

Highland Council submission of 23 December 2022

PE1955/C: Make the provision of public toilets a statutory duty

Thank you for your letter of 5 November 2022 regarding this matter.

In relation to the information the Committee has requested about our comfort scheme, please find our responses below.

1. How many businesses and organisations are currently registered?

The Council has 37 three-year agreement Comfort Schemes. In addition to this, the Council's Tourism Committee in 2021/22 and 2022/23 agreed funding to support visitor management. This facilitated additional seasonal comfort schemes to be put in place, 14 in 2021/22 and 16 in 2022/23. This funding is non-recurring.

Our current service providers can be accessed via this link.

https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory/60/highland_comfort_scheme_providers

2. What the annual cost of this scheme is and how this compares to maintaining local authority-run public toilets?

Comfort schemes are a low risk, cost-effective way of providing this service. There are no building maintenance, utility, cleaning or staff costs to be met. The comfort scheme payments contribute to the cleaning and supply of consumables.

The annual cost of providing the comfort scheme is £96,000.

In addition, £24,500 was spent on seasonal comfort scheme providers in 2021/22 and £30,000 in 2022/23. This was funded by the visitor management fund.

3. How widely advertised and understood the scheme?

We advertise each scheme as it is agreed, normally by way of a press release. We also provide window clings and stickers and harmonized signage as well as promoting via our website and whenever we receive correspondence on PCs we direct people to our website which has a map and list of all comfort schemes. We also developed a QR code which is used on signage at local hot spot areas for wild toileting. This code directs people straight to the map on the Council website.

4. Whether the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund could be used to broaden the scheme to more Local Authorities?

This would be a worthwhile consideration as additional funding for more schemes would allow further facilities to be made available.

I hope this response provides sufficient detail for the committee. Please contact me if you require any further information.