Public Petitions Committee

Legacy Paper
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Public Petitions Committee

To consider public petitions addressed to the Parliament in accordance with these Rules and, in particular, to—

a. decide in a case of dispute whether a petition is admissible;

b. decide what action should be taken upon an admissible public petition; and

c. keep under review the operation of the petitions system.

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Introduction

1. It has become established practice for committees to publish a “legacy paper” at the end of each Session. This provides an opportunity to reflect on the experiences of the committee across the Session and to make some recommendations to successor committees to ensure that those experiences can inform the further development of the roles of the committee. It also provides an opportunity to make recommendations to carry over work into the new Session. As petitions that have not been closed do not fall at the end of a Session this is particularly important for the Public Petitions Committee.

The Committee’s work in Session 4

Engagement and innovation

2. At the heart of the Parliament’s engagement strategy during Session 4 was the introduction of Parliament Days. These sought to take the Parliament out into communities around Scotland, allowing people to engage directly with the Parliament and how issues of concern within communities can be addressed by the Parliament.

3. The objectives of Parliament Days very much echoed the ethos of the Public Petitions Committee and we were delighted to contribute to two of the fourteen such events. The Committee played a central role in the second Parliament Day, in the Western Isles in March 2013. It held an informal drop-in session in Stornoway and then a well-attended formal public meeting, taking evidence on a number of local petitions. Issues considered included equitable access to insulin pumps, inter-island transport links and Wi-Fi on CalMac ferries. Similarly, we participated in the very successful Parliament Day in Dumfries in February 2015. In advance of the day, the Committee held workshops and made a short video promoting and explaining the public petitions process and supported the Parliament’s Community Conference.

4. The approach of holding a workshop in advance of a formal committee meeting was replicated in Argyll and Bute when we held a workshop in Oban in August 2015, prior to a fact-finding visit and formal meeting of the Committee in Inveraray in September 2015. The ongoing use of the workshop format is considered further in this report in connection with the review of the petitions process.

5. As part of the 50th sitting of the Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP), the Committee met jointly with the SYP to consider a number of public petitions prepared by members of the SYP. Three new petitions on young people’s hospital wards, a Scottish living wage recognition scheme and a young carers grant were considered. In particular, PE1467 on a Scottish living wage recognition scheme led to the Scottish Government agreeing to fund a pilot accreditation scheme.
6. In recognition of advances in technology, the Parliament launched a new website in this Session. As part of this project a new online petitions facility was also developed and launched. The new facility is easier to use, more integrated with the Parliament’s other systems and processes and provides better security protections. It also enables petitioners to link up more effectively with social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, to publicise their petition and generate signatures and comments if the petitioner wishes to do so.

New approaches to consideration of petitions

7. The Committee’s consideration of most petitions follows the mini-inquiry model of asking questions of the Scottish Government and other bodies through written or oral evidence and, where appropriate, making recommendations for action that should be taken. However, there have been occasions in this Session where a new approach has been taken to consideration of petitions and the way in which petition outcomes are pursued.

8. Following consideration of public petition PE1393 by Barnardo’s Scotland, the Committee undertook an inquiry into tackling child sexual exploitation in Scotland. The Committee took evidence over eight months and published its report in January 2014 containing 28 recommendations. This was the first inquiry to be carried out by the Committee. The Committee’s work informed the development by the Scottish Government of a National Action Plan to Tackle Child Sexual Exploitation.

9. Another example was consideration of PE1463, which seeks changes to thyroid and adrenal testing, diagnosis and treatment. Following an evidence session with the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN) on the petition, the Committee agreed to progress the issues by making a formal application to SIGN requesting that it considered developing a draft guideline on this topic.

10. The Committee recommends to its successor committee that different approaches to consideration of petitions should be continued where appropriate.
Fig 1: Public Petitions Committee – Session 4 in numbers

- 94 Committee meetings
- 387 Number of people who gave evidence
- 251 Petitions considered
- 2265 Written evidence received
- 3 External committee meetings
Engagement with other legislatures

11. The Committee’s work is of interest to legislatures around the world and we have enjoyed being able to meet colleagues from a wide range of countries to share experiences, ambitions and ideas about the purpose and operation of petitions systems. In this Session, the Committee has met with a number of delegations, including—

- The Committee was invited to be represented at a ‘Reform of E-petitions’ seminar hosted by the Hansard Society in partnership with the Backbench Business Committee at Westminster. The purpose of the seminar was to consider the UK Government’s e-petition process and the potential for reform.

