

Government will reintroduce peak rail fares in September

The pilot scheme under which ScotRail removed peak time fares will end in September.

Transport Scotland announced it will bring back peak rail fares on 27 September. The body says the scheme has had “a limited degree of success”. The cost to the government of the full year’s subsidy was £40 million. Data which is published today confirms the scheme was not successful in moving passengers from car to rail. The Scottish Government has already reported its own financial challenges, and this scheme is no longer to be a priority. The price reduction was set up for six months, and then extended earlier this year.

Cabinet Secretary

Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Fiona Hyslop said: “The pilot primarily benefitted existing train passengers and those with medium to higher incomes. Although passenger levels increased to a maximum of around 6.8%, it would require a 10% increase in passenger numbers for the policy to be self-financing.

“The pilot will have been welcome in saving many passengers hundreds and in some cases thousands of pounds during the cost of living crisis but this level of subsidy cannot continue in the current financial climate on that measure alone.

“I am aware, however, that a significant minority of people who cannot choose when they travel to and from work did and would benefit from lower priced rail travel – these are people who might find the return to peak fares challenging.

“I can therefore announce the introduction of a 12-month discount on all ScotRail season tickets and permanently amending the terms of flexipasses to allow for 12 single journeys for the price of 10, used within 60 days, equivalent to a 20% discount for those who travel less frequently.

“Super off-peak tickets will also be reintroduced.

“The Scottish Government would be open to consider future subsidy to remove peak fares should UK budget allocations to the Scottish Government improve in future years.”

Fares from Edinburgh to Glasgow

- Pre-pilot anytime return – £28.90
- Post-pilot anytime return – £31.40
- Cost per return trip if using annual season ticket at least 4 days per week – £18.52
- Cost per return trip if using a flexipass – £21.25



POLITICAL RESPONSE – Greens

This news is a “hammer blow to commuters and will harm our climate” according to the Scottish Greens.

Mark Ruskell Green MSP said: “This is deeply disappointing. It is a hammer blow to the many workers all over Scotland who have to travel every day but have no say on when they need to be at work.

“Ending peak rail fares is something that the Scottish Greens pushed hard for alongside rail workers unions and anti-poverty campaigners, and I know many will be angry to see the SNP bringing them back like this.

“By reducing fares we were able to support hundreds of thousands of commuters through the cost of living crisis while encouraging them to leave their cars at home. A lot of workers

and their families saved hundreds of pounds.

“Behavioural change doesn’t happen overnight and by making the move permanent we could have encouraged more people to change the way they travel.

“This will pile extra costs on to people at a really difficult time. Every pound that’s saved on travel is another pound that can go towards heating, eating or the many other expenses that have piled up for households and families all over Scotland.

“It is also very bad news for our environment. It sends a terrible signal and derails our climate efforts. Transport is the biggest source of carbon emissions in Scotland. There is no way for us to tackle the climate crisis without drastically and urgently reducing the numbers of cars on our roads.

“Cheaper, greener railways are an essential part of boosting public transport and protecting our planet. When we invest in our rail we are investing in people, communities and our environment.

Mr Ruskell added: “When the Scottish Greens secured free bus travel for everyone under 22 there were some who doubted how successful it would be. But it has worked. It has driven up passenger numbers and kept money in people’s pockets. The removal of peak rail fares comes from a similar place and I’m confident that over time it would have a similar impact.”

Scottish Labour

Scottish Labour Transport spokesperson Alex Rowley said: “I am astonished that the SNP government has decided to reinstate peak fare pricing on Scotland’s rail services from September at a time of chaos for commuters.

“The SNP’s complete failure to provide a sustainable rail service has meant many of those who commute by train have been forced back into cars as they cannot rely on ScotRail services

to run when they are supposed to.

“That there has been a 6.8 per cent increase in rail users during the period of the peak fare suspension is nothing short of incredible when you consider the impact the SNP’s mismanagement has had on rail services.

“I have been clear that peak fares exist purely as a tax on workers trying to travel to work in a more sustainable way – this is simply another way that working Scots are paying the price for the SNP’s financial mismanagement.

“An affordable and reliable rail service can unlock huge environmental and economic benefits, but it is clear that the SNP are incapable of taking the bold action required to do this as they keep squandering the opportunities of public ownership.”

Scottish Liberal Democrats

Scottish Liberal Democrat transport spokesperson Daniel O’Malley said: “This SNP government is doing everything it can to punish people for choosing a more sustainable form of travel.

“With key routes such as Glasgow to Edinburgh now being cheaper to drive, many commuters just won’t see the point in getting the train.

“ScotRail has been in public hands for more than two years. In that time, passengers have had to endure endless disruption all while rail fares continue to rise.

“Scottish Liberal Democrats want to see a cheap, reliable and frequent rail service that can tempt people out of private cars and tackle the climate crisis. That’s why we would cut fares, create options for two/three-day a week season tickets and explore new lines, especially in areas which suffer from poor transport links.”

