

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 5 March 2025
4th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

PE2084: Allow alkaline hydrolysis

Introduction

Petitioner Randall Graeme Kilgour Foggie

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to amend the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016 to allow alkaline hydrolysis, accelerated composting and other more eco-friendly methods of disposal of human cadavers.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2084>

1. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 15 May 2024](#). At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the Scottish Government.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received a new written submission from the Scottish Government, which is set out in **Annexe C**.
4. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage](#).
5. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
6. [The Scottish Government gave its initial response to the petition on 7 March 2024](#).
7. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 19 signatures have been received on this petition.

Action

8. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

Clerks to the Committee
February 2025

Annexe A: Summary of petition

PE2084: Allow alkaline hydrolysis

Petitioner

Randall Graeme Kilgour Foggie

Date Lodged

20 February 2024

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to amend the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016 to allow alkaline hydrolysis, accelerated composting and other more eco-friendly methods of disposal of human cadavers.

Previous action

I wrote to my MSP, David Torrance MSP, who then wrote to the Scottish Government. The Scottish Government replied stating that they were going to consult on this in 2023. Then nothing happened.

Background information

Graveyards are filling up, more will be needed. Good quality land is being "sterilised" from productive use.

Cremation uses energy and produces toxic fumes, ash and CO₂.

Alkaline hydrolysis and accelerated composting both produce inert by-product and allow for the recovery of medical implants and the safe disposal of mercury amalgam filled teeth.

Annexe B: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE2084 on 15 May 2024

The Convener: The next of our new petitions is PE2084, which has been lodged by Randall Graeme Kilgour Foggie. It calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to amend the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016 to allow alkaline hydrolysis, accelerated composting and other more eco-friendly methods of disposal of human cadavers. Alkaline hydrolysis, also known as water cremation, is a method of disposal of human remains using hot water with the addition of chemicals. The current legislative framework for burial and cremation allows for the regulation of any new methods of body disposal in the same way that burial and cremation is regulated—how we move from one subject to another in the petitions committee!

The Scottish Government recently consulted on burial inspection, funeral director licensing and alkaline hydrolysis. The consultation sought views on proposals and regulations on all four topics under the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016.

The report on the alkaline hydrolysis consultation states that 84 per cent of respondents support the introduction of regulations to allow alkaline hydrolysis, which I understand is practised elsewhere. It concludes that the Scottish Government will now consider the proposals for regulating alkaline hydrolysis in light of the consultation findings and that it will continue to engage with the funeral sector and other interested parties to further inform the development of policy proposals. Do members have any comments or suggestions for action?

David Torrance: I put on record that the petitioner is a constituent of mine and he has discussed the petition with me, so I will let my colleagues make recommendations.

The Convener: Thank you, Mr Torrance. Would anybody else like to come forward with proposals?

Maurice Golden: We should write to the Scottish Government to ask, in light of the consultation responses, whether it intends to regulate alkaline hydrolysis in its development of regulations under the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016 and when it expects the outstanding regulations to be implemented.

The Convener: Are we content?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: I am happy to say to the petitioner that we will not bury the petition but will make efforts to keep it alive. We will wait to hear what the responses to our inquiries are.

Annexe C: Written submission

Scottish Government written submission of 14 June 2024

PE2084/B: Allow alkaline hydrolysis

Thank you for your letter of 17 May 2024 requesting information on:

- whether the Scottish Government intends to regulate alkaline hydrolysis in its development of regulations under the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016.
- when the Scottish Government expects the outstanding regulations to be implemented.

I am responding as Deputy Director for the Public Health Capabilities Division, with responsibility for the overarching policy governing the Burial and Cremation (Scotland) Act 2016 ('the 2016 Act').

The 2016 Act already provides for new methods of disposing of bodies in section 99 which may be done by making regulations under section 99. There is therefore no need to amend the 2016 Act to enable new methods to be made available.

As you mention, the responses to the Scottish Government consultation on alkaline hydrolysis support the introduction of regulations for alkaline hydrolysis. The responses are helping to inform the development of the regulations which is ongoing. The regulations will be laid in parliament for consideration but I am unable to provide a definite date at this time.

Population Health Directorate