



Procedure for Submission of Petitions

The Purpose of a Petition

Taking part in a petition is one way that a community, individuals or groups can be involved in what the Council does. When a petition is submitted to the Council it can have positive outcomes by creating informed debate which may result in the Council taking further action to address concerns raised in the petition.

Pre-Petition Actions

Petitioners may wish to consider raising their issue using other forums before a petition is submitted, including:

- raising the issue with the local Community Council
- raising the issue with the appropriate local councillor(s), Member of Parliament or Member of the Scottish Parliament.
- pursuing a complaint through the Council's complaints process

If these routes have been explored, this information and copies of any correspondence should be included in the petition as background information.

1. The petition must not contain offensive, inflammatory or inappropriate language.
2. The petition must not contain false or defamatory statements or material that is commercially sensitive.
3. petitions may be submitted by:
 - a. Citizens - a petition from citizens with at least 50 signatures from people living within the Council area.
 - b. Businesses – a petition from at least ten local businesses, voluntary organisations or social enterprise companies with a business address within the Highland Council area.
4. Petitions may be lodged in relation to:
 - a. matters concerning the Council's activities or responsibilities, including where other organisations deliver services on behalf of the Council
 - b. matters of concern to the interests and welfare of residents, voluntary organisations or businesses in the Council area.
5. Petitions will not be accepted in respect of the following matters:
 - a. regulatory matters including the determination of planning, licensing and other matters with their own procedures for objections and appeals e.g. Education Transport Entitlement Reviews, road traffic orders
 - b. matters that are sub-judice or have the potential to involve the Council in litigation
 - c. matters that have been referred to, and dealt with, either under the Council's Complaints procedures or by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
 - d. matters concerning individual elected Members or Council employees, including salaries, terms and conditions
 - e. housing allocations, in respect of a specific individual or individual(s)
 - f. a decision made by the Council or any of its Committees or Boards within the previous six months
 - g. matters designed to gain or reduce support for one or more political parties or groups
 - h. matters that could damage a person's reputation or discriminate against them
 - i. content that is intended to be solely frivolous or humorous.
6. Petitions may be submitted electronically by email to legal.hq@highland.gov.uk or to the Chief Executive at the following address:

The Chief Executive
Highland Council
Glenurquhart Road

Inverness

IV3 5NX

7. You will receive a written acknowledgement within 5 working days. Upon receipt the petition will be verified by the Assistant Chief Executive and/or Head of Legal & Democratic Services as having been correctly completed and submitted and that it meets the criteria for the petitions procedure. Once verified, the petition and its subject matter will be considered by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Convener, Leader, Depute Leader, appropriate Committee Chair and Leader of the Opposition, Assistant Chief Executive and relevant Service Director. The purpose of this consideration is to determine the future direction of the petition not to assess the merits of the matters being raised. Petitions may, at this stage, be referred to another organisation for their consideration. You will be advised how the Council will deal with your petition and, if appropriate, when your petition will be considered by Council/Committee. Normally, petitions will need to be received at least 4 weeks prior to the date of the appropriate Council/Committee meeting, to allow time for officers to consider the petition and to issue it along with the agenda and papers for the meeting. Petitions to be heard at a Committee/Council will be the subject of an accompanying report from officers.

8. After considering your petition, the Council/Strategic Committee may:
 - a. decide to take no action – if this happens you will be given the reason; or
 - b. agree that the matter be the subject of a report to a future meeting of the Council/Strategic Committee which may result in the Council making a decision to take a particular action as a result of your petition; or
 - c. decide to refer the petition to another organisation

9. New petitions are welcome however once a petition has been presented, a further petition on the same or substantially similar matters will not be heard for a period of one year.