



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

# PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE Newsletter



November 2014,

Issue 4

## Introduction

This newsletter highlights the current work of the [Public Petitions Committee](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/Index.aspx) and describes its role.

The newsletter is aimed at MSPs, MPs in Scotland and their staff to inform them about the work of the Committee.

We encourage people to submit petitions using the Parliament's online petitions system. The system can be used to host petitions while they gather signatures of support for a set period. It also has a facility for comments and views.

Further information on the system can be found here:

[http://  
www.scottish.parliament.u  
k/GettingInvolved/  
Petitions/Index.aspx](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/Index.aspx)

## Mesh Implants

PE1517 calls for a number of actions from the Scottish Government in relation to the use of Transvaginal Mesh (TVM) implants. The Public Petitions Committee heard from the petitioners on 3 June during in a moving session.

The Committee called the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Well-being to appear at its following meeting on 17 June.

The Cabinet Secretary announced to the Committee that the Scottish Government will, among other things, initiate an independent review into the use of these implants and ask the acting Chief Medical Officer to write to all health boards requesting that they suspend the use of TVM.

The Committee plans to consider PE1517 again before the end of the year.



## Petitions gathering signatures

[PE1535](#) on teaching sustainability and banning plastic bags.

[PE1536](#) on the definition of adultery.

[PE1540](#) on a permanent solution for the A83.



## New petitions

### Evidence sessions

On 28 October, the Committee considered [PE1531](#) on removing charitable status from private schools and heard from the petitioner. It agreed to invite the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator to give evidence at a future meeting.

On 11 November, the Committee will consider [PE1530](#) on guidance on how creationism is presented in schools, [PE1533](#) on abolishing non-residential social care charges for older and disabled people and [PE1534](#) on equal rights of appeal in the planning system.

In the last months, the Committee has considered a number of petitions covering a breadth of subjects.

The Committee's work on [PE1513](#): Equal Rights for Unmarried Fathers has raised some interesting questions. The Committee received submissions with a variety of views; including a suggestion from the Law Society of Scotland that courts to be given the power to order DNA tests to determine paternity.

[PE1522](#) on improving bulk

fuel storage flagged up what the petitioner considered to be an anomaly in the regulations governing the large scale storage of fuel. The response from SEPA on the issue was supportive of the petitioners' view and the Scottish Government has indicated that it will review the regulations.

On 30 September, the Committee considered [PE1523](#) on the Tinkers' Heart of Argyll and [PE1526](#) on statutory sex and relationship education in Scotland for the first time.



## Ongoing petitions

The Committee was pleased to secure time for a debate in the Chamber on 9 October on [PE1458](#) which calls for a judicial register of interests. A range of MSPs welcomed the debate and the opportunity to discuss the issues raised by the petition.

The Committee continued its consideration of [PE1319](#) on youth football in Scotland. The Committee held a round-table evidence session on 20 May 2014 and agreed to ask Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People to review the current registration process of youth footballers.

The Committee has continued to raise issues of school bus safety and signage through its consideration of two longstanding petitions, [PE1098](#) and [PE1223](#). There has been progress on these petitions with the UK Government agreeing in principle to devolve powers to the Scottish Government in relation to school bus safety.

## What can the Committee do?

The Public Petitions Committee is dedicated to considering admissible petitions. New petitions are normally considered at each meeting as well as current petitions. In the case of new petitions the Committee will regularly invite the petitioner to give oral evidence.

Petitions should raise issues which relate to matters within the Scottish Parliament's responsibility, in general these will be devolved matters.

Petitions should be relevant at a national level and not just a personal or local matter. The Committee has no remit to intervene in the operational decisions or actions of public bodies such as local authorities and health boards. While the Committee cannot become directly involved in such matters it can, for example, ask the Scottish Government to review the wider national policies and / or guidance.

The Committee may not adjudicate on personal or commercial interests, and is unable to consider petitions that bear on matters currently being determined by the courts, or which are potentially defamatory. Advice on admissibility can be obtained from the clerks and further guidance accessed at:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/29869.aspx>

The Committee usually meets fortnightly on a Tuesday and papers are issued the preceding Thursday. The next meeting is on Tuesday 11 November.

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