



**PUBLIC PETITION NO.**

**PE01350**

### Name of petitioner

Nick Brand

### Petition title

Return of the Wallace Safe Conduct

### Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to make a formal loan request to the National Archive at Kew to return the Wallace Safe Conduct to Scotland under a permanent loan agreement.

### Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition

Since 2005, various members of the Society of William Wallace have corresponded with officials at Kew and the National Museum of Scotland over this matter.

Kew is refusing to release the document on the grounds that there is no evidence to indicate the origins of the document or to conclusively say it was in Wallace's possession beyond the very strong circumstantial case that indicates it was. A number of prominent Scottish historians are firmly of the view that the contemporaneous indexing of the document around the time of Wallace's capture by English agents at a time when England was effectively at war with both Scotland and France offer the only reasonable explanation on how this document fell into English hands. Scottish historians have completely dismissed the suggestion by officials at Kew that the document is an English copy of an original French document. Why would they make a copy if they had possession of the original, which if released at the time could have assisted Wallace's work in Rome and Scottish claims for recognition as an independent nation. The NMS appears to have taken the same position without adequate reference to the input of several eminent Scottish historians, and this position should be re assessed with the aid of the historians mentioned.

Many MPs and MSPs have been contacted in regard to this since 2005. The national press have shown an interest on several occasions, printing various stories about it.

Several eminent Scottish historians (including Professor Barrow, who is recognised as one of the leading historical experts in this field and who believes strongly in its authenticity along with Dr Fiona Watson and other academics) have been contacted, and have agreed to assess the document for authenticity, and to hopefully prove that it is not, as has been claimed, merely a copy.

### Petition background information

Members of the Society of William Wallace have been in touch with several eminent

Scottish historians, including Professor Geoffrey Barrow, Professor Ted Cowan, and Dr Fiona Watson. All of these have agreed to meet and professionally assess the document to ascertain whether it is indeed genuine, and not, as the National Archives at Kew claim, just a copy. This is vitally important as it will once and for all settle the debate as to the document's provenance.

The Wallace Safe Conduct (Kew Ref. SC 1/30/81) is a letter written on parchment paper approximately 16cm x 7cm. It is a letter of instruction to French agents to aid and assist William Wallace. Scottish historians believe the letter was being carried by Wallace when he was captured by English agents whilst he made preparations to make his way to Rome to lobby the Pope to support Scottish claims for independence. It has fold marks on it suggesting it was carried and not part of a roll or other similar document. The document names Wallace directly. The National Archive at Kew concedes that Wallace was carrying other Safe Conduct documents at the time of his capture in 1305 (Ref: Exchequer Treasury of Receipt produced between 1323 and 1324). The National Archive at Kew does not know, or can offer, no explanation why this document fell into its hands. It has claimed that it is not of Scottish origin, but curiously say it does not know what origin it is, despite ruling out a Scottish origin.

Kew has suggested it is an English copy of an original French document, something flatly dismissed as nonsense by Scottish historians. Kew (The National Archive) believes there are no grounds to release the documents to Scotland, although a permanent loan agreement was suggested by the First Minister's office and discussions between officials at Kew and the Keeper of Records in Scotland did take place, but NLS officials do not appear to have followed through and made a formal loan request (Ref: FoI returns from the National Archive obtained by Christine Grahame MSPs office). Scottish Ministers are supportive of the document being returned to Scotland under a permanent loan agreement and, in conjunction with officials at Kew, having it examined further by leading Scottish historians and experts to better understand the purpose and origin of the document.

If, as many leading Scottish historians believe who have examined high resolution digital images of the document, that this is indeed what I believe it to be, then it will be one of the few actual artefacts known to have been in William Wallace's possession. Given Wallace's iconic status in Scottish history and as part of the nation's identity, the document is of great importance. Its public display in Scotland would rekindle interest in this pivotal moment in Scotland's history and also boost tourism locally (Ref: representations made by Stirling tourism organisations to Christine Grahame MSP).

#### Unique web address

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/PE01350>

#### Related information for petition

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**NO**

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2577

<b>Closing date for collecting signatures online</b>
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