

Lothians MSP raises importance of concessionary travel scheme

✘ Scotland's National Older and Disabled Persons Concessionary Travel Scheme runs year round but is considered especially important over Christmas and New Year, helping to bring families together from across Scotland at a special time.

The concessionary travel scheme – which has been rolled out for injured armed services veterans too – has been hailed as “a service Scotland can be proud of and one that will be protected and maintained by the gains of independence” by Jim Eadie MSP.

The white paper on independence Scotland's Future includes reference to the concessionary scheme on Page 98, Part 2, Chapter 2, where it says: “The priorities of the current Scottish Government for that first budget will be to maintain a commitment to protecting free personal care, free prescriptions, free higher education tuition for Scottish students and free concessionary travel.”

The average saving per year is approximately £232 to each of the 1.27 million people holding a National Entitlement Card. 145 million journeys were made by card holders in 2012/13.

Labour's Cuts Commission has raised the prospect of cuts across Scotland's public spending, warning that “nothing is off the table”. In January 2013, Labour's then Transport Spokesperson Elaine Murray raised the prospect of cuts to the current scheme, stating “we will be looking at the most effective way to provide support, including whether to raise the age to 65.”

Mr Eadie, who is also a member of the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee, said:-“This progressive policy enables people to get across Scotland to be with their loved ones; it encourages well-being and helps strengthen family and community ties.

“Funding for concessionary travel has increased every year since its introduction and in the last year has benefited Scotland’s older bus users by an average of around £232.

“With the scheme helping older and disabled people to make 145 million journeys last year, it is the height of irresponsibility for Johann Lamont’s Cuts Commission to have the policy in their sights.

“All of the Westminster led parties have threatened Scotland with billions of pounds of cuts to the money Scotland gets back from Westminster.

“This universal service is one of the gains of self-government – and an indication of the kind of country we want to be – and we can do so much more with a Yes vote.”

Mr Eadie recently asked the following question at Holyrood:-

Question S4W-18493: Jim Eadie, Edinburgh Southern, Scottish National Party:

To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S4W-10611 by Keith Brown on 6 November 2012, whether it will provide an update regarding how much on average the travel scheme saves people who use it each year.

Answered by Keith Brown (03/12/2013): Under the National Older and Disabled Persons Concessionary Travel Scheme, the average saving per year is around £232 for each of the 1.27 million people holding a National Entitlement Card. This may be estimated from figures for 2012-13, in which the total number of journeys made was 145 million and the average fare per

journey was £2.03.