

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

11th Meeting, 2023 (Session 6), Wednesday
28 June 2023

PE1956: Increase the provision of wheelchair accessible homes

Lodged on	31 August 2022
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. 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, COSLA, and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received new responses from the Scottish Government, the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, and the Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers (ALACHO) which are set out in **Annexe C**.
4. Members may wish to note that COSLA asked ALACHO to respond on its behalf.
5. Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the [petition's webpage](#).
6. Further background information about this petition can be found in the [SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.

7. The Scottish Government's initial position on this petition can be found on the [petition's webpage](#).
8. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 16 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

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

Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE1956 on 23 November 2022

The Convener: PE1956, lodged by Louise McGee, seeks to increase the provision of wheelchair-accessible homes. The petition calls 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.

In the background information to the petition, Louise tells us that she has been waiting for around five or six years to be offered a more suitable house, but the local authority has been unable to do so, due to a lack of wheelchair-accessible houses in the area. In its response to the petition, the Scottish Government has set out a range of actions being undertaken to increase the number of wheelchair-accessible houses across Scotland. They include making

“funding ... available through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme”

and publishing

“guidance for local authorities on the setting of Local Housing Strategy ... targets to support the delivery of ... wheelchair accessible housing across all tenures.”

The Scottish Government also states that it is taking forward reviews of the housing adaptations system and the “Housing for varying needs: a design guide” publication, and has suggested that

“the petitioner may wish to contribute to public consultations which will take place as part of this work.”

Do members have any suggestions that we might consider?

Alexander Stewart: The petitioner makes some valid points. Adaptations have been discussed in the past in the Parliament, and various committees have looked into the current situation and how it can be appraised.

I think it important that we continue with the petition, so I suggest that we write to the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations to seek information on the progress that is being made to deliver more wheelchair-accessible homes across Scotland, in particular. We can also seek confirmation from the Scottish Government on issues that the petitioner has raised. For example, in the petitioner’s view, there are issues with the current housing adaptations system—as I have said, the system has been looked at by committees in the past—in respect of the management of adaptations, the backlog and any

difficulties in that respect. Seeking confirmation from the Scottish Government would give us an update on the current situation.

The Convener: Are members content to proceed on that basis?

Members *indicated agreement.*

The Convener: The petition will stay open. We will write as suggested by Mr Stewart and consider the petition again in due course.

Annexe C

Scottish Government submission of 27 March 2023

PE1956/B: Increase the provision of wheelchair accessible homes

I refer to your correspondence dated 25 November seeking confirmation about the Scottish Government's adaptations system in relation to Petition PE1920.

The Scottish Government can confirm that is currently undertaking a review of the adaptations system. This includes looking at current guidance, how processes can be streamlined to improve delivery and to ensure equity of service regardless of housing tenure or location. The review will take account of the development of a new National Care Service and also the assessment of aids and equipment guidance currently being undertaken by Health colleagues. The current intention is to complete the review by spring next year.

Scottish Federation of Housing Associations submission of 14 April 2023

PE1956/C: Increase the provision of wheelchair accessible homes

Wheelchair Accessible homes

Response to question on the progress being made to deliver more wheelchair accessible homes across Scotland.

About SFHA

SFHA is the membership body for, and collective voice of, housing associations and co-operatives in Scotland. Housing associations and co-operatives provide homes for over half a million people in Scotland. Not-for-profit organisations, they don't just build, maintain and rent out homes: they also help their tenants by providing care and support

services as well as advice and help on energy efficiency, finances, employment and much more.

Role of RSLs

The Scottish Government's affordable housing supply programme is set up to support the delivery of flexible adaptable homes through the provision of grants to registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to develop new homes. RSLs work in partnership with local authorities to develop the new homes identified in the Local Authority Housing Strategy, which should demonstrate that consideration is given to specialist housing requirements, including people with disabilities. This includes targets for the delivery of wheelchair accessible homes.

RSLs have an important role to play in the delivery of wheelchair accessible homes and we know that there is a shortage of accessible housing, which is vital for the health, wellbeing and independence of people living with disabilities. RSLs are able to access funding for aids and adaptations to modify existing homes but funding for adaptations across the housing sector is fragmented and inadequate to support demand.

New Accessible Housing

For new housing, the latest figures we were able to obtain from [government statistics](#) show that for 2020-2021, the total number of wheelchair accessible homes developed for RSL social rent was 101 out of a total of 2,983 house completions: that is, 0.3%. We look forward to updated figures for 2021-22.

