

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

Dornoch Rail Link Action Group

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

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3. Permissions - I am responding as...

Individual

☐

/ Group/Organisation

Please tick as

☒

- (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?

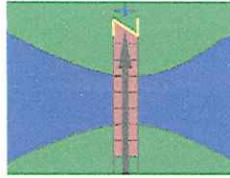
Please tick as appropriate ☒ Yes ☐ No

- (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



DORNOCH RAIL LINK ACTION GROUP

Hon. President Revd. Alistair Roy BD

Dornoch Rail Link Action Group Formal responses to Rail 2014 consultation

This is the official response of the Dornoch Rail Link Action Group to the Rail 2014 consultation for renewing the Scottish rail franchise and also for renewing the funding arrangements with Network Rail.

Section 3 – Procuring rail passenger services

Questions

01 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?

A): Scotland is a largely rural country with many lines serving a sparse population. Several lines in the Central Belt region could be run on an economic basis owing to the volume of passenger traffic carried on them, with leeway for commercial variation of service levels. Many lines however do serve a very important socio-economic function for many regional centres and rural areas which may not be easily reflected in simple transport economics. The retention and improvement of these lines is very important for the economic development regeneration of the areas thereby served, which would be of national and regional importance. These lines also generate substantial tourism income which should be recognised. This is further explored in the response to Question 17.

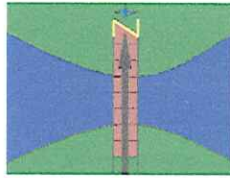
We would advise therefore that the rail franchise for Scotland should be managed as a dual focus franchise, with the Central Belt, urban and inter-urban services managed on at least a partly commercial/ economic basis, with the social element specified for rural and regional services such as Inverness – Thurso/ Wick.

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

A): We have difficulty agreeing that shorter franchises would encourage greater competitiveness as suggested in paragraphs 3.18 and 3.19. Rail is already competing against road and air, and it is important to encourage franchisees to invest in rolling stock and other capital plant/ equipment to increase rail's economic, social and environmental edge over road. Such investment is highly capital intensive and can take long periods of time to effect any appreciable return on such equipment, with purchase of new trains being an obvious example. The long franchise of Chiltern Railways and Virgin West Coast could be seen as an example. Moreover, how would residual asset value be maximised if the franchisee was only allowed a single term of less than 10 years after investing large sums of money in new trains?

We therefore suggest that new franchisees should be allowed a minimum term of 12 years, possibly 15 or even 20 years for the length of the franchise. Exacting terms would be built into such a contract to ensure a rigorous quality of service regime, with sanctions including loss of franchise should these terms be transgressed.

03 What risk support mechanism should be reflected within the franchise?



DORNOCH RAIL LINK ACTION GROUP

Hon. President Revd. Alistair Roy BD

No comment

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

No comment

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

A): If a third party can offer a service on any given line or group of lines which would be of equal or superior quality and value for money than that which the franchisee can offer, at less or no cost to the taxpayer, then our Group would support such a proposal. Indeed, the provision of such a service could be a community, company or corporation's method of augmenting local rural/ regional services and filling in the gap between subsidy and revenue/ income.

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

No comment

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

No comment

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

No comment

Section 4 – Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

Questions

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

A): We would support the introduction of a "virtuous circle", whereby good performance above an agreed cut-off point would result in rewards such as increased support for service improvement or even a lengthening of a franchise.

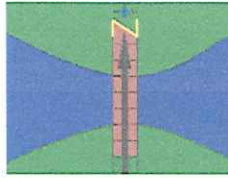
10 Should the performance regime be aligned with actual routes or service groups, or should there be one system for the whole of Scotland?

A): There could be a general regime for all of Scotland, with small scale variations or shifts in balances to reflect the circumstances to a particular line or region.

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

No comment.

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



DORNOCH RAIL LINK ACTION GROUP

Hon. President Revd. Alistair Roy BD

A): Our Group obviously supports the reliability and punctuality of services as outlined in Paragraph 4.8 in Section 4 of the consultation. We have recently conducted a passenger rail and local users' survey in the Far North, which confirms that reduction in the excessively long rail journey times on the Inverness – Thurso/ Wick railway line is the highest priority for 90% of respondents.

While we recognise the logic behind the arguments in Paragraphs 4.7 and 4.8 concerning the benefits of journey time reduction against reliability improvement, we vigorously and vehemently oppose any suggestion of further journey time increases. The current rail journey times on the above line are hindering efforts to regenerate ourselves post – Dounreay, as they are a major disincentive to personnel we rely on to help develop the Pentland Firth tidal/ wave power, offshore wind, West of Shetland oil/ gas and related developments. Positive developments in this regard have the potential to generate several hundred million pounds per year, which a better, faster railway to the far North could help realise. If conflicts as outlined in the relevant paragraphs arise, we would prefer line and train improvements to resolve the conflict as opposed to journey time increases. The ultimate example of this is, of course the Dornoch Rail Link. Our Group has conducted professional studies which confirm the value arising from the 45 minute/ 27 mile journey time reduction from this scheme on the Far North Line. This scheme is the biggest contributor towards a better used, more competitive and strategically relevant railway to the far North in the above context, along with other schemes.

