



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Jamie Halcro Johnston MSP
Member of the Scottish Parliament for the Highlands and Islands Region

John Larkinson
Chief Executive Officer
Office of Rail and Road
25 Cabot Square
London E14 4QZ

25th March 2024

Dear Mr Larkinson,

Further to concerns raised with me by my constituents, I am contacting you as an MSP for the Highlands and Islands regarding the suspension of the Jacobite Steam Train service operated by West Coast Railways.

As you will be aware, this service is an important part of my region's tourism identity and economy, and it is estimated that it contributes at least £20 million annually, although some estimate this figure to be even higher. What isn't disputed is that the service – and those visitors it attracts to the area - support a range of local businesses, jobs and livelihoods across the hospitality and tourism sectors.

The issue at the centre of this problem - the installation of central locking systems for the carriages - would require significant financial outlay and disruption. Whilst I appreciate the ORR's commitment to safety, and the obligations that you are under, the service has operated successfully for over 30 years under an exemption and I believe a pragmatic solution can be found that ensures safety without compromising the longer-term economic viability of the Jacobite.

On that basis, I would ask that you grant a temporary short-term exemption certificate to allow the service to continue to operate while the ORR and West Coast Railways work together to develop a feasible long-term solution. This would help mitigate the economic impact, not only on West Coast Railways themselves, but also on those local communities for which the service is so important.

Yours sincerely,



Jamie Halcro Johnston MSP
Member of the Scottish Parliament
Highlands and Islands

CC West Coast Railways