

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

16th Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Wednesday
23 November 2022

PE1956: Increase the provision of wheelchair
accessible homes

Note by the Clerk

Petitioner	Louise McGee
Petition summary	Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to review the existing Wheelchair Accessible Housing Target guidance, and to explore options for increasing the availability of wheelchair accessible housing in Scotland
Webpage	https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1956

Introduction

1. This is a new petition that was lodged on 31 August 2022.
2. A full summary of this petition and its aims can be found at **Annexe A**.
3. A SPICe briefing has been prepared to inform the Committee's consideration of the petition and can be found at **Annexe B**.
4. While not a formal requirement, petitioners have the option to collect signatures on their petition. On this occasion, the petitioner elected to collect this information. 12 signatures have been received.
5. The Committee seeks views from the Scottish Government on all new petitions before they are formally considered. A response has been received from the Scottish Government and is included at **Annexe C** of this paper.

Action

The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take on this petition.

Clerk to the Committee

Annexe A

PE1956: Increase the provision of wheelchair accessible homes

Petitioner

Louise McGee

Date lodged

31 August 2022

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to review the existing Wheelchair Accessible Housing Target guidance, and to explore options for increasing the availability of wheelchair accessible housing in Scotland.

Previous action

I have tried raising this issue with my MP and MSPs.

Background information

I have been trying to get moved for around 5/6 years due to a neighbour dispute. Midlothian Council say that there aren't enough wheelchair accessible homes to be able to offer me another, more suitable, house.

Annexe B

The logo for SPICe (The Information Centre) is a purple rounded rectangle. The text 'SPICe' is in white, with 'The Information Centre' and 'An t-Ionad Fiosrachaidh' in white text below it.

The Information Centre
An t-Ionad Fiosrachaidh

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition [PE1956](#): Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to take action to review the existing Wheelchair Accessible Housing Target guidance, and to explore options for increasing the availability of wheelchair accessible housing in Scotland, lodged by Louise McGee.

Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

1. Research has identified a lack of accessible homes including those suitable for wheelchair users to live in permanently. For example, In 2018 the Equalities and Human Rights Commission's report [Housing and Disabled People Scotland's Hidden Crisis](#) argued that the 'supply of accessible and wheelchair-accessible housing across all tenures needs to increase significantly if Scotland's housing market is to be future proofed and disabled people are to enjoy independent lives.'
2. There is no universally agreed definition of wheelchair accessible homes and no national source on the number of existing wheelchair accessible homes.
3. In March 2019, the Scottish Government published, "[Guidance for setting of Local Housing Strategy targets to support the Delivery of more wheelchair accessible housing](#)." The guidance required

councils to set a target for the delivery of wheelchair accessible homes across all tenures. This could be single target, setting out the requirement for housing across all tenures or could distinguish requirements by tenure and / or sub area where this can be evidenced. Councils are required to report annually on progress against the target(s). This guidance followed a commitment made in the Scottish Government's 2016 [Fairer Scotland for Disabled People Delivery Plan](#)

4. The guidance notes the lack of a universally agreed housing standard to define housing for wheelchair users to live in. It sets out the expectation that wheelchair accessible homes should meet certain criteria of the Housing for Varying Needs (HfVN) design guide (for homes funded through the Scottish Government's affordable housing supply programme). Where councils use a higher standard than HfVN, further information should be provided and value for money should be ensured.
5. The guidance also outlines the purpose of the target:

“The purpose of setting a target is to provide a greater focus and commitment to the delivery of wheelchair accessible housing across all tenures, which can be evidenced through annual reporting. Progress on delivery should be monitored in both the affordable and market housing sectors with the intended outcome of providing increased choice and flexibility for wheelchair users.
6. Councils are expected to prepare local housing strategies (LHS) at least every five years. The [Scottish Government published updated local housing strategy guidance in 2019](#). Councils prepare LHS at different points. Some councils are currently preparing new five-year LHS. As part of the process for setting targets some councils have undertaken further research and analysis into the demand for, and existing provision of, wheelchair accessible homes in their area.
7. The Scottish Government guidance on wheelchair accessible homes targets asked councils to provide a position statement in their Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) submission (2019-2024) and set out the intention that future SHIPs would be used to report progress towards each council's target across all tenures.

SHIPs are submitted annually to the Scottish Government and set out how councils and their local partners will spend the resources available through the Scottish Government's Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP).

