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## **Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee**

# **Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee Annual Report 2022 - 2023**



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# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Membership changes</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The work of the Committee on citizen participation</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The work of the Committee on petitions</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>The Public Petitions System</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Equalities and Diversity</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Annex A - Petitions considered by the Committee during the Parliamentary year 2022 - 2023</b>	<b>12</b>

# Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

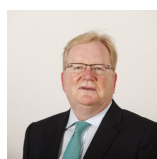
To consider public petitions addressed to the Parliament in accordance with these Rules (and any additional matter added under Rule 6.1.5A) and, in particular, to—

- (a) decide in a case of dispute whether a petition is admissible;
- (b) decide what action should be taken upon an admissible public petition; and
- (c) keep under review the operation of the petitions system.
- (d) consider and report on public policy or undertake post-legislative scrutiny through the use of deliberative democracy, Citizen's Assemblies or other forms of participative engagement.



[petitions.committee@parliament.scot](mailto:petitions.committee@parliament.scot)

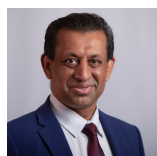
# Committee Membership



**Convener**  
**Jackson Carlaw**  
Scottish Conservative  
and Unionist Party



**Deputy Convener**  
**David Torrance**  
Scottish National Party



**Foyso Choudhury**  
Scottish Labour



**Fergus Ewing**  
Scottish National Party



**Alexander Stewart**  
Scottish Conservative  
and Unionist Party

# Introduction

1. This annual report covers the period 13 May 2022 to 12 May 2023.
2. During that period, 19 meetings took place in total, of which
  - 5 meetings were held entirely in public
  - 14 meetings were held in public and included private items



3. At the start of the Parliamentary session, the remit of the Committee was extended to include citizen participation. Over the course of the Parliamentary year, the Committee has been considering its extended remit and how the Scottish Parliament should embed citizen participation, including deliberative engagement, in its work.

# Membership changes

4. Previous members of the Committee during the Parliamentary year:
  - Paul Sweeney MSP left the Committee on 19 January 2023 and was replaced by Carol Mochan MSP.
  - Carol Mochan MSP left the Committee on 25 April 2023 and was replaced by Foyso! Choudhury MSP.

# The work of the Committee on citizen participation

5. The Committee launched an inquiry at the start of May 2022, to consider how the Scottish Parliament’s work involves, reflects and meets the needs of the full range of communities it represents. This is seeking to understand why some individuals and groups are more closely involved in the Parliament’s work than others, and why some are not involved at all.
6. The inquiry had an initial focus on groups that are currently under-represented in the work of the Parliament. This included, but was not limited to, people with a disability, people from minority ethnic groups and people living on a low income.
7. In October and November 2022, the Committee set up a Citizens’ Panel, comprised of 19 people from across Scotland, to make suggestions on how improvements can be made through consideration of the question:

*How can the Scottish Parliament ensure diverse voices and communities from all parts of Scotland influence our work?*

8. This Citizens’ Panel came up with 17 recommendations for the Committee (and the Scottish Parliament) which it grouped into the following areas:

- Community Engagement
- How the Parliament uses Deliberative Democracy
- Public Involvement in Parliamentary business
- Communication and Education



Community Engagement



How the Parliament uses Deliberative Democracy



Public Involvement in Parliamentary business



Communication and Education

9. The Committee heard directly from members of the Citizens’ Panel in December before publishing the Panel’s recommendations as part of its [interim report](#).

10. Following the publication of the interim report, the Committee sought views on the Panel's recommendations online, and informally.
11. In February and March 2023, members of the Committee visited Dublin and Paris, and held an online discussion with a representative of the French-speaking Parliament of Brussels, to explore their use of Citizens' Assemblies.

**Convener addressing Paris Citizens' Assembly during the final weekend of their deliberations.**



Source: The Scottish Parliament

12. Throughout its inquiry, the Committee has been supported by input from the Participation and Communities Team (PACT), and from SPICe. This collaborative approach has ensured that the Committee's work is aligned with the Public Engagement Strategy and the work of the Public Engagement Group.
13. The Committee will finalise its report by the end of June 2023, ready for publication in September 2023.

