

MC1

From: Maggie Chapman MSP <maggie.chapman.msp@parliament.scot>

Sent: Friday, July 26, 2024 1:26 PM

To: Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice 2024 <CabSecforSJ@gov.scot>

Subject: Ending Conversion Practices - PfG commitment? (Case Ref: MC4994)

Dear Shirley-Anne,

I hope you are well.

Please find attached a letter from me asking you to commit to including the promised ending conversion practices legislation in the forthcoming Programme for Government.

Many thanks.

With best wishes,

Maggie

Maggie Chapman MSP (she/her)

Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice
Scottish Government
St Andrew`s House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG
Our Ref: MC4994 26 July 2024
Your Ref: 202400413624

Dear Shirley-Anne,

Re: Ending Conversion Practices – Scotland must act now!

Following our correspondence in May about our shared desire to see a comprehensive ban on conversion practices in Scotland, I am writing to you again to seek a commitment from the Scottish Government to include legislation to end these harmful acts in the forthcoming Programme for Government.

In May, Kaukab Stewart clearly stated her personal commitment to ending these practices which are harmful, discriminatory, and have no place in our society. Scottish Greens share this view, and I know many in the Scottish Government do too. The recent King`s Speech following the General Election included a commitment by the new UK Government to a Draft Conversion Practices Bill, which would apply to England and Wales. There have been some comments in the media since this announcement that suggest that the Scottish Government will seek to extend the application of the UK Parliament`s Bill to Scotland, rather than continue with plans to introduce Scotland-specific legislation.

I believe that there is a clear mandate for legislation on this issue to be introduced in this parliamentary session. Indeed, there was a clear commitment between the Scottish Government and the Scottish Greens to bring forward a ban on conversion practices that was as comprehensive as possible under devolved powers by the end of 2023. For various reasons of which I am aware, this did not happen. But I was heartened to see progress on Scottish legislation with the consultation that ended in April 2024.

In addition to this, the unanimous report from the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee from 2022 that called for a comprehensive ban provides a clear parliamentary mandate for such legislation.

I and many other campaigners on this issue are concerned that waiting for legislation to pass through the House of Commons represents an unacceptable and avoidable delay to the delivery of important protections for members of the LGBTQIA+ community in Scotland. There is no guarantee that the Draft Bill will actually be lodged in Westminster, and no guarantee that it will become law in the next five years.

Victims and survivors of conversion practices should not have to wait for another parliament to act when we have promised action in Scotland. We should not delay the creation of protections to ensure no other member of the LGBTQIA+ community in Scotland is subjected to the cruel and harmful practices we have the powers to prevent now.

Everyone in Scotland deserves to live their lives free from marginalisation and discrimination. No one should be made to feel less equal because of who they are or who they love. Banning conversion practices is a vital step towards ending the ideology that LGBTQIA+ identities are somehow wrong and must be changed.

I urge the Scottish Government not to delay any further, but to keep its word to the people of Scotland, fulfil the mandate from and wishes of Scotland's Parliament as expressed by our two parties and the unanimous Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee, and include a Bill that ends conversion practices in Scotland in the forthcoming Programme for Government.

You will have the Scottish Green Party's full support on this issue if you choose to do so.

Yours sincerely,
Maggie Chapman MSP
North East Scotland

MC2

From: Maggie Chapman MSP <maggie.chapman.msp@parliament.scot>
Sent: Friday, September 27, 2024 8:32 AM
To: Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care 2024 <CabSecHSC@gov.scot>
Subject: Ambulance Delays (Case Ref: MC5654)

Hello,

Please see the attached letter from the office of Maggie Chapman MSP.

We would be grateful if you could let us have your comments in a form that can be forwarded to the constituent.

Furthermore, can you please advise on receipt of this email the expected timescale for a response?

With best wishes,
Maggie

Maggie Chapman (she/her)

MSP for North East Scotland | Scottish Green Party
Spokesperson for Justice, Equalities, Human Rights and Economy

Phone 0131 348 6332 | 01382 279991

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Neil Gray MSP

Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care

Health and Social Care

Scottish Government, St Andrew`s House

Regent Road

Edinburgh

EH1 3DG

Our Ref: MC5654 27 September 2024

Dear Neil,

Re: Ambulance waiting times – NHS Grampian

I am writing on behalf of a constituent who recently contacted me regarding the experience of his [Redacted s.38(1)(b)] mother when waiting for an ambulance. By way of background, my constituent advises me that on the 31st of August, his mother waited over 5 hours with a debilitating headache, vomiting, and low temperature after a GP from NHS 111 advised that she needed to attend hospital. A local ambulance controller called my constituent to explain that there would be a delay in the wait due to other emergencies occurring.

