

# Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

16th Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Wednesday  
23 November 2022

PE1896: Provide every primary school child in  
Scotland with a reusable water bottle

## Note by the Clerk

**Lodged on** 20 September 2021

**Petitioner** Callum Isted

**Petition  
summary** Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to  
replace the disposable water bottle provided with primary school  
lunches with a sustainable, reusable, metal bottle.

**Webpage** <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1896>

## Introduction

1. The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on [9 March 2022](#). At that meeting, the Committee heard evidence from the petitioner and agreed to write to the First Minister to ask what action is planned to fulfil the aims of the petition.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the [petition's webpage](#). The Committee has not received a response from the First Minister.
4. Further background information about this petition can be found in the [SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.

5. The Scottish Government's initial position on this petition can be found on the [petition's webpage](#).

## **Action**

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

**Clerk to the Committee**

## Annexe A

# PE1896: Provide every primary school child in Scotland with a reusable water bottle

## Petitioner

Callum Isted

## Date Lodged

20/09/2021

## Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to replace the disposable water bottle provided with primary school lunches with a sustainable, reusable, metal bottle.

## Previous action

Callum has:

- written to his headteacher, who forwarded his complaint to West Lothian Council who then made the disposable water bottle in school lunches optional
- contacted & received positive responses from several MSPs
- raised over £1,400 to buy reusable water bottles for his school, with additional lids to make his scheme sustainable for the future
- will have finished walking the entire John Muir Way (134 miles) in order to raise the money above

## Background information

Each week schoolchildren are given 250ml disposable plastic water bottles to have with their lunches. Callum (age 7) feels very strongly that this is the wrong thing to do.

Callum has been running his campaign since early 2021 and is very determined to succeed.

He says that you want to help the environment but were wasting more plastic than the weight of one of the pandas at the zoo (estimated per

school, per year). He has solved the problem for his school and now wants to help the whole of Scotland.

Many adults have agreed with him and Sue Webber MSP has been particularly helpful.

He says adults should listen to children about the environment and provide the money to buy more water bottles. Shortly, he will have walked 134 miles to prove his point.

He has already achieved a phenomenal amount for a 7 year old and I hope his petition is viewed positively.

## Annexe B

### Extract from the Official Report of last consideration of PE1896 on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2022

**The Convener:** Agenda item 1 is consideration of continued petitions. PE1896, which was lodged by Callum Isted, calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to provide every primary school child in Scotland with a reusable water bottle. The petition calls for the disposable water bottle that is provided with many primary school lunches to be replaced with a sustainable, reusable metal bottle.

We give the warmest of welcomes to Callum, who is the Scottish Parliament's youngest ever petitioner. We are absolutely delighted that he has found time to come in and have a chat with us about his petition. We welcome his dad, James, who joins him, and his mum, Sarah, who is in the public gallery. His local MSP, Sue Webber, also joins us, and I am very jealous to see that she has already been gifted a very fancy and colour-appropriate reusable water bottle.

Callum, it is great to have you with us. To start off, tell us a bit about yourself—how old you are, which primary class you are in at school and why you decided to lodge the petition.

**Callum Isted:** I am seven years old and I am in primary 3 at Dedridge primary school.

**The Convener:** Is it a big class? Are there a lot of people in it?

**Callum Isted:** Yes, there are a lot of people.

**The Convener:** I hope that you have a lot—or a few—friends in the class.

**Callum Isted:** Yes, I have a few.

**The Convener:** Is it a big school with lots of people?

**Callum Isted:** Yes.

**The Convener:** What is your favourite subject at school?

**Callum Isted:** It is definitely maths.

**The Convener:** That is very encouraging. I was absolutely hopeless at maths. You are here because you have lodged this petition. Can you tell us why you thought that the petition was a good idea and what you hope that it will do? Why did you think that it would be a good idea to write to the Scottish Parliament? Was it because we can get things done?

**Callum Isted:** I wanted to go to Nicola Sturgeon’s house to speak to her about the bottles, but my mum said that it was not allowed, so we looked online and found out about petitions.

**The Convener:** I see—so we were second choice. In fact, I raised the fact that you were coming in with the First Minister last week at a meeting of all the committee conveners, and she was very keen to meet you. I gather that you are going to be seeing the First Minister in a little while, so that you can discuss the petition with her. Is that correct?

**Callum Isted:** Yes.

**The Convener:** That is great. What are you going to say to her?

**Callum Isted:** I really do not know yet.

[Laughter.]

**The Convener:** I hope that you are going to do some straight talking and not let her flannel you or put you off—make sure that you get straight through it. Essentially, you want everybody to have a reusable water bottle. You have a water bottle with you today—is that the sort of bottle that you are thinking of?

