



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Iain Stewart MP  
Chair  
Transport Select Committee  
House of Commons

By email only

**Net Zero, Energy and Transport  
Committee**

c/o Clerk to the Committee  
Room T3.40

The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

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21 March 2023

Dear Mr Stewart,

### **Inquiry into Accessible Transport**

I am writing in relation to your upcoming inquiry into legal obligations regarding accessible transport.

The Scottish Parliament's Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee recently considered a public petition ([PE1866](#)) [on this topic](#). It was submitted by Petitioner Daryl Cooper and calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to introduce legislation so that wheelchair users are able to face frontwards when travelling on a bus.

At our meeting on 7 March 2023, we agreed to close the petition on the basis that the issue of regulations which govern accessibility on public transport is a matter reserved to the UK Parliament. However, we also decided to write to your Committee to provide details of the issues raised by the petition, [noting your upcoming inquiry into legal obligations for accessible transport](#).

I have set out further details of the petition, our consideration of the petition and prior scrutiny by the Scottish Parliament's Citizen Participation and Public Petitions (CPPP) Committee in the Annexes below. I hope you will find the contents of the petition and our work helpful in informing your Inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

Edward Mountain MSP  
Convener  
**Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee**

## **Annexe A – The Petition**

### **PE1886: Introduce legislation to improve bus travel for wheelchair users**

- Purpose: Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to introduce legislation so that wheelchair users are able to face frontwards when travelling on a bus.
- Petitioner: Daryl Cooper
- Date published: 20 May 2021
- Webpage: [View the full petition - Scottish Parliament](#)

#### **Previous action taken**

I have taken the issue to my local MSP, who just advised me to take it up with disability charities. I didn't feel this response was adequate, or that the issue was really treated that seriously.

Also, as this is a travel issue, I tried to go through the transport minister's office but as I do not live within the local constituency, to my shock I got told they couldn't take it up.

#### **Background information**

Currently wheelchair users are required to face backwards on buses. This is unfair as other passengers have the option. It is not very dignifying facing everyone else on a bus and also for people who suffer from travel sickness, travelling backwards can make this worse. People like me are missing out as they can't travel on buses. Let's make it equal, give wheelchair users the same choice as other passengers.

## Annexe B - CPPP Committee Consideration of the Petition

The CPPP Committee invited the Scottish Government to share its initial views on the petition following its lodging in May 2021. It [received a submission from the Scottish Government](#) on 17 June 2021. This stated the regulations which govern accessibility on bus services was reserved and that provision for both forward and rearward facing wheelchair spaces are provided for in the [Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000 \(PSVAR\)](#). The Scottish Government said that the UK Government had committed to complete a review of the PSVAR by the end of 2023.

The CPPP Committee then [received a submission from the Petitioner](#) on 24 June 2021, responding to the Scottish Government. In this he notes the control bus operators have over the type of spaces to provide depending on the service being provided.

[On 8 September 2021](#), the CPPP Committee considered the petition. The CPPP Committee agreed to write to the Scottish Government to ask if the issues raised in the petition could be addressed via the provisions relating to bus service improvement partnerships and local services franchises within the [Transport \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#).

The Scottish Government [responded on 21 October 2022](#) and highlighted that powers conferred on local authorities to operate bus services and Bus Service Improvement Plans and Local Service Franchises. The Scottish Government notes “the provisions in the 2019 Act operate in such a way as to place the setting of any service standards for local bus services within the competence of local transport authorities (either through a partnership scheme in the case of a BSIP or a franchising framework in the case of an LSF).”

[At its meeting on 1 December 2021](#), the CPPP Committee discussed the response it received from the Scottish Government and agreed to write to Pam Duncan-Glancy MSP to seek her testimony on the issues she has experienced on the public bus network as a wheelchair user.

Pam Duncan-Glancy MSP [replied on 29 December 2022](#). She said the current arrangements on bus services has a “huge impact on disabled people’s ability to get to work, visit family and friends, enjoy a social life, participate in society and lead a life on an equal basis to non-disabled people. It also means that disabled people have to rely on private cars and are restricted in their ability to contribute to a carbon free society”.

[On 9 March 2022](#), the CPPP Committee agreed to refer the petition to a subject committee to ensure consideration of the issues relating to accessibility on bus services for disabled users could continue. The petition was later referred to the Net Zero Energy and Transport Committee.

## Annexe C – NZET Committee Consideration of the Petition

The NZET Committee first considered the petition on [1 November 2022](#). The Committee agreed to keep it open and to write to the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) to ask how local authorities are delivering improvements for wheelchair users on public buses. It also agreed to make representations with the UK Government on its upcoming review of the rules which govern accessibility on public transport, the Public Sector Vehicles Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR).

On 7 November 2022, the Convener wrote to COSLA and the UK Government regarding the petition, links to these letters can be found below—

- [Correspondence to the President of COSLA](#)
- [Correspondence to the Secretary of State for Transport](#)

On 16 November 2022, [the Committee received a response from the UK Government’s Minister for Roads and Local Transport](#), Richard Holden MP. His reply stipulates that the PSVAR allows for wheelchair spaces to be either forward or rearward-facing. He said that the design of the rearward-facing wheelchair space helps to prevent injuries to the wheelchair user as the vehicle moves and that “forward-facing wheelchair space designs require additional tie-down systems attached to the wheelchair, as well as a suitable restraint, to provide a reasonable level of safety”.

On 31 January 2023, [the Committee received a response from COSLA’s Environment and Economy Spokesperson](#), Cllr Gail McGregor. She stated that “the decision on the design of bus fleets needs to be decided at the national level with involvement of the appropriate operators, bus manufacturers, safety professionals and advocacy groups”. The response also indicated that, whilst local authorities now have flexibility to operate their own bus services, current budget constraints are inhibiting their ability to explore these actions.

[On 7 March 2023](#), the NZET Committee considered next steps on the petition following receipt of responses from COSLA and the UK Government. The Committee agreed to close the petition and write to the Transport Select Committee of the House of Commons to inform it of the issues raised by the petition and contribute to its inquiry into [Accessible Transport: Legal Obligations](#).