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Committee

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6 February 2023

Dear Edward,

QUESTIONS FOLLOWING THE NET ZERO, ENERGY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE EVIDENCE SESSION

I would firstly like to thank the Committee for inviting me to present evidence on the 2023-24 Scottish Budget during the session held on Tuesday 17 January 2023.

During the course of the evidence session, there were a number of matters to which I agreed to provide answers in writing. As outlined in the email sent on your behalf on 17 January, there were three of these:

1. Further details on the Scottish Government's allocation of capital investment as it relates to specific road infrastructure projects.
2. Figures on the total income ScotRail received from rail fares in the previous year.
3. Information on ScotRail's passenger satisfaction survey and how it was administered

I would like to respond to each of these in turn and have therefore outlined responses in the annex attached to this letter.

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I trust that the Committee will find these responses useful. I look forward to continuing to engage with the Committee on these important matters and thank it for its continued scrutiny.

Yours sincerely,

MICHAEL MATHESON MSP

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ANNEX A – RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS RAISED AT NET ZERO, ENERGY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

The Committee requested further details on the Scottish Government’s allocation of capital investment as it relates to specific road infrastructure projects:

There is a significant pressure on the Scottish Government’s capital programme. This is due to the impact of high inflation combined with the effects of COVID-19, EU exit and the war in Ukraine. This has meant that there has been a steep decline in the buying power of our investment. As a result, it has been vital to ensure that we maximise the impact of capital expenditure in order to deliver against our strategic priorities.

This has meant prioritising safety critical spend in order to ensure the trunk road network remains in a safe and serviceable condition. We are making best use of available resources and are developing and implementing efficiencies within our cyclical maintenance strategy where possible. The work programme is focussed on maintaining a safe trunk road network, with works to reduce the backlog of ancillary repairs being re-profiled. Although the overall budget allocation has reduced, we are still investing significantly in the trunk road network. We have provided funding of £25 million in the 2023-24 budget as part of our commitment to reducing trunk road casualties and fatalities and to deliver on the commitments set out in the Road Safety Framework 2030.

Specifically in relation to the capital land and works budget allocation, we have prioritised the most critical projects, and those where we have legal commitments or contracts already in place. For example, we have committed to delivering a solution to the A83 Access to Argyll and Bute and announced a preferred medium-term solution in December 2022, with the preferred option for the long term solution expected this spring.

The increased cost pressures faced as a result of the current economic environment mean that it is no longer possible to deliver the scale of projects anticipated at the time of the capital spending review. The Scottish Government continues to review the affordability and effectiveness of the capital programme to ensure that it is achieving maximum value for the people of Scotland.

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The Committee requested figures on the total income ScotRail received from rail fares in the previous year:

Given that this session was scrutiny of the 2023-24 Budget, we have taken “previous year” to mean the current financial year, 2022-23. As this financial year has not yet concluded, we can advise that the last reported ticket revenue forecast for ScotRail Trains in 2022-23 was £287 million. It should be noted this forecast remains subject to material uncertainty arising from industrial action affecting Network Rail in Scotland. Responsibility for resolution of the Network Rail industrial action rests with the UK Government.

The Committee requested information on ScotRail’s passenger satisfaction survey and how it was administered:

Prior to Covid-19 Transport Focus undertook a bi-annual National Rail Passenger Survey (NRPS). The survey provided a GB network-wide picture of customer satisfaction with rail travel by each Train Operating Company (TOC). The NRPS survey is still being redeveloped by Transport Focus however they have started to undertake light touch surveys to gauge passenger satisfaction (Rail User Survey).

The Rail User Survey asks passengers in Great Britain about experiences of travelling by rail and how satisfied they were with their most recent train journey. Each weekend a representative sample of 2000 people from across Great Britain are asked questions by Yonder Consulting about their public transport use.

In the last published survey results in October, overall satisfaction with ScotRail was **90%**. This maintains the same passenger satisfaction result from the previous survey. This is 3% above the GB average satisfaction rate of 87%. This represents a 4% increase in overall satisfaction with ScotRail when compared to the results from last year. In the seven areas noted ScotRail have performed better in six and maintained their score in the other.

The last full NRPS survey for Spring 2020 (prior to pandemic) was 90% satisfaction. Below is a tracked table showing ScotRail’s satisfaction covering the period before and through public ownership.



Transport Focus. Rail User Survey: Train Operator Results. Transport Focus, 4 October 2022, URL: [Rail User Survey - train operator results](#) (last accessed: 30/01/23).

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