

Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee on petition PE2245: Keep the William Wallace letter in Scotland 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 keep the “[Wallace Letter](#)” in Scotland.

The Wallace letter is a letter of recommendation by [King Philip IV of France](#) commanding his agents in Rome to recommend and support William Wallace favourably in his business. Historians and archivists have [argued](#) that the letter shows William Wallace was engaging in high-level diplomacy throughout Europe during this time and that it was likely to have been in William Wallace’s possession at some point.

The letter was kept within diplomatic archives held in the Tower of London until the 1830s when it was subsequently transferred to the UK Public Records Office, which is now known as [The National Archives](#) and functions as the UK Government’s national archive. The National Archives is a non-ministerial department of the UK Government.

The National Archives holds official physical ownership of the Wallace letter in the National Archives building at Kew. The Wallace letter has been on loan to the [National Records of Scotland](#) since 2012. The loan was initially due to [end in 2014](#) but has been extended on several occasions to now be due to return to the National Archives at the end of September 2026.

The [Society of William Wallace](#), a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation established to uphold William Wallace’s memory, campaigned for the [return of the Wallace letter prior to 2012](#) and is [calling for the letter to remain in Scotland](#).

The Wallace letter can only go on display under controlled lighting for a limited period every few years. While it has been on loan from the National Archives, it has been displayed several times including in [2012 at the Scottish Parliament](#), in [2018 for Edinburgh Doors Open Day](#) at the National Records of Scotland, and in [2024 on St Andrews Day](#) at the National Records of Scotland.

The National Records of Scotland is a non-ministerial department of the Scottish Government. It is responsible for the Scottish national archives, which contains government documents and public records.

The [National Archives](#) and [National Records of Scotland](#) both operate formal loan arrangements for archival material. Published policies indicate that lending decisions are based on factors including the condition of documents, conservation

requirements, security arrangements, environmental controls, transport arrangements and insurance. The National Archives [retains discretion](#) over whether records are lent and may require their return.

On 9 September 2026, the National Records of Scotland announced a "new shared approach" for the Wallace letter. According to the [news release](#), the letter will return to The National Archives and be displayed there in 2027 under a new joint curatorial agreement between the two institutions. It will then return to the National Records of Scotland on loan from 2028 to 2031. The press release states that arrangements for the letter beyond 2031 will be discussed before the end of the loan period. The Cabinet Secretary for Education, Culture and Gaelic, Mairi McAllan MSP, is quoted as saying:

"I believe the letter should be in Scotland and am pleased that after a short period of planned display in England, the Wallace letter will return to Scotland from 2028, ensuring people here can engage with this remarkable piece of our history. [...] Given the letter and Wallace's centrality to Scotland's history, we will continue our dialogue with the UK Government to discuss its longer term future."

Key Organisations and relevant links

- [The National Archives](#)
- [National Records of Scotland](#)
- [The Society of William Wallace](#)
- [William Wallace, Guardian of Scotland | The Royal Family](#)
- [Digital reproduction of the Wallace safe conduct pass \(The National Archives\)](#)
- [The Wallace Letter, November 1300 \(National Records of Scotland\)](#)

Courtney Aitken

SPICe Research

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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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