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Dear Douglas

As you will be aware, Scottish Ministers are able to provide non-binding advice in respect of cross-border passenger services. I wrote to your predecessor on 26 October 2005, at the outset of the process of renegotiating and remapping of the West Coast and Cross Country franchises respectively. I would now like to supplement that advice, in the light of the more detailed specifications of the services on which your Department has been consulting.

My strategic aims underpinning this advice are to :

- enhance connections between the main centres of business on each side of the Border
- effect a modal shift towards rail from less sustainable modes of transport
- meet the reasonable demand of intermediate communities served by the cross border services.

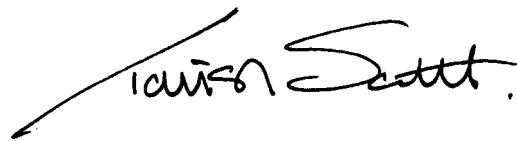
Overall I am keen to see the improvement of journeys between Scotland and England, where business and leisure connections are strong. Following the considerable investment in the West Coast Main Line in particular, I believe rail can make a real impact on modal shift by offering an attractive alternative to travel by road and air. Connections from both Glasgow and Edinburgh to Newcastle, Carlisle, Leeds, Manchester, Birmingham and London are particularly significant. All have potentially growing markets. From a passenger perspective, we have considered the impacts of total journey times and arrival and departure times, frequency and quality of services, and, where necessary, connections to onward services.

The cross border services also provide important links within Scotland that I believe should be maintained at levels similar to those in place at the time of rail devolution. This includes services north of Edinburgh, and the provision of regular services at Dunbar, Lockerbie and

Motherwell, which we see as key regional access points. In addition, I am disappointed with the suggested loss of through services between Glasgow and points south of Birmingham, especially for the leisure market. This diminution of service is at odds with a desire to improve connections across Britain and encourage modal shift from air and car to rail.

In the light of these overall objectives, we have a number of detailed points on the proposals, set out in the Annex to this letter. I hope that this advice is helpful, and I look forward to seeing you incorporate these suggestions in the final franchise specifications.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tavish Scott". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

TAVISH SCOTT

Cross Country refranchising, including rescheduling of West Coast Mainline and Transpennine services to Scotland.

Non-binding advice from Scottish Ministers to the Department for Transport

INTRODUCTION

Background

1. Scottish Ministers can provide advice to the Department for Transport in relation to cross border passenger railway services. The following is our advice in relation to the proposed cross border services included within franchises for Cross Country, Transpennine Express and West Coast Main Line services intended to take effect from the December 2008 timetable change.

2. These service revisions aim to provide a structure to enable the refranchising of the Cross Country franchise and the renegotiation of the West Coast Main Line franchise from the current management contract. They build upon the substantial service improvements which have already been delivered through the Cross Country and West Coast Main Line franchises, and put into effect the enhancements for which the investment in the modernisation of the West Coast Mainline has been made. This advice presumes that those enhancements are substantially completed by December 2008 in accordance with the current construction programme.

3. Accordingly, this advice sets out Scottish Ministers' aspirations to deliver enhanced service levels on these routes to meet the needs of the main rail markets for cross border travel, maximising the return upon the substantial investment which has been made by United Kingdom taxpayers in the West Coast route.

Strategic Aims

4. The strategic aims underlying this advice are:

- to enhance connectivity between the main centres of business on each side of the Border served by these routes for the mutual benefit of the English and Scottish economies;
- to effect a mode shift towards rail from less sustainable modes of transport by making rail more competitive with these other modes, in particular by increasing the frequency of service and reducing end-to-end travel times, and
- to meet the reasonable needs of intermediate communities served by cross border services.

