

Daniel Lucas

I am responding as an individual. I make regular journeys to Scotland, mostly for tourism purposes, but also occasional business related trips. I always travel by rail, both when in Scotland and to travel to Scotland. I am a regular user of the Caledonian Sleeper services either alone or with my family. I am responding to the consultation in this context and where I have not responded to particular questions please presume I have no comment to make on the matters concerned.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the issues set out, and I hope you can take my views into consideration.

Section 4: Reliability, Performance and Service Quality

Do not slow journeys to increase reliability. This is a poor target driven approach which is ultimately a false economy as it makes other modes of travel more attractive in terms of journey times.

Q11 & Q14) Ensure the importance on cleanliness of stations and trains is recognised, particularly train interiors. This should also include throughout the day. Passengers can often suffer from dirty train interiors as the day goes on, yet ticket prices are not reduced as the day goes on, so service quality should not be any less.

Q12) Re Lateness. Some minutes late is acceptable (although undesirable). However, more attention in the performance regime should be given to on time arrival at stations throughout the journey (or at least key intermediate stations) rather than simply on time arrival at the *final* destination, which is of no relevance to passengers travelling to intermediate points.

Section 5: Train Services

I believe there is a strong case for better quality of rolling stock, particularly on internal Inter City type services, and longer distance services. This would be carriages more suited to journeys of this length and 'status'.

Q15) With regard to the issue of capacity there is no sense in attempting to solve the problem by cramming more seats into carriages giving passengers ever less personal space. Where the car is the main competitor mode, private cars have got larger and more comfortable over the years, trains have arguably become more cramped and less comfortable. Average size of passengers is increasing (mean personal height for example). There is no point in equipping rolling stock with seating that people can not sit in in any comfort, particularly in regards of any journeys over about 30 minutes duration.

Para 5.8 recognises the tourist potential of Scotland's railways, and this is of significant importance, but the 'offer' is sub standard with particular regard to the rolling stock, which is often too cramped internally, with poor alignment of windows to seats (thus restricting the views, which is what many tourists will have chosen the train to see), yet the document makes it clear that capacity shortage is less of an issue on these routes. Train design is too much 'one size fits all' yet the market is clearly different on different routes.

Journey Frequency:

Frequency, including at off peak times, is important, because service frequency is the only way the train can compete with the car in terms of the ability to travel at the time you wish (or close to it) which the private car always offers its owner.

Boosting off peak use through ticketing arrangements has some merit, although complex book ahead ticketing that then allows only inflexible travel arrangements (i.e. the need to decide some time ahead the exact time of travel) is not really the solution, although it may have some place in terms of the range of fares available to offer passengers.

Para 5.11

No route can just be a tourist route. Services must also be attractively priced and suitably frequent (including early morning and late evening services) to meet the needs of local people who will of course be potential commuters, shoppers and leisure users.

Q16) People do not like changing trains, this can put them off travel by train for all of their journey. This should not be underestimated. That would be the consequence of reducing the numbers of direct trains and expecting people to make more interchanges.

Furthermore, where connectivity is between modes, especially other forms of public transport, this must be *guaranteed*, especially in sparsely populated areas where service frequency is limited and thus the connections are vital to the passenger.

Section 6: Rail Fares

In this section I would stress the importance of retaining fares like Rail Rovers / Rail passes of varying types both for UK citizens and those from abroad, as a way of making use of the network easy for tourists and visitors. These should be continued, and wherever possible, not be subject to over restrictive conditions which makes them unattractive to users (subject to achieving a balance with capacity issues at peak times on busy routes).

Q20 and Q21)

Removing anomalies in fares (para 6.4) is important.

Regulation has value, but also services to create perverse situations where operators seek to make up for income lost to them through regulated fares by disproportionately increasing unregulated fares (or restricting access to regulated cheaper off peak fares by adjusting definitions of peak and off peak, which themselves are not uniform and thus confusing to the passengers).

The 'fares basket' concept is not only confusing to passengers, but of no benefit since if you happen to live on a route that happens to receive a high fare increase you are rarely faced with the ability to choose an alternative route as a consequence.

Q23) If there is too steep a differential between Peak and Off Peak Fares it can simply result in overcrowding on the 1st services after the peak period ends (at the margins of the peak). Rail franchisees varying definitions of peak time (as Cross Country Trains has recently done for example) is also not in the passengers interest and results in significant fares increases, often at times that are not in fact particularly busy. This can result in under used services at Peak times, as well as a perception that rail offers poor value for money.

