

PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE Newsletter



March 2014, Issue 3

Introduction

This quarterly newsletter highlights the current work of the Public Petitions Committee and describes its role. It includes information on the online petitions system and how it can be used by petitioners.

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

More information about the Public Petitions Committee is available on our [webpage](#).



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Online petitions system

We encourage people to submit petitions using the Parliament's online petitions system. By creating an account and completing the online template petitioners can submit their proposal to the clerks. 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.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/Index.aspx>

Inquiry into child sexual exploitation

The Committee published its [report](#) into its inquiry into child sexual exploitation (CSE) in Scotland on 14 January. The inquiry followed on from a petition by Barnardo's Scotland ([PE1393](#)).

The report included a number of recommendations, including calling for a clear strategy for CSE in Scotland.

Parliament held a debate on the Committee's report on 28 January and expects a response from the Scottish Government shortly.

Scotland's National Tree

A petition lodged in November 2012 ([PE1457](#)) which called for the Scots Pine to be proclaimed Scotland's National Tree has borne fruit (or pine cones, perhaps). As a result of the work of the Committee, the Scottish Government undertook a consultation on a national tree for Scotland in autumn 2013. Parliament declared the Scots Pine as Scotland's national tree on [11 March 2014](#).

Petitions gathering signatures

The latest petitions currently collecting signatures include:

Inverness Fire Service Control Room by Laura Ross, which seeks a review of the control room's closure ([PE1511](#))

Equal rights for unmarried fathers by Ron Park, which calls for a review of family law in respect of the access to children of unmarried fathers. ([PE1513](#))

Asylum in Scotland to Glasgow University rector Edward Snowden by Mick Napier. ([PE1515](#))

Referenda for Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles by Malcolm Lamont, which seeks additional referenda shortly after the referendum on an independent Scotland asking the people of those island groups to decide on the constitutional future of Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles ([PE1516](#))



New petitions

In the last month, the Committee has considered a number of new petitions.

On **4 March**, the Committee considered:

A petition by Alex Orr and Sophie Pilgrim, on behalf of the Scottish Children's Services Coalition and Kindred, on funding for additional support for learning in Scotland. ([PE1507](#))

On **18 March** the Committee heard from:

Jackie Watt and Jane Plumb, Chief Executive, Group B Strep Support campaign, on awareness of Strep B in pregnancy and infants ([PE1505](#)), and

Sean Clerkin and Iain MacInnes, Secretary, Glasgow against ATOS, on ATOS as a sponsor of the 2014 Commonwealth Games ([PE1508](#))

Petitions under current consideration

The Committee is currently considering a number of petitions including:

Improving youth football in Scotland ([PE1319](#)). The Committee plans to hold a round-table session with stakeholders on this topic in May.

Opt for life, which calls on an opt-out system for organ donation in Scotland ([PE1453](#)). There is due to be a Committee debate on this petition in the Chamber in April.

Golden Eagle as the National Bird of Scotland ([PE1500](#))

Review of A9 speed proposals ([PE1503](#))



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 1 April.

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