

PE1930/O: Ensure customers are always given information on cheapest possible fare in new Scotrail contract

Cabinet Secretary for Transport written submission, 13 May 2024

Thank you for your letter of 18 April 2024, regarding the petition: PE1930 and enquiring about an update on Smart & Integrated Ticketing Strategy Delivery Plan and ScotRail fares system.

In terms of the Smart & Integrated Ticketing Strategy Delivery Plan, please note that the Scottish Government is currently refreshing this document, which will outline its strategy and programme of work for enhancing smart, integrated ticketing and payments, and digital travel data over the next 5-10 years. The strategy will set out the timescales for delivering the actions over the short, medium and long term and will align to the forthcoming National Smart Ticketing Advisory Board's work programme.

The strategy is being developed through a collaborative process with stakeholders and the public, following a public survey last year. It is also taking into account the significant progress and technological development of smart ticketing since the previous publication in 2018, reflecting the public's increasing desire for, and increasing use of, contactless and digital payments and ticketing.

Following the Fair Fares Review and Climate Change Package announcements of the Scottish Government's intention to develop a new national integrated ticketing system for public transport, the strategy will now progress through the final engagement and approval process to be published in the coming months.

[I have written to the Committee separately with an update regarding the publication on Fair Fares Review.](#)

Independently from this, ScotRail, in public ownership, is in the early stages of trialling an Account Based Travel scheme (or Pay As You Go) with a closed group, with the intention of launching that wider, if it proves successful. It is anticipated that a successful trial will lead to a rollout in early summer, covering the Strathclyde area and across to Edinburgh, initially.

In terms of the progress made to simplify fares, ScotRail has advised me that its digital supplier (Trainline) has now developed split ticketing functionality and ScotRail is currently finalising details and arrangements to introduce that functionality to the ScotRail website and app. ScotRail expects that this functionality is introduced over the summer of this year.

ScotRail has also advised that in relation to the availability of cheapest fares in more general terms, it carries out regular reviews to assess if and when it can expand product availability through different channels and fulfilment methods, balancing the need to make discounted products widely available against the need to protect

revenue and as such, the public purse. It is important to note that some discounted products have eligibility criteria that cannot always be assessed through self-service channels, for example making 'Kids for a Quid' tickets available through self-service channels comes with the risk that these tickets could be purchased fraudulently.

It is also important to note that concessionary fares on public transport, including rail, which is the responsibility of local authorities, who have discretionary powers under the Transport Act 1985 to provide and fund local concessionary travel schemes for residents, need to be considered in the same context. Local authorities subsidise any rail concession schemes and require ScotRail to retail only via 'face-to-face' channels such as stations and on-train, due to the risk of fraud involved.

More widely, under the public ownership arrangements, Scottish Ministers have set out their expectations for rail fares and ticketing. This includes an obligation for Scottish Rail Holdings (SRH), who manages and oversees ScotRail's services on behalf of Scottish Ministers and ScotRail to develop and implement a Fares & Ticketing Strategy, which, as part of a number of requirements, looks to remove and prevent future fares anomalies.

The current ScotRail Peak Fares Removal Pilot will inform the work to develop the ScotRail's Fares and Ticketing Strategy. Complementing the outcomes of the pilot, ScotRail is committed to developing and providing products shaped by customer insights, including how fares and ticketing can be improved to remove barriers to travel.

My officials at Transport Scotland will continue collaborating with ScotRail and SRH as they develop the Fares and Ticketing Strategy over the coming year. At the end of this year, Parliament will also receive an update on progress towards delivering this rail policy as part of a wider annual policy update.

Yours sincerely,

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Cabinet Secretary for Transport