



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee

Collette Stevenson MSP
Convener
Social Justice and Social Security Committee

3 February 2025

Dear Collette,

Addressing child poverty through parental employment report – Follow up

Thank you for your letter of 2 December 2024 regarding the Social Justice and Social Security Committee's follow-up work on addressing child poverty through parental employment. I outline below the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee's scrutiny activities in relation to transport policy and its links to child poverty as you have requested.

The Committee will follow up on this scrutiny where it can in the run up to dissolution. The Committee's remarkably wide remit, with transport only one important aspect among many, has made it a constant challenge to be all over every major issue or to drill down into the detail of policy in a particular area. Future work by your Committee at the intersection of transport policy and social inclusion is therefore welcome, although we would also welcome being informed of any substantial scrutiny proposals you have in this area to ensure our work dovetails well.

Transport Generally

- The Committee held a session with the Cabinet Secretary for Transport on 4 June 2024, where various transport affordability and accessibility concerns were discussed, including fare structures and modal shifts in transport usage.
- In March of last year, Transport Scotland published the Fair Fares Review, which sets out proposals to make the public transport system more accessible, available, and affordable, with the costs of transport more fairly shared across government, business and society. We continue to monitor how the Review's recommendations will be implemented.
- The Scottish Government's response to the Committee's pre-budget scrutiny letter provides an overview of the policies in place to support public transport. The Committee explored some of these areas during our budget evidence session with the cabinet secretary on 21 January. In particular, we examined the fall in the annual distance travelled by Scottish bus services and cuts to Community bus and bus partnership funding. The Committee also explored the challenges associated with accessibility, particularly in rural areas.

Contact: Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP. Email netzero@parliament.scot. We welcome calls through Relay UK and in BSL through Contact Scotland BSL.

Ferries

- Last October, the Scottish Government [wrote](#) to the Committee regarding fare increases on ferry services, which equates to an approximately 20% increase over two years. Given the impact of ferry unreliability on access to employment, especially for key workers such as teachers and healthcare staff in island communities, the Committee remains engaged with this issue.
- The Committee's report [A Modern and Sustainable Ferry Service for Scotland](#), published in June 2023, examined the evolving needs of ferry users and made a number of recommendations as to how these services could be improved. The Committee continues to monitor how its recommendations are being implemented. The report also highlighted the [Island Connectivity Plan](#), published in February last year, as a key opportunity for fresh thinking about how ferries are run in Scotland and how the transport needs of islands and other ferry-dependent communities are met.

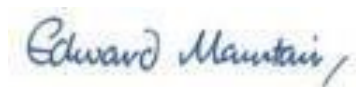
Buses

- On [17 January 2024](#), the Committee considered an SSI related to buses, and the session evolved into a broader budget discussion on bus funding. This discussion contained significant detail on the financial pressures affecting the sector. In February, the Committee will be scrutinising a further SSI which sets the capped level of funding for the National Bus Travel Concession Scheme. The evidence session will provide a further opportunity to question the Scottish Government on its plans for the scheme.
- The Committee has received budget-related [correspondence](#) from the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) on funding cuts affecting the Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT). We will continue to consider the implications of these reductions.

Rail

- The Committee has engaged with the Scottish Government on the decision to discontinue the pilot removal of peak fares. The Scottish Government's [letter](#) of 20 August 2024, sets out the rationale for discontinuing the pilot. The letter notes that the Scottish Government would be open to considering future subsidies to remove peak fares should UK budget allocations to the Scottish Government improve in future years. The Committee will continue to monitor future subsidies should they be introduced in future.
- The Cabinet Secretary's [letter of 9 July 2024](#), following the 4 June session, raised concerns regarding ticket price discrepancies based on payment method. The Committee remains interested in how these issues are being addressed.

Yours sincerely,



Edward Mountain MSP

Convener

Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee