



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

The Party Leaders' Expenses Scheme



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1.Introduction

- 1.1 The Party Leaders' Expenses Scheme as set out below is given effect by resolution of the Scottish Parliament.
- 1.2 The Scheme sets out the provisions available to support eligible party leaders in carrying out their parliamentary party leader duties and the principles and rules party leaders must abide by making a claim for reimbursement under the Scheme.
- 1.3 This Scheme is issued by the SPCB with the purpose of ensuring the regularity and propriety of the management of public money and resources, which the SPCB is accountable for under the Scotland Act 1998. The Party Leaders' Expenses Scheme operates in addition to the Members' Expenses Scheme and imposes additional considerations for Party Leaders to those placed on them as Members under the Members' Expenses Scheme.
- 1.4 The Scheme applies to party leaders whenever they make a claim under the Scheme, and compliance with the Scheme is required under [Section 7, paragraph 4](#), of the Members' Code of Conduct.

Part A

2. Principles and Rules in relation to the Scheme

- 2.1 Any claim made under the Scheme will be made having regard to the Principles of the Scheme. These principles, which stem from the Nolan principles of standards in public life and inform the interpretation of the Scheme, are:

Objectivity

- A party leader is entitled to reimbursement of expenses which have been incurred only for the purpose of carrying out parliamentary leader duties as detailed in this Scheme.
- A party leader or a member of their staff shall not submit a claim unless satisfied that the expenses represent value for money and were incurred having due regard to efficiency and effectiveness.

Accountability

- A party leader is personally accountable for a claim, even if they delegate the administration of the claim to others.
- A party leader is entitled to reimbursement of expenses only if the claim is supported by invoices, receipts or other documentation confirming the expenditure, unless otherwise determined by the SPCB.

Openness

- A party leader shall be open and transparent as respects expenses claimed under the Scheme.
- A party leader shall observe and comply with the SPCB's finance and governance arrangements in relation to travel and expenses claimed under the Scheme.

Integrity

- A party leader shall ensure that a claim is in compliance with the Scheme.
- A party leader shall not enter into any arrangement which could give rise to a benefit to a party-political organisation.

Selflessness

- A party leader shall ensure that any claim is submitted solely in respect of the performance of parliamentary party leader duties, including the role of a party spokesperson or representative and is not submitted in order to gain financial or other benefit for the party leader or any other person.

Honesty

- A claim shall be made in good faith.

Leadership

- In complying with the rules of the Scheme and the Scheme Principles, a party leader shall lead, by example, to maintain the reputation of the Parliament and-strengthen and maintain public confidence and trust in the Scheme.

Equality

- All eligible party leaders have equal formal and legal status

2.2 The SPCB shall exercise its functions under the Scheme so as best to promote and achieve conformity with the Scheme Principles.

2.3 The following general rules shall, unless the context otherwise requires, govern the Scheme.

3. Interpretation

3.1 In this Scheme-

- "claim " means any such form or method to claim expenses as prescribed by the SPCB from time to time;
- "financial year" means the period from 1 April in one year to 31 March in the next year;
- "member" means a Member of the Scottish Parliament;
- "qualifying party leader" means the Parliamentary leader of a registered political party represented in the Parliament and which registered political party has not less than five members, but excludes any Parliamentary party leader who is or a member of whose party is a part of the Scottish Government or a junior Scottish Minister in terms of the Scotland Acts of 1998, 2012 and 2016 and any amendment to, or any re-enactment thereof;

- "registered political party" means a party registered under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, and any amendment to, or any re-enactment thereof;
- "SPCB" means the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body in terms of section 21 of the Scotland Act 1998;
- "staff" in relation to a qualifying party leader means an employee or employees of a qualifying party leader and a person or persons on a contract with an agency, a contract for services or a volunteer; and any reference to a Part is a reference to the Part so lettered in this Scheme and any reference to an Annex is a reference to the Annex so lettered in this Scheme.

