

PE2188/C: Extend the National Entitlement Card scheme to include ferry travel for people aged 60 and over

Petitioner written submission, 10 November 2025

While the existing National Entitlement Card scheme provides valuable support to older people across Scotland through free bus travel, this provision does not deliver equal access for those of us who live on islands.

Older island residents are effectively excluded from the same freedom of movement that their mainland counterparts enjoy. The current arrangement means that before we can even reach a bus service where our entitlement applies, we must first pay for ferry travel – often at considerable cost. This is not simply a matter of inconvenience; it is a matter of geographical inequality and social isolation.

For island OAPs, the ferry is our “bus” to the mainland. It is the essential first step to access healthcare, shopping, family, and community support. Without parity in travel entitlement, older island residents are left trapped by geography, discriminated against purely because of where we live.

It is also worth noting the inconsistency in provision. While young people under 22 on islands now receive free ferry travel, older residents – many on fixed incomes and facing health or mobility challenges – are excluded from equivalent support. This creates a clear imbalance and sends an unfortunate message that older islanders’ needs are of lesser importance.

The extension of the National Entitlement Card scheme to include ferry travel for over-60s would not only promote fairness and inclusion but would also align with the Scottish Government’s wider aims of tackling isolation, promoting wellbeing, and supporting rural and island communities.

In short, we ask the Committee to recognise that island OAPs are being denied equal access to the benefits of the concessionary travel scheme, and to consider this petition as a matter of equity, not privilege.