

Allan Anderson
Transport Scotland
Buchanan House
58 Port Dundas Road
Glasgow
G4 0HF

5th December 2011



Dear Mr Anderson,

As requested in your email today, please find enclosed a hard copy of my response to the Transport Scotland consultation with particular reference to cross border services, particularly the Highland Chieftain serving the East Coast Main Line route between London King's Cross and Inverness.

The text of my response closely echoes the content of my email to Keith Brown but I am happy to provide it in the specific format of the consultation. It is just unfortunate that my computer's word processing software is incompatible with WordPad and the conversion program does not always work especially in email attachments.

Thank you for taking the time to contact me about this and show such an interest in my response.

Yours sincerely,

Caledonia McFarlane (Ms)

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

Title Mr Mrs Miss Dr *Please tick as appropriate*

Surname

McFarlane

Forename

Caledonia

2. Postal Address

[REDACTED]

Postcode

Phone

3. Permissions - I am responding as...

Individual / Group/Organisation
Please tick as appropriate

(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

Yes, make my response available, but not my name and address

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

Consultation Questions

The answer boxes will expand as you type.

Procuring rail passenger services

1. 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?

Q1 comments:

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

Q2 comments:

3. What risk support mechanism should be reflected within the franchise?

Q3 comments:

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

Q4 comments:

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

Q5 comments:

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

Q6 comments:

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

Q7 comments:

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

Q8 comments:

Achieving reliability, performance and service quality

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

Q9 comments:

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

Q10 comments:

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

Q11 comments:

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

Q12 comments:

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?

Q13 comments:

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

Q14 comments:

Scottish train services

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?

Q15 comments:

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?

Q16 comments:

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?

Q17 comments:

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

Q18 comments:

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

Q19 comments:

Scottish rail fares

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

Q20 comments:

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)?

Q21 comments:

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?

Q22 comments:

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?

Q23 comments:

Q29 comments: Firstly, the continued availability of HSTs or similar sized trains as opposed to relying upon ScotRail's much smaller units is vital. Even with the demand absorbed by the present availability of the Highland Chieftain and the sleeper, these commuter trains are entirely insufficient to serve the needs of the type of passenger traffic prevalent upon this section of the route as the proportion of luggage space to number of seats is not geared towards large numbers of suitcases, backpacks, bicycles and outdoor sports equipment. When travelling on these services I have regularly seen doorways blocked by luggage with quite simply no other place to go, not to mention the stress, bad atmosphere and frayed tempers as people try to locate their reserved seats. I have witnessed children clearly frightened by confrontations between angry and swearing adults; tourists caught up in chaotic scenes looking bewildered and wondering what to make of it and whether they are in the right place. There is also a significant disparity in the provision of First Class accommodation between the ScotRail stock and the HSTs, both in terms of actual numbers of seats available and the comfort, space and facilities. A lot of First Class business would be lost, costing the railway both financial revenue and goodwill, if the ScotRail stock were the only available option north of Edinburgh. Many of those people including myself who would still travel by rail would return to Standard Class thereby paying less; I firmly believe that countless others would stop using rail transport altogether and the Inverness Courier's online petition reinforces this just as it did a year ago when a successful campaign against a similar proposal was taken to the Westminster Government.

