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Dear Dave,

Thank you for your letter from 5 March 2016 regarding various issues which you raise about ScotRail's plans for on train cycle carriage. I note that you have also copied this to Roy Brannen, Chief Executive and Aidan Grisewood, Rail Director at Transport Scotland (TS).

The decision on whether to provide more space for cycles on train with less fixed seating was balanced against issues such as impact on overall seating capacity and passengers comfort. As usage continues to grow fast it is important we can accommodate this growth for everyone's benefit while still meeting our obligations to make our railways more accessible to disabled people.

The day to day operation of train fleets and how they manage passengers on board rests with ScotRail. It has a clearly stated policy on its website on how it accommodates and encourages integration with cyclists, including the free carriage of bikes on trains. It will continue to keep this under review and is committed to training its staff in cycle capacity procedures and how to provide additional ad-hoc spaces where there is demand, without compromising passenger safety.

On train cycle capacity on Edinburgh-Glasgow via Falkirk services will not reduce by 50% and when ScotRail introduces new electric trains onto the route as it is looking at operational procedures which have worked successfully elsewhere on the network such as in Ayrshire and North Berwick. ScotRail plans to adopt a similar information campaign, staff training and on train management model that was rolled out on the Edinburgh - North Berwick route when class 380s replaced class 322s in 2011 and has proved to be very well received. These trains allow informal storage of cycles at vestibules, at the train crew discretion, which has worked very smoothly in Strathclyde for many years. This will enable more bikes to be carried than the two which can be booked on three car class 170s currently operating and Phil Verster, Managing Director of the ScotRail Alliance confirmed this in the Scottish Parliament to the ICI Committee on the 9th March.

A similar policy will then be used for the new Hitachi class 385 fleet when it's introduced in late 2017 onto the E-G line then across other central belt routes in the following year. Currently the four routes between Edinburgh and Glasgow offer various means of on train cycle carriage and by 2019 all routes will be operated by a mix of electrics (c385, c380 and c334) allowing a more flexible approach to on train cycle carriage.

I note your support of the major investment, of around £4M, which Abellio will deliver through the many obligations it offered to Scottish Ministers in the current ScotRail Franchise Agreement (FA). This will provide significant enhancements aimed at boosting rail/ cycle integration by improving facilities for cyclists at either end of their journey to reduce demand for taking bikes on trains. Significant investment from both Scottish Government and ScotRail is already evident and will include some of the following projects:

- £194,000 from Scottish Stations Fund to opening a new and significantly expanded cycle parking facility at Haymarket with around 90 spaces
- £100,000 from Scottish Stations Fund to install 200 cycle spaces at Waverley for covered canopy near the Calton Road entrance
- 5,000 cycle storage spaces at stations across the rail network, 3,500 to be in place within the first three years of the franchise.
- ScotRail is committed to a new Cyclepoint at Edinburgh Waverley with significant uplift in facilities expected
- Bike & Go facilities have already been opened at Stirling & Haymarket.
- Enhanced cycle parking provision at the new Queen Street which will emerge after discussions with Network Rail / Sustrans

The programme to deliver a fully refurbished fleet of class 158 trains that are to be cascaded on the west Highland line (WHL) from late 2017 is underway. This investment amounts to around £14M across the fleet with five trains already back in service receiving good feedback from users. This work delivers two toilets - one accessible - two wheelchair spaces, companion seating, luggage racks, air conditioning plus new lighting and carpets. This will support a "scenic train" experience offering passengers a better on board environment which aims to drive up patronage, boost businesses and the rural economy along the route. ScotRail will continue to carry cycles free of charge and, since the introduction of a more frequent service on the route and more carriages on certain journeys, passengers will still have many opportunities to take their bikes onto WHL services.

As you state the specification in the FA is for a minimum of two bookable spaces per train and ScotRail has consulted both externally and internally to finalise layouts of its fleet to deliver its commitments. Within the HST fleet which will operate on inter-city routes there will be spaces for significantly more than the minimum of two spaces for those who wish to book bikes on board. As a business it has made the decision that two bookable spaces are sufficient across the class 158 and class 170 trains which will form around 19% of its fleet by 2019 and Transport Scotland was aware that this layout was its preferred choice. If trains are then coupled it could see four or six bookable spaces provided on some services.

ScotRail was obliged under the FA to produce a Cycle Innovation Plan, which it has done, to be updated yearly and shared with cycling groups, such as SPOKES, including ways to develop cycling. The cycle forum meeting that ScotRail chairs aims to develop ways in which more integration can be encouraged and promoted by them working in co-operation with relevant stakeholder groups to help achieve this. The TS franchise team is in the process of setting up a new round of meetings with ScotRail only, to review the cycle forum external stakeholder meetings, monitor franchise project delivery, analyse facility usage and discuss publicity /comms plans as part of a formal audit of the franchisee's output.


The new franchise contains further obligations to encourage patronage at off peak times and ScotRail will continue to offer free carriage of bicycles unlike some other operators in England who are imposing charges or restrictions. The significant investment in new storage facilities at stations plus a greater focus on integration between the rail network and cyclists has been welcomed by official cycling groups, and ScotRail will continue to encourage links with cyclists as part of its travel integration strategy.

ScotRail continues to monitor cycle bookings on rural routes and is aware that the revised capacity on these routes will need to be managed carefully going forward. TS and ScotRail are aware that bookable cycle spaces will reduce to two on some WHL journeys, the minimum required by the FA, and are looking to understand the impact, develop options to manage this and how to deliver solutions which will balance the needs of all passengers who wish to travel on the route, in conjunction with relevant cycling groups. It would be useful to understand how SPOKES can contribute to this process and I ask that you make contact with TS officials to contribute to the on-going debate and put forward your ideas.

TS is working closely with ScotRail to ensure all rail users' needs are taken into account for everyday journeys, including cyclists. The Cycling Action Plan for Scotland (CAPS) identifies integration between modes as a crucial component of the promotion of active travel. CAPS is due to be refreshed later this year to assess how all sectors within the transport industry and wider society can support the overall SG Vision of increased cycling participation and usage within Scotland. Plans are currently being developed as to how we will consult and engage on CAPS and TS active travel officials will be in touch with all cycling stakeholders in due course.

I look forward to your organisation continuing to play a part in promoting cycling and integration with other transport modes across the country.

Kind regards



DEREK MACKAY