



Rhoda Grant

Scottish Labour MSP for the Highlands and Islands

29 May 2008

Rhoda Grant, Highlands and Islands MSP, is calling for support for volunteer drivers who work for the Scottish Ambulance Service.

Volunteers in different parts of the Highlands and Islands have contacted the MSP to express their fears that dwindling numbers of drivers could leave areas without the vital lifeline services.

"There are no employed transport services personnel in the North West Highlands, and if the SAS loses the few volunteer drivers working in this area it will make it very difficult or very costly for the transport service to get people to hospital," said Mrs Grant.

Volunteers have not seen an increase in their mileage costs since 2001 – which in real terms is a 23 percent decrease in their expenses.

A recent review by the SAS indicated there was no intention to raise the rate, however, following questions in parliament raised by Mrs Grant in April it has agreed to look at the rates on a monthly basis to ensure costs for drivers are covered.

"It is vital that these services are supported.

"One volunteer driver is covering 3,000 miles a month – this sounds like a situation where there should be an employed post in place.

"I would call on the Scottish Government to ensure that the ambulance service has the funds in place to provide a robust ambulance service where there are employed drivers and where volunteer drivers are receive adequate expenses," she said.

The SAS chairman William Brackenridge told Mrs Grant that the costs for volunteer drivers covers fuel and maintenance of the vehicles but no allowance is made for depreciation.

Mrs Grant has tabled a number of additional questions to determine what action the Scottish Government is taking.

"With the rising costs of fuel it is very difficult for people to sustain this voluntary service.

"In areas where there is limited public transport it is vital local people can gain access to hospital," said Mrs Grant.

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Rhoda Grant's website : www.rhodagrants.org.uk

Highlands and Islands Labour : www.handilabour.org.uk