One of the principles set out in the Scottish Government's plans for Housing to 2040 is that Housing and the Housing Market should be highly flexible to enable people to meet their changing needs, including "*enough accessible or adaptable homes across Scotland suitable for older people, disabled people, or anyone else in need of specialist accommodation...*". Plans include a **review of adaptations, new building standards and plans for a new accessible homes standard.**

Progress on this has been slow, while recent figures show a reduction in the number of approvals for housing associations to develop new homes. There is currently a review of housing with varying needs and a consultation expected in spring along with a consultation on the

accessible homes standard. However, the review of aids and adaptations has not yet begun. There is also limited opportunity for RSLs to invest in existing housing stock which forms the majority of social housing. A [report commissioned by HACT](#) [Housing Associations Charitable Trust] on the impact of social housing recommended a need for such investment in the existing stock for a range of interlocking reasons.

With an ageing population and a lack of affordable housing to meet the needs of disabled people, it may well be helpful for Scottish Government to review Target Guidance and explore options to increase the supply of affordable wheelchair accessible housing. This should include the review of funding for aids and adaptations for existing homes and sufficient funding to develop new homes.

Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers (ALACHO) submission of 11 May 2023

PE1956/D: Increase the provision of wheelchair accessible homes

ALACHO, agrees that the Scottish Government should review the existing wheelchair accessible housing target guidance.

Housing to 2040, is the Scottish Government's long term housing strategy, which sets out how homes need to be adaptable to meet the needs of the households, such as those living 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 authorities each have an individual Local Housing Strategy (LHS) and Strategic Housing Investment Plans (SHIPs), which seeks to deliver the Scottish Government commitment of building 110,000 affordable homes by 2032, of which 70% will be for social rent, with funding made available to local authorities through the Affordable Housing Supply Programme (AHSP). It is the statutory responsibility of local authorities through their LHS to determine the appropriate housing required in their

area, informed by a Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA). This includes identifying what specialist provision housing is needed locally, current supply and required delivery and including the delivery of specialist housing in their SHIP and AHSP.

1. Background

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.

2. Scottish Housing Network report on local authority wheelchair accessible housing targets.

In October 2022, the Scottish Housing Network (SHN) contacted local authorities, asking them to provide a copy of their most recent SHIP, covering the period 2023-2028. SHN published their [Review of Local Authority Strategic Housing Investment plans 2023-2028 report](#), which provided an update on the national position at, February 2023 using as many available SHIPs as possible.

The key findings from the report, were positive, with most local authorities having a numeric or percentage target for wheelchair accessible homes in social rented sector.

Local authority wheelchair accessible homes targets, examples from SHN report showed:

- **East Dunbartonshire Council:** Last year's SHIP made reference to an all-tenure target of 10% for wheelchair and accessible housing.
- **City of Edinburgh Council:** 7% all tenure target set for wheelchair accessible homes, where previously no private sector target had been stated. 10% affordable housing target retained subject to review.

- **Falkirk Council:** 5% to 10% of new build properties to be wheelchair accessible where viable. Previously stated ‘on sites subject to Affordable Housing Policy’.
- **Midlothian Council:** Numeric targets now set – 10 wheelchair accessible homes per annum in the social rented sector, 10 wheelchair accessible homes per annum in the private sector.

Some LA’s increasing their social housing targets or changed them to include RSL partner developments.

It was also noted in the report that most SHIPs referred to an all-tenure target, an ‘all tenure minimum’, or a specific target for private sector development being in place and crucially, a number of local authorities had indicated that targets were being considered as part of Local Housing Strategy development.

3. Challenges for delivering increased numbers of wheelchair accessible homes across all tenures

<p>Planning</p>	<p>There is no statutory planning obligation on house builders and private developers to include a proportion of wheelchair accessible homes.</p> <p>The SHN reports states, “<i>Supplementary Guidance introduced by one authority requiring private developers to build wheelchair accessible stock removed by the Reporter in LDP 2020.</i>”</p>
<p>Financial Viability for new build social rent developments</p>	<p>Local authorities are finding it increasing more difficult to financially afford to build new homes and this is evidenced in</p>

	<p>the slowing of the affordable homes supply programme.</p> <p>Another issue is around sizes of home and site capacity, resulting in mainly flatted development, with homes no larger than a 3 bed, with wheelchair accessible homes in the ground floor.</p> <p>Although it would be possible to build blocks with lifts, there are ongoing issues around increased build costs, maintenance and servicing costs and health and safety.</p>
<p>Definition of wheelchair accessible home</p>	<p>There is currently no definition of a wheelchair accessible home. In order to deliver the same standard of home across local authority areas and tenures, in Scotland a single definition is needed.</p>

In conclusion, there are multiple strands that need to come together to allow for a significant increase in the number of wheelchair accessible homes being built or adapted across the different tenures to meet the current and changing housing needs of Scotland’s population.

The review of the [guidance for local authorities on the setting of Local Housing Strategy \(LHS\) targets to support the delivery of more wheelchair accessible housing](#), would allow for some of those strands to be created, such as the single definition of a wheelchair accessible home, evidence gathering to take place in the private sector and

frameworks to be created for LA's to enforce a minimum requirement of wheelchair accessible homes to be delivered across tenures, monitor progress.