

Respondent Information Form and Questions

Please Note this form **must** be returned with your response to ensure that we handle your response appropriately

1. Name/Organisation

Organisation Name

Title Mr ☒ Ms ☐ Mrs ☐ Miss ☐ Dr ☐ *Please tick as appropriate*

Surname

Forename

2. Postal Address

The Manse		
Fort William Road		
Newtonmore		
Inverness-shire		
Postcode PH20 1DG	Phone 01540 673238	Email alanbuchan@btinternet.com

3. Permissions - I am responding as...

Individual

☒

/ Group/Organisation

☐

Please tick as appropriate

- (a) Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site)?

Please tick as appropriate ☒ Yes ☐ No

- (b) Where confidentiality is not requested, we will make your responses available to the public on the following basis

Please tick ONE of the following boxes

Yes, make my response, name and address all available ☒

or

Yes, make my response available, but not my name and address ☐

or

Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address ☐

- (c) The name and address of your organisation **will be** made available to the public (in the Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site).

Are you content for your **response** to be made available?

Please tick as appropriate ☒ Yes ☐ No

- (d) We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?
- Please tick as appropriate ☒ Yes ☐ No

Consultation Questions

The answer boxes will expand as you type.

Procuring rail passenger services

1. What are the merits of offering the ScotRail franchise as a dual focus franchise and what services should be covered by the economic rail element, and what by the social rail element?

Q1 comments: A good balance 50-50 between the two factors is needed.

2. What should be the length of the contract for future franchises, and what factors lead you to this view?

Q2 comments: Six years is good, giving time to plan, but enough incentive to perform well at any time during this short period.

3. What risk support mechanism should be reflected within the franchise?

Q3 comments: There should perhaps be the sanction of franchise withdrawal, or subsidy withdrawal, in extreme circumstances.

4. What, if any, profit share mechanism should apply within the franchise?

Q4 comments: I am not a businessman, but a profit share of 20% seems sufficient?

5. Under what terms should third parties be involved in the operation of passenger rail services?

Q5 comments: Government, local authorities and community councils should all be given a say, but there should be facility for Scotrail to appeal if local councillors without detailed knowledge cause problems.

6. What is the best way to structure and incentivise the achievement of outcome measures whilst ensuring value for money?

Q6 comments: Question not altogether understood !

7. What level of performance bond and/or parent company guarantees are appropriate?

Q7 comments: Maximum guarantees which the parent companies can give should be acceptable.

8. What sanctions should be used to ensure the franchisee fulfils its franchise commitments?

Q8 comments: Early withdrawal of the franchise or withdrawal of subsidy should be a sanction available in extreme circumstances.

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

9. Under the franchise, should we incentivise good performance or only penalise poor performance?

Q9 comments: Both incentives and penalties required.

10. Should the performance regime be aligned with actual routes or service groups, or should there be one system for the whole of Scotland?

Q10 comments: One system preferable.

11. How can we make the performance regime more aligned with passenger issues?

Q11 comments: More consultation with local community councils and local staff required.

12. What should the balance be between journey times and performance?

Q12 comments: A sensible balance is required, with journey times which are not too fast. It's OK at the moment.

13. Is a Service Quality Incentive Regime required? And if so should it cover all aspects of stations and service delivery, or just those being managed through the franchise?

Q13 comments: It is probably required and should cover all aspects.

14. What other mechanisms could be used for assessing train and station quality?

Q14 comments: Stations benefit from local involvement.

Scottish train services

15. Can better use be made of existing train capacity, such as increasing the permitted standing time beyond the limit of 10 minutes or increasing the capacity limit? What is an acceptable limit for standing times on rail services?

Q15 comments: Fifteen minutes is perhaps the maximum acceptable standing time.

16. Should the number of services making use of interchange stations (both rail to rail and rail to other modes) be increased to reduce the number of direct services? What would be the opportunities and challenges of this?

Q16 comments: It is inevitable that passengers will have to change more often in the future as services expand. New interchange stations may need to be built. The challenge will be to achieve reliable connections.

17. Should Government direct aspects of service provision such as frequency and journey time, or would these be better determined by the franchisee based on customer demand?

Q17 comments: Both Government and franchisee need to cooperate on customer demand, taking account of local input.

18. What level of contract specification should we use the for the next ScotRail franchise?

Q18 comments: As ever, a good balance is required, with some leeway provided, and some safeguards too. Such a system should be flexible.

19. How should the contract incentivise the franchisee to be innovative in the provision of services?

Q19 comments: They should be asked to liaise directly with local Community Councils, as well as Local Authorities, and local staff on the ground.

Scottish rail fares

20. What should be the rationale for, and purpose of, our fares policy?

Q20 comments: The rationale should be to maximise revenue without reducing passenger numbers.

21. What fares should be regulated by government and what should be set on a commercial basis? Do your recommendations change by geographic area (the Strathclyde area example), or by type of journey (for example suburban or intercity)?

Q21 comments: There should probably be a mixture of regulated fares and commercial judgments. However, the judgments have to be seen to be fair and free from anomalies. Geographical disparities may not be a good thing.

22. How should we achieve a balance between the taxpayer subsidy and passenger revenue contributions in funding the Scottish rail network? At what rate should fares be increased, and how feasible would it be to apply higher increases to Sections of the network which have recently been enhanced?

Q22 comments: The fares can be increased annually by c. 6%, as in the past, but it's not a good idea to increase fares on a particular route when a specific improvement is achieved. There is always an adverse customer reaction which immediately becomes counterproductive.

23. What should the difference be between peak and off-peak fares? Will this help encourage people to switch to travelling in the off-peak?

Q23 comments: Peak/Off-peak balance is about right at the moment.

Scottish stations

24. How should we determine what rail stations are required and where, including whether a station should be closed?

Q24 comments: A wide variety of factors should be taken into account, and not just population within a specific radius of a station. Fare levels should be looked at, alternative bus services and connections need to be examined, population patterns and requirements need to be studied. These all need to be assessed, and not too objectively!

25. What are the merits or issues that arise from a third party (such as a local authority or local business) being able to propose, promote and fund a station or service?

Q25 comments: There are many merits of local involvement at various levels – quality of service, fare anomalies, frequencies, station location. There are one or two pitfalls too, in the form of unreasonable demands, which should be resisted.

26. Should only one organisation be responsible for the management and maintenance of stations? If this was the franchisee how should that responsibility be structured in terms of leasing, investment, and issues relating to residual capital value?

Q26 comments: Yes, it is better to have only one authority, and it should be a branch of Scotrail . Scotrail should own the stations?

27. How can local communities be encouraged to support their local station?

Q27 comments: They can be encouraged through their local Community Councils and the local media.

28. What categories of station should be designated and what facilities should be available at each category of station?

Q28 comments: Facilities should be determined by passenger numbers, and the facilities should be minimal at stations with a very low patronage. Please note that passenger numbers are not always accurately reflected by ticket sales from that station.

Cross-border services

29. Should cross-border services continue to go north of Edinburgh? In operating alongside ScotRail services, how do cross-border services benefit passengers and taxpayers? And who should specify these services, the Department of Transport or the Scottish Ministers?

Q29 comments: Cross-border services should certainly continue to go north of Edinburgh. Many people use them to travel from north of the Tay to England who might not use connecting services. Many people still do not trust a two-stage journey, especially the elderly. Both Governments should have an input. More detail in my accompanying text.

30. Or should the cross-border services terminate at Edinburgh Waverley, allowing opportunities for Scottish connections? And if so, what additional benefits would accrue from having an Edinburgh Hub?

Q30 comments: No, Edinburgh is too crowded for a hub; the chaotic scenes can be imagined. Perth has plenty space and good inter-platform access already.

