PE2245/A: Keep the William Wallace letter in Scotland

Scottish Government written submission, 23 September 2026

Does the Scottish Government consider the specific ask[s] of the petition to be practical or achievable? If not, please explain why.

Ministers believe the letter should be in Scotland. Accordingly the Scottish Government has engaged with the National Records of Scotland, the UK Government and The National Archives to explore options that maintain a strong Scottish connection to the letter while supporting public access and appropriate stewardship of this nationally significant document.

It is important to note the specific request for the letter to remain permanently in Scotland is not solely a matter for the Scottish Government, though Ministers believe the letter should remain in Scotland, due to the significant cultural and historical importance of the Wallace letter to Scotland. The document is owned by The National Archives and has been on loan to National Records of Scotland since 2012 under an agreed loan arrangement. Decisions regarding the location and display of the document therefore require agreement between the custodial institutions involved.

What, if any, action is the Scottish Government currently taking to address the issues raised by this petition, and is any further action being considered that will achieve the ask[s] of this petition?

Given the importance of the Wallace letter to Scotland's heritage, the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Culture and Gaelic made it clear that Ministers believe the letter should be in Scotland and asked senior officials to explore options for retaining a strong Scottish connection to the document and to engage with National Records of Scotland, the UK Government and The National Archives regarding its future display and accessibility.

As a result of the Cabinet Secretary’s intervention, the discussions between National Records of Scotland and The National Archives have agreed a new shared curatorial arrangement for the document. Under this arrangement – announced on 9 September, the current loan period will conclude as planned in September 2026, after which the letter will be displayed by The National Archives as part of its public programme.

The letter will then return to Scotland from 2028 until 2031 under a new loan agreement, enabling continued public access in Scotland and opportunities for display in Edinburgh and potentially elsewhere in the country. Discussions on the document's longer-term future will begin during the final year of that loan period. The Scottish Government welcomes this collaborative approach, which balances public access, conservation considerations and the shared historical significance of

the document. It also allows for further negotiation in the future.

Is there any further information the Scottish Government wish to bring to the Committee's attention, which would assist it in considering this petition?

The Wallace letter is one of only two surviving documents with a direct personal connection to Sir William Wallace and is of considerable historical significance. The Scottish Government recognises the strong public interest in its future and welcomes the constructive engagement of campaign groups and stakeholders on this issue. The new arrangements developed by National Records of Scotland and The National Archives will allow the letter to be seen by audiences across the UK while also ensuring its return to Scotland for a significant period beyond the current loan agreement.

Scottish Ministers will renew negotiations regarding the document's longer-term future once the Letter has returned to Scotland for the renewed loan period, with the ultimate aim of settling it permanently in Scotland.

Culture and Historic Environment Division