

> I feel myself unqualified to answer the kinds of questions asked in the consultation itself, but wanted to express my comments as a citizen and a sometime rail passenger.

>

> 1. Environmental - I believe we have to get more freight onto rail and off roads, and also make passenger fares competitive in comparison with car costs (buses may continue to undercut but I do not think it worth competing with them - many would choose between train and car, not bus).

>

> 2. I believe that our values as a nation would dictate that we fully support those living in the remotest areas served by rail - making it cost effective, sufficiently frequent services, ease of information and ease of access (not too many changes and connections).

>

> 3. I think we need to do the cost parts by taxation where services don't pay their way, and increase rail usage by advertising the benefits - a comparison cost if you went by car, where this is favourable; the benefits of not having to drive, etc.; the beautiful views on a highland journey.

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> 4. Information is currently very difficult to obtain/ compare online - one good site that lists all options and fares would be a great encouragement to book train travel, and this too should be advertised.

>

> 5. Connectivity with other transport is essential - our experience is that although the Oban train arrives at say half past the hour, the Cal Mac ferry leaves at 20 past - this must be changed (we had no success at all in writing to Cal Mac who seem committed to arrogant independence!) If the train is 15 minutes late the ferry should delay departure to maintain the connection.

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> 6. I believe we need to invest in the track and stock to keep things modern and working well, so that delays and breakdowns are minimised and peoples' perception of rail is that it's an up to date and reliable option.

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> It's a very different scenario but I have been extremely impressed with the way Lothian Buses have come to the fore in recent years - rail could have similar promotion - email news, innovative technology etc. I think this has started on trains with the introduction of better on journey information - both scrolling announcements and spoken information re stations and changes (thankfully in local accents!) but there is scope to do much more - news bulletins, station on-platform information, etc - to promote what we have and make people feel they own the service - in the way I feel now when I mention 'our buses' to someone.

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> I wish you well in forging a good way forward for our railways.

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