go back and listen to those particularly, obviously all of the episodes, but particularly the Pass the Mic handover some really really interesting discussions, and follow the women that featured on that podcast. We put links in all of the show notes we always do to how you can find out more about the speakers and check out the Pass the Mic website, if you are a woman of colour, get yourself registered on there with your interests. And it's just a fantastic resource.

[00:12:08.310] - Amanda Aitken

On top of everything else that we did this year, we also spent a lot of time fangirling over authors that we like. [Laughter].

[00:12:18.010] - Alys Mumford

We did, we did.

[00:12:18.010] - Amanda Aitken

And you emailed them being like, would you like to come on? And they said, yes. And that's what we did, didn't we Alys?

[00:12:29.450] - Alys Mumford

And I went ahhh! And you went, oh, I better read the book!

[00:12:33.170] - Amanda Aitken

Pretty much, yeah.

[00:12:33.480] - Alys Mumford

So we started with Laura Bates talking about incels and misogyny online. And that - I mean I go back to that conversation a lot in my head and Laura's book, because obviously we're still in that conversation. Misogyny is still, rightly, a hot topic. There was just an article this month by Caitlin Logan in The National saying that visits to incel websites have increased by 600% over the past year. So, yeah, a really important conversation to have and definitely a great way to sort of bring, I think, bring that topic to a lot of folk that maybe hadn't realised how prevalent it was in Scotland.

[00:13:16.150] - Laura Bates

Men say they're shocked, policymakers say this is terrible, police say this is an isolated incident and then it all quiets down for a couple of months and the whole cycle starts again. And the only way to break that cycle is to create actual systemic change. Instead of just putting the onus on individual women to be the ones to bear the burden of creating change. Individual women are doing an incredibly brave and courageous thing, which is a vital part of the process, and that is forcing us to acknowledge that the problem exists. But that doesn't mean that they have the power to solve the problem. The people with that power are the people who have actual control over the levers of the police, the judiciary, our schools, and what young people are taught, our universities and the ways in which they treat sexualised violence, and our policies around issues like street harassment and abuse of women in public spaces and how we penalise those.

[00:14:06.290] - Amanda Aitken

Following on from our event with Laura Bates, later in the year we did an event with Leslie Kern on her book, Feminist City. Which -

[00:14:15.510] - Alys Mumford

Yeah, this is really the one where I couldn't control my fan-girling.

[00:14:20.690] - Amanda Aitken

Well, yeah -

[00:14:21.720] - Alys Mumford

Because it's such a good book. If you haven't read Feminist City, read it. Watch the webinar with Leslie, listen to the podcast. You can mute me when I'm just going, oh, Leslie!

[00:14:34.650] - Amanda Aitken

It was really great. It was just so nice to have that event, to then be able to record a podcast with her after. If you've not read Feminist City, then you definitely should, as Alys said, it's a really great book. And yeah, we were really fortunate to get her on all the way from Canada.

[00:14:51.100] - Leslie Kern

If we don't really think seriously about this ongoing, you know, division between, say, public and private and the gendered division of labour, then even our futuristic utopian visions for the future could end up reproducing it. Part of the issue is that under what we, you know, call neoliberalism over here, and the term austerity, more commonly used in the UK and Europe, is that organisations like Kinning Park and women and community members have had to patch the gaps, right? Left in the social safety net from the clawing back of resources and funding from all sorts of areas, whether you know, it's mental health care, immigration services, language training, wellness support, child care, feeding people - just like super super basic human needs, right. We've piled even more and more upon the shoulders of women and other marginalised groups to do this labour and it's exacerbated what has already been this longstanding gender division of labour that allows capitalism to function.

[00:16:05.350] - Alys Mumford

And then finally, we have an event with Eve Livingston, on her book about unions, and another one that just keeps seeming to get more and more relevant. Obviously, we've seen lots of Union action, particularly in your neck of the woods, Amanda in Glasgow this month. And we've also seen conversations that Eve has been righteously weighing in on Twitter around expectations of workload for elected politicians, workers rights in general. So that was a really great event. I loved that. And we had Suki Sangha chairing that, who was also great.

[00:16:40.060] - Eve Livingston

That question about kind of young workers is actually in some ways quite similar to the question about women workers and marginalised workers, because for me it's like, it's about the sort of and I think I used this phrase in the webinar. It's like a leap of faith that unions need to take almost to organise those workers, because if there are people who are in sectors where they haven't had

traditionally any relationship to unions, then that's a big bit of work that the union needs to do to reach them and to talk to them about unions and to win them over and kind of make in rows and organising that workforce. And I think that's exactly the same for young people in precarious work, where - that it's exactly the same issue, right. If you're in like a restaurant, for instance, it's very likely that your restaurant hasn't ever had a union recognition agreement. And a lot of the colleagues that you're working with haven't ever been members of a union either. So you're starting from ten steps back from where people like a lot of the people that were in that webinar today would be, which is that we're kind of switched on and politicised and interested in unions and interested in feminism and interested in these conversations. But the starting point for a lot of people in those workplaces, be they young precarious workers or migrant women or whatever, for a lot of them, it's the conversation that starts a lot further back than that, about what is a union? And why does it matter, and what is my union? Which one should I join? All these kind of questions that people might write off as basic.

[00:18:08.290] - Amanda Aitken

All in all, we had a really busy old year on the old podcast with a variety of guests and yeah, feel so lucky that we got to talk to everybody and do them collaborations and yeah, just a real great year. I'm looking forward to 2022. We had a meeting the other day and we made a big list of things we want to do. But I guess on top of that -

[00:18:28.560] - Alys Mumford

A very big list.

[00:18:29.170] - Amanda Aitken

But I think on top of that, new listeners, it would be great to hear from you. You can tweet us using the hashtag #OnTheEngender and let us know who you would like to see on the podcast in 2022, if there's any particular topics you'd like to have covered. We're always open to suggestions, so yeah.

[00:18:46.890] - Alys Mumford

And in fact, if you think, hey, I'd be a great guest on that podcast, we offer people that appear a fee, obviously, we don't expect women to give their expertise for free. But yeah, let us know, get in touch if there's any authors you would like to fan girl over or you would like to hear us fan girl over we are open to many things. And you know, of course we will also be looking at what's happening in Scotland in 2022. We've got the local elections coming up in May, we've got some really exciting stuff hopefully happening around CEDAW incorporation, we'll be looking at all of the core feminist work around abortion, around Social Security, around women's rights that Engender work on. So yeah, here's to a good 2022 everyone.

[00:19:38.670] - Amanda Aitken

Before our first episode drops for 2022 you should go back and listen to all the episodes from 2021 and also go to the Engender blog to read our recommends from across the year because there's a lot of good things in there.

[00:19:51.930] - Alys Mumford

Yeah, 100% it was fun pulling that together. So yeah if you're new to the podcast we always ask guests for a recommendation and we, over the year, got a really nice range of serious feminist essays and things to read and educate yourselves with, things to listen, things to watch, things to do and Schitt's Creek and Taylor Swift and various other be kind to your mind recommendations. If you haven't made any new year resolutions yet, resolve to get through that list and you'll be doing pretty well.

[00:20:23.560] - Amanda Aitken

Great. Well that's us. That was 2021, onto 2022.

[00:20:26.910] - Alys Mumford

And until next time, stay safe.

[00:20:37.630] - Amanda Aitken

On the Engender was hosted by Alys Mumford and produced by myself, Amanda Aitken. The music featured throughout was written and performed by Bossy Love to find out more about the work of the organisation, head to engender.scot and be sure to click subscribe to this podcast so you don't miss the next episode.