

Public Petitions Committee
Thursday 8 October 2026
4th Meeting, 2026 (Session 7)

PE2245: Keep the William Wallace letter in Scotland

Introduction

Petitioner David Reid

Petition Summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to keep the Wallace Letter, known as the Safe conduct/Letter of introduction, in Scotland.

The letter is on loan from the National Archives and is a key item of significant cultural importance to Scotland and our history. It is due to end its loan period in September 2026, and we want the letter extended indefinitely and kept where it is most significant.

Website <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2245>

1. This is a new petition that was published on 25 August 2026.
2. A full summary of this petition and its aims can be found at **Annexe A**.
3. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 1,381 signatures have been received on this petition.
4. A SPICe briefing has been prepared to inform the Committee's consideration of the petition and can be found at **Annexe B**.
5. The Committee seeks views from the Scottish Government on all new petitions before they are formally considered.
6. The Committee has received a submission from the Scottish Government which is set out in **Annexe C** of this paper.

Action

7. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

Clerks to the Committee
October 2026

Annexe A: Summary of petition

PE2245: Keep the William Wallace letter in Scotland

Petitioner:

David Reid

Date published:

25 August 2026

Petition summary:

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to keep the Wallace Letter, known as the Safe conduct/Letter of introduction, in Scotland.

The letter is on loan from the National Archives and is a key item of significant cultural importance to Scotland and our history. It is due to end its loan period in September 2026, and we want the letter extended indefinitely and kept where it is most significant.

Previous action:

The Society of William Wallace has previously discussed these matters with MSPs via email as well as meeting with former Falkirk West MSP, Michael Matheson, and attending a meeting with former Cabinet Secretary for Constitution, External Affairs and Culture, Angus Robertson. We are also seeking meetings with the new Cabinet Secretary and the First Minister. In addition, we have set up a change petition: <https://c.org/5H5P9vsm5b>, which has gathered over 5000 signatures.

Background information:

The Wallace letter was given to William Wallace by the King of France around 1299-1300 as an introduction to the Pope. It was taken from William Wallace in London prior to his judiciary execution. Had Wallace not been captured the letter would be in the National Archives of Scotland.

The letter was secured on loan in 2012 and has been displayed in Scotland several times, the last being in 2024.

We understand that the National Records of Scotland does not intend to ask for an extension and the National Archives, located in Kew, England has stated that it would like to take the letter back.

This letter is one of the few items we know Wallace had and as he is Scotland's National hero the letter is of huge significance to Scotland's culture.

Annexe B: SPICe Briefing



Scottish Parliament
Information Centre
Ionad Fiosrachaidh
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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

10 September 2026

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

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in petition briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

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Annexe C: Written Submissions

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