

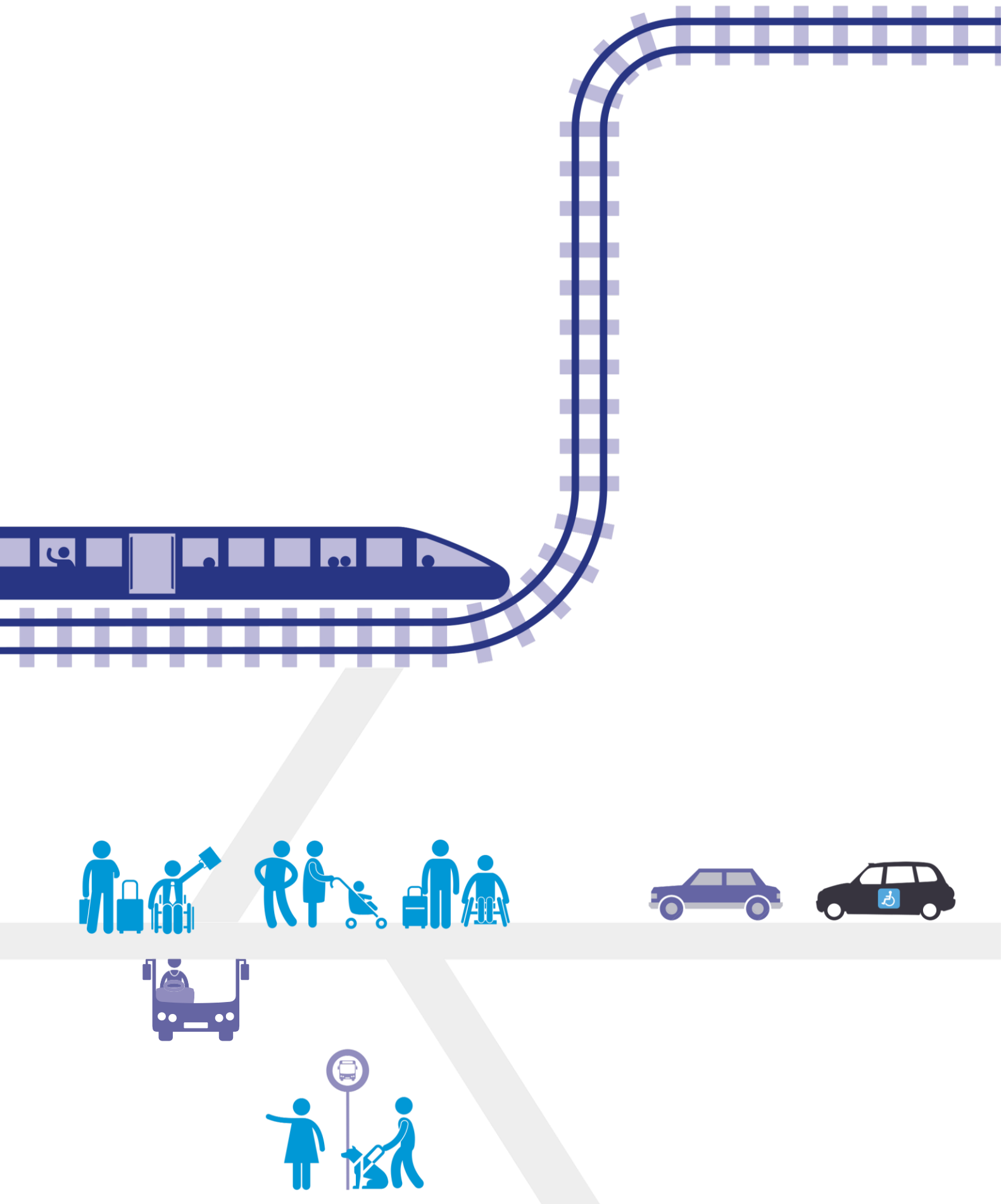


# Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland Annual Report **2024-2025**





