

Scottish Parliament Public Petition PE1493 on a Sunshine Act for Scotland

Letter from the petitioner, Dr Peter J. Gordon.

2nd December 2015

Dear Members of the Petition Committee,

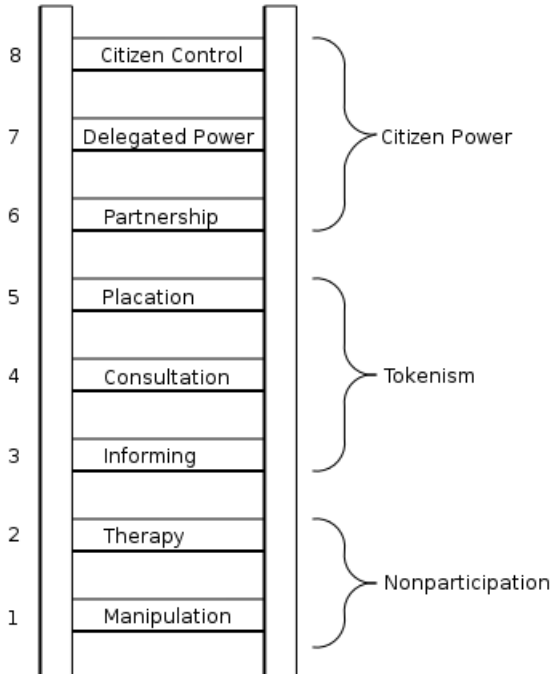
Since my last letter I have been in contact with both the Scottish Health Council (SHC) and the Scottish Government (SG) seeking clarification regarding who is accountable for the information provided for the public consultation on this petition.

I have now had clarification on two points:

1. The Scottish Government is accountable for the information provided
2. The Scottish Health Council has confirmed its role as responsible for carrying out the consultation but not the content of the information provided

It is now clear to me that I did not understand this process. This is perhaps quite understandable in that I was invited to meet with executives of the SHC, and did so in June 2015, where they asked me to provide a summary of information as part of the process. We spent most of our meeting discussing the process and content for the consultation. Given that the SHC does not have responsibility for the information provided for the consultation I cannot understand why we all invested valuable time when the reality is that the Scottish Government provides the information.

In terms of public engagement, consultation is only half-way up what academics have termed "the Ladder of Participation":



For any consultation undertaken to be meaningful it is important that the information provided should include its authors and sources. If this is not the case the process risks sliding further down the ladder towards manipulation.

To me it seems essential that in considering consultations the committee needs to ensure that public participation is protected from accusations of predetermination.

Addendum of 10 December 2015

Can the Petitions Committee confirm who they tasked, and hold accountable for, the information provided for the public consultation on PE1493?

The Director of the Scottish Health Council has confirmed his view [2 Dec 2015] that the information provided by the Scottish Government for public consultation “was fair”. I would welcome, as petitioner, the views of all members of the PPC on this specific matter.

Dr Peter J Gordon