



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme- Travel Application 20 April 2023 Reference: SPCB (2023) Paper 27

Executive summary

1. The SPCB is invited to consider an application submitted by Sarah Boyack MSP to have the travel and overnight costs for a proposed visit to Vilnius, Lithuania in May 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 Boyack's application relates to a request for her to take part in the 2-day Global Parliamentary Congress on the Future of the world, held in Vilnius, Lithuania on the 12th and 13th May 2023.
5. The Congress aims to build inter-parliamentary contacts and bring people from across the globe to help lobby and shape the UN's Agenda for the Future. Over the two days there will be plenaries on geostrategic reconstruction, the future of democracy, long term solutions and embedding future generations in parliamentary practice.

6. Ms Boyack has learned about the conference through international networks she has linked with in developing her Members Bill proposal for a Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill. The organisers of the event have asked Ms Boyack to speak and present during one of the plenary sessions, this will provide her with an opportunity to learn about the work of others to help shape her Members Bill proposal and will also help Ms Boyack be part of the international debate on future generations policy and the UN's agenda for the future.
7. Ms Boyack is proposing to travel from 11th to 14th May 2023 should costs be approved to be met from the Scheme by the SPCB. Ms Boyack is applying for the cost of the flights from Edinburgh to Vilnius costing between £250 and £400 at present and public transport costs whilst in Vilnius at approx £7.00. Depending on the time of the flights Ms Boyack may also use a taxi from her home address to Edinburgh City Centre in order to use the Airlink bus to Edinburgh Airport. If required this will cost approximately £20 for a return taxi journey.
8. Ms Boyack also requires overnight accommodation in Vilnius for 3 nights, the total cost would be approximately £235, and she would also be claiming for evening meal costs of 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 £250 per night covering dinner, bed and breakfast.
9. The total cost for flights, public transport, accommodation, meals and taxis based on the indicative costs above would be approximately £752 based on the highest indicative flight costs.
10. Based on the information provided by the Member, our advice to the SPCB would be that the application does meet the criteria set out in the Members' Expenses Scheme as detailed in paragraph 3 of this paper.

Governance

11. 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

12. 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 2023-24.

Publication Scheme

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

Next steps

14. 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

15. The SPCB is invited to consider an application from Ms Boyack for the cost of travel and overnight accommodation to be met from the Members' Expenses Scheme for a proposed visit Vilnius, Lithuania as detailed above.

Allowances Office

April 2023