

PE1457/F

Petitions Committee,
Scottish Parliament,
Edinburgh EH99 1SP

PEO1457 Scotland's National Tree

Dear Members,

Since your last meeting, interest has continued in the concept of a National Tree for Scotland.

I have been particularly pleased to note that MSPs from all the political groups in the Parliament and in significant numbers have signed Motion S4M-06190. The cross-party agreement suggests that the tree could indeed be 'national', resonating with all. The major environmental groups in Scotland have continued to be active. The Woodland Trust have concluded their poll indicating strong support for the Scots pine and the results have been presented to you. The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh is carrying out a poll to establish Scotland's favourite plant. Several of the environmental groups have also emphasised the importance of and given support to Joan McAlpine's Motion.

I have also received a letter of support from The National Tree Collections of Scotland.

The Government's response of 22nd March indicated that the previous statement by the Forestry Commission and SNH could be taken as the policy of the Government. That statement gave considerable support for the Scots pine but left the question of whether there should be a National Tree to the elected representatives. The Government statement continued that there would be a good opportunity to declare a National Tree in the context of the constitution of an independent Scotland. I would emphasise that MSPs from the three 'unionist' parties have supported Ms McAlpine's Motion and that, within the Union, England already has a National Tree. A 'Yes' vote is not a prerequisite of a National Tree. As the Government's response states, the present Parliament does have the capability of determining a National Tree.

I believe that it has been shown that there is wide support for the principle of a National Tree and I urge the Committee to put its weight behind this petition.

Yours sincerely,

Alex Hamilton