

PE1826/A

Scottish Government submission of 7 October 2020

Many thanks for your e-mail of 9 September 2020 seeking views from the Scottish Government on the above petition. I offer the following comments:

Formal Emblems of Scotland

The Purple Thistle

The purple thistle was adopted as the Emblem of Scotland during the reign of Alexander III (1249 -1286), following its part in ensuring victory for the Scots over the invading forces of King Haakon of Norway. The thistle was thereafter first used as a Royal symbol of Scotland on silver coins issued by James III in 1470 and was further honoured in the Order of the Thistle, founded by King James V, which continues to this day.

The Unicorn

The Unicorn is Scotland's national animal and although a mystical entity has been a Scottish heraldic symbol since the 12 Century, when it was used on an early form of the Scottish coat of arms by William I. It was first seen on a coin during the reign of King James III (1466 - 1488), and on King James VI of Scotland's succession to the throne of England, was joined on his coat of arms by the English lion in an outward display of unity.

The Lion Rampant

The Royal Banner of the Royal Arms of Scotland is today the Royal Banner of Scotland and historically the Royal Standard of Scotland. Its earliest recorded use as a Royal emblem in Scotland was by Alexander II in 1222 and it was used by the King of the Scots until 1603. Since then it has been incorporated into the unified Royal arms and banners to symbolise Scotland and is now officially restricted to use by representatives of the Monarch.

The Saltire

First mentioned in the legend of St. Andrew appearing to the Pictish King Oengus II on the eve of a battle against the Angles in 832 and thereafter, in the 15 Century, made as a banner by Queen Margaret, wife of James III. The Saltire is recognised across the world as the flag of Scotland and is flown from Scottish Government buildings on a daily basis as a matter of course, in line with flag flying guidance.

Informal Emblems of Scotland

In addition to those that may be considered formal emblems of Scotland there are, at various times and dependent on current national and distinct groups, a long list of informal emblems which are adopted, sometimes for particular periods or causes and which occasionally stand the test of time. Consider the capercaillie, often cited as the emblem of Scotland's disappearing and endangered wildlife, Landseer's Monarch of the Glen, thought by many to be the emblem of all that is Scotland and the highly stylised

thistle that is recognised across the world as the emblem of Scottish rugby. These examples are not exhaustive.

Conclusion

There is a strong and lengthy historical record of the formal emblems of Scotland which is supported by a rich and evolving cast of unofficial insignia. These supporting emblems are often determined informally over time and are adapted and turned to as specific situations require. In line with Scottish Minister's response to requests for Scotland to adopt a formal national anthem, Scottish Ministers believe that consideration of any further national emblems should be arrived at informally as need dictates and should not be led by the Scottish Government or by any political party.