As you can imagine, this situation was highly distressing for the family, and the severe delay only exacerbated this frustration and concern.

I would appreciate it if you could investigate my constituents' concerns and take steps to address the issue raised. Further, I would appreciate it if you could advise me on what the Scottish Government is doing to address the delays families across Scotland face when calling for an ambulance.

Thank you and I look forward to your response which I will share with my constituent.

Yours sincerely,
Maggie Chapman MSP
North East Scotland
TB

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MC3

Neil Gray MSP/BPA

T : 0300 244 4000

E : scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Maggie Chapman MSP

maggie.chapman.msp@parliament.scot

Our Reference: 202400434119

Your Reference: Ambulance Delays (Case Ref: MC5654)

21 October 2024

Dear Maggie,

Thank you for writing to me to raise your constituent's concerns with the Scottish Ambulance Service after his mother experienced a lengthy wait for an ambulance when she became unwell. I, and indeed the Scottish Government, regret and apologise for any occasion where the standard of care provided by the Scottish Ambulance Service falls short of our expectations. I hope that your constituent's mother is recovering well after what I know will have been an upsetting time. The Scottish Ambulance Service is experiencing sustained pressure, as is every other ambulance service across the UK. This is due to a combination of increased demand, increasingly complex cases, delayed discharge and exceptionally busy emergency departments. This is resulting in a small number of people not receiving the standard of service that any of us expect or that the Service wants to deliver, however the Scottish Government is clear that there should be no unnecessary delays in response or handover at hospital, and that all calls must be triaged appropriately. I am determined to ensure the Scottish Ambulance Service has the resources and skilled staff in place to continue to deliver a high-quality service and patient safety remains the number one priority. We continue to invest in supporting SAS staff and patients, including a record number of additional staff (1388) since 2020. The 2023-24 Budget provided the Scottish Ambulance Service with £28.4 million of increased investment. At the most challenged sites, SAS has established cohorting areas within the hospitals to ensure that during periods of high demand, crews are able to hand over patients and are freed up to respond to other calls when possible. SAS continues to operate an Integrated Clinical Hub which allows clinicians to review appropriate emergency calls and resulted in preventing 4,315 unnecessary ambulance dispatches in August 2024. This also means that more ambulances are freed up to respond to more emergency calls. You will appreciate that it is not appropriate for Ministers or their officials to comment on or intervene directly in matters relating to patient's treatment and care. Therefore, any concerns about patient care should, in the first instance, be addressed by the Scottish Ambulance Service. The Service can be contacted at the following address: Corporate Affairs and Engagement Department Scottish Ambulance Service National Headquarters 1 South Gyle Crescent Edinburgh EH12 9EB Tel: 0131 314 0000 The Scottish Ambulance Service can also be contacted here. I hope that you find the information provided in this letter helpful.

Yours sincerely,
NEIL GRAY

MC4

From: [Redacted s.38(1)(b)]

Sent: 03 July 2024 13:54

To: Minister for Climate Action <MinisterCA@gov.scot>

Cc: Minister for Public Finance <MinisterPF@gov.scot>

Subject: Peterhead gas-fired power station plans

Dear Minister,

Please find attached a letter setting out concerns that have been shared with myself and Scottish Green colleagues about proposals for a new gas-fired power plant at Peterhead. We have significant concerns about the impact the proposal could have on Scotland's climate ambitions and the risk that this diverts attention and investment in the renewable energy sector. We kindly request an update on the Scottish Governments plans and I look forward to your response.

With best wishes,
Maggie

Maggie Chapman MSP (she/her)

MSP for North East Scotland | Scottish Green Party

Spokesperson for Justice, Equality, Human Rights and Social Justice

Maggie Chapman MSP

North East Scotland

Minister for Climate Action

Cc Minister for Public Finance

Scottish Government

St Andrew's House

EH1 3DG

3 July 2024

RE: Peterhead gas-fired power station plans

Dear Minister,

I am writing to share with you concerns that constituents have raised with myself, and my Scottish Green MSP colleagues, about plans to construct a new gas-fired power station at Peterhead. In particular, my constituents are deeply concerned about the impact that a new fossil fuel power station will have on Scotland's drive to reduce carbon emissions in line with the Paris Agreement goal of keeping global temperature rise to below 1.5°C. Peterhead is already home to Scotland's most polluting power plant, and there is nothing in the proposals that would rule out both plants operating at full capacity. This is not compatible with any of our climate goals or commitments.