We therefore believe that journey time reduction should be made a priority on this line and on the railways in general, particularly as the rail journey from Caithness to Inverness takes twice as long as road.

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?

No comment.

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

No comment.

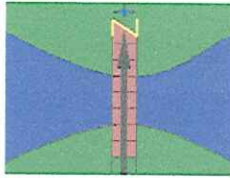
Section 5 – Scottish train services

Questions

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?

No comment

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?



DORNOCH RAIL LINK ACTION GROUP

Hon. President Revd. Alistair Roy BD

A): Several passengers greatly value the direct services going from Thurso/ Wick to Glasgow, Edinburgh or Aberdeen without having to change at Inverness. This service has been in operation before. Changing trains unnecessarily is a major dis-incentive to potential rail users and should be avoided. There is anecdotal evidence that forcing bus passengers from Wick to change buses at Dunbeath to get to Inverness has driven up rail usage from Wick, as changing buses or trains is a serious disadvantage to elderly/ disabled passengers or those with large amounts of luggage and young children.

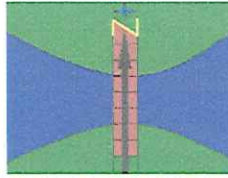
17 Should Government direct aspects of service provision such as frequency and journey time, or would these be better determined by the franchisee based on customer demand?

A): We welcome the recognition of journey time improvements on the rail network in general referred to in this section from Paragraph 5.11 onwards, and we particularly welcome the aspiration to improve rail journey times as a strategic outcome. This applies to rural lines as recognised in the graph shown under Paragraph 5.8, as this is a central issue on the Inverness – Thurso/ Wick line.

We nevertheless strongly disagree with the implied classification of our railway line as purely a tourist route. The Dornoch Rail Link Action Group can confirm that the issue of journey times is a serious issue for local residents and also for businesses wishing to invest in Caithness and the Far North to fully exploit the development of wave, tidal and offshore wind in the Pentland and Moray Firths and in Orkney, as well as West of Shetland oil and gas field developments. This is of fundamental importance in generating a sufficiently robust, thriving, prosperous economy in the Far North to counteract the forthcoming accelerated decommissioning programme for the Dounreay nuclear site, with around 2-3000 job losses. Tourist travel on our Line is limited to mostly the summer months, and is otherwise of little relevance.

Moreover, the unfavourably and unhelpfully long journey times from Caithness to Inverness are a major dis-incentive for business and commercial users as well as local users to use the Inverness – Wick railway line productively. We have conducted a rail survey of local rail users in the Far North, which confirms that reduced journey times are the greatest and most important improvement aspired to on our services, by some margin. There is also massive support for the Dornoch Rail Link by 90% of the respondents to the survey we have undertaken, covering a wide variety of users including rail passengers, as attached with our Group's responses to the Rail 2014 consultation. The issue of journey time reductions is therefore of critical and fundamental importance to the Far North Line, and should be treated as an equal of not greater priority compared to that for urban, commuter and inter-city services.

Therefore, we would support a dual-focus franchise as suggested in this question, specified by the Government in accordance with the strategic considerations outlined above. Any future franchise specified after 2014 **absolutely must** have a specification for journey time optimisation and reduction in accordance with the social objectives for inclusion, stability and regeneration as specified in the second bullet point entitled "Social Rail" under Paragraph 3.14, Section 3 of the Rail 2014 document. Leeway and provision should also be made for the implementation of major infrastructural improvements on rural lines as well as trunk routes on the scale



DORNOCH RAIL LINK ACTION GROUP

Hon. President Revd. Alistair Roy BD

ultimately approaching that afforded by the Dornoch Rail Link in any franchise specification. The Dornoch Rail Link would be the largest contributor for inclusion, and regeneration as discussed in our Corus / MVA studies on the Far North Line, by enabling a faster, more competitive and strategically relevant railway which would enable the connection of Dornoch town to the rail network once again. We would support the idea of community involvement in the provision of such services as suggested therein, to address local and commercial/ professional concerns.

Nevertheless, serious concerns have arisen over the wording in the same bullet point, which implies that local communities and organisations would be required to financially support the improvements to such services over and above those already arising from general taxation for rail service provision, fare costs and track access charges for freight operators. Our Group would have difficulty in accepting this extra cost burden for the local community, given that many rural communities are facing serious financial difficulties in the current economic climate. Our Group would also resist, as vigorously and aggressively as possible, any suggestion of service reduction or withdrawal implied should local communities be perceived as unable or unwilling to help fill the gap between subsidy and revenue income.

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

No comment

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

A): The value of railways in a socio-economic sense should be understood and maximised, as well as on a purely commercial basis. The latter idea is applicable to routes such as Glasgow – Edinburgh or Aberdeen, but the role of the railway in developing and regenerating areas served by the lines concerned, including particularly the Far North Line, can be recognised in the former view. In this case, the contract should allow, and indeed encourage, the franchisee to establish positive liaisons with regeneration partnerships, transport forums and engineering firms to help improve service frequency, reliability and journey time. Partnerships for the provision of new services could be established in a similar manner.

Section 6 – Scottish rail fares

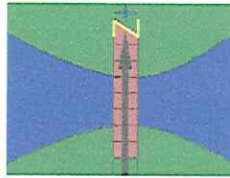
Questions

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

No comment

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)?

