

Letter to Net Zero, Energy, and Transport Committee

Dear Convener,

I am writing to provide a follow-up for the committee on our work around apprenticeship opportunities following the rail evidence session on 30 May 2023.

Like the rail industry across the whole of Britain, ScotRail faces a demographic challenge, with a significant number of colleagues due to retire in the next five years. While this is ultimately a testament to the fact that ScotRail provides well-paid, high-skilled jobs which retain talent for many years, we are also conscious of the need to maintain a strong pipeline of talent. Doing so will ensure that the business is resilient in the future and that we deliver the high-quality service that the public expects.

Given many roles in the rail industry are specialised and highly skilled, we view apprenticeships as a good way to bring people into the business, equip them with skills to set them up for a successful career, and ensure the business plans effectively to fill potential skills gaps in advance.

There are currently 26 apprentices employed across ScotRail in various roles. These are broken down by area of the business below:

- 16 Engineering
- 6 Customer Service
- 1 Graduate Finance Apprentice
- 3 IT Apprentices

We aim to continue ramping up our recruitment of apprentices and plan to have 38 in place by the end of 2023.

Beyond this year, we are considering various proposals to significantly increase apprenticeship numbers from current levels. Doing so would not only secure a pipeline of talent for ScotRail but also provide high-skilled employment opportunities across a wide range of roles and throughout a geographic spread that covers the majority of mainland Scotland.

In addition to apprenticeships, we will look to maintain our strong internal routes for career progression that sees many staff move throughout the organisation. This progression is long established in the rail industry and contributes to high levels of staff retention. While we feel the current system works well, we are looking at ways that we can support and augment this by way of formal schemes and internal apprenticeships, for example.

I hope the committee finds this helpful and should you require more information, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Joanne Maguire
Chief Operating Officer, ScotRail