

# Realgrassroots

**PE1319/AA**

*Monday 12<sup>th</sup> December 2011*

Ms. Anne Peat,  
Clerk to the Public Petition Committee,  
TG.01,  
The Scottish Parliament,  
Edinburgh.

Dear Ms. Peat,

**PUBLIC PETITION PE1319**

Mr. Smith and I would like to open by thanking the Committee for agreeing to continue our petition.

We acknowledge the responses submitted by the Scottish FA, Scottish Schools FA, Scottish Youth FA, Ayr United FC and the Scottish Government. We recognise the progress the Scottish FA is making towards change across the spectrum of its business and welcome this appetite for review and implementing of revolution.

It was disappointing to read that neither the Scottish FA nor the Scottish Government directly responded to the issues of compensation for players or offer views on young players being bound by a contract/registration document.

We welcome the comments and observations offered by the Scottish Schools FA and Scottish Youth FA, which provide support for our petition.

Mr. Smith and I have been present at all hearings of our petition and would reflect that at times members are taking the petition down avenues we have no enthusiasm to explore. May we respectfully ask that the Committee focus on Scottish players and the practices within Scottish football?

We note that at the October session of the Public Petitions Committee (PPC) members expressed a desire to take evidence from the 'consumers'; we therefore respectfully request oral evidence be invited from Mr. William Gibbons, father of Kieran Gibbons – a young player who was involved in a high profile dispute whilst signed with a professional club at the age of 14 years.

We, the petitioners feel there is a great need to resolve the debate on the status and legality of the registration process and would therefore ask the PPC to write to the Scottish FA and obtain a copy of the registration form and any associated guidelines which a player and parent would normally see and sign.

We would ask that oral evidence be taken from the Child Law Centre and Malcolm McGregor, Advocate at Compass Chambers to discuss the legality of the registration document with a view to determining if it can be considered a contract.

We would remind the Committee of the previous evidence taken from the Commissioner for Children and Young People in Scotland, the Scottish Trade Union Congress and the Child Law Centre regarding the legality of contracts in respect of players under 16 years of age. We are mindful that currently a signed player has no exit clause and is bound for minimum of 1 year and in the case of a 15 year old; he is bound for 3 years. This has been deemed unfair and unreasonable by the aforementioned organisations, given that a club can release a player at ANY point in time.

It is therefore our opinion that it is paramount that Mr. McGregor, Advocate as an independent legal mind and the Child Law Centre be invited to give evidence. This is said with an eye on the FIFA Regulations on the Status and Transfer of Players document, Article 20 - *Training compensation shall be paid to a player's training club(s): (1) when a player signs his first contract as a professional and (2) each time a professional is transferred until the end of the season of his 23rd birthday.*

There appears to be no mechanism for any payment between clubs for players until they first become professional.

In a further effort to get closer to the 'consumers', we would suggest that it would be valuable to take oral evidence from the Scottish Schools FA who can provide insight into a number of the points contained within our petition.

Further, we would propose that evidence be invited from Falkirk FC at a future PPC session to discuss the issue of the Commitment Form. The petitioners previously submitted to the PPC a copy of this document, which has been used by clubs to retain players under the age of 12 years. This form is not recognised by the governing body.

Mr. Smith and I welcome the new members of the PPC and look forward to seeing our concerns progressed with the same vigour as the previous committee.

In summary, we the petitioners respectfully request the following be invited to provide oral evidence in pursuance of PE1319:

- William Gibbons
- Child Law Centre
- Advocate McGregor
- Scottish Schools FA
- Falkirk FC

Kind regards,

**Scott Robertson**  
(On behalf of Realgrassroots)

**William Smith**