

Call for 'concrete plans' for Scotland's railways on anniversary of Scotrail being nationalised

Opposition parties have called for concrete plans and a better vision for Scotland's rail services, on the first anniversary of Scotrail being brought back into public hands.

From April 1 last year, in what former First Minister Nicola Sturgeon called ["a historic moment"](#), the Scottish Government took back the franchise from Dutch State company Abellio after it was much criticised for poor performance. A government owned company, Scotrail Trains Limited, now operates the services, overseen by a new public body, Scottish Rail Holdings Ltd.

At the time of renationalisation last year, the SNP [promised to engage](#) a wide ranging group of people in a "National Conversation" later in the spring, to decide what the new, publicly owned service would look like and develop a railway that was "affordable, sustainable and customer focussed". Details of this delayed consultation exercise are expected to [be announced](#) this April to coincide with the anniversary of Scotrail coming into public ownership.

The first year since nationalisation has certainly not been incident free, with nearly 80 days of disrupted rail services and an emergency timetable operating for 2 months, although similar or worse issues have affected rail services right across the UK and Scotrail disputes were resolved with an improved offer agreed, while [fresh strikes continued](#) elsewhere.

Opposition spokespeople for both Conservatives and Labour have

criticised the Scottish Government for still not producing a clear plan to take things forward.

Scottish Conservative Transport Minister Graham Simpson MSP said:-

“The SNP seemed to think that nationalisation would be a magic wand that would improve rail services, but they never took the trouble actually to come up with concrete plans. As a result, rail users are still stuck with a substandard service subject to constant disruption, and taxpayers are on the hook for the bill.

“Unless Kevin Stewart plans to fail as comprehensively as Humza Yousaf did when he was in the transport minister’s job, there needs finally to be some vision for a rail service that will actually deliver for Scotland.”

Labour backed the nationalisation, but claim the SNP have “no vision, no ambition and no plan” for rail.

They point to latest figures which show the number of trains being run is still more than 10 per cent lower than pre-pandemic levels – a cut of on average 250 trains every day.

A final decision is also still to be made on results of a ScotRail [Ticket Office consultation](#) which initially proposed cutting opening times at 117 ticket offices and three ticket offices shut down altogether. The Scottish Government said the results would be announced “in due course” but have confirmed [“there are no proposals for ticket office closures”](#).

Scottish Labour Transport spokesperson Neil Bibby said “It’s been one year since ScotRail was nationalised, but so far the SNP’s woeful lack of ambition has left our railways to decline.

“After dragging their feet for years on nationalisation, they are now squandering the opportunity we have to deliver a

railway that truly works for Scotland.

“The SNP has no vision, no ambition and no plan for our railways – and while Ministers kick decisions into the long grass, passengers are paying the price.

“We need a reliable and affordable rail network to drive down emissions, link up communities and revive our struggling economy.”

The SNP were approached for comment.



Scotrail