



GREAT BRITISH RAILWAYS NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS COMPETITION

Expression of interest: Edinburgh

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Contents

Introduction.....	2
1 Context.....	3
2 Levelling up	7
3 Connected and easy to get to.....	8
4 Opportunities for Great British Railways.....	10
5 Railway heritage and links to the network	14
6 Value for money	16
7 Public support.....	17

Introduction



*“On behalf of the City of Edinburgh Council and its partners, I am delighted to propose **Edinburgh** as the location for the headquarters of Great British Railways.*

“For many years, Edinburgh has played a key role in the success of the UK’s railway industry. The world’s first roll-on/roll-off train ferry was launched in Edinburgh in 1850, while in 2021 the Edinburgh Tram was recognised in the Technical Innovation of the Year category of the Global Light Rail Awards. In recent years, Edinburgh has been the focal point for massive scale investment in rail, including the city tram line, the new Gateway rail interchange station, and the Borders Railway.

“Edinburgh is a vibrant city with a highly-skilled population and a robust knowledge economy. By locating in Edinburgh, Great British Railways would have ready access to a pool of employees and suppliers, as well as academic partnerships with the city’s universities. Locating in Edinburgh would also give Great British Railways ready access to the Scottish Government and, in turn, the soon-to-be publicly owned ScotRail train operator.

“We have identified two sites in public ownership within Edinburgh that we feel would be excellent fits for Great British Railways. Bringing Great British Railways to Edinburgh would help us ‘level up’ the city, driving forward regeneration projects in central Edinburgh and creating opportunities for people and businesses in Edinburgh.

“I hope you will agree that bringing the Great British Railways headquarters to Edinburgh will create a multitude of opportunities for all concerned.”

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Adam McVey', with a stylized flourish at the end.

–Councillor Adam McVey, Leader, the City of Edinburgh Council

1 Context

1.1 Describe the geographical area covered by the application and why it should be considered for hosting the headquarters?

- Located on the east coast of Great Britain in the Central Belt of Scotland (around 530 km north of London and 200 km south of Aberdeen), Edinburgh is the Scottish capital and the UK's eighth largest city. Known internationally for its mix of medieval and Georgian architecture coupled with its dramatic natural scenery, Edinburgh is a European hub for academic, financial services, technology, and culture. The city's skilled population, knowledge-driven economy, and renowned quality of life have led many businesses and other organisations to locate here, for example the selection of Edinburgh as the home of the UK Green Investment Bank.
- This expression of interest document briefly sets out the case for Edinburgh being selected as the home of Great British Railways (GBR). In short, we believe basing GBR in Edinburgh would create substantial opportunities for GBR to collaborate with industry and academia to develop and implement sweeping improvements to the British railway network and industry, while Levelling-Up the city by anchoring a flagship regeneration project in central Edinburgh.
- Scotland's ambitious goal of becoming net zero carbon by 2045 will drive increased public transport usage and decarbonisation of transport infrastructure over the next two decades. The Rail Services Decarbonisation Action Plan published by Transport Scotland in 2020 sets out a roadmap for decarbonising all rail passenger services in Scotland by 2035. The Inward Investment Plan for Scotland identifies "decarbonisation of transport" as one of nine key opportunity areas for inward investment in Scotland.
- Scotland has invested heavily in rail transport in recent years, with recent projects including the creation of the 57 km Borders Railway between Edinburgh and Tweedbank in the Scottish Borders (the longest new railways to be built in the UK in over 100 years) and the electrification of rail services between Edinburgh and Glasgow. Work is currently underway on a 5 km extension of the Edinburgh tram line that will link the city centre with the waterfront.



The Forth Bridge between Edinburgh and Fife (a UNESCO World Heritage Site).

