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Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee Comataidh Eaconomaidh Dùthchail is Co- cheangailteachd

Subordinate Legislation considered by the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee on 18 March 2020



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Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee

Remit: To consider and report on matters relating to the rural economy within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and Tourism and matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity.



<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/rural-committee.aspx>



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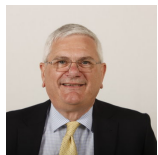
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Executive Summary

1. This report details the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee's consideration of the draft National Bus Travel Concession Scheme for Older and Disabled Persons (Scotland) Amendment Order 2020.

The Committee agreed to recommend to the Parliament that it approves the draft instrument.

The National Bus Travel Concession Scheme for Older and Disabled Persons (Scotland) Amendment Order 2020 [draft]

The Committee reports to the Parliament as follows—

2. On 7 February 2020, the [National Bus Travel Concession Scheme for Older and Disabled Persons \(Scotland\) Amendment Order 2020 \[draft\]](#) was laid before the Parliament and was subject to the affirmative resolution procedure.

Purpose of the instrument

3. The National Bus Travel Concession Scheme for Older and Disabled Persons (“the Scheme”) provides an entitlement to free bus travel for people in Scotland age 60 and over or meeting certain disability-related criteria. In line with the Scheme objectives, operators can be reimbursed for the costs of carrying concessionary passengers provided they are left no better or no worse off through their participation in the Scheme. This complies with EU rules relating to state aid.
4. This instrument sets out the capped level of funding and reimbursement rate for bus operators in the concession scheme in 2020-21.
5. In 2020-2021, the reimbursement rate will be 55.9 % (of the adult single fare) and the capped level of funding will be £226.1 million. The corresponding figures for 2019-2020 are 56.5% and £213.65 million. The funding cap for 2020-2021 is over 5% higher than for 2019-2020.

Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee consideration

6. The Delegated Powers and Law Reform (DPLR) Committee considered the instrument at its meeting on [18 February 2020](#) and agreed not to draw the Parliament's attention to the instrument on any grounds within its remit.

Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee consideration

7. In advance of the Committee's consideration, the Convener wrote to the Scottish Government seeking clarification on why the increase in the Scheme's capped level from that set for 2019/20 was greater than RPI. The Scottish Government's response was published as part of the [Committee's papers](#) for its meeting on 18 March 2020.

8. At its meeting on 18 March 2020, the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee took evidence on this instrument from Michael Matheson, Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity, and his officials.
9. The Committee raised a number of points about the bus travel concession scheme with the Cabinet Secretary. These included sharing information about the wider benefits of the Scheme, promotion of the Scheme, the role of projections in Scheme financial calculations and seeking clarification that the reimbursement rate remains constant, regardless of the total number of bus journeys.
10. The Committee raised concerns expressed by some Scheme users about the destinations displayed on bus tickets, which in some cases were beyond their final destinations. Members were advised that, under the Scheme, sanctions can be applied to bus operators for not complying with its rules. Members also queried how the freephone number, for bus users to report concerns about potential misuse of the Scheme, was being promoted.
11. The Committee asked the Cabinet Secretary about the status of coach operators (which are excluded from the Scheme) who run services on longer distance routes and the ways in which Ministers might encourage such operators to take part in the Scheme.
12. The Cabinet Secretary subsequently moved the following motion in his name—
S5M-20928 —

That the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee recommends that the National Bus Travel Concession Scheme for Older and Disabled Persons (Scotland) Amendment Order 2020 [draft] be approved.
13. The Committee agreed the motion without division.
14. Full details of the Committee's consideration of the instrument can be found in the the [Official Report](#) of the meeting

Recommendation

The Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee recommends to the Parliament that the National Bus Travel Concession Scheme for Older and Disabled Persons (Scotland) Amendment Order 2020 [draft] be approved.

