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As you will understand last week's news of a move towards a settlement in Shirley's civil action against the Scottish Ministers was a very welcome piece of news.

After 8 long years we had become jaundiced about the democratic process in the Scottish Parliament as no one in the Executive appeared to be listening.

This latest move appears to disprove this.

While we remain cautious about the eventual outcome there is little doubt that this is an important political decision by yourself and the other Scottish Ministers.

Having been extremely critical in the past I feel it is appropriate to pass on my thanks to you and your colleagues for this positive and humane decision.

I hope that the negotiations towards settlement will proceed quickly and smoothly and that Shirley and our family will at last be given the chance to recover from the trauma of the past 8 years.

In your role as Minister for Justice you must be aware that all is not well within the Scottish Fingerprint Service and I look forward to positive action to right wrongs and ensure that public faith in Scotland's forensic services can be restored.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you feel I can be of assistance in this regard.

Yours sincerely,

**Iain A J McKie**