1.2 Who else is involved in developing and supporting your application?

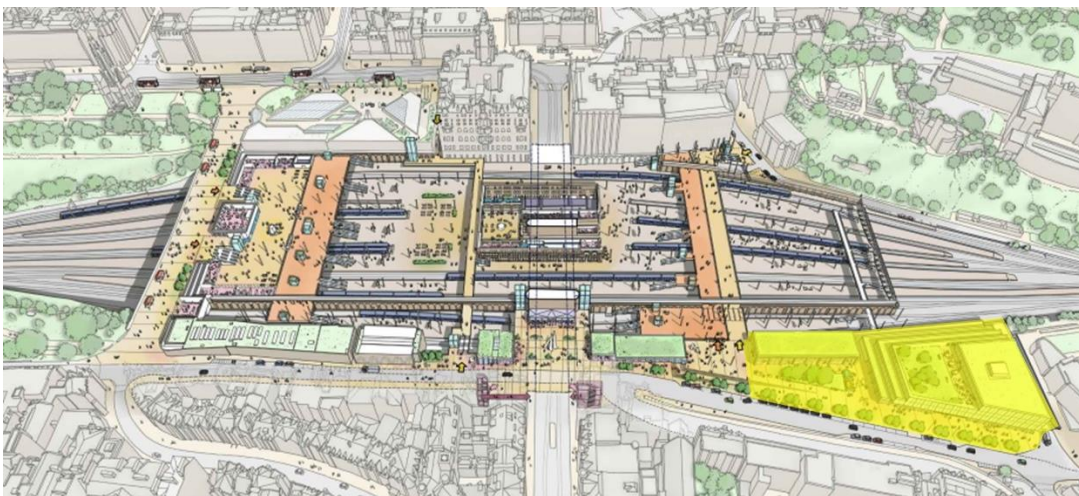
- This document has been prepared in conjunction with the University of Edinburgh and Network Rail.

1.2 Describe the proposed site(s) for the national headquarters.

- Two sites in public ownership in Edinburgh are proposed as potential headquarters locations for the GBR, both of which are considered to represent compelling propositions: Waverley and Fountainbridge.

Waverley

- “Waverley” is a development site adjacent to Edinburgh Waverley railway station. In 2019/20, Waverley was the fifth busiest railway station in the UK outside of London, with over 23 million passengers using the station. Waverley is the northern terminus of the East Coast Main Line which links Edinburgh and London.
- Located just minutes away from the Scottish Parliament, St Andrews House (the home of the Scottish Government), the Supreme Courts, and Queen Elizabeth House (the UK Government’s hub in Edinburgh), Waverley is at the political and judicial heart of Scotland.
- Waverley’s location in the east end of Edinburgh city centre also puts it within easy walking distance of a huge range of amenities, including restaurants, bars, shops, gyms, museums, galleries, and the award-winning Princes Street Gardens. Many blue-chip firms have offices in the area.
- The City of Edinburgh Council, Network Rail, and Transport Scotland have together master-planned the future of Edinburgh Waverley railway station and its curtilage. The masterplan includes the development of new commercial space on an existing car park. This would give Great British Railways access to strategically located purpose-built modern office space.



The Waverley Station Masterplan, with new commercial buildings highlighted in yellow.

Fountainbridge

- “Fountainbridge” is situated a short distance to the south of Haymarket railway station and bus/tram interchange. It forms part of the city’s central business district, with many financial, professional service, and technology firms having a base in the area. Major companies with offices in Fountainbridge itself include accountants Bakery Tilly and Saffery Champness; legal practice DWF; real estate firm Cushman & Wakefield; and technology firm Apple, as well as UK Government bodies such as Companies House and the Financial Conduct Authority.
- Fountainbridge offers excellent access to the amenities of Edinburgh city centre. Attractions in the immediate vicinity include Fountain Park leisure park, the King’s Theatre, and the Edinburgh Printmakers arts centre.
- Formerly an industrial area centred on the Fountain Brewery, there has been major investment in Fountainbridge in recent years, with brownfield land regenerated into flats, offices, student accommodation, hotels, and a high school. Among the remaining land is around three hectares of vacant land owned by the City of Edinburgh Council.
- The Council has prepared a masterplan for its land at Fountainbridge which includes the development of a new energy efficient office building providing up to 10,117 square metres (108,898 square feet) of space. Great British Railways could occupy floors within the building to meet its requirements, with the fit-out of the building tailored to its specifications. It is anticipated that residual space within the building would be leased out to early-stage technology companies.



New office space at Fountainbridge.

