



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

**PUBLIC PETITION NO.**

**PE01721**

### **Name of petitioner**

John Hanks on behalf of Friends of Geilston

### **Petition title**

National tourism strategy for Scotland and the role of the National Trust for Scotland

### **Petition summary**

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to meet with the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) to discuss the role the NTS can play in the context of the national tourism strategy, Tourism Scotland 2020 and, within that, the future of any Trust property under threat of closure, such as Geilston Gardens near Cardross.

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

As well as ongoing discussions with the NTS, the Friends of Geilston have met with local MSPs Maurice Corry and Jackie Baillie to discuss the local and national issues raised by the threatened closures of NTS properties. Questions have also been tabled by Maurice Corry MSP in the Parliament on the subject of funding for NTS properties under threat of closure.

### **Petition background information**

In June 2017 the NTS announced to the staff and volunteers at Geilston Gardens that the Board of Trustees had decided to divest itself of the property unless an examination of all possible options revealed that the Garden could be run on a more economically viable basis. A Friends group of NTS members, volunteers and local residents was formed to challenge some of the criteria used by the NTS in reaching its decision, and to work with the NTS in formulating an acceptable plan that would allow the Gardens to remain open to visitors. This work is ongoing. In discussions with the NTS it also emerged that other NTS properties are currently under threat of closure, and that some had already been closed.

Local evidence at Geilston Gardens suggests that NTS properties have a high proportion of UK wide and international visitors. These visitors must, therefore, contribute significantly to the total visitor numbers to Scotland, and to the tourism industry as a whole, and it follows that this contribution could be affected by a narrative of NTS property closures. The scale of threatened closures is not known to the general public, but as individual cases become known, they are each likely to generate negative publicity, and this drip feed of negative publicity may adversely affect the public's view

publicity, and this drip feed of negative publicity may adversely affect the public's view of Scotland as a tourist destination. Of course, not all NTS properties under threat of closure will have a local Friends group to champion the cause of keeping the property open.

The Friends group notes that the Scottish Government supports Tourism Scotland 2020, which is the industry led national tourism strategy. The strategy aims to make Scotland a "first-choice destination for a high quality, value for money and memorable customer experience delivered by skilled and passionate people", and has several targets associated with increasing the scale of the tourism industry. Heritage and nature are certainly two important strands to this strategy, and both are exemplified by Geilston Gardens and other NTS properties.

The Friends group believes that the Scottish Government is well placed to meet with the NTS in the event of any proposed closure of NTS properties, to ensure that, as far as is possible, these closures are kept to an absolute minimum, in line with the aims and objectives of Tourism Scotland 2020.

#### Unique web address

<https://www.parliament.scot/GettingInvolved/Petitions/PE01721>

#### Related information for petition

**Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?**

YES

**How many signatures have you collected so far?**

0

**Closing date for collecting signatures online**

10 / 06 / 2019

#### Comments to stimulate online discussion

Do you agree that the National Trust for Scotland can play a key role in Scotland's national tourism strategy?

Are you aware of any Trust properties in your area that may be at risk of closure?

If yes, what impact do you think this may have on the local area?