

ScotRail reports gains on the trains

RECORD investment across Scotland's Railway, including £475 million on new and upgraded trains, is delivering a better service for customers, according to new figures published this week.

Saturday's Badenoch flood disruption of the Highland line aside, the Service Quality Incentive Regime report released by Transport Scotland has shown that the service on ScotRail trains and at stations improved significantly. This covered the period between September 15 to December 7 compared with the same period the previous year.

Customers have seen improvements in security on trains and at stations following the upgrade of ScotRail's CCTV network, with station and on-train CCTV availability improving by an accumulative seven percentage points compared with last year.

A spokesman said: "Litter and contamination at stations continues improving thanks to a closer working relationship with Network Rail."

Delay in delivering faster broadband

By Tom Ramage
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THE Scottish Government has announced its flagship superfast broadband programme R100 will not be completed until 2023 in south and central Scotland - and no date has been set for the Highlands.

In a statement to the Scottish Parliament earlier this week, rural economy and connectivity cabinet secretary Fergus Ewing was unable to give a time frame because of a legal dispute.

He said homes and offices not connected by 2021 would be eligible for a voucher scheme to help them access commercial broadband services.

Highland MSP Edward Mountain said: "Sadly, another contract that is going to be delivered late and another broken promise. Fergus Ewing offered to resign if R100 wasn't delivered by 2021 and it appears it won't be delivered in the Highlands before 2026/2027 - Mr Ewing if you are having trouble drafting it I will give you a hand."

He asked if the vouchers would ensure no Highlander paid more than those in the central belt.

Mr Ewing replied: "I accept entirely that there may be people who



Edward Mountain MSP pictured in the chamber of the Scottish Parliament.
Picture: Andrew Coway/Scottish Parliament

are priced out of using broadband services, clearly we don't have the tools in this Parliament - that's not me making a constitutional point it's just a fact. We don't have the tools to intervene in the telecoms market to make the intervention that we would have to see."

Following the exchange, Mr Mountain said: "The SNP Government's handling of the R100

"The R100 programme will invest £600 million to enable homes and businesses in rural Scotland to have access to not just superfast broadband, but gigabit capable broadband - the vast majority of premises will get access to 1000 megabits per second, not 30 megabits per second, providing a future-proofed solution," said Mr Ewing.

"Delivering this more complex solution will take time to complete, so there will also be a voucher scheme for anyone wanting delivery by the end of 2021."

"Frustratingly, work on R100 cannot begin in the north lot until the legal challenge by the unsuccessful bidder is resolved but the voucher scheme, which will launch later this year, will be available.

"The Scottish Government has put up £579 million compared with the UK Tory government's £21 million.

"As broadband is still a reserved function, it should be the Tory UK government that is footing this bill.

"Their minute contribution is indefensible and I would ask if any other Scottish Tory MSPs will join with me in calling for their London colleagues to honour their obligations to Scotland."

