

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 15 May 2024
9th Meeting, 2024 (Session 6)

PE1962: Stop motorhomes parking overnight out with formal campsites, caravan parks and Aires

Introduction

Petitioner Lynn and Darren Redfern

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to improve licensing enforcement on motorhomes to ensure they are only parking in designated and regulated locations.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1962>

1. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 14 June 2023](#). At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the Scottish Government.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received new written submissions from the Scottish Government and the Petitioner which are set out in **Annexe C**.
4. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage](#).
5. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
6. [The Scottish Government gave its initial response to the petition on 21 September 2022](#).
7. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 935 signatures have been received on this petition.

Action

8. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

Clerks to the Committee
May 2024

Annexe A: Summary of petition

PE1962: Stop motorhomes parking overnight outwith formal campsites, caravan parks and Aires

Petitioner

Lynn and Darren Redfern

Date Lodged

15 September 2022

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to improve licensing enforcement on motorhomes to ensure they are only parking in designated and regulated locations.

Previous action

There have been several emails between ourselves and Maree Todd, our local MSP, as well as emails with various people within the Highland council. All of which have not managed to solve the issue.

Background information

We believe that motorhomes that choose not to use campsites, caravan parks or Aires (small-scale designated campsites with only basic facilities) place an unnecessary burden on local communities by parking inappropriately, disposing of their rubbish, chemical toilet and dirty water as well as defecating at the side of the road. Regulated parks offer all these facilities in one safe location. Motorhomes often park in an unsafe manner, where regulated parks are required to keep motorhomes 6m apart for fire risk (motorhomes use LPG), unregulated parking places them much closer together and is a disaster waiting to happen.

The Scottish Outdoor Access Code does not apply to motorised vehicles and motorhome users who must have the permission of the landowner before parking overnight. This almost never happens. Although there is much documented evidence of motorhomes parking in adverse spots across the Scotland, enforcement is not being implemented to stop this happening.

Annexe B: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE1962 on 14 June 2023

The Convener: PE1962, which seeks to stop motorhomes being parked overnight outside formal campsites, caravan parks and aires, was lodged by Lynn and Darren Redfern. It calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to improve licensing enforcement on motorhomes to ensure they are only parking in designated and regulated locations. We previously discussed the petition on 23 November 2022, when, members will recall, we were keen to explore the promotion of aires as an alternative solution to the challenges presented by the petitioners.

The Scottish Government has stated that a camper van and motorhome working group was set up and has explored the unique challenges created by motorhome and camper van users in Scotland, with facilities being part of its consideration. [Laughter.] I do apologise. The group will report its recommendations to the visitor management steering group at some point this year.

The petitioners' recent submission states that new facilities will not be effective in addressing the issues that were raised in the petition and that strict restrictions must be enforced against unregulated camper van parking, wherever that might take place. They highlight an incident where a camper van renter was displeased because the rental company had promoted the vehicle as fully self-contained, incorrectly implying that campsite facilities would not be necessary. The petitioners state that that is the mentality that they wish to stem. Financial challenges are also highlighted by the petitioners, because they are ineligible for the support that not-for-profit establishments might get.

I will try to contain my obvious associated hysteria. Do members have any comments that we might wish to consider?

David Torrance: I think that Jackie Baillie wants to say something.

The Convener: I see that Jackie Baillie, who is not formally here to advise us on the petition, would like to come in. I have been generous today in bringing in parliamentary colleagues, so it would be churlish of me not to offer you that opportunity.

Jackie Baillie: I am so grateful, convener. I did not know that I had such an interest in camper vans until now, but I suggest that the committee might want to consider a debate in parliamentary time, given the level of interest.

The Convener: Thank you. I suppose that we could also take evidence from camper van owners—that is potentially a way—[Laughter.]—forward.

Mr Torrance, save us from this mischievous hilarity.

David Torrance: If someone has road tax for their vehicle, whether or not it is a camper van, they are allowed to park it anywhere, as long as it is not causing an obstruction to a road or driveway. Therefore, under rule 15.7 of standing orders, I am happy to close the petition—

The Convener: Oh, I feel that that would be a terrible wasted opportunity, Mr Torrance. Given that a working group has been set up, might we not want to know what it has done?

David Torrance: Convener, I am quite happy to close the petition under rule 15.7 of standing orders—[Laughter.]—if any other committee members wish to back me.

The Convener: Are there any alternative suggestions?

Foyso Choudhury: I have never been in a camper van.

Fergus Ewing: That's what they all say. [Laughter.]

The Convener: On what is the safest thing for us to do, there is a proposal to close the petition or we can—[Laughter.] Are there any alternative suggestions?

Fergus Ewing: I will incur the wrath of Mr Torrance, but I wonder whether we have done justice to the petitioners, who have said that they want specific restrictions on overnight parking. There is no doubt that it is a nuisance in the Highlands and also elsewhere. Camper vans are huge vehicles, so parking can cause some nuisance issues.