Section 7: Scottish Stations

I would comment that the figures listed for usage patterns in Table 5 may be far from accurate. Where passengers can use stations with rail passes, rover tickets, or by intermediate breaks of journeys on day and season tickets, these user numbers will not be recorded in statistical information of this sort. This would result in these figures being underestimates.

In terms of station closures (Q24) the above comment would be pertinent.

Q25) Allowing third parties to promote and fund stations is of value.

Q26) Maintenance splits of the sort described seems pointless. A single responsibility should be established.

Q27) There is much to be gained by facilitating wider use of station buildings, especially redundant buildings, as the station can be a hub of an area, and be of immense community benefit. All steps should be taken to ensure buildings are maintained and used (rather than simply demolished), as a way of increasing the facilities for travellers as well as local people. This can be through local authority use, community use or commercial use. The wider benefits of usage (such as security, presence of other people etc) means that other uses should not necessarily have to be on a commercial basis if commercially viable uses cannot be found.

Q28) Staffing of stations where practical is important, or the creation of other uses which bring a presence of people to station (including 'official' people). This brings wider benefits. This can be of particular relevance in terms of tourist use, where people unfamiliar with an area will be reassured by the presence of staff or other users of station buildings and facilities. It could be that Transport Scotland could create a funding pot that would allow community use of stations by creating incentives or match funding to help bring such facilities into wider / community use or not for profit use as a way of recognising the value of such facilities to the community at large.

I would add that the presence of washroom facilities (including showers) is important in connection with stations served (larger stations) by the Caledonian Sleeper network. This includes facilities for passengers at London Euston where it is unacceptable that shower facilities (currently provided by Virgin Trains) only seem to be available to 1st class ticket holders. Sleeper passengers of both classes need to be able to use these facilities.

Section 8: Cross Border Services

Para 8.5 implies that you might propose to respond to the perverse incentives created by ORCATS by removing such cross border services, despite their value to long distance passengers. This is a mistake. Certain long distance services are of value (note the comments above about the considerable dislike many passengers have of changing trains), and opportunities should be sought to increase such services - for example through services to the English Midlands / East Midlands or West Yorkshire from Glasgow via the Carlisle to Leeds route. There might also be a case for re-introduction of the sleeper services from the South West of England to Scotland via the Midlands (that had existed prior to railway privatisation) – perhaps on a seasonal basis.

Q29) These services should continue to serve destinations north of Edinburgh, and can be specified in partnership with the Department of Transport.

Q30) No, as stated above a selection of services should continue north of Edinburgh.

Section 9: Rolling Stock

Q32) Facilities on board should include:

Cycle storage for suitable numbers of cycles. In respect of the sleeper services the use of traditional guard's vans properly equipped with suitable cycle racking could facilitate the transport of reasonable numbers of cycles (i.e. more than just the number needed for one family for example!).

Interior layout issues are important, especially for routes popular with tourists, where space standards will be considered of importance, as well as alignment between seats and windows, something that is currently very poor on much rolling stock, but of critical importance to someone who chooses to travel by train to enjoy Scotland's scenery. This also includes seating to allow people to sit in groups (tables seats for example).

On many routes, where overcrowding is not an issue, seat density suitable for short urban travel is completely unnecessary for longer, rural routes, where passengers could enjoy more space and comfort.

For future orders of rolling stock for use on scenic routes, consideration could be given to increased areas of glazing, as is common on many continental operated trains that run in scenic areas. This should be important to Scotland, where some of Scotland's railway routes rank as amongst the most scenic in the world.

The quality of on board catering is relevant in particular on inter city and longer distance journeys. That the catering offer has reduced to simply what is available from small trolley services is very poor compared with a hot food offer provided by at least buffet cars with basic food preparation facilities in what seems like a relatively recent period ago.

Section 10: Comfort, Security and Information

Q34) There is a value in maintaining First Class provision certainly on Inter City routes, and possibly on other longer distance services. Intelligent pricing and marketing (including the use of upgrades, supplements and promotions) is the way to make such First class seating well used and attractive to travellers as part of the process of balancing capacity with demand and choice of grades of travel. First Class seating is not necessarily about more space, it can be about a quieter environment as well as other issues of quality and on board service. It would be a mistake to remove what is a relatively small amount of First Class provision from such services.

Q35) Both the reality and the perceptions of anti-social behaviour is a significant reason not to use public transport. With this in mind a complete alcohol ban would be welcome, and would be easily understood by staff and passengers alike.

Depending on how this was introduced there may need to be suitable exemptions from charter type train services (that would not form part of the franchised service in any case), where alcohol might be considered appropriate (for example when served with food on these types of services). Operators of such charters might expect to be able to demonstrate appropriate measures to ensure safety and levels of enjoyment for other passengers where alcohol is being served.

