

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition PE2191: Review legislation in order to strengthen the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, lodged by Robin Pettigrew.

Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

The petition raises concerns about the environmental impacts of tourism, particularly in relation to motorhomes in rural areas of Scotland. It proposes that the [Scottish Outdoor Access Code](#) (SOAC), should be reviewed in order to:

- explicitly prohibit camping in a vehicle, outside of designated camping zones
- make the provisions of the Code legally enforceable by introducing dedicated enforcement teams and fines for Code violations.

As highlighted in the [Scottish Government's response to the petition](#), camping with motorised vehicles is outwith the scope of [legal access rights](#) and, therefore, the guidance provided by the SOAC. However, the Government does recognise that "there can be challenges arising from the behaviour of a minority of road users". They propose that education and promotion "to motorhome and campervan users how to travel and stay in Scotland responsibly" is the best course of action and note that "there is already a range of criminal and other sanctions for behaviour which passes the threshold for anti-social behaviour or criminal acts".

Most of the evidence in relation to this petition comes from news articles and social media groups / campaigns. See below for relevant hyperlinks.

In 2023, [VisitScotland conducted research](#) with people who had visited Scotland in a motorhome, campervan, caravan, or camped (in a tent or other structure) in the last five years. This was an online survey with 4,554 respondents, the majority of whom lived in the UK. In short, the survey found that most were older domestic visitors (with no children) using a campervan who visited from spring to autumn, and some were keen to "get away" from the traditional campsite experience. Respondents considered themselves to be well informed about guidance and regulations and eager to know more. They were willing to pay for facilities like waste disposal and showers. Broadly, their experiences with local communities were positive, whilst some noted more mixed attitudes. The research states:

A third (33%) of respondents stated that they experienced issues with parking during their most recent trip in Scotland.

Those that had had issues with daytime parking had difficulties parking due to the size of their vehicle or height barriers. Those that had had issues with overnight parking described a lack of sufficient overnight facilities.

According to an [article in the Press and Journal](#), which interviews the petitioner, he would like to see a system of management and enforcement similar to New Zealand, who put a [regulatory framework for self-contained vehicles \(SCV\) in place in December 2023](#). Recent changes have strengthened the system for certification and registration of SCVs, with the [relevant department stating that](#) “changes were made to strengthen the rules around freedom camping and protect Aotearoa New Zealand’s natural environment”.

Concerns relating to this petition appear to relate primarily to the North Coast 500 road trip, which is reported to have [boosted the Highland economy by £22.8m](#) in 2018. However, it also [appears to have contributed to](#) a significant increase in traffic (with associated speeding and poor driving), littering and “outdoor toileting”. [NC500 Ltd](#), the private firm which promotes the trip, has recently commissioned an economic and environmental impact analysis of the scheme.

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11 December 2025

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at spice@parliament.scot

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