

W Riggs

Rail 2014 - Public Consultation

1. Reason for writing

1.1 I live in South Wales but have family in Central Scotland. I make much use of the Edinburgh/ Glasgow / Dunblane lines and I also use the railway for leisure in Scotland. I thus wish to contribute to your consultation. I have views on only a few of the set questions; responses are in section 3 below. However, I have prefaced these responses with some more general comments, although I realise they may go beyond the immediate scope of this consultation. I trust of interest.

2. General comments

2.1 Consultations such as the present one give the impression of being aimed primarily at running the present system better, which is of course vitally important. But the impression is also given of lack of vision for a bigger, better railway - this despite the recent reinstatements and even the major EGIP project. One way of achieving 'a distinctly Scottish railway' [Ministerial Foreword], would be to have many more lines restored in the country: more towns reconnected, more routes, more interconnectivity and more consideration of the value of leisure and tourist travel. Yet, in contrast, we read [7.6] 'We are keen to improve access to the rail network by local communities on *existing routes* through the provision of additional stations.'

2.2 Consideration should thus be given to restoring to the network many more lines and destinations, e.g. Ballater/Deeside, St. Andrews, Callander, Dollar, Haddington, Melrose and others; also links such as Dalry-Kilmarnock (bringing the latter within twelve miles of the electrified network), and main lines such as Perth-Forfar-Aberdeen, Edinburgh-Perth and Stirling-Dunfermline (the last two being notable for not even having been on the Beeching closure list). A long term aspiration to such re-openings, nowhere to be seen in the consultation, is desirable.

2.3 Aspiration to re-openings should bring with it a policy of protecting track-beds, particularly though not exclusively in built-up areas. Two urban examples stand out. Most notably, the lack of such protection has led to the loss within Dunfermline, as recently as 1993, of the otherwise complete route of the Stirling-Dunfermline main line, this only fifteen years before the re-opening of the section to Alloa. At the time of its closure to passengers in 1968, the route offered journey times of about 30 minutes, in comparison with an hour by bus. Another example of a potentially valuable lost urban link is the Haghill curve in Glasgow. Initially closed about the same time as Airdrie-Bathgate, it would have given the opportunity for Queen Street High Level - Edinburgh trains to be routed or diverted via the now re-opened Bathgate line. Certain rural locations also deserve special protection; it would not be absurd to consider Crianlarich Lower, having regard to the great importance of tourism to Scotland. We should strongly presume in favour of protecting alignments for very many years.

2.4 Similarly, when lines are re-opened, we should strategically oversee the works to ensure that they are not carried out in ways that, except at great cost, would impede

further developments. One example might be the new single track Alloa line, which appears to have been reopened with drainage, etc, taking up space on the former main line two track alignment. Similar considerations appear to apply to the formerly four-track Glasgow-Paisley corridor.

2.5 It is encouraging to see a project on the scale of EGIP. Equivalent strategic determination is needed to improve other rail services and undertake large scale restoration of rail infrastructure in Scotland, not just 'existing routes'. Three examples: first, regarding EGIP, in comparison to the service at Falkirk High, it seems likely that the Grahamston-Glasgow service will continue to be unattractive, hindered by slow running via a dog-leg route through Springburn to reach Queen Street. The Garngad proposal looks little better. The fundamental problem here appears to be the loss of the direct route into the city centre (at the former Buchanan Street station). Consideration should be given to re-using the upper approach to Buchanan St. tunnel and from there tunnelling, dropping in level and curving to emerge in Queen Street High Level. Second, regarding Stirling-Dunfermline, there was some press discussion after the SAK re-opening of onward services to Dunfermline. This would have been via the slow single track coastal freight line due to the loss of the main line route within Dunfermline. Such lack of ambition, and contrast with roads expenditure, e.g. on the Upper Forth Crossing, is remarkable. Consideration should be given to new build, from the west to the south of Dunfermline, to allow the substantially straight main line to re-open as a through route to Stirling. Thirdly, in the same area, the 'Halbeath link' has been suggested; consideration should be given to this being a precursor to rebuilding a main line railway from Edinburgh to Perth, replacing the route via Kinross that closed in 1970. Continuing major long term renewal *and restoration* is desirable, yet there is no suggestion in the consultation that such matters are ever considered, on any timescale.

3. Responses to selected questions

Q14 What other mechanisms could be used for assessing train and station quality? European comparisons of train design, comfort and quality. More modern stock such as the 170s, and even the refurbished 158s, are fast and relatively comfortable. But the 156s units, despite refurbishment, are quite unsuitable for use on the prime tourist West Highland routes due to their high noise and vibration. Airline seats and poor seat / table / window alignment is a problem that affects most stock; even the new electric 380s and first class accommodation in the 170s. Much greater attention needs to be paid to passenger comfort.

Q17 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?

The railway should serve to connect and integrate different areas of Scotland, north-south and east-west, e.g. by opening direct new routes such as Motherwell-Perth or Edinburgh-Ayr.

Q29 Should cross-border services continue to go north of Edinburgh? ...

Yes.

Q30 Or should the cross-border services terminate at Edinburgh Waverley, allowing opportunities for Scottish connections?

No. The railway should connect all parts of the country. The notion of trains 'to Scotland' meaning in practice Edinburgh or Glasgow is intellectually lazy and restrictive. The existence of the M73/M9/A9 motorway corridor suggests that this is a major traffic artery up the central spine of Scotland. Yet, despite being paralleled by

main line railways, there are currently no regular railway passenger services from the south up through Motherwell to Larbert, Stirling, Perth and beyond. This area includes a large part of the population of Scotland. Direct services would avoid the need to change at Edinburgh and lose time in comparison with equivalent road travel.

Q32 What facilities should be present on a train and to what extent should these facilities vary according to the route served?

Regarding long distance trains (including WHL and cross border) - comfort and dining (e.g. though use of better, older rolling stock, or new build of at least the same standard. cf Arriva Trains Wales 'Premier Service')

Q35 What issues and evidence should be considered prior to determining whether or not to ban the consumption of alcohol on trains?

I do not support the suggestion that alcohol should be banned on all trains. Better policing may be required. The railway traveller should be able quietly to enjoy a drink (or meal, see Q32) on any journey where this may be appropriate and should not be denied this by the antisocial behaviour of some.