



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE

Tuesday 5 March 2013

Session 4

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PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE
6th Meeting 2013, Session 4

CONVENER

*David Stewart (Highlands and Islands) (Lab)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Jackson Carlaw (West Scotland) (Con)

*Adam Ingram (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)

*Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP)

*Anne McTaggart (Glasgow) (Lab)

*John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP)

*attended

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Anne Peat

LOCATION

Committee Room 1

Scottish Parliament

Public Petitions Committee

Tuesday 5 March 2013

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 10:00*]

Decision on Taking Business in Private

The Convener (David Stewart): Good morning and welcome to this meeting of the Public Petitions Committee. As always, I remind everyone to switch off mobile phones and other electronic equipment, as they interfere with our sound systems.

Agenda item 1 is a decision on taking business in private. Do members agree that item 3 should be taken in private?

Members indicated agreement.

Current Petitions

Victims of Crime (Support and Assistance) (PE1403)

10:01

The Convener: Agenda item 2 is consideration of current petitions. There are eight current petitions for consideration, the first of which is PE1403, by Peter Morris, on improving support and assistance to victims of crime and their families. Members have a note by the clerk and the submissions.

Members will know that a lot of hard work has been done on the issue by Peter Morris and, I think, legal students from the University of Aberdeen, who gave an excellent presentation. Mr Morris has been a real advocate of victims' rights. Members might know that I, too, have an interest in the matter, in that I introduced the Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Bill in the previous session. Sadly, it is no longer with us, but the intention was good.

Mr Morris has made a fairly critical analysis of the Government's views on victims. However, we have the Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Bill, which I presume the Justice Committee will scrutinise in due course. It would certainly be a shame if the Justice Committee did not get all the work that we have done. If members agree, I recommend that we refer this excellent petition to that committee so that it can consider it in due course although, obviously, I am open to views from members.

Chic Brodie (South Scotland) (SNP): The petitioner has written to the Justice Committee—I presume along the lines that the petition follows. I wonder whether we would be duplicating what he has done.

The Convener: The Justice Committee will have received some information directly. We have a number of choices about how to deal with the petition. Obviously, we could close it, although I am reluctant to do that, as I do not think that the petitioner's wishes have been fulfilled. Alternatively, we could formally transfer the petition. Chic Brodie is right that the Justice Committee will already have received much of the material, but we still need to formally transfer the petition or dispose of it in some way.

John Wilson (Central Scotland) (SNP): I agree with the convener. We should refer the petition to the Justice Committee for its consideration. I know that the petitioner has written to that committee to express his views but, given the work that the Public Petitions Committee has done on the issue, it might be useful if we

passed on all the paperwork to that committee, rather than have it duplicate the work. The Justice Committee can then consider matters in light of the work that we have carried out.

Anne McTaggart (Glasgow) (Lab): I agree with John Wilson. It is important that we formally move the petition on to the Justice Committee to ensure that it is not lost and that the good work is continued.

Chic Brodie: That is my point. The petition will not be lost, as the petitioner has written to the Justice Committee. I presume that he presented the same information that was presented to us, although we do not know that. I know that we have discussed that, although I was not there at the time. I wonder where the added value is in passing the petition to the Justice Committee.

The Convener: I think that what the petitioner has passed over is only partial. The *Official Reports* and any information that we have received will also be passed on. We will pass over the complete record: that is the difference.

Have I made the point that Jackson Carlaw was about to make?

Jackson Carlaw (West Scotland) (Con): In part, convener. I also think that, if we closed the petition, it might appear that we felt in some way that there was no further merit in the suggestion. Passing it on implies that we think that the issues in it still deserve to be aired in the Justice Committee.

Angus MacDonald (Falkirk East) (SNP): I totally agree with Jackson Carlaw. If we refer the petition to the Justice Committee, that will reinforce the fact that this committee believes that it merits further attention.

John Wilson: Part of the reason for referring the petition to the Justice Committee is that the information that we have gathered and the written evidence that we have received will be useful in its scrutiny of the Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Bill. Jackson Carlaw is right. We would not be closing the petition; we would be referring it on. As I said, that would assist the Justice Committee in the process, as we have already received evidence from a number of individuals who have contributed to the debate. The point is to ensure that the Justice Committee is aware of the avenues that the Public Petitions Committee has examined and pursued to aid the discussion for the petitioner and, I hope, to assist the Justice Committee in its scrutiny of the Scottish Government's bill.

