

PE2056/D: Introduce legislation allowing Scottish Ministers to intervene on the hire of public land

Scottish Tourism Alliance written submission, 6 June 2024

The Scottish Tourism Alliance (STA) thanks the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee for seeking our views on petition PE2056 lodged,

“Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to introduce legislation providing Ministers with the power to “call in” and potentially override council decisions on the hire of public land for large-scale events.”

A key driver of domestic and international tourism in Scotland is the hosting of events, helping to support and deliver the national tourism strategy, Scotland Outlook 2030, and the national events strategy, Scotland: The Perfect Stage. Alongside large-scale events, small to medium-sized events also deliver significant benefits for the economy and communities, which play an important role in contributing to our strategic priorities.

The hosting of events is associated with more overnight stays and greater visitor spend in local economies, alongside boosting Scotland’s international profile as a perfect stage for major events and encouraging other events to take place.

Where there is no sound reason given in refusing the hiring of land for events and there is a clear case that it delivers a positive local, regional, and national economic impact, alongside social and/or regenerative benefits, then we believe it would be fair that the Scottish Government could have the power granted to challenge the local authority’s decision and engage in the decision-making process.

If Scottish Ministers are given the power to intervene, it is important that there is an open and transparent dialogue with local authorities, local communities and businesses, and prospective event organisers to reach an informed decision if an event is to take place, including whether an alternative site can be identified, if needed.

Any decision must be balanced with the potential economic, social and strategic benefits of hosting an event; health and safety; any rerouting of traffic; policing considerations; any commercial issues around use of the land (i.e. it is being marketed for development); and ensuring there is as limited disruption to local residents as possible.