**Callum Isted:** It is the yellow one, not the black one.

**The Convener:** What is special about the bottle?

**Callum Isted:** Instead of getting a reusable plastic bottle, I would get a reusable metal one, because the reusable plastic ones break too easily.

**The Convener:** That is great. We will all ask you a few wee questions, so that we can get a handle on the petition.

**David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP):** Good morning, Callum. In the 11 years that I have been on this committee, I cannot recall a petitioner twice your age, never mind one as young as you. Well done, and welcome to the committee. Before I ask questions about the petition, what is your favourite sport?

**Callum Isted:** Football.

**David Torrance:** What team do you support?

**Callum Isted:** Manchester United and Rangers.

**David Torrance:** I will not say which Scottish team I support, because it is in the headlines quite a lot just now, but I am a Leeds United fan. When did you first notice in school that there were lots of children using plastic bottles?

**Callum Isted:** In the last lockdown, in February 2021.

**David Torrance:** So nearly everybody in your class was using plastic bottles.

**Callum Isted:** Yes. In fact, everybody in my class was.

**David Torrance:** Why do you think that they should not use plastic bottles? I can see that you have lots of examples in front of you.

**Callum Isted:** Because animals could get injured or die from the litter and humans could get ill if they eat a fish that has eaten plastic. Those are called microplastics.

**David Torrance:** I can say, as somebody who does a lot of litter picks, that plastic bottles are probably the most common thing that we pick up from trees and bushes around Kirkcaldy and the surrounding areas. They are really bad for the environment, so I am extremely glad that you have brought your petition to the committee.

I am so impressed by what you have done, especially given your age. Usually, boys your age are looking to get money from tooth fairies and things like that, rather than bringing petitions to the Parliament, so well done—you have done really well.

**Callum Isted:** Thank you.

**The Convener:** Thank you, David. Callum might be looking for money for his teeth as well—don't short change him there!

**Ruth Maguire (Cunninghame South) (SNP):** Good morning, Callum. My name is Ruth. Thank you for coming to talk to us. Would you be able to tell me a little bit about your eco group? I heard that you did some work with it in your school.

**Callum Isted:** We have meetings, including meetings with other schools. We have teamed up with another school called Dunblane primary and we are trying to fix the broken taps.

**Ruth Maguire:** I was interested to read a little bit about that. You did something about the broken taps in your school—could you tell the committee about that?

**Callum Isted:** In my classroom, there is a hot tap and a cold tap, both of which are broken. Those are the only two taps in my area, so everybody who needs to use a tap has to come all the way to our class. There is only one place to fill up your water bottle and that is in primary 4.

**Ruth Maguire:** Okay. Did you do something about it when the taps were not working? Did you get some help from one of the adults in the school?

**Callum Isted:** Yes. Ruth Maguire: Who did you go to for help?

**Callum Isted:** Mrs Mohammed and my eco group.

**Ruth Maguire:** Did the janitor fix them for you?

**Callum Isted:** She has not replied to our letter yet.

**Ruth Maguire:** I am sure that she will. This will be a wee reminder for her. Who else have you spoken to? You have not just come straight to the Parliament, have you? You have spoken to lots of people.

**Callum Isted:** I have spoken to my headteacher, Mrs French, and to STV, Forth 1 and Radio Scotland.

**Ruth Maguire:** I heard you on Radio Scotland this morning—you did very well. You sounded less nervous than some of my colleagues sound sometimes—you did a really good job.

**Callum Isted:** I also spoke to the council and to the BBC.

**Ruth Maguire:** Well done—you have done a really good job.

**The Convener:** Out of interest, Callum, what did the council say? The council manages all the schools, so it could be one of the groups that could give everybody a reusable water bottle. Is it away to think about it?

**Callum Isted:** The bottles cost money. The council made the bottles optional. The

**Convener:** We are paying for baby boxes. A water bottle does not seem like such a big additional expense.

**Paul Sweeney (Glasgow) (Lab):** Welcome to our committee, Callum. It is great to hear from you. I heard that you went to visit the 26th United Nations climate change conference of the parties—COP26—in Glasgow last year. Did you have a nice time there?

**Callum Isted:** Yes.

**Paul Sweeney:** What was your favourite thing about COP26?

**Callum Isted:** The big bouncy castle that had water inside it.

**Paul Sweeney:** Oh, right—I did not see the bouncy castle. I am gutted that I missed that. I saw the big giant planet that span round. That was really cool. I thought that that was really interesting.

Another thing that was really cool was that I got a reusable water bottle when I visited COP26. I think that everybody who visited Glasgow for the conference got one, so when you submitted your petition, I thought, “Why don’t we give our own children the same thing? Why are we giving all these VIPs metal reusable water bottles?” Do you think that it was a bit of a double standard? Is it important that we set an example and that, if we did it at COP, we should do it for kids as well?

