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Mr Jim Eadie

By Email - jimeadie@edsouthernscot.org

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Dear Jim

Thank you for your letter of 8 April 2016 on behalf of your constituents regarding ScotRail's plans for on train cycle carriage on the West Highland line and Edinburgh – Glasgow route.

The decision on whether to provide more space for cycles on trains with less fixed seating was balanced against issues such as impact on overall capacity and passengers' comfort. As usage continues to grow, 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. The company 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. ScotRail will continue to keep this under review and are 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.

When ScotRail introduces new electric trains onto the Edinburgh – Glasgow route in December 2016 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 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 currently be booked on three car class 170s.

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

ScotRail will invest around £4 million to deliver the many obligations it offered to Scottish Ministers in the current ScotRail Franchise Agreement. 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 a number of stations across Scotland
- Enhanced cycle parking provision at the new Queen Street station which will emerge after discussions with Network Rail / Sustrans

The programme to deliver the fully refurbished fleet of class 158 trains which will be introduced onto the West Highland line from late 2018 is already underway. This investment amounts to around £14 million across the fleet, with five trains having already been completed and these upgrades have been well received. This upgrade work was based on extensive consultation, and delivers two toilets - one accessible - two wheelchair spaces, companion seats, luggage racks, air conditioning plus new seating, lighting and carpets. This will support a "scenic train" experience offering passengers a better on board environment which aims to drive up patronage, boost local 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 these services.

ScotRail were obliged under the Franchise Agreement to produce a Cycle Innovation Plan, which it has done, to be updated yearly and shared with cycling groups 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.

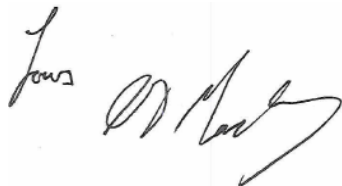
The new Franchise Agreement contains further obligations to encourage patronage at off peak times and ScotRail will continue to offer free carriage of bicycles unlike some other operators in England who are imposing charges or restrictions. The significant investment in new storage facilities at stations 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.

The specification in the Franchise Agreement 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 High Speed Train fleet which will operate on inter-city routes there will be spaces for significantly more than the minimum of two for those who wish to book bikes on board. As a business, ScotRail 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.

Transport Scotland and ScotRail are aware that bookable cycle spaces will reduce to two on West Highland line services, the minimum required by the Franchise Agreement, 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.

Transport Scotland 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 Scottish Government Vision that 10% of everyday journeys will be by bike by 2020. We remain committed to achieving this Vision and have significantly increased the budget for active travel in recent years to help achieve this. Compared to 2013/14 we have increased the budget for active travel by over 80% (from £21.35 million for 2013/14 to £39.2 million in 2015/16) This is at a time when our overall capital budget has decreased by 26%. In 2016-17 approximately £39 million has been made available for active travel infrastructure improvements and behaviour change initiatives

Kind regards



DEREK MACKAY