SERVICE LEVEL SPECIFICATIONS

Cross Country (East Coast Route)

5. Scottish Ministers support the proposed hourly clock-face service between Edinburgh and the South-west via Newcastle, Leeds, Sheffield, Birmingham and Bristol, in particular so that it will continue to provide for key business connectivity to West and South Yorkshire, and the East and West Midlands. We regret the loss of through services to the South Coast but are pleased to see the retention of through services to the West Country. In order to mitigate the diversion via Leeds and provide sufficient capacity for longer distance passengers we expect that the Edinburgh services will be operating as limited stop trains over the York to Bristol section of the route where there are other services able to make the required intermediate calls. To meet business requirements we expect the first train to arrive in Leeds not later than 0915 and the last departure from Edinburgh to be no earlier than 1800, Mondays to Fridays. We expect similar times for the first and last Edinburgh-bound services from Leeds.

6. Scottish Ministers expect these services to provide for a level of through travel from points north of Edinburgh to England which is no less than that provided currently (i.e. three trains to/from Dundee, one of which is to/from Aberdeen). There should be two trains from the north into Edinburgh in the morning peak one of which should continue to be timed so as to arrive between 0800 and 0830 and one northbound departure should be timed to depart Edinburgh between 1630 and 1730. Both services should be timed to enable useful long-distance journeys from the north east of Scotland to England to be made during the main part of the day, and so as to make a contribution to the peak capacity required for travel in and out of Edinburgh from the north. These services should be provided in such a manner so that they conform to the requirements of the current ScotRail Franchise Service Level Commitment (SLC), where they are noted as being provided by Virgin. We note the desire not to restrict the bidders to a specific depot strategy, by not including the “positioning” moves before the morning services and after the evening services.

These trains are also included in the ScotRail SLC but noted as being operated by Virgin, and are still required to operate. Therefore we expect the bidders to be required to make appropriate provision for these services. This could include an option for First ScotRail to operate them, by a change in the ScotRail Franchise Agreement, funded by the Cross Country bidder.

7. There is a significant market for business travel from Glasgow to the North East and West Yorkshire which is currently met by a combination of GNER services and the provision of two cross-country east coast services starting from Glasgow Central. Both of these through services from Glasgow to Leeds via Newcastle should be continued, comprising (as a minimum) an arrival in Leeds before 1030 and a departure from Leeds between 1630 and 1730 and a middle of the day departure from Glasgow. In addition an afternoon/ early evening return service to Leeds from Glasgow would be highly desirable, especially as it would offer a later service from the West Country. All these services should have corresponding return services.

These services will run forward on the standard Cross Country pattern to Birmingham and beyond to Bristol, Plymouth and the South West. They will offer a small range of through

journeys, albeit with extended journey times and thus partly compensate for the proposed withdrawal of the through services via the West Coast route. (See paragraph 14) Therefore we attach considerable importance to the provision of these Glasgow extensions to the East Coast Cross Country service, if the East Coast through services are withdrawn as currently proposed. Such a service will provide an element of choice for passengers who require a through journey, although the journey time will be extended.

8. To meet the needs of East Lothian, services should call at Dunbar in each direction in every hour in which the station is not otherwise served by East Coast InterCity franchise services (those currently operated by GNER). In view of the significant and rapidly growing demand for long distance commuting into Edinburgh, the timetables of GNER and the Cross Country franchise should be arranged to ensure two arrivals from Dunbar into Edinburgh between 0730 and 0845 , and three departures from Edinburgh between 1700 and 1830 (in both cases separated by at least half an hour). These trains need to have competitive journey times.

West Coast Mainline services (Glasgow to London)

9. Scottish Ministers wish to capitalise on the major route enhancement works that have (and still are) being delivered by the West Coast Main Line (WCML) upgrade. It considers that to deliver rail's contribution to a sustainable transport strategy there is a minimum requirement of an hourly frequency all day between London and Glasgow, with journey times not significantly in excess of 4 hours and with a restricted number of intermediate stops.

10. We note the intention to run services throughout the day at a normal end-to-end journey time of under 4 hours 30 minutes with six intermediate stops, and with the addition of a peak period journey into and out of London taking less than 4 hours 15 minutes. In these circumstances we advise that the fast train should arrive in London between 0945 and 1045, and that the corresponding northbound service should depart London between 1645 and 1745 to match periods of peak business travel demand.

11. However we note that, although a recurring clockface pattern of service is proposed, the current timetable proposal does not allow for a train each way in every hour, because of the limited number of trains currently available and a requirement to provide capacity at the south end of the route. Any timetabling proposals require choices to be made, but Scottish Ministers are not persuaded that the balance of the current proposals is optimal in its allocation of trainsets to the Glasgow route,, especially having regard to the underlying purpose of the WCML upgrade and its justification as a strategic project at the all-UK and TENS levels. Our aspiration therefore remains for an at least hourly service, and our advice is consequently to that effect.

12. If in the short term unsatisfactory service intervals are unavoidable, we advise that the gaps in service should occur northbound between 0900 and 1000 from London (between morning business departures and the build up of leisure demand), in late morning and in early afternoon. (In particular we advise that the current proposal to omit the departure at 1030 should be reconsidered in favour of omitting the departure at 0930). (Also see paragraph 15 below.)

13. Both UK and Scottish transport policy envisages that there will be a significant growth in demand for rail travel between Glasgow and WCML destinations after the

enhanced service is implemented, principally as a result of mode switch from air and from road. We therefore expect that the franchise is progressively modified in future years to meet that anticipated growth by increasing capacity in line with the increase in traffic. Plugging any gaps in the hourly pattern of service should take precedence over, or be delivered simultaneously with, any lengthening of trains in order to provide the same standard of service to the West of Scotland as to the rest of the West Coast route and thus encourage further increases in rail travel, achieving mode shift from other less sustainable modes and a providing a more financially sustainable operation.

West Coast Mainline service (Edinburgh/Glasgow – Birmingham)

14. Scottish Ministers note and regret the proposed loss of through services between Glasgow and points south of Birmingham, especially for the leisure market which is generally less willing to make changes between services than business travellers. However it is recognised that through passenger journeys between Scotland and points to the south of Birmingham are currently comparatively few. To mitigate the impact of the new service pattern it is advised that:

- careful consideration is given to defining the optimum opportunity for same-platform or cross-platform interchange between the Glasgow - Birmingham services with services to/from the South-west and South Coast at an appropriate intermediate station, and that this facility is properly marketed and addressed in timetable information (including in computer based journey planners and ticketing systems). There needs to be satisfactory provision for passengers with impaired mobility;
- because there is an hourly direct service from Edinburgh to Birmingham and the South West via the East Coast route, that the West Coast service be predominantly operated to and from Glasgow. Within this specification, there should be a regular two-hourly interval fast service between Glasgow and Birmingham with a journey time of less than four hours. In addition, service planning should be integrated with the Scotland-Manchester and Glasgow-Euston services to optimise connectional opportunities between the two Scottish destinations and Manchester or Birmingham in a manner which complements the direct services from each of the Scottish cities. (See also paragraph 20 below, 4th and 5th bullet points.);
- that through tickets between Scotland and the South-West and the South Coast (including any range of discounted tickets and special discount offers etc.) must be made available to passengers whose journeys involve travelling on the West Coast services Glasgow - Birmingham and onward on the Cross Country franchise as if this route was under the sole operation of the Cross Country franchise. There must not be any significant difference in the fares and ticketing between the East and West Coast routes to Scotland to and from stations on the Cross Country network south of Birmingham.
- that consideration is given to including a through service between Glasgow and the South West as part of the peak summer seasonal supplementation of the core timetable (if this is a feature of future Cross Country operations).

15. If there are (as a short term measure) gaps in the hourly pattern of departures between Glasgow and London, Birmingham services should be scheduled to run from Glasgow as a replacement and opportunities to make a suitable London connection should be provided at a

station further south. Similar connections for journeys from London to Glasgow should be provided for any gaps in through northbound London services.

Trans-Pennine Express services (Edinburgh/Glasgow – Manchester)

16. Manchester and the North-west is the largest single market for cross border travel by all modes from Scotland, and Manchester is the second busiest long distance destination (after Newcastle) for cross border journeys on present cross-country trains. It is natural that the level of interaction between cities and regions is greater over shorter distances and the cities of the North West are Scotland's nearest neighbours west of the Pennines. Therefore the Manchester services are substantially busier than services to Birmingham or beyond and of at least the same level of strategic significance to Scotland. Yet rail currently enjoys a relatively small market share in the Scotland-Manchester market as it is not competitive in speed or frequency with air or road. The present service comprises of six through journeys southbound (four from Edinburgh and two from Glasgow) and seven northbound including an additional Glasgow journey. Journey time ranges between 3 hours 22 minutes and 4 hours 3 minutes, but mostly around 3 hours 35 minutes.

17. Consequently Scottish Ministers welcome the proposal to transfer the operation of this important route to the Transpennine franchise as it believes that this will result in a greater management focus being given to the route and that it will be developed in a manner that meets the needs of both Scotland and North West England.

18. The currently proposed service is an extension of Transpennine's Manchester to Windermere services with new class 185 trains offering 'similar' city to city travel times, and 'not less than' the same number of through services. This represents a significant downgrade in terms of rolling stock, and maximum speeds and is making very little use of the very expensive and disruptive upgrade to the West Coast Main Line. This can only be seen as a temporary expedient and is not acceptable in the medium term. Scottish Ministers wish to see a commitment to move towards an hourly frequency and a plan from Transpennine to upgrade the service to meet the medium term aspirations of reduced journey times. (See paragraphs 19 and 20 below.)

19. We advise that it is important that the future Manchester services should provide a significant improvement over that which is currently available, or currently proposed for December 2008, in order to meet the primary aim to secure better links to key business destinations, and to maximise the benefits from the investment in the modernisation of the West Coast Route that has taken place (in particular the speed improvements that have been made possible as a result of the large investment).

20. The minimum initial specification (December 2008) should provide that:

- Average journey times between Edinburgh or Glasgow and Manchester Piccadilly should not exceed 3 hours 30 minutes;
- A business train arrival in Manchester should be available from both Edinburgh and Glasgow before 1000, with a marketable departure time from each origin and a departure from Manchester to both of these cities should be scheduled between 1630 and 1730. Trains at corresponding departure times and with corresponding journey times should be provided from Manchester.

- Between these hours in the short term there should be no interval between through services between Scotland and Manchester greater than 2 hours in each direction. There should be one further train in each direction offering travel to and from both Edinburgh and Glasgow later than the evening business peak service.
- Consistent with available data on cross-border flows (*Scottish Transport Statistics no 24, table 12.24(a)*) Scottish Ministers advise that Glasgow should be seen as the predominant origin/destination in Scotland for the through West Coast Manchester service. However the overall pattern of service should seek to maximise the connectional opportunities such that, in any hour when a through Glasgow or Edinburgh service is not provided, a fast journey to/from Manchester is possible by means of a well scheduled, advertised and managed connection between other services.
- Consequently, the West Coast and Transpennine franchises should be contractually obliged to integrate the service planning of the Scotland-Birmingham/Euston and Scotland-Manchester service groups to optimise direct and connectional Scotland-Manchester and Scotland-Birmingham services and to ensure that West Coast route connections between Scotland and Manchester and Birmingham are planned and managed on a complementary basis. The full range of fares available on the through trains also needs to be available for journeys that require the use of connecting services involving both successor franchisees.

21. Scottish Ministers advise that during the remaining period of the Transpennine franchise a strategy should be developed in consultation with Transport Scotland for further progressive improvements to enhance this service to an hourly frequency throughout the day, and offering reduced city-to-city travel times (target time 3 hours) to secure for rail a greater share of this important travel market.

