



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme - Travel Application By Correspondence Reference: SPCB (2023) Paper 09

Executive summary

1. The SPCB is invited to consider an application submitted by Gillian Mackay MSP to have the travel and overnight costs for a proposed visit to Dublin, Republic of Ireland in February 2023 to be met under the provisions made at paragraphs 2.2.3 and 6.1.5 of the Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme.

Issues and options

2. The Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme makes provision to meet travel and overnight costs associated with a Member undertaking their parliamentary duties. However, in relation to travel outwith the UK, Members are required to make an application to the SPCB to have such costs met.
3. The criteria previously applied when determining such applications included where the reason for the journey was:
 - a. Directly related to a specific constituency matter, where the visit is necessary in order to address the issue;
 - b. Directly related to Parliamentary business;
 - c. Something the SPCB considers the Parliament should be paying for;
 - d. Provides value for money.
4. Ms Mackay's application relates to a visit to the Irish Parliament in relation to her Members Bill, Abortion Services Safe Access Zones (Scotland) Bill, to discuss with members of the Irish Parliament and see first-hand the work being carried out in Dublin on Safe Access Zones.
5. Ms Mackay's planned visit will include meeting with the Green Party TD Neasa Hourigan and cross-party colleagues from the Senate to discuss their work on safe access zones including the challenges faced. She will also visit sites and speak to those involved in bringing this legislation forward, including listening to first-hand experiences of the situation in Dublin and how this has affected people visiting clinics.
6. Ms Mackay is proposing to travel from 14th to 17th February 2023 should costs be approved to be met from the Scheme by the SPCB. Ms Mackay is applying for the cost of the train to and from her home in Falkirk to Holyhead train station totaling £123.20,

return ferry crossing from Holyhead to Dublin totaling £59.56, overnight stay for 3 nights in Dublin and travel by tram/train around the city to and from meetings, approximate cost £20.00.

7. Overnight accommodation would be required for 3 nights to allow Ms Mackay to make the most of the visit. The total cost of bed and breakfast for 3 nights in Dublin would cost approximately £499, she would also be claiming for evening meal costs approximately £30 per night. The SPCB will wish to note that all overnight costs are expected to be within the overnight limit for travel abroad which is currently £220 per night covering dinner, bed and breakfast.
8. The total cost for train, ferry, accommodation, meals and tram/trains in Dublin city based on the indicative costs above would be £795.

Governance

9. There are no governance issues as the Scheme provides for Members travelling abroad and applying to the SPCB for the costs to be met from the Scheme prior to travelling.

Resource implications

10. Should the SPCB determine that the costs should be met it is confirmed that there are sufficient funds available within the overall Members budget for 2022-23.

Publication Scheme

11. This paper can be published in accordance with the SPCB's publication scheme.

Next steps

12. Advise the Member of the SPCB's decision and if the SPCB agree the travel and overnight costs can be met from the Scheme then the Member will be advised to move forward with the proposed visit.

Decision

13. The SPCB is invited to consider an application from Ms Mackay for the cost of travel and overnight accommodation to be met from the Members' Expenses Scheme for a proposed visit to Dublin in the Republic of Ireland as detailed above.

Allowances Office

25 January 2023