

# Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

10th Meeting, 2023 (Session 6), Wednesday  
14 June 2023

## PE1962: Stop motorhomes parking overnight outwith formal campsites, caravan parks and Aires

**Lodged on** 15 September 2022

**Petitioner** Lynn & Darren Redfern

**Petition  
summary** Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to improve licensing enforcement on motorhomes to ensure they are only parking in designated and regulated locations.

**Webpage** <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1962>

### Introduction

1. The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on [23 November 2022](#). At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the Scottish Government and COSLA.
2. A full summary of this petition and its aims can be found at **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. Written submissions have been received from the Scottish Government and the Petitioner which are included at **Annexe C**.
4. Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the [petition's webpage](#).

5. Further background information about this petition can be found in the [SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
6. The Scottish Government's initial position on this petition can be found on the [petition's webpage](#).
7. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 610 signatures have been received on this petition.

## Action

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

### **Clerk to the Committee**

# Annexe A

## PE1962: Stop motorhomes parking overnight outwith formal campsites, caravan parks and Aires.

### Petitioner

Lynn & Darren Redfern

### Date Lodged

15 September 2022

### Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to improve licensing enforcement on motorhomes to ensure they are only parking in designated and regulated locations.

### Previous action

There have been several emails between ourselves and Maree Todd, our local MSP, as well as emails with various people within the Highland council. All of which have not managed to solve the issue.

### Background information

We believe that motorhomes that choose not to use campsites, caravan parks or Aires (small-scale designated campsites with only basic facilities) place an unnecessary burden on local communities by parking inappropriately, disposing of their rubbish, chemical toilet and dirty water as well as defecating at the side of the road. Regulated parks offer all these facilities in one safe location. Motorhomes often park in an unsafe manner, where regulated parks are required to keep motorhomes 6m apart for fire risk (motorhomes use LPG), Unregulated parking places them much closer together and is a disaster waiting to happen.

The Scottish Outdoor Access Code does not apply to motorised vehicles and motorhome users who must have the permission of the landowner before parking overnight. This almost never happens. Although there is much documented evidence of motorhomes parking in adverse spots

across the Scotland, enforcement is not being implemented to stop this happening.

## Annexe B

### Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE1962: Stop motorhomes parking overnight out with formal campsites, caravan parks and Aires on 23 November 2022

**The Convener:** PE1962, which was lodged by Lynn and Darren Redfern, is on stopping motorhomes parking overnight outwith formal campsites, caravan parks and aires. The petition calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to improve licensing enforcement on motorhomes to ensure that they park only in designated and regulated locations.

Lynn and Darren explain that motorhomes place an unnecessary burden on local communities when they park outwith formal spaces, with the disposal of rubbish, chemical toilets and dirty water. The Scottish Government has responded to the petition highlighting the rural tourism infrastructure fund, which has helped with the provision of facilities and with addressing issues of irresponsible waste disposal. It also highlights newly revised NatureScot guidance for land managers on off-road parking and positive awareness-raising work by the visitor management group.

The Scottish Government states that it believes that the current response to the increasing use of motorhomes is “sufficient”, and points to feedback that “campervans have been managed better in 2022 than in previous years”.

Therefore, it does not believe that “introducing a formal requirement to use specific sites” would address “the challenges outlined in the petition.”

Do members have any comments or suggestions for action on the petition?

**Paul Sweeney:** This is not only a rural problem, but a persistent problem in parts of Glasgow, too. For example, I have dealt with constituent correspondence in relation to the parking of motorhomes on Glasgow Green. The petition might give us an opportunity to look at what local authorities do to enforce motorhome parking and whether there are local byelaws or provisions that could be more widely adopted. I have to say that it feels like a matter for local authorities to deal with through byelaws and local levies and parking restrictions rather than something to be dealt with through statutory measures.

**Fergus Ewing:** The petitioners are probably not alone in suffering inconvenience from the illegal parking of camper vans in inappropriate places, and there is no doubt that it happens. However, the Scottish Government response might be correct in that I am not sure that the particular prescription advocated by the petitioners will necessarily solve the problem.

It also occurs to me that, as a matter of road traffic law, and perhaps criminal law in relation to illicit parking or local byelaws—I am sorry; I do not know whether you have considered that—the petitioners’ reference to aires is very helpful. I discovered

when I was tourism minister that aires exist as facilities for caravans, camper vans and so on outwith settlements, with provision of services such as water and sewage facilities. They are serviced sites. They are very prevalent in France, which apparently has a network of aires, but we have not got off the mark with them here. I wonder whether, in an effort to solve the issue another way, we could ask the Scottish Government to consider promoting aires—I know that VisitScotland is keen on that—as something that would qualify automatically under the rural infrastructure fund, which again appears in our deliberations today.

I realise that that is not quite what the petitioners want, and I have some sympathy with them, because this is a big problem in the Highlands, particularly on the single-track roads that serve small communities. Illicit parking in lay-bys is another problem, particularly on the NC500 in the Highlands.

