



The Scottish Parliament

(For official use only)
PUBLIC PETITION NO.

PE1050

Should you wish to submit a public petition for consideration by the Public Petitions Committee please refer to the guidance leaflet entitled "How to submit a public petition".

NAME OF PRINCIPAL PETITIONER:

Councillor Ann Watters

TEXT OF PETITION:

The petition should clearly state what action the petitioner wishes the Parliament to take in no more than 5 lines of text, e.g.

"Petition by John Smith, on behalf of Edinburgh Community Council, calling for the Scottish Parliament to consider and debate the need for new legislation to tackle anti-social behaviour."

Petition by Councillor Ann Watters, on behalf of Kirkcaldy Civic Society, calling for the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Executive to introduce legislation to provide better protection for common good sites, such as Ravenscraig Park in Kirkcaldy, and to ensure that such assets are retained for their original purpose for future generations.

ACTION TAKEN TO RESOLVE ISSUES OF CONCERN BEFORE SUBMITTING PETITION:

Before submitting a petition to the Parliament, petitioners are expected to have made an attempt to resolve their issues of concern by, for example, making representations to the Scottish Executive or seeking the assistance of locally elected representatives, such as councillors, MSPs and MPs. Please provide a summary of the action you have taken to resolve your issue of concern including details of elected representatives you have approached.

The Ravenscraig Nurseries having closed at the end of September 2006 left the Council an opportunity to sell the land for housing in the near future. This land is part of a Trust given to the Royal Burgh of Kirkcaldy in 1929 as a part of what became Ravenscraig Park. As a Fife Councillor (October) and as a member of Adult Services I seconded a motion by a Kirkcaldy Member (six signatures were required) requesting that the matter be again reviewed. The motion was defeated. Later in December I attempted to put a motion to the full Council but this was deemed illegal as six months must elapse before the matter could be brought up. In February I put a more general motion to the full Council (copy attached) which was unopposed.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Provide any additional information relevant to your petition and set out the reasons why you consider the action requested to be necessary. This information will be made available to Members of the Committee prior to its consideration of your petition and should be limited to no more than 4 sides of A4. If you wish to use the e-petitioner system your additional information will be posted on the web page with your petition and you may provide further sources/links to background information.

The closure of the Ravenscraig Nurseries left land within the walled garden of the Ravenscraig Park available for alternative use. We and the people of Kirkcaldy who have signed this Petition are against any sale by the Council of land which was gifted to the people of the Royal Burgh of Kirkcaldy in 1929 by Sir Michael Nairn. It was to be used as a park for the people of the town. The Trust Deed states that no buildings were to be built on the ground other than those associated with the running of the park, ie toilets, old men's shelter. While the vast majority of those who signed the Petition were perplexed at the closure of the Nurseries they were absolutely outraged at the intention to sell off the ground for housing.

The Park was part of the policies of Dysart House which Sir Michael Nairn left in donating this land to the Royal Burgh of Kirkcaldy. The Dysart House was sold to the Coates family of Paisley who donated it to the Roman Catholic Church and it became a Carmelite Monastery (for nuns). It is run today as a retirement home for older nuns. The nuns all signed the petition.

The Petition drawn up was signed by 3500 people.

The local MSP Marilyn Livingstone has already signed the Petition and feels strongly that this ground should be retained for public use. She has been extremely supportive from the outset and came with us to Holyrood to present this Petition to the Convenor of the Petitions Committee. This would have presented earlier but the Christmas and new Year break intervened.

In the light of this recent experience, Kirkcaldy Civic Society would suggest to the Parliament that a register of all Common Good assets in Scotland should be drawn up so that organisation like ourselves, Community Councils and the general public can keep track of what is happening to these assets and have an input into their future use. We suspect that many pieces of land and property have been disposed of over the years without the public or even the Councillors being aware that they were part of the Common Good and therefore, monies raised have not automatically been transferred into Common Good funds. A prime example in Kirkcaldy is Volunteers' Green nearly nine acres of which was gifted to the people of Kirkcaldy when it became a Royal Burgh in 1644. This was for the drying and bleaching of linen and for the recreation of the people. Since 1876 two portions exist separated by half a mile and in total is now a little over half an acre.

Now that Councils and wards are so large it is likely that much of Common Good and Trust land may be misused and the suggested register would help to make Councils more accountable to the communities they serve.