Create a Section Representative Post for Students who Commute to University

What we will do:

1. Create a new student section representative post that represents students who travel to the University of Edinburgh from home
2. The post should be filled during the Postgraduate Election cycle in October 2020 and subsequently in every Spring cycle, as per other representative positions.
3. The post should be filled and elected by those who live at home and outside Edinburgh; determined whichever way the Students’ Association sees fit.
4. The Sabbatical Officers shall, in association with the University, additionally conduct a study to understand why some students choose to commute to University from home and how the Students’ Association can best support these students

Background to this:

1. Some students, particularly those from Fife and the Lothians, decide to commute to University from home instead of moving to Edinburgh for a variety of reasons, including the cost of living in Edinburgh and a preference to continue living with their parents.
2. Because of the longer journey times to and from university, these students often have fewer opportunities to engage and interact with the Students’ Association and Student Societies, as well as making new friends there.
3. Many bus and rail services out of Edinburgh don’t operate after around 11:00pm on most nights, meanwhile Lothian Buses operates a comprehensive NightBus network.
4. Campaigns that are run by the Students’ Association, particularly those relating to cost of living, appear not to focus at all on students who live outside the city and are often excluded from debates and representation that is relevant to them.
5. Students from Fife particularly sometimes struggle to reach university as a result of poorer public transport links and severe weather than those from Edinburgh benefit from.
6. In February 2020, the Queensferry Crossing was closed in both directions as a result of ice and snow forming and falling from the cables, damaging vehicles.
7. Both the road and public transport networks struggled to cope with the increased demand and some students will have been unable to attend classes as a result of this disruption.
8. The Students’ Association and the University did not publicly acknowledge these issues as they were happening.
9. In December 2015, the Forth Road Bridge was closed for several weeks after a major defect was found on the bridge.
10. This closure happened during that semester’s exam season and commuting students were affected.
11. At the time, the University acknowledged the seriousness of the issue and offered students discounted accommodation if they were unable or unwilling to travel to/from Fife.
12. Local media in Fife frequently report frustrations with the rail service provided to Fifers, with trains often running late, have fewer carriages than there should be, or simply don’t run at all and often at short notice.
13. The time spent commuting often makes students more tired and gives them less time to complete their studies during the week than those who live nearer to campus and have closer access to study facilities.

Beliefs and motivating actions:
1. The issues that affect students who commute from home haven’t been voiced because there is nobody currently to represent them.
2. This group of students need and deserve a voice within the Students’ Association.
3. The University should be doing more to support students who commute to Edinburgh and its campuses from a transportation, academic and social viewpoint.
4. Commuting students’ access to services and activities provided by the Students’ Association and the University are in need of improvement.

Submitted with 40 student signatures in March 2020.