Lockerbie

22. Scottish Ministers have identified Lockerbie as a regional railhead for south west Scotland. To enhance this role, it is the Ministers' aspiration that a train should call there once in every two hours in each direction in the off peak period. In view of the trend towards increased long distance commuting, and the desirability of encouraging such journeys to be made by rail rather than by car, the Lockerbie service should also permit a journey opportunity to both Glasgow and Edinburgh, arriving no later than 0840 and departing between 1700 and 1800. If necessary, amendments to the ScotRail franchise could be considered to facilitate the maintenance of Lockerbie-Edinburgh peak connections via Carstairs. There is also a need to provide peak services from Lockerbie to Carlisle, arriving between 0800 and 0900 and departing between 1700 and 1800.

Motherwell

23. Scottish Ministers have identified Motherwell as a regional railhead for North Lanarkshire and southeast Glasgow, the areas most distant from airports and thus with the greatest potential for rail to be the mode of choice. To enhance this role, we consider that alternate Glasgow-Euston and Glasgow-Birmingham trains should call there with the objective of providing an approximately hourly cross border service from and to Motherwell. We recognise the difficulty of balancing headline city-to-city journey time at times of peak

business travel with the needs of such intermediate points, and would be prepared to discuss in more detail how the aspiration to enhance the level of long-distance services from Motherwell could most effectively be delivered.

Timetabling

24. Scottish Ministers are not convinced that it is necessary to ‘flight’ the passenger train services into a group of fast trains which closely following one another in each hour in order to provide capacity for freight to meet current or project freight demand, taking into account plans to increase capacity on alternative routes. This policy fails to maximise the potential benefits of the performance and capacity improvements on the northern section of the West Coast route that have been created through the modernisation programme. The level of service between Scotland and Preston in the north-west of England (and points beyond by connection) could effectively be doubled with the same train resources if the timetable were re-planned around a 30 minute headway of fast trains. Our analysis of the Scottish section of the route suggests that this would still provide adequate capacity for current and projected west coast main line freight demand. Further freight capacity would be possible if freight train operating companies were to adopt the improved performance of electric haulage.

25. Such a strategy would greatly enhance the attractiveness of the passenger service to long distance travellers and effect a further shift in mode towards rail from less sustainable modes of travel. It would also assist in developing inter-connectional opportunities and optimising the pattern of intermediate calls over the northern section of route. Scottish Ministers therefore advise that an option to restructure the December 2008 timetable around a 30 minute headway for fast passenger services should be developed to provide the most attractive service possible with the resources available.

Weekend service levels

26. Scottish Ministers welcome the intentions of the restructured timetable to ensure a comprehensive weekend train service (as opposed to the regular use of road transport) following the completion of the West Coast Main Line modernisation engineering works, and supports the general structure of the weekend timetable plans. In the event of that longer blockades of the two-track railway are required for major tasks, we advise that every effort must be made to ensure that the East Coast Main Line remains open for full operations during periods when the West Coast Main Line is closed, and vice versa. The requirement is for a predictable and uninterrupted journey between Scotland and England to be available at all times, by at least one route, with the same range of fares available at times of disruption as are available at times of normal service to encourage rail use for long distance leisure journeys at weekends.

On-board facilities/First Class provision

24. Scottish Ministers are aware that the Cross Country franchise has developed considerable growth in business travel over the past 10 years, and that a significant part of the market for cross-country services is now in the business sector. This business is of particular strategic value to the economies of both Scottish and English cities on the cross country network. Accordingly we advise that the service quality specification for the services on former cross-country routes should continue to feature an adequate provision for First Class travellers, appropriate First class fares, and (as noted above) as a minimum no diminution in

the quality and availability of catering services on all cross-border services. It is expected that services that in the relet Cross Country franchise and on the routes to be transferred to the West Coast and Transpennine franchises will retain the current onboard services as a minimum. It is also essential that on-board catering services are provided at an acceptable level at weekends to reflect the relatively long journeys made by cross-border passengers.