

SNP kept rail scheme delay secret ahead of General Election

- [Home](#)
- [All News](#)
- SNP kept rail scheme delay secret ahead of General Election

14 Jun 2017



The SNP knew its flagship rail project between Glasgow and Edinburgh would be delayed last month, but chose not to make the information public before the General Election.

It emerged at the weekend that the electrification of the line between the two cities would not be up-and-running until the autumn, almost a year behind schedule.

Now transport minister Humza Yousaf has admitted he was informed of the delay on May 25, a fortnight before the country went to the polls.

He told Scottish Conservative transport spokesman Liam Kerr that he received the letter from Network Rail chief executive Mark Carne more than two weeks ago, and will now come under pressure to publish the correspondence.

It is the latest disruption to hit Scotland's railway services in recent years.

And while Mr Yousaf has tried to shift the blame onto Network Rail, he previously took credit for the project, telling Holyrood: "We are in the midst of one of the most significant transformations of our railway infrastructure in recent memory."

Today's rural economy and connectivity committee is expected to hear more about the delay to the scheme, which is part of a £795 million improvement programme.

Despite being reluctant to reveal details of the delays ahead of the General Election, the Scottish Government made several separate funding announcements during that period, prompting accusations of breaching rules on purdah.

Scottish Conservative transport spokesman Liam Kerr said:

"There are serious questions to be asked about why the Scottish Government kept this important information to itself for so long.

"The transport minister admitted he was informed on May 25, yet we had to wait until Sunday until those key details emerged.

"Many will suspect the impending General Election may have influenced the SNP's decision to keep this bad news under wraps.

"That's irresponsible government, especially during a period where the SNP was more than happy to make contentious funding announcements during a period of purdah.

"Now the minister has confirmed he has this letter, he should make it public immediately."

Scottish Conservative MSP Jamie Greene, a member of the rural economy and connectivity committee, said:

"It is extremely concerning to hear the electrification of the line is yet again delayed, bringing us nearly a year over the Scottish Government's original deadline.

"Passengers who have already had to put up with major disruptions to the line will be dismayed to learn that electric trains will not be operating until October.

"This is one of Scotland's flagship lines connecting two of our most important cities – it needs to be fit for the 21st century."

Delays to the scheme were confirmed at the weekend:

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/transport/delays-hit-electric-train-plans-for-edinburgh-glasgow-line-1-4472211>

Transport minister Humza Yousaf admitted yesterday he knew about the delay as early as May 25:

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=11003&mode=pdf>

And he previously boasted to parliament about how his Scottish Government was delivering on the scheme:

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10642&mode=pdf>

Despite being reluctant to reveal details of the delay, the SNP was more than happy to make a series of funding announcements in the run up to the General Election:

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/06/officials-admit-they-did-break-purdah-rules-over-snp-glasgow-funding-deal/>

<http://www.scottishconservatives.com/2017/06/cash-for-votes-scandal-snp-overruled-civil-servants-on-lm-crofting-spending-announcement/>

Press release: Update on Cup Trust Inquiry

- The Charity Commission, in one of the first uses of its new power, has disqualified Mountstar from being a charity trustee
- Mountstar acted as sole and corporate trustee of the Cup Trust
- The Cup Trust has been wound up by the interim managers appointed by the regulator and the Commission removed it from the charity register

The Commission has used its new powers conferred under the Charities (Protection and Social Investment) Act 2016 to disqualify the company, Mountstar (PTC) Limited ("Mountstar"), from being a charity trustee for a period of 15 years. The order, which came into force today (14 June 2017), was made by the regulator as it was satisfied that Mountstar, as trustee, (1) was responsible for misconduct and/or mismanagement in the administration of the charity, (2) was unfit to be a charity trustee and (3) that it was desirable to make the disqualification order in the public interest so as to protect public trust and confidence in charities.

The charity has been wound up by the charity's interim managers, who were appointed by the regulator to administer the charity. The Commission removed the Cup Trust from the register of charities on 26 May 2017. The Commission is also considering regulatory action against the individuals who were directors of Mountstar.

Michelle Russell, Director of Investigations, Monitoring and Enforcement at the Charity Commission, said:

In using this new power to make an order to disqualify this company that we have found is responsible for misconduct and/or mismanagement in administering The Cup Trust, we are sending a strong message to all those whose actions harm charities: that they will be held accountable and that we will protect other charities from those who pose a risk to them.

The Commission was concerned in this case that public trust in charities would be undermined if this charity continued to be involved with a tax avoidance scheme through facilitating a gift aid claim. Arrangements which principally aim to confer advantages to private businesses or individuals with any benefit to the charity being a by-product of the scheme are not consistent with trustees' duties.

Our action in this case is important to protect the trust the public should have in charities. It shows the donating

public that the regulator acts to address wrongdoing and that they can have confidence in a well-run charitable sector.

Background

The Commission opened an inquiry into The Cup Trust on 12 April 2013, following receipt of information from HMRC. The scope of the investigation includes examining the governance of the charity by its trustee, management of conflicts of interest and the charity's involvement in a gift aid scheme and whether or not the trustee had complied with its obligations.

The Commission used its powers to appoint interim managers to administer the charity to the exclusion of Mountstar in April 2013. Once the interim managers had carried out the functions required of them and had withdrawn the charity's Gift Aid claims, they wound up the charity and were discharged. The charity was removed from the register of charities on 26 May 2017. The Commission is continuing with its formal investigation of the charity and will report its findings once this is concluded.

Ends.

PR 46/17

Notes to editors

1. The Charities (Protection and Social Investment) Act 2016 amends the Charities Act 1992 and the Charities Act 2011.
2. A charity trustee is defined under section 177 of the Charities Act 2011 as being one of the persons having the general control and management of the administration of a charity. A trustee for a charity is an individual (or body) who holds land, money or securities for a charity, or in whom the legal ownership of the charity's property is vested.
3. The new discretionary disqualification power in section 181A of the Charities Act 2011 enables the regulator to disqualify a person it considers unfit from being a trustee, for a maximum period of 15 years. Before making an order, the Commission must give at least one month's notice to the person it intends to disqualify. If the Commission goes on to make an order after considering any representations, the order does not take effect until the period for making an appeal to the Tribunal has expired (42 days). If no appeal is made, the disqualification takes effect.
4. The Commission made an order on 3 May 2017 under section 181A of the Charities Act 2011. Having satisfied itself that:
 - Mountstar was responsible for misconduct and/or mismanagement in the administration of the charity at a time when it was the corporate trustee;
 - Mountstar is unfit to be a charity trustee or trustee for a

- charity; and
 - disqualification is desirable in the public interest to protect public trust and confidence in charities generally, The effect of the order, which came into force today (14th June), is to disqualify Mountstar from being a charity trustee or trustee for a charity in respect of any charity in England and Wales for a period of 15 years. The order also disqualifies Mountstar from holding any office or employment with senior management functions in any such charity for the same period.
5. The [Commission brought a case](#) to the High Court to seek approval of the interim managers' decision to withdraw the charity's claim of £46 million in Gift Aid tax relief. Although challenged by Mountstar, the High Court ruled in April 2016 that the charity could then withdraw the £46 million claim.
 6. [The Charity Commission](#) is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work, see our [annual report](#).
 7. Search for charities on our [online register](#).
 8. Details of how the commission reports on its regulatory work can be found on [GOV.UK](#).
-

[Press release: Foreign Secretary statement on UN Security Council resolution on arms smuggling in Libya](#)

I welcome the UN Security Council's decision to unanimously adopt the UK drafted resolution targeting arms smuggling in the high seas off the coast of Libya.

The resolution demonstrates the international community's commitment to tackle the illegal flow of weapons into Libya, which fuels internal conflict. It enables international and regional organisations to stop vessels thought to be carrying arms, and acts as an important deterrent to those seeking to smuggle arms into the country by sea.

The UK is committed to bringing this conflict to a close and give the Libyan people the security and political stability they deserve. We call upon the international community to act quickly and firmly on this resolution, and to collectively tackle other flows of arms that continue to destabilise the country.

News story: Record numbers expected at this year's event for suppliers

Thursday's [NDA Estate Supply Chain Event](#) has reached full capacity, with a record 1,600 visitors now signed up to attend.

More than 300 organisations have taken exhibition space at the EventCity venue, Manchester, which will once again feature the popular Innovation Zone, with technology demonstrations throughout the day. Last year saw the launch of the Skills Zone which has expanded for 2017.

Other government departments attending include:

- the Ministry of Defence (MOD)
- the export-focused Department for International Trade (DIT)
- innovation agency Innovate UK

The event is organised jointly by the NDA and its Site Licence Companies and is now believed to be the biggest of its kind in Europe. Launched in 2011, its aim is to create greater visibility of opportunities for suppliers, in particular for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs).

The morning will be opened by new NDA Chief Executive David Peattie, with a further keynote speech by Rear Admiral Keith Beckett from the MOD's submarine programme.

This will be followed by the annual awards ceremony that acknowledges the vital role of suppliers in driving decommissioning progress across the UK.

The afternoon will see a series of presentations from the NDA's business units, outlining future opportunities. The day brings together suppliers of all sizes with organisations placing contracts, and provides opportunities for informal face-to-face networking while showcasing the latest nuclear technologies.

Ron Gorham, the NDA's Head of Supply Chain Optimisation and SME Champion, said:

We're delighted that the event continues to attract ever more interest, and this year's looks set to be the busiest yet.

We look forward to engaging with our supply chain, discussing opportunities, listening to their feedback and encouraging newcomers to become involved with decommissioning across the UK. Suppliers are vital to our success and we hope they will take full advantage of the presentations and informal networking.

- Date: Thursday 2 November, 9.30am to 4.30pm (sign-in from 8am)

- Venue: EventCity, Manchester

If you're not attending, then [keep up to date via Twitter and #DecommSupply](#)

News story: Crime news: July to December 2017 duty rotas

New duty solicitor rotas are available covering the period from 1 July to 31 December 2017.

You can now view the latest duty solicitor rotas – see link below.

Revised members' lists on which the rotas are based have also been published.

If you have any feedback about these rotas or members' lists you should use the contact details below.

2017 standard crime contract

A copy of the 2017 standard crime contract is available on gov.uk – see link below.

Further information

[Duty solicitors: rotas, information and guidance](#) – duty solicitor rotas covering 1 July to 31 December 2017 and revised members' lists

[Standard Crime Contract 2017](#)

dutysolqueries@legalaid.gsi.gov.uk – for feedback or enquiries about rotas or members' list