

Dear Sir,

Rail 2014: Passenger Consultation

I am writing in response to the call for views on the Rail 2014 consultative document, and in particular on its proposal that direct rail services between London and stations north of Edinburgh be withdrawn. I understand that this proposal would affect the users of all stations north of Edinburgh who would be obliged to extend their journey by changing at Edinburgh Waverley. This would be a most unhelpful development. I have used the direct service between Leuchars and London several times a year for over 28 years, both on business for the University of St. Andrews and, together with my wife, to visit family and friends in York and London. My comments in addressing questions 29 and 30 of the consultation document are largely based on that experience.

Question 29: Should cross-border services continue to go north of Edinburgh?

London is the epicentre of U.K. business, entertainment, population and tourism. Residents, visitors and working people in prominent cities such as Plymouth, Norwich, Carlisle, Inverness, Aberdeen and Dundee have an understandable interest in direct links with such a major metropolis. From the perspective of people in London, the withdrawal of the link would send an unfortunate message about the importance attached to that link by the residents of such remote cities and regions of the U.K. In view of the importance of good communication to both the economies of Aberdeen, Dundee and Inverness and their hinterlands and to the tourist income and development of large areas of eastern and northern Scotland, that would be a most unwelcome development. As well as maintaining that link, direct rail services also reinforce the public perception of the inter-dependence and ready accessibility of different corners of the U.K. Inverness, Aberdeen and Dundee would not wish to find themselves at a disadvantage in comparison with Plymouth, Norwich and Carlisle.

Question 29 places undue emphasis on the term 'cross-border'. The border is not a relevant issue. The interests of passengers and the rail services' business model are the key issues here. Borders do not affect direct rail services between Paris and Antwerp, passing through Brussels, or, perhaps more pertinently, between London and Swansea, passing through Cardiff. The crossing of a border is simply not relevant.

Question 30: Should the cross-border services terminate at Edinburgh Waverley?

Turning Edinburgh Waverley into a terminus for services to and from London would be a most retrograde step. Changing trains at Edinburgh would inevitably increase traveling times between London and the north of Scotland. As a not infrequent victim of missed connections at Edinburgh, traveling in both directions, I can confirm that changing trains, especially at busy times, would increase passenger anxieties about the risk of missing their second train and therefore of arriving late at their destination. Even more important, changing trains would be particularly unwelcome for certain groups of passengers:

- The elderly.
- The disabled.
- Families with young children.
- Passengers with suitcases and other heavy luggage.

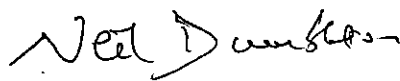
For each of these categories, traveling to and from London would be easier without any need to change at Edinburgh. From my own personal experience, I am aware that many such passengers from Leuchars deliberately choose a direct train to England for these reasons.

...What additional benefits would accrue from having an Edinburgh hub?

I genuinely can't think of any. It is misleading to present the hub and direct through services as either / or alternatives in competition with each other. Edinburgh is already a useful hub, enabling passengers traveling to and from parts of Fife, the Lothians and Central Scotland to connect with the London services. But however helpful that might be, it is only second best. Direct services are most certainly the preferred option. Edinburgh Waverley should continue to fulfil both roles.

This is a personal submission to the Rail 2014 review. If needed, I can be contacted at the address at the head of this page or by telephone on 01334 – 476819.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Neil Dumbleton'.

Neil Dumbleton