

Agenda Item	8
Report No	CP/6/22

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Communities and Place

Date: 23 February 2022

Report Title: Blue Badge Petition

Report By: Interim Executive Chief Executive - Communities and Place

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 A petition has been lodged seeking to abolish the administration charge for the reapplication of a Blue Badge.
- 1.2 The Head of Corporate Governance has confirmed the petition and assessed it in line with the Petitions Procedure. It is recommended that the petition is accepted
- 1.3 The budget implication of this is a reduction in cost recovery of approximately £53,000 per annum.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note:
 - a) The contents of the petition
 - b) That it has been accepted as compliant with Council procedure
 - c) The current volume and full cost recovery for processing Blue Badges
 - d) The budget pressure implication of removing the charge for the reapplication of blue badges
- 2.2 Members are asked to consider and advise on the course of action required as a result of this petition and either:
 - a) Keep the £20 administration charge for reapplications or;
 - b) Agree to recommend to the Council meeting on 3 March 22 that as part of its consideration of the 22/23 Council Revenue Budget that the charge for Blue Badge reapplications is abolished from 1 April 22.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resources
The Council ensures full cost recovery where achievable. Any change to the current charging model, as set out by the Scottish Government, would create a budget pressure

for the Council. This would be in the region of £53,000, depending on the number of reapplications received in any year.

3.2 Legal

Local Authorities are permitted to charge up to £20 administration fee for a blue badge application, whether it is a first-time application, a reapplication or a replacement of a lost card.

3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)

There are no community implications arising from this report. The application is not means tested. It is a national scheme open to all residents regardless of location.

3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever

There are no implications arising from this report.

3.5 Risk

There are no risks arising from this report.

3.6 Gaelic

There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report.

4. **Background**

- 4.1 On 18 November 2021 the Council was served with a petition “Abolish the Blue Badge Charge”. Attached as **Appendix 1**.

A national online petition was also set up, [Petition · Abolish the Blue Badge charge · Change.org](#)

The petitioner’s statement is that they request the Council, and all Councils nationwide, to abolish the reapplication charge for the blue badge, especially for people who suffer with lifelong disabilities and whose condition will never change or improve.

- 4.2 The Council Leader wrote to Graeme Dey MSP, Minister for Transport to bring the petition to his attention and seek any comments. His reply is attached as **Appendix 2**.

- 4.3 The scheme provides a national arrangement throughout the UK of on-street parking concessions for severely disabled people who experience the greatest barriers to their mobility when seeking to access community-based facilities. The scheme is open to eligible disabled people irrespective of whether they are travelling as a driver or a passenger.

Full details of the scheme are available through the link. <https://www.mygov.scot/apply-blue-badge>

- 4.4 Local Councils process blue badge applications on behalf of the Scottish Government. The administration charge for a Blue Badge can be up to £20 and it is for each Council to decide on the administration charge for a Blue Badge. The money is paid directly to the Council.

Highland Council charge a £20 administration fee for each successful application. This recovers the full administration cost. This is in line with most other Scottish Councils. To our knowledge Dumfries and Galloway Council are the only local authority to waive the charge.

- 4.5 A Blue Badge usually lasts for up to 3 years and needs to be reapplied for upon expiry. The Code of Practice states that many local authorities treat an application from a current badge holder whose badge is about to expire as a “renewal”. The actual legislation states that a badge only lasts for three years and therefore every application should be assessed equally; there is therefore no such thing as a “renewal” in legislation.
- 4.6 The Highland Council processes circa 4000 blue badge applications each year. These are new applications and reapplications of current blue badges. Some applications are refused, and some are withdrawn. Reasons for refusal include:

Not meeting one of the specified passported benefits i.e., Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Disability Living Allowance, mobility component (DLA)
 Failure to meet criteria after Independent Mobility Assessment (IMA)
 Insufficient evidence from a specialised professional in regard to cognitive impairment

Table 1 - applications over the last 3 financial years.

Year	Number of Applications Processed			
	New Applications	Reapplications	Badges Issued	Refused or Withdrawn
2019/20	1,834	2,512	4,230	116
2020/21	956	2,730	3,488	198
2021/22 to date	739	2,665	3,302	102

5. Budget Implications

- 5.1 The £20 administration charge for each successful blue badge issued ensures full cost recovery to the Council.
- 5.2 The petition refers to reapplication. On the basis of the numbers in the table above, if we continued to administer reapplication but didn’t recover cost this would lead to a budget pressure of approximately £53,000 per annum (subject to the number of reapplications made).
- The impact of Covid over the past two years has seen a decline in applications being made as those more vulnerable have chosen to stay at home more and with the introduction of video appointments such as NHS Near Me has meant travelling to appointments has been removed. The likely impact of restrictions being eased may lead to a surge in applications in the coming months.
- 5.3
- 5.4 If an application is withdrawn or refused there is no charge even though there has been a staff cost associated with processing up to that point. Such applications represent about 3% of total applications.

