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Our Reference: 202400423064
Your Reference: Major reduction in train services for Eastwood

29 July 2024

Dear Jackson,

RE Reduction in train services for Eastwood

Thank you for your letter dated 18th July 2024 raising concerns about the impact the ScotRail temporary timetable, has had on passengers travelling on the East Kilbride and Neilston train lines.

I appreciate the impact an introduction of ScotRail's reduced timetable has made on passengers' rail travel across Scotland, whether it is for commute, education or leisure, including in your constituency.

ScotRail has been forced to introduce the temporary timetable because fewer Train Drivers than normal are making themselves available to work overtime or rest days while there remains a dispute with ScotRail about pay.

On bringing ScotRail into public ownership, we inherited a historic problem in the reliance on driver recruitment. ScotRail has been recruiting more staff to minimise reliance on staff working on rest days or overtime. Whilst relying on staff working on rest days and overtime is a measure used by all train operators on GB network, ScotRail recognises that recruitment is an important solution which will offer a better staff availability in the future. As such, ScotRail now employs 400 more people than it did prior to public sector ownership, which includes 250 new Train Drivers. In addition, 160 Train Drivers are being currently recruited – the highest number ever and ScotRail plans to continue its recruitment for Train Drivers in the coming years in its bid to strengthen the resilience of its services in the future. However, as these are specialised jobs, it takes time to recruit and train the right staff.

Whilst train planning and staff rotas are operational matters for ScotRail, the Scottish Government fully expects any timetable to give the best reliability and availability for passengers. The temporary

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timetable changes enables ScotRail to better plan its services and minimise the need for late-notice cancellations to enable effective journey planning for its passengers.

The Scottish Government acknowledges the desire of rail unions to negotiate a fair settlement for their members. ScotRail, as a public body and the employer, has responsibility and the ability to negotiate within the limits of public sector pay metrics. However, as rail unions have been made aware, any offer beyond these limits would require changes to the settlement from the UK Government.

The Scottish Government continues to encourage rail unions to maintain meaningful dialogue with ScotRail, so that a mutually agreeable outcome can be reached as soon as possible, which would allow for a resumption of the full timetable in the near future. I am sure that is something that you would also hope for and wish to support.

Yours sincerely



FIONA HYSLOP
Cabinet Secretary for Transport

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