- Following an invitation to speak at a public participation conference, the then Convener, David Stewart, travelled to Johannesburg to deliver a presentation on effective petitions systems in legislatures and share the Scottish Parliament’s knowledge and experience of its public petitions system. The conference was attended by over 300 national and international delegates.

- The Committee was pleased to welcome the Joint Committee on Investigations, Oversight and Petitions (IOP) Committee of the Oireachtas. The IOP Committee visited the Scottish Parliament as part of its work to design a new petitions system for the Houses of the Oireachtas.

- The Committee visited the National Assembly for Wales in Cardiff and met with its Petitions Committee to discuss matters of shared interest.

12. In December 2014 members of the Committee visited the European Parliament in Brussels and attended a meeting of the Committee on Petitions. The delegation was led by the then Convener, David Stewart who also addressed the Committee on Petitions. Other members who participated in the visit were David Torrance, Angus MacDonald, Anne McTaggart and John Wilson. This visit also provided opportunities for informal discussions on how the institutions of the EU work, how citizens can affect policy at an EU level and regulation of medical devices at EU level. The last of these discussions was specifically relevant to the Committee’s consideration of PE1517 on polypropylene mesh medical devices.

13. During 2015, delegations from the Parliament of Kenya and the legislatures of North Rhine-Westphalia and Baden-Württemberg visited the Parliament and met with Committee members and officials to discuss the different approaches and criteria that apply to petitions in different jurisdictions and the role of petitions in public engagement.
14. The Committee believes that there is great value to be gained in exchanging views and experiences with other legislatures. These meetings enable the Scottish Parliament’s innovative and open petitions model to be promoted to other legislatures and also allows us to learn from the experiences of others in keeping our petitions process under review.

Membership

15. Changes in the Committee’s membership over the course of the Session are presented below.

16. The Committee considers that continuity of membership is important in enabling consistent scrutiny of petitions over a, sometimes, lengthy period and that this should be taken into account in Session 5.
Review of the petitions process

17. In 2015, the Committee commissioned research on the petitions process to address four areas—

- a review of progress on the commitments made in response to earlier research, published in 2009;
- a comparative assessment of processes and performance indicators with reference to petitions processes in other parliaments;
- an analysis of the socio-economic demographics of petitioners, to better understand the extent of public participation and social inclusiveness; and
- a summary of petitioners’ expectations and experiences of the petitions process, and perceptions of the Scottish Parliament, more generally.

18. The Committee was pleased that the research found people’s experiences of the petitions process to have been positive. The research also identified a number of areas of the process that could be developed and improved.

19. The research was published, along with the Committee’s initial responses, in December 2015. The initial responses were set out under two broad headings: engagement and transparency. The report indicated that our final recommendations on the development of the petitions process would be set out in this legacy paper.

Engagement

Frequency of external meetings

20. The research notes that one of the recommendations of the 2009 review of the petitions process was that the Committee should meet outside Edinburgh with greater frequency.

21. As noted above, the Committee has held three external meetings this session, two of which formed part of the programme of Parliament Days. Each of these meetings has involved consideration of at least one petition brought forward by a local person, or which raises an issue relevant to local circumstances. The Committee considers that this local relevance was an important factor in encouraging people to attend the meeting and engage with the Committee.

22. In advance of these meetings, petitions workshops were held in the area where the Committee was due to meet. The purpose and outcomes of these workshops varied: some were specifically intended to generate new petitions for the Committee to consider at an external meeting while others were more
‘promotional’ and sought to highlight the existence of the petitions process and the role of the Committee.

23. The Committee considers that there is great value in external meetings and recognises that the practice of including local petitions on the agenda has played an important role in attracting audiences and enabling engagement with the Committee’s work. However, the Committee also considers that there would be merit in having external meetings that focus not solely on geographical communities but also take account of communities of interest or where the focus of the meeting is a petition of general public interest.

