

I am writing in response to the consultation on the future of rail services in Scotland. The whole document is fundamentally flawed and has the potential to highlight Scotland as closed for Business.

The Railways in general seem to think they have a right to exist simply because they are the railways. They rely too heavily on commuter traffic and do not do enough to promote and develop the leisure market and that is large market which is continually growing and provides big opportunities to develop services. They need to work more with agencies such as VisitScotland and perhaps private companies and organisations such as Music Promoters, SRU and the like to really give people a reason to visit all areas covered by the Rail Network. The Rail Network need to reach further than Just the central belt in order to encourage people to use the railways. Developments need to be introduced to allow passengers to travel to and from the North faster than is currently achievable.

There is plenty to see and do in the north of Scotland but there is far too much focus on Edinburgh and Glasgow and if you really want passengers to use the railways more and more reasons need to be given for them to do so.

Airline Disruption:

When Airports are fog bound or a situation like the volcanic Ash cloud its again.. It was East Coast that carried significantly most passengers.. Do you really think ScotRail could have coped with that in Aberdeen with a 170?... no... hundreds of passengers would have been left on the platforms.

Unsuitable Rolling Stock:

All of ScotRail's trains are not suitable for Long Distance travel.. They are suitable for routes like the fife circle and not a lot else. When I mean long distance travel I mean Aberdeen/Inverness/Edinburgh/Dundee/Perth/Glasgow. Catering facilities are basic and sometimes non existent. Would you really buy a first class ticket for a small cup of coffee and a biscuit that you would get free in a hotel. If ScotRail expect to make money from First class they really need a full coach for first class to encourage passengers to use it.. 20 or so seats is not really enough as it can often be full.

Do you really expect to sell a cup of coffee by simply looking at them or pulling the trolley through the train like a suitcase without engaging with the passengers because this happens a lot? Ask the passengers. ScotRails 3 car trains aren't long so there is plenty of opportunity to take your time and provide a much better catering service to the travelling public.

The provision of luggage facilities are poor, sorry its not poor its a total joke given the size of luggage etc these days. At times these trains are invariably full and standing, packed to the doors with people and luggage and to be honest are just not large enough for the inter city services.

Sleeper:

I think it is a terrible idea to even consider abandoning the sleeper service altogether. It does need investment but it is a service which many people love so it has to continue.

Cross Border services:

As for the Cross Border daytime services. Passengers love direct trains and as a train guard for East Coast they keep telling me time and time again this is the case. Look at the luggage facilities on an HST, the catering facilities, capacity, set up of the train.. passengers love all this compared to ScotRail. These trains often have 70+ in the first class.. can a ScotRail 170 accommodate that plus 400 in standard..... No. It will drive many passengers away from the trains completely. They will fly, take the bus or just not travel at all.

Perhaps cross border services could be improved by becoming a limited stop service as this would help to speed up the journey times between Aberdeen and Edinburgh and ultimately further south. Perhaps the London Trains should only stop at Leuchars, Dundee, Montrose (I include the Montrose Stop due to the antiquated nature of the signalling north of Cupar) and Aberdeen. This would leave the commuter traffic, or most of the commuter traffic for ScotRail. I appreciate in saying so will upset stakeholders such as councillors, MSP's and MP's but it would make a great step in speeding up cross border services to Aberdeen, Dundee, Perth and Inverness. This would really mean that ScotRail/East Coast and Cross Country Services would be complimenting each other.

It is a total fudge to say friendly platforming at Edinburgh will enable a smooth transition from a ScotRail Service to a cross border service... it will not, trains will get shunted to the opposite side of the station, the lifts will be broken, or various other factors will just have the effect of passengers diverting away from the trains, Passengers will not buy into that at all

The point was raised that ScotRail gets a large subsidy from Transport Scotland to facilitate the running of the franchise.. Well let me put it this way.. If you terminate the East Coast and Cross Country trains at Edinburgh you will need to:

- employ and pay for new drivers, guards and catering staff;
- locate new rolling stock from somewhere;
- pay for its rental and maintenance;
- increased fuel costs.

This will surely add to an increased cost base for ScotRail which will need to be paid to operate the franchise (given other operators use their rolling stock and staff with no subsidy from the taxpayer). If you replace it with a ScotRail service in its current Specification the passengers will simply stop travelling by train in their droves. Given that East Coast Trains have 9 coach trains you are going to need 3 of them joined together to come close to the capacity on a 9 coach HST and the first class service is decimated as a result.

Revenue Protection:

Revenue Protection needs to be improved. Just because there are ticket Barriers at a station doesn't mean the passengers are on the correct train and I have seen on many occasions tickets not being checked because its assumed everyone has a ticket... some stations with ticket barriers let passengers through **WITHOUT** tickets and you wonder why the railway loses money.

ScotRail's Sunday Service:

Sundays on the Aberdeen to Edinburgh route are a little short of a joke. Everybody wants to travel at the weekends and ScotRail have got away with only running around four direct trains to Aberdeen on a Sunday. In my opinion for the benefit of the travelling public this has to change. Nearly every East Coast Train between these cities, on a Sunday is 3/4 full **at least** and on some occasions is **grossly over crowded** because of ScotRails reduced services. Because of this I think much of the tickets sold around weekend travel are the more flexible tickets because passengers travelling home on a sunday cannot get an advance ticket. Sundays need to become part of the working week for all ScotRail Staff like they are for us at East Coast and this will enable ScotRail to run more services on a sunday for the benefit of the travelling public who have been short changed on this for a good number of years.

To suggest that services north of Edinburgh are lightly loaded is far from the truth. These trains are nearly always busy for most of the year, as they cater for a cross border market.

It would just be political suicide for anyone to even contemplate axing cross border trains in Scotland and **you should remember that the public and business communities fought a long and hard campaign for these services to continue last year.**

Commuter Trains:

There really needs to be a commuter service between Aberdeen and Dundee calling at all stops to enable the Aberdeen to Edinburgh and Glasgow Services to stop only at Montrose in between, thus cutting down the journey times.

Infrastructure:

In order to allow the express services travel north quicker (I include all services operating to Aberdeen, Dundee and perhaps Perth and Inverness) they need to be separated from the commuter and local services in Fife and in order to do so I feel the only way to do this is to build a new line.. capable of 125mph running From Inverkeithing Junction to either Perth or Leuchars/just north of the Tay Bridge at Dundee.

It would be beneficial for big improvements being made to the signalling north of the Central belt.. were given a priority, primarily for the services north of Stirling and Cupar which is mostly of the old semaphor signalling type. Not 10 or 15 years down the line.. it needs to be brought forward.

To facilitate faster services to Aberdeen work should be done to improve the linespeed (perhaps 110 or 125mph) in certain areas such as Springfield, Monifeith - Arbroath and perhaps North of Hillside to Laurencekirk.

The crossovers on the line between Cupar and Aberdeen need to be improved to mainline standards so when disruption occurs, ie a broken down train and Single Line Working is imposed.. the passage of trains can be significantly improved because trains do not need to set back over points in order to cross to the opposite line and cause less delay to passengers.

Privatisation:

The whole point of privatisation was competition on the railways so the passenger can choose who they want to travel with. If an operator is losing money and passengers then the whole point of it would be that they up their game and raise the standards. I don't hear Asda trying to shut down Tesco because it might be taking revenue from them... they compete, they up their game, they provide a better service and give the passengers a reason to travel with them.

High Speed:

It is right that High Speed Rail comes to Scotland.. it is wrong that it comes only to Edinburgh and Glasgow. It needs to serve Aberdeen, Inverness, Dundee and Perth also.. It actually would not take much reduction in the journey time from say Aberdeen to London to make taking the train the quicker option

Conclusions:

It is vitally important Scotland has retains its cross border services to London. It is vitally important that Aberdeen, Inverness and Glasgow retain their cross border services as these are important for tourism, business and leisure. It vastly opens up the country for travel by train and I think if some or sorry all of the ideas I have suggested above were acted upon Rail Services to the North of Scotland would be significantly improved and this would only be good for the whole of the country and help open Scotland up as a place to do business, visit, live in, holiday in and be beneficial to the North of Scotland. Scotland has a lot to offer, we need to shout about it more, particularly north of the central belt.

It is High time Scotland is promoted as a country to do business in. It definitely needs its cross border services to London serving Cities in Scotland North of Edinburgh. This is vital for Tourism, Business tourism, Business in general and the growth of the Scottish Economy. It is even more important when there is on-going speculation relating to the future of Scottish flights in and out of Heathrow. Many people are scared of flying and many in general see the train as a more comfortable and enjoyable experience which gives travellers and the like the opportunity to actually see Scotland.

If the cross border services are terminated at Edinburgh you just highlight that Aberdeen, Dundee, Perth, Glasgow, Inverness are closed for Business, closed for tourism, closed for leisure trips

The North of Scotland deserves better support from its government and its agencies, it is just as important as Glasgow and Edinburgh and services between these cities. I think if the infrastructure improvements were put in place, the cross border services became limited stop but continued through to Aberdeen and Inverness, a commuter service was operated between Dundee and Aberdeen to allow the journey time for services to Glasgow and Edinburgh to be reduced, the rail services in Scotland would be significantly improved for the better.