The Convener: In fairness, my understanding of Mr Morris's assessment is that he is at one with the Scottish Government in many ways. I think

that all of us would want to do a lot more work for victims.

There is an issue of interpretation. For example, the petitioner says that the victims surcharge is fine, but look how much is being paid out through the legal aid system. He is trying to get the balance right. A lot of it is simply about points of detail, and I am sure that the Justice Committee will deal with the matter in much more detail than we possibly can.

I take Chic Brodie's point, but the broader point is that we can refer a lot more on than there would be if we simply allowed the petitioner to deal with the matter.

Do members agree to refer the petition to the Justice Committee?

Members indicated agreement.

Use of Productive Land (PE1433)

The Convener: The second current petition is PE1433, by John Hancox, on productive land for landless Scots to grow their own food. Members have a note by the clerk and the submissions.

Members will know that the Government is currently considering many initiatives in the area through the community empowerment and renewal bill. It seems sensible to refer the petition to the Local Government and Regeneration Committee, which will, I assume, be the lead committee on that bill. Do members agree?

Jackson Carlaw: May I be perverse and take the opposite view on this occasion? As the Government is responding directly to many of the issues that have been raised and there have been and are opportunities for the petitioner and the wider public to make direct contributions on these matters, I do not know that it is necessary to refer the petition. It might be perfectly sensible to close it. I do not think that the same body of work or evidence underpins the petition as that which underpins the petition that we considered previously so that our referring it on would meaningfully assist the lead committee in its work.

The Convener: I know that John Wilson has taken a big interest in the issue.

John Wilson: I have declared an interest in the issue in the past, and I declare an interest as a member of the Local Government and Regeneration Committee, which has spent some time on its public services reform inquiry, particularly strand 3. We recently heard evidence from local communities on how they can engage in delivering services for local areas, and one issue that has come up in the committee is about community growing land—waste areas that could be passed on to the community to allow it to set up

allotments—and other initiatives to allow local people to grow local produce. I suggest that we refer the petition to the Local Government and Regeneration Committee for its consideration of community engagement and regeneration in the wider sense. That would give it another argument for looking at empowering local communities. Grow your own is one of those areas in which community empowerment could be advantageous. It could allow local communities at the grass-roots level—I hate to say that—to engage in community initiatives that would result in real benefits in many communities throughout Scotland.

The Convener: Adam Ingram has just come in. We are debating the John Hancox petition. The issue is being discussed in relation to the community empowerment and renewal bill. The arguments are that we either close the petition, as the petitioner has already put his contributions to the committee, or refer it to the Local Government and Regeneration Committee, which will, I assume, be the lead committee on the community empowerment and renewal bill.

Adam Ingram (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP): I tend to agree with John Wilson.

Angus MacDonald: Given that the agriculture, food and rural communities directorate is still looking at the Scotland rural development programme, referring the petition to the Local Government and Regeneration Committee would perhaps give more power to the argument by allowing that committee to further investigate whether the initiative in the petition can be incorporated in the SRDP.

The Convener: Officials have suggested that the initiative might be eligible to be part of the next programme, which is interesting.

Anne McTaggart: I declare an interest, as a member of the Local Government and Regeneration Committee. It is important to refer the petition to that committee to give it an insight into the work that has been done.

I heard what Jackson Carlaw said, but referring the petition would give the subject more weight, and the Local Government and Regeneration Committee would welcome the opportunity to give its input.

The Convener: On balance, Mr Carlaw, I understand your point, but we will refer the petition to the Local Government and Regeneration Committee.

Jackson Carlaw: I am happy with that.

The Convener: Thank you. We will refer the petition to the Local Government and Regeneration Committee.

Mental Health Services (PE1438)

The Convener: The third current petition is PE1438, by Lynsey Pattie, on improving services for people with mental illness. Members have a note from the clerk and submissions.

The petition is useful. Members who were at our meeting last Friday will recall that the Scottish Youth Parliament made the same point about young people accessing mental health services. It certainly seems sensible to continue the petition and ask the Scottish Government to give us its views on the concerns that we have received about children and adolescents receiving help from mental health services.

