

Explanatory Notes for Motions on Trip Transport Charges

A decision taken at the 2024 AGM to cap transport charges at Band 3. The argument for this was that some band 4 and 5 members were choosing to travel independently rather than pay the additional charge above the band 3 level. No statistics were tabled to support this but merely what appeared to be anecdotal evidence about a local problem. Before the cap there was no economic incentive for band 4 or 5 members to drive independently as the cost of that is higher than paying the band 4 or 5 mileage for a lift or forgoing the net driver's reimbursement for a designated trip car.

The only circumstance in which there would be an incentive to travel independently would be if using public transport

- If all are using public transport (e.g. taking a ferry) it would clearly be against the ethos of the club for a band 4 or 5 member to say that they would travel independently. Capping the charge for that case would just be capitulation to selfishness.
- If the member must use public transport because there are not sufficient car places available, then it would be iniquitous for them to be charged more than a member in the same band making the same journey with a lift in a trip car. However, this is not a frequent occurrence, and it is a poorly targeted solution to cap all transport charges arbitrarily at the band 3 level rather than capping the charge (after reimbursing fares) at the amount that the same person taking a lift would pay. For example, taking the Scotland trip to Knoydart in June 2025, because of a shortage of cars, two participants will have to travel by train between Edinburgh and Mallaig and return. The cost of the cheapest advance tickets is £87 (or £59.80 with a railcard.) Before the cap was introduced band 4 and 5 members travelling by train would pay their fare and in addition pay Red Rope £39 and £61, a total of £126 and £148. If they travelled in a designated trip car they for the 360 mile round trip they would pay only £30.24 and £35.64 respectively. With the cap they only pay their fare but this is still considerably more than the cost in a car.

The Scotland group have organised a large number of trips, but we see no evidence that higher band members are disproportionately travelling independently. The table below shows the figures for trip from 2018 to date.

RR Scotland Trip Journeys			
Band	Total journeys	Travelling Independently	
1	56	3	5%
2	71	0	0%
3	151	14	9%
4	143	7	5%
5	58	3	5%

The band 5 figure excludes 1 person with a disabled national entitlement card who can travel for free on public transport and would not pay transport charges irrespective of the cap. In general, those travelling independently are doing so to combine the trip with visits to family or another trip, or are travelling alone from a distant place to all those in the transport pool and have chosen voluntarily not to claim any transport expenses.

The capping of transport charges has not been applied on Scotland group trips. No complaints have been received about this. Since 2018, on average, our trips have a deficit on transport of 15% of the cost. This has been covered by a surplus on accommodation. If the cap had been in operation the deficit would have been 30% of costs.

RR Scotland Trip Transport Finances							
Year ending	Actual				If Capped		
	Transport Costs	Transport Charges	Transport Deficit		Transport Charges	Transport Deficit	
2018	£2,406	£2,068	£338	14%	£1,760	£646	27%
2019	£1,303	£1,243	£60	5%	£1,026	£277	21%
2020	no trips						
2021	£1,491	£1,232	£259	17%	£975	£516	35%
2022	£1,518	£1,421	£97	6%	£1,132	£387	25%
2023	£2,446	£1,992	£454	19%	£1,671	£775	32%
2024	£1,618	£1,220	£398	25%	£943	£676	42%
Total	£10,783	£9,177	£1,606	15%	£7,507	£3,276	30%

Our bank balance is quite healthy averaging about £2500 during the years 2018-24 but dipping down to about £1250 at the start of the calendar year before significant numbers of members pay deposits for trips. If the cap had been in place, then we would have gone into the red unless we had put a multiplier on accommodation charges even though these were already generating a surplus.

The National Trips report for last year's AGM (before the cap was applied) showed transport costs of £4740 and income of £4107, a deficit of 13%, similar to the Scotland trips figure. It was stated that "If this policy had been adopted 2 years ago, national trips income would have been reduced by about £450." The objective of the cap was to change the behaviour of high band members travelling by public transport who opt-out, but no estimate was given of the additional income that would arise if that behaviour change did occur.

Unless it can be shown that the cap does not have a deleterious effect on trip finances and that considering that it goes against the socialist ethos of the club it should be removed.

If opting-out were to be shown to be a general and financially significant problem then a solution would be to split the costs of transport between all participants whether opted out or not (this is already happening to some extent as overnight charges subsidise transport.) This would be unfair on those who have a genuine need to travel independently. The current rules discriminate against members who live far from regional centres. For example, there are Scottish members living more than 150 miles from Edinburgh or Glasgow.

- Some members live in regions which cannot or do not organise many trips; they are discriminated against when joining other groups trips if Policy C11 is applied.

National	14
Scotland	11
Manchester	2
Merseyside	2
East Anglia	1
West Midlands	1
Bristol & SW	0
East Midlands	0
London	0
North-East	0
Sheffield	0

The fraction of trips which are longer than 2 nights has been increasing, reflecting the fact the affluent retirees constitute the bulk of the membership. With many regions not organising their own weekend trips, policy C11 discriminates against those still working who may not be able to stay for the full duration of an extended trip and those on a lower income who may not be able to afford week-long national trips. The rules on the trip charges page state that no reduction will be made for persons staying fewer nights. We have not applied this rule for Scotland group trips. Lower income members are less likely to have flexible working and be able to take time off.

- Because some participants must leave after work while others want to set off early to walk during the day car occupancy is often sub-optimal. There can also be a shortage of trip vehicles when some participants must leave a day or more earlier to return to work. These factors contribute to the deficit in trip transport finances.
- Some members find the trip transport charges confusing and the mileage records are often incorrectly filled in. The system puts some people off volunteering to be organiser/trip treasurer.

To deal with these points, Motion 1 proposes that the trip transport charges are not distance dependent but simply banded and cover the cost on each trip and that policy C11 should be deleted.

Amendment 1 is to include all trip participants in the transport charges to discourage independent travel.

In the event that Motion 1 is not passed Motion 2 is simply to remove the cap on transport charges but to limit the charge on those who have to use public transport to what they would pay if they had a lift in a designated trip car for the same distance.

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