

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 12 June 2024
10th Meeting, 2024 (Session 6)

PE2027: Launch the Changing Places Toilet fund

Introduction

Petitioner Sarah Heward on behalf of The Tyndrum Infrastructure Group

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to launch the £10M Changing Places Toilet fund that was pledged in the 2021 SNP manifesto without further delay and make the application process clear, straight-forward and expeditious for groups trying to build these much needed facilities.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2027>

1. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 6 September 2023.](#) At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport.
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 a new written submission from the Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport which is set out in **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 gave its initial response to the petition on 8 June 2023.](#)
7. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 621 signatures have been received on this petition.

Action

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

Clerks to the Committee
May 2024

Annexe A: Summary of petition

PE2027: Launch the Changing Places Toilet fund

Petitioner

Sarah Heward on behalf of The Tyndrum Infrastructure Group

Date Lodged

18 May 2023

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to launch the £10M Changing Places Toilet fund that was pledged in the 2021 SNP manifesto without further delay and make the application process clear, straight-forward and expeditious for groups trying to build these much needed facilities.

Previous action

I sit on the Cross Party Group for Changing Places Toilets. At the CPG meeting on 2/11/22, I was given an official agenda slot to ask the Minister with responsibility for CPTs, Kevin Stewart, about the fund. I asked when the fund would be launched and for information about the application criteria. I didn't get firm answers.

I have written to Evelyn Tweed MSP, our constituent MSP, and Alyn Smith MP asking for advice about this petition and funding for the CPT. Again, I have not received firm answers. Alyn Smith MP has offered to write to the Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport, Maree Todd.

Background information

This application is on behalf a small community charity called The Tyndrum Infrastructure Group, whose primary aim is to build a Changing Places Toilet in Tyndrum.

We recently completed a Development Feasibility Study on our potential site which is at The Green Welly Stop. As a result, we now have a costed design plan, a signed Letter of Intent and a draft Memorandum of Understanding. We are currently preparing to start the planning process with the National Park Authority.

Back in 2021, I attended a workshop co-hosted by Pamis and Calmac. At the workshop, the number one priority location in Scotland for a Changing Places toilet was identified as Tyndrum.

There is currently a black hole the size of Wales in the North West of Scotland where no CPT toilet facilities exist. This situation does not seem representative of the kind of inclusive and accessible community that Scotland aspires to be. We need this CPT fund to be launched to access the money needed to address this in Tyndrum.

Annexe B: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE2027 on 6 September 2023

The Convener: We come to the last of our new petitions this morning. PE2027, which was lodged by Sarah Heward on behalf of the Tyndrum Infrastructure Group, calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to launch without further delay the £10 million changing places toilet fund that was pledged in the 2021 Scottish National Party manifesto, and to make the application process clear, straightforward and expeditious for groups that are trying to build these much-needed facilities.

The response from the Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport states that, due to budget constraints, funding for the construction of changing places toilets has not yet been allocated and specific timelines for its distribution remain unannounced. The Government's submission emphasises the need to prioritise spending efficiently to benefit those in the greatest need and says that further details on the investment in question will be provided over the parliamentary session.

The petitioner's submission details the group's work to obtain the necessary permissions for a changing places toilet in Tyndrum and notes that the only thing that is preventing it from building the facility is a lack of capital funding. The petitioner highlights the hardships that are faced by disabled individuals and their carers as a result of the absence of changing places toilets, which include indignity, isolation and health risks.

The positive impact that the use of similar funding in England has had in expanding access for disabled individuals is cited. The petitioner notes the benefits to the local economy of tapping into the purple pound of potential tourists and customers in the disabled community.

Do members have any comments or suggestions?

I am sorry; I had forgotten—even though I directed him to the appropriate seat—that we are joined by our colleague Paul O'Kane, who has an interest in the petition. Before we move to our consideration of potential options, I invite him to comment in support of the petition.

Paul O'Kane (West Scotland) (Lab): I am very grateful to the committee for hearing me this morning. I am convener of the Parliament's cross-party group on changing places toilets, which was newly established this session, so I have had an opportunity to hear from a number of stakeholders who are interested in the provision of changing places toilets across the country.

