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Citizen Participation and Public Petitions
Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

By email only: petitions.committee@parliament.scot

19 March 2026

Dear Jackson,

The Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee contacted me with a request for response to sections of Committee's 2025 report *A blueprint for participation - embedding deliberative democracy in the work of the Scottish Parliament* relating to the work of Scottish Government.

Please see below for my response, set out according to the relevant parts of the report.

I would like to reiterate my government's support for public participation, and our ongoing commitment to our vision the people can be involved in the decisions that affect them, making Scotland a more inclusive, sustainable and successful place.

Part 50:

We returned to this issue as part of our 2024-2025 budget scrutiny, taking evidence from the Minister for Parliamentary Business on progress in implementing the recommendations of the IPDD working group. In a letter to the Committee the Minister stated:

“We recognise the need to build participation skills and capabilities across the public sector and civil society, and that this is required to realise our ambitions for participatory and deliberative democracy in Scotland. It is envisaged that this would be a task for a participation team to explore when resources allow as this will require time and collaboration.”

We would welcome an update from the Scottish Government about its plans in this area.

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Scottish Government response:

A participation team has yet to be established, due to ongoing budget pressures. In lieu of this, officials have been developing a range of resources to support improved practice across Scottish Government. This includes a procurement framework - which is due to go to tender in the next few months - sets of guidance on good practice in participation, and a network of trained officials who can provide support and signposting for colleagues considering taking a participatory approach in their work.

It is intended that these resources will raise standards in participatory work initiated by Scottish Government, placing us in an improved position to address IPDD working group recommendations. The co-creation with civil society of the next Open Government Action Plan is currently underway. The Action Plan will run from 2026 – 2030, and will be a key driver of this work.

Part 51:

The second issue is the interaction between benefits and payments for participation. We have not been able to confirm whether a payment for participating in a People's Panel or any other payment in line with the Scottish Parliament's Payment for Participation policy, would have an impact on someone's benefit entitlement. We urge the Scottish Government to work with the UK Government to clarify this issue.

Scottish Government response:

This is a concern shared by Scottish Government. In February 2024, we published [guidance on paying participant expenses and compensating participant time](#). Developing this guidance included a focus on the question of whether a payment for involvement in a participatory process would interact with an individual's benefit entitlement. Discussions were had with DWP over the course of 2022 and 2023, as a result of which we were able to establish that payment in the form of vouchers would not interact with an individual's benefit entitlement, but that a cash payment would.

This information is set out in our guidance (section 12), where we also say that we are of the view that all participants, including those claiming benefits, should be able to choose the mode of payment for their time involved in research. We continue to be concerned that restricting benefit claimants to conditional modes of payment (i.e. vouchers) communicates a lack of trust and risks discrimination. At present, DWP has not agreed to a change in their position.

We will continue to make representations to DWP on this matter. We would welcome collaboration on this from Scottish Parliament and other stakeholders, to demonstrate to DWP that this is a widely held and unresolved concern.

Yours sincerely,



GRAEME DEY

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