8. The Scottish Housing Network has collated information from councils' SHIPs covering the period 2022-2027, and other relevant documents, on the targets councils have set. As at 25 August 2022, 29 of 32 local authorities have set targets for affordable housing wheelchair accessible housing provision. The remaining three councils are working on the development of targets.
[Midlothian Council recently \(on 23 August 2022\) agreed a target of 20 wheelchair accessible homes to be built in the council area each year](#) and are looking at further ways to increase that figure.
[This followed a consultation on the issue.](#)
9. Councils have taken varied approaches to setting targets. For example:
 - Where targets have been set, these are most commonly a % target. For example, [East Ayrshire Council's SHIP](#) states that "where possible and practicable, aspire to ensure that 10% of housing stock in new developments that feature in the SHIP is fully wheelchair accessible."
 - Some other councils have set a numerical target. For example, [Dundee City Council's target is 8 wheelchair accessible homes a year.](#)
 - Some councils have a different target set for their own stock and for RSL stock. For example, [North Lanarkshire council has a 5% target for all new build social rented housing, with a 10% target set for the council's own new build programme.](#)
 - Few councils have set an all-tenure target or a specific target for the private sector. There are some challenges to developing a target for private sector providers. These include, for example, the lack of data on existing private sector provision, and the difficulty councils have holding private developers to a target without specific planning mechanisms in place.

10. The Scottish Government guidance provides that councils are required to report on progress towards delivery of its target,(s) annually through the SHIP process. SPICe has examined SHIPs from selected councils who have set targets to find out what information is being provided about monitoring and progress. Not all SHIPs provide monitoring information (this partly may reflect that some targets may have only been set recently). Where monitoring information is provided there seems to be variable progress towards those targets.
11. Even though some councils have not developed a target, or have not reported on progress, this does not mean that wheelchair accessible homes are not being developed in their areas.
12. The Scottish Government's Affordable Housing Supply Programme out-turn reports provides statistics on the number of homes that are purpose built for older people or disabled people. [For example, in 2020-21 through the programme](#), 716 home were purpose built for older or disabled people including 198 identified as specifically designed for wheelchair users. The 198 homes specifically designed for wheelchair users accounts for 3% of the total 6,477 homes completed through the programme in 2020-21.
13. [Scottish Government SHIP guidance](#) published in June 2022 (for the preparation of SHIPs covering 2023-2028) emphasises the existing guidance on wheelchair accessible housing targets and reminds councils to include information in their SHIPs.

“Wheelchair Accessible Housing

The published guidance for setting of LHS targets to support the delivery of more wheelchair accessible housing. We are aware from information provided by local authorities that work to develop all-tenure targets is underway in areas to help inform new Local Housing Strategies that are being prepared. A session has been held with Scotland's Housing Network to help support local authorities with the development of their targets. Where a local authority is currently or has yet to develop all-tenure targets, we encourage engagement with local authorities who have set all tenure targets to discuss the approach that they have taken.

The SHIP should include information on:

- a. what the wheelchair accessible housing target is across all tenures;
- b. a summary of what has been delivered to date against the target; and
- c. the planned investment for wheelchair accessible housing over the period of the SHIP.

Local authorities will be aware that draft National Planning Framework 4 includes proposals that new homes that improve affordability and choice should be supported including self-provided homes; accessible, adaptable and wheelchair accessible homes amongst others. Where proposals are included in Local Development Plans to include provision of wheelchair accessible housing, local authorities should be aware that these should be backed by evidence of need.”

14. The Scottish Government is reviewing the HfVN standard and, in its [Housing to 2040 policy document](#), also commits to introducing new building regulations to underpin a Scottish Accessible Homes Standard which all new homes must achieve. As Housing to 2040 states:

“We will carry out research and engagement with stakeholders to confirm the shortfalls of the current framework. Then, as we consult on the new Housing Standard in 2021 (see Part 4A), we will also explore views on the new Scottish Accessible Homes Standard. We will build on the review of the Housing for Varying Needs Design Guide and the implementation of all tenure wheelchair accessible housing targets, intending to introduce these new requirements into building standards from 2025/26 alongside the new Housing Standard.”

Kate Berry
Senior Researcher
[25/08/22]

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

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in petition briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

Published by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe), an office of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

Annexe C

Scottish Government submission of 6 September 2022

PE1956/A – Increase the provision of wheelchair accessible homes

The Scottish Government is committed to delivering homes that are fit for purpose now and for the future to meet the needs of older people, disabled people, wheelchair users and people with other specific needs. We are already undertaking a range of action, which I am happy to outline in this letter. As some of the longer term commitments are still under development, including the new Scottish Accessible Homes Standard, the petitioner may wish to contribute to public consultations which will take place as part of this work.

Housing to 2040, the Scottish Government's long term housing strategy, makes clear that we will take action so that our homes support those with long-term conditions and disabilities and everyone, who can and wants to, is enabled to live independently in a home of their own.

Local Housing Strategies and Strategic Housing Investment Plans

The Scottish Government has committed to delivering 110,000 affordable homes by 2032, of which 70% will be for social rent, and funding is available through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme to deliver more wheelchair accessible homes where local authorities have included these in their Strategic Housing Investment Plans.