Aires would be the proper long-term solution. It would make everybody happy; holidaymakers could enjoy the countryside as they travel around in their camper vans, if that is what they choose to do, and locals could avoid being inconvenienced by that third-party pleasure.

**The Convener:** I am grateful for that exposition. It seems like a commendable action that we could take in relation to the Scottish Government.

Is there also a way forward for us on Mr Sweeney's suggestion? Would it involve our writing to the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and finding out what enforcement takes place? I know from wearing a different hat in relation to showpeople that councils' approaches to this matter can be highly individual and variable in the extreme. I do not know whether there would be a common response, but it might be interesting to find out how those matters are being approached and dealt with.

Does the committee agree to keep the petition open, move forward on those two streams and see what further information comes to us?

*Members indicated agreement.*

## Annexe C

### Scottish Government submission of 12 December 2022

#### PE1962/C: Stop motorhomes parking overnight outwith formal campsites, caravan parks and Aires

The Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee wrote to the Scottish Government on 25 November upon considering the above petition at its meeting on 23 November 2022. It asked the following: *The Committee asks the Scottish Government to give consideration to the use of Aires as a facility for those traveling in motorhomes. The Committee would also welcome a view as to whether Aires would qualify for funding through the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund.*

#### **Scottish Government Response**

Please reassure the Petitions Committee that this is already being explored by the Scottish Government. A campervan and motorhome working group was set up to report to the Visitor Management Group in late 2022. It has pulled together key stakeholders to consider the unique challenges created by motorhome and campervan users in Scotland, particularly in rural areas. Facilities will be considered as part of this. Depending on the challenges they seek to address, and subject to meeting the funding criteria, aires may be eligible for funding from the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund. It will be important to note that although there may be community ambitions to establish aires in some areas, applications must consider the impact on existing businesses which may be able to provide these services already. The sub-group will report its recommendations to the Visitor Management Steering Group in 2023.

# Petitioner submission of 19 May 2023

## PE1962/D: Stop motorhomes parking overnight outwith formal campsites, caravan parks and Aires

Adding new aires will not be effective unless you enforce restrictions on “wild camping”. There is a certain sub-section of camper van owners and people renting campervans who want to tour Scotland without paying for pitches or facilities. Until this behaviour is legally prohibited and enforcement carried out against it then these people will continue to “wild camp” no matter how many facilities are provided for them even if they are low cost. It is not more facilities that we requested in our petition, it is a stop to the illusion that you can “park for the night” wherever you wish in Scotland.

We run a caravan park and campervan users can empty their grey and chemical waste at our park for a fee. Last year one lady pulled up to empty and fill her water who was very annoyed at the rental company that she had rented the campervan from as they had promoted the rental as fully self-contained and hence not needing campsites or aires. They said she would have enough water to do the whole trip. It is this mentality we wish to stem.

The Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTF) cannot be accessed by commercial campsites like ourselves and there is little or no funding for us to expand or enhance our facilities. In the meantime, we are having to compete with government subsidised not for profit community run establishments at the same time being expected to provide facilities for people staying off our park to come in and use. We have upgraded our existing water service point and added another one at our own expense (we spent over £5,000) while the Scottish Government give money to not-for-profit organisations to create such facilities for free...we cannot compete!

The “responsible” motorhomers wild camp or use rest stops for 2-3 nights and then come to a campsite and use our facilities to excess to last them for the next 2-3 nights wild camping. This means more water, electricity and rubbish in our bins. They cost us more to host and therefore drive our prices up. The more we charge, the more people choose to “wild camp” and it becomes a vicious circle.



Just last week there was a motorhome “wild camping” in the turning circle outside our gates. This happens several times a year and has already happened twice this year. There seems to be an inability or unwillingness for the authorities to stop this from happening (we asked a passing police car to move them on once from this location and they refused to do this). There is currently no “turning circle” sign in this location and we have been promised one for the last 2 years and it has not yet materialised (although we ask on at least a monthly basis and always get told that they will get it done soon).

The highland council have now erected a passing place (no Parking) sign at this location.

We have tried asking some of the motorhomers who have parked here in the past to move on and have not had a very pleasant response so we have stopped trying to do this. Most campsites in the North of Scotland experience behaviour like this on a regular basis. We all experience theft of services. We all have motorhomers coming in to use our services without paying for it on a weekly basis throughout the season. Last year we ended up installing code locks on our toilet blocks at a cost of £4,000 in an attempt to stem this abuse.

We believe that the only effective way to deal with such behaviour is to ensure that motorhomes park overnight in authorised and regulated spaces only. Otherwise, the behaviour that we are witnessing is only going to get worse.

On a side note we have concerns about the idea of a Transient Visitor Levy (tourist tax). This will make the cost of using a formal campsite even more (unless you have an effective strategy to collect this from “wild campers”) which again will encourage more people not to use campsites like ours.