



The Lord President

Parliament House
Edinburgh, EH1 1RQ

2 April 2013

David Stewart MSP
Convenor of the Public Petitions Committee
c/o Public Petitions Clerks
Room T3.40
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh EH99 1SP

Dear Convenor,

**PUBLIC PETITION PE1458 ON A REGISTER OF INTERESTS FOR MEMBERS OF
SCOTLANDS JUDICIARY**

Thank you for your letter of 20 March 2013 regarding Public Petition PE1458. Thank you for your invitation to attend the committee to provide oral evidence.

I hope that you will not think it discourteous of me to decline your invitation. As your fellow members noted in their discussion, I have provided a detailed response. On reflection, I think that I could not add any material points to the terms of my response.

In my written evidence I referred to the Council of Europe Group of States against Corruption's (GRECO) Fourth Evaluation Round Report, which was then unpublished. This report has just been published. I enclose a copy of the report and the accompanying ministerial statement. I refer the committee to pages 25 to 36 on "Corruption Prevention in Respect of Judges". Paragraph 133 is as follows:

The Right Honourable Lord Gill

Telephone 0131 240 6732

Fax 0131 240 6704
lppo@scotcourts.gov.uk

DX549306 Edinburgh 36

"The GET was made aware during the on-site visit that a petition to the Government has been made to require all members of the judiciary to submit their interests and hospitality to a publicly available register of interests (as of July 2012, 20 signatures had been collected; the deadline for closing the petition is set on 25 October 2012). The GET wishes to note, however, that nothing emerged during the current evaluation which could indicate that there is any element of corruption in relation to judges, nor is there evidence of judicial decisions being influenced in an inappropriate manner. It would therefore appear that what was said in the First Evaluation Round Report (paragraphs 62 and 87) with respect to the absence of a system for formal registration of interests of judges is still valid. GRECO did not recommend the introduction of an asset declaration system at that time and the GET found no change of circumstance that would require such a recommendation at this time."

I hope that this reference will assist the Committee.