One thing that struck me and which I think Lynsey Pattie mentioned was that referral times for mental health services for young people are different from those for adults. I had not realised that. The figure is 26 weeks for young people and 18 weeks for adults. I was surprised by that difference. Given measures such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, normally one would not expect a distinction in the way that services were targeted. That is a general point that I wanted to make.

What are members' views?

Adam Ingram: One reason for that distinction is historical, in that there has been underinvestment in child and adolescent mental health services for a considerable period. If we write to the Scottish Government for its views, we should ask specifically about access to child and adolescent mental health services, and to what extent progress has been and still has to be made.

We should also ask about how best practice is embedded in national health service boards. There has been significant improvement in mental health services in the last decade or so but, clearly, from the evidence that we have received, practice is still inconsistent across the country. We need to ask for the Scottish Government's view on how well health boards are providing the services.

In relation to that, we need to ask to what extent talking therapies rather than medication have been the order of the day. One big criticism of mental health services is that there are not enough psychologists and that the use of cognitive behavioural therapy in primary services is the exception rather than the rule. We need to establish both pace and direction of travel. There are issues to address.

The Convener: That is a good point. It occurs to me that, if we are talking about a lack of access to psychology services, that may come under our inquiry, which we will talk about later.

Jackson Carlaw: I agree with Adam Ingram. However, we should be careful about generalising. Last Tuesday, I attended a presentation in the Parliament on adult mental health services. Mental health services for the elderly appear to be even worse than services for young people. The adult service covers a wide age band. The issue about a lack of provision extends beyond young people to elderly people. That in no way devalues the petition, but the petition might create the false impression that young people are disadvantaged by the system compared to all adults, when in fact elderly adults are equally disadvantaged.

10:15

The Convener: Could the point be made more widely that we should be careful about age discrimination?

Jackson Carlaw: Yes.

Chic Brodie: I support Adam Ingram's points. According to the letters from NHS Lothian, NHS Fife and NHS Borders, they are all doing various improvement reviews. I wonder how much cross-pollination or exchange of information there is in order to achieve best practice. It looks as if there is consistency in some areas, but I suggest that, in other areas, communication is not as thorough as it might be.

The Convener: There are the health improvement, efficiency and governance, access and treatment—HEAT—targets. What we have found in other areas, not least insulin pumps, is that when the Scottish Government feels that there is a lack of action, it tends to send out letters to chief executives to reinforce action that really has to happen immediately.

Are colleagues happy to continue the petition and write to the Scottish Government, including the issues that Adam Ingram outlined?

Members *indicated agreement.*

John Wilson: I declare an interest, in that I am a member of the cross-party group in the Scottish Parliament on mental health.

Jackson Carlaw and Adam Ingram have raised an interesting issue about the wide differences in response and referral times for young people and older adults. It might be useful, in any correspondence that we send to the Scottish Government, to seek clarification on the HEAT targets and why those targets differ so widely when it comes to the delivery of services and response times for adults, young people and older adults. We have to be seen to be responding a lot more quickly to mental health issues, particularly for young people. The debilitating impact of a mental health issue on a young person can continue throughout their life. The Government

needs to be aware that the HEAT targets should be reviewed to ensure that there is consistency in the delivery of services, not only with respect to the age range, but in relation to health board areas.

Jackson Carlaw: One thing that last week's presentation impressed on me was that dealing with the issue is not simply a matter of moving resource around in the health service, because the discipline and training for youth psychologists, adult psychologists and elderly adult psychologists is not always transferable. We cannot simply divert resource and move psychologists from one group to another, because the issue is much more complicated to address than that.

The Convener: I thank colleagues for that. In summary, we will continue the petition to seek further information from the Scottish Government.

Flood Insurance (PE1441)

The Convener: The fourth current petition is PE1441, by David Crichton, on flood insurance problems. Members have a note from the clerk and the submissions. This is an interesting petition, which is relevant throughout the United Kingdom. We have seen considerable and unusual flood events. I am concerned that the arrangement between the United Kingdom Government and the insurance industry that in effect underwrites houses that are in flood zones is up for renewal in May or June this year. The issue is extremely relevant. The Scottish Government has an input on the issue through its dialogue with the UK Government. If we did not have the agreement, the insurance industry would not insure thousands of people across Scotland who live in flood zones.

