



TRANSPORT
SCOTLAND

Cathy Peattie MSP
Constituency Office
5 Kerse Road
GRANGEMOUTH
FK3 8HQ

Your ref
CP/KI

12 November 2007

Dear Mrs Peattie,

SCOTLAND-WIDE FREE BUS TRAVEL FOR OLDER AND DISABLED PEOPLE

Thank you for your letter of 22nd August 2007 to the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change, Stewart Stevenson MSP, on behalf of your constituent Mr Henry Sherlock, Parklands Station Road. Slamannan about Scotland-wide free Bus Travel For Older and Disabled People. As this is a matter delegated to Transport Scotland, your letter has been passed to me for reply

As Mr Sherlock's letter raised a number of issues. I have used his headings and addressed each bullet point in turn.

ISSUE 1. Lack of Literature Accompanying The National Entitlement Card

1.1 The National Entitlement Card (NEC) is a multi application card (*one* application being the Scotland-Wide Free Bus Travel for Older and Disabled People, which has been introduced by the Scottish Government in partnership with the local authorities and overseen by another Government body, the Improvement Service. At the time of card issue the Improvement Service did not permit Transport Scotland to enclose any information with the card.

1.2 An information leaflet is available on request from Transport Scotland Concessionary Travel and Integrated Ticketing Unit and is produced in alternative formats. Information is also available on the Transport Scotland website www.transportscotland.gov.uk.

1.3 Transport Scotland has carried out a number of marketing campaigns via its website, the media and bus operators to promote and notify of any changes to the Scheme. Transport Scotland has also encouraged local authorities to promote the Scheme through their own communication channels.

ISSUE 2 - Misleading title of National Travel Pass/National Entitlement Card

2.1 Transport Scotland always makes reference to the card as The National Entitlement Card in any correspondence but has no control over how other bodies refer to the card. Many members of the public refer to it as their bus pass

2.2 As explained in my response to issue 1, the NEC is a multi application smartcard and can hold other travel concessions and give access to other services which may be offered by local authorities.

ISSUE 3-Eligibility criteria for the plus one component

3.1 The onus is on the applicant to provide evidence to confirm that they meet the eligibility criteria. The middle and high rate of the care component of the Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance are benefits which are non-means tested and issued to anyone with mobility or other health problems whereby a companion is essential for their well being. This is one of the main reasons this concession was introduced.

3.2 It is considered that the criteria which were developed are fair, consistent and focus support on those who suffer from a physical or mental impairment which severely effects their mobility and therefore their ability to travel to carry out day to day activities.

3.3 The timetable by which buses must be fully accessible is set in legislation reserved to Westminster (The Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR) 2000). New buses have had to be fully accessible since 31 December 2000. All buses will be fully accessible 1 January 2017 and all coaches by 1 January 2020. These timetables have been agreed in discussion with the transport industry and with the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC).

3.4 Under the formal guidance issued to bus operators they are reminded that they have an obligation under the Disability Discrimination Act to offer reasonable assistance to disabled people where practical.

ISSUE 4- Eligibility

4.1 With a view to standardising the eligibility and validation processes the then Scottish Executive undertook a public consultation exercise during the period October 2005 to December 2005. Following this consultation exercise, the national scheme eligibility criteria and validation processes were standardised with the agreement of local authorities, transport operators and the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland, and was passed by the Scottish Parliament under the National Bus Travel Concession Scheme for Older and Disabled Persons (Eligible Persons and Eligible Services) (Scotland) Order 2006.

4.2 Each local authority or their agent has been issued with full guidance on the eligibility criteria and the supporting documentary evidence an applicant is required to submit. The eligibility criteria are set out in the National Bus Travel Concession Scheme for Older and Disabled Persons (Eligible Persons and Eligible Services) (Scotland) Order 2006 and to participate in the Scheme the individual must meet the criteria. There is no discretion within the legislation.

4.3 The Department of Work and Pensions and Local Authority can offer support to those individuals that require support.

ISSUE 5 – On Other Modes Of Transport With Companion Component

5.1 The concession introduced by the Scottish Executive is Scotland-Wide free bus travel, concessions offered on other modes of transport are administered and funded through local authority schemes. It is a matter for the local authority and transport operator to promote the local concession correctly.

5,2 The Scottish Government has no plans at this time to introduce concessions on other modes of transport.

There are no immediate plans to make any changes to the eligibility criteria, but there is a commitment to review of the Scheme in its third year of operation when issues such as you have raised will be considered.

I hope this is helpful.

I am copying this reply to the Minister for Transport Infrastructure and Climate Change.

Yours sincerely

MALCOLM REED