

Rail 2014 - Public Consultation

11 - Caledonian Sleeper

11.1 There are currently two rail sleeper services operating between Scotland and London. As part of this review of rail passenger services we are considering how to continue to fund, and contract for, these Caledonian Sleeper services and would be interested in your views.

Current Operation

11.2 The Caledonian Sleeper service consists of two sleeper services operating nightly, except Saturdays, between Scotland and London. Both of these are currently provided as part of the ScotRail franchise.

11.3 The Lowland Sleeper:

- Edinburgh to London, and Glasgow to London, with trains joining at Carstairs just after midnight, and arriving in London in the early morning
- London to Edinburgh and Glasgow with the train splitting at Carstairs in the morning, and arriving in the early morning in both cities

11.4 The Highland Sleeper:

- separate trains from Fort William, Inverness and Aberdeen which join together at Edinburgh, and arrive in London Euston in the early morning
- one train from London Euston, splitting at Edinburgh in the early morning, into three separate trains stopping at a total of 36 stations across the Highlands

11.5 The Caledonian Sleeper services require 66 vehicles a day to operate. Daily servicing and maintenance is carried out in Glasgow, London, Aberdeen and Fort William. Major maintenance is carried out in Inverness and each carriage must be rotated through Inverness for servicing on a regular eight-day rotation.

11.6 It costs around £21 million a year to provide the Caledonian Sleeper services, excluding the track access costs.

Issues

11.7 The Caledonian Sleeper services provide an alternative to air travel, particularly to and from the North of Scotland. However the services are likely to face increasing competition in the next few years due to:

- improvements in journey times and timetables for daytime services to/ from the central belt and London
- passengers having higher expectations of the facilities and services available, and therefore alternatives such as budget hotels and sleeper bus services become more attractive

11.8 Commissioned reports and passenger research, however, show that improvements in on-train facilities making them more attractive, could lead to an increase in demand for the Sleeper Services.

Rolling stock refurbishment

11.9 The rolling stock used by the Caledonian Sleeper services was built in the early 1970s. Although it is mechanically sound and has been cosmetically refurbished a number of times, the level of accommodation provided falls short of the expectations of today's passenger.

11.10 It would be possible for rolling stock to be upgraded - for example, to reduce noise, improve beds, provide better temperature controls. In addition the booking system could be improved. Consideration is also being given to providing en-suite accommodation - although this would significantly reduce the number of berths available and presents technical challenges in water and power supply.

Options

11.11 Overall we consider that there is the potential to improve the longer-term financial performance across all the sleeper service routes, through investment in services and rolling stock.

11.12 We are considering a number of options for the future provision of sleeper services, for instance: removing or increasing financial support; and reducing the provision, either through removing the Highland or Lowland service, or by running the Lowland services to and from Edinburgh only.

11.13 We are also carrying out additional research and financial modelling and are looking at a number of options including letting the sleeper services as a separate franchise. This option may enable greater commercial opportunities for the service provider and facilitate investment in the fleet. As a specialised service, it may benefit from more focused and specialised management. A sleeper-only franchise service could also attract new entrants with innovative ideas to the rail franchise market

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

Should the Caledonian Sleeper services be contracted for separately from the main ScotRail franchise? YES WITH THE OPPORTUNITY FOR SCOTRAIL TO BID Or should it be an option for within the main ScotRail franchise? NO

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? STRAIGHTFORWARD, HASSLE FREE WAY TO REACH ABERDEEN. BETTER THAN A JOURNEY INVOLVING AIRPORTS AND THE WAITING TIMES THEY INVOLVE. ICHOICE OF TWO DEPARTURE TIMES PER EVENING WOULD MAKE SENSE. REINVIGORATE THE MARKETING AND OFFER AND YOU SHOULD HAVE A GREAT BUSINESS.
- 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? THE VALUE TO ABERDEEN AND INVERNESS IS ENORMOUS – ABERDEEN IS A MAJOR HUB OF THE ECONOMY AND INVERNESS IS THE ONLY NORTHERN HUB AFTER THAT – TRAIN ON TO INVERNESS IS FAR MORE EFFICIENT AND DESIRABLE ON NUMEROUS LEVELS THAN HAVING TO TRAVEL ON BY CAR FROM ABERDEEN. INVERNESS IS THE EASTERN SETTING OUT POINT FOR THE REST OF THE NORTH. YES OBAN WOULD PROVIDE MUCH BETTER CONNECTIVITY THAN FORT WILLIAM – TO THE WESTERN ISLES IN PARTICULAR AND THE MAINLAND BY ROAD/BUS.
- What facilities should the sleeper services provide and would you pay more for better facilities? SIMPLE CLEAN, COMFORTABLE, BETTER HEATING/COOLING CONTROL. TWIN AND SINGLE BERTH. I PERSONALLY USE THE FRENCH SLEEPER SYSTEM WITH 6 BERTHS AND IT WORKS WELL, BUT OUR CULTURE IS SO DIFFERENT THAT I DO NOT THINK FOR ONE MOMENT THAT A 6 BERTH SYSTEM SHARING WITH STRANGERS WOULD WORK. THE OPTION FOR SINGLE OR TWIN IS A GOOD FIRST CLASS OPTION. ATTACH TICKETS TO A MEAL BEFOREHAND NEAR

THE DEPARTURE STATION, OFFER BAR AND MEAL ON BOARD.