Secondly, we must consider the implications for customer choice. In the particular case of the Inverness service, there is only one through train per day and therefore replacing that with a format requiring a physical transfer between trains at Edinburgh is entirely removing an established, successful and popular option against customers' wishes. There is much more to the implications of doing this than mere dislike of the move by the travelling public but even that dislike is not something which ought to be dismissed lightly. If any business imposes a change on its paying customers and tells them that how they may feel about it makes no difference, those paying customers are likely to take their custom elsewhere. At a time when air travel has become so fraught with complications due to increased security levels, overbooking and technical difficulties coupled with economic instability bringing about situations where people are left stranded, the railways are in a stronger position than ever to provide a viable and sustainable alternative. A key feature of this is that people can travel easily from city centre to city centre without having to keep gathering up their belongings and changing from one seat to another. Foreign visitors do not want to have to spend extra time working out connections, signs and trying to make out tannoy announcements. If people wish to settle in, get out their travelling slippers and a light jacket, settle down to a session of work on their computer, get the children organised with some games and colouring books or go to sleep for the long journey for which they are paying the train company then they have the right to have that wish taken seriously. In addition to this, we must consider the extra needs of the elderly and disabled, including those with disabilities which are not obvious to the casual observer. Many people, including regular travellers on the Highland Chieftain between Highland and English stations, rely for their peace of mind upon being able to be put on the train by family or friends at one end and met by family or friends at the other. This reassurance would not apply if they were forced to change trains mid journey. As a civilised and modern society we have a duty of care to those for whom travel presents an elevated set of challenges and the complete removal of the option of a daytime through train would be a retrograde step which jars uncomfortably with the current climate of social awareness and accessibility. It is vital to take into account the hidden demographic of those with mental health problems, learning difficulties and conditions such as Asperger's Syndrome and high functioning autism. It is

Please see
continuation
sheet.

It is vital to take into account the hidden demographic of those with mental health problems, learning difficulties and conditions such as Asperger's Syndrome and high functioning autism. It is estimated that one to two in every hundred people in the UK is affected by autism; some are high functioning enough to be able to travel with minimal support as long as they are going to and from a familiar place. Add to these the many more people who are just on the borderline and in many instances are never diagnosed but still go through life facing the difficulties arising from their social and judgemental impairments, problems adapting to change and coping in unfamiliar surroundings, potential elements of physical clumsiness and awkward appearance which can make them additionally vulnerable to just the type of incidents with which they find it especially hard to cope and which can consequently escalate into real trouble and distress for themselves and others. Statistically speaking, this would amount to **at least a handful of people on every single intercity train**. It is a lot to ask of this group of people, even if accompanied, to deal with changing trains in a large, busy capital city station which is otherwise not a regular part of their routine, particularly at times such as the Christmas / New Year period and the Edinburgh Festival. There are indeed reasons why the belief in the importance of through trains has become so deeply entrenched and in today's increasingly stressful world, with mental illness on the increase and not always predictable, it is in many ways more important than before, not less.

Thirdly we need to take into account the physical layout, location and scope of Edinburgh Waverley, which is struggling to accommodate all current services as it is. On many occasions I have seen the Northbound Highland Chieftain approach on time only to arrive late due to having been awaiting a signal or a platform becoming free. The station has tunnels on both sides and there will always be a limit to the number of lines in and out. Forcing everyone to change trains there would require the availability of more staff to assist, especially considering the high proportion of staircases and bridges involved in changing platforms; this of course would cost money. Anyone with any awareness of recent current affairs will know that there have already been several industrial disputes on the railways revolving around various issues arising from a reduction in staff and increase in safety critical duties for the remaining workers so I struggle to imagine how this fits with the purported financial savings. I cannot praise the Highland Chieftain's onboard crews highly enough for the level of care they provide to all passengers but there are many more passengers than crew members and the train crew cannot be everywhere at once. It is a regrettable fact that even at the current level of service, booked assistance at stations is sometimes known to fail to arrive or to be at the wrong part of the train and I have personally assisted several passengers on various trains in recent times in the absence of their booked help, including one lady over the age of ninety who could never have gotten off the train alone. For all passengers, in addition to the unwanted inconvenience, transfer en masse between trains in an already busy station brings an increased risk of accident, theft and even terrorism. Every platform at a station with a layout like Edinburgh Waverley is to some extent exposed to the effects of the weather and the additional fluctuations in temperature during the winter if people have to break a long journey there in between heated train carriages, coupled with having more surfaces to touch is likely to make them, especially the elderly, young children, visitors from different climates and pregnant women more vulnerable to illnesses such as influenza. There is much more to the quality of a journey than merely promising that the onward service will wait if the incoming one should be delayed.

