



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

PUBLIC PETITION NO.

PE01770

Name of petitioner

Margaret Spiers

Petition title

Improving Water Safety

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to work with all relevant bodies across Scotland to improve water safety by ensuring that:

- All waterways have life-saving equipment such as lifebelts and buoyancy Throw Bags, with ropes, to allow multiple attempts at rescue; and
- Tampering with water safety equipment is made a criminal offence of endangering public safety.

Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition

We started the campaign in Glasgow initially, gathering public support and engaging with councillors and local MSPs. We have also spoken at the Parliament Cross Party Group on Water Safety and we have a meeting scheduled with the Minister for Community Safety.

Petition background information

In January 2016 our son Christopher died after falling into the Clyde in Glasgow City Centre. He was only 28. We are grieving the loss of our son but we decided to do everything we could to prevent more such tragic accidents.

When we investigated we came to the conclusion that water safety had to be improved and we launched the 'Christopher's Saving Lives Campaign.' At that point we were looking at the River Clyde and we campaigned to Glasgow City Council. Much of what we campaigned for has now been adopted by the council, so we want to see some of these measures rolled out across Scotland.

- The recommendations of our campaign are as follows:
- To ensure all waterways have life-saving equipment such as lifebelts and ropes.
- The ropes on life belts to be attached so that someone can be pulled to safety but also so that if the first throw misses the person in the water another try can be made

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- The provision of buoyancy Throw Bags with instructions (also attached to ropes) because these can be thrown further out than life belts.
- All ropes attached to buoyancy safety equipment to be specific pattern using multi coloured rope so that it is easy to identify and acts as a deterrent to would be thieves. (This is currently being adopted in Glasgow.)
- Warning signs so someone else might think twice on taking risks – most areas of deep water have no sign to indicate the depth.
- CCTV covering deep water areas particularly in city centres should be monitored at peak times for example at weekends when people are out socialising.
- Greater police presence in busy deep-water areas.
- Training should be made available for those already out on the streets at night to support people for example in Glasgow we have street pastors who go into the city to feed people who are homeless but also to look out for vulnerable individuals.
- Safety measures to be adopted on rivers, canals, reservoirs and lochs and not just on 'open sea' type spaces.
- Possible legislation to ensure safety equipment is visible and accessible. Hogganfield Loch in the East End of Glasgow goes very quickly from being shallow to a steep drop and this has resulted in deaths. This loch has a life belt but the sign says it is INSIDE the local golf club (at least a 5 minute walk away) and the golf club shuts at 6pm so after that there is no safety equipment.
- Make tampering with water safety equipment a criminal offence of endangering public safety.
- Education in schools in water safety
- For all new builds located at waterways to agree to install water safety equipment and include this in their planning applications to ensure approval

Our campaign is aimed at preventing accidental deaths rather than suicides. We support any measure taken to prevent suicide but we believe that needs to be tackled with a different approach.

We have had success in Glasgow already. One of our local councillors Graham Campbell worked closely with us to get the campaign in front of the Water Safety Committee. We have since attended a meeting of this committee. We have also met with Cllr Susan Aitken the Leader of GCC and Cllr Campbell raised our concerns at a meeting of the Full Council.

The water safety group within Glasgow City Council had agreed to install ropes on the lifebelts along the Clyde. They have now implemented these on all the bridges and quay walls adjacent to the city centre. They have attached unique ropes which are multi-coloured to identify as water safety equipment to the lifebelts and throw bags. The unique coloured rope is not available for sale to any other organisations or to the public. This is unique to Glasgow City Council and other councils may adopt their own colour to make it easier to identify. This may deter vandalism.

Additionally, the water safety group have introduced enhanced CCTV to deter would be vandals. They will also introduce more training and education on water safety.

Unique web address

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

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

18 / 12 / 2019

Comments to stimulate online discussion

We believe that we need to improve water safety and that these improvements will save lives.

Do you agree that:

- All waterways should have life-saving equipment to allow multiple attempts at rescue?
- All safety equipment should be visible and accessible?
- Tampering with water safety equipment should be an offence of endangering public safety