

PE2188/B: Extend the National Entitlement Card scheme to include ferry travel for people aged 60 and over

Petitioner written submission, 30 October 2025

Introduction

I am submitting this evidence in support of Petition PE2188, which calls on the Scottish Parliament to extend the National Entitlement Card (NEC) scheme to include ferry travel for people aged 60 and over.

Currently, young people **up to age 22 travel free on buses and ferries**, and older adults on the **mainland benefit from free bus travel**. Residents of island communities, however, cannot access equivalent free travel without ferry support. This leaves older island residents at a significant disadvantage compared with mainland peers.

Experience and Community Impact

Ferry travel is essential for older adults living on islands:

- to attend healthcare appointments not available locally
- to purchase groceries and other necessities
- to maintain social and family connections.

Without financial support, older island residents face restricted independence, social isolation, and financial strain. Mainland older adults have the freedom to travel without cost on buses, while we must pay for ferries to access the same services, creating inequity.

This discrepancy not only affects individuals but also impacts the wider community. Reduced travel limits engagement with local businesses and services, which rely on residents' mobility.

Rationale for Extending NEC

Equity: Older adults on islands should have the same travel freedoms as those on the mainland. Young people already travel free on buses and ferries; older residents should receive the same support.

Independence and Wellbeing: Affordable ferry travel allows older adults to remain active, attend healthcare appointments, and stay socially connected.

Community and Economy: Supporting travel sustains local businesses and strengthens community engagement.

Social Inclusion: Reducing travel costs prevents isolation and promotes mental health.

Conclusion

Extending NEC ferry travel to residents aged 60 and over is fair, practical, and necessary. It addresses a clear inequity between mainland and island residents, supports independence and wellbeing, and benefits island communities socially and economically. I urge the Scottish Government to prioritise this extension and provide the necessary funding.