Turning to security more generally, whilst CCTV is a valuable tool, it is often no substitute for a visible staff presence on trains and at stations (including out and about amongst travellers, not secured inside locked premises).

Q36) It would be a useful requirement of the franchise if the operator was required to produce a paper timetable to cover all services in Scotland which should be widely available. It would be acceptable to charge a modest fee for such a document. Route timetables on paper should continue to be provided by operators, and they should be free of charge. This should complement web based timetable information and journey planners.

Automated announcements (para 10.27) are particularly annoying, and detract from a travel experience. They are too often repetitive, and far too frequent. They have been a retrograde step

in many ways. Simpler, briefer announcements should suffice for those with visual impairments. All too often audible announcements seem to be inaccurate as a consequence of software errors. It is a relief when they are turned off.

That it is a requirement of the information service to be based in Scotland is of considerable importance, both in terms of the quality of information, and the economic benefits of such a decision. This should continue to be a specification.

Finally, the point made above about interior train cleanliness should be recognised as part of the quality and comfort of train travel. This should not be interpreted as cleanliness at the start of the operational day; passengers should expect a reasonably clean travelling environment at whatever time of day they choose to travel.

Section 11: Caledonian Sleeper

This service is vitally important, and one I choose to use regularly, both for its quality, and its convenience. It permits an 'extra day' as the travel can be carried out whilst asleep. Things like budget hotels or later and earlier day time trains do not permit this benefit, and are thus no substitute for the service. I can also not image the option of sleeper buses ever being more than a marginal part of the market, and in as much as they would simply duplicate the sleeper trains service, would seem irrelevant anyway.

I would say that I have often chosen to holiday in Scotland because of the convenience of the sleeper service to make the journey to both the Highlands and the Lowlands.

I note that the point stated in para 11.9 about the age of the rolling stock is *incorrect*. The carriages were built between 1982 and 1984 (not the early 1970s as stated).

Q37) The sleeper service should continue to be part of the specified service, with the service continuing to operate on at least 6 days per week (although there is an argument for a daily service).

Q38) There would be risks associated with operating this separately from the main franchise. This would include potential problems of service integration, connections with other services, through ticketing and wider marketing across Scotland and perhaps elsewhere on the rail network. Careful consideration would have to be made to justify such a decision, and relevant protection given to all these issues.

Q39) Both the Lowland and Highland sleeper services should be retained as separate services. The existence of the separate lowland sleeper allows later departures from Scotland and London, permitting greater use of the day. However, in the case of the Lowland Sleeper some more flexibility could be permitted at limited extra cost simply by allowing longer boarding times at the start of the journey so people who wished to get on board earlier in the evening (families with children for example) could do so (eg permit boarding from say 20.00 or 20.30 hrs).

As stated above, more early and late trains would have no impact on the attractiveness of the sleeper service, and with regards to the Highland sleeper, could still not cover the distance and permit much useful time on the day of travel to be dedicated to other tasks (either leisure or business). This suggestion misunderstands the benefits of sleeper services.

Altering the terminating point from Fort William to Oban ought to be a matter for local stakeholders and customers to advise on, so I make no comment on that matter.

Refurbishment or replacement of the sleeper carriages to provide more up to date facilities would be welcome. This could permit a range of facilities for different prices, so en suite facilities or more spacious compartments could be provided for those who wished to pay extra for such things, but it would not necessarily be the case that all compartments would have these facilities. This could provide a choice of accommodation, which may well be welcome.

Catering provision on the sleeper services (as it currently exists) is also an important part of the service offer for passengers.

It is regrettable that some of the sleeper carriages built for the aborted channel tunnel service (and subsequently sold by the UK government to Canadian Railways) were not secured to modernise the Caledonian sleeper services. However, those carriages could provide a model for replacement carriages (both for sleeping car and 'seated sleeper' passengers) as replacement is considered. I make this comment having travelled in the vehicles in Canada.

As mentioned above, an important aspect of the service is shower / washroom facilities at main stations served by the sleeper (especially terminating points). The situation at London Euston is particularly poor where Scotrail relies on Virgin Trains provision, and they seem to only provide the facility for 1st class passengers, which is not acceptable.

It would also be beneficial to provide additional sleeper and seated carriages at peak times, and to give serious consideration to the re-provision of the sleeper service that existed before railway privatisation from the South West of England and the English Midlands to Glasgow and Edinburgh.

I hope you can take these points into consideration as part of this consultation.