

Jenny Marra MSP

The Tay Tax

Speech in the Scottish Parliament debate on Scotland's Railways

30 May 2013

The point that I wanted to put to Stewart Stevenson was that I am glad to hear that he feels that the remaining anomalies on the railways should be sorted out.

Perhaps we will get the chance later in the debate to hear whether he thinks that they should be sorted out during this franchise, or whether people will have to wait until the next franchise, as the Scottish Government has indicated.

Nearly two months ago, the Scottish Government answered Labour's calls to end the Tay tax for Dundonians by pledging to lower the cost of 275,000 rail journeys into and out of the city. My campaign to end the Tay tax began in July 2011.

For years, Dundonians were unfairly penalised at the train station, simply because they did not live in the central belt, inside the Government's subsidised zone.

On journeys to Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen, it was cheaper for Dundonians to split their tickets across different legs of a journey and thus make a modest saving.

At new year this year, a return fare from Dundee to Glasgow hit £50.50, making it cheaper for four people travelling from Dundee to Glasgow to take a taxi there and back.

Stewart Stevenson: Is the member aware that the advance fare to Dundee at peak time, bought by 6 o'clock yesterday evening, is less than £15?

Jenny Marra: Yes—I am aware of the myriad of fares across our system and of the fact that they are incomprehensible.

The Government has made some moves to sort out the anomalies, but there are still many anomalies in existence, which I will come to.

It is now exactly two weeks since lower fares kicked in, and I am pleased to say that many Dundonians are benefiting.

Not all of them are, however.

Some are still being hit with the Tay tax—the one that we wanted to abolish.

Will the Government finish the job that it started at Easter and commit to ending all rail fare anomalies for Dundee within the current franchise?

It is still cheaper to buy a return ticket from Dundee to Leuchars, at £7.80, and a return ticket from Leuchars to Edinburgh, at £23.20, than it is to buy a direct return from Dundee to Edinburgh, at £31.40.

It is 40p more expensive to travel with a direct ticket.

That is not much, members might say, but it makes no sense at all—and this is my point.

The cost per mile between Dundee and Leuchars over the Tay bridge is far higher than for the journey between Leuchars and Edinburgh.

Why is that, when Alex Salmond said that he would sort out the Tay tax?

For someone travelling from Edinburgh to Dundee, the last 14 minutes of their journey home, across the beautiful Tay, puts their fare up by 35 per cent.

It is a beautiful view, as I am sure the Minister for Transport and Veterans will agree, but people still have to pay through the nose for it, even after the intervention at Easter. Furthermore, I am told that it is cheaper to travel from Leuchars to Edinburgh in first class than it is to travel the longer journey from Dundee to the capital city in standard class.

Patrick Harvie: I share the member's frustration. Does she recognise that that situation also applies in many other parts of the country? I say that with a little irritation, having recently been stung for £12 for the convenience of a single ticket between my home and the centre of Glasgow, on my way to Perth.

Jenny Marra: I agree with the member that there are anomalies across the country, but he will forgive me for coming back to my pet topic and talking about the situation facing my home city.

As I have said, I welcome the alterations to fares that Alex Salmond made at Easter.

I am glad that he listened to our campaign and made commuters' lives a bit easier.

However, I am asking the transport minister to consider this issue again today.

Dundee to Edinburgh is a well-used commuting route.

The rail subsidies are designed to encourage business and investment; that is what the subsidised zone is for.

Many people travel from Dundee to Edinburgh for business and work purposes.

When the new Malmaison opens on our waterfront this autumn, we will want to make it attractive to visitors and potential investors in our city from Edinburgh as well as from Glasgow.

We cannot wait until the next franchise period to tee up investment opportunities for our important waterfront project.

I am asking the transport minister this today: he has sorted the Clyde tax and the Don tax; will he now be true to his pledge and abolish the iniquitous Tay tax for my city, once and for all?

Link :

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<http://www.jennymarra.com>