

[ScotRail forks out £2k a day in compensation to disgruntled passengers](#)

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- ScotRail forks out £2k a day in compensation to disgruntled passengers

18 Feb 2017



Train passengers are handed more than £2000 a day in compensation from Scotrail amid complaints of cancellations and delays.

Figures obtained by the Scottish Conservatives have revealed £587,527 was paid out by bosses between April and December 2016 to commuters.

The majority of these payments were for delayed trains, as transport minister Humza Yousaf faced pressure on the quality and reliability of Scotland's trains.

Of the half-million total, £340,000 was given to those who complained of delay, with £52,000 handed to others as a "gesture of goodwill".

The Freedom of Information request also showed there was £178,000 paid out under various Scotrail "policies", which the organisation describes as full or partial refunds given out to those passengers who feel the agreed level of service wasn't reached.

In total, more than 40,000 people successfully sought compensation in nine months.

The table also shows a radical increase in both passengers affected and the amount of money paid.

In April, there were 1963 people who claimed £24,244 in compensation.

But by December, when the trains crisis began to intensify, that rose to 9224 claiming £94,878.

Scottish Conservative transport spokesman Liam Kerr said:

"The rising cost of compensation appears to reflect the nosedive in quality and reliability experienced by passengers on Scotland's trains.

"It's no surprise the bill has surpassed £500,000 for the last nine months when you consider the problems on our railways.

"As well as passengers, you have to feel for the staff who are doing their best with no help from the Scottish Government, and they will be wondering

how transport minister Humza Yousaf ever allowed it to get this bad.

“And even if this cost isn’t coming directly from the public purse, passengers and taxpayers – including those who never even use a railway – will end up paying.

“It’s vital the situation on Scotland’s railways is sorted out.

“What worries me the most is, as with so many other public services, the Scottish Government has been completely neglectful, focusing on a renewed drive for independence rather than the day job of running the country.”

[Greens denounce Ministers' pandering to industry lobbyists on plastic pollution](#)



Green Party

18 February 2017

Keith Taylor MEP: ‘These latest revelations expose the Government’s shameful decision to kowtow to industry lobbyists and roll back important recycling progress.’

Keith Taylor, Green MEP for the South East, has issued a stinging criticism of government Ministers as documents reveal the [influence of plastics industry lobbying](#) on the decision to cut UK recycling targets. The revelations come as the latest ‘Great Winter Nurdle Hunt’ uncovers [widespread plastic pollution](#) on Britain’s beaches.

The UK government quietly reduced recycling targets for plastic waste last year, after dozens of lobby groups and plastic producers pushed for lower rates, according to documents obtained by Energydesk.

Energydesk obtained 62 of the 63 responses to a government consultation on recycling targets.

The majority of respondents to the consultation were plastic producers or industry groups. Of those, all pushed for a reduction in the targets.

Keith, a member of the European Parliament's Environment Committee, said:

"Plastic pollution is choking our oceans and our beaches, but the documents obtained this week demonstrate the UK Government appears more concerned with protecting the profit margins of multinational corporations and industry lobbyists than safeguarding Britain's natural environment."

"It is extremely concerning that almost three-quarters of UK beaches are blighted by the raw materials of the plastic industry. These plastic pellets pose a significant threat to our precious wildlife and damage the health of our oceans and seas."

"These latest revelations expose the Government's shameful decision to kowtow to industry lobbyists and roll back important recycling progress. Far from being a party working for the many, the Conservatives prove, once again, they are the party of powerful and privileged vested interests."

"We cannot let the Government use the EU referendum as an excuse further water down essential recycling targets. The [EU Circular Economy Package](#) sets an ambitious and common EU-wide target for recycling 75% of packaging waste by 2030. Ministers must make a firm commitment to maintaining and implementing these ambitious targets post-Brexit."

"Plastic pollution does not respect borders nor national sovereignty. For the sake of the health of our oceans and our beaches, to protect our precious environment and our beloved wildlife, Theresa May must also commit to maintaining a close relationship with our European neighbours to combat the problem."

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[Press release: Prime Minister's plans to transform the way we tackle domestic violence and abuse](#)

Theresa May has today announced plans to transform the way we think about and tackle domestic violence and abuse – one of the most widespread and heinous offences, but one where victims are often let down by the legal system.

Domestic violence and abuse shatters lives but the way we deal with it at the moment does not go far enough – with a plethora of different offences and

procedures scattered across the statute book.

This lack of clarity has led to an unacceptable diversity across the country in terms of the degree of effort put in to try and tackle it. Although the prosecution of, and convictions for, such offences have started to improve in recent years, there is inconsistency in the use and effectiveness of the various law enforcement measures across the country.

