

# £1.6 million crackdown on staff abuse on Scotland's Railway

December 14, 2023



A special campaign has been launched by Transport Minister Fiona Hyslop MSP, further committing to protecting and supporting staff. This campaign has been launched to coincide with the Christmas party season, which can see a rise in abuse on the rail network.

**ScotRail** is investing £1.6 million to triple the number of body-worn cameras to tackle anti-social behaviour on Scotland's Railway, hire more people to double staff late-night trains in known problem areas, and introduced a team of revenue protection officers.

The **British Transport Police (BTP)**, the force responsible for policing the train network, has committed to several pledges which aim to enhance the safety of staff and support any victims of abuse.

A dedicated investigator will follow up any report of abuse and will work closely with ScotRail to support railway staff through any incident. Any repeat offenders, or those deemed to pose the greatest threat to staff, will be targeted with prohibitive court orders.

Supported by a publicity campaign urging customers to consider the longer-term consequences of violence or abuse, the pledge promises to fully support staff by setting out the increased measures being used.

An additional £2 million has already been invested on improved CCTV cameras with intelligent video analytics which can monitor network operations in real time and support the BTP in any follow up investigations. Extra support will be offered to affected staff, from assistance in attending court hearings, to training in conflict resolution.

The campaign is being supported by the National Union of Rail, Maritime, and Transport Workers (RMT), Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF), Transport Salaried Staff Association (TSSA), and Unite the Union (Unite), in addition to Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government.

Fiona Hyslop MSP, Transport Minister, said: “We want everyone to have a great time this festive season. However, abuse of frontline public transport staff – be it verbal or physical – is completely unacceptable and will not be tolerated. That is why I have no hesitation in supporting this important message, alongside rail unions, BTP and transport providers.

“Everyone working or using public transport has an absolute right to go about their business without fear of abuse. Passengers can support these efforts by refraining from this type of unnecessary behaviour and by actively reporting incidents or suspicious behaviour where they see this happening.”

Phil Campbell, ScotRail Customer Operations Director, said: “All rail staff have the right to go about their day in peace without fear of harassment or abuse. ScotRail works very closely with British Transport Police, government, and the trade unions to ensure that Scotland’s Railway is a safe environment in which to work.

“ScotRail is investing £1.6million this year to keep staff and customers safe, using new technology and a more visible staff presence. With this new pledge we will work together to ensure our staff feel more protected and supported when faced with unacceptable behaviour from a small minority of passengers.”

Chris Shields, British Transport Police Chief Inspector, said: “There’s absolutely no place for abuse, verbal or physical, directed towards staff on Scotland’s rail network and tackling this type of unacceptable behaviour is a key priority for BTP throughout this festive period and beyond.

“Day and night, we have targeted patrols of high-visibility officers on trains and at stations, who are there to identify and deter offenders and reassure staff as they travel on the network.

“Substantial investment has been made to improve an already excellent CCTV coverage of the rail network in Scotland, and we will investigate all incidents of abuse against staff with appropriate action being taken against perpetrators.

“If you see or experience abuse on Scotland’s rail network, you can text us on 61016 or report via the Railway Guardian app.”

Mick Hogg, RMT Regional Organiser for Scotland, said: “No employee should come to work and be

subjected to anti-social behaviour or assaulted for doing their job. Those found guilty should be robustly dealt by the courts. Everyone home safely to their families every day.”

Kevin Lindsay, ASLEF District Organiser, said: “No worker should have to suffer abuse in their workplace at any time of the year never mind Christmas. This new joint initiative will see the Scottish Government and industry join to hammer home the message abuse will not be tolerated.”

Derek Thomson, Unite Scottish Secretary, said: “At the heart of every journey is the dedicated rail staff who work tirelessly to keep you on the rails, but unfortunately there are a minority who like to go off the rails, so we are proud to support this campaign to ensure that safety is a priority for everyone aboard ScotRail this year.

“Each journey is a chance to create positive connections, so let’s all do our bit and support our hard-working rail staff by creating stress-free travel. Every worker on our railways is just like you, and they are trying to do their best to keep Scotland moving, let’s not uncouple their efforts with unacceptable behaviour.”

*Photo credit: ScotRail*