1.3 What benefits do you expect your town/city will gain from accommodating the headquarters?

- As set out above, it is proposed that the GBR headquarters would be located at either Waverley or Fountainbridge. These are two flagship projects in central Edinburgh that are respectively transforming a Victorian railway station and its surroundings into a modern transport hub and regenerating brownfield ex-industrial land into a vibrant mixed-use community. The GBR headquarters would anchor these projects, giving them a stamp of quality and helping attract other occupiers.
- Bringing the GBR headquarters to Edinburgh would create opportunities for the city's economy, both in terms of new direct jobs within the organisation and opportunities for suppliers. Edinburgh's skilled population and multiple universities would give GBR access to a steady stream of talent. The Council would seek to work closely with GBR to ensure the benefits from having GBR based in Edinburgh were realised widely, including giving small local businesses the opportunity to bid to be a supplier to GBR and working with GBR to create apprenticeships and opportunities for people with barriers to participation in the workforce.
- The GBR headquarters would create significant opportunities for collaboration with Edinburgh's academic institutions. As set out below, both the University of Edinburgh and Heriot-Watt University are engaged in sophisticated research around railway design; having the GBR headquarters in Edinburgh would enable them to work closely with the guiding mind of the British railway system, with research emerging from the institutions being translated into tangible advancements for the industry.

1.4 What do you think makes your town/city best suited as the location for Great British Railways' national headquarters?

- The most highly skilled population of any major UK city – 56.9% of working age residents of Edinburgh are educated to degree level or above, more than any other UK town or city bar Oxford and Cambridge.
- A highly productive workforce – gross value added per employee of over £70,000 per annum, compared to a median for Great Britain of £57,000.
- Excellent quality of life – Edinburgh is regularly ranked one of the top places to live in the UK, with Knight Frank naming the city one of the top 20 places worldwide in its 2021 City Wellbeing Index.
- An international city with a sophisticated business ecosystem – Edinburgh has a knowledge driven economy. Organisations in the city can access a wide range of high-quality suppliers in areas including law, finance, accounting, human resources, business consulting, and technology. The Globalization and World Cities Research Network classes Edinburgh as a beta level city ("important world cities that are instrumental in linking their region or state into the world economy"); Edinburgh is the UK's only beta level city bar Manchester.

2 Levelling up

2.1 What is your vision for levelling up your local area? What is currently underway to deliver this?

- The City of Edinburgh Council's vision for levelling-up Edinburgh is centred on the concept of "inclusive growth": growth that benefits all strata of society. This is driven by a realisation that while Edinburgh has experienced strong economic growth in recent years, some segments of society have not benefited from this growth and have in effect been "left behind". Additionally, these segments of society face challenges associated with growth, for example sharply rising housing costs that have not been matched by increases in income. The Council's vision is for the future growth of Edinburgh to benefit all the city's residents.

2.2 What levelling up opportunities do you believe could be created for your town/city that are linked to the headquarters?

- We believe that bringing the GBR headquarters to Edinburgh would create both direct employment opportunities and opportunities for suppliers. The Council would seek to work with GBR to maximise the benefit of these opportunities for more marginalised residents of Edinburgh. Initiatives would include working with GBR to develop Modern Apprenticeship schemes to equip school leavers for a career in the railway industry; working with GBR to open up opportunities for suppliers to small companies in the area (for example, by breaking contracts into smaller lots); and working with GBR to use its presence in Edinburgh to promote employment and learning opportunities in the rail sector more broadly.



3 Connected and easy to get to

3.1 How would employees and visitors be able to access the National Headquarters, via rail routes and other sustainable modes?

- Both potential locations identified in Edinburgh are well located in central Edinburgh.
- Waverley is adjacent to both Edinburgh Waverley railway station and the Edinburgh tram line; there are multiple bus stops in the vicinity, with the Edinburgh Bus Station just a few minutes away.
- Fountainbridge is around 10 minutes' walk from Haymarket railway station and bus/tram interchange.
- Both locations are easily walkable to the city centre, which offers transport options by bus/train/tram as well as bus and tram links to Edinburgh Airport.



3.2 How connected is your location to and from other nations and regions of Great Britain?

- Edinburgh benefits from excellent connectivity. The city has strong rail links to the rest of the UK, with a journey between Edinburgh and London taking around 4 hours 20 minutes. Trains between Edinburgh and London (via Newcastle, York, and other cities/towns) are operated by both London North Eastern Railway and Lumo, with a sleeper service provided by Serco. Trains between Edinburgh and Glasgow in the west of Scotland can be as quick as 45 minutes.
- Edinburgh Airport provides direct flights to destinations throughout the UK including London, Cardiff; Belfast; Birmingham; Manchester; and Bristol.

3.3 How will your suggested sites be equally accessible to all members of society, in line with Public Sector Equality Duties?

- Both Waverley and Fountainbridge sit within wider regeneration areas that have been carefully master-planned in line with current accessibility guidance. The office buildings would be fully accessible for wheelchair users and other people with mobility issues.
- Demonstrate how your location has supported successful collaboration between local authorities, business and other organisations across the UK to further social, economic and transport objectives.
- The City of Edinburgh Council is a participant in the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal: a partnership between the UK Government, the Scottish Government, and the local authority areas of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Fife, Midlothian, Scottish Borders, and West Lothian. The partnership has been formed to deliver transformative projects to boost the economic performance of the region with a total value of £1.3 billion across five themes, one of them being transport. Work is currently underway on the design of major transport infrastructure upgrades in west and southeast Edinburgh.
- The Council is also a member of the South East of Scotland Transport Partnership (SEStran), which brings Edinburgh and seven other local authority areas to take forward regional transport interventions. Its projects include the Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) project, which uses digital signage to display live bus, tram and train times for nearby services in public buildings.

4 Opportunities for Great British Railways

4.1 How will your location enable Great British Railways to engage with customers, the private sector and wider transport industry?

- From 1 April 2022, ScotRail – Scotland’s national train operating company – will be in public ownership. This would give GBR an excellent opportunity to work directly with the Scottish Government to develop and test new services, technologies, and other innovations to enhance the British railway wider industry. ScotRail manages over 350 stations; over 3,000 kilometres of rail; over 5,000 employees; and over 1,000 train carriages, representing a substantial testbed for GBR. Scotland’s railway represents over 17% of Britain’s rail network.
- More generally, being located in Edinburgh would mean GBR was located at the political heart of Scotland, giving it ready access to the Scottish Government, to public bodies such as Transport Scotland, and to Scotland’s Railway (which brings together ScotRail; Network Rail; Serco Caledonian Sleeper; other rail operators; the rail supply chain; and the Office of Rail and Road).

4.4 What opportunities does your location offer for working with the rail supply chain, manufacturing hubs and institutes?

- Edinburgh is a key hub for rail industry-related technological research:
- The Institute for Infrastructure and Environment of the University of Edinburgh conducts research into railway themes. Current areas of exploration include the micromechanics of railway track bed to inform safer design of high-speed railway systems.

“Here at the university of Edinburgh we have a Research Group working with Network Rail High Speed-1 looking at improved and more cost-effective maintenance using Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning. The Group is led by Professor Mike Forde with Dr Hwa-Kian Chai, Dr Robert De Bold and PhD student Konstantin Popov. We have research funding from Loram Technologies Inc, Austin TX, USA, Loram UK, Derby and the Scottish Research Partnership in Engineering (SRPe). Our key UK partner at Network Rail (NR) is Dr Sin Sin Hsu. She is now regional Track Engineer for NR Eastern. This cutting-edge work has been presented to the (US) National Academies Transportation Research Board in January 2021 and to the (US) Department of Transport in January 2022. This is the future of railway maintenance.”

*–Professor Michael C. Forde, Chair of Civil Engineering Construction,
University of Edinburgh*

- The National Robotarium in Edinburgh has developed a robot that can help comprehensively clean train carriages, including difficult to access under-seat areas.

“The pandemic has shown the importance of regular, thorough cleaning on board public transport. I am excited that these new robots could help make cleaning both quick and affordable, and so improve the wellbeing of travellers and staff.”

–Iain Stewart MP, UK Government Minister for Scotland

- The Institute for Infrastructure and Environment of Heriot-Watt University conducts a variety of research into railways, forming part of the UK Rail Research and Innovation Network’s Centre of Excellence in Infrastructure. The University’s Geopavement and Railways Accelerated Fatigue Testing facility (GRAFT) enables testing of railway technology in realistic conditions. The XiTRACK polymer technology developed by the University is now widely used throughout the railway industry to reinforce ballast.
- Edinburgh and the surrounding area are home to a variety of facilities for the maintenance of heavy rail and tram locomotives:
 - In the heart of Edinburgh is the Haymarket Railway Depot, used for the stabling, maintenance, fuelling, cleaning, and preparation of ScotRail’s fleet of Class 170 Turbostar diesel trains and Class 43 High Speed Trains.
 - In the east of Edinburgh is the Craighentenny Train Maintenance Centre operated by Hitachi Rail for the maintenance of class 385 electric trains.
 - On the south-eastern outskirts of Edinburgh is the Millerhill Railway Depot, a purpose-built facility for the stabling, cleaning, and light maintenance of ScotRail’s fleet of Hitachi class 385 electric trains that opened in 2017.
 - In west Edinburgh is the Gogar Tram Depot, a facility for the stabling and servicing of the City of Edinburgh Council’s fleet of 27 CAF Urbos 3 trams. The Depot, which opened in 2014, is also home to the control centre for the city’s tram network.
 - To the north of Edinburgh, in Longannet, Spanish train manufacturer Talgo has announced plans for a new £40 million manufacturing facility that would directly support 1,000 jobs. Site clearance began in December 2021.



The Gogar tram depot in Edinburgh.

- Edinburgh is also home to multiple interesting companies involved in the rail industry, for example:
 - Lenz Labs, which has developed “Traction Hub” technology that enables trains to strongly grip rails during adverse weather conditions that reduce friction, helping eliminate safety risks and delays.
 - Rail BI, which provides a platform to help railway infrastructure decision makers to develop business cases for service investment.
 - INFINECT, a spin-out from Heriot-Watt University which has developed a train carriage-mounted satellite antenna designed at providing continued broadband connectivity for rail passengers while trains are passing through tunnels.

4.3 What opportunities exist for collaboration with the retail, economic and environmental sectors? How could Great British Railways benefit from these links?

- Being located within central Edinburgh would put GBR at the commercial heart of Scotland, creating opportunities for collaborations with private sector, third sector, and academic organisations. Specific opportunities would include working with charities in Edinburgh on the theme of sustainable travel and working with the retail, wholesale, and distribution sectors in Edinburgh to promote increased usage of rail freight as a sustainable alternative to heavy goods vehicles.

4.4 What opportunities does/do the site(s)/building(s) itself offer Great British Railways to develop as an organisation?

- Waverley would put GBR at the heart of Scotland's transport network, within one of the UK's largest railway stations. GBR would have ready access to the multiple operating companies running services out of Waverley, as well as potentially the ability to work with Network Rail to use a major railway station to pilot new initiatives. Waverley would also put GBR close to both the centre of the Scottish Government and the UK Government's Edinburgh hub, giving it unparalleled access to policy formulators and decision makers.
- Fountainbridge would put GBR in the central business district, close to multiple financial services and technology companies. The location would leave GBR well placed to work with the private sector on projects and initiatives.



The Scottish Parliament building

5 Railway heritage and links to the network

5.1 Demonstrate your railway heritage and the benefits it offers to Great British Railways.

- Waverley Station, the heart of Edinburgh's railway network, is a major piece of British railway heritage. Built in the 1890s, its features include its domed booking hall ceiling and classically detailed former parcels office.
- Adjacent to Waverley Station is the category 'A' listed 1890s Balmoral Hotel (originally known as the North British Railway Hotel); one of the UK's great railway hotels, today it is one of Scotland's most iconic luxury hotels. At the west end of Princes Street, the 'A' listed 1890s former Princes Street railway station is now the Waldorf Astoria Edinburgh, another of the city's finest hotels.
- The iconic cantilevered 1880s Forth Bridge linking Edinburgh and Fife is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Plans for a new visitor centre are underway.
- Edinburgh is also home to multiple pieces of rail history that have been repurposed for other uses. The 'B' listed 1900s Granton Station building – built to transport workers to and from the Granton Gasworks – was closed during the Second World War and fell into disrepair; the City of Edinburgh Council is now restoring Granton Station as new workspaces for the creative industry. The 'A' listed 1890s former Leith Central railway station has been reborn as shops, cafés, and bars.
- This rich railway heritage of Edinburgh would help GBR establish its identity as the heir and champion of the wider UK railway heritage.



Granton Station: an Edwardian former railway station reborn as business space.

5.2 What links are there with existing rail employment, innovation and sector bodies, such as regional or local offices?

- As set out at 4.2, Edinburgh has a significant concentration of academic researchers involved in various projects relating to the railway industry, from carriage cleaning to track design. Edinburgh is also home to multiple train maintenance facilities with plans for a new manufacturing centre to the north of Edinburgh.
- Transport Scotland and ScotRail – Scotland's transport agency and Scotland's national train operating company – both have offices in Edinburgh, with their headquarters lying in Glasgow a short train journey to the west.
- The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) – the UK's principal trade union for transport workers – has a branch office in Edinburgh, as do UNISON and Unite the Union, the UK's largest and second largest trade unions.

5.3 How could you use the headquarters to preserve and enhance your railway heritage?

- It is proposed that the headquarters could house some of the city's railway heritage, for example "Ralph", a 1903 narrow gauge gasworks locomotive previously used at the Granton Gasworks in Edinburgh that is now held in storage by National Museums of Scotland. This and other items of heritage could help animate the foyer and other public facing areas of the headquarters.



A plaque marking the Scotland Street railway tunnel.

6 Value for money

6.1 How will your location offer financial efficiency to Great British Railways?

- Edinburgh is a cost-effective place to do business. The median salary of full-time workers in Edinburgh was £32,864 in 2021: similar to the UK average of £31,285, but considerably below that of London (£39,716).
- Edinburgh's skilled workforce and sophisticated business ecosystem would enable GBR to easily access the workers and suppliers it required.

6.2 How does the proposed site allow Great British Railways to make good use of public money and keep costs down?

- The City of Edinburgh Council and its partners have identified two sites in public ownership where GBR could establish its headquarters. The Council and its partners would work with GBR to refine the detailed design of the headquarters building and to agree a mutually satisfactory commercial model for the delivery and occupation of the building.

6.3 How does your location generate public value including economic, social and environmental impacts?

- As set out in this document, the GBR headquarters would anchor one of two flagship regeneration projects in Edinburgh. The presence of the GBR would help unlock significant additional public and private sector investment by providing an anchor for each development.

7 Public support

7.1 Demonstrate the importance of the railways to the local community and your region.

- Edinburgh's railways (and tram line) play a key role in the functioning of the city, with tens of thousands of people using the railways to travel to and from work every day. The railways are also a major drive of the city's tourism sector, bringing visitors to Edinburgh from around the UK and further afield. The railway industry also supports thousands of jobs across Edinburgh, ranging from the people driving, running, and maintaining the city's fleet of trains to the people working in the city's railway stations.

7.2 How do your intentions for the national headquarters tie in with the needs of your local communities, your identity and values?

- As set out above, the GBR headquarters would anchor the regeneration of one of two flagship developments in central Edinburgh: Waverley or Fountainbridge. Both these developments have been carefully designed to meet the needs of the surrounding communities.
- The Waverley development would comprehensively upgrade Edinburgh Waverley railway station and its surroundings, both enhancing the capacity and efficiency of the station and creating additional public space and new routes through the station area. As part of the development, new office and commercial space would be delivered on an existing car park, creating much-needed new workspaces in the heart of Edinburgh.
- The Fountainbridge development would deliver hundreds of new homes (including over 100 new affordable homes), new workspaces, and new green space and public realm on a brownfield site in central Edinburgh. It has been master-planned in conjunction with the Fountainbridge Sounding Board, which brings together local residents and community groups. The GBR headquarters would help anchor the development of the new workspaces, helping unlock the delivery of offices and other commercial spaces targeted at high-growth early-stage firms.