The proposed new fossil fuel power station relies on carbon capture and storage (CCS) technologies. These technologies are unproven at scale and where they are in place (at only 26 plants around the world), they do not deliver the level of carbon sequestration promised. This would be the third attempt to get a CCS plant at Peterhead and it highly unlikely that the promised carbon capture would be achievable, even if the technology was available in time. CCS is also used to greenwash energy developments, with more than 81% of carbon captured to date used to extract even more fossil fuels.

Scottish Green MSPs share these concerns: we do not support the proposed new fossil fuel power station at Peterhead. I would like to use this opportunity to re-state our scepticism of carbon capture technology and the utmost necessity of keeping Scotland's remaining fossil fuel reserves in the ground. We also agree with international climate and energy experts that any further investment in fossil fuels will crowd out the much-needed investment for renewables and alternative green energy solutions. All of our efforts should be oriented toward a fossil-free future, not baking in reliance on oil and gas for decades to come.

Further, constituents have highlighted the need for a credible just transition for Scotland's energy sector to be set out. I, too, urge that the Scottish Government presents plans for what a just transition would look like in the absence of carbon capture technology becoming viable. This plan must include clear actions to support all those currently working in the oil and gas sector to transition to either renewable energy jobs or other work in the green economy.

We understand that ministers are actively considering the planning application for the new power station at Peterhead. Scottish Green MSPs strongly urge you to reject this application and instead focus on developing a comprehensive, fossil-fuel-free energy strategy for Scotland's future. Additionally, we note the call from environmental groups for a public inquiry on the proposals given that they will impact the region's economy and Scotland's action on climate for decades to come. We request an update on what consideration you have given to this call, as a public inquiry would allow for full scrutiny of SSE's plans and give local communities a chance to have their say on the environmental and economic consequences.

Yours sincerely,
Maggie Chapman MSP

MC5

Minister for Climate Action
Ministear airson Gnìomhachd na Gnàth-shìde
Alasdair Allan MSP/BPA
T : 0300 244 4000
E : scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Maggie Chapman MSP
[Redacted s.38(1)(b)]

Our Reference: 202400421649
Your Reference: gas-fired power station

22 July 2024

Dear Maggie,

Thank you for your letter of 3 July regarding proposals for a new power station at Peterhead. As this relates to a live application, you will be aware that I cannot comment on the merits or otherwise of the proposed development. A decision will be taken by Ministers in due course, following consideration of the application information, consultation responses and representations made by members of the public. For more information on the consenting process in full, the Energy Consents Unit's published guidance on section 36 and section 37 applications, sets out the process in detail. In relation to the Scottish Government policy on unabated fossil fuels, this is set out in the draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan (ESJTP). This makes clear our opposition to the continued use of unabated fossil fuels to generate electricity, and sets out that Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) cannot be used to justify unsustainable levels of fossil fuel extraction or impede Scotland's just transition to net zero. The advice we have received from the independent UK Climate Change Committee describes CCUS as a "necessity, not an option" to achieve net-zero emissions. The Global CCS Institute's (GCCSI) latest Global Status Report 2023 identified a total of 41 successful CCS projects in operation, a further 26 under construction and 325 in development. The oldest operational project, Sleipner in Norway, has operated for over 25 years and is estimated to have reduced emissions by 1 MT/year over its lifespan. The Scottish Government supports the development of CCUS, which can play a central role in the decarbonisation strategies of key sectors such as heat, industry and energy. We are clear that the deployment of CCUS for the Scottish Cluster must enable decarbonisation at pace. I would like to highlight that UK Government has published business models which include requirements for the capture rates that CCUS power stations are expected to achieve. The capture rate is a key component in calculating the payment which operators will receive as part of the dispatchable power agreement (DPA); the less CO₂ captured, the less money they will receive. To be eligible for DPA payments, a minimum capture rate must be achieved. I would also like to highlight the Scottish Government's forthcoming ESJTP, Scotland's first sectoral Just Transition Plan. After extensive consultation and engagement, we will set out our vision for a future net zero energy system that delivers affordable, secure and clean energy and provides high quality jobs and economic opportunities. I hope

that this letter goes some way to addressing your concerns and thank you again for getting in touch.

