

Rail

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Your ref:

Our ref:
2016/0011993

Date:
15 April 2016

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 29 March 2016 to the Minister for Transport and Islands, Derek Mackay regarding ScotRail's plans for on train cycle carriage. As this is a matter delegated to Transport Scotland your email has been passed to me for reply.

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.

On train cycle capacity on the Edinburgh-Glasgow via Falkirk route will not reduce when ScotRail introduces new electric trains onto the route in early 2017 and ScotRail is looking at operational procedures which have worked successfully elsewhere on the network such as in Ayrshire. ScotRail's customer service staff are trained to be flexible regarding the number of bicycles that can be stored on-board trains and to provide additional ad-hoc spaces where there is demand and the opportunity. This will enable more bikes to be carried than the two which can currently be booked on three car class 170 trains.

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.

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.

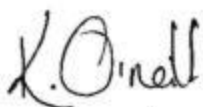
ScotRail will invest around £4 million to deliver the many obligations it offered to Scottish Ministers in the current ScotRail Franchise Agreement. This will provide significant enhancements aimed at boosting rail/cycle integration by improving facilities at stations for cyclists at either end of their journey to reduce demand for taking bikes on trains. Our view is that the ScotRail approach offers the greatest contribution to encourage more people to integrate cycling into their journeys in an affordable and efficient manner.

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. 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. However, if trains are then coupled it could see four or six bookable spaces provided on some services.

Please be assured 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.

Kind regards,



Keavy O'Neill
Smart and Integrated Travel Officer