24. The Committee recommends to its successor committee that any external meetings it undertakes should balance local interest with the potential to take account of other issues, such as communities of interest or meeting in parts of Scotland that are underrepresented in petition terms.

Quality of engagement

25. The research referred to comments received from people, including a petitioner, who attended the Committee’s external meeting in Inveraray on 7 September 2015. These comments indicated an interest not just in attending and observing the Committee’s meeting, but in participating and contributing to the meeting. The Committee recognises the importance of a participative element to external meetings and the need for the timing, location and format of external meetings to enable that active participation.

26. To deliver these opportunities, the Committee recommends that its successor committee considers the following issues in planning external meetings—

- holding meetings at times of the day that are more likely to enable working people to attend;
- holding a Q&A session prior to an evidence session and using the comments made to inform the questioning of witnesses, or
- holding roundtable evidence sessions at which people are able to make comments on the record.

Use of social media

27. The primary social media channel used by committees of the Parliament is Twitter. The Committee’s Twitter account started in January 2013 and now has 785 followers. Twitter is used to provide information on the consideration of, and decisions about, petitions and other Committee activities. The research compared the activities of all committee Twitter accounts. However, the metrics used focus
on engagement with information that is pushed out, rather than on measuring two-
way communication.

28. We asked the Committee clerks to try different options to develop engagement via
social media, including greater tagging of petitioners and the use of hashtags to
connect with existing audiences with an interest in a particular subject.

29. We recommend that our successor committee continues to pursue
opportunities for enhancing its use of Twitter and that an evaluation takes
place at the end of the first year of Session 5.

30. The Committee also recommends that our successor committee should
consider whether to use other social media channels, such as Facebook
and YouTube, to promote the petitions process in general or to highlight and
seek views on particular petitions.

31. However, in making this recommendation we also observe that care should be
taken not to focus efforts too narrowly on new media for reasons that are
discussed below.

Petitioner diversity

32. One of the findings of the research was that the demographic profile of petitioners
has not altered to any great degree since the first research on the petitions
process was published in 2006. Actions have been taken by the Committee since
that research to focus on targeting specific groups, such as younger people.
However, it appears that these actions have not resulted in any overall shift in the
profile of petitioners.

33. To try and understand why certain demographics are underrepresented, the
Committee held an engagement event that focused on asking people for their
views about the system and whether it presents, or is seen to present, a barrier to
their participation. The intention was that the outcomes of the event would be used
to inform this legacy paper

34. The event was held in Dundee in February 2016. Participants at the workshop
represented a variety of organisations and interests such as residents’
associations, advocacy groups, youth groups and service users.

35. The key finding that arose from the discussions with participants is that, simply,
the greatest barrier to participation is a lack of awareness of the petitions process.

36. Participants were asked about where they would look to find out about the
petitions process, including what media sources they used. The local evening
paper was identified as being the main source of written news while television was
also a good source of information for many and both nightly news programmes
and weekend political magazine programmes were mentioned. However, there
was much less engagement reported with current affairs programmes on radio. For example, only one participant indicated that they listened to Good Morning Scotland. Places where people were likely to visit, such as community centres and libraries, were also suggested as locations where some form of advertising or promotion of the petitions process would increase awareness.

37. The use of new media was discussed and a divide in the use of social media between age groups was clear. Younger people indicated that they would be more likely to look to social media as a source of information while older people indicated that they were less likely to use these channels.

38. A suggestion was made that successes of the Committee should be promoted more widely both on social media and in local media where there is a local interest to raise awareness. The Committee should consider how it presents news stories and the news outlets it seeks to engage with to ensure best impact within its target groups. The Committee should also explore geographically targeted social media posts where there has been a success with a particular local focus.

39. Another way to raise awareness of the petitions system that was discussed was the use of existing structures and networks. One participant illustrated this by saying that now they have gained knowledge of the petitions system, they will discuss it with other members of the organisation they are involved with. Another participant suggested that schools should be a focus of engagement, for example by engaging with modern studies teachers.

40. The Committee recommends that its successor committee considers these suggestions in planning future work on promoting and engaging people with the petitions process and the opportunities it provides to raise issues directly with the Parliament.

41. We suggest that the number of workshops, such as the event in Dundee or those held prior to our external meetings, could be increased and that a strategic approach is taken to target particular groups/geographical areas that are known to be underrepresented among petitioners. This could be done either directly or through relevant civic organisations and charities, in line with the suggestion made in Dundee. Ways to capture the data that would allow the Committee to target underrepresented communities are considered in the ‘Transparency’ section below.

42. The Committee also recommends that other avenues of promoting or advertising the petitions process such as those highlighted by participants in the Dundee workshop should be explored. In addition, we suggest that opportunities to promote the process within other information sources, for example, in members’ newsletters to constituents or other Parliamentary publications. We also recommend that our successor committee seeks to promote the petitions process through its own newsletter.
Transparency

Petition proposals

43. The question of transparency around proposals that are received and do not go on to be lodged as petitions was also commented upon in the research, which includes an analysis of petitions proposals in Session 4. This analysis shows that the percentage of proposals that do not go on to be lodged as petitions is similar to that in other jurisdictions. However, to date the Parliament's petitions system has not routinely captured statistical information in a way that would allow such analysis to be available as a matter of routine.

44. Both the National Assembly for Wales and the UK Parliament publish information about proposals that are received but do not go on to be lodged as petitions. The information that is published includes the title of the proposal, the summary of what the proposal calls for and the reasons why it has not been lodged as a petition.

45. The Committee recommends that the Session 5 Public Petitions Committee establishes a system for recording and publishing information about proposals that do not go on to be lodged as petitions. The information that should be published is the title and summary of the petition and the reason for the proposal not being lodged. We consider that publication of this information within the annual report will assist in ensuring there is greater transparency in this area.

Data

46. Identifying people who are underrepresented among petitioners requires data to be captured in a way that is readily usable. While some data about petitioners, primarily to do with location, is routinely captured in the petitions system, other demographic information has been captured only in specific pieces of work, such as the recent research.

47. We consider that relevant demographic information should be sought from petitioners on an ongoing basis. In the first instance, we recommend that a survey system (suitable for both online and hard copy petitions) could be used to request demographic data; that any such system should enable differentiation between people submitting proposals that go on to be lodged and people submitting proposals that do not and that this demographic data should be captured in a way that allows respondents to remain anonymous.
Consideration of petitions

48. While the research found that all aspects of the petitions process were regarded positively by petitioners, two elements were regarded as less satisfactory than others: consideration of petitions by the Committee and the opportunity to present additional oral evidence.

49. The Committee has placed a great deal of importance on the views of petitioners throughout its consideration of petitions and, whenever information is sought from the Scottish Government or other bodies, petitioners are given the opportunity to submit written evidence that addresses that information and to request further actions that the Committee could take.

50. The Committee has also considered requests from petitioners to give additional oral evidence. However, the opportunity to give additional evidence was always balanced against the opportunity for the Committee to hear from petitioners on the first occasion that a petition was considered.

51. However, we have reflected on the ways in which consideration of petitions, and the information taken into account in taking decisions on petitions, can be clearly communicated to assist petitioners and others with an interest in the petitions system to understand how decisions are reached.

52. To that end we recommend that our successor committee considers new ways of presenting the decisions and outcomes of petition consideration. This could include presenting information more clearly on the webpage for each petition, publishing a summary of the Committee's consideration of a petition or publishing a formal report.

Petitions in Session 5

Petitions carried forward to Session 5

53. Of the 251 petitions considered by the Committee in this Session, 24 remain open for consideration by the Session 5 Public Petitions Committee. In all instances these petitions remain open because, in the Committee’s view, there is work still to be done. Annexe A to this report provides details of all the petitions that are carried forward, along with suggestions for next steps that we would invite our successor committee to consider.