Yours sincerely,
ALASDAIR ALLAN

MC6

From: Maggie Chapman MSP <maggie.chapman.msp@parliament.scot>
Sent: Wednesday, May 29, 2024 12:53 PM
To: Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice <cabsecsj@gov.scot>
Subject: A Human Rights Bill for Scotland (Case Ref: MC5153)

Hello Shirley-Anne,

I hope you are well.

Please find attached a letter requesting an update on the proposed Human Rights Bill.

I look forward to receiving your response.

Many thanks.
With best wishes,
Maggie

Maggie Chapman MSP (she/her)

**MSP for North East Scotland | Scottish Green Party
Spokesperson for Justice, Equality, Human Rights and Economy**

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Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice
Scottish Government
St Andrew`s House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Our Ref: MC5153

29 May 2024

Dear Shirley-Anne,

Re: A Human Rights Bill for Scotland

I am writing to ask you to reaffirm the Scottish Government's commitment to introduce world leading human rights legislation. This was a commitment in the Bute House Agreement, and in the SNP's 2021 Scottish Parliament election manifesto.

You will know that the Scottish Greens are very supportive of, and remain committed to, the incorporation of the following international treaties into Scots law: the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

We also want to see our laws include the right to a healthy environment, a right for older people to ensure equal access to their human rights so that they can live a life of dignity and independence, and an equality clause which provides equal access for everyone, including LGBTQIA+ people.

You will be aware of the concerns within civil society that the delays to the introduction of this legislation have caused. The consultation on the proposed legislation closed in October 2023, and the analysis of the responses to this consultation were published in January 2024. Many individuals and organisations were expecting to see the legislation lodged this Spring, but since the recent changes to the Scottish Government, there has been no update provided on this important Bill, and no mention of the importance of human rights in the new Government's priorities.

MC7

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice
Rùnaire a' Chaibineit airson Ceartas Sòisealta
Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP/BPA
T : 0300 244 4000
E : scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Maggie Chapman MSP
maggie.chapman.msp@parliament.scot

Our Reference: 202400416891
Your Reference: FW: A Human Rights Bill for Scotland (Case Ref: MC5153)

31 July 2024

Dear Maggie Chapman MSP,

Thank you for your letter dated 29 May 2024 regarding the Scottish Government's Human Rights Bill. I appreciate that you raised this issue during the Parliamentary debate on child poverty on Tuesday 11 June, and I indicated in response that the government remains committed to the Bill. I want to reassure you that the Scottish Government remains firmly committed to advancing human rights in Scotland and continues to recognise the importance of incorporation in building a stronger human rights culture across public service delivery. The advancement of human rights - particularly for those furthest from realising their rights - is central to this government's priority missions of tackling child poverty, building excellent public services and tackling climate change. As you would expect, the legislative priorities of the Scottish Government for the year ahead will be announced in the First Minister's upcoming Programme for Government. I am very grateful for your support and engagement on progressing human rights. I note that you recently met with the Minister for Equalities and look forward to our continued engagement on this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

SHIRLEY-ANNE SOMERVILLE

MC8

From: [Redacted s.38(1)(b)]

On Behalf Of Chapman M (Maggie), MSP

Sent: Thursday, May 16, 2024 2:34 PM

To: Cabinet Secretary for Finance & Local Government <CabSecFLG@gov.scot>

Subject: Meeting with Maggie Chapman re Public Sector Pay Disputes

Dear Shona,

Following Maggie's portfolio question on 1 May 2024, she would like to take you up on your offer to discuss the issue further. Could I ask if there are any time and dates that work best for you?

In addition, the GMB Scotland rep, [Redacted s.38(1)(b)], has asked whether he could attend the meeting. The question arose from an enquiry he raised on behalf of Dundee City Council GMB members. Please let me know if this would work for you.