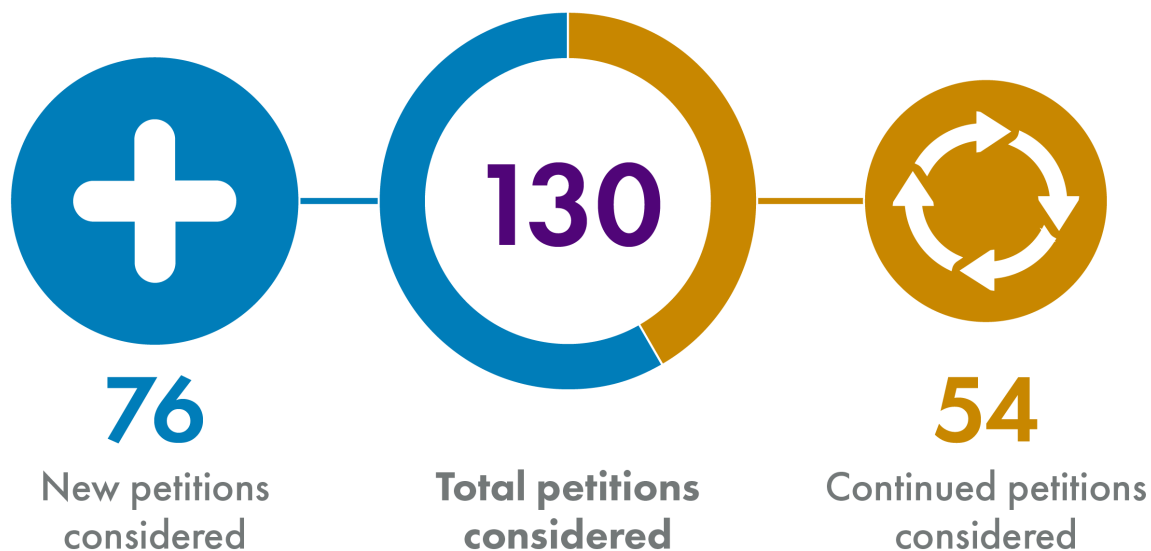
**Committee members with the Secretariat of Irish Citizens' Assemblies and former assembly participants during their visit to Dublin.**



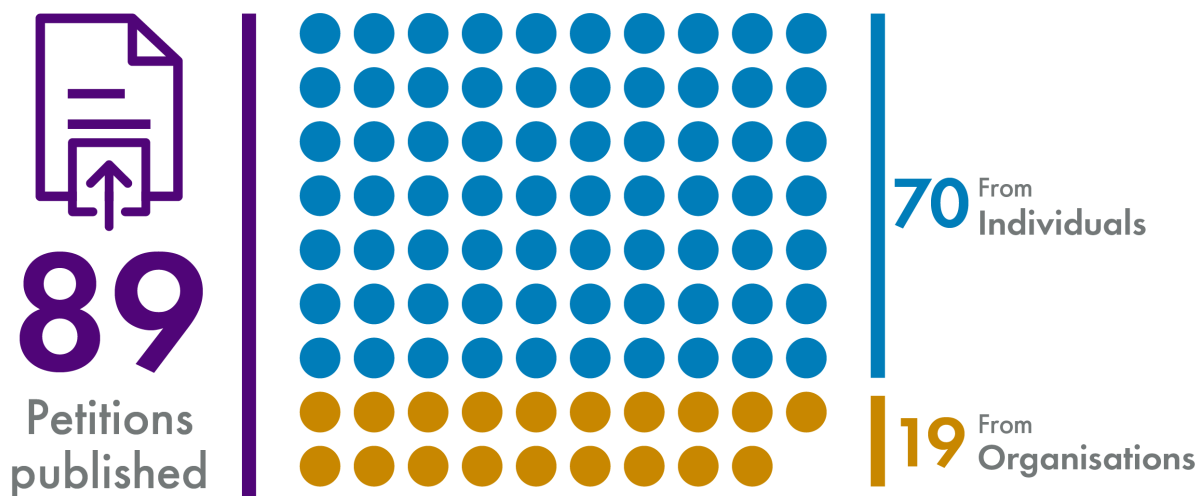
Source: The Scottish Parliament

## The work of the Committee on petitions

14. Over the course of the Parliamentary year, the Committee considered a total of 130 petitions on a wide range of issues. Of these, 54 were continued petitions (i.e. petitions first considered before the start of the Parliamentary year) and 76 were new petitions (first considered during the Parliamentary year). Most petitions are considered on a number of occasions. Of those petitions considered by the Committee, 33 were closed. A full list of petitions considered is included in [Annexe A](#).



15. Petitions may be lodged by individuals or organisations. This parliamentary year, 89 petitions have been published, 70 that were submitted by individual petitioners and 19 that were submitted by groups or organisations.



16. Since the beginning of the session, the Committee has sought a SPICe briefing and an initial submission from the Scottish Government on every new petition before the petition is included on a Committee agenda. This has allowed the Committee to

make informed decisions on new petitions at their first consideration. This approach has worked well, and the Committee is grateful to the Scottish Government for continuing to engage positively with these requests for information.

17. The majority of the information gathered by the Committee is through written submissions. This Parliamentary year, submissions were received from—
  - petitioners
  - the Scottish Government
  - relevant organisations with an interest in the petition
  - members of the public.
18. The Committee published 569 written submissions during the Parliamentary year. This figure includes the initial submissions received on every new petition from the Scottish Government.
19. The Committee has also heard oral evidence on petitions. During the Parliamentary year, evidence sessions were conducted both virtually and in person. This enabled the Committee to hear from a wide range of people and organisations from Scotland and beyond. The Committee heard from 41 people over 15 meetings.
20. This parliamentary year the Committee heard oral evidence on the following petitions:
  - PE1804: Halt Highlands & Islands Airports Ltd.'s Air Traffic Management Strategy
    - The Committee heard from Highlands and Islands Airports Limited.
  - PE1865: Suspend all surgical mesh and fixation devices
    - The Committee took evidence from the then Minister for Public Health, Women's Health and Sport, and the Chief Medical Officer.
  - PE1845: Agency to advocate for the healthcare needs of rural Scotland
    - The Committee heard from the Petitioner - Gordon Baird.
  - PE1890: Find solutions to recruitment and training challenges for rural healthcare in Scotland
    - The Committee heard from the Petitioner - Maria Aitken.
  - PE1915: Reinstate Caithness County Council and Caithness NHS Board
    - The Committee heard from the Petitioner - William Sinclair.
  - PE1924: Complete an emergency in-depth review of Women's Health services in Caithness & Sutherland
    - The Committee heard from the Petitioner - Rebecca Wymer.
  - PE1864: Increase the ability of communities to influence planning decisions for

## onshore windfarms

- The Committee heard evidence from the then Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth.
- PE1885: Make offering Community Shared Ownership mandatory for all windfarm development planning proposals
  - The Committee heard evidence from the then Minister for Public Finance, Planning and Community Wealth.
- PE1887: Create an Unborn Victims of Violence Act
  - The Committee heard evidence from the Petitioner - Nicola Murray, Victim Support Scotland, an academic from the University of Strathclyde, and Scottish Women's Aid.
- PE1862: Introduce community representation on boards of public organisations delivering lifeline services to island communities
  - The Committee took evidence from the Minister for Transport and Transport Scotland.
- PE1856: Support the taxi trade
  - The Committee heard evidence from the Scottish Taxi Federation and the trade union Unite.
- PE1871: Full review of mental health services
  - The Committee heard evidence from the Petitioner - Karen McKeown.
- PE1900: Access to prescribed medication for detainees in police custody
  - The Committee took evidence from former members of the Scottish Drug Deaths Taskforce, and the then Minister for Drugs Policy.
- PE1928: Provide free rail travel for disabled people who meet the qualifications for free bus travel
  - The Committee heard from the Petitioner - David Gallant, and Sight Scotland.
- PE1859: Retain falconers' rights to practice upland falconry in Scotland
  - The Committee heard from the Petitioner - Barry Blyther, the then Minister for Environment and Land Reform, and NatureScot.
- PE1948: Improve the way that unexplained deaths are dealt with
  - The Committee heard evidence from Stephanie Bonner.
- PE1896: Provide every primary school child in Scotland with a reusable water bottle

- The Committee took evidence from the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity.
- PE1941: Stop the destruction of headstones within community cemeteries
  - The Committee heard from the Petitioner - Cllr Andrew Stuart Wood, and Friends of Hawkhead Cemetery.
- PE1950: Ensure immunosuppressed people in Scotland can access the Evusheld antibody treatment
  - The Committee heard from the campaign group Evusheld for the UK.
- PE1958: Extend aftercare for previously looked after young people, and remove the continuing care age cap
  - The Committee heard from the Petitioner, Jasmin-Kasaya Pilling, and representatives of Who Cares? Scotland, CELCIS (Centre for Excellence for Children’s Care and Protection), the Children and Young People’s Commissioner Scotland, and The Promise Scotland.



