

Malcolm MacDonald

As a regular rail user, both commuter and long distance I would like to make my views known regarding some of the points for discussion raised. While the rail network in Scotland does need a good look at and would definitely benefit from improvement I do think that there are some points which should not be given too much consideration. The first would be the idea of using Edinburgh, (or Glasgow for that matter) as a "hub" station which would require changing trains. As any rail user who is traveling long distances with luggage will tell you, the biggest hassle is changing trains, especially when this involves changing platforms with bags. Where it is possible this should be avoided and longer continuous rail journeys promoted.

This leads me to the next point, the sleeper services. I have travelled frequently on these services and while I do think that the idea of having a train which has virtually no "normal" seats but is purely a sleeper service is perhaps overkill, the removal entirely of the sleeper is a mistake. It is a very useful and indeed pleasant service and should not be axed.

My views on the availability and amount of first class seating on trains is tempered entirely by commercial considerations. If there is a proven demand for first class seating, then continue it, however if there is not, then certainly make for more standard accommodation. This however should not be used to just decrease the passenger carrying capacity of trains as frequently first class compartments need to be used to carry the "overspill" from standard accommodation as there is simply not enough room for already crammed passengers. This is ridiculous, especially on longer train journeys. Aberdeen to Glasgow springs to mind where I have frequently had to spend hours standing along with many other passengers.

My last comment is on the subject of alcohol consumption onboard trains. While I will agree that it is unpleasant to be stuck on a train with inebriated and aggressive passengers, this is not normally a common occurrence and I think that to extend a ban on alcohol consumption beyond the current ones used on trains to and from sports events would be both unpopular and uncivilized, especially on longer and tourist popular routes.

For every occurrence of unpleasantness I have witnessed onboard trains while alcohol consumption onboard is a factor, I have seen many, many more pleasant ones where people have enjoyed a glass of wine, or a can of beer while enjoying the scenery of Scotland fly past. I think that to ban this would also show Scotland in a rather poor light to visitors and tourists.

Having never written to any such public consultation before I have no idea what, if any weight my views will have however, for what they are worth here they are. After all, if one does not contribute then how can you complain if things happen that you disagree with?