4. Verifiable Expenditure

- 4.1 The SPCB may, on application for the purpose made to it by a qualifying party leader in accordance with this Scheme, make payments to that qualifying party leader for reimbursement of travel and expenses incurred by that qualifying party leader under the Scheme.
- 4.2 Subject to paragraph (4.3), payments for which a qualifying party leader is eligible shall be paid by the SPCB only upon the production to the SPCB of evidence of relevant expenditure in the form of invoices or receipts.
- 4.3 Supporting invoices and receipts are not required for the payment of mileage claims.
- 4.4 A qualifying party leader shall complete, certify and submit a claim in order to obtain payment from the Scheme. In submitting a claim, a party leader shall: -
- (a) act in accordance with the Principles and Code of this Scheme;
 - (b) comply with the rules of the Scheme; and
 - (c) have regard to any guidance issued by the SPCB.
- 4.5 The SPCB shall, for the purposes of administering the Scheme, prescribe the form and manner in which claims are submitted by qualifying party leaders under the Scheme and the manner in which such claims are verified.

5. Party Leader's Expenses Scheme Code

- 5.1 The proper use of qualifying party leaders' Expenses Scheme provisions payable under this Scheme shall be governed by the Expenses Code in the Annex.

6. Publication

- 6.1 The SPCB shall publish information on travel and expenses claimed under this Scheme for each financial year in such form as the SPCB may determine.

7. Enforcement

- 7.1 The SPCB shall be responsible for supervising adherence to the provisions under this Scheme.
- 7.2 Where eligibility for any provision under this Scheme is in dispute, and cannot otherwise be resolved, the matter shall be referred to the SPCB for determination.
- 7.3 Any member may make a complaint to the SPCB where that member has reason to believe that any provision under this Scheme has not been expended in accordance with the Scheme, and where such a complaint is made, the SPCB shall hear that complaint within one month.
- 7.4 Where the SPCB has reason to believe that improper use has occurred or where the SPCB has received a complaint under paragraph (7.3), the SPCB may initiate investigations into the matter.
- 7.5 Where the SPCB has initiated investigations in accordance with paragraph (7.4) and finds that there has been improper use of the Scheme, the SPCB may refer to complaint to the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee; and such referral may result in the removal of all or part of the provision available to party leader under the Scheme.

8. Uprating & Rates Payable

- 8.1 The SPCB shall uprate the party leaders' expenses provision limit on 1 April each year, having regard to such indices as the SPCB considers appropriate.

The rates payable in respect of travel and overnight expenses shall not exceed the appropriate rates specified in the Members' Expenses Scheme whether incurred by a qualifying party leader or one of his or her staff.

Part B

9. Party Leaders' Expenses

- 9.1 A qualifying party leader shall be eligible for a party leaders' provision under this part of the Scheme for the purpose of providing support to carry out the extra duties as a Parliamentary party leader, including the role of a party spokesperson or representative.
- 9.2 The duties referred to in sub paragraph (9.1) shall:
- a. include any work on the preparation of
 - (i) briefing notes
 - (ii) speeches and
 - (iii) attendance at an event to which the qualifying party leader has been invited to give a presentation on his or her party's policies in the Parliament; but
 - b. excludes any work on the preparation of briefing notes and speeches and attendance at a party-political conference or a seminar, workshop or meeting with party activists and canvassing for party political support, whether during an election or otherwise, and fundraising for a political party and any constituency case work.
- 9.3 Without prejudice to the generality of sub paragraph (9.1) above, the provision may be used for the following:
- i. the employment of staff (which shall, in relation to employees include the costs of employer's National Insurance contribution and any pension contributions);

ii. necessary office accommodation costs;

iii. to meet travel and overnight expenses (which shall include car hire and taxi fares) of the qualifying party leader and any staff referred to in (i) above relating to travel within Scotland and travel commencing within Scotland to destinations within the UK (but outside Scotland) and return incurred whilst undertaking the duties of a Parliamentary party leader, or in the case of one of his or her staff, assisting a Parliamentary party leader in his or her duties.

iv. to meet travel and overnight expenses outside the UK including those of staff not covered by (9.3) (iii) for meetings as part of the duties of a Parliamentary party leader, or in the case of staff assisting with those duties, provided that the SPCB authorises such travel in advance.

v. office equipment and furniture, where not provided for centrally.

9.4 Subject to the provisions of this paragraph, the maximum amount per qualifying party leader which may be claimed in a financial year will be calculated as follows:

(a) A fixed sum per annum applicable to eligible party leaders of a registered political party with 5 or more members plus an amount per member subsequently returned for that party at an election.

9.5 For the period beginning 7 May 2026 and ending 31 March 2027, the relevant amount shall be a fixed sum of £20,000 plus £1,500 per member of that registered party.

9.6 For any subsequent period of one year beginning 1 April 2027, the fixed amount and amount per member of the party shall be increased having regard to such indices as the SPCB considers appropriate.

9.7 Subject to sub paragraph (9.6), where a member becomes a qualifying party leader during a financial year the amount which may be claimed shall be the pro rata amount due from the date when that member became a qualifying party leader to the end of the relevant financial year.

9.8 Where a qualifying party leader is replaced by his or her party by another qualifying party leader, the amount which may be claimed by the replacement

qualifying party leader shall be the balance remaining of the provision (if any) for that financial year.

- 9.9 Where any change of qualifying party leader occurs under sub-paragraph (9.6) above, intimation in writing shall be given to the SPCB by the replacement qualifying party leader and the date applicable for eligibility for this provision shall be the date of intimation of the change to the SPCB.
- 9.4 Where any change in the number of members of a registered political party occurs (except a registered political party which has a member or members who is or are a part of the Scottish Government or a junior Scottish Minister) by virtue of an election to fill the seat of a constituency member which is vacant or the filling of a seat of a regional member which is vacant, a re-calculation of the amount payable per member of the party under sub paragraph (9.4) shall be made and the re-calculation date shall be the date or the last date when the member or members concerned take the oath or affirmation of allegiance.
- 9.5 In the event of a general election resulting in any change in the number of members of a registered political party, any calculation of the amounts claimable under sub paragraph (9.4) shall be the proportionate amount due for the remainder of the year.
- 9.6 An employee of a qualifying party leader shall be employed on the terms and conditions as determined by the SPCB from time to time but an employee can be employed on conditions which are more favourable to the employee provided that this does not entail the qualifying party leader exceeding the annual amount available under the Scheme.
- 9.7 Whilst the remuneration of an employee shall be the responsibility of a qualifying party leader, the SPCB shall provide:
 - a. payroll services for such employee; and
 - b. arrangements for employer's pension contributions to be paid, and a qualifying party leader shall provide the SPCB with details of his or her employee to enable the SPCB to provide such services and make such arrangements.

- 9.8 Daily commuting journeys of any staff of a qualifying party leader to and from the Parliament or, as the case may be, such other place which is the normal place of work do not qualify for payment under this Scheme.

10. Winding-up Allowance

- 10.1 Where a change of qualifying party leader occurs or where he or she ceases to be a Member of the Scottish Parliament or where the number of members of a registered political party falls below five, eligibility to make any further claim from the Scheme as provided for under paragraphs 9.1 to 9.7 ceases. The former qualifying party leader shall from this point be eligible for a winding-up allowance.
- 10.2 The maximum amount of the winding-up allowance shall be the equivalent of one third of the maximum amount payable, in accordance with paragraph 9.4, to which the former qualifying party leader was entitled prior to any change as set out in subparagraph (10.1).

11. Party Leaders' Expenses Code

- 11.1 Any staff of a qualifying party leader, during the hours that such staff are contracted to perform or have volunteered to undertake work for which a claim under this Scheme is made, shall be restricted to support of the qualifying party leader as party spokesperson or representative but shall not extend to campaigning, whether during an election campaign or not, or to political canvassing.
- 11.2 No stationery provided to a qualifying party leader shall be used for campaigning, electoral activities or display of party materials.
- 11.3 A qualifying party leader may base his or her staff within a parliamentary or other office base but the qualifying party leader and any of his or her staff shall not engage in any political activity from the parliamentary or other office base other than that provided for in paragraph 9.2.
- 11.4 A qualifying party leader will be responsible to the SPCB for his or her observance of this code and will also be responsible for the activities of his or her staff.

- 11.5 A qualifying party leader has a duty to ensure that he or she utilises the provisions to which the Scheme applies for the purpose for which they were intended. This includes any provision for which any of his or her staff is eligible.
- 11.6 A qualifying party leader has a duty to ensure that he or she adheres to the terms of this code in spirit and in practice.

12. Complaints Process

- 12.1 Under the Code of Conduct, complaints about the use of SPCB facilities, resources and services and breaches of SPCB policies are to be made to the SPCB. This includes in relation to this Scheme.
- 12.2 The SPCB may refer any complaint relating to the use of parliamentary resources, facilities and services and breaches of any SPCB policies to the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee.