

Rail Directorate
Transport Scotland

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Katharine Melville
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Your ref:

Our ref:
202100249880

Date:
10 November 2021

Dear Ms Melville,

Thank you for your correspondence of 21 October to the Minister for Zero Carbon Buildings, Active Travel and Tenants' Rights regarding the provision for cycle carriage on trains. As this is a delegated matter for Transport Scotland, your correspondence has been passed to the Rail Communications team and I have been asked to respond.

I am sorry to learn of the negative experience your member reported when using ScotRail services.

The Scottish Government is committed to getting more people to make active travel choices and provide opportunities for more sustainable forms of transport whenever possible and has made considerable investment in cycle infrastructure both on board trains and at stations. Furthermore, we continue to look for new opportunities to improve rail/cycle integration across the ScotRail network. This will be of even greater importance as we move out of the pandemic into a green recovery.

The day to day operation of train fleets and how they manage passengers on board rests with ScotRail. It has a clearly stated policy on its website on how it accommodates and encourages integration with cyclists, including the free carriage of bikes on trains. ScotRail will continue to keep this under review and is committed to training its staff in cycle capacity procedures, and how to provide additional ad-hoc spaces where there is demand, without compromising passenger safety.

ScotRail do offer non-reservable cycle spaces on a 'first come first served' basis on most services they operate but this is, understandably, subject to availability where other passengers may have already stowed their bikes. On longer distance services, bookings are compulsory as services can be busy and there is a limited capacity for cycle storage. Further information is contained on ScotRail's website <https://www.scotrail.co.uk/plan-your-journey/cycling/bikes-train>.

The appropriate allocation of space within a train is always challenging as rolling stock has to run on a variety of routes and cater for passengers with differing requirements. In trying to attract more passengers onto train services it is necessary to balance space for seating, cycle racks, toilets, luggage space, facilities for disabled travellers and pram users; and also to allow safe and quick access on and off the train.

Transport Scotland is aware of the demand for additional cycle spaces on trains, and you may therefore

be pleased to note we have asked that ScotRail investigate options to increase cycle capacity further, and this work is now currently underway.

As you have noted, the ScotRail Highland Explorer was officially launched to the general public on the 19th July and operates on the West Highland Line. Each carriage provides capacity for up to 20 bicycles and additional larger sports equipment. The carriages also offer options for tandems and e-bike users, boosting accessibility. These carriages will act as a pilot and will provide lessons we can learn from to help inform future rolling stock decisions in relation to active travel opportunities.

I hope this information is helpful and wish you well in travelling on Scotland's rail network.

Yours sincerely

Lawrence Southern
TS : TS RD Rail Policy