Designation: Head of Community Operations and Logistics

Date: 2 February 2022

Author: Caroline Campbell



Office Use: Petition Number

PETITION SUBMISSION FORM

<p>Title of the Petition:</p> <p>Abolish the Blue Badge Charge</p>
<p>Name of the Principal Petitioner: Please enter the name of the person who is organising the petition, and the name of any organisation you represent (if applicable).</p> <p>Danielle Morrall</p>
<p>Contact Address to which all communication should be sent – please include a telephone number and email address if available so that we can contact you with any queries.</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>
<p>Petition Statement – Please state (in no more than 250 words) what action the Petitioner wishes the Council to take. If you prefer, you can attach this as a typed sheet to this form.</p> <p>I wish the Council, and all Councils nationwide to abolish the reapplication charge for Blue Badges, especially for people who suffer with lifelong disabilities and whose condition will never change or improve. The cost of a Blue Badge is £20 in Scotland, £10 in England and free in Wales. To even have different charges across the nation is absolutely ludicrous and requires some explanation. Not only is this reapplication charge unfair, it is completely unethical. Why should it cost more to be disabled in Scotland than England or Wales??</p> <p>Disability is not a choice.</p> <p>This charge is wrong.</p>

Action taken prior to the Petition – Before a Petition is submitted, petitioners are expected to have taken reasonable steps in attempting to resolve the issues.

Please enter below details of any individuals or organisations approached. Copies of correspondence should also be appended.

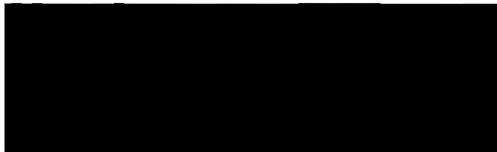
This information will be made available to the Council or Committee in consideration of the Petition.

Emma Roddick, MSP – no response received
Andrew Jarvie, MSP – no response received

Signature - When you are satisfied that the Petition meets all the criteria outlined in the Guidance to Submission of Petitions, the Principal Petitioner should sign and date the form.

Any additional sheets of signatures should be appended to the form.

Signature:

A solid black rectangular box redacting the signature of the principal petitioner.

Date: 25th October 2021

Name in block capitals: DANIELLE MORRALL

Minister for Transport
Ministear airson Còmhdhail
Graeme Dey BPA/MSP



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

T : 0300 244 4000
E : scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Councillor Margaret Davidson
Gordon.Morrison@highland.gov.uk

Our Reference: 202100268163
Your Reference: Blue Badge Scheme – Public Petition

13 January 2022

Dear Margaret

Thank you for your letter dated 20 December regarding the petition which seeks to remove or reduce the current charge for Blue Badges, and remove the requirement for Blue Badge re-applications to take place every three years.

As you may know, the legislation that governs the Blue Badge Scheme in Scotland gives Local Authorities the discretion to charge a fee not exceeding £20 for the issue or re-issue of a disabled person's badge. There are currently no plans to amend the legislation in this regard.

Currently, 31 of the 32 Local Authorities in Scotland charge £20 for a Blue Badge. The exception to this is Dumfries & Galloway who have taken the decision locally not to charge for a Blue Badge. Whilst there is consistency across the country they are slight variations in the fees charged for short term and replacement badges, with around a quarter of Local Authorities choosing to reduce their fee. Transport Scotland views this as good practice

All applications for a Blue Badge are assessed on an individual basis by Local Authority blue badge teams and by regulated healthcare professionals if/when the applicants eligibility is uncertain. The majority of Blue Badges are issued for a three-year period although there are occasions when a badge may be issued for a reduced period. Upon expiration of their badge the badge holder is required to re-apply for a Blue Badge. The reapplication process allows Local Authorities to complete the relevant eligibility and ID checks to ensure badges aren't being issued fraudulently.

My officials engage with badge holders and continue to work very closely with all Scottish Local Authorities and Blue Badge Policy teams across the UK and over the last year they have been revising

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh www.lobbying.scot

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the current guidance Transport Scotland provides to Local Authorities to help them administer the Scheme.

You may wish to know that as part of the review, my officials have been working closely with all local authorities across the country to put in place a process which enables current badge holders who have previously been assessed by a regulated healthcare professional and have been deemed as requiring no further assessment to re-apply using a more streamlined application form.

I hope this gives you reassurances that we continue to review, monitor and update our processes for delivering the Blue Badge Scheme in Scotland.

Yours sincerely



GRAEME DEY

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