Many thanks,

[Redacted s.38(1)(b)]

Office of Maggie Chapman

MSP for North East Scotland | Scottish Green Party

Spokesperson for Justice, Equalities, Human Rights and Economy

Phone [Redacted s.38(1)(b)] | **Email** [Redacted s.38(1)(b)]

MG.16 | The Scottish Parliament | Edinburgh | EH99 1SP

MC9

Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government
Rùnaire a' Chaibineit airson Ionmhas agus Riaghaltas Ionadail
Shona Robison MSP/BPA
T : 0300 244 4000
E : scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Maggie Chapman MSP
[Redacted s.38(1)(b)]

Our Reference: 202400414722

10 June 2024

Dear Maggie,

Thank you for your email of 16 May following up my offer to meet with you to further discuss the issue of public sector equal pay disputes raised in your portfolio question from 1 May. I am happy to meet with you and my office will be in touch to identify a suitable time and date. You may find it helpful to be aware that I have already advised [Redacted s.38(1)(b)] in recent correspondence that it would not be appropriate for me to discuss any ongoing issues in relation to particular local authorities across Scotland or equal pay in local government more generally. Local Authorities are independent bodies with their own powers and responsibilities separate from the Scottish Government. Local and national government have committed to respecting each other's democratic mandates as part of the Verity House Agreement. In regards to [Redacted s.38(1)(b)] attending, as a member of a trade union representing employees in an ongoing dispute with specific local authorities, I do not feel it would be appropriate for me to meet with [Redacted s.38(1)(b)] on these matters. I look forward to meeting with you.

Yours Sincerely,
SHONA ROBISON

MC10

From: Maggie Chapman MSP <maggie.chapman.msp@parliament.scot>
Sent: Monday, May 13, 2024 9:02 AM
To: Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice <cabsecsj@gov.scot>
Subject: Ending Conversion Practices (Case Ref: MC4994)

Dear Shirley-Anne,

I hope you are well.

Please find attached a letter about Ending Conversion Practices legislation.

I look forward to your response.

With best wishes,

Maggie

Maggie Chapman MSP (she/her)

**MSP for North East Scotland | Scottish Green Party
Spokesperson for Justice, Equality, Human Rights and Economy**

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Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice
Scottish Government
St Andrew`s House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Our Ref: MC4994 13 May 2024

Dear Shirley-Anne,

Re: Ending Conversion Practices

I am writing to ask if you will reaffirm the Scottish Government`s commitment to bring in a full and watertight ban on conversion practices, or so-called conversion therapy.

This was a commitment in the Bute House Agreement, and in the SNP`s 2021 Scottish Parliament election manifesto. You will be aware of the importance of this legislation to the Scottish Green Party, but also – more importantly – the LGBTQIA+ community in Scotland. Recent changes in the Scottish Government, including the ending of the BHA and the departure of Emma Roddick as the Minister responsible for taking forward this legislation, have raised doubts and fears about whether this will be delivered in this parliamentary session.

I remind you of the unanimous Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee report in 2022 that called for a comprehensive ban on conversion practices. I also refer you to the findings of the Scottish Government's Expert Advisory Group on Ending Conversion Practices, published in October 2022. This report concluded: that a ban would not lead to the unlawful restriction of existing freedoms such as freedoms of speech, religion and belief; that the definition of conversion practices must apply equally to sexual orientation, expression of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression; that a ban must recognise the inability of victims to consent to these practices; and that the legislation should not provide any exemptions.

I was pleased to see Neil Gray's comments at the weekend, in which he said that the Scottish Government is still committed to delivering a ban. But, given widespread speculation about this legislation, I would welcome your confirmation that this is the case and that the ban will still be watertight and trans inclusive. Can you also confirm:

When will the Scottish Government publish the results of the consultation held earlier this year?

When will the Scottish Government publish draft legislation to ban conversion practices?

Will you ensure that the draft legislation aligns with the guiding principles recommended by the expert advisory group?

Everyone in Scotland deserves to live their lives free from marginalisation and discrimination: no one should be made to feel less equal because of who they are or who they love. Banning conversion practices is a vital step forward in ending the ideology that LGBTQIA+ identities are somehow wrong and must be changed.

It is vital that the Scottish Government continues to prioritise this legislation and brings forward a full and watertight ban. You will have the Scottish Green Party's full support to do so.