Advising Scottish Ministers  
on Accessible Travel



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## A Warm Welcome to our New Convener



I am really pleased to say hello as the new Convener of MACS. I stepped into the role at the end of January, and it's been a busy, brilliant few months getting to know the team, our work, and our partners. I've completed the Convener induction, had great one-to-one chats with committee members, and established weekly catch-ups with our Head of Secretariat to help keep everything running smoothly. I've also set up regular fortnightly meetings with our sponsor team at Transport Scotland to ensure strong communication and alignment. In addition, I've begun representing MACS at key meetings from free rail companion travel to discussions on the Accessible Travel Framework and have had the privilege of chairing our April Board meeting and attending the Four Nations Forum. I've also met with the CEO of Transport Scotland, Motability Foundation, and Motability Operations. It's been a fast-paced start, and I'm genuinely excited about what lies ahead as we continue pushing for accessible and inclusive transport across Scotland.

As we look ahead, MACS finds itself at a point of transition and renewal. We extend our sincere thanks to Linda Bamford, whose tenure as Convener concluded on January 1st, 2025. Linda's leadership, commitment, and passionate advocacy have been instrumental in shaping MACS' voice and advancing accessible transport across Scotland.

Looking to the year ahead, we do so with both reflection and purpose. Several long-serving members Joanne Devitt and Michael Tornow, whose terms end in September 2025, and Naghat Ahmed, due to finish in March 2026 will be concluding their service. Their contributions have helped define MACS' impact and their presence will be greatly missed.

We are pleased to confirm Simon Watkins' reappointment as Vice Convener, offering stability and experienced leadership as we navigate this period of change.

Recruiting new members will be a central focus as we work to ensure the committee continues to represent a broad range of lived experiences and expert perspectives. While we bid farewell to valued colleagues, we are energised by the opportunity to welcome new voices who will help shape the future of accessible transport in Scotland. Our mission remains clear: to ensure that disabled people's transport needs are not only recognised, but prioritised in the vision for a more inclusive Scotland.

Anya Kettles  
Convener of the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland

# A Brief Overview of MACS

## Who We Are

The Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS) is an advisory body established in 2002. We are dedicated to ensuring that the transport needs of disabled people are met across Scotland.

## Our Mission

Our mission is to advocate for accessible, inclusive, and barrier-free transport systems that enable disabled people to travel independently and confidently.

## Our Vision

We envision a Scotland where disabled people can enjoy seamless, door-to-door journeys, contributing to their full participation in society.

## What We Do

- **Advise Scottish Ministers** - We provide expert advice on policies, legislation, and practices that impact the travel experiences of disabled people.
- **Promote Awareness** - We raise awareness about the importance of accessible transport and the challenges faced by disabled travellers.
- **Collaborate with Stakeholders** - We work closely with transport providers, planners, and other organisations to improve accessibility.
- **Monitor and Evaluate** - We assess the effectiveness of transport services and advocate for continuous improvements.

## Our Impact

Since our inception, MACS has played a crucial role in shaping transport policies and practices, ensuring that the voices of disabled people are heard and their needs are prioritised.

## Get Involved

We encourage feedback and participation from the community. Your insights help us to better understand the challenges and work towards more inclusive transport solutions.

Please email us at [MACS@gov.scot](mailto:MACS@gov.scot) or contact us on Twitter/X [@WeAreMACS](https://twitter.com/WeAreMACS), [LinkedIn](#) and [Bluesky](#)

# The MACS Strategy

## MACS Five High Level Objectives

Underpinning all that we do, MACS has set out five high level objectives around which Committee activities are focussed.

These objectives are:

### Objective One

Build on the commitments in Programme for Government (PfG) to promote a fair, accessible and inclusive Scotland.

### Objective Two

Work across Cabinet and Ministerial portfolios to ensure the need for an accessible transport system is recognised and cited as an enabler.

### Objective Three

Ensure that the Scottish Government makes it clear that public bodies and local authorities have a duty to respect the legislation regulating improvements of the accessibility of public transport service provision and the surrounding infrastructures.

### Objective Four

Advocate for engagement with MACS when developing or revising policy, plans or contracts by officials to gain expert advice and ensure accessibility is given a priority consideration. This includes using procurement and franchise opportunities when awarding contracts to promote accessibility in transport provisions.

### Objective Five

Advocate for an effective and inclusive “just transition” in our review of the National Transport Strategy, the Accessible Travel Framework and supporting strategic plans and route maps. Our reviews will acknowledge progress, identify barriers and gaps, and make recommendations to assist with the delivery of these commitments as we make transport more accessible and sustainable.

## Influencing Policy

Throughout 2024–2025, MACS provided expert advice and lived experience insight across a wide range of national policies, consultations, and legislative developments. By engaging directly with Ministers, civil servants, and strategic partners, MACS ensured that the rights and needs of disabled people remained central to decision-making in transport and infrastructure.

### National Cross-cutting Issues

MACS engaged with high-level policies and strategic frameworks, shaping national approaches to inclusion and rights:

- **Collaborated on inclusive reform:** Actively explored and responded to discussions about building inclusive environments within national initiatives, such as the 20-minute neighbourhoods programme and Scotland's national events strategy.
- **Reviewed policy with a focus on fairness:** Took a close look at transport policy documents and the Scottish Budget, ensuring that accessibility, fairness, and inclusion were at the forefront of each review.
- **Evaluated government consultations:** Carefully assessed the Scottish Government's consultation on Learning Disability, Autism, and Neurodivergence, ensuring MACS' stance was clearly represented. MACS commented on the Fair Fares Review, expressing concern over its lack of ambition and innovative proposals.
- **Influenced national strategies:** Played an active role in reviewing the consultations on both the 20-minute neighbourhoods initiative and advocating for the establishment of a Disability Commissioner.
- **Planned strategic responses:** Developed a detailed plan to address the Just Transition Draft Plan consultation by identifying risks of digital exclusion, exposing accessibility barriers in climate documents, and highlighting gaps in monitoring inclusive outcomes.
- **Highlighting infrastructural challenges:** Provided detailed evidence to Transport Scotland regarding street furniture and infrastructure barriers that disproportionately affect blind and visually impaired individuals.

MACS maintains regular contact with policy teams throughout Transport Scotland but in some cases, MACS have to write directly to Ministers and Parliamentarians to champion transport equity and influence government decisions:

- MACS voiced our worries about the lack of accessibility on the Benbecula–Stornoway air route by engaging with multiple Ministers and local authority leaders.
- Raised important concerns over the profits of Motability with the Cabinet Secretary of Social Justice and put forward practical solutions to tackle these issues.

## Public Spaces and Infrastructure

MACS advised on inclusive design for streets, towns, and public infrastructure, where physical accessibility is won or lost:

- Met with the Scottish Road Works Commissioner to co-develop a disability awareness training session for street works inspectors.
- Advised on the update of the Safety at Street Works and Road Works Code of Practice to improve access for disabled pedestrians.
- Contributed to Inclusive Design for Town Centres and busy streets and consultations to ensure disabled people's needs were reflected.
- Delivered a keynote speech on Inclusive Placemaking at the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Scottish Conference, making the case for accessible infrastructure and transport links.
- Delivered an awareness session to Planning Aid volunteers in Inclusive Design linked to transport infrastructure.

## Transport Services, Operations and Accessibility Reform

MACS offered targeted advice to improve transport service design, accessibility standards, and operational planning:

- Consulted with Transport Scotland on the free rail travel pilot for blind companions, advising on implementation and promotion.
- Gave feedback on Northern Isles freight vessel plans and ferry replacement strategies.
- Continued input into ferry accessibility improvements through liaison with the Ferry Communities Board.
- Participated in developing the Health & Transport Action Plan in the Grampian area.
- Engaged with the DfT's Aviation Accessibility Task and Finish Group to spotlight transport barriers for disabled islanders.



## Parliamentary Engagement via Cross-Party Groups

MACS members regularly contributed to a range of Cross-Party Groups (CPG), bringing lived experience and policy insight to national discussions:

- **CPG on Disability** – Advocated for accessible housing and transport as part of wider discussions on disability rights.
- **CPG on Islands** – Promoted the voices of young islanders through engagement with the Young Islanders Network and shared lived experience data.
- **CPG on Poverty** – Highlighted the cost of rural transport and proposed solutions to improve affordability and access.
- **CPG on Rural Issues** – Provided input on decarbonisation and net zero strategies, ensuring inclusive planning for rural communities.
- **CPG on Sustainable Transport** – Raised links between poverty and transport exclusion, pushing for more equitable policy responses.
- **CPG on Women and Transport** – Shared insights into gendered transport barriers, particularly for women in rural areas.

# The Year at a Glance – The MACS Big Ticket Items

## Western Isles Accessibility Issues

MACS took sustained and strategic action to address the accessibility challenges introduced by changes to the Benbecula–Stornoway air route, following the award of a new contract.

Between April and July, MACS wrote to Ministers, and local authority leaders to raise concerns about the lack of accessibility and weak impact assessments, particularly for disabled and older people. This engagement led to an invitation to join the Western Isles Airport Consultative Committee, where MACS highlighted both the inaccessibility of the aircraft and the impact on patients travelling for healthcare.

Throughout autumn and winter, MACS was represented at a high-level Transport to Health workshop in Benbecula, where the severity of the crisis—patients missing or avoiding healthcare due to travel barriers—was laid bare. MACS reinforced the need for better coordination between health and transport services and supported calls for a dedicated working group.

In early 2025, MACS representatives inspected a proposed replacement aircraft and raised serious concerns around ongoing inaccessibility, legality, and safety. MACS also pressed for a thorough, inclusive impact assessment involving all stakeholders, particularly DPOs and NHS partners, and challenged the assumption that increasing frequency of inaccessible services could be seen as progress.

By March 2025, the MACS input was reflected in the Working Group's final report, with a commitment to reconvene in September 2025 to review progress.

Throughout the previous year, MACS maintained a principled stance that lifeline services must be accessible to all, in line with the Equality Act.

## Temporary Road Works and Public Space Access

One of MACS' standout practical advocacy efforts this year was around the impact of temporary road works on disabled pedestrians. The committee engaged directly with the Scottish Road Works Commissioner, co-developing a disability awareness training session for street works inspectors. This work culminated in a site visit, where committee members showcased real-life examples of how poor planning obstructs access. Alongside this, MACS collaborated with Living Streets Edinburgh, gathering a comprehensive set of photographic examples of improperly placed roadworks equipment. Their evidence and advocacy fed into the update of the Safety at Street Works and Road Works Code of Practice, helping ensure stronger compliance and enforcement mechanisms.

## Deepening Engagement with Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs)

Throughout 2024, MACS deepened its direct engagement with DPOs across Scotland, recognising the centrality of lived experience in shaping accessible transport systems. MACS ran targeted engagement campaigns, held meetings with groups like People First, Carers Scotland, Cornerstone, and The Assembly, and developed an Engagement Plan, including strategic use of social media and the development of a MACS Slide Deck to expand MACS' visibility. By strengthening these connections, MACS ensured its consultation responses, position papers, and event planning were grounded in the realities faced by disabled people.

## Raising Standards in Rail Accessibility

Throughout 2024 and into 2025, MACS played a vital role in shaping rail accessibility policy and passenger experience improvements across Scotland. The committee supported ScotRail's efforts to improve service for neurodivergent passengers, offering insights into environmental design, wayfinding, and communication. This work complemented MACS' review of ScotRail's Accessible Travel Policy, where the committee submitted detailed feedback to enhance passenger touchpoints, such as assistance requests, station signage, and staff interaction.

MACS also maintained strategic dialogue with Glasgow Clyde Metro planners, pushing for full accessibility to be embedded from the start. While the Clyde Metro project remains a future initiative, MACS' early intervention ensured accessibility became a core delivery principle, setting the tone for long-term planning.

The committee also monitored Passenger Assist data, which showed encouraging signs of confidence returning among disabled rail users. MACS used this data to advocate for continued investment in accessible infrastructure and staff training, stressing that positive trends must be matched by action to prevent service stagnation or regression.

Finally, MACS engaged with ScotRail engineers and Network Rail pilots on train design, advocating for better carriage layouts, level boarding, and consistent accessibility standards. These touchpoints both high-level and hands-on demonstrate MACS' comprehensive influence on rail transport reform, spanning strategy, operations, and lived experience.

## Accessible Ferries – A Push for Islander Equity

Ferry travel remained a critical focus, especially for island communities. MACS engaged with CalMac, the Ferry Communities Board, and Transport Scotland, provided input on the needs of neurodivergent ferry passengers and shaping ferry specifications like the Mallaig–Lochboisdale route, to improve accessibility for all. MACS also pushed for improvements in booking systems for concessionary card users and highlighted the need for updated standards in the Scottish Ferries Plan. Input was provided on freight vessel plans for the Northern Isles, and MACS advocated for better alignment between ferry, air, and healthcare transport.

This ongoing work has reinforced the systemic nature of accessibility gaps while also ensuring MACS' expertise is actively shaping future solutions. In recognition of our insights, we were invited to review several ferry designs, including an accessibility discussion onboard the new Glen Sannox. We also provided feedback on low sensory space designs for the MV Loch Seaforth, contributing to more supportive environments for neurodivergent passengers. Additionally, Caledonian MacBrayne hosted a call with MACS Members where we shared our insights for developing solutions to mitigate accessibility barriers—particularly those encountered during replacement services, route changes, and delays.

These engagements highlight the growing emphasis on inclusive design and the value of MACS' advocacy in delivering tangible improvements for ferry users.

## Embedding Accessibility into Active Travel and Infrastructure Design

Throughout 2024-25, MACS championed the integration of accessibility into Scotland's evolving active travel and infrastructure strategies. With a growing national focus on low-carbon, health-promoting mobility, MACS ensured that disabled voices were not sidelined in the design of walking, wheeling, and cycling routes.

MACS participated in consultations and practical events tied to Cycling by Design, consistently raising concerns about floating bus stops, segregated infrastructure, and wayfinding. MACS provided direct feedback during events such as the Visibility Scotland urban streetscapes session and contributed accessibility insight to guidance for inclusive town centres and streets.

The committee also engaged with local authorities on infrastructure projects like the Glasgow Avenues and George Street designs, and participated in forums like the Inclusive Design in Town Centres Working Group. These engagements allowed MACS to push for guidance implementation at the local level, translating policy into practice.

Through these actions, MACS not only reviewed and responded to national strategies such as the 20-minute neighbourhood concept but grounded their feedback in lived experience, ensuring that infrastructure across Scotland evolves to support all modes of travel for all citizens.

## Building MACS' Visibility and Influence through Communications

This year saw MACS dramatically increase its communications reach and influence. An internal social media strategy and Twitter/X guide helped boost member activity online, with our previous Annual Report receiving a 50% increase in visibility. MACS joined LinkedIn and BlueSky, developed a communications and engagement plan, and crafted platform-specific content strategies. These efforts supported wider DPO outreach and raised the profile of accessibility issues through engagement with Transport Scotland newsletters, the Public Health and Sustainable Transport Conference, and Co-production Week. This proactive approach to storytelling and policy engagement reinforced MACS' role as a national leader on accessible transport advocacy.

## Continuing to Advocate for Fairness within Motability

MACS has continued its longstanding advocacy work around the Motability Scheme and the development of Scotland's Accessible Vehicle and Equipment Scheme (AVES), with a major focus throughout 2024-25 on transparency and value for money for disabled people. We met with the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, where MACS raised four key issues: ensuring benefit uplifts truly support disabled people rather than increasing Motability Operations' (MO) profits; encouraging the Scottish Government to push for profit-sharing with customers; establishing a Scottish Motability Users' Group to influence AVES; and seeking clarity on the AVES Scheme's launch timeline and new provider involvement.

MACS also met directly with the CEO of the Motability Foundation (MF) and Motability Operations, reinforcing three longstanding asks: that powered wheelchairs and scooters be retained at end of lease; extending the bereavement vehicle return policy to three months; and establishing a Scottish Accessible Vehicle and Equipment (SAVE) advisory group. The meeting included discussions on value for money, governance, and the need for profits to better benefit customers rather than being diverted elsewhere.

MACS stressed the need for practical outcomes from research and highlighted concerns around the affordability of vehicles, especially in rural and island communities. Both MF and MO appeared more open to MACS' influence than in previous engagements, indicating potential for progress in 2025. MACS also referenced research from the National Centre for Accessible Transport (NCAT), calling for clearer actions tied to the £22 million allocated for future accessibility innovation.

Additionally, MACS is collaborating with project leads from the Motability Foundation to support the development of a DPO Insights Panel in Scotland, with engagement planned for July 2025. This partnership represents another channel for amplifying the lived experience of disabled people and embedding it in policy and programme development.

# Reflections from the MACS Work Stream Leads



## **Lynn Pilkington – Planning, Strategy and Engagement Lead**

"It has been a rewarding and growth-filled year for me personally and the workstream. We have delivered on external engagements, a relationship-building strategy and internal/external communication improvements. We are all adapting to new ways of coming together as a team and I look forward to seeing the benefits through increased accessible transport for all."



## **Susan Fulton – Active Travel and Infrastructure Lead**

"It's been a busy and rewarding year for the Active Travel and Infrastructure Workstream. We've contributed to a wide range of projects—from input into SEStran's People and Place Plan, kerb height research, and updates to Cycling by Design, to advising on Pavement Parking Legislation and participating in groups on Continuous Footways and Floating Bus Stops.

Our collaboration with the Active Travel team helped strengthen connections and share insights across workstreams. Highlights included our Development Day, where we explored new funding models and heard directly from those delivering projects on the ground.

Site visits with the Roadworks Commissioner's team gave powerful insight into how people navigate temporary roadworks, offering a deeper understanding of the lived experiences we represent."



## **Anne Macleod – Ferries and Aviation Lead**

"This year, we've strengthened our engagement with island communities, particularly around ferry accessibility and the emerging aviation issues in the Western Isles. We've built strong working relationships with operators and pushed for clearer commitments to inclusive design across terminals and vessels. There's more to do, but we're making sure disabled people's voices are at the heart of future transport planning."





### **Simon Watkins – MACS Vice Convener and Rail Lead**

"It has been another steady year of accessibility improvements on the railways without any major stand-out moments. We are glad that we have been able to assure ourselves that the Glasgow metro, however constituted, will be fully accessible and that Scotland continues to lead the way in the UK in station accessibility improvements under the Access for All scheme. We are continuing to try and ensure, along with other Disabled People's Organisations, that the newly-formed Great British Railways has accessibility at its core."

### **Lesley Macinnes – Public and Community Transport Lead**

"As we look ahead, there are real opportunities to shape more accessible and inclusive public transport across Scotland. With upcoming changes through the Bus Services (No. 2) Bill, improvements in open data, and ongoing developments in Traveline's accessibility, MACS will be engaging closely to make sure these systems reflect the needs and experiences of disabled people. It's an important time to get things right and we're ready to contribute."

## A Thank You from the Committee

Thank you for taking time to read and reflect on our work.

With sincere thanks from all of us the MACS Committee: Anya Kettles, Simon Watkins, Anne MacLeod, Lesley Macinnes, Lynn Pilkington, Susan Fulton, Catherine Barile, Elliot Cooper, Joanne Devitt, Lynsey Shovlin, Michael Tornow, Naghat Ahmed and Zara Todd.