

Petitioner submission of 25 August 2023

PE2027/B: Launch the Changing Places Toilet fund

We wish to submit the following information in support of our ongoing petition asking for Changing Places funding to be made available at the earliest opportunity.

Since submitting our petition, our Changing Place Toilet design for Tyndrum has been submitted for planning at The Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park planning department with an outcome expected imminently.

The charity, The Tyndrum Infrastructure Group who lodged the petition, has been awarded funds to proceed with the building warrant once planning is granted.

Once we receive planning consent which we expect to be forthcoming in September, the only thing preventing us for building the facility will be a lack of capital funding.

We have proceeded to this point through a lengthy process of hard work by volunteers because we believed that the capital funding promised in the SNP 2021 Manifesto would have been ring fenced and be forthcoming. Afterall, a lot is spoken about an inclusive and equal society in Scotland but there is nothing at all inclusive or equal about not being able to go to the toilet.

Through our time spent campaigning we have heard many horror stories of what happens to disabled people and their carers if there are no Changing Places toilets available. Disabled children often face the indignity of being changed on public toilet floors, as they grow older they may have to be changed in the back of cars. Disabled children turn into disabled teenagers and adults, they sometimes can no longer be physically lifted by carers and so end up sitting in their own body fluids for prolonged periods of time, isolated in their own homes or dehydrating themselves in order that they do not need to use toilet facilities while they are out and about. There are even disabled women who have resorted to having clinically unnecessary surgery to have suprapubic catheters fitted because of a lack of adequate toilet facilities in their communities. The above puts disabled people at risk of developing infections, of developing pressure ulcers, and all have a potential negative impact on the mental health of many disabled people.

In addition to the above, carers both paid and unpaid, are also put at the risk of serious harm, as they physically lift disabled people, in direct contravention of guidance set out by the Health & Safety executive (<https://www.hse.gov.uk/healthservices/moving-handling.htm>). These carers include parents, community nurses, teachers and more. The guidance from the Health and Safety Executive explicitly states:

“Poor moving and handling practice can lead to:

- back pain and musculoskeletal disorders, which can lead to inability to work
- moving and handling accidents – which can injure both the person being moved and the employee
- discomfort and a lack of dignity for the person being moved

You must take action to prevent or minimise the risk of injury”.

Whilst the Scottish Parliament have already acted in making the provision of Changing Places toilets mandatory in larger public buildings, we still have a long way to go before we have toileting equity. It would therefore, be a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act (2010) to make the funding available that was already promised. Where this has been done in England it has made a huge difference for disabled people in many communities. It has given them the opportunity to access social, medical, cultural and educational opportunities that were previously closed to them. While this will be an expenditure in the short-term, it can be seen as an investment in the long term. The disabled “Purple Pound” was estimated to equate to £249 billion back in 2019 (<https://wearepurple.org.uk/understanding-the-purple-pound-market/>), these are your potential tourists, your potential customers.

Finally, please see evidence of the desperate need for these facilities in the words of a few of the people that need them.

A previous petition, set up by Lorna Fillingham in 2015 collected many hundreds of comments, the full list can be found at <http://bit.ly/toilets4all>

All these comments other than the first were made by Scottish citizens.

“I work with SN children. The amount of trips we have gone on and there have been no changing facilities – going from changing them on our knees, to using the floor, to 3 people having to help manoeuvre onto the

floor out of the individual's chair”

“It is inhumane to go out with family & friends & have to sit in a dirty and/or wet pad for hours or stop your trip early because there is not a suitable place for you to go to the toilet”

“I am a health professional that works with disabled children and I see parents’ health deteriorate because of moving and handling of their children and the social recluse they slowly become because the facilities are not there”

“I work in the care sector and have been stunned at the time it takes to plan an outing for someone who cannot transfer to a toilet. It shouldn't be the case that I have to plan outings for people based on toilet facilities rather than what the person would actually like to do”

“My nephew... requires catheters every 3 hours and needs appropriate space to do this. He has outgrown the change tables so the only option at the present is to lie him on the floor. Not sure you would want to lie on the floor of a public lavatory but I sure wouldn't.”

“Disabled children have enough challenges without having to face this humiliation. Parents and carers need to have safe, hygienic facilities”.

“I support young adults with complex physical difficulties and many times had to use toilet floors for personal care. Having to change on toilet floors is undignified and unhygienic”

You can change disabled people’s lives, and that of their carers’, by making the promised investment available, and it needs to be made available at the earliest opportunity. It's the 21st century – no one should have to lie on a public toilet floor.