

## **PE1826/B**

Petitioner submission of 16 October 2020

Thank you for your reply summarising the emblems of Scotland and laying out the historical reasons for their use. As I mentioned in the original petition submission, my intent, when asking for the Scottish Government to facilitate a conversation on a new emblem, was not to replace these but rather enhance the list by adding another emblem chosen after discussion with the Scottish people.

Emblems are symbols which help us identify who we are and carry meaning through which people learn the values, norms, beliefs, and expectations of their society therefore helping to define the culture they live in<sup>1</sup>. Scotland has changed significantly during the last 50 years, most notable with our attitude towards organised religion, and it is now difficult to discern what our shared cultural values are. This can lead to a mismatch between individual expectations and the social reality we find ourselves in.

There are many examples internationally where countries have approached similar situations successfully through the choice of a new emblem; using the findings from the discussion to form the basis of subsequent social policy. Canada, a country which describes itself as a cultural mosaic, comes to mind as a particularly good example of how this can work in practice.

Here in Scotland, many refer to the words carved on the parliamentary mace for guidance on our values. We should remember that these words were originally only meant to inform members of the devolved government of the standards expected of them when representing the people of this country. Those same values (ideals?) now form the basis of our education system yet, as they were chosen without consultation with the Scottish population, it is difficult to discern whether or not they are valid in society today or indeed if parents, and our wider society, are aligned with this vision. The falling standards of behaviour within our schools, and in society in general, suggest not.

A national discussion about a new emblem would allow us to explore this apparent misalignment in a non-threatening manner. The topic lends itself to gamification which means that the discussion could be held in a fun way and may even allow us to elicit a response from even the most disengaged citizens.

I can understand the government's reluctance to get involved in a debate of this kind, especially during this difficult time, however I struggle to see what other organisation in Scotland would have the integrity and reach required to ensure relevance or indeed stand to gain so much from the process. This is not about party politics, or fulfilling the needs of a section of society, this is about aligning people behind a common cause. Developing a shared cultural vision for our country.

If the committee members decide, after consideration, that the topic is not suitable for full parliamentary involvement, then perhaps delegating responsibility to a sub-

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.oursehero.com/sg/introduction-to-sociology/cultural-symbolsvalues-and-norms/>

committee such as the Freedom of Religion of Belief, might be an appropriate response?

I look forward to hearing your decision.