In recognition of this, the Prime Minister has announced plans for a major new programme of work leading towards bringing forward a Domestic Violence and Abuse Act.

The programme of work will look at what more can be done to improve support for victims especially in the way the law, and legal procedures, currently work for such victims. Experts in this area will be invited to contribute ideas and proposals for improving the way the system works which is likely to lead to legislation – making it much easier for law enforcement bodies to find and use more consistently the measures at their disposal. The Prime Minister will also ask for any potential ‘quick wins’ in the intervening period to be identified and acted upon. The Prime Minister will directly oversee this work, which will be truly cross-governmental – but co-ordinated by the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice.

Like the [Modern Slavery Act](#), the Prime Minister believes that the measures that come out of this work will raise public awareness of the problem – as well as encourage victims to report their abusers and see them brought to justice.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

Domestic violence and abuse is a life shattering and absolutely abhorrent crime; tackling it is a key priority for this government – and something I have always attached a personal importance to, both as Home Secretary and now as Prime Minister. I am clear that we need to build on the [measures I introduced as Home Secretary](#) – including the new offence of ‘Controlling and Coercive Behaviour’, Domestic Violence Protection Orders, and the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme – and ensure that no stone will be left unturned in delivering a system that increases convictions, and works better for victims.

She added:

I believe that the plans I have announced today have the potential to completely transform the way we think about and tackle domestic violence and abuse. There are thousands of people who are suffering at the hands of abusers – often isolated, and unaware of the options and support available to them to end it. Given the central importance of victim evidence to support prosecutions in this area, raising public awareness – as well as consolidating the law – will

prove crucial.

Press release: PM meeting with French Prime Minister Cazeneuve: 17 February 2017

From:

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Part of:

Prime Minister Theresa May met the Prime Minister of France Bernard Cazeneuve and discussed a range of bilateral and foreign policy issues.

A Downing Street spokesperson said:

The Prime Minister met Prime Minister Cazeneuve of France at Downing Street today. They talked about a range of bilateral issues and also discussed foreign policy and Brexit.

The Prime Minister was clear that while the UK is leaving the EU, we are not leaving Europe, and they talked about the importance of coming to an early agreement on the rights of EU citizens in the UK and UK citizens in the EU.

They agreed on the need to maintain our close co-operation on security and defence, including through NATO. They discussed how we can work together to address the shared global challenges we face, including migration, the situation in Syria and in Ukraine, and the threat of terrorism.

News story: UK Government proposes new

approach to boost banking competition and resolve RBS' State aid commitments

The proposal, put forward by HM Treasury with the agreement of RBS, has been designed to help small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) access and benefit from greater choice in the banking services available to them.

As part of the State aid commitments agreed with the European Commission in 2009 and updated in 2014, RBS undertook to carry out five major divestments. Four have been successfully implemented. In line with its commitments, HM Treasury and RBS have put significant effort into achieving the fifth divestment, that of Williams and Glyn, which has to-date been unsuccessful mainly due to external factors. If adopted, this new plan would replace the need for the fifth divestment and would finally remedy the distortion in the UK's business banking market which flowed from the provision of state support, with greater speed and certainty than a divestment.

HM Treasury has been in constructive contact with the European Commission in recent months and HM Treasury will now seek formal amendment to RBS's State aid commitments. The Commissioner responsible for EU competition policy, Margrethe Vestager, plans to propose to the College of Commissioners in the coming weeks to open proceedings in order to gather evidence on the new plan. HM Treasury will carry out a market testing exercise in parallel. The opening of proceedings does not prejudice the outcome of the investigation.

The proposed package of measures includes:

- a fund, administered by an independent body, that eligible challenger banks can access to increase their business banking capabilities
- funding for eligible challenger banks to help them incentivise SMEs to switch their accounts from RBS paid in the form of "dowries" to challenger banks to use to incentivise switching
- RBS granting business customers of eligible challenger banks access to its branch network for cash and cheque handling, to support the measures above
- an independent fund to invest in fintech to support the business banking of the future

An HMT spokesperson said:

RBS must deliver on its remaining State aid commitments and this new plan represents the most effective way of delivering the pro-competition objectives behind them.

This new plan provides a clear blueprint to increase competition in the UK's business banking market, and would help RBS resolve one of its most significant legacy issues which has held back the sale of the taxpayers' stake.

The estimated upfront cost of the proposed package to RBS is expected to be in the region of £750m. In keeping with the original commitments, the other large incumbent banks (HSBC, Lloyds, and Barclays) would not be eligible to benefit from the proposal. Further details, including precise eligibility criteria for challenger banks, will be announced in due course.