



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

PUBLIC PETITION NO.

PE01754

Name of petitioner

Mark Openshaw

Petition title

Ensure any referendum on constitutional change has a two thirds majority for it to succeed

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ensure that any referendum advocating constitutional change should have at least a two thirds majority for it to succeed.

Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition

In addition to writing to my constituency MSP Maureen Watt and attending one of her surgeries to discuss the matter I have also had email correspondence on the subject with Liam Kerr MSP, Lewis Macdonald MSP and Mike Rumbles MSP.

Petition background information

This Petition is in response to the Scottish Government's recently published Referendums Scotland Bill - which is described as "A Bill for an Act of the Scottish Parliament to make provision for the holding of referendums throughout Scotland; to make provision about such referendums and other referendums held under Acts of the Scottish Parliament".

The 2014 Scottish separation referendum result had a clear majority of 10%, but despite promises by the SNP that this was a "once in a generation" vote, the SNP, the Green party and their supporters have not accepted this and continue to campaign for another referendum.

The ongoing uncertainty, debate and division is harmful to Scotland as it distracts politicians and civil servants from concentrating on immediate and pressing problems which they already have the power and responsibility to tackle.

A two thirds vote in favour of change would be clear, demand acceptance by all, and neutralise subsequent efforts to revoke the result or have another referendum.

It would also give a powerful mandate to the governing party responsible for implementing the change

implementing the change.

In the case of a referendum on Scotland's separation from the UK, the change would mean negotiating a treaty of separation and subsequent agreements on trade, co-operation, assets, defence and transfer of powers. The narrow Brexit vote and ongoing difficulty of a British Government to negotiate and implement a settlement is an example of the problems resulting from deciding an issue on anything less than a substantial majority that gives a widely accepted mandate.

Referendums are an accepted way to resolve major constitutional issues but recent experience (and that of Quebec in 1980 and 1995) shows that low thresholds produce indecisive, contested results and that a high threshold is required. Very few people questioned the 75%/25% result of the 1997 Scottish devolution referendum, for example.

It is also worth pointing out that the SNP's own rules requires a majority of 66% in order to approve a change to their constitution stating: "This constitution may not be changed except by vote of at least two thirds of the delegates voting at the National Conference".

Unique web address

<https://www.parliament.scot/GettingInvolved/Petitions/PE01754>

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

30 / 09 / 2019

Comments to stimulate online discussion

Do you agree that only the mandate of a 2/3rds majority in favour of separating from the UK can justify the distraction from dealing with the many urgent issues already within the remit of both the Holyrood and Westminster Parliaments?