Better journeys ahead: governments agree framework for Scotland’s rail network ahead of the creation of Great British Railways

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New framework strengthens Scotland’s rail decision-making, protecting devolved powers and delivering clearer, more reliable services for passengers.

- new framework sets the direction for a clearer, more accountable railway for Scottish passengers, making it easier to see how decisions are made and implemented
- devolved responsibilities remain protected as future work between Transport Scotland and Great British Railways (GBR) is defined to improve services
- services, investment and passenger information to be better tailored to Scottish priorities – supporting easier and more reliable journeys
- rail passengers travelling in Scotland will benefit from strengthened local decision making under the Railways Bill which will establish Great British Railways from next year

Today (25 March 2026) both the UK and Scottish Governments have published the foundations for an agreement setting out how they will work together to exercise their respective rail functions after GBR is established.

The framework for the memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander and Scottish ministers marks a major milestone in the delivery of the UK government’s bold rail reforms, demonstrating both parties’ commitment to a simplified and more integrated railway for Scotland.

The framework means Scottish passengers will experience a railway that is easier to use, more responsive to local needs, and clearer about who is responsible for delivering improvements.

Devolved responsibilities will remain fully protected, ensuring Scottish ministers retain their current control over funding for Scottish rail infrastructure and their responsibility for the specification and provision of Scottish-designated passenger services. The framework makes clear rail reform will respect existing decision-making powers while improving system-wide coordination.

The framework sets out how both governments will work together and with GBR to deliver a more integrated, passenger-focused railway, with clearly defined responsibilities and governance.

By ensuring Great British Railways and Transport Scotland plan the network more closely together, passengers will see more reliable services, helpful updates when journeys change, and improvements focused on the things people value most, such as smoother connections and better

punctuality.

Transport Secretary, Heidi Alexander, said:

> Under the Railways Bill and following the introduction of Great British Railways, the Scottish Government will have a new, strengthened role and a bigger say in how the railway is run to improve local connectivity.
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> At its heart, this framework is about improving outcomes for passengers and communities. By placing decision making at the heart of rail in Scotland we will ensure services and investment are better tailored to Scottish passenger and freight customer priorities.

Key benefits of the framework for Scotland include:

- strengthening the integration of track and train in Scotland to ensure the country reaps the same benefits from rail reform and the creation of GBR as in the rest of Great Britain
- Scottish ministers will retain responsibility for setting the strategy, specifying and funding the infrastructure and provision of passenger services in Scotland, so decisions can be shaped around what works best for local communities
- setting a direction of travel for a future MoU to be agreed by both the UK and Scottish Government

The Railways Bill will create a new rail body, GBR, which once established will put passengers and freight customers back at the heart of the railways.

GBR will deliver a safe, sustainable and high-performing network. Where the previous system saw profits put before passengers, GBR will prioritise value for money for taxpayers and drive investment and consistently better experience for all rail customers.

GBR will run and manage the tracks and trains used every day – ending years of fragmentation, driving up standards for passengers, and making journeys easier and better value for money.

This framework provides the foundations for the MoU between the Secretary of State for Transport and the Scottish ministers, setting out how they will work together to exercise their respective rail functions following the creation of GBR. Once signed, the MoU will form a key part of rail reforms through the Railways Bill.

https://www.gov.uk/government/news/better-journeys-ahead-governments-agree-framework-for-scotlands-rail-network-ahead-of-the-creation-of-great-british-railways