Yours sincerely,

Maggie Chapman MSP

Scottish Greens' Spokesperson for Justice, Equalities, Human Rights & Economy
Scottish Green MSP for North East Scotland
MC

MC11

Minister for Equalities
Ministear airson Cho-ionannachdan
Kaukab Stewart MSP/BPA
T : 0300 244 4000
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Maggie Chapman MSP
maggie.chapman.msp@parliament.scot

Our Reference: 202400413624
Your Reference: Ending Conversion Practices (Case Ref: MC4994)

21 May 2024

Dear Maggie,

Thank you for your email of 13 May 2024 regarding the government's commitment to ban conversion practices in Scotland. The Scottish Government has committed to introducing a Bill on ending conversion practices that is as comprehensive as possible within devolved competence. As you have noted in your correspondence, this commitment has been reiterated by Neil Grey MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, on 11 May 2024 and John Swinney MSP, First Minister, on 13 May 2024. I would also like to reiterate my own commitment to ending these harmful acts. Regarding the public consultation, this ran for 12 weeks and closed on 2 April 2024. Responses to that consultation are now being analysed and considered. An external company will lead the data analysis and a formal report will be published once this work is completed. We will use the analysis to shape and refine the Bill to ensure that legislation introduced into parliament is as effective and robust as possible. In your email you expressed a wish for the legislation to align with the recommendations of the expert advisory group (EAG). The report and recommendations of the EAG, published 4 October 2022, have been carefully considered alongside other research and evidence, including the experience of other countries and engagement with stakeholders, including in the LGBTQI+ and faith and belief communities, healthcare practitioners, parenting groups and young people. We will continue to engage with a range of stakeholders in considering final legislative proposals and consider these alongside the consultation analysis. Overall, the Scottish Government is clear about the need to act to end conversion practices: these practices are harmful, discriminatory, and have no place in our society. I am pleased to hear that I can rely on the Scottish Green Party's support on this matter. I hope this goes some way to addressing your concerns.

Yours sincerely
KAUKAB STEWART

MC12

From: [Redacted s.38(1)(b)]

On Behalf Of Ruskell M (Mark), MSP

Sent: Thursday, August 22, 2024 9:45 AM

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Cc: Ruskell M (Mark), MSP <Mark.Ruskell.msp@parliament.scot>; Chapman M (Maggie), MSP <Maggie.Chapman.MSP@Parliament.scot>

Subject: Letter from Mark Ruskell MSP and Maggie Chapman MSP - free bus travel for people seeking asylum

Dear First Minister,

Please find attached a letter from Mark Ruskell MSP and Maggie Chapman MSP about the recent decision to cancel the provision of free bus travel to people seeking asylum.

We look forward to receiving your response in due course.

With best wishes,

[Redacted s.38(1)(b)]

Mark Ruskell MSP – Mid-Scotland & Fife Region

[Scottish Green Party](#)

MG.12

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Mark Ruskell MSP / Maggie Chapman MSP

MG.12 / 16 The Scottish Parliament Edinburgh EH99 1SP

T: 0131 3486 468

E: Mark.Ruskell.MSP@parliament.scot

22nd August 2024

Dear First Minister

Free Bus Travel for People Seeking Asylum

We are writing to you to express our serious concerns about the Scottish Government's recent decision to drop its promise to extend free bus travel to people seeking asylum in Scotland. In October 2023, the Scottish Government committed £2m from the 2024/2025 budget to deliver on this important and life-changing promise. The commitment came following a successful crossparty campaign led by refugee rights organisations and was negotiated as part of the cooperation agreement between the Scottish Greens and the Scottish Government. At the time, the Scottish Government was very clear – it wholeheartedly supported the principle