54. In addition, we followed practice in previous Sessions and set a cut-off date after which we have not considered new petitions. As a result of this there are six petitions which have been or will be lodged prior to dissolution but which have not yet been considered by the Committee.
Implementing the petition outcomes

55. Aside from the petitions that are carried over, the Committee also suggests that our successor committee may wish to consider exploring the possibility of carrying out what might be termed post-closure scrutiny of petitions. The purpose of this type of work would be to look at the longer-term outcomes of those petitions that have been closed on the basis that a successful outcome has been achieved. This work would be broadly analogous to the post-legislative scrutiny that may be undertaken by other committees.

56. There are a number of examples where a petition has been closed following a commitment by the Scottish Government or other bodies to undertake work to implement the outcome that a petitioner has sought. However, no work has been done to look into how those undertakings have been taken forward and changes implemented. Some examples of petitions which may be considered for this type of scrutiny are PE1473 which called for WiFi to be provided on all CalMac ferries and PE1393 which was the basis for the Committee’s inquiry into child sexual exploitation.

57. Understanding about how petition outcomes are implemented could also offer the opportunity to determine whether there are lessons to learn about the stage at which petitions are closed or what information should be requested about how implementation will be taken forward. For example, this could include lessons about whether there is value in clarifying a timeframe for implementation and making sure that this information is communicated clearly to the petitioner and other stakeholders.

58. Before deciding whether or not to undertake this work, there are a number of issues that would have to be addressed. These include the application of the Committee’s remit, the possible involvement of previous petitioners, the impact on consideration of new and current petitions and how the Committee could respond in the event that implementation of actions has not progressed. These are all issues that are matters for our successor committee to take into account. However, for the purposes of clarity, in making this suggestion the Committee is not proposing that an expectation of post-closure scrutiny of all petitions be established, or that a new or additional mechanism to re-open closed petitions be created. Existing rules enable petitions to be lodged in the same or similar terms after they have been closed, subject to certain requirements. We consider that these rules provide sufficient opportunity for people to re-introduce petitions should they wish to do so in light of any post-closure scrutiny.

59. The Committee suggests that the Session 5 Committee gives consideration to the issues raised above and, subject to those issues being resolved, considers carrying out a pilot of post-closure scrutiny of petitions.
Annexe A: Petitions carried forward to Session 5

PE1223 on school bus safety

Petition by Ron Beaty calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to take all appropriate action, whether through amending guidance, contracts, agreements or legislation, to require local authorities to install proper safety signage and lights on school buses, to be used only when school children are on the bus when necessary, and make overtaking a stationary school bus a criminal offence.

**Recommendation:** We invite the Session 5 Public Petitions Committee to consider this petition in light of the fact that, in response to the findings from Glasgow City Council’s pilot programme, Transport Scotland is considering what further steps could improve and standardise the display of the school bus sign in Scotland. Transport Scotland anticipates it will be able to report back on this in summer 2016.

PE1319 on improving youth football in Scotland

Petition by William Robertson and Scott Robertson calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to investigate the (1) legal status and appropriateness of professional SFA clubs entering into contracts with children under 16 years; (2) audit process and accountability of all public funds distributed by the Scottish Football Association to its member clubs; (3) social, educational and psychological affects and legality of SFA member clubs prohibiting such children from participating in extra curricular activity; and (4) appropriateness of ‘compensation’ payments between SFA member clubs for the transfer of young players under the age of 16 years; and to (5) increase the educational target from 2 hours curricular physical activity to four hours per week; and (6) develop a long-term plan to provide quality artificial surfaces for training and playing football at all ages across all regions.

**Recommendation:** We invite the Session 5 Public Petitions Committee to consider this petition further. We have written to the Scottish Government to seek its views on the call from Children and Young People’s Commissioner Scotland to consider how the issues raised can be dealt with through external regulation. We recommend that the response received should be taken into account in deciding what further action to take on this petition.
PE1408 on updating pernicious anaemia/Vitamin B12 deficiency

Petition by Andrea MacArthur calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to review and overhaul the current out-dated and ineffective method of diagnosing and treating Pernicious Anaemia/VitaminB12 Deficiency.