I urge you to consider all the families who are working hard to make their contributions to the UK economy by taking their children on holiday to the Highlands, encouraging them to participate in healthy outdoor activities. This passenger group is overwhelmingly in favour of direct travel and may well switch to going abroad if it is taken from them, especially when you consider that the cost of fuel for the long drive would then be compounded by the higher fuel prices at their destination. Please also take some time to consider the values of those many people who have elderly relatives and rely upon the direct train service to keep regular face to face contact and allow those relatives the dignity and quality of life inherent in being able to travel safely and comfortably to visit them and see their grandchildren without having the stress of changing trains in a place which is unfamiliar to them. In this modern age it is vital that family bonds which are stretched by geographical distance are nurtured and facilitated to help elderly people maintain their independence and gain support, rest and care

which may otherwise have to be provided to a greater degree by the state if they became isolated by travel becoming too difficult or daunting. I respectfully draw your attention to the online petition organised by the Inverness Courier which will be conveyed to the Scottish Government; this contains many accounts from passengers who are tax paying voters and who are bearing out in increasing numbers of real life scenarios the points of principle which I am making here. All of these people have the right to expect that their comments will indeed be read and considered by those with the responsibility for making the decision on the recommendations of the Transport Scotland Report. May I add to this the relevant point that many members of the more vulnerable groups affected by the prospect of having to change trains are out there with no access to, or confidence to use, the Internet and are unlikely to be able to respond directly; awareness of this and of their needs is part of the Government's duty of care.

It is important to consider that investing in a lifeline railway connection is not necessarily to the detriment of road transport; the two modes ought to complement one another rather than being seen as an "either or" dilemma. Many people who travel to the Highlands by train hire a car for the duration of their stay; this generates further revenue for the economy and in its own way helps the environment as they are more likely to share cars or indeed take bus tours or use the many taxi firms in the area which organise bespoke tours and trips. Forcing people back into cars for the journey up to the Highlands, especially the leisure trippers who are likely to have the minimum practicable number of designated drivers so that others may drink alcohol on their holiday, increases the risk of people driving whilst tired and this on the A9 which is notorious for its dangers. Human nature can never be discounted and so many people would push themselves to cut down the number of breaks in the long drive when transporting carloads of excited, restless and eventually overwrought children.

To conclude, I appreciate that no decision has yet been made, nor has the Government expressed any intention of cutting this well established and much relied upon national treasure of a train service. However I find it deeply concerning that it is even being considered; as a regular traveller on the Highland Chieftain, I strongly refute the claims that it is frequently underutilised. It is in fact becoming busier than ever, all the way to and from Inverness! A strong nation needs to protect the interests of all its people and all its visitors, both leisure and business; this cannot be achieved by putting up barriers, turning everything inwards and concentrating our infrastructure development on the most densely populated areas to the detriment of the rest. To do so not only harms the marginalised areas but presents a picture to the outside world of a country as a whole which is underconfident, underperforming and weak; negative, insular and defeatist in its outlook. That is not the Scotland we know, nor the Scotland we aspire to become. So much energy is needlessly wasted through the creeping resentment and prejudice generated by the growth of "Them and Us" mindsets in all walks of modern life; it is vital that links are not only maintained at their current level and in their current form but built upon and improved.

I shall also be putting the text of this response into a direct letter to Keith Brown.

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?

Q30 comments: Please see above.

Rolling stock

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

Q31 comments:

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

Q32 comments:

Passengers – information, security and services

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

Q33 comments:

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?

Q34 comments:

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

Q35 comments: I consider that people who want to get drunk will do so and it is likely that they will simply either disguise their alcohol by putting it in a soft drink, rather than on train staff having some awareness of how much alcohol someone has purchased from them, or they will drink more in a shorter period of time before getting on the train, resulting in worse intoxication and effects showing themselves, including in glorious technicolour in the middle of the aisle, as the journey progresses and the alcohol is absorbed. It is also a shame to punish responsible drinkers for the actions of others.

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

Q36 comments:

Caledonian Sleeper

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

Q37 comments:

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?

Q38 comments:

39. We would be interested in your views in the level and type of service that the Caledonian Sleeper

Services should provide. Including:

- 1 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?
- 2 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?
- 3 What facilities should the sleeper services provide and would you pay more for better facilities?

Q39 comments:

Environmental issues

40. What environmental key performance indicators should we consider for inclusion in the franchise agreement or the High Level Output Specification?

Q40 comments: