

Petitioner submission of 10 November 2022

PE1855/K: Pardon and memorialise those convicted under the Witchcraft Act 1563

We are grateful to the Public Petitions Committee's consideration of the petition lodged in 2021 to forward the aims of the Witches of Scotland campaign.

When we lodged the petition we sought assistance with forwarding the 3 aims of the campaign, to obtain a formal apology, to legislate for a pardon and to obtain a national memorial.

During the period of time that the petition has been before the Committee there has been considerable work done in furthering these aims.

On International Women's Day 2022, as a result of a request made in writing to her from Witches of Scotland, the First Minister provided a formal state apology to all those accused of witchcraft between 1563 and 1736.

Currently a proposed Members Bill to pardon those convicted of witchcraft is being taken forward by Natalie Don MSP. The public consultation period has just concluded, and we understand that there has been significant support for the proposed law.

Finally, we note the response from the Cabinet Secretary for Justice in relation to the national memorial. We are very grateful to the Cabinet Secretary for the offer of support in helping with publicising any specific initiative raising funding in this area. We have met with and spoken with interested parties and we are working towards a national memorial at this time. We have also spoken with a number of interested parties in relation to the building of a museum of witch-hunts, such as exist in other countries that had a significant number of witchcraft trials.

We are grateful to the Committee for having considered these matters and having allowed both campaigners, Zoe Venditozzi and Claire Mitchell KC, to come and give evidence about why we consider the campaign to be an important one with not only a historic but a significant current relevance.

We are also very grateful to the committee for the comments made in support of the aims of the campaign by the Committee Members, and we hope to obtain further cross-party support more broadly in the Scottish Parliament in relation to the proposed Witchcraft Convictions (Pardons) (Scotland) Bill.

Claire Mitchell KC
Zoe Venditozzi
WITCHES OF SCOTLAND