



T : 0300 244 4000  
E : scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Councillor Susan Aitken  
Pauline.Stevenson@glasgow.gov.uk

**Item 6(b)**

**20th February 2025**

Our Reference: 202400444841

Your Reference: Letter FAO Cabinet Secretary for Transport

7 January 2025

Dear Cllr Aitken,

thank you for your letter dated 3 December 2024 to Fiona Hyslop MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Transport regarding free bus travel for people seeking asylum in Scotland. I am replying as Concessionary Bus Travel falls within my portfolio responsibilities.

At the outset it is important to note that the National Concessionary Travel Schemes providing free bus travel to people resident in Scotland who are under 22 or over 60 years of age, as well as people with eligible disabilities, includes eligibility for people seeking asylum who fall into these categories.

In August 2024, the Scottish Government had to make decisions to deliver balanced and sustainable spending, while pursuing our ambition to deliver support for integration. As such, the budget has not been cut, but decisions on spend based on indicative allocations have been subject to necessary corporate spending controls. This is the case for all budgets across Scottish Government.

Scottish Ministers are committed to the New Scots refugee integration strategy delivery plan. The Scottish Government has ensured that we have enhanced the support we are providing to New Scots in 2024-25, despite a very challenging financial context. We have provided over £3.8 million of grant funding towards the delivery of the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy in 2024-25. Additionally, we continue to fund a number of third sector organisations to support refugee integration. This funding totals £488,000 in 2024-25. This investment represents an increase in the funding the Scottish Government has provided in previous years, to mitigate the impact of the end of EU funding.

As you may be aware, the draft Scottish Budget for 2025-26 published on 4 December 2024, includes extending free bus travel to all people seeking asylum in Scotland, which demonstrates the Scottish

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)



Government's intent to progress this policy in 2025-26. In addition, we are committed to exploring if we can extend free bus travel to all people seeking asylum on a longer term basis before the end of the current Parliamentary session, subject to the successful passage of a Scottish Budget containing this issue and an agreed way forward on the policy in terms of practical delivery. The development of this policy will, as you would expect, include the completion of appropriate impact assessments.

Whilst the asylum support system is reserved to the UK Government, the Scottish Government recognises that free bus travel has the potential to be transformative for people seeking asylum, who are among the most vulnerable in society. It would help those who receive very limited support for living costs from the UK Government while waiting for an asylum decision, enabling them to access essential services and to contribute to their local community.

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

—

**JIM FAIRLIE**

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1  
3DG  
[www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)



**INVESTORS IN PEOPLE™**  
We invest in people Silver