Perhaps the clerk can keep me right, but there is one point on which I am not sure that we have had a resolution. David Crichton said that there is Scottish Parliament legislation that says that, if someone's house was built in a flood zone by a developer and it was agreed by planning, the developer can be sued, but that no such cases are outstanding. That is interesting. It would be good to get clarity on that point.

The petition is relevant and interesting. As members know, there is a suggestion that we continue the petition, monitor the new commercial licence that will enable data in the Scottish flood defence asset database to be shared with the insurance industry, and consider the petition again after the Easter recess, by which time we should have useful technical information on that.

Angus MacDonald: I agree with your comments, convener. I am encouraged by the responses from the Minister for Environment and Climate Change and the Scottish Environment

Protection Agency. I understand that SEPA has written to all local authorities to seek permission to share the data that they provide to the Scottish flood defence asset database. I see no reason why all 32 local authorities should not agree to do that.

Given your previous comments, convener, I agree that we should consider the petition further after the Easter recess.

Jackson Carlaw: I feel that we have lost track of one point, although I am not sure whether it is just that I have failed to keep pace with it. The petitioner made the point that planning in Scotland has prevented further development on flood plains, but that in England such development has continued apace. In consequence, the implication is that insurance policies are being cross-subsidised in Scotland because there are more such properties south of the border as a consequence of planning, and they affect the overall level of premiums. The petitioner hoped that ministers would make that point in any discussions that they have. I am not sure that we have managed to pursue the matter to a resolution.

The Convener: That is a fair point. I think that we got some information back on it. I ask the clerk to circulate that to members and we will discuss the matter when we discuss the petition after Easter, assuming that members agree to that.

It goes without saying that concerns about climate change have accelerated the worries and concerns, but this is an important issue for us to look at in the longer term.

Chic Brodie: One of the letters says something about SEPA sharing the database with the insurance industry, but only for non-commercial purposes. That makes a nonsense of the point that Jackson Carlaw raised. There would appear to be no fairness in the system unless the insurance companies enjoy use of the database for commercial purposes.

The Convener: Planning authorities and developers obviously have responsibilities. However, I have witnessed at first hand really difficult flood events in the Culloden part of Inverness, and in that case we are talking about a once in 90 years possibility of flooding. In all fairness, and by definition, we would not expect such things to happen on a regular basis, or to happen two or three times. We managed to resolve that through extensive increased drainage to prevent flood events from happening again.

The petition raises huge issues. Do members agree that we should consider it again after Easter?

Members indicated agreement.

People's Charter (PE1452)

The Convener: The fifth current petition is PE1452, by Vince Mills, on the people's charter. Members have a note by the clerk and the submissions.

We had a useful presentation by Vince Mills and his colleagues. We need to get further information from the Scottish Government and—this is a familiar story to members—we are still missing feedback from a couple of organisations. One is the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the other is the Confederation of British Industry Scotland. In order for us to get a comprehensive view, I would prefer us to have all the organisations' responses before we make a decision on the petition.

Chic Brodie: I made my view clear at the time, which is that a lot of the things that the petition is asking for are already in the Administration's programme. I did not understand why the petition was lodged, and I still feel that way. We could go round and round the information loop, but a lot of the questions that have been raised by the petitioner are being addressed in the Administration's programme.

The Convener: I am sure that Chic Brodie will have a similar view when we finally come to dispose of the petition, unless the responses that we are still awaiting are radically different.

John Wilson: I agree that we should keep the petition open. I declare that, as a signatory to it, I support the petition. It is important that we get responses from CBI Scotland and COSLA before we write to the Scottish Government, as we need comprehensive responses on the petition. If we write to the Scottish Government now, without the responses from CBI Scotland and COSLA, we may end up having to write to the Scottish Government again on the basis of the issues raised in those responses.

I am particularly interested in hearing from CBI Scotland, as the idea of the charter raises a number of issues that relate directly to issues on which CBI Scotland has reported in the past and will, no doubt, want to report on in the future. It would be interesting to get those responses before we write to the Scottish Government.

I suggest that we keep the petition open, write to CBI Scotland and COSLA asking for responses, and consider those responses at a later date before we write to the Scottish Government.

Chic Brodie: The point that John Wilson makes underlines why the petition should be closed. We will get a standard reply from CBI Scotland and COSLA about representations that they have made on the budget or on other stances that the

Administration has taken, and I am not sure whether that will add value.

Jackson Carlaw: I very much support Chic Brodie's view. The petition is so overwhelmingly broad-brush in its scope that we will end up with a forest of paperwork. If the committee would like to dispose of the petition on the basis of a forest of paperwork that is fair enough, but I cannot see that we will ultimately do anything with it other than that.

The Convener: I take the member's point, but my general view is that, if a petitioner has taken a lot of time and effort to launch a petition, we should do it justice by considering it in a comprehensive and fair way. For all petitioners, we try to go the extra mile in ensuring that we have every piece of information about a petition in front of us before we make a decision. I am realistic and recognise the strength of Chic Brodie's views on the issue, but there is still time for the petition to have its day in court when it comes before us.

Chic Brodie: I understand that petitioners put a lot of time into their petitions but, with respect, I think that they might take some counsel before they embark on the amount of work that they do.

Adam Ingram: I always like to see the correspondence completed before we dispose of a petition, so I agree with John Wilson in this instance.

Angus MacDonald: I see the merits in both arguments. However, I agree with Adam Ingram that, given that we have requested responses from CBI Scotland and COSLA and they have not yet arrived, it would be premature to close the petition prior to receiving that information. I think that it would be unfair to close the petition at this time.

Anne McTaggart: I am sure that this was part of the e-petitions system and a lot of signatures were involved. I think that it is important that we see it through thoroughly, and to enable us to do that we must look at all the information that has been requested before we decide what happens with the petition.

The Convener: Thank you. On balance, we will continue to seek information from CBI Scotland and COSLA and we will consider the petition again.

Tobacco Products (Individual Purchase Licence) (PE1456)

10:30

The Convener: The sixth current petition is PE1456, by Scott Anderson, on the introduction of an individual licence to purchase tobacco

products. Members will have received a note from the clerk and various submissions.

Given the very clear response from the Scottish Government that it has no plans to introduce such a scheme and the fact that we have received all the information that we requested on this petition, I would argue that we have no choice but to close it under rule 15.7. Are members agreed?

Members indicated agreement.

Scotland's National Tree (PE1457)

The Convener: The seventh current petition is PE1457, by Alex Hamilton, on Scotland's national tree. Members will have received the clerk's note and the various submissions.

Again, this was a very interesting and well researched petition, and I suggest that we continue it until we receive the Scottish Government's response and the results of the Woodland Trust's public vote. It makes a lot of sense to find out what the public thinks.

Jackson Carlaw: In receiving the outcome of that vote, I would also like to know about the efforts that were made to publicise it to the wider public. After all, if we are basing decisions on it, we should know how representative of the public the vote actually is.

The Convener: Thank you for that comment.

We will move—

John Wilson: Convener, are we agreeing to write to the Scottish Wildlife Trust? I am a member—

The Convener: It is the Woodland Trust.

John Wilson: I am sorry, convener. Are we agreeing to write to the Woodland Trust for clarification of Jackson Carlaw's point about how it is conducting the questionnaire and co-ordinating the response to it? His question about who has been notified, how the public has been engaged in the process and whether its determination of the results will stand up to scrutiny is a very interesting one.

The Convener: I propose that we write immediately to the trust and ask it to ensure that, as per Jackson Carlaw's point, as many members of the public as possible know about this vote.

John Wilson: I should also declare that I am a member of the Woodland Trust.

The Convener: Are members happy with that course of action?

Members indicated agreement.

Judiciary (Register of Interests) (PE1458)

The Convener: The eighth and final current petition is PE1458, by Peter Cherbi, on a register of interests for members of Scotland's judiciary. Members will have received the clerk's note and the submissions.

As I am sure other members have, I have looked at this very interesting petition in great detail. Members might be aware that the current position as outlined by the Lord President is that a sheriff or judge who faces a conflict in a case—if, for example, he or she plays golf with the accused or if, as in the case in New Zealand, he or she allegedly owes money to one of the lead defence lawyers, which has triggered one particular issue—is able to recuse themselves, which basically means that they disqualify themselves from presiding in that case.

The Lord President and the Scottish Government have indicated that they have no plans to introduce changes. If they were so minded, the Scottish Government could change the law in this respect—in other words, create the kind of standard register that we, MPs and ministers have to comply with—or the Lord President could introduce administrative changes to the rules but, as I have said, neither is minded to do so.

Interestingly, the petitioner has argued that there is no real evidence on, for example, the number of judges who have declared an interest in a case and recused themselves or on whether any judges are presiding over cases in which they have an interest but have not declared it. He also wonders why, if many other public groups need a register of interests, judges should be any different.

We find ourselves in quite a difficult dilemma. The people that the petition seeks to change have made it clear that there is not going to be any change. However, as I said earlier, this committee has always had a good tradition of going the extra mile for every single petitioner. Do we need any more information from the Lord President on, for example, the number of judges who have recused themselves and the effectiveness of the system? We do not actually know that.

There is also a wider issue. Some of the tabloids have reported that, for example, there have been judges with convictions. Future petitions might come to us concerning issues such as whether a judge with a masonic interest has declared it.

There are three areas in which judges already have quite a solid background: the judicial oath; the statement of principles; and the Judiciary and Courts (Scotland) Act 2008. There are some

things that judges already have to comply with, which would be set against a registration of interests.

I hope that that is a reasonable summary of the situation.

Jackson Carlaw: When you said that the judge could be playing golf with the accused, convener, I am sure that you did not mean to discriminate. They could be playing darts or five-a-side football or going out clubbing. We should point that out, to be entirely reasonable.

When I first saw the petition, I was not terribly impressed with it, but I am more impressed with it now, as a consequence of the responses that we have received. The student anarchist in me smells the whiff of vested interests closing doors and turning their backs in an effort to shut the matter down. In fact, the protest was so great that I found myself thinking, "Methinks the Lord President doth protest too much."

I would like us to invite the Lord President to give evidence to the committee, if that is within our competence, along with other vested interests who think that we should close the petition, so that we can ask them to justify their position. Since it is clear that no one else is examining the issue at the moment, it may be that, on behalf of the petitioner, we should ensure that the issue is aired in public rather than just in writing.

The Convener: That is an interesting view. To answer the technical point, it is perfectly competent for us to invite Lord Gill to give evidence.

Chic Brodie: I could not agree more with Jackson Carlaw. The letter from the Lord President says:

"The introduction of such a register could also have unintended consequences. Consideration requires to be given to judges' privacy and freedom from harassment by aggressive media or hostile individuals".

We could replace "judges" with "politicians". Why should judges be any different from politicians? I agree that we should invite the Lord President, the Lord Advocate and others to speak to us.

John Wilson: I agree with Jackson Carlaw's suggestion that we invite Lord Gill to the committee to explain why he has written what he has. In fairness, the petitioner has responded in a strong manner, and the response to the petitioner would encourage me to write again to the Scottish Government and to the Lord President to seek clarification about how confident they are that the current system is above reproach and that judges and others recuse themselves when they know someone who is appearing before them, either as a solicitor, advocate, Queen's counsel or an accused person. It would be extremely useful for

the petitioner, this committee and the Parliament to have Lord Gill and others give their account of why they think that there is no need for any action at the present moment.

Angus MacDonald: When I came to the committee this morning, I did not expect the debate to go down this route. However, having heard Jackson Carlaw's suggestion that Lord Gill and others should appear before the committee, I think that that is an excellent course of action. It would be helpful if we could get further information on the legislation that has been proposed in New Zealand.

The Convener: I think that 10 useful points were set out in New Zealand to weigh up whether it was necessary to introduce any further controls—I would put “controls” in inverted commas. I suggest that members familiarise themselves with those 10 points before we speak to Lord Gill at any future meeting.

Anne McTaggart: I agree with Jackson Carlaw's suggestion.

Chic Brodie: I know that the petitioner called for a register of judges' pecuniary interests. However, I am not sure that the investigation should be limited just to that. Perhaps we should consider the issue of a register of judges' total interests. I do not know whether that would be competent.

The Convener: That is a fair point that we could raise with Lord Gill. However, as I said, I suggest that members examine closely what is happening in New Zealand. The petitioner makes the point that there is more to the situation than what is happening in New Zealand, but I think that that is a useful point to focus on.

Do we agree to continue the petition and to invite the Lord President, and any colleagues that he wishes, to speak to us at a future meeting?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: As agreed earlier, we will take the final agenda item in private.

10:40

Meeting continued in private until 11:04.

Members who would like a printed copy of the *Official Report* to be forwarded to them should give notice to SPICe.

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