

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

Cabinet Secretary for Transport written submission, 20 January 2026

Thank you for your correspondence of 1 December 2025 regarding Petition 2188 which is asking that the Scottish Government to “Extend the National Entitlement Card scheme to include ferry travel for people aged 60 and over.”

I appreciate the concerns raised by the correspondent. The schemes currently in place form part of the Scottish Government’s long-term strategy to ensure ferry services are affordable and sustainable for years to come.

The Scottish Government does provide significant funding to keep ferry fares low for everyone, including over 60s, through Road Equivalent Tariff. Islander fares and funding of local authority ferries are also designed to allow for frequent travel at lower cost for the day-to-day needs of islanders. This funding also supports a number of local concessionary ferry schemes that are tailored to provide older and disabled people with free or discounted ferry travel. For example, eligible residents of Orkney’s outer-lying islands receive 24 free journeys per year for travel to mainland Orkney, and in Shetland older and disabled island residents receive free or discounted inter-island ferry travel.

Further to these, the Scottish Government provides 4 free ferry journeys to or from the Scottish mainland per year for over 60s and disabled people, if you live in Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles.

Fare levels are set by Scottish Ministers for the Clyde & Hebrides and Northern Isles Ferry Services and by the relevant local authority (supported by their Regional Transport Partnership in some instances) or private operators for ferry services they are responsible for.

The Scottish Government is currently providing the full funding requested by local authorities to run their inter-island and internal ferry services in 2025-26, which is around £50 million, and increase of 19.4% from last year.

However, we have looked closely at ferry fares as part of the Fair Fares Review and the Islands Connectivity Plan. On 2 May 2025, we published our Strategic Approach document, which confirmed that concessionary ferry travel will only be extended to under 22s.

We understand the calls to include over 60s, but within current budgets we’re not able to expand concessions further at this time, however, existing discounts and support will continue.

Yours sincerely,

FIONA HYSLOP

Cabinet Secretary for Transport