



HOLYROOD ELECTION 2026

Highlands'
Railways Need
Your Support

21st century system running along 19th century lines



Wonderful tourism
opportunities by rail

Enhanced railway = enhanced economy



FRIENDS OF THE FAR NORTH LINE



Starved of investment

- The railways in the Highlands have been allowed to fall **far behind** most of the Scottish rail network

Modal shift

- Scottish Government policy is to **promote modal shift** from road to rail - the environmental benefits are obvious
- **Investment** is needed for this to happen
- The service must be **reliable** as a cancellation often causes a 3-4 hour wait, or an uncomfortable bus ride

Highlands railway journeys are slow

- HML and FNL average speeds are **52 mph** and **37 mph**
- Edinburgh-Perth takes about the same time as it did in **1895**

Single track railways are difficult to run

- Perth to Wick - 279 miles - **243 miles of single track**, 36 miles of double track
- Only 20 passing loops remain
- Average distance between loops is 13 miles
- FNL has gaps of **21** and **24** miles - (28 and 34 mins respectively)
- A 10-minute delay can easily become **1 hour** if a late runner is held for trains to pass the other way



How long since any additional track was added?

- Highland Main Line - **48 years** (reinstatement of 23 miles of double track removed 12 years earlier)
- Far North Line - **113 years** (six miles of double track installed, subsequently removed)

What about freight?

- An existing railway is a great opportunity to **clear heavy freight from the roads**
- The Far North Line now has **no freight**, apart from the occasional nuclear waste flask
- Proposed timber loading at Altnabreac for the new freight terminal at Dalcross would be **great news**, if only there were timber wagons available
- SSEN power line project offers significant freight traffic - **new loops** are needed to provide paths in the timetable

What about the trains?

- The class 158s used on the Far North Line are now around **35 years old**
- Spare parts are hard to come by
- **Cancellations** due to train faults are too common
- **No prospect** of replacements in the foreseeable future

Scotland's population is very unevenly distributed

- Capital projects have to achieve a "business case"
- Unless economic, social and environmental benefits are fully factored in, Highland residents and tourists remain **2nd class** 'transport citizens'

As a whole, Scotland's railway system, and the way it is run, is an exemplar of good practice. But although a traveller between Scotland's two largest cities is whisked between them by a fast, reliable railway, anyone venturing to the Highlands from the Central Belt, will experience a shocking decline in what they are offered, making it far more likely that they'll just choose to drive.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

This needs to **change**. Now that you're elected you can help begin the process of bringing the Highlands railways up to scratch.

- Railway works are not cheap, but they are very resilient and extremely long-lasting and **great value for money**
- Some track refurbishment on the Far North Line last year reused components nearly **100 years old**



Keep Highlands railways at the forefront of your mind

- These railways are an **under-used** resource
- **Improvements** are needed now
- We need **more passing loops**, and **modern trains** on the tourist routes
- When the service is **reliable** more travellers will take the train
- These lines can **bring more tourism** to the Highlands, without clogging the roads with more cars
- Be **proactive** in keeping the government focused on Highlands rail
- Give **cross-party support**
- It is the **Scottish Government's duty** to provide a good standard of railway infrastructure, no matter where it is in Scotland

