

10 April 2024

Dear Convener,

Evidence session on Scotland's Railway – 19 March 2024

I am writing to provide written updates to the committee on the following queries raised by members during the session on 19 March.

1. *Bob Doris MSP asked if follow-up information could be provided on how ScotRail reports and promotes initiatives seeking to increase rail usage in Scotland.*

In 2023/24, ScotRail had the following promotions and initiatives to encourage rail travel:

- Half-price sale - 50 per cent discount on off-peak tickets from 26 January to 28 February 2023.
- Club 50 £15 flat fare offer from 13 February to 26 March 2023.
- Student offer – 50 per cent discount on off-peak from 27 March to 30 April 2023.
- Club 50 £15 flat fare offer from 15 May to 25 June 2023.
- Off-peak all-day trial from 2 October to 28 June 2024.
- Club 50 £17 flat fare offer from 10 January to 20 March 2024.
- Club 50 Caledonian Sleeper discount from 14 November to 14 December 2023.

ScotRail invests in advertising throughout the year to build positivity around the ScotRail brand and encourage rail travel when planning a journey. For example, with the support of independent modelling, ScotRail's advertising and initiatives have shown to deliver around £13million of additional revenue over the past year.

In 2023, we launched *Your Ticket Goes Further Than You Think* – a celebration of ScotRail, the people who work here, and the job they do to create a positive experience for our customers. We regularly promote our best value fares throughout the year, including campaigns such as our Kids For A Quid offer, which is available throughout the year and allows four children can travel for just £1 return each with an adult.

In late summer 2023, we launched *Go By Train*, a campaign designed to promote just how close many of our stations are to many of the great sights and experiences of Scotland, and this came with the launch of our new and improved Inspiration Hub on the ScotRail website. In November and December, we ran the 'Christmas By Train' campaign, reminding people our city and town centre stations mean rail travel is a great way to enjoy events over Christmas.

We regularly promote our value for money products too, with GroupSave – where a group of three, four, or five people can save up to a third on off-peak day return train tickets, in addition to the Kids For A Quid product, off-peak all-day trial, and Club50 benefits, which Mr Doris referred to during the session.

- In response to a question from Monica Lennon MSP, Joanne Maguire confirmed she would provide further information setting out ScotRail's position on driver only operations and the rationale for this.*

At the time of the committee session, ScotRail was in dispute with the RMT trade union over which member of staff opens and closes the doors on services on the newly electrified line between Glasgow to Barrhead, not over whether or not there should be a second member of staff on the train. To be clear, ScotRail has no intention of rolling out a policy of driver only operations (DOO) on Barrhead electric services. ScotRail is investing significant resources to ensure there is always a second member of staff on each service.

On 13 March, the RMT issued a ballot of its members for industrial action covering conductors at Glasgow Central, Ayr, Dumfries, and Stranraer depots. The basis of the ballot was the RMT's inaccurate position that ScotRail intended to implement DOO on electric Barrhead services. The ballot was due to close on 11 April. On 28 March, ScotRail was notified by the RMT National Executive Committee (NEC) that the ballot had been suspended.

However, on 4 April, we received further correspondence from RMT NEC that the union will ballot its members at Ayr, Dumfries, Glasgow Central, and Stranraer depots in relation to 'the role and responsibility of the guard, Barrhead & East Kilbride route'. The ballot will open on 11 April.

For clarity, our plans for the route are as follows:

- The driver will operate train doors on the Barrhead service – this means the driver will be responsible for opening and closing the train doors.
- The conductor will remain on those services and focus on customer service duties, including, but not limited to, proactive revenue collection and customer assistance. The conductor would play no part in the opening and closing of doors.

ScotRail has also reassured the conductors at the depots that:

- Nobody will lose their job.
- There will be no changes to existing terms and conditions.
- Conductors will continue to work services from the same depot.
- We will recruit more conductors given the additional work required over the coming months, including at Levenmouth and Shotts.

There are significant benefits to drivers opening and closing the train doors, with a positive impact on revenue collected for the taxpayer, the punctuality and reliability of our trains, and benefits for customers, including:

- No impact on safety with the driver being responsible for opening and closing doors. This happens on the majority of all ScotRail services at the moment.
- A better level of customer service and staff visibility as conductors can focus on customers and revenue collection instead of door duties on the Barrhead and East Kilbride routes.

We are disappointed that the RMT, despite suspending its original ballot, has now reversed its position and will commence a new ballot. We will continue to work constructively with trade union colleagues on these matters.

3. *In response to a question from Douglas Lumsden MSP, Joanne Maguire agreed to confirm when ScotRail reported back to Transport Scotland on the findings of its consultation on the consumption of alcohol on train services.*

As per the governance processes, ScotRail provided the results of our online survey on the alcohol ban to Scottish Rail Holdings (SRH) on 25 January and we understand that SRH sent it onto Transport Scotland on the same day.

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

Best regards,

Joanne Maguire
ScotRail Chief Operating Officer