**Recommendation:** We invite the Session 5 Public Petitions Committee to consider this petition in light of the fact the Scottish Haematology Society has developed draft guidance for general practitioners on the diagnosis and treatment of B12 deficiency. The Session 5 Public Petitions Committee may wish to explore with the Scottish Government the further clarification requested by the petitioner as to how the guidance will address the benefits and the timescales in which patients should be receiving regular injections.

PE1458 on a register of interests for members of Scotland’s judiciary

Petition by Peter Cherbi calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to create a Register of Pecuniary Interests of Judges Bill (as is currently being considered in New Zealand’s Parliament) or amend present legislation to require all members of the Judiciary in Scotland to submit their interests & hospitality received to a publicly available Register of Interests.

**Recommendation:** We invite the Session 5 Public Petitions Committee to consider this petition further. We have written to Professor Alan Paterson to ask for his views which we hope will be available to inform the Session 5 Public Petitions Committee’s consideration.

PE1463 on effective thyroid and adrenal testing, diagnosis and treatment

Petition by Sandra Whyte, Marian Dyer and Lorraine Cleaver calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to take action to ensure GPs and endocrinologists are able to accurately diagnose thyroid and adrenal disorders and provide the most appropriate treatment.

**Recommendation:** We invite the Session 5 Public Petitions Committee to consider the petition in light of Thyroid UK’s recent patient experience survey conducted as part of the Scottish Government’s listening exercise, including what action the Scottish Government is taking to obtain the Scottish figures from the survey and any other action it is taking to evaluate the results of the listening exercise. The Session 5 Public Petitions Committee is also invited to consider the petitioner’s suggestion of inviting oral evidence from Dr Midgley.
PE1477 on gender neutral Human Pappilomavirus vaccination

Petition by Jamie Rae, on behalf of the Throat Cancer Foundation, calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to extend the current Human Papillomavirus (HPV) immunisation programme in Scotland to include boys.

**Recommendation:** We have written to the Scottish Government asking whether it will implement a gender-neutral HPV vaccine programme prior to the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation making a recommendation on such a programme. We invite the Session 5 Public Petitions Committee to consider this petition in light of that response.

PE1480 on Alzheimer’s and dementia awareness / PE1533 on abolition of non-residential social care charges for older and disabled people

Petition by Amanda Kopel, on behalf of the Frank Kopel Alzheimer's Awareness Campaign, calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to raise awareness of the daily issues suffered by people with Alzheimer’s and dementia and to ensure that free personal care is made available for all sufferers of this illness regardless of age.

Petition by Jeff Adamson, on behalf of Scotland Against the Care Tax, calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to abolish all local authority charges for non-residential care services as under Part 1, Paragraph 1, Subsection (4) of the Community Care and Health (Scotland) Act 2002.

**Recommendation:** We invite the Session 5 Public Petitions Committee to consider these petitions in light of the Scottish Government’s commitment and on-going work to review fairness in social care charging.

PE1517 on Polypropylene Mesh Medical Devices

Petition by Elaine Holmes and Olive McIlroy, on behalf of Scottish Mesh Survivors - "Hear Our Voice" campaign, calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to:

1. Suspend use of polypropylene Transvaginal Mesh (TVM) procedures;
2. Initiate a Public Inquiry and/or comprehensive independent research to evaluate the safety of mesh devices using all evidence available, including that from across the world;
3. Introduce mandatory reporting of all adverse incidents by health professionals;
4. Set up a Scottish Transvaginal Mesh implant register with view to linking this up with national and international registers;
5. Introduce fully Informed Consent with uniformity throughout Scotland’s Health Boards; and

6. Write to the MHRA and ask that they reclassify TVM devices to heightened alert status to reflect ongoing concerns worldwide.

**Recommendation:** In 2014, the Scottish Government agreed to place a moratorium on mesh implant procedures and established an *Independent Review of Use, Safety and Efficacy of Transvaginal Mesh Implants in the Treatment of Stress Urinary Incontinence and Pelvic Organ Prolapse in Women.* The Independent Review published an interim report in October 2015 and we understand that a final report will be published later in 2016. We invite the Session 5 Public Petitions Committee to consider the petition in light of the final report of the Independent Review.