In order to ascertain whether the working group will consider any specific recommendations, perhaps we could write to the Government to ask whether the working group has looked at the issue and what its recommendations are. Could any measures be taken? For example, local byelaw provisions might enable Highland Council to tackle such things.

To be fair, the petitioners' business is one of many that operates a caravan park, and it is a particular issue of nuisance for many residents along the North Coast 500, and perhaps in many other places, too. If you have a bloody great camper van parked somewhere that you need to go or that needs to be made available for safety vehicles, particularly on restricted narrow and single-track roads in places such as Skye, it is a serious issue, although perhaps not necessarily the one that was foremost in everybody's minds as the frivolity and jollity proceeded unabated.

The Convener: We have a proposal to close the petition and one to ask the Scottish Government whether the camper van and motorhome working group has reported to the visitor management steering group and when the steering group is expected to respond to that report.

Fergus Ewing: I apologise to Mr Torrance for stealing his thunder, but I think that that is worth while, out of justice to the petitioner, because we do not really have a clear answer. We should at least get an answer to that.

Alexander Stewart: I support Mr Ewing, convener, because I think that there is an opportunity here. I would like to hear from the visitor management steering group as to where we are. I propose that we keep the petition open for some more deliberation.

CPPP/S6/24/9/3

The Convener: Mr Choudhury, do you wish to close the petition or would you like to explore your interest in camper vans a little further?

Foyso Choudhury: I think that we should explore more.

The Convener: Are you content that we proceed at least to that stage, Mr Torrance?

David Torrance: Yes.

Annexe C: Written submissions

Scottish Government submission of 17 August 2023

PE1962/E: Stop motorhomes parking overnight out with formal campsites, caravan parks and Aires

Request from Committee: The Committee is keen to know whether the campervan and motorhome working group has reported to the Visitor Management Steering Group and when the Steering Group is expected to respond to that report.

Response: As work is still underway, no formal report has been submitted to the steering group, although informal updates have been provided.

Reporting was discussed at the Visitor Management Steering Group and it was agreed a formal report will be provided at the end of 2023.

Petitioner submission, 18 April 2024

PE1962/F: Stop motorhomes parking overnight out with formal campsites, caravan parks and Aires

The problem has not gone away, and in fact may get worse. The Highland Council had an Access Ranger programme running for the last few years, **but they are unable to fund it for 2024.**

It highlights that they observed:

- 33,243 motorhomes parked up mostly overnight – not in a campsite or aire
- 126 incidents of motorhome waste on the roadside
- 8,657 incidents of outdoor toileting
- 3,740 scorch marks from campfires
- 2,186 bags of litter were collected

They also dealt with issues with litter and issues surrounding informal camping which is also an issue, but not one addressed in our petition.

We firmly believe that if these 33,243 motorhomes were somehow forced into regulated spaces which had at least facilities for disposing of waste and were monitored regularly in order to prevent misuse, these problems would be reduced significantly.

Robin Pettigrew who also lives in the highlands also produced a report “Combatting overtourism in Scotland”, his report highlights the same problems that we are trying to tackle with this petition. He offers several solutions to try and solve the issues. We are all on the same page – there is a very significant problem here and the government needs to step up and do something about it. His report is available if the Committee wishes to receive a copy.

A recent report from the NC550 the Land Weeps Facebook page found that 73% of respondents think that RVs (motorhomes) should be required to stay on sites.

We also believe that if the tourist tax is applied to campsites and not to the motorhomes staying by the roadside then these numbers will increase significantly. The Scottish Government has already received concerns from various NGOs like the Federation of Small Business and the Scottish Tourism Alliance as well as the Highland Council highlighting this case. A report called Pitching the Value is available which was created in conjunction with all the major caravan and camping organisations. This report highlights the value that campsites have to the Scottish Economy and the jobs that are created, both directly and indirectly through the supply chain.

Here is a quote from the report, **“In 2022/23 it is estimated that the Scottish holiday park and campsite sector generated a gross direct visitor expenditure impact of £991m in the economy. This visitor expenditure supports 18,354 FTE jobs and contributes £565m (including multipliers) of GVA to the economy. In addition to the figures above, money spent on maintenance by tourers and holiday caravan owners adds a further £99m of expenditure to the Scottish economy.”**

If there are 33,000 motorhomes parking up overnight at the roadside and not staying on campsites there will be a significant detrimental effect on the economy.

As per our petition, we would like to remind you that it costs money to host these 33,000 motorhomes. They need somewhere to dispose of their rubbish (our campsite spends over £20,000 per year on getting our bins collected.) They also need somewhere to fill up with water and dispose of their waste (again our campsite paid over £17,000 last year on water bills). If these costs are not being covered by campsites or aires then the taxpayer will need to pay for it instead. Please also remember that our campsite pays over £21,000 per year in business rates, and another £113,000 to HMRC by way of PAYE, VAT and Corporation Tax. We also employ 2 staff all year round and 5 staff on a seasonal basis. Therefore, the government is losing even more tax revenue by allowing this to continue.