A): It would make sense for the fares to be set in a principally commercial level on areas with high passenger patronage, e.g. Glasgow – Edinburgh, or Glasgow/



DORNOCH RAIL LINK ACTION GROUP

Hon. President Revd. Alistair Roy BD

Edinburgh – Aberdeen, although not to the extent that this prices people off trains unnecessarily. Government regulation would apply more to the rural or regional lines, e.g. the Inverness – Thurso/ Wick or Kyle of Lochalsh. The long journey times of the Wick line particularly are a major dis-incentive for local passenger use, so regulation and subsidy should be applied to ensure that the fares are set at a sufficiently low value to attract custom, particularly where high road fuel prices are a major problem.

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?

A): In setting fares for the Scottish rail network, it should be recognised that volumes on certain regional and rural routes will not cover entirely the cost of running rail services therein. The broader economic and social inclusion benefits of good rail services should not be underestimated, however. Higher increases on any rail route would be politically difficult.

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?

No comment

Section 7 – Scottish stations

Questions

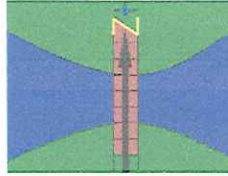
24 How should we determine what rail stations are required and where, including whether a station should be closed?

A): The prospect for new rail stations, or re-opening previously closed ones, should be examined as part of future strategy. One local example we can cite is Halkirk station in Caithness, which would be ideal for socio-economic and transport regeneration of Caithness post – Dounreay.

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?

A): Such a move to involve local communities in promoting a local station would help such communities fill the gap between revenue and subsidy for a particular rail service, e.g. Thurso, Wick and other far North Line stations for instance. Socio-economic regeneration funds would then possibly be available for such a move. In proposing the management of such a station, however, sufficient local money and voluntary or professional resource should be confirmed to be available before going through this move.

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?



DORNOCH RAIL LINK ACTION GROUP

Hon. President Revd. Alistair Roy BD

A): The presence of a single party for the management of a station ensures immediate accountability for resolution of issues pertaining to that station, rather than one party to "pass the buck" to another.

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

No comment.

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

No comment.

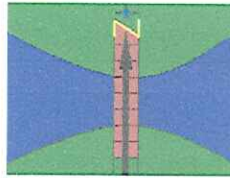
Section 8 – Cross border services

Questions

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?

A): In view of the response given to Question 15 in Section 5 responses, the importance of direct cross-border services to Inverness, Aberdeen and intermediate stations cannot be over-estimated. While the logic of making Edinburgh and Glasgow major interchanges for transfer onto services may seem apparent from the point of view of maximising passenger carriage for the Scotrail TOC northwards to Inverness/ Aberdeen and stations in between, this would be a major loss of Highland connectivity to stations south of the Border as the inconvenience of changing trains on a cold and draughty Edinburgh Waverley station concourse should not be underestimated. This applies particularly for passengers with large items of luggage, young children or elderly/ disabled passengers. Moreover, the Class 170 DMUs currently used on the Edinburgh/ Glasgow – Aberdeen/ Inverness services are not a suitable substitute for trains like the HSTs used on the Kings Cross – Aberdeen/ Inverness services, even if the trains themselves are fine on medium-distance services. The value of direct rail services should not be underestimated firstly in the context of major disruption to internal air services caused by adverse events like the Iceland volcano eruption, and also in the importance of Aberdeen as a major oil city and Inverness as the capital of the Highlands.

In view of maximising passenger usage and continuation of cross-border services, I will put this proposal forward on behalf of our Group. It is known that the IC-125 HSTs will require replacement with effect from 2020 onwards, partly on account of the disability compliance legislation and partly on account of the age of these trains, introduced in the late 1970's. It is also known that the replacement IEP trains will be in the form of electric only or diesel-electric hybrids, and will be configured as 10-, 8- or 5-carriage formations. The 10-car and 8-car electric IEP trains will eventually be used on the East Coast and Great Western services respectively, while 5-car hybrid services may be used on Cross-Country services or services away from "under the wires".



DORNOCH RAIL LINK ACTION GROUP

Hon. President Revd. Alistair Roy BD

Therefore, it would be easy to run two 5-car hybrids as a combined 10-car train from London as far as Edinburgh, before the services split at Edinburgh Waverley or even Haymarket. One 5-car unit runs to Inverness, while the other runs to Aberdeen. This reduces excess capacity on the direct trains, continues with the direct services to Aberdeen and Inverness and may even free up line capacity on the East Coast Main Line as separate services to Aberdeen and Inverness would no longer be required. Moreover, now we have the Airdrie – Bathgate line opened, it may even be possible to run one 5-car hybrid from London to Fort William via Edinburgh Waverley, Glasgow Queen Street Low Level, Dumbarton and Helensburgh Upper. The train would be electric as far as Dumbarton, with the pantographs coming down and the diesels engaged westwards from there. This proposal could work with some imagination and provide Fort William with major rail travel opportunities not currently realised.

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?

A): No. The direct connectivity for cities and areas north of Glasgow/ Edinburgh is vital for the reasons stated in the answer to Question 29. The number of passengers using Edinburgh Waverley is forecast to rise substantially, and forcing passengers to change trains will increase overcrowding and attendant safety issues with regard to platform occupation. Additional benefits of having an Edinburgh hub as proposed here are not immediately apparent.

