

Changes to the Highland Explorer service next month

Scotrail's Highland Explorer service which offers cycle carriages is making changes to give even more support to active travel.

The train operator is cutting the additional fares on the Highland Explorer service and is adding carriages to two of the daily services on the Mallaig branch of the West Highland Line, This will introduce more seats and improve on-board facilities for customers.

The carriages will operate on the early morning service from Mallaig to Glasgow and the evening Glasgow to Mallaig train from the end of March.

This will mean a 15 per cent increase in the number of seats, more luggage space and access to an additional toilet on board. Highland Explorer carriages have larger cushioned seats, USB and plug charging points. Table maps detailing the route, with recommendations on where to walk, cycle, and visit. And QR codes at each table also provide links for further inspiration on places to visit in Scotland.

Lesley Kane, ScotRail Commercial Director, said: "Our Highland Explorer carriages were the first of their kind in the UK, and can accommodate up to 20 cycles, allowing more people before to enjoy the iconic scenery the West Highland Line has to offer.

"The changes we're making, by removing the additional fare for our Highland Explorer service and by introducing the carriages

to the Mallaig line, proves that we've been listening to feedback from both customers and stakeholders on how make the most of these fantastic carriages and deliver the best service possible.

"Customers will benefit from more seats as the whole train will be accessible for the price of a standard class ticket, and customers will no longer have to pay an additional charge to sit with their bikes.

"These changes will help make the service a more attractive option, as well as support active travel and our continued recovery from the pandemic."

Karen McGregor, Scotland Director at Sustrans, added: "The Highland Explorer services have already shown the positive impact of public transport and active travel working hand in hand.

"From families planning days out on traffic-free National Cycle Network routes to experienced cyclists setting off along the iconic Caledonia Way, the Highland Explorer carriages make it easier to leave the car at home and experience the stunning west coast by foot or by bike.

"We're delighted to see more, sustainable travel options created for joined-up everyday journeys, and for everyone hoping to enjoy some of Scotland's most famous walking, wheeling and cycling routes."

John Barnes, Vice-President Friends of the West Highland Lines, said:"It is good news that the 153 carriages are now planned to provide a service north of Crianlarich over Rannoch Moor and onward to Fort William and Mallaig.

"It is important that the Outdoor Capital of the UK is served by these carriages, and we hope to be seeing them on even more trains in the future.

“Both Friends of the West Highland Lines and the West Highland Community Rail Partnership have raised our concerns about the Highland Explorer surcharge for some time, so we are delighted that it will now be removed.”

<https://www.scotrail.co.uk/scotrail-highland-explorer>