of extending free bus travel to people seeking asylum. It was integrated into the broader New Scots Strategy and understood as a key policy lever to help mitigate the devastating impacts of hostile environment policies orchestrated by the UK Government. For the past ten months, refugee rights organisations, community groups and those currently in the asylum system have been waiting patiently for updates from the Scottish Government on how this commitment would be delivered. A working group was set up with representatives from expert organisations to help design the best way forward. Responses to letters and parliamentary questions from ourselves remained positive, stating that work was ongoing to identify the best way to roll out free bus travel to those seeking asylum. Therefore, the reported announcement by the Minister for Equalities Kaukab Stewart on the 19th August 2024 to cancel this commitment came as a big surprise. People seeking asylum are forced into abject poverty. They are not allowed to work. They are forced to survive on barely £50 a week to meet all essential living needs. Those living in hotels are surviving on barely £8 a week for all essentials beyond meals. Many are stuck in completely inappropriate housing, isolated from local communities, and vulnerable to harassment and intimidation from an emboldened far right. The Scottish Government does not have the power to build its own asylum and protection system. But we do have the ability – and the responsibility – to use what powers we have to support those who have come to Scotland in search of protection. The extension of free bus travel to people seeking asylum was exactly that. We aimed to use the powers we do have to mitigate the devastating impact of a hostile asylum system built on racist policies. Over the past month, we have seen some of the worst examples of far-right violence in the UK for years. People seeking asylum have been specifically targeted in their homes, threatened, and attacked. So, it is deeply ironic that precisely at the time we should be ramping up our offer of support and care to those seeking protection, the Scottish Government has decided to roll back on this commitment. We are devastated that this policy has been axed and are deeply concerned about the impact this will have on people seeking asylum in Scotland. We are frustrated at the disrespect this shows to refugee rights organisations that have given countless hours of time, expertise, and energy to support the Scottish Government's development of this policy. We are concerned that there still appears to be no formal public announcement from the Scottish Government about the decision to axe the policy or the rationale behind it. And we are worried about what this decision says about the Scottish Government's commitment to support New Scots to rebuild their lives here in Scotland. Given the months of promises and restatements of its commitment to this policy, this u-turn will likely generate distrust and resentment towards the Scottish Government and Parliament. It reflects badly on us as politicians and policy makers at a time when we should be working to build trust with marginalised communities. We want to build and live in a country which welcomes everyone who chooses to make Scotland their home. So, we urge you to immediately restore the Scottish Government's commitment to expand free bus travel to people seeking asylum.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Ruskell MSP
Transport Spokesperson for the Scottish Greens
MSP Mid Scotland and Fife Region

Maggie Chapman MSP
Equalities Spokesperson for the Scottish Greens
MSP North East Region

MC13

Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity
Ministear airson Àiteachas agus Comas-ceangail
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Mark Ruskell MSP
[Redacted s.38(1)(b)]

Our Reference: 202400430248
Your Reference: Letter from Mark Ruskell MSP and Maggie Chapman MSP - free bus travel for people seeking asylum

1 October 2024

Dear Mark and Maggie,

Thank you for your letter dated 22 August 2024 from yourself and Maggie Chapman MSP to the First Minister expressing your concern regarding the recent announcement that the £2 million funding allocated in 2024-25 to progress piloting free bus travel for all people in Scotland seeking asylum will not proceed. I am replying as Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity as responsibility for bus services and concessionary fares sits within my portfolio. As you will both be aware, the Scottish Government is having to make very difficult decisions to deliver balanced and sustainable spending plans for the 2024-25 financial year, therefore it is unaffordable to progress our plans to pilot free bus travel for all people seeking asylum in Scotland. I can provide assurance that this decision was not taken lightly and the Scottish Government understands that this news will be extremely disappointing for those who would have benefitted from the pilot. As you would expect, the Scottish Government places the upmost importance in balancing its budget each financial year. This decision sits within the wider context of extremely challenging financial constraints across the whole of the public sector in Scotland, given these constraints it is not possible at this time to make any commitments for future financial years. I can confirm however, that people seeking asylum in Scotland who are currently eligible for free bus travel through the National Concessionary Travel Schemes, including those under 22 and over 60 years of age and those with qualifying disabilities, will continue to be able to make use of their entitlement. I encourage all who may be eligible to apply. The Working Group that was established to help develop the pilot consists of representatives from third sector organisations supporting people seeking asylum in communities and also those with lived experience of the asylum system. It was therefore considered appropriate to provide group members with the information that the pilot was unable to proceed in the first instance at a scheduled meeting on 16 August. Follow up discussions took place with members who were unable to attend this meeting. This approach ensured there was time for group members to ask questions and discuss the impacts of the decision. Group members advised that it would be helpful in terms of dissemination of this news to the wider sector for the Minister for Equalities, Kaukab Stewart MSP, to reference the decision at an event held on 19 August in Glasgow to mark the New

Scots Refugee Integration Strategy: Delivery Plan for 2024-2026. This advice was actioned and the Minister included announcement of the news in her speech at the event. At the request of some of the Working Group members, officials held a further meeting to explain the decision to people seeking asylum that they have been supporting. In addition, formal confirmation was provided by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government, Shona Robison MSP, during a Ministerial Statement on the Pre-budget Fiscal Update in Parliament on 3 September 2024. The Scottish Government remains committed to supporting people seeking asylum, refugees and communities through the New Scots refugee integration strategy. We will continue to work closely with partners to deliver the remaining actions in the ambitious plan and this will include ensuring New Scots who continue to be entitled to free bus travel receive this. We want to work collaboratively with the UK Government to contribute ideas that build on shared priorities and where possible provide evidence of impacts and needs. By working together and sharing learning, there is great potential for tangible improvements to be made for refugees and people seeking asylum living in the UK. I reiterate my thanks for your support as we progress the delivery of the New Scots Strategy.