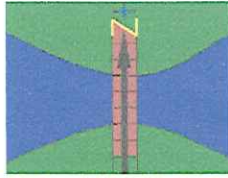
Section 9 – Rolling Stock

Questions

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

A): Commonality with other types of rolling stock in use in the U.K., Ireland and possibly Europe should be used as much as the U.K. loading gauge will allow. If refurbishment for Scottish regional and rural services is undertaken, then a comprehensive engine and transmission upgrade should be carried out for all regional diesel train services. An example of this would be the power train currently in use for the Class 172 DMUs recently introduced for London Midland services, which employs a diesel-mechanical transmission which would reduce engine wear and tear, associated maintenance and fuel consumption. This applies to electrical and ancillary equipment to reduce procurement and maintenance/ replacement costs. This naturally applies to electric trains, with the added bonus that these are inherently simpler and more reliable than diesel trains.

The same applies for the provision of new rolling stock, with this extending to bodysells and underfloor equipment. Bespoke equipment should be kept to a minimum when buying new trains. In order to reduce the fuel costs of diesel trains, a hybrid system of propulsion should be specified for new diesel trains with regenerative braking and battery electric propulsion. Such trains could then be easily converted to electric traction if they are deployed on electric lines or if the line they



DORNOCH RAIL LINK ACTION GROUP

Hon. President Revd. Alistair Roy BD

are used on is electrified. In order to reduce track access charges, a maximum axle loading of 12 tonnes should be specified for any new passenger D/EMU train ordered for Scotland.

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

A): The average passenger looks for comfortable seats with good legroom and back support, reliable air conditioning or heating depending on time of year, good toilets (at least 1, preferably 2 for a 2-car unit and respectively 2, preferably 3 for a 3-car train), and at least a basic level of catering. Cost and crowding considerations may preclude the provision of toilets or catering on journeys lasting less than 45 minutes, but we recommend that toilets should be provided on journeys lasting more than 45 minutes. Catering for hot and cold drinks should be provided for journeys of more than 1 hour, with food provided additionally for journeys longer than 90 minutes. We would also ask for at least 5 tables per carriage on long distance journeys to allow for families travelling together. Tip-up seats in vestibule areas must be provided on all trains.

Space for cycles should also be provided for at least 4 cycles for each 2-car train used on regional or rural routes.

Section 10 – Passengers – comfort, security and information

Questions

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

No comment

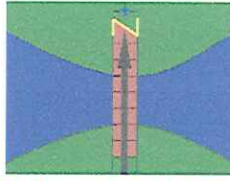
34 How should we balance the need for additional seating capacity and retain the flexibility of a franchisee to offer first-class services if commercially viable?

No comment

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

A): We recognise the difficulties and unpleasantness of excessive alcohol consumption on certain train services, and the adverse effects on other passengers. The discretionary banning of alcohol on certain trains could possibly be extended if (British Transport) Police and on-train staff evidence and CCTV footage suggests that rail services on certain areas and days are prone to alcohol-fuelled crime and anti-social behaviour. We however feel that the alcohol consumption is a societal issue which will not be resolved by a blanket ban on all train services in Scotland. The responsible and moderate consumption of alcoholic liquor on rural or regional services can be a relaxing and beneficial way of spending a journey.

We feel that a review and extension of targeted discretionary banning of alcohol on certain trains may be a more useful way of countering anti-social behaviour caused by excessive alcohol consumption – e.g. no alcohol on certain services during Friday



DORNOCH RAIL LINK ACTION GROUP

Hon. President Revd. Alistair Roy BD

or the weekends. A total ban would, in our view, be difficult to enforce under current social circumstances and may be counter-productive.

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

No comment

Section 11 – Caledonian Sleeper services

Questions

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

A): Our Group welcomes the recent announcement for the retention and upgrade of the sleeper services between Scotland and England as recently confirmed by both the Westminster and Holyrood Governments. Given that sleeper services do have a social benefit as well as a commercial benefit, we recommend that a minimum specification should be set by the Government. Leeway should however be given for improvements to such services on a commercial basis. Operation of the sleeper services on a purely commercial basis may compromise service levels to some current destinations, notably those in the Highlands. It is important that the broader commercial and socio-economic benefits should be recognised in the specification of sleeper services on their current basis, allowing leeway for commercial variation within acceptable limits.

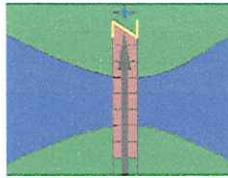
38 Should the Caledonian Sleeper services be contracted for separately from the main ScotRail franchise? Or should it be an option for within the main ScotRail franchise?

A): Given that the passenger and operational priorities may differ from the provision of daytime services in Scotland, it may make sense to manage the provision of sleeper services under a separate Train Operating Company. Some benefit may accrue from the merging of such a separate TOC with that responsible for the running of the Great Western sleeper rail services from London Paddington to the far South West of England, subject to external considerations. It is important that current connectivity and timing benefits to passenger traffic, with attendant commercial benefits and competitive pricing, should remain irrespective of who assumes charge of the sleeper services. It is also important that the comfort, speed, reliability, punctuality and safety of the services is maintained and improved under any circumstance.

