



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Getting Involved: Petitioning the Scottish Parliament

Would you like to raise awareness of an issue or try to change something about the way things work in Scotland?

The petitions process allows you to get your issue on the Parliament's agenda and ask us to look at issues that the Parliament has the power to do something about.



Petitions to the Scottish Parliament

There are some rules on the types of issue that you can petition the Scottish Parliament about, and on the way that a petition to the Parliament should be set out.

What can you petition the Parliament about?

Basically, petitions to the Parliament must:

- be about something that is within the powers of the Scottish Parliament
- be about an issue of national policy or practice
- not ask the Scottish Parliament to become involved in a local or individual matter, or to intervene in a decision that should be taken by another organisation.

For example, a petition cannot ask the Scottish Parliament to stop the closure of a local health centre but could ask for a review of the national policies or guidance that sets out the actions health boards should take when closures are being considered.

The standards for petitions are set out on pages 3 & 4 of this guide. You should read the rules before writing your petition. If you have any questions, the petitions team is available to help; just contact them at petitions@parliament.scot or on 0131 348 5254.

How should your petition be set out?

There is a specific format for petitions to the Scottish Parliament. The format has five main sections:

- **Details about you:** You need to provide us with your name, postal address and email address. The Parliament's [privacy notice for the petitions system](#) explains how this information will be used and managed.
- **Petition title:** This should explain in as few words as possible what your petition is about.
- **Petition summary:** This is where you tell the Parliament what you want it to do. This section should be one or two sentences and should state clearly what action you want the Parliament to take.
- **Previous action taken:** Before you petition the Scottish Parliament, you need to have already taken some action to raise the issue. This can be a range of activities but should include contacting at least one of your MSP(s) or the Scottish Government.
- **Background information:** Any other information you want to let the Parliament know about to help MSPs to understand why you would like them to consider the issue you have raised. This section should be no longer than three A4 pages in Arial 12pt.

Please note, if your petition does not meet this specific format, it will be considered inadmissible and returned to you for further action. We are also unable to accept petitions via other online petitions systems.

Creating your petition

After you have read the rules you will be ready to start your petition. You should do this using the Parliament's petitions system.

The first thing you will need to do is register an account on the online system. As part of registering an account you will receive an email asking you to verify your email address – if you don't see this email in your inbox, please check your junk email folder. Your account details will be held as described in the [privacy notice for the petitions system](#).

After you are registered you will be able to type the text of your petition into each of the sections that we have explained are part of the format for petitions to the Parliament.

Helpful hint: For security reasons, the system will automatically log you out if you have been on the same page for around 15 minutes. If this happens you may lose information that you have entered. To prevent this from happening, we would suggest that you write your petition out in Word or similar before you create your account.

When you have completed each section, you should read through your petition one last time and then press the 'Submit' button. If you do not hit this button, it will not be received by the petitions team.

If you cannot access the online system, it is possible to submit your petition using a template that can be provided by the petitions team.

The petitions team will send you an email to confirm your petition has been received. We try and do this as quickly as possible, but please allow extra time for petitions received over the weekend, bank holidays and parliamentary recess. It will then be reviewed by one of the petitions team who are there to check that petitions meet the Parliament's rules and to make sure that petitions are as clear as possible. One of the team will then provide you with advice on your petition.

Note: If your petition does not meet the Parliament's rules, the petitions team will explain why.

After you've considered any advice from the petitions team and the final wording of your petition is agreed, your petition will be published on the petitions website. At this stage, you have the option to collect signatures and comments on your petition for a maximum period of six weeks, although this is not a formal requirement of the petitioning process.

What happens next?

Once your petition has been published on the Scottish Parliament's website, it will be scheduled for consideration by the Public Petitions Committee. The petitions team will let you know when your petition will be considered and if the Committee would like to invite you to give evidence in person to ensure they understand the issue you have raised.