**Callum Isted:** I did not even notice that they were doing that.

**Paul Sweeney:** Really? I will need to send you one, then.

**Callum Isted:** No, I have already got two—well, three.

**Paul Sweeney:** Okay—that is fine. I got one with “COP26” written on it, which was quite cool. It probably peels off after a while, so maybe it is not such a good thing. Who did you meet at COP26? What kind of people did you go and see?

**Callum Isted:** I met the BBC and I met the boss, Stephen Breslin. He is very nice.

**Paul Sweeney:** Brilliant. There were a lot of bosses of different kinds at COP26, so at least you got to see some important people. Did you talk to him about your idea?

**Callum Isted:** Yes. He is the head of the Glasgow Science Centre. They already knew about my idea.

**Paul Sweeney:** That is fantastic. Did they agree that bringing reusable water bottles into schools was a good idea?

**Callum Isted:** Yes.

**Callum Isted:** I would like Parliament to buy the bottles, please.

**Paul Sweeney:** We will certainly look into that. We will see how much money we have left in our wallet. Thank you very much, Callum.

**The Convener:** Alexander Stewart will ask some questions about how Callum has handled the fundraising.

**Alexander Stewart (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):** Good morning, Callum. You did a long walk to raise some funds to make sure that you could buy some bottles for your school. Where did you walk and how long was it?

**Callum Isted:** I started walking in the last lockdown in February 2021. It was 134 miles. I was actually just round the back of the Parliament.

**Alexander Stewart:** How much did you raise?

**Callum Isted:** I raised £1,405.66.

**Alexander Stewart:** That is a fantastic amount of money. Who went with you on the walk?

**Callum Isted:** My mum and dad went with me, and also my puppy and my sister Matilda.

**Alexander Stewart:** What did people at your school say when you had raised that huge sum of money and were able to give them a bottle?

**Callum Isted:** They said nothing.

**Alexander Stewart:** How did you feel?

**Callum Isted:** I felt very surprised that I had raised so much money. It was actually over how much I had to have.

**Alexander Stewart:** So you beat your target.

**Callum Isted:** Yes.

**Alexander Stewart:** That is excellent. Now that you have done that, you want us to make sure that everybody can get a bottle.

**Callum Isted:** Yes.

**Alexander Stewart:** What will your next project be? Have you thought about that? Do you want to get this one finished first?

**Callum Isted:** Yes.

**Alexander Stewart:** That is good. Thank you very much for coming in. You should be proud of raising such a huge amount of money and proud to be here today. We are delighted to see you.

09:45

**The Convener:** Thank you, Callum. We wish you lots of success. You will be seeing the First Minister shortly. Before the committee agrees on its next actions, is there anything else that you would like to say to us?

**Callum Isted:** No.

**The Convener:** We have quite a clear steer on the petition. Out of interest, how many bottles did the money buy?

**Callum Isted:** I earned so much money that I was able to get some for the adults in the school, too.

**The Convener:** Crikey!

**Callum Isted:** I also bought some straws. I gave some to every class in my school and to the nursery, which is next door, and some to the adults. They have to share them.

**The Convener:** That is a lot of bottles.

**James Isted:** It was 250.

**The Convener:** That is fantastic.

Sue Webber is with us, as I said earlier. Sue, would you like to contribute to our thoughts and the discussion?

**Sue Webber (Lothian) (Con):** Thank you, convener. You can see why, when I first saw Callum's Facebook posts back in May, not long after I got elected, I was so keen to do everything I could to help this young, inspiring boy to aspire to his dreams. I followed him diligently when he walked the John Muir way. We went out and met him, his puppy and his parents in East Lothian with my old dog.

**Callum Isted:** And my teachers.

**Sue Webber:** That is right. We went out to see you as you got to the end of your long walk.

**Callum Isted:** And my auntie and uncle.

**Sue Webber:** Everyone was there. There were a lot of people.

It is tremendous that the committee has opened up and been so willing to endorse and support this young man's dreams and to get the First Minister involved. With everything that we aspire to do as parliamentarians, when there is something as tangible as Callum's petition, which will make a real difference to so many young people across the country, we would be foolhardy not to get on side and back it all the way.

**The Convener:** We know that Callum will meet the First Minister. In considering Callum's evidence and taking forward the petition, does the committee agree to write to the First Minister following the meeting to outline the objectives that Callum has set and to find out what she and the Scottish Government might be able to do to advance the objectives of the petition?

**Members** *indicated agreement*

**The Convener:** If there are no other suggestions, we will take forward the petition on that basis.

Thank you very much, Callum. It has been an absolute pleasure to have you here. I hope that you will have a great day. We will take forward the petition and, after you have met the First Minister, we will ask her to honour whatever commitments you can get out of her and we will see what we can do to put your petition into practice.

I suspend the meeting briefly.