

## **Response to additional questions from the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs**

**13. Our Committee currently sets a limit of two pages for the submission of a principal petitioner and tabling Member. Do you have a length limit for submissions and does the principal petitioner have the right to respond in writing to responses to the petition?**

Currently, the length limit for written submissions is a maximum of 4 pages of A4 or the equivalent (which is about 2,500 words).

The Committee have recently taken the decision to reduce this to 2 pages (approx. 1200 words) with the aim of achieving more succinct submissions and avoiding the repetition of views that have already been highlighted to the Committee.

As we indicated during the Hearing, anyone, including the petitioner, can submit a written submission in connection with a petition at any time.

As a matter of course, the clerks will invite a petitioner to provide a written submission in response to any new information (i.e. written submissions) that have been received about their petition. If the Committee receives written submissions from a number of stakeholders at the same time, the clerks will ask the petitioner to provide one consolidated response to address all of the new information that has been received.

**14. How has the committee dealt with any complaints from petitioners that oppose the committee closing/finalising their petition?**

Any complaints or other correspondence about the outcome of a petition or a Committee decision are usually received by the Convener directly.

The open and transparent approach taken by the Committee in considering petitions assists in dealing with any complaints as it is able to point to the information gathered on a petition, the various stages of consideration and the point at which decision is made and the rationale for these decisions.

**15. There is a summary of how our Committee handles petitions in the 4th paragraph of the submission invite letter, where a reference is made to the Committee's 48th report.**

- **Do you have any suggestions how we could improve our procedures and processes?**

We hope that the comments provided during the Hearing prove useful as you review your procedures and processes. As we only have limited information about these, we have no further comments to make.

It may be helpful to highlight one improvement the Scottish Parliament is currently in the process of implementing, which is to ensure the use of plain English in all our petitions guidance material, as well as across our website more generally.