

## **Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on PE1930: Ensure customers are always given information on cheapest possible fare in new ScotRail contract, submitted by George Eckton**

### **Background**

The rail industry is currently undergoing significant change at a British and Scottish level.

The UK Government published [Great British Railways: The Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail](#) in May 2021. This proposed a fundamental restructuring of the rail industry, the main change being the ending of the current franchising system and the creation of Great British Railways (GBR). GBR will assume ownership of the rail infrastructure from Network Rail, collect fare revenue, plan the network and set most fares and timetables. Passenger rail services will be provided by private operators delivering services specified by Government in management contracts. The implications of this for Scotland are not yet clear, although there is a general commitment in the paper that:

“The devolved authorities in Scotland and Wales have a range of devolved powers in relation to rail which they will continue to exercise, as will TfL [Transport for London] and other metropolitan authorities, in relation to rail and light rail in their areas.”

Legislation establishing GBR is expected to pass through the UK Parliament during 2022/23, with GBR being operational by 2024. Progress towards the creation of GBR is being led by the cross-industry Great British Railways Transition Team (GBRTT), which is currently working on a [Whole Industry Strategic Plan for Rail](#).

At the Scottish level, from 1 April 2022 ScotRail services have been operated by ScotRail Trains Ltd, which is owned and overseen by Scottish Rail Holdings Ltd, itself wholly owned by Scottish Ministers. This is the first time ScotRail services have been operated by a public sector provider in 25 years.

**Previous petition:** The Session 5 Public Petitions Committee considered a very similar petition to this one ([PE1760: Clear Pricing for Train fares](#)) during

2019/20. This was closed on 3 September 2020, as the Scottish Government had [stated in written evidence](#) that:

“It would be our intention to build on the Price Promise Scheme and ensure in future rail contracts that there is an obligation placed on the operator to provide customers with clear, straightforward information on all fares’ options and that includes the identification of the cheapest possible fare together with any conditions that may relate to that fare.”

## **Scottish Government Action**

The Scottish Government made a commitment regarding fares under future rail contracts, as set out above. However, it is unclear what impact bringing ScotRail under direct public control and proposed changes to rail ticketing at a British level might have on the delivery of this commitment.

## **Scottish Parliament Action**

The Scottish Parliament has not considered the issue of passengers being provided with information on best value rail fares since the closure of petition PE1760 in September 2020.

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