

West Lothian Council submission of 8 March 2023

PE1928/E: Provide free rail travel for disabled people who meet the qualifications for free bus travel

Thank you for your letter of 12 December 2022 and for giving the opportunity to respond to your request for information subsequent to the meeting of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee 7 December 2022 where the petition "*PE1928: Provide free rail travel for disabled people who meet the qualifications for free bus travel*" was considered. I can confirm this is an officer's response.

The following responses relate directly to the current West Lothian Council Rail Concession Scheme. It should be noted that at a meeting of West Lothian Council on Tuesday 21st February a number of budget saving measures were approved. One of these measures was the removal of the West Lothian Council Rail Concession Scheme. The final date for concessionary rail journeys under this scheme in West Lothian is 30th April 2023.

1. The number of passengers making use of the companion travel discount scheme for rail journeys across West Lothian;

The number of Passengers making use of a companion discount is not recorded separately at time of purchase so I am unable to fulfil this request specifically. The reason for this is that this discount reflects the same fare charged on the current West Lothian Council Rail Concession scheme and are charged as such. Additionally, West Lothian Council are billed on the number of journeys which does not reflect the number of individual people making use of the scheme, this will include individuals making multiple journeys. To provide some additional information on the Rail Concession Scheme in West Lothian, I can confirm that the number of journeys taken in financial year 2021/22 was approximately 116,000 and the current financial year 2022/23 to 5th February 2023 is approximately 85,000. These are a combined total of concessionary cardholders and their eligible companions.

A total of approximately 46,000 NEC cardholders in West Lothian are eligible for the West Lothian Council Rail Concession Scheme

which will cease on 30th April 2023. Approximately 3,500 of these have companion eligibility.

Separately to the West Lothian Scheme is The Scottish National Blind Persons Scheme of which approx. 280 cardholders will remain eligible for free rail travel however their companions will no longer receive the discount from the local scheme when this ends on 30th April 2023.

2. The support provided to passengers to ensure they can access the reduced fares when travelling with a National Entitlement Cardholder, particularly where staffed ticket offices are not available at the beginning of their journey

Information relating to accessing concessionary rail fares is available on West Lothian Council and ScotRail websites and can be found at:

West Lothian Council -

<https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/article/34299/Rail-concessions-using-your-bus-pass>

ScotRail website information: www.scotrail.co.uk/tickets/railcards

Fares information can also be obtained from station ticket counters (at staffed stations) or from onboard train staff where concessionary tickets can be purchased.

3. What guidance and training is provided to rail staff to ensure that the policy on companion travel is being applied consistently across the region?

ScotRail have a Concessionary Fares Scheme Guide which is distributed to all members of frontline staff which is updated with any changes. These details are also covered during ScotRail 'Ops Comms' briefings which take place face to face. It is also featured in ScotRail Ops Comms Handbook accessible via the company intranet.

I trust this provides the committee with the information required however officers would be happy to discuss this in further detail if required.