**569**

Written submissions



**41**

Witnesses

21. The Committee also had the opportunity to gather evidence on petitions through less formal channels, which this year included:
- Committee Members visiting Pressmennan Wood in East Lothian as part of their consideration of PE1812: Protect Scotland’s remaining ancient, native and semi-native woodlands and woodland floors
  - Committee Members participating in an online, informal discussion with care experienced individuals as part of the consideration of PE1958: Extend aftercare for previously looked after young people, and remove the continuing care age cap.

# The Public Petitions System

22. Part of the Committee's remit is to "keep under review the operation of the petitions system". A new e-petitions system was launched at the start of the parliamentary session. This seeks to improve the accessibility and efficiency of the petitions process, and to make website content about petitions user centred, easily located, consistent and accessible. This system is supported by guidance on the admissibility of petitions and on the petitions process.
23. As part of the continuous evaluation and monitoring of the system, the Committee clerks collected data on and reviewed the timescales of the petition process. The results of this review were broadly positive. In most cases, the Committee considers both new and continued petitions at, or close to, the earliest possible opportunity. Where delays occur, these are usually caused by late responses to Committee requests for evidence, or practical challenges associated with scheduling. Nevertheless, it was noted that with the current number of petitions, the system is close to being at capacity.
24. In December 2022, the Committee agreed to revise its approach to the management of petitions, and these changes were brought into effect in March 2023. It used to be that only some petitions were open for signature after they were lodged, and then only for four weeks. Now, members of the public may add their names in support of any petition throughout the period when the petition is under consideration. However, it is now only petitioners, MSPs and the Scottish Government who can make unsolicited submissions on petitions once they are under consideration; others can make submissions only if invited to do so by the Committee.

## Equalities and Diversity

25. The Committee is keen to ensure that the petition process is made accessible to the widest range of people. To achieve this, the Committee seeks to remove any barriers that may prevent people from creating a petition and facilitates additional support for petitioners throughout the process where required. Committee clerks have provided over-the-phone support by writing up submissions for petitioners who have to dictate, rather than type, as a result of medical conditions. Communications with petitioners have been provided in a printed format with large font for accessibility adjustments, where required. When preparing petitioners to give evidence to the Committee, potential barriers are discussed and additional support is planned, such as the provision of quiet spaces in the building.
26. The Committee has continued to focus on accessibility throughout its work on the Public Participation Inquiry. As part of its communications approach, the Committee produced key documents in multiple formats and languages including: Easy Read, BSL, Gaelic, Polish, Kurdish, Urdu, Arabic, and Ukrainian.
27. The Committee also held 10 focus group sessions, which gave people a chance to share their views with the Committee. These groups were chosen because they included people who might be less likely to get involved in the Parliament's work, which includes people from minority ethnic groups, people living on a low income and disabled people. This focus will continue as the Committee moves to produce its final report.

# Annex A - Petitions considered by the Committee during the Parliamentary year 2022 - 2023

## Continued petitions considered by the Committee

1. PE1610: Upgrade the A75
2. PE1657: A77 upgrade
3. PE1723: Essential tremor treatment in Scotland
4. PE1804: Halt Highlands & Islands Airports Ltd.'s Air Traffic Management Strategy
5. PE1812: Protect Scotland's remaining ancient, native and semi-native woodlands and woodland floors
6. PE1837: Provide clear direction and investment for autism support
7. PE1845: Agency to advocate for the healthcare needs of rural Scotland
8. PE1854: Review the adult disability payment eligibility criteria for people with mobility needs
9. PE1855: Pardon and memorialise those convicted under the Witchcraft Act 1563:
10. PE1856: Support the taxi trade
11. PE1859: Retain falconers rights to practice upland falconry in Scotland
12. PE1860: New legislation for Prescription and Limitation Act
13. PE1862: Introduce community representation on boards of public organisations delivering lifeline services to island communities
14. PE1864: Increase the ability of communities to influence planning decisions for onshore windfarms
15. PE1865: Suspend all surgical mesh and fixation devices
16. PE1866: Introduce legislation to improve bus travel for wheelchair users
17. PE1867: Establish a new national qualification for British Sign Language (BSL)
18. PE1870: Ensure teachers of autistic pupils are appropriately qualified
19. PE1871: Full review of mental health services
20. PE1875: Public inquiry into the Scottish Qualifications Authority
21. PE1876: Accurately record the sex of people charged or convicted of rape or attempted rape

