



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE Newsletter

July 2015

Issue 6



Meeting in Inveraray – 7 September 2015

The Public Petitions Committee will hold a meeting in **Inveraray** on Monday 7 September 2015.

At the meeting, the Committee will take evidence from Derek Mackay MSP, Minister for Transport and the Islands on petition [PE1540](#) by Douglas Philand on a permanent solution for the A83.

The petition is calling for the Scottish Government to ensure that the A83 can be kept open when there are landslips. The Committee is looking forward to being in the community and meeting the people most affected by this important national issue in the area most affected.

Prior to the meeting, the Committee will visit the Rest and be Thankful, the highest point of the A83.

The Committee will also take the opportunity to visit the *Tinkers' Heart of Argyll* which has been the topic of

[PE1523](#) by Jess Smith. As a result of the work of the Committee on this petition, Historic Scotland [wrote to the Committee](#) in June confirming that it intends designate the Heart as a monument of national importance.

Details of the meeting in Inveraray will be available on the [Committee's website](#) in late August. In the meantime, more information can be obtained by contacting the Committee directly.



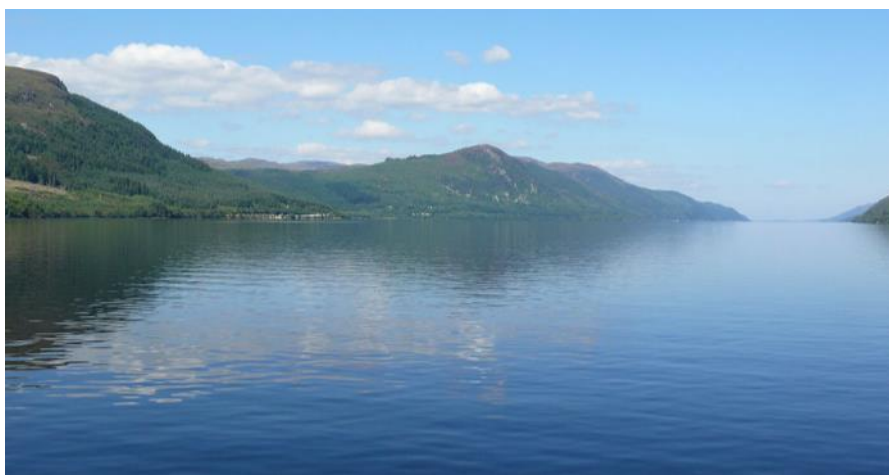
Work of the Public Petitions Committee

The Committee continues to consider petitions covering a wide range of issues. Here are some examples of the Committee's varied work.

Continued Petitions

Petition [PE1319](#) is a longstanding petition by William Smith and Scott Robertson on improving youth football. Last year, the Committee invited Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People to review the current registration process for youth football from a rights perspective. The Commissioner published his [report](#) to the Committee in May 2015 and the Committee took evidence from him on his findings in June.

Petition [PE1537](#) by the Coastal Regeneration Alliance called for the planned building of an energy park on the site of the Cockenzie power station be abandoned because of the lack of local support. In March 2015, Scottish Enterprise announced that the energy park would not now be built on the site and the Committee received assurances that local people would be consulted on any future developments. With those assurances,



es, the Committee agreed in June to close the petition.

New Petitions

The Committee has been considering petition [PE1563](#) by Avonbridge and Standburn Community Council on banning the use of sewage sludge on land. After initially hearing from the petitioners, the Committee took further evidence from Scottish Water and SEPA on 23 June.

Petition [PE1564](#) by James Treasurer, on behalf of the Friends of the Great Glen, urges the Government to designate Loch Ness and the Great Glen as a National Scenic Area, to seek World Heritage status for the area, and to discourage further wind turbine developments

on the site. The petition collected 3,098 signatures and 521 comments from individuals from across the world.

The Committee took evidence from two congenital heart patients, Mary Hemphill and Ian Reid, on petition [PE1566](#). The petitioners are concerned that patients who take warfarin are not given the opportunity to self-test and self-manage their condition.

Petitions Currently Collecting Signatures

Currently, a number of petitions are collecting signatures and comments on the Parliament's website and will be considered by the Committee when that period ends:

[PE1569](#) on the re-introduction of the Scottish Red Ensign;

[PE1570](#) on parental rights to child contact;

[PE1571](#) on food bank funding;

[PE1572](#) on occupational disclosure in trials and sentencing;

[PE1573](#) on statutory teaching of LGBTI+ issues.



FAQs

The Public Petitions Committee's (PPC) Convener, John Pentland MSP, answers your questions on Petitions.

Q: What does the PPC do?

John: The PPC probably has the most straightforward remit – to consider public petitions. Petitions are an ideal opportunity for anyone, particularly members of the public, to get a national policy issue on the agenda of a Parliamentary Committee. The PPC will consider and ask for views on what petitions are asking for and, in doing so, we hold the Scottish Government and others to account. We can't guarantee that this will lead to a change in policy but we can guarantee that petitioners' proposals will be seriously considered.

Q: Who can petition?

John: With the exception of sitting MSPs, anyone.

Q: How many signatures does a petition need?

John: Just one, but often petitioners want to show wider support for their petition by collecting more signatures.

Q: What action should be taken before petitioning the Scottish Parliament?

John: We ask that every petitioner attempts to resolve or progress

their suggestion on their own or through their elected representatives before raising a petition.

Q: What sorts of issues does the Committee consider?

John: Matters of national policy or practice. Petitions can't ask the Parliament to do anything it has no power to do and the PPC won't generally consider operational decisions of independent bodies such as local authorities or health boards. However, we understand that experience of these bodies can generate petitioners' ideas for improving national policy or guidance. The clerks are always happy to help and advise on the criteria for public petitions.

Q: What are the options, other than a public petition, for a local issue to be raised in the Parliament?

John: There are several other ways to raise local issues in the Parliament, for example, asking your MSP to lodge a motion or a parliamentary question.

Q: How do people petition?

John: It's easy – register an account on our online system and draft the proposal there. The clerks will provide feedback and, once completed, the petition will be considered by the Committee at a formal meeting.



Contact details

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Guidance update

The Committee has agreed to update its guidance for petitioners. An updated leaflet will be published this summer.