I am sure that colleagues will be aware of the great benefits that such facilities bring to communities across Scotland. As well as being fundamentally the right thing to do, the putting in place of such a facility benefits the whole community. Where such facilities are not in place, many families feel that they cannot be spontaneous and cannot enjoy the same access to tourism and leisure activities that others do. Therefore, the provision of changing places toilets benefits the wider economy.

The convener might be aware of the changing places facility in Rouken Glen park in his constituency, which opened only recently. It has increased the number of visits, particularly by families who have disabled children, which shows the impact that the provision of such a facility can have.

In speaking to the petition, I must note the challenge that is faced. A party-political pledge was made in the SNP's manifesto; it was also a feature of the 2021-22 programme for government that a £10 million fund would be rolled out. Evidently, that has not yet happened. I appreciate what the minister has said about financial constraints and challenges, but I believe that the Government is still committed to rolling out that funding by the end of the parliamentary session. I think that what people want is detail from the Government about its intentions for the fund, how applications might be made to it and what structure the process might take. That would go some way towards making people feel confident that the fund will be put in place.

The petitioner runs a business and is keen, as a business owner, to make a contribution, which she wants to be supplemented by capital funding for the wider community. There are many third sector organisations and people who run their own businesses who are interested in putting in some of their own funds in order to make a changing places toilet a reality, but who require additional funding from the Government.

There is a huge opportunity here. People are concerned that, as we approach the midway point of the parliamentary session, progress does not seem to have been made. Progress has been made in other parts of the UK—a £30 million fund has been distributed in England and is entering its second phase—so Scotland is falling behind in the availability of changing places toilets. That brings us back to the economic argument. People might choose to holiday in other places where there is greater provision.

I simply wish to represent the views of the members of the CPG and ask the committee to give the petition serious consideration and to look, at least, at how such provision might be structured.

The Convener: Thank you. I think that you are quite right—the Government lit the fuse of expectation without giving us the bang of delivery on an issue on which the public expected progress.

Do colleagues have any suggestions?

David Torrance: I wonder whether we could write to the Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport to highlight the equality and welfare issues that the petitioner has raised in her recent submission and to ask when the promised £10 million will be allocated to the changing places toilet fund and when it will be distributed. Perhaps we could also highlight to the petitioner the existence of the rural tourism infrastructure fund, which is available to be used to build new toilets or to provide upgrades to existing facilities. That might be a route for the Tyndrum group to go down.

The Convener: Do colleagues have any other suggestions?

Fergus Ewing: I endorse David Torrance's suggestion and support Paul O'Kane's comments.

I have heard from constituents who are parents of a child with profound disabilities, who feel that they cannot travel south of Inverness because there are no facilities on the A9 that are suitable for their child. I thought that I would mention that, because, although the petition relates to the situation in Tyndrum, which is over on the A82 in the west, the issue is one that substantially affects rural Scotland, as the petitioner herself says.

The Convener: Thank you. We welcome the petition. Are members content to keep it open and to begin our investigations by following the suggestions that have been made?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Annexe C: Written submission

Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport submission of 21 September 2023

PE2027/C: Launch the Changing Places Toilet fund

Thank you for your letter dated 8 September 2023 regarding the petition PE2027: Launch the Changing Places Toilet fund.

The Scottish Government knows that Changing Places Toilets make a real difference to disabled people and their families, and we are keen to encourage the development and provision of more of these facilities across Scotland. The provision of these fundamental facilities offers everyone in Scotland dignity and freedom.

We are committed to investing in Changing Places Toilets during this parliamentary term, in order to increase the number of these facilities across the country and to support mobile Changing Places Toilets to allow people easier access to events and outdoor venues.

The Scottish Government will look to make the £10 million fund available across the financial years 2024-25 and 2025-26. We will undertake the necessary development work, alongside key stakeholders, to open the fund by the beginning of 2025.

This information on the timeline for the investment was also confirmed in the response to Parliamentary Question [S6O-02550](#) answered in Chamber today, 21 September 2023.

Maree Todd MSP