

Scottish Youth Parliament- Visitor Levy Bill Consultation Response

Introduction

SYP's response to the Visitor Levy Bill consultation is mainly based on an in-person session held at SYP's 80th Sitting during the Culture and Media Subject Committee session.

The MSYPs who participated all supported the introduction of a levy but were divided over where the money should go. They all agreed that whether through funding in tourists or the local community, the overall impact should improve the local economy for local residents. Moreover, they said that they needed to be clear guidance and transparency in where the proceeds are spent.

In addition, SYP has a wide range of policies that aim to address funding gaps by local authorities. The proceeds from the levy could help achieve these calls that can come from consultation with thousands of young people.

Who We Are

The Scottish Youth Parliament - www.syp.org.uk

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is the basis for the Scottish Youth Parliament's (SYP's) vision, mission and values. In particular, SYP embodies Article 12 of the UNCRC, which states that young people have the right to express their views freely and have their opinions listened to in all matters affecting them. As a completely youth-led charity, the words and sentiment of Article 12 have profound importance for our work.

Our Vision

The Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) is the democratic voice of Scotland's young people. Our vision for Scotland is of a nation that actively listens to and values the meaningful participation of its young people. Our goal is to make this vision a reality, in order to ensure young people in Scotland grow up loved, safe and respected, and able to realise their full potential.

Our Mission

SYP is a rights-based charity, with members supported by all of Scotland's 32 local authorities and 11 National Voluntary Organisations. SYP's mission is to provide a national platform for young people to discuss the issues that are important to them, and campaign for changes to the nation that they live in. We support our members in their work by training them, supporting their personal development, and empowering them, using a youth work ethos. Our democratically elected members listen to and recognise the issues that are most important to young

people in every community across the country and ensure that decision-makers listen to their voices.

Our Values

- **Democracy** - We are youth-led and accountable to young people aged 14 to 25. Our democratic structure and the scale of our engagement across Scotland gives us a mandate that sets us apart from other organisations.
- **Rights** - We are a rights-based organisation. We are passionate about making young people aware of their rights and ensuring that local and national governments uphold their rights.
- **Inclusion and Diversity** - We are committed to being truly inclusive and work tirelessly to ensure policymakers and politicians hear the voices of young people from every community and background in Scotland.
- **Political Impartiality** - We are independent from all political parties. By working with all stakeholders, groups, and individuals who share our values, we deliver the policies that are most important to young people.

Our Approach

As a youth-led organisation, we are constantly seeking the views of our MSYPs and other young people to ensure our policy positions represent their views as clearly as possible. To ensure our response can accurately reflect the views of our members and the young people they represent, we pulled our information from various sources.

The consultations referenced in this response include:

Culture and Media Subject Committee Session (October 2023)

To help respond to specific questions in the *Call for Views* we held a focus group with members from our Culture and Media Subject Committee. The focus group took place in-person, on Saturday 7th October 2023 with 6 MSYPs in attendance.

SYP's 2021-2026 Manifesto

The calls in SYP's 2021-2026 Manifesto (available [here](#)) came directly from young people aged 12-25 across Scotland. The consultation as a whole was led by MSYPs and supported by the staff team. Due to the innovative and multifaceted approach we took to this manifesto, we do not have the exact number of young people engaged throughout this process. However, we estimate this to be around 10,000.

SYP Policy passed as a Members' Motion

At SYP Sittings, the membership gets together and has the opportunity to propose Member Motions that will become SYP policy statements. To submit a motion, they will have consulted with young people in their constituencies to demonstrate it is an issue important to young people. At the Sitting, the membership then votes on whether the motion should pass, again based on consultation of the proposed Motions with their constituents. By way of example, at the last SYP Sitting, SYP79

in July 2023, nearly 5000 young people were consulted before MSYPs voted on Members' Motions

Questions

Q1) What are your views on whether local authorities should have a power to place a levy (a type of additional charge or fee) on top of the price charged for overnight accommodation in their area?

The Culture and Media Committee was in unanimous agreement that local authorities should have the power to place a levy on top of the price charged for overnight accommodation in their area.

It's important to note there were a few caveats to this:

- "As long as it goes to a good place"
- "To an extent - must be small charges"
- "Needs national standard guidance - covering a minimum cost, maximum cost and penalty for non-compliance"
- "Should be clear where the money goes"
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Overall, their support could be summarised by the thoughts of one MSYP who said; "most European countries do it - I didn't realise we didn't."

Q9) The Bill requires that net proceeds of the scheme should only be used to "achieve the scheme's objectives" and for "developing, supporting, and sustaining facilities and services which are substantially for or used by persons visiting the area of the local authority for leisure purposes." Do you agree with how the Bill proposes net proceeds should be used and if not, how do you think net proceeds should be used?

The Culture and Media Committee were divided on where the net proceeds of the scheme should go. This was split between those who disagreed and thought the levy should support the local community. Some suggestions included funding local organisations, charities and associations that are overlooked, and youth-led grants supporting creative industry projects. Alternatively, some agreed it should go towards supporting tourism, especially if there was evidence to show that using it to help tourism can positively impact the local community. One MSYP argued that tourists shouldn't be "responsible to fund their own tourist centre" - and that the levy should go to wherever the data shows would help the overall economy.

Overall, the MSYPs were conscious about how community and tourism investment support each other. Their main focus was on increasing local economies - either through tourism or creative industries (which in themselves, would support

tourism too). In this sense, the best investment was seen to be anywhere where there was overlap that would benefit tourism, local communities, and the economy. For example, one MSYP pointed out that “transport is a joke” and investment is needed for communities and tourists.

SYP has a range of policies that recognise the resource challenges and calls for more funding to support communities. The proceeds from the Levy could help address these funding gaps.

- “The Scottish Youth Parliament believes that local and national governments should invest more infrastructure and opportunities for young people in rural communities, to help tackle rural isolation and improve mental health outcomes.” (91% agreed, 2021, Members Motion)
- “The Scottish Youth Parliament believes and calls on the Scottish Government and local authorities to ensure participation in sport must be maintained, and that barriers facing young people in our most socially deprived areas have to be minimised.” (82% agreed, 2019, Committee Motion)
- “Local youth work should be invested in by national and local government and protected by law from budget cuts.” (75% agreed, 2020, Manifesto statement)
- “There should be support and funding for the arts, museums, heritage sites, cultural events, and the promotion and protection of the Gaelic language and all Scottish dialects.” (65% agreed, 2016, Manifesto statement)
- “The Scottish Youth Parliament believes the Community Councils should be empowered and funded with adequate resources to a base level to ensure that they can properly fulfil their roles as the first tier of local government in Scotland; and urges local and central government to work together to ensure that Community Councils can operate more effectively.” (57% agreed, 2018, Members Motion)