Rolling stock

31. What alternative strategies or mechanisms could be used to reduce the cost of the provision of rolling stock?

Q31 comments: Scotrail should own the rolling stock. Continental suppliers might be used?

32. What facilities should be present on a train and to what extent should these facilities vary according to the route served?

Q32 comments: Catering might benefit from expansion, if self-financing, in the form of more buffet bars as well as trolleys. Bike and buggy space could be expanded with a larger area completely free of seats. Play areas for young children would also be good. See my text.

Passengers – information, security and services

33. How should we prioritise investment for mobile phone provision and / or Wi-Fi type high-bandwidth services?

Q33 comments: Gradual improvement.

34. How should we balance the need for additional seating capacity and retain the flexibility of a franchisee to offer first-class services if commercially viable?

Q34 comments: The franchisee can decide where First Class should exist. However, the seats should never be cramped in the way there were/are on 158s. The class 170 trains are about right in this respect.

35. What issues and evidence should be considered prior to determining whether or not to ban the consumption of alcohol on trains?

Q35 comments: There should be more effective powers and mechanisms to oust passengers, rather than banning alcohol. Passengers can be drunk when they board, after all. See text.

36. How can the provision of travel information for passengers be further improved?

Q36 comments: Fewer standard comments, and fewer announcements in general would please customers. No one pays any attention to frequent standard announcements.

Caledonian Sleeper

37. Should we continue to specify sleeper services, or should this be a purely commercial matter for a train operating company?

Q37 comments: They should probably be specified.

38. Should the Caledonian Sleeper services be contracted for separately from the main ScotRail franchise? Or should it be an option for within the main ScotRail franchise?

Q38 comments: Better to keep within Scotrail, even if funded from Westminster.

39. We would be interested in your views in the level and type of service that the Caledonian Sleeper Services should provide. Including:

- What is the appeal of the Caledonian Sleeper Service, and if there were more early and late trains would the appeal of the sleeper services change?
- What is the value of sleeper services to Fort William, Inverness and Aberdeen and are these the correct destinations, for example would Oban provide better connectivity?
- What facilities should the sleeper services provide and would you pay more for better facilities?

Q39 comments: Later trains would not help the Highlands, where the sleeper is the best way of travelling. Fort William is well enough used, but other places also have potential – see my text.

Environmental issues

40. What environmental key performance indicators should we consider for inclusion in the franchise agreement or the High Level Output Specification?

Q40 comments: It makes sense to use electric trains where wires exist.

Response to Rail 2014 Consultation

Alan Buchan
The Manse
Fort William Road
Newtonmore PH20 1DG
alanbuchan@btinternet.com

I welcome this opportunity to have a say in the future of rail services in Scotland.

Ministerial Statement There is no doubt that the ministers believe in the independence of railway services within Scotland! This is to be welcomed.

Executive Summary

There is huge scope for increase in freight services, and the commitment to that aim is very welcome.

I could not support separate franchises for profitable routes, which is the road to excessive bureaucracy and reduced investment for less profitable routes.

Other aspects of the summary are covered in the following headings and on the mandatory application form included herewith as an attachment.

1) Rail in Scotland

With revenue only representing 26% of the costs of running the railways, there is a clear need to continue to increase passenger numbers and freight. There is also a need to economise where possible.

2) Transport Policy and Structural Developments

Your document refers specifically to three proposed developments, but details given of the plans appear sketchy at the moment. These are Edinburgh-Glasgow, Perth-Inverness and Aberdeen-Inverness.

With Edinburgh-Glasgow, I am inclined to think that there are now too many trains, leading to congestion and potential delay. With four operating routes between the two cities, it might be better to concentrate on a half hourly service via Falkirk High with increased capacity, increasing to quarter-hourly at busy times of day. Trains could go by other routes at different departure times, with other routes like Edinburgh-Stirling and a regular Glasgow-Fife train serving the intermediate stations

There may also be too many trains on the Bathgate route. They do not appear to be overly busy when they reach Edinburgh. It might be better to operate a half hourly fast service, and have a separate Livingston to Helensburgh stopping service for smaller stations like Blackridge and Caldercruix.

With Perth to Inverness, an hourly service is desirable. Economies could be made by reducing the number of manually operated signal boxes, creating more flexible running. Extra passing loops at Daviot, Newtonmore, Ballinluig and Murthly would help. Needed most of all for Edinburgh-bound passengers would be a passing loop at Newburgh. On several occasions I have experienced long delays at Ladybank or Bridge of Earn in my regular journeys from Newtonmore to Edinburgh.

When changes in the timetable are made, consultation with local Community Councils might be beneficial. The recent changes to the Highland route, on 10th December, have not altogether reflected local demand. Commuter passengers have not benefited from the retiming of the former 1718 train from Perth to Inverness (it now leaves at 1618). There were previously quite a few passengers for Dunkeld or Blair Atholl on this train, who can no longer use the train to travel to work in Perth, as there is no suitable return service.

With Aberdeen to Inverness, replacement of rough track, especially nearer the Aberdeen end would be desirable. The benefits of re-doubling track from Aberdeen to Inverurie are obvious, opening up the possibility of a local service from Inverurie to Stonehaven with stations at places like Kintore, Bucksburn, Kittybrewster, Cove, and Muchalls, where housing has expanded greatly. Further north, new passing loops at places like Pitcaple, Cairnie, Orbliston and Dalcross would help make an hourly service on that route possible and open up freight capacity. This might be more useful than building new stations at Forres and Keith - both of which could be adapted at lesser expense. I imagine you have much of this in mind.

There are a number of new passenger routes which could be re-created or re-started quite cheaply, for example:

Stirling-Dunfermline
Falkirk-Grangemouth
Thornton Jn-Leven
Glasgow North-South Crossrail
Glasgow-Kirkcaldy
Perth or Leuchars-Arbroath (stopping)
Newcraighall-Slateford via Cameron Toll/Morningside

Others like St. Andrews-Leuchars would be much more expensive but worthwhile. Extending the Borders line to Hawick should also be an urgent aim.

3) Procuring Rail Passenger Services

This area is for businessmen and accountants to sort out. I have no expertise in this area or strong views on it.

4) Achieving Reliability in Performance and Service Quality

I have answered each of the given questions on the mandatory form. The most important ingredient is to have motivated staff, and motivated managers and attractive conditions for staff. This seems to have been achieved to some extent in recent years, but there is still a view amongst the staff on the ground that senior management is a little remote. The public may be encouraged to have a say in running the railways, as in this exercise, but the staff with direct experience of running the system at local level should also have their views taken seriously.

5) Scottish Train Services

It is inevitable that people will have to stand occasionally, and perhaps up to 15 minutes is acceptable.

This section also refers to the minimal use made of the **Motherwell-Cumbernauld** service. It would be more useful and would attract more passengers if it were to be extended to Falkirk Grahamston or Stirling at the north end and to Hamilton West at the south end. The service could perhaps be more actively promoted.

The North and West **Highland Routes** are certainly quiet in the winter, but investment in observation car trains with tour guides would help to attract year-round passengers.

More publicity locally, nationally and internationally would also help. A few years ago I went into the hotel at Tyndrum and found scores of leaflets about local tourist attractions, but no information about train times at the two railway stations which serve this tiny village.

Similarly the Tourist Information office at Portree in Skye had no leaflets about the Kyle or Mallaig Scotrail trains. The situation may be better now?

A lot of money could be saved if passengers were willing to change at **Interchange Stations** (section

5.16 of your report), and I would welcome this, as it would free up capacity at Edinburgh and Glasgow, for potential new services like the Edinburgh south side suburban line.

An example of where this might be done is the Fife circle route. At the moment there are four trains per hour travelling from Edinburgh to serve this route, one often following closely upon another; the service could be reduced to two at off-peak times, with a connecting service from Inverkeithing in one direction round the circle. Some of the circle trains are very lightly used in the middle of the day and in the evenings.

In section 5.18 you talk about **bus connections**. With a very small number of exceptions at Leuchars, Markinch and Keith, meaningful connections are still few and far between. The "Sustrans" One-Ticket system is good where it exists, but it does not appear to exist in the North of Scotland and the tickets also should be more widely obtainable. They are not available on buses or trains and I have often found that the staff at Pay-Points in newspaper shops, garages etc. have not been trained in selling them - it can take twenty minutes to buy one.

As regards **train connections**, these need to be meaningful. On the Highland line (where I live) the connection times at Perth are often unreliable. Recently I noticed the afternoon train from Inverness arriving at Perth arriving a few minutes late at 1701, but the 1700 "connection" for Kirkcaldy and Edinburgh had already departed on time. You cannot call that a connection. It could have waited a few minutes without jeopardising crossing points unduly. It would be counterproductive to create more "connections" if missing such connections results in an hour's wait.

I would like to question the wisdom of not having the Edinburgh-Aberdeen trains stop at Kirkcaldy. Leuchars may show greater use, and the trains should stop there, but there is surely potential patronage at Kirkcaldy. The local Edinburgh-Dundee service does not connect well at Dundee for stations further north. Kirkcaldy should have a regular direct service to Aberdeen. There is surely also a case for a more frequent service from Glasgow to Dundee throughout the day, connecting at Dundee with the Edinburgh - Aberdeen service.

I do not think the specification of any services should be left entirely to the franchisee. Government and local Community Councils should also have a say.

Specific questions answered on the form.

6) Scottish Rail Fares

Most people now accept that in most forms of public transport, cheaper "**Advance**" tickets are here to stay and that booking tickets weeks in advance can save a great deal of money. It is fair enough that those who have time to spare and who can plan in advance (often those who are unemployed or on pensions) should benefit. Those in business who have to make journeys at the last minute can pay more.

However, considerable irritation is caused to the public by unfairness within this system.

It may be that national guidelines dictate that, for example, passengers in Kingussie and Newtonmore should pay almost double the price enjoyed by those in Aviemore or Inverness for Advance tickets to Edinburgh or Glasgow. The fare from Aviemore to Edinburgh is currently £10.30, from Kingussie or Newtonmore to Edinburgh £20.30.

It would be easy to instruct guards to turn a blind eye to those boarding at Kingussie or Newtonmore with Advance tickets from Aviemore. Unfortunately this has not always happened and some have been charged full fares on boarding. The only consequence of this is to alienate the public. It does nothing to enhance First Scotrail's reputation. The official explanation only sounds absurd to the layman.

The same problem exists on the West Highland routes with Advance tickets from Oban to Glasgow being considerably cheaper than those from Connel Ferry to Glasgow, etc.

Under item **6.4**, you mention the problem of long distance tickets being more expensive than buying

them in stages. This problem is still widespread and needs to be looked at thoroughly. From Newtonmore, we can buy tickets for long journeys much more cheaply on the day by buying day returns in stages.

Under item **6.8** you mention that the "Edinburgh Commuter Area" extends to Addiewell in West Lothian. It is therefore difficult to understand why a day return from Edinburgh to Addiewell is (and always has been) significantly more expensive than a day return from Edinburgh to West Calder and most other stations in West Lothian. The rail journey to Bathgate is much the same mileage, but cheaper. Why is Addiewell singled out to have a more expensive fare?

Item **6.15** - Yes, the decision on how to travel (rail/road) is often last minute so every factor, including fares, can count in every situation. It is not a good idea to have inter-city fares unregulated. It just leads to people buying tickets in stages (e.g. Edinburgh to Falkirk, Falkirk to Glasgow, in event of Edinburgh to Glasgow fares being increased unduly). All fares should be planned and controlled, in order to be fair.

Specific questions answered on the form.

7) Scottish Stations

Item **7.1** Good access to stations is certainly important. One area which could be improved is in creating secondary station entrances. In many cases there is just one entrance to stations, increasing walking distances for passengers arriving at the stations. The west side of Aberdeen Station would benefit from direct access to the platforms. The east side of Stirling station used to have a useful entrance on the Cambuskenneth side, where there might be room for a new car park. If barriers have to be installed at secondary entrances, do they have to be permanently staffed?

Item **7.3** You specifically mention Broughty Ferry Station. As I mentioned under item 2, the time has maybe come to reintroduce a stopping service between Dundee and Arbroath.

Item **7.4** There is certainly a danger of losing passengers when extra stations create longer journey times. Kirknewton lost passengers when Kingsknowe, Wester Hailes and Curriehill were added. Some re-openings were maybe a mistake - I keep thinking that Falkirk Camelon might have been better served by connecting buses to Grahamston and Larbert.

Item **7.5** There is a danger of being too objective in assessing the likely patronage of potential new stations. After my experiences of STAG appraisals in the Stow Station campaign, I found them much too inflexible. Assessments of potential new stations need to take account of all sorts of things apart from population levels within a two kilometre radius. Current level of bus service, state of the local roads, weather conditions in the winter, tourist potential, historic use when stations were open in previous times, distance from large city destinations, likely fares, and local attitudes to the railway all need to be taken into account.

Item **7.8** If stations are to be closed, a genuine attempt has to be made to find an alternative. If, for example, either Culrain or Invershin were to be closed to save journey time, a safer path should be created across the viaduct. Maybe some stations on the south side of Glasgow are unnecessary, but they all perhaps show a higher usage than many rural stations. Some economies could be made in the maintenance costs of small rural halts - no need to maintain public address systems, when most people now have mobile phones. In assessing usage of particular stations, it's important to realise that ticket sales are not the only indicator - many people using Newtonmore Station, for example, have bought their tickets from Kingussie for return purposes. The ticket sales will thus not show usage for Newtonmore for these journeys.

Item **7.16** It makes more sense for Scotrail to own the stations, then leasing costs (a theoretical concept?) would be less of a problem?

Item **7.23** Local involvement in station enhancement excellent.

Item **7.25** Does *Historic Scotland* not give grants for restoration of historic station buildings, e.g.

Burntisland? Local input desirable in every case.

Item **7.35** Good idea to have cycle storage racks under cover in more stations. At Kingussie there is a large canopied area (larger than ever necessary), but the cycle racks have been installed outside it and are open to the elements.

8) Cross-Border Services

Item **8.4** The East Coast service from London to Inverness operates well below the capacity of a nine coach train for much of the year, though it is well filled at Christmas and July to mid-September. The London-Aberdeen services, however are well filled throughout the year, although not all week, with students from Aberdeen, Dundee and St. Andrews providing some of the clientele.

In the last two years, the East Coast train to Inverness has performed unreliably north of Perth in bad weather, due partly to traction problems. There might be a case for running it only from Perth to London. However, under the present system it should be noted that this would have the effect of doubling the cost of Advance fares from Kingussie to Edinburgh under the Scotrail system. That can be changed of course. It would be better to use Perth as an interchange station; Edinburgh Waverley is much too busy and cramped.

Instead of East Coast running a daytime train to Inverness, however, there might be a case for Virgin running a smaller five coach train from London Euston to Inverness. The new trains with dual electric/diesel operation are obvious candidates to operate the service. When daytime London to Inverness trains started in the mid-1970s, they initially followed the West Coast route, running via Birmingham, Crewe, Carlisle, Motherwell, Coatbridge and Stirling. The engine was changed near Coatbridge. These trains were always busy and I never fully understood why they were diverted on to the slower route from Inverness via Edinburgh to Kings Cross.

9) Rolling Stock

Rolling Stock is pretty good on the whole. The Class 170s do not seem to function well in very low temperatures, being - I notice - replaced by 158s on the Inverness route when the temperature falls below minus 10 degrees. They also do not have small snowploughs attached, as the 158s do. Neither type of train performs too well on long gradients like Blair Atholl-Drumochter.

Item **9.5** Cycle carriage. Better to have a larger space completely free of seats, for bicycles, buggies, etc. The 156 trains used on the West Highland routes are better for bicycle capacity. With lower back rests on the seats they also allow better sight-lines of the scenery. Even better to have purpose-built trains with larger windows, like observation cars.

Item **9.20** Purpose-built trains for the Highland routes are really required, with static buffet bar catering rather than trolleys, at least one toilet per carriage, larger observation-style windows, good uphill acceleration, attached snowploughs, etc. Dedicated play areas for smaller children (as on trains in Switzerland) and video carriages are good long term aims. Corridor connections between coupled units are essential; the current practice of sometimes joining two units without corridor connections is hardly safe.

10) Passenger Comfort

Item **10.4** Better internet access should certainly be the aim.

Item **10.14** Better to confine First Class accommodation to longer distance trains. I can see little benefit of First Class at all, except on larger trains which have all the First Class accommodation quite separate from Standard Class. The little First Class compartments on Scotrail trains are often cramped.

Item **10.18** Alcohol.

To ban alcoholic drinks on all trains is to take a sledge hammer to crack a nut.

Many troublesome passengers are in any case already drunk when they board the train. Banning alcohol would not therefore solve the problem entirely. Instead there needs to be a swift police response, with the guard being able to make contact with the police during the journey. The most

troublesome passengers could be ejected from the train, preferably half way between Rannoch and Corrour, or between Forsinard and Altnabreac!

I often enjoy a glass of wine on the train, when eating. It would be a pity to stop this. The ability to drink alcohol - and hot drinks - on trains is an advantage trains have over road transport. Better to keep it.

Item **10.24** Essential to have two members of staff on every passenger train.

Item **10.25** There are too many announcements on Scotrail trains, often twice at every station. Sometimes the automatic voice is followed by the guard saying exactly the same thing.

Item **10.30** Information tends to be lacking in extreme situations. Passengers are informed when a train is late, but sometimes there is no announcement when it doesn't appear at all.

11) Caledonian Sleeper

There may be scope for economies in staffing levels. There seems to be a large number of staff on each sleeper, particularly in the buffet car.

Would there be economies in joining the various sleepers together in the same place? Are extra staff not required at Carstairs for the Edinburgh/Glasgow sleeper?

Are couchettes not a good idea for student travellers? Short distance seated passengers should be allowed on the full Inverness-Stirling leg (as well as Fort William to Glasgow) to generate revenue.

Item **11.9** I thought the rolling stock dated from the early 1980s, not 1970s. Some of the carriages do seem to suffer from "square wheel syndrome", judging by the noise, suggesting that the wheels need overhaul.

Best to be run by Scotrail, as at present.

There may be scope for a service from Oban to London, but the Fort William portion seems to be quite well used, judging by the lack of bargain berths available.

Although Stranraer may no longer be of much use for daytime trains connecting with ferries, there may be scope for a night train, with a bus taking passengers from Cairnryan to Stranraer or Girvan for a sleeper service which might also be useful for passengers travelling from Ayr, Prestwick, Kilmarnock and Dumfries to London.

There used to be a useful sleeper service from Edinburgh and Glasgow to Birmingham, Bristol, Exeter and Plymouth. With recent general increases in rail passengers throughout the country, there may be scope for a revival of this one?

12) Environment

I am not an expert on this, but it obviously makes sense to use electric trains where wires exist. Use of diesels under the wires has always been fairly common. Pity.

Alan Buchan
alanbuchan@btinternet.com
January 2012