Yours sincerely,

JIM FAIRLIE

MC14

From: [Redacted s.38(1)(b)]

Sent: Tuesday, November 12, 2024 10:06 AM

To: Minister for Employment and Investment <MinisterEI@gov.scot>

Cc: Maggie Chapman <Maggie.Chapman.msp@parliament.scot>; Emma Harper <Emma.Harper.msp@parliament.scot>; [Redacted s.38(1)(b)]; Gary Gillespie <Gary.Gillespie@gov.scot>

Subject: Invitation to joint CPG meeting on December 6 2024

Dear Minister,

as secretary for the CPG on Wellbeing Economy I am pleased to attach an invitation from our co-convener to speak our next CPG meeting on the 6th of December. The meeting is scheduled from 11:00 am to 12:30 pm and will be held online on Zoom.

The meeting is a joint meeting of the CPGs on Wellbeing Economy, Circular Economy and Social Enterprise and we will host a panel discussion on the role of economic democracy and inclusive and democratic business models in building a Wellbeing Economy.

Any contribution you can make to the meeting would be very much appreciated. We are looking forward to hearing from you.

Warm wishes

[Redacted s.38(1)(b)]

Minister for Employment and Investment, Tom Arthur MSP
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House Regent Road Edinburgh EH1 3DG

12/11/2024

Dear Minister,

As Co-convener of the Cross Party Group on Wellbeing Economy, I extend a warm invitation to you to join our next meeting on Friday December 6th, 2024, from 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM which will be held online. The meeting will be a joint meeting with the CPG on Social Enterprise and the CPG Circular Economy. This meeting will focus on how economic democracy can contribute to building a Wellbeing Economy, especially looking at the contributions made by inclusive and democratic business models. Your attendance would be a valuable opportunity to share your vision and we believe your participation would be instrumental in furthering the conversation and collaboration on this critical issue. Please RSVP to [Redacted s.38(1)(b)] by the 29th of November to confirm your attendance. The meeting will be held online on Zoom. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Maggie Chapman MSP

Co-convenor of the Cross Party Group on Wellbeing Economy in the Scottish Parliament

MC15

Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice
Rùnaire a' Chaibineit airson Ceartas Sòisealta
Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP/BPA
T : 0300 244 4000
E : scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Maggie Chapman MSP
maggie.chapman.msp@parliament.scot

Our Reference: 202400424220
Your Reference: Ending Conversion Practices - PfG commitment? (Case Ref: MC4994)

19 August 2024

Dear Maggie Chapman MSP,

Thank you for your letter of 26 July 2024 regarding our ongoing work to ban conversion practices in Scotland. I am pleased to hear that I can continue to rely on the Scottish Green Party's support on this matter, and thank you for your personal commitment. As you know, we set out detailed proposals for legislation in a public consultation in January. External, expert analysis of responses is underway and will be used to inform next steps. The First Minister will be setting out further detail on the Government's intentions for this coming year in the Programme for Government. We were pleased to see reference to legislation banning conversion practices in the recent King's Speech at Westminster and look forward to a cooperative and constructive relationship with the UK Government as we both work to address these abusive acts. The Scottish Government is clear about the need to act to end conversion practices. The practices are harmful, discriminatory, and have no place in our society. Through the Equality and Human Rights Fund, the Scottish Government is providing funding of over £1.1 million to organisations working to promote LGBTQI+ equality in Scotland in 2024-25. We are continuing to develop a package of non-legislative, supportive measures to end conversion practices and support survivors of conversion practices. We also provide funding to LGBT Health and Wellbeing for their helpline to support victims and survivors of conversion practices. I hope this addresses your concerns.

Yours sincerely

SHIRLEY-ANNE SOMERVILLE

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www.gov.scot