

Realgrassroots

PE1319/MM

Wednesday 2nd January 2013

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 send our very best wishes for the New Year to the members of Public Petitions Committee and associated staff.

We write ahead of the Committee's scheduled session on 8th January 2013, to provide an update on our recent progress.

On Wednesday 12th December 2012 both petitioners, by prior arrangement attended a meeting at Hampden Park to discuss several issues. These included Commitment Forms, Compensation Payments, Registrations/Contract issues, Scouting protocol and Player Exit Strategy.

This meeting involved three SFA representatives from differing departments, but all with an involvement in the pro-youth initiative system or as it is now referred to, the Club Academy Scotland programme.

The meeting was engaging and allowed Realgrassroots to cover several issues raised in the petition. As a result a Minute is in the process of being agreed as well as several actions. Once this Minute is agreed by all present a copy can be forwarded to the Committee if requested.

The discussion was positive and as the Committee are aware, a 'formal working party' (as disclosed in the SFA's letter to the Committee dated 18th May 2012) has been examining the existing processes in light of the concerns raised by Realgrassroots. The findings of the SFA's formal working party will not be available to the Petitions Committee until February 2013 and therefore continuing the Petition will allow the members to analyse the proposals in due course.

Several of these issues raised and supported by three independent legal opinions as well as bodies such as the STUC, Child Law Centre and Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People will be addressed in this proposal document.

The only item not satisfactorily resolved was the issue relating to under 15 year olds signing for one year, but at the behest of a club being retained for a further two years. However, the SFA's newly appointed Director of Football Governance and Regulation, Mr. Andrew McKinlay (a former lawyer) has agreed to look at this and

consider if the process complies with Scottish Law – primarily Section 2 (1) Age of Legal Capacity (Scotland) Act 1991 as well as European law and provide a response.

The SFA plan to present this reviewed Club Academy Scotland document to the Professional Game Board in February of this year, however, it must be stressed that until it is voted through, the proposals remain just that - proposals. Realgrassroots are acutely aware that it will be the professional clubs themselves who will be required to vote on these proposals and therefore, there is a possibility they will not embrace all of these changes.

It is, in our eyes imperative the Public Petitions Committee continues to pursue PE1319 and ensure that the pressure applied thus far is maintained and indeed focuses on the actions of Scotland's professional football clubs when dealing with the legal rights of our nations young players.

We are concerned that any reduction of momentum at this stage would effectively permit professional clubs to dismiss these proposals.

Kind regards,

Scott Robertson
(On behalf of Realgrassroots)

William Smith