**PE1540 on a permanent solution for the A83**

Petition by Douglas Philand calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ensure that a permanent solution for the A83 at Rest and be thankful ensuring the vital lifeline route is not closed because of landslides.

**Recommendation:** We invite the Session 5 Public Petitions Committee to consider the petition on the basis of the concerns that have been raised in submissions about the impacts of closure of the A83.

**PE1545 on residential care provision for the severely learning disabled**

Petition by Ann Maxwell, on behalf of the Muir Maxwell Trust, calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to recognise residential care as a way severely learning disabled children, young people and adults can lead happy and fulfilled lives and provide the resources to local authorities to establish residential care options for families in Scotland.

**Recommendation:** We invite the Session 5 Public Petitions Committee to consider this petition in light of the further discussions that are expected to take place between the petitioner and the Scottish Government on delivery approaches which support individuals with complex needs.
PE1548 on national guidance on restraint and seclusion in schools

Petition by Beth Morrison calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to:

Introduce National Guidance on the use of restraint and seclusion in all schools; this guidance should support the principles of:

- Last resort - where it is deemed necessary, restraint should be the minimum required to deal with the agreed risk, for the minimum amount of time
- Appropriate supervision of the child at all times, including during “time out” or seclusion.
- Reducing the use of solitary exclusion and limiting the time it is used for (e.g. maximum time limits)
- No use of restraints that are cruel, humiliating, painful and unnecessary or not in line with trained techniques.
- Accountability of teaching and support staff for their actions; this should include recording every incident leading to the use of seclusion or restraint and monitoring of this by the local authority.
- Regular training for staff in how to avoid the use of restraint
- Where restraint is unavoidable training in appropriate restraint techniques by British Institute of Learning Disability accredited providers and no use of restraint by untrained staff.

2. Appoint a specific agency (either Education Scotland or possibly the Care Inspectorate) to monitor the support and care given in non-educational areas including the evaluation of the use of restraint and seclusion of children with special needs in local authority, voluntary sector or private special schools.

**Recommendation:** While the petitioner refers to the use of restraint and seclusion in all schools, her focus has been on children with severe learning disabilities. The Scottish Government has provided the Committee with draft guidance on this practice and we have agreed to seek the views of the Children and Young People’s Commissioner Scotland on the draft guidance. We invite the Session 5 Public Petitions Committee to consider this petition in light of the response from the Commissioner.

PE1551 on mandatory reporting of child abuse

Petition by Scott Pattinson calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to introduce legislation that makes it a criminal offence to fail to report child abuse.
**Recommendation:** We invite the Session 5 Public Petitions Committee to consider this petition in light of the UK Government’s consultation on mandatory reporting of child abuse, which is due to take place in 2016. The Committee has asked the Scottish Government to provide an update on its position on mandatory reporting once further details of the UK Government’s consultation are available.

**PE1563 on sewage sludge spreading**

Petition by Doreen Goldie, on behalf of Avonbridge and Standburn Community Council, calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ban the use of sewage sludge on land and to look for alternative acceptable methods of disposal as adopted in other European countries.

**Recommendation:** The Committee sought the views of the petitioners on the Scottish Government’s Review of the Storage and Spreading of Sewage Sludge on Land in Scotland (The Sludge Review): Final Recommendations. The petitioners raised a number of questions regarding the recommendations and the Committee agreed to put those questions to the Scottish Government. We invite the Session 5 Public Petitions Committee to consider this petition in light of the response from the Scottish Government.

**PE1568 on Funding, access and promotion of the NHS Centre for Integrative Care**

Petition by Catherine Hughes calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ensure that Scotland-wide access to the NHS Centre of Integrative Care (NHS CIC) is restored by providing national funding for a specialist national resource for chronic conditions, to uphold NHS patient choice and cease the current postcode lottery by removing barriers to patient access and prevent institutional discrimination by helping to promote the benefits of this care pathway for patients with long-term conditions.