22. PE1878: Investigate prosecutions under the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003
23. PE1881: Longer sentences for paedophiles and sexual predators
24. PE1884: Make whole plant cannabis oil available on the NHS or alternative funding put in place
25. PE1885: Make offering Community Shared Ownership mandatory for all windfarm development planning proposals
26. PE1887: Create an Unborn Victims of Violence Act
27. PE1890: Find solutions to recruitment and training challenges for rural healthcare in Scotland
28. PE1891: Make swimming lessons a statutory requirement in the primary school curriculum
29. PE1895: Mandatory accountability for Nature Scotland's decision making procedures
30. PE1896: Provide every primary school child in Scotland with a reusable water bottle
31. PE1900: Access to prescribed medication for detainees in police custody
32. PE1902: To allow an appeal process for Community Participation Requests
33. PE1905: Public Inquiry into the response of religious organisations to allegations of child sexual abuse since 1950
34. PE1906: Investigate options for removing and reducing the impact of the central Glasgow section of the M8
35. PE1907: Provide funded early learning & childcare for all 2 year olds in Scotland
36. PE1909: Remove the "gender-based crime" domestic abuse narrative and make it gender neutral and equal
37. PE1910: Amend the forthcoming legal requirement to have interlinked fire and smoke alarms in small houses
38. PE1911: Review of Human Tissue (Scotland) Act 2006 as it relates to post-mortems
39. PE1912: Funding for council venues
40. PE1913: Fast-track future Adult Disability Payment applications for people undergoing cancer treatment
41. PE1914: Ban school uniforms in secondary schools
42. PE1915: Reinstate Caithness County Council and Caithness NHS Board
43. PE1916: Request a public inquiry into the management of the rest and be thankful project
44. PE1917: Provide full legal aid to all parent's fighting for access to their children

45. PE1918: Improve sex education in schools
46. PE1919: Ban the sale of high caffeine products to children for performance enhancement
47. PE1920: Introduce more thorough follow-up care for women with diabetes
48. PE1921: The Scottish Government must confirm that it will not introduce voter ID in devolved elections
49. PE1924: Complete an emergency in-depth review of Women's Health services in Caithness & Sutherland
50. PE1925: Bring the HGV speed limit on major trunk roads to 50mph in line with other parts of the UK
51. PE1926: Expand universal free school meals for all nursery, primary and secondary school pupils
52. PE1927: Install CCTV cameras in all additional support needs schools
53. PE1928: Provide free rail travel for disabled people who meet the qualifications for free bus travel
54. PE1931: Improve the R100 rollout by prioritising properties who currently have speeds of less than 5 Mbps

#### **New petitions considered by the Committee**

1. PE1930: Ensure customers are always given information on cheapest possible fare in new Scotrail contract
2. PE1932: Ban smoking in Scotland and develop a strategy for vaping
3. PE1933: Allow the Fornethy Survivors to access Scotland's redress scheme
4. PE1934: Develop an educational resource on gender-based violence for all year groups in High School.
5. PE1935: Create an Independent Committee to judge whether Scottish Ministers have broken the Ministerial Code
6. PE1936: Remove potholes from Scotland's roads
7. PE1937: To give children the respect they deserve by providing options for privacy when changing for P.E
8. PE1938: Introduce compulsory microchipping of cats in Scotland
9. PE1939: Amend the date of birth to allow wider accessibility to the HPV vaccination programme for boys
10. PE1940: Permit Nest Protect as a valid system under new Fire and Smoke Alarm law
11. PE1941: Stop the destruction of headstones within community cemeteries.