It is the statutory responsibility of local authorities through their Local Housing Strategy (LHS) to determine the appropriate housing required in their area, informed by a Housing Need and Demand Assessment. This includes identifying what specialist provision housing need there is locally, current supply and required delivery. Where LHSs identify a strategic requirement for a particular type of home, including wheelchair accessible housing, projects to support delivery of these homes are expected to be included in Local Authority Strategic Housing Investment Plans for delivery through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme.

In March 2019, the Scottish Government published guidance for local authorities on the setting of Local Housing Strategy (LHS) targets to support the delivery of more wheelchair accessible housing across all tenures.

The guidance was developed collaboratively with stakeholders including the Accessible Housing group, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), Association for Local Authority Chief Housing Officers (ALACHO) as well as disability organisations including Inclusion Scotland, Housing Options Scotland, and MND Scotland. The guidance has been well received by stakeholders and by local authorities who are responsible for setting targets and local authorities have developed targets in line with the guidance or are in the process of doing so. Therefore, we do not intend to any review although local authorities will continue to monitor progress of delivery of their targets.

There has been good progress by local authorities in setting wheelchair accessible housing targets. From information gathered from the 2022/23 Strategic Housing Investment Plans which local authorities are required to submit, 29 of the 32 local authorities have in place wheelchair housing targets for the delivery of affordable housing. We realise there is more to do, and we are working with all local authorities through Scotland's Housing Network to have targets in place for all tenure wheelchair accessible housing. Of note, on 23 August 2022, Midlothian Council where the petitioner resides, approved its wheelchair accessible housing target to build 20 homes per annum, 10 of which will be social housing and 10 will be in the private sector.

Draft National Planning Framework

Draft National Planning Framework 4, published in November 2021, further underpins Scottish Government's commitment to providing for accessible housing and proposes support for the delivery of high quality homes, particularly those that improve affordability and choice, including accessible, adaptable and wheelchair accessible homes.

Responses to the public consultation and Parliamentary scrutiny on Draft National Planning Framework (NPF4) are being carefully considered and we intend to lay a final NPF4 in the Parliament in the Autumn.

Housing for Varying Needs and Scottish Accessible Housing Standard

Our existing Housing for Varying Needs design guide offers good practice in the design of homes – including those designed specifically for wheelchair users – in order to help them achieve a degree of flexibility, suit people of varying needs, be convenient to use, and be fit for purpose. Where possible, all new affordable homes delivered through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme are built to Housing for Varying Needs standards. In 2020-21, where information was returned, 95% of new build homes delivered by housing associations and councils met those standards.

As set out within the Housing to 2040 route map, we are reviewing the Housing for Varying Needs design guide. We want the guide to help better meet the needs of an ageing population, help people to live in their home for longer, consider a wider range of needs, and learn lessons from the pandemic by recognising the importance of outdoor space, and space for home working or study.

We plan to consult on proposed changes to the guide over the coming months and will wish to engage with disability groups and those with experience of living in homes delivered to Housing for Varying Needs standards, as well as those involved in the delivery of new homes.

Once complete, the review of Housing for Varying Needs will inform the introduction of building standards in 2025-26 to underpin a new Scottish Accessible Homes Standard, which all new homes will need to achieve by law, regardless of tenure.

Adaptations

Since the integration of health and social care, Integration Joint Boards (IJBs) are responsible for the planning and delivery of adaptations using budget created by delegation. IJBs are also responsible for reviewing and developing services to improve outcomes for people who require adaptations. Scottish Government is providing £11 million funding in 2022-23 to registered social landlords to provide adaptations for their tenants.

However, we know that there are issues with the way in which adaptations are being accessed and delivered locally. We are therefore taking forward a review of the current housing adaptations system to consider how the process can be streamlined and made easier for people who need adaptations. Health officials are undertaking a review of aids and adaptations guidance which will contribute to the housing

adaptations review. Housing to 2040 also includes a commitment to establish an inclusive programme of retrofitting social homes. This will ensure all planned refurbishment addresses accessibility requirements.

We have also identified the need to drive improvements in digital connectivity in all homes. Telehealth and telecare have the potential to transform the way people engage and manage their own health and wellbeing. We will also look to address the practical barriers faced by older and disabled homeowners who want to move to a home that better meets their needs.

Affordable Home Ownership Options

The Scottish Government provides priority access to support disabled people to buy a home through its Open Market Shared Equity Scheme. In August 2022, to reflect current market conditions and the recent sharp increase in house prices, it carried out an interim review of the threshold prices for the scheme increasing the majority of these by 9%. In addition to this, applicants to the scheme are now permitted to make 'offers over' formal valuation levels providing they are able to meet the cost from their own funds. It is hoped that these changes will increase access to the scheme and allow priority groups to search for a home best suited to their needs.

I hope that the information above assures you that we are taking positive action to increase the number of wheelchair accessible homes across Scotland.