



Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

Petition Number: [PE1232](#)

Main Petitioner: Alasdair Archibald Walker

Subject: Calls on the Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to instigate a national civic award, The Saint Andrews Medal, to recognise those who have given extraordinary or outstanding acts of bravery.

Background

The honours system is a reserved matter under Part 1 Paragraph 2 of Schedule 5 of the Scotland Act 1998.

The UK honours system is used to reward people for merit, service or bravery. Bravery awards are made in recognition of specific acts by individuals who risk their own lives in order to save, or attempt to save, the life of one of the Queen's subjects. They are also used to recognise similarly selfless brave acts undertaken in the prevention of crime or in the arrest, or attempted arrest, of dangerous criminals.

Anyone may nominate a person for a bravery award, though the majority of nominations are made through official channels (e.g. fire service). All cases are assessed on their own merits and against criteria established by precedent. Awards may be made at any time, although they will usually be published in one of two annual lists. For civilian awards, the Ceremonial Secretariat coordinates the assessment of nominations. The Prime Minister then submits these to The Sovereign for approval.

Currently there are a number of bravery awards. These are organised into different levels to recognise the degree of bravery involved. The civil awards are:

George Cross

This award is granted for acts of bravery of the greatest heroism or of the most conspicuous courage in circumstances of extreme danger. It may be granted posthumously but is restricted to British subjects.

George Medal

This award is granted for gallantry of an extremely high order. It may be granted posthumously and is not restricted to British subjects.

The Queen's Gallantry Medal

This award is granted for gallantry of an exceptional order. It may be granted posthumously and is not restricted to British subjects.

The Queen's Commendation for Bravery, and The Queen's Commendation for Bravery in the Air

These awards are granted for gallantry of a high order entailing risk to life and meriting national recognition. Either award may be granted posthumously and neither is restricted to British subjects.

The George Medal and the George Cross were founded by George VI in 1940 to honour the 'many acts of heroism performed both by male and female persons especially during the present war.'

Scottish Parliament Action

Two relevant motions were laid in the Scottish Parliament in 2008.

[S3M-01420 Christine Grahame: St Andrew's Medal](#)— That the Parliament believes that a special award should be commissioned to reward acts of civilian bravery and recognise exemplary acts of gallantry by individuals in, or meriting recognition by, Scotland; notes that the UK Government presently issues its own gallantry medal to its subjects in the form of the George Medal, depicting St George of England slaying a lion, but that the Scottish Government currently has no formal method to recognise acts of bravery and heroism by its own citizens, and therefore urges Scottish ministers to consider instituting an award for bravery, entitled the St Andrew's Medal, as a way to recognise and acknowledge acts of great bravery by individuals in Scotland.

[S3M-01440 George Foulkes: The Whole of the UK Should Celebrate the Bravery of Scots](#)— That the Parliament recognises that the George Medal and George Cross were both introduced in 1940 by King George VI to recognise the bravery of civilians during the Second World War; also acknowledges that the George Medal carries the head of King George IV on one side and the name of the awardee on the other; urges SNP MSPs to acknowledge that there are three medals for civilian bravery and gallantry and encourages these MSPs to note the difference between them; believes that attempts by nationalist MSPs to introduce a St Andrew's Medal are an insult to a whole generation of Scots who fought and died to protect the United Kingdom; believes that the sole intention of Christine Grahame's motion, S3M-1420, is to peddle narrow nationalism; remembers that one of the most recent medals for gallantry awarded to a Scot was to John Smeaton, and believes the whole of the United Kingdom is grateful to him for the unflinching bravery and selflessness that he demonstrated during the attacks on Glasgow Airport.

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2 February 2009

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