12. PE1942: Encourage peer support programmes in public sector organisations.
13. PE1943: Help prevent the destruction of greenfield sites by providing financial incentives towards the remediation and reuse of brownfield sites.
14. PE1944: Enforce engine idling ban
15. PE1945: Ban the extraction and use of peat for horticulture and all growing media by 2023
16. PE1946: To call on the Scottish Government to pay all charges for homeless temporary accommodation
17. PE1947: Address Scotland's culture of youth violence
18. PE1948: Improve the way that unexplained deaths are dealt with
19. PE1949: Review the rules concerning Dual Mandate MSPs
20. PE1950: Ensure immunosuppressed people in Scotland can access the Evusheld antibody treatment
21. PE1951: Reinstate inshore coastal limit on the use of dredge and trawl fishing gears
22. PE1952: Specialist services for patients with autonomic dysfunction
23. PE1953: Review Education Support staff roles
24. PE1954: End the installation of new telegraph poles for broadband provision
25. PE1955: Make the provision of public toilets a statutory duty
26. PE1956: Increase the provision of wheelchair accessible homes
27. PE1957: Home Reports – make surveyors more accountable
28. PE1958: Extend aftercare for previously looked after young people, and remove the continuing care age cap
29. PE1959: Tackle Scotland's affordable housing crisis
30. PE1960: Formally recognise private hire cars and taxis as modes of public transport
31. PE1961: Make it a specific offence to assault, threaten or abuse a private hire or taxi driver while at work
32. PE1962: Stop motorhomes parking overnight out with formal campsites, caravan parks and Aires
33. PE1963: Phase in meat production ban by 2040
34. PE1964: Create an independent review of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
35. PE1965: Limit estranged couples' claim on an estate after 7 years of non-medical separation

36. PE1966: Formally recognise and incorporate local knowledge in Scottish Government policy
37. PE1967: Protect Loch Lomond's Atlantic oakwood shoreline by implementing the High road option for the A82 upgrade between Tarbet and Inverarnan
38. PE1968: Restrict perpetrators of domestic abuse from using family court proceedings to continue tormenting their victims
39. PE1969: Amend the law to fully decriminalise abortion in Scotland
40. PE1970: Create an online account for parents to manage the 1140 hours of Early Learning and Childcare funding
41. PE1971: Take Robust Action to Stop Motorcycle Theft
42. PE1972: Allow Assisted Dying for people with long-term mental illness and consenting capacity
43. PE1973: End the use of Sheriffs Discretion when ruling on civil cases and provide clear legal guidance on division of assets
44. PE1974: Adopt the A890 as a trunk road
45. PE1975: Reform the law relating to Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs)
46. PE1976: Backdate council tax discounts for dementia to the date of GP certification
47. PE1977: Require social services to inform biological fathers of concerns about their children
48. PE1978: Allow raw milk to be sold in Scotland
49. PE1979: Establish an independent inquiry and an independent national whistleblowing officer to investigate concerns about the alleged mishandling of child safeguarding enquiries by public bodies
50. PE1980: Adopt the A832 between Achnasheen and Gorstan as a trunk road
51. PE1981: Ensure perpetrators of domestic abuse, who have been excluded from the matrimonial home, cannot force the sale of the property
52. PE1982: Review funding arrangements for higher education to help ensure more funded places are available for Scottish ballet dancers at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
53. PE1983: Improve the transparency and accountability of Scottish legal courts
54. PE1984: Introduce the C100 form for child arrangement orders in Scotland
55. PE1985: Evaluate Garages to Homes Developments
56. PE1986: Provide testing kits for drugs in public spaces
57. PE1987: Amend the Scotland Act 2016 to automatically trigger a by-election if an

MSP/Councillor leaves their party

58. PE1988: Review the process for disposal of household raw sewage
59. PE1989: Increase defibrillators in public spaces and workplaces
60. PE1990: Introduce a Scottish Parliament question session for young people
61. PE1991: Develop an educational resource on abortion
62. PE1992: Dual the A9 and improve road safety
63. PE1993: Reform the financial support for social work students on work placements
64. PE1994: Review the trial process for sexual offence cases
65. PE1995: Improve support for victims of spiking
66. PE1996: Take action to prevent discriminatory abortions for disability in Scotland
67. PE1997: Introduce mandatory braille labelling for food products sold in Scotland:
68. PE1998: End legal loopholes for the Monarchy
69. PP1999: Fully implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
70. PE2000: Ensure universities are held accountable to students under consumer law
71. PE2001: Withdraw the 'Supporting transgender young people in schools' guidance from Scottish schools
72. PE2002: Ensure access to legal aid for people with disabilities
73. PE2003: Prohibit reward systems in fast food chains
74. PE2004: Abolish the use of Public Private Partnerships in Scotland
75. PE2005: Formal response to the annual Adoption Barometer Report in Scotland
76. PE2006: Review and simplify the legislation in relation to dismissal of property factors