After your petition has been discussed, the Committee will decide what action they wish to take on your petition. Actions that the Committee can consider taking include:

- getting information from the Scottish Government and other organisations
- taking oral evidence on the petition from the Scottish Government, public bodies or other organisations
- referring the petition to another committee of the Parliament
- making recommendations for action by the Scottish Government
- asking for time in the Chamber to allow the petition to be debated by the Parliament
- closing the petition.

The petitions team will get in touch with you to let you know each time your petition is to be considered and will confirm the outcome of each meeting. When further information is received we will invite you to provide your views on this information before the Committee considers your petition again.

Consideration of a petition ends when the Committee decides to formally close it. When this happens we will write to you to confirm the Committee's decision and the reasons for closing your petition

Scottish Parliament Petition Rules

The rules for petitions to the Scottish Parliament are set out in two places: the Standing Orders of the Scottish Parliament (the rule book for how the Parliament works) and a document (known as a determination) agreed by the Public Petitions Committee.

Standing Orders Rules:

Rule 15.4.2

A petition must clearly state: (a) the name of the petitioner; (b) an address of the petitioner to which all communications concerning the petition should be sent; and (c) the name and address of any person supporting the petition.

Rule 15.5.1

A petition is admissible unless it: (a) does not comply with Rule 15.4.2 or is otherwise not in proper form; (aa) is frivolous; (ab) breaches any enactment or rule of law; (ac) refers to any matter in relation to which legal proceedings are active; (b) contains language which is offensive; (ba) fails to raise issues of national policy or practice; (c) requests the Parliament to do anything which the Parliament clearly has no power to do; or (d) is the same as, or in substantially similar terms to, a petition brought during the same session of the Parliament and which was closed less than a year earlier.

Public Petitions Committee

Determination on proper form of petitions

To be read alongside the Parliament's rules on public petitions, the Public Petitions Committee has made the following determination under Rule 15.4.3 on proper form of petitions.

- Petitions should be submitted using the Scottish Parliament's online petitions site. All sections should be completed.
- If an individual has no access to or difficulty in using the online petitions site, or if the site is unavailable, a petition may be submitted in paper form using the word template (available from the clerks).
- A petition may be brought in any language. Where a language other than English is used, the Parliament will provide a translation.
- Petitions should be brief and state clearly what action is being sought.
- No supplementary information (such as correspondence, legal information, photographs, or copies of Freedom of Information requests) will be accepted as part of a petition.
- Petitions must relate to national policy or practice as opposed to a local or individual matter.
- Petition titles should be a short factual description of what is being looked for not a slogan or campaign name. For example "changes to the law governing fatal accident inquiries" would be an appropriate title. "Betty's Law" or "Justice for Betty" would not be.
- Previous action taken on a petition must include raising the issue with a relevant decision maker such as the Scottish Government (or other relevant public body) or an elected representative such as an MSP.

- A petition will not be considered by the Public Petitions Committee if the same (or substantially similar) petition, submitted by the same petitioner, has previously been considered by the Committee and closed at its first consideration on three consecutive occasions.
- Petitions should not:
 - Name individuals or otherwise contain information that could lead to the identification of any individual. This excludes elected representatives and senior managers of public bodies.
 - Contain any false statements. It is the responsibility of the petitioner to ensure that statements are accurate.
 - Refer to any matter that is the subject of continuing court proceedings.
 - Seek an adjudication or decision on an individual or commercial matter.
 - Seek to involve the Public Petitions Committee in a decision that is more properly the domain of another body (for example complaints, court appeals, planning appeals, local authority expenditure decisions etc.)
 - Include language or wording that is defamatory, offensive or inappropriate, for example swear words, insults, sarcasm or other language that could reasonably be considered offensive by a reader.

All petitions which meet the Parliament's rules will be published and considered by the Public Petitions Committee. Petitions should be submitted using the Parliament's online system but may be submitted in hard copy or email if a petitioner is not able to use the petitions system or the system is unavailable.