

Top award for the Highland Explorer

ScotRail's Highland Explorer scheme has landed a top award at the Scottish Transport Awards 2023.

The carriages which carry bikes and other sports gear for those cycling and walking on the west coast won the award for Excellence in Transport Design at the ceremony on Thursday.

ScotRail began operating the specially designed active travel carriages – a first of their kind for the UK rail network – in July 2021.



The redesigned carriage has space for 20 bicycles and other bulky sports gear, including ordinary bikes, a limited number

of tandem cycles and an e-bike charging socket – which is a unique feature on any UK train.

Prior to their introduction, the carriages were renovated inside and out and work included the installation of larger cushioned seats, USB sockets, and plug charging points.

The carriages also have table maps detailing the route, with recommendations on where to walk, cycle, and visit. QR codes at each table provide links for further inspiration on places to visit in Scotland.

Services with the Highland Explorer carriages initially operated on the West Highland Line between Glasgow and Oban, but more recently, were introduced to the Mallaig branch of the route.

The rollout of the carriages on that part of the line benefits local communities as well as cyclists, as the addition of the carriages on the route means that customers benefit from 15 per cent more seats, more luggage space, and access to an additional toilet on board.

Tom Smith, ScotRail Head of Fleet Technical, said: “It’s fantastic to see the hard work of all of the partners involved in the introduction and delivery of our Highland Explorer carriages recognised at such a high level within the transport industry.

“The successful delivery of these carriages on the world-famous West Highland Line has been a welcome economic boost for rural communities, many of whom depend on tourism for their livelihoods.

“Since their introduction, we’ve listened to feedback from both customers and stakeholders on how make the most of these fantastic carriages and deliver the best possible service, while supporting active travel and our continued recovery from the pandemic.”

