

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

3rd Meeting, 2021 (Session 6), Wednesday 8
September 2021

PE1662: Improve Treatment for Patients with Lyme Disease and Associated Tick-borne Diseases

Note by the Clerk

PE1662: Lodged 28 June 2017

Petitioners Janey Cringean and Lorraine Murray on behalf of Tick-borne Illness Campaign Scotland

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to improve testing and treatment for Lyme Disease and associated tick-borne diseases by ensuring that medical professionals in Scotland are fully equipped to deal with the complexity of tick-borne infections, addressing the lack of reliability of tests, the full variety of species in Scotland, the presence of 'persister' bacteria which are difficult to eradicate, and the complexities caused by the presence of possibly multiple co-infections, and to complement this with a public awareness campaign.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1662>

Introduction

1. The Session 5 Public Petitions Committee (PPC) last considered this petition at its meeting on [24 March 2021](#). At that meeting, the PPC agreed to continue this petition and include it in its legacy paper for its Session 6 successor Committee, along with a suggestion to seek an update from the Scottish Government on any progress made to address the issues raised during the evidence session.

2. A summary of past consideration of the petition and suggested areas for future investigation is provided for the Committee's consideration.

Background

3. During its consideration of this petition, the PPC received more than forty written submissions and took oral evidence from—
 - Representatives from Scottish Land & Estates, Scottish Natural Heritage (now NatureScot), Scottish Microbiology Reference Laboratory, British Veterinary Association and NFU Scotland at a roundtable discussion on [12 September 2019](#); and
 - Mairi Gougeon, the then Minister for Public Health and Sport; supported by Dr Gill Hawkins, Senior Medical Officer Health Protection and Public Health; and Professor Tom Evans, CMO Specialty Adviser in Infectious Diseases, Scottish Government on [24 February 2021](#).
4. When giving evidence to the PPC in February 2021, the then Minister for Public Health and Sport, Mairi Gougeon, assured the PPC that—

“the Scottish Government and its public health partners are committed to supporting people with Lyme disease, finding new and better diagnostic and treatment tools, and trying to prevent it in the first place.”
5. During the session, the Minister and officials also highlighted—
 - At the suggestion of the petitioners, the Scottish Government was due to hold a round table event earlier this year, bringing together clinicians, patient representatives and public health experts to discuss testing, treatment and raising awareness.
 - Use of any treatment offered in the NHS has to be evidence-based and proven that it will do patients good. More research is needed to underpin the development of better treatment options, particularly for those who are suffering with longer-term symptoms;
 - the Scottish Government is keen to develop an infectious diseases managed clinical network, to include lyme disease as a workstream.
 - The importance of the Scottish Lyme disease and tick-borne infections reference laboratory in Inverness, which has well-validated tests to cover the species that are thought to be prevalent in Scotland.
 - The reference laboratory follows best international practice on what the evidence base shows are the tests that work and are the most reliable. The tests are constantly under review and the Scottish Government takes on board the best possible evidence at the time.

- The Scottish Government will be committing resources to support the education and awareness raising around Lyme disease.

Action

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

Clerk to the Committee

Annexe

The Scottish Parliament launched a new website at the end of Session 5.

All written submissions received on the petition before May 2021 can be viewed on the petition on the [archive webpage](#). Written submissions received on the petition after May 2021 can be viewed on its [new webpage](#).