

Ned Sharratt  
Public Petitions Clerks  
Room T3.40  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

29 April 2015

Dear Mr Sharratt,

### **CONSIDERATION OF PETITION [PE1549](#)**

Thank you for your letter of 01 April 2015 on behalf of the Public Petitions Committee which sought my views on the following petition lodged by Mr Alan Clark Young:

“Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ensure that all war veterans that are in receipt of a War Disablement Pension can get Concessionary Travel passes.”

Since taking up the post of Scottish Veterans Commissioner in August 2014, I have been fortunate to meet a large number of veterans and those organisations in Scotland which support them and represent their interests. These discussions have been instrumental in shaping my Strategy and Work Plan (<http://www.gov.scot/About/public-bodies/veterans-commissioner/Publications>) and allowed me to set out my priorities for the year ahead. This document has subsequently been agreed with the Cabinet Secretary for Veterans, Keith Brown, and establishes my schedule for 2015.

It may be of interest that at no point during this period of extensive engagement has the issue of concessionary travel passes for former service personnel been raised with me. Whilst there may be scope to examine transport issues in the longer term, investigating the challenges faced by veterans and their families in securing housing and employment will drive my work programme over the coming months.

However, and notwithstanding any future work on this issue, there are some points of principle which I would wish to set out here. Throughout my engagement with veterans and support organisations, one of the strongest messages I hear is that those who have served are rarely looking to be treated differently from their civilian counterparts but want reassurance that

they will not suffer as a result of their military service. The core principles of the Armed Forces Covenant are worth restating in this context, namely that serving and former service personnel deserve respect, support and fair treatment, and should face no disadvantage in the provision of public and commercial services. In this respect, I understand that the eligibility of veterans for concessionary travel is the same as that of the wider population and thus there is no apparent disadvantage.

The principle of fair treatment is intended to remove disadvantage, which I wholeheartedly endorse, but I have reservations about the conferral of advantage on veterans, which might separate former service personnel from wider society. Rather, I would urge that the broader question about eligibility for the scheme be considered to explore whether the issues raised in the petition are affecting disabled people across our communities, potentially creating barriers to employment and impairing access to services.

I look forward to seeing the views of other organisations you have contacted and how you plan to take this petition forward.

Yours Sincerely,

Eric Fraser CBE

**Scottish Veterans Commissioner**