

PE1491/F

Date: 18 December 2013

Your Ref:

Our Ref: DCC/NR/SMCK

Mr Stuart Todd
Assistant Clerk to the Public Petitions
Committee
Scottish Parliament
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Chief Constable
Sir Stephen House QPM

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Dear Stuart

**CONSIDERATION OF PETITION PE1491 – SECRET SOCIETY
MEMBERSHIP**

Police Scotland has considered the above petition and the attached written questions at the request of the Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee.

The Petition seeks to make it compulsory for decision makers, including Sheriffs, Judges and Juries at their Courts, Arbiters and Panel Members of Tribunal that are convened and held in Scotland and governed by devolved legislation, custom and practice, to declare if they have ever been members of organisations, such as the Masons. It further seeks that a register of such membership is held by the various bodies that supervise such judicial and quasi-judicial tribunals, which is made accessible to a defendant, litigant or plaintiff seeking to exercise their right to a fair hearing in accordance with Article 6 of the ECHR.

I can confirm that the Police Service of Scotland does not hold a view on what the petition seeks, particularly in the context of those decision makers involved in the Criminal Justice System, of which Police Scotland is a part.

The practicalities of making such a declaration notifiable and maintaining a register of membership would be a matter for those bodies that supervise such judicial and quasi-judicial tribunals. From a Criminal Justice perspective, it occurs to me that were such a declaration of membership viewed as a reason not to serve on a court jury, it could result in a proclivity amongst those not wishing to undertake such duty to make such a declaration falsely which, when viewed in the context of membership of a secret society, would in turn be difficult to dispute.

I trust this information will be of use to the Public Petitions Committee.

Yours sincerely

Neil Richardson

Deputy Chief Constable (Designate)