



Nicola Sturgeon MSP  
First Minister, The Scottish Government  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

2<sup>nd</sup> February 2022

Dear First Minister,

### ScotRail Ticket Office Consultation

We are writing to you to express grave concerns about the proposed reduction in ticket office opening hours at 117 ScotRail stations, including the closure of three ticket offices, and to call on you to withdraw these damaging proposals. We understand that the proposals equate to a cut of around a third of total ticket office opening hours across the affected stations.

We believe these proposed cuts will worsen passenger service, accessibility, safety and security, and will hinder Scotland's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Under ScotRail's proposals, there is no guarantee that staff will remain present at the station at the times it is proposed the ticket offices will be closed. We also believe that once ticket office hours are no longer regulated by Schedule 17 it makes it easier for operators to reduce station staffing in the future. Yet this is not what passengers want. In fact, research by passenger watchdog Transport Focus found that **'staff play a central role in helping passengers feel safe and secure'** and that passengers want to see more rather than less rail staff.

We also believe that ScotRail's proposals will worsen passenger accessibility and that disabled and elderly passengers will be particularly disadvantaged. Already, disabled people are less likely to use the railways, and these substantial cuts would worsen accessibility by significantly reducing the times that disabled and elderly passengers could guarantee that staff will be present at the station. This would also impact the assistance available to disabled and elderly passengers when boarding and alighting trains, particularly those services which do not have a second member of staff available on the train.

The proposals would also lead to a worsening of the quality of services available to passengers at the times when it is proposed the ticket offices will be closed. There are various services provided at the ticket office which are not available at Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs). Unlike ticket offices, TVMs also do not ensure that passengers get the cheapest ticket for their journey. The Scottish Government is undertaking a 'Fair Fares' review on public transport, yet these cuts would significantly reduce the time that staff are available to ensure that passengers do not pay more than they need to.

Cuts to ticket office hours also further exclude those who do not have access to the internet or who struggle to use TVMs and/or online ticketing platforms. For instance, disabled and elderly people are less likely to use the internet and lower income households are less likely to have access to the internet at home. Some disabled or elderly people may also have difficulties accessing TVMs at stations.

We have significant concerns about the process undertaken to conduct this consultation. The public consultation was launched at a time when Scottish Government 'work from home' guidance remained in place. This will undoubtedly mean that far fewer passengers will have had the opportunity to find out about the consultation and make their views known. This appears to us to be a *'fait accompli'*. Furthermore, why has Abellio, the outgoing operator, been permitted to undertake a consultation over the future of a rail franchise it will no longer be operating from 1 April 2022?

Last year, your Government was keen to dissociate itself from a report by Professor Iain Docherty and commissioned by Abellio ScotRail that advocated job losses, service cuts and ticket office closures across Scotland's railway. Yet, the Scottish Government now appears to be presiding over the same cuts it sought to distance itself from. At the same time, Scottish rail passengers have just been hit with a 3.8% fare increase – they will be paying more - but getting less.

We believe it is clear that if the proposed cuts to ScotRail ticket offices are allowed to go ahead, it will deter passengers from Scotland's railway at a time when we should be encouraging passengers to switch to rail in order to meet the Scottish Government's climate change targets and to support a green recovery from Covid-19.

With just weeks to go until the Scottish Government is running the ScotRail franchise directly in public ownership, we call on you to scrap the proposed cuts to ScotRail ticket offices and instead commit to investing in an affordable, accessible, reliable and properly staffed rail network for Scotland.

Yours Sincerely,

**Mick Lynch – RMT, General Secretary**

**Kevin Lindsay – Aslef, Scotland District Organiser**

**Gary Kelly – TSSA, Organiser – Scotland**

**Pat McIlvogue - Unite the Union, Lead Industrial Officer - ScotRail**

**Roz Foyer - STUC, General Secretary**

**Linda Burnip – Disabled People Against Cuts**

**Gavin Thompson – Friends of the Earth Scotland, Transport Campaigner**

**Moir Tasker - Inclusion Scotland, Chief Executive**

**Rose Jackson - Scottish Pensioners Forum, Chairperson**

**Agnes Tolmie - The Scottish Women's Convention, Chair**

**Cat Hobbs - We Own It, Director**

**Ellie Harrison – Bring Back British Rail**

**Susan Galloway – Get Glasgow Moving**

Cc Anthony Smith, CEO Transport Focus