**Recommendation:** We invite the Session 5 Public Petitions Committee to consider this petition in light of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde’s review of the services provided at the Centre for Integrative Care. We would also attention to the evidence the Committee received in relation to the weight given to patients’ views when coming to decisions on whether to cease referrals to the Centre for Integrative Care. We also suggest that greater clarity should be sought from the Scottish Government on whether and how plans for the proposed national chronic pain centre will affect the Centre for Integrative Care.
PE1571 on Food Bank Funding

Petition by John Beattie calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to provide direct funding to food banks to ensure that demand for their services can be fully met.

**Recommendation:** We invite the Session 5 Public Petitions Committee to consider this petition in light of the Scottish Government’s Social Justice Action Plan, which is due to be published shortly before dissolution. We would suggest that future action on this petition could include referring it to the relevant subject committee in Session 5.

PE1577 on Adult Cerebral Palsy Services

Petition by Rachael Wallace calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to develop and provide funding for a clinical pathway and services for adults with cerebral palsy.

**Recommendation:** We invite the Session 5 Public Petitions Committee to consider this petition and further scrutinise the Scottish Government’s position on the proposal in light of the outcome of Bobath Scotland’s pilot programme and the petitioner’s meeting with the Scottish Government.

PE1581 on Save Scotland’s School Libraries

Petition by Duncan Wright calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to set out a new national strategy for school libraries which recognises the vital role of high quality school libraries in supporting pupils’ literacy and research skills.

**Recommendation:** We invite the Session 5 Public Petitions Committee to consider this petition and further scrutinise the Scottish Government’s position on the proposal.
PE1586 on statutory control measures for invasive non-native species

Petition by James A Mackie, on behalf of Innes Community Council, calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to amend the Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011 to include statutory powers enforced by penalties to force land owners/tenants to destroy invasive non-native species that grow on their lands.

**Recommendation:** We invite the Session 5 Public Petitions Committee to consider this petition in light of concerns about the growth of invasive non-native species and the apparent decline in funding to address the issue. The Committee has asked SEPA to provide further details on progress on research into biocontrol organisms, the adequacy of funding, the use of statutory control agreements, the legal removal of invasive non-native species and public information about how to contact the correct agency to remove invasive non-native species. The Session 5 Public Petitions Committee may wish to invite oral evidence on these issues from SNH and SEPA.

PE1591 on major redesign of healthcare services in Skye, Lochalsh and South West Ross

Petition by Catriona MacDonald, on behalf of SOS-NHS, calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to reverse its approval of the major service change to healthcare services in Skye, Lochalsh and South West Ross.

**Recommendation:** We invite the Session 5 Public Petitions Committee to consider this petition in light of expected replies from NHS Highland, the Scottish Health Council and the Scottish Government all of which were invited to comment on the petitioners’ submission of 15 February 2016.

PE1592 on Group B Strep information and testing

Petition by Shaheen McQuade calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ensure all pregnant women receive information about Group B Strep and are given the option to be tested; and to set aside funding to find more reliable methods of testing.

**Recommendation:** We invite the Session 5 Public Petitions Committee to consider this petition in light of the National Screening Committee’s review of the evidence on Group B Strep screening this year.
PE1593 on a full review of the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act 2012

Petition by Paul Quigley, on behalf of Fans Against Criminalisation, calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to hold a full and comprehensive review of the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act 2012 with a view to having this Act repealed.

**Recommendation:** We invite the Session 5 Public Petitions Committee to consider this petition and to seek clarification from the Scottish Government and Police Scotland on the points raised in the petitioner’s submission of 23 February 2016.

PE1595 on moratorium on shared spaces

Petition by Alexander Taylor calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to place a moratorium on all shared space schemes until safety and equality concerns have been addressed.

**Recommendation:** We invite the Session 5 Public Petitions Committee to consider this petition further. In doing so we note the submission from Lord Holmes of Richmond that indicates the UK Government is seeking details of shared space schemes from all UK local authorities.

PE1596 on In Care Survivors Service Scotland

Petition by Paul Anderson, James McDermott and Chris Daly calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to retain our essential, dedicated In Care Survivor Service Scotland in its current form.

**Recommendation:** We invite the Session 5 Public Petitions Committee to consider this petition and take a watching brief to ensure that the needs of survivors of in-care abuse are taken into account during the establishment of a new service to support those individuals’ needs.