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?

A): The principal appeal, for most people, is the travel time efficiency. This focuses on the ability to do up to a full day's work at or near one sleeper destination (e.g.



DORNOCH RAIL LINK ACTION GROUP

Hon. President Revd. Alistair Roy BD

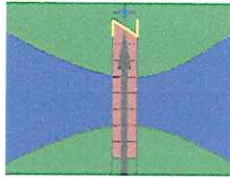
London) and then travel overnight on the sleeper for a business meeting several hundred miles away (e.g. Inverness, Aberdeen or the Central Belt) the next day. Many business people as well as families and leisure travellers use the sleeper train for these reasons from as far away as Caithness to travel to London and further onwards. The availability of restaurant style catering as well as an overnight berth or seat makes this an attractive, commercially benign and environmentally friendly travel option compared to domestic flights. The latter can be subject to severe disruption owing to external events such as the Iceland volcanic eruptions, and there is evidence that this is one factor leading to big increases in overnight sleeper travel. Another factor is the long check-in and security check times increasingly necessary in airports these days, which use up a lot of useful work time during the day, and can make commercial flying an unpleasant experience. Indeed, sleeper train travel in general has increased substantially since 2005. Many tourists travel to and from Scotland by sleeper train, so the economic benefits to Scotland in this regard should not be overlooked.

Given the distances people travel as mentioned above, and given the increasing popularity of train travel in general, earlier or later day trains may be highly useful but should not be used as a substitute for very necessary sleeper train travel.

- 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?

A): In considering the provision of such services, the importance of Aberdeen as the centre for North Sea oil and gas exploration and distribution needs to be recognised. This is a major contributor of sleeper traffic from Aberdeen to London. Inverness is assuming increasing importance for access from the South for major renewable energy projects such as the Pentland Firth tidal/ wave energy and offshore wind energy. The same applies for the West of Shetland oil and gas, as well as the Dounreay decommissioning programme. Additionally, substantial tourist traffic is received at Inverness and Fort William by rail as well as road. There is substantial traffic to and from Aviemore near Inverness for skiing holidays during the winter season which uses the sleeper train. The expansion of Inverness and surrounding areas provides an increasing opportunity for business and leisure sleeper usage on the line suggested in the response to Question 39, 1st bullet point. Fort William is a major tourist destination for visiting the West Highlands. Both locations are assuming increasing importance as centres of areas where hi-tech manufacturing and research into renewable energy, information technology and other industries. All of the above have major national strategic importance in developing the Scottish and British economy under the current difficult climate, developing nuclear decommissioning skills which could be used worldwide, developing a reliable and dependable renewable energy resource and also realising a new oil and gas resource. Sleeper trains provide a vital transport link for all these developments in the light of environmental priorities recognising rail as the most environmentally benign form of travel on balance, increasing domestic air disruption and price, and also increasing oil and road fuel price. Trains are also a lot safer than road travel.

- What facilities should the sleeper services provide and would you pay more for better facilities?



DORNOCH RAIL LINK ACTION GROUP

Hon. President Revd. Alistair Roy BD

A): Please see below for details of ideas for future sleeper train travel.

We cannot focus any future sleeper service purely on a high end market which may be of at best limited use during the off-season months. En-suite facilities could be used by business executives although this would be at a premium price.

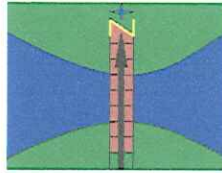
To this end, we could have 1st class carriages with maybe 3 or 4 en-suite premium price berths, with the rest being single-occupancy carriages as now. There could again be double berth accommodation in separate carriages, as now, but there should also be couchette accommodation with maybe three berths per compartment. These couchettes would have a single easy-clean plastic mattress which could then be used by travellers at the lower end of the market. A curtain would then be drawn across the berth for privacy. These could then be arranged either as compartments or even transverse dormitories for 1/2 or 1/3rd of a 23 m carriage.

Open-seat carriages would have reclining seats with some seats having possibly the same design as what is seen on long-distance aircraft - i.e. one click of a lever and the back folds flat and the foot rest comes up to make a bed. It is important that at least one restaurant car is included in the sleeper consist, and the extended length of such a carriage could increase space for greater range of food or drink available.

If 23 metre carriages are used for all new sleeper rolling stock, the Inverness train would then have to be reduced from 8 to 7 carriages as the Euston platforms are not long enough for 16 23m long carriage. This problem could however be circumvented if the ex-Eurostar platforms at Waterloo are used. Finally, to ensure economy of scale, any new sleeper rolling stock should be ordered and built at the same time as that for the Great Western services from London to Plymouth and Penzance.

M.W. Nester,

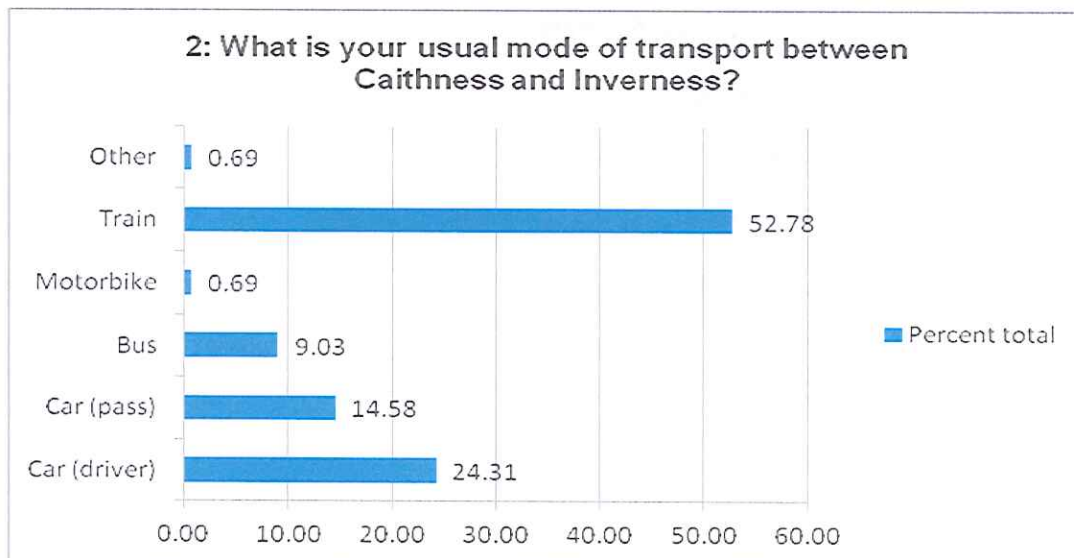
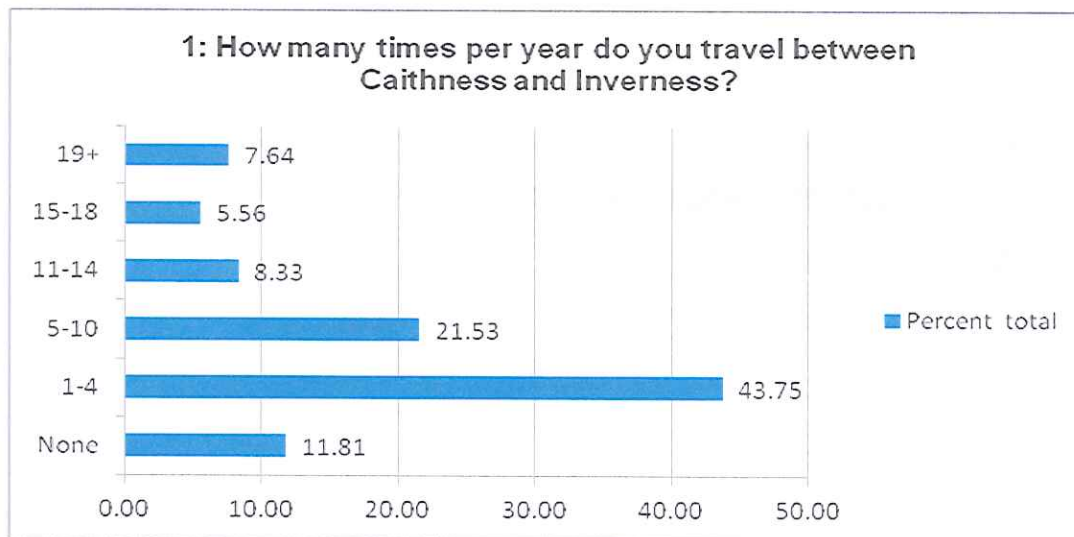
Chairman, Dornoch Rail Link Action Group.

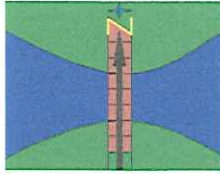


DORNOCH RAIL LINK ACTION GROUP

Hon. President Revd. Alistair Roy BD

Results of the printed copies of the 2011 Dorlag rail users' survey. Each question is graphically represented as percentage responses to the 144 total number of returned surveys.

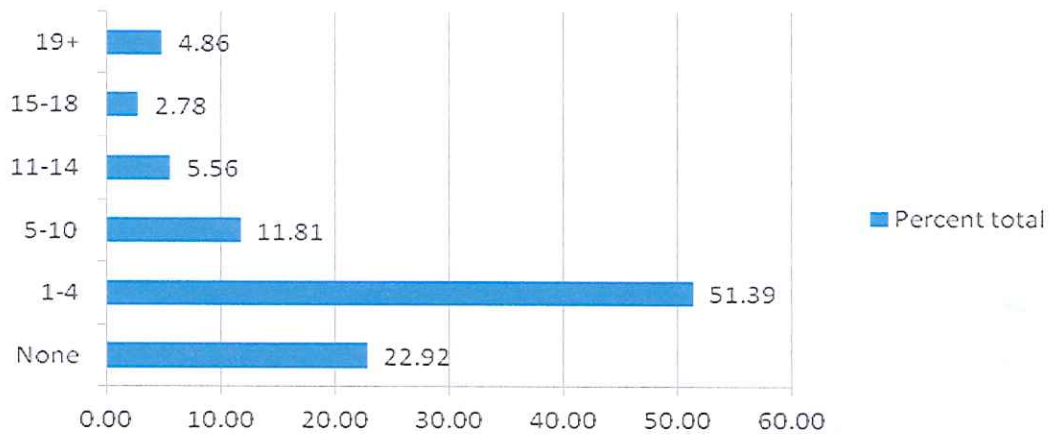




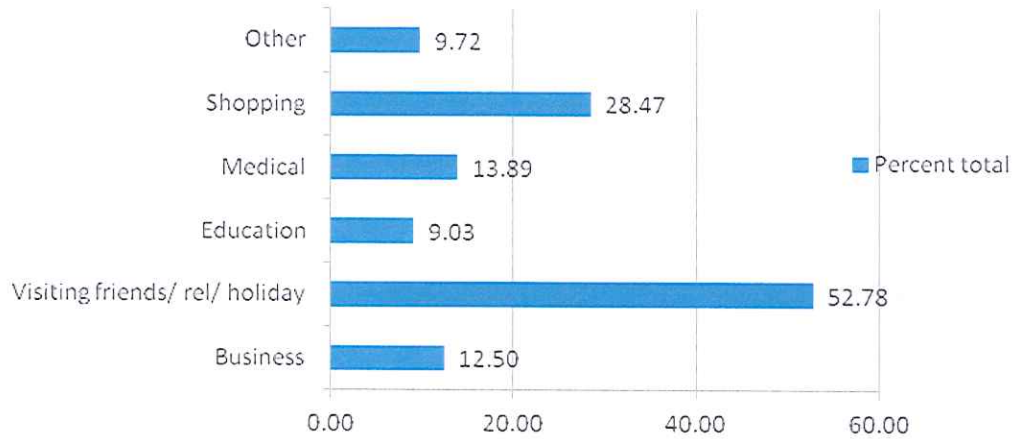
DORNOCH RAIL LINK ACTION GROUP

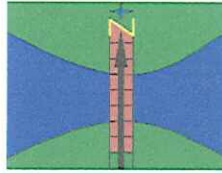
Hon. President Revd. Alistair Roy BD

3: How many times per year do you travel on average by train between Caithness and Inverness?



4: What is your most common reason for travelling between Caithness and Inverness?

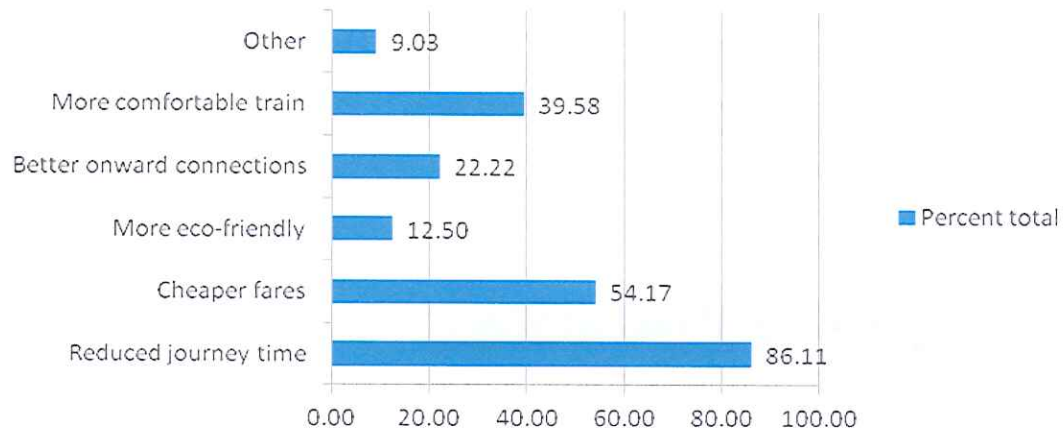




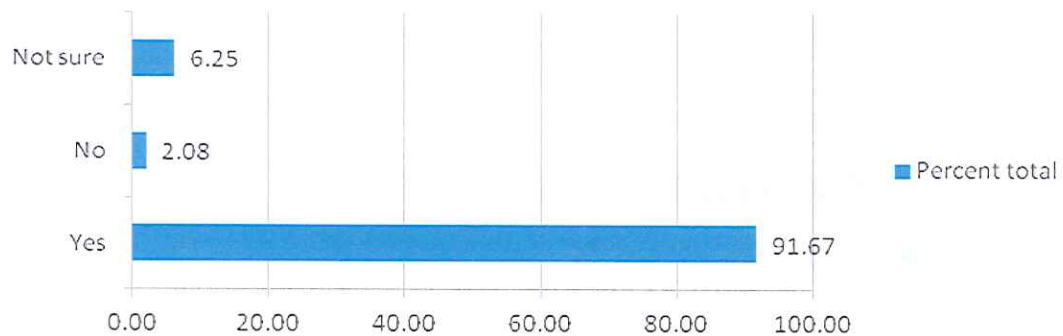
DORNOCH RAIL LINK ACTION GROUP

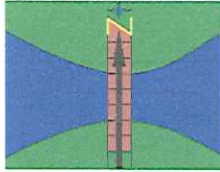
Hon. President Revd. Alistair Roy BD

5: Would any of the following factors make you more likely to travel by train between Caithness and Inverness?



6: The Highland Council Structure Plan 2000 states that a direct rail crossing of the Dornoch Firth 'would achieve a considerable journey time saving for rail passengers between caithness/ East Sutherland and Inverness. Do you support this policy?

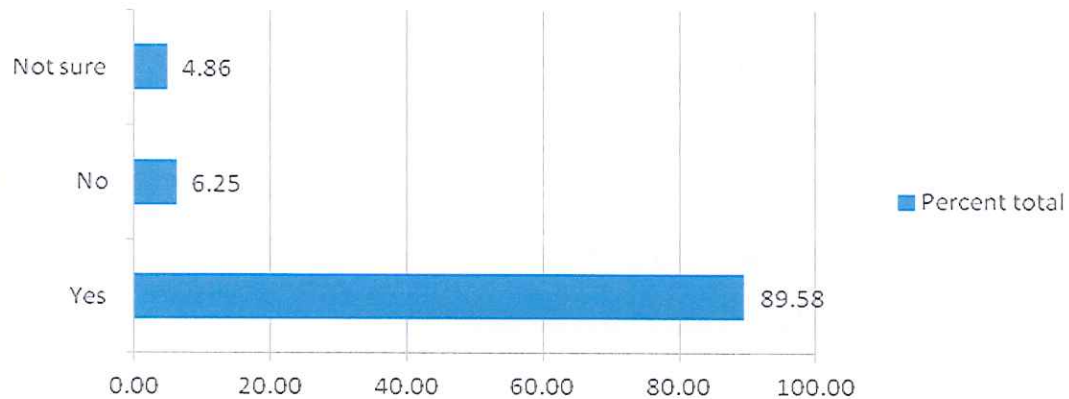




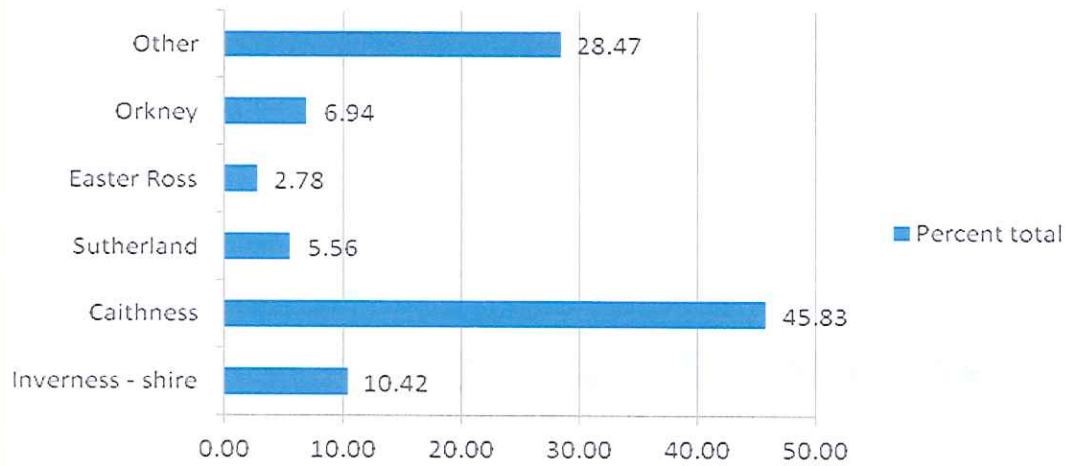
DORNOCH RAIL LINK ACTION GROUP

Hon. President Revd. Alistair Roy BD







7: Would you be more likely to travel by train between Caithness and Inverness if the journey was shortened by 27 miles, reducing the journey time by about 45 minutes?








8: Please select your main residence area






1. On average, how many times per year do you travel between Caithness and Inverness?

		Response Percent	Response Count
A None		11.0%	43
B 1-4		27.6%	108
C 5-10		23.0%	90
D 11-14		16.6%	65
E 15-18		6.4%	25
F 19+		15.3%	60
answered question			391
skipped question			0







2. What is your usual mode of transport between Caithness and Inverness?

		Response Percent	Response Count
A Car (Driver)		53.7%	208
B Car (Passenger)		15.8%	61
C Bus		3.9%	15
D Motorcycle		0.0%	0
E Train		24.5%	95
F Other		2.1%	8
answered question			387
skipped question			4

7. Would you be more likely to travel by train between Caithness and Inverness if the journey was shortened by 27 miles, reducing the journey time by around 45 minutes?

		Response Percent	Response Count
A Yes		85.2%	322
B No		6.3%	24
C Don't know		8.5%	32
answered question			378
skipped question			13

8. Please select your main residence area:

		Response Percent	Response Count
A Inverness-shire		2.7%	10
B Caithness		56.0%	211
C Sutherland		6.4%	24
D Easter Ross		2.1%	8
E Orkney		12.7%	48
F Other		20.2%	76
answered question			377
skipped question			14

9. Any additional comments? Please write them below:

	Response Count
	156
answered question	156
skipped question	235

10. Thank you very much for taking a short time to complete this survey. If you have any comments or questions, please feel free to visit the website of the Dornoch Rail Link Action Group, which is www.dorlag.co.uk, or please write to the Convener at the following postal or email address: Email: info07@dorlag.co.uk Postal: Seaview Cottage, Barrock, Thurso, Caithness KW14 8SY.

	Response Count
	3
answered question	3
skipped question	388