



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme- Travel Application By Correspondence

Reference: SPCB (2022) Paper 50

Executive summary

1. The SPCB is invited to consider an application submitted by Beatrice Wishart MSP to have the travel and overnight costs associated with a proposed visit to the Faroe Islands in August 2022 met under the provisions made at paragraphs 2.2.3 and 6.1.5 of the Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme.

Issues and options

2. The Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme makes provision to meet travel and overnight costs associated with a Member undertaking their parliamentary duties. However, in relation to travel outwith the UK, Members are required to make an application to the SPCB to have such costs met.
3. The criteria previously applied when determining such applications included where the reason for the journey was:
 - a. Directly related to a specific constituency matter, where the visit is necessary in order to address the issue;
 - b. Directly related to Parliamentary business;
 - c. Something the SPCB considers the Parliament should be paying for;
 - d. Provides value for money.
4. Ms Wishart's application relates to an invitation by Head of the Faroese Representation following a visit by her to the Scottish Parliament in June 2022. Ms Wishart is looking to explore the shared interests with Scotland and the Faroes particularly around fishing, energy, and tourism, and from an island constituency perspective she is especially interested to learn more about travel and digital connectivity within Faroe and how that relates to these issues within her constituency.
5. Ms Wishart is proposing to travel either 22 – 25 August or 29 August to 1 September 2022 should costs be approved to be met from the Scheme by

the SPCB. Ms Wishart is applying for the cost of flights from her constituency, Shetland, to Edinburgh and then onward flights from Edinburgh to Faroe as well as the cost of overnight accommodation and evening meal whilst in Faroe.

6. The estimated cost of flights is £880. This splits as approx. £550 for the Shetland to Edinburgh return flights and £330 for the Edinburgh to Faroe return flights.
7. Overnight accommodation would be required for 3 nights. Ms Wishart has looked at options for accommodation in the capital Torshavn where she proposes to visit and advises that prices range greatly with limited options for booking. The overnight limit for travel abroad is currently £220 per night covering dinner, bed and breakfast. Ms Wishart has indicated that she anticipates that following her research the approx. costs per night for overnight accommodation would be £250 per night.
8. Ms Wishart is seeking SPCB agreement to meet the higher overnight cost up to £250 should she not be able to secure accommodation within the usual overnight limit and has advised that she would propose to meet any costs above the £250 personally, if necessary to secure accommodation. If the SPCB agrees the overnight accommodation costs and sets a higher limit of £250 this would equate to £750 in total.
9. Total costs for both flights and accommodation based on the indicative costs above would be £1,630.

Governance

10. There are no governance issues as the Scheme provides for Members travelling abroad and applying to the SPCB for the costs to be met from the Scheme prior to travelling.

Resource implications

11. Should the SPCB determine that the costs should be met it is confirmed that there are sufficient funds available within the overall Members budget for 2022-23.

Publication Scheme

12. This paper can be published in accordance with the SPCB's publication scheme.

Next steps

13. Advise the Member of the SPCB's decision and if the SPCB agree the travel and overnight costs can be met from the Scheme then the Member will be advised to move forward with the proposed visit.

Decision

14. The SPCB is invited to consider an application from Ms Wishart for the cost of travel and overnight accommodation to be met from the Members' Expenses Scheme for a proposed visit to Faroe Islands as detailed above.

Allowances Office

14 July 2022