



Department for Transport

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill
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Edward Mountain MSP
Convener
Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
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10 December 2025

Dear Edward,

Thank you for your letter of 17 October regarding the Railways Bill. As you are most likely aware, the Bill was introduced into Parliament on 5 November, and I apologise for not responding by the requested date.

Once the Bill has received Royal Assent, we are anticipating GBR to be established a further 12 months after this date.

The Railways Bill will bring about the fundamental reform that is needed to fix the underlying structural problems that exist in the railway today, putting passengers and customers at the heart of the railways and creating the opportunity for economic growth.

The Bill will do this by streamlining the current fragmented system, establishing Great British Railways (GBR) as a new 'directing mind' for the railway, unifying track and train under a public body to deliver better services for passengers and customers, and better value for money for taxpayers.

I can confirm that the existing devolution position will be maintained, and the Scottish Government will continue to exercise its current powers and GBR will be democratically accountable for them. This means the Scottish Government will continue to be responsible for ScotRail and the Caledonian Sleeper, while GBR will operate cross-border services that are currently the responsibility of the Secretary of State.

GBR will own the infrastructure in Scotland as Network Rail does now, with Scottish Ministers funding and specifying infrastructure in Scotland.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Secretary of State and Scottish Ministers will outline the role of Scottish Ministers in GBR's governance and management. Providing clarity on roles, accountability and collaboration, the MoU will support seamless rail integration while safeguarding Scotland's ability to shape its rail network in line with Scottish Ministers priorities.

The Bill will give Scottish Ministers significant powers to issue directions and guidance to GBR. This means that, Scottish Ministers can set strategic priorities for rail in Scotland, ensuring GBR must comply with directions and have regard to guidance when carrying out its functions. This strengthens devolution and guarantees that Scotland's rail strategy is embedded within GBR's decision-making framework. Additionally, the Bill will also create a powerful new passenger watchdog to champion improvements in rail services and ensure GBR delivers the service passengers deserve.

I have met with the Cabinet Secretary twice to discuss the Bill and the Secretary of State met her on 27 October and 4 November. My officials are in regular contact with Transport Scotland officials, working together on how agreements will operate in practice. We will continue to engage with Transport Scotland on the future relationship between GBR and Scottish Ministers and their operators, to ensure all parts of Great Britain feel the benefits of rail reform and GBR is appropriately accountable to both UK and Scottish Ministers.

The UK Government is firmly committed to continuing our positive relationship and we look forward to working with Scottish Ministers to achieve our bold vision for the railways. I am always happy to further discuss the details of the legislation with you and colleagues if helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Peter, Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill

MINISTER OF STATE FOR RAIL