

Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee on petition PE2214: Officially annually recognise 23rd of August as Wallace Day in honour of Sir William Wallace, lodged by David Reid

Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

[William Wallace](#) (c.1270–1305) was a Scottish knight and military leader who rose to prominence in 1297 during resistance to the rule of King Edward I of England and the First War of Scottish Independence. The petitioner, David Reid, asks the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to "officially declare and promote" 23 August as "Wallace Day," marking the anniversary of Wallace's judicial execution at Smithfield, London, in 1305.

The [Society of William Wallace](#), a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation established to uphold William Wallace's memory, already runs an annual "[Wallace Day](#)" event on the Saturday nearest 23 August. The Society is separately running a [Change.org](#) petition with the same aim as [PE2214](#).

The petition claims that a national Wallace Day could increase tourist numbers without citing specific surveys or figures. There is some independent support for underlying visitor interest in Wallace-related heritage. Stirling Council reported [144,200 visitors to the National Wallace Monument in 2025–26](#), the highest figure since records began.

How other commemorative days are recognised

Commemorative days in Scotland can be marked in different ways — through sustained civic and cultural practice alone, or with the added status of a bank holiday. Not every day commemorating a significant figure carries statutory recognition. Burns Night, for example, [began in 1801 as a grassroots commemorative gathering](#) and spread across Scotland and internationally by imitation. It is now occasionally acknowledged by the [Scottish Parliament through agreed motions](#), and the Scottish Government regularly acknowledges Burns Night with a [letter to Scotland's diaspora from the First Minister](#) and [Ministerial attendance at Burns Night suppers](#).

[St Andrew's Day](#) is considered Scotland's national day, observed in honour of St Andrew the Apostle, Scotland's patron saint, whose feast date it marks in the Christian liturgical calendar. It gained formal bank holiday status in 2007, through the [St Andrew's Day Bank Holiday \(Scotland\) Act 2007](#), which amended [schedule 1 of the Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971](#) to add the day as a bank holiday in Scotland.

How bank holidays are created

The designation of bank holidays is a devolved matter. Bank holidays are created under the [Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971](#) and are days on which financial dealings may be suspended. They include days specifically listed in the Act (as amended), as well as days proclaimed by the King.

[Section 1\(3\) of the 1971 Act](#) gives the King the power to appoint additional bank holidays by Royal Proclamation. The King acts on advice from the [Privy Council](#), of which, the First Minister of Scotland is a member. This power was most recently used to designate [15 June 2026 as a bank holiday](#) marking the Scotland's men's football team competing at the FIFA World Cup for the first time in 28 years, following a proposal from First Minister John Swinney MSP.

Public holidays

In addition to national bank holidays, local authorities in Scotland set their own [public holidays](#), which vary from area to area and have no statutory basis. Unlike bank holidays, which are the same across Scotland, public holidays are decided by each local authority based on local tradition, usually in consultation with local businesses.

There is no automatic entitlement to paid leave for bank or public holidays.

Key Organisations and relevant links

- [William Wallace - National Wallace Monument](#)
- [William Wallace, Guardian of Scotland | The Royal Family](#)
- [The Society of William Wallace](#) (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation SC045959)
- [Bank and public holidays - House of Commons Library](#)

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The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at spice@parliament.scot

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