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Consultation
Rail Performance Team
Transport Scotland
7th Floor
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58 Port Dundas Road
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28th November 2008

Dear Sir

Consultation on Initiatives Related to the Scotrail Franchise Extension

Forward Scotland welcomes the consultation on initiatives related to the Scotrail Franchise extension.

We welcome, in particular, the initiatives that aim to engage with the community and those that contribute to regeneration of our villages, town and cities.

In responding, Forward Scotland restricts itself to its areas of greatest competency, in this instance, sustainable community development. It will be noted, therefore that we have not responded to all questions posed in the consultation.

Forward Scotland is keen to support and complement the work of the Scottish Government in promoting sustainable development. We would be pleased to meet with you if clarification or further detail is required.

Yours faithfully



Frazer Scott
Chief Executive

CONSULTATION ON INITIATIVES RELATED TO THE SCOTRAIL FRANCHISE EXTENSION

A CONTRIBUTION FROM FORWARD SCOTLAND

Forward Scotland welcomes the opportunity to respond and provide feedback to the Scottish Government's discussion on the extension of the Scotrail franchise extension in Scotland. We are happy to have this response placed in the public domain, and invite questions or further discussion on any issues raised in this document.

Forward Scotland is an NGO that promotes action for sustainable development. For over ten years the organisation has championed innovative approaches to creating a culture of sustainable development. Much of our work involves building the capacity and commitment of communities across Scotland to become more sustainable through practical action to improve their local environment.

Over the years, Forward Scotland has promoted a number of sustainable travel and transport projects from the mystery travellers of Lanarkshire, travel plans at Ninewells Hospital in Dundee to Scotland's first cycle tourism strategy and the Angus Demand Responsive Transport pilot. These projects have all featured the connection of people to travel and transport provision. Most recently, Forward Scotland has undertaken a feasibility study for the regeneration of [Arbroath Station](#) with local community-based organisations.

OVERVIEW OF THE CONSULTATION

Forward Scotland notes a number of key initiatives focussed around improvement to passenger environment, safety and facilities. We recognise the innovative nature of the stations community regeneration fund and believe that it has the potential to provide an opportunity for those not already engaged in railway activity to take 'ownership' of an asset at the heart of their community.

Question 6 – To make the best use of available space at stations, how should we balance the use between commercial outlets and other facilities that offer further passenger benefits?

Commercial activity in railway stations is highly desirable. The presence of commerce adds to the vibrancy of stations, while adding to the economic viability of the villages and towns in which they are located, generating employment and wealth.

Forward Scotland believes that opportunities for commercial activity are determined by the location and passenger footfall. However in more remote areas and/or where passenger footfall is low these railway stations will not be suitable to host commercial activity. In these cases, Forward Scotland believes that the use of premises for community-based/not-for-profit activity can add as much benefit to railway stations as those offered by commercial activity. The use of vacant accommodation at railway stations for activities such as social enterprises, youth clubs, community meetings and events and to house community support groups, encourages both passengers and non passengers into the station, adding to the sense of vibrancy during the day and lessening the feeling of isolation and emptiness at night. In addition, these community groups can offer important services to the passengers, thereby enhancing the quality of the rail travel experience.

Forward Scotland encourages the Scottish government and the railway franchise to consider the benefits of community groups utilising railway station premises for community activity as an equally viable action to encourage station vitality and vibrancy. Forward Scotland urges the Scottish Government to take measures to reduce the bureaucracy surrounding leasing to provide a security of tenure for these groups without entailing excessive costs

Question 7 – How can the station environment be improved? Please Consider:-

- **Lighting**
- **Availability of seating/furniture**
- **Safety (e.g. through technology such as CCTV, help-points)**
- **A visible staff presence**

Forward Scotland acknowledges that station environments can be greatly improved by careful use of lighting, attractive comfortable seating, appropriate furniture and CCTV. In addition staff should be situated where they can clearly see and be seen by passengers on the platform and where they themselves can work in safety. In addition to those above considerations, Forward Scotland suggests the following to be valuable contributions to improvement of railway station environment:-

Scotland benefits from a large number of railway stations where buildings are architecturally attractive and many are historically significant in terms of their design. This in itself can act as a pleasant diversion for those travelling or waiting to travel by train. However, many of these station buildings are not being utilised for any purpose that is of use to the travelling public. Further, a lack of coherent maintenance can often reduce the attractive quality of the building fronts. Forward Scotland supports a rigorous system of maintenance for these station buildings, bringing them back into a state of repair and usefulness and also restoring the original features of the building fronts to reflect their architectural heritage. Use of shrubs and other forms of planting on platforms, while not in themselves of significant environmental benefit, can further enhance the attractiveness of station platforms which have been subject to restoration and refurbishment.

The [Beautiful Scotland](#) campaign has over the last 20 years encouraged community groups to enhance their communities through season and permanent planting. Many of Scotland's railway stations have benefitted as a result of motivated local people working with the support of local railways staff to enhance the appearance of railway stations.

Forward Scotland urges the Scottish Government to consider a coherent plan of restoration and maintenance to Scotland's railway station buildings and their surroundings as well as taking steps to ensure that stations are personable and attractive places to visit and work in.

Question 9 – How can we improve assisted travel at stations? In particular, please consider:-

- **Station access (such as wheelchair ramps, facilities for light scooters, facilities for passengers with assistance dogs)**

- **Assistance for people with hearing or learning difficulties**
- **Increased training for existing staff**
- **The availability of dedicated staff**

Forward Scotland would refer the Scottish Government back to our comments outlined on question 6 and conclude that community and voluntary groups, making use of station buildings are in an ideal position to offer services for people with additional needs. This could offer additional support to railway staff and those requiring assistance at railway stations with a low staffing ratio.

Forward Scotland suggests that community groups offering additional need services are ideally placed to occupy vacant railway station premises.

Question 19 – How best can we focus the franchisee on the options for delivering better sustainability?

Since 2000, Forward Scotland has supported a wide range of support networks for businesses to reduce their negative environmental impacts and to be more socially sustainable. In doing so, these businesses have also reduced their revenue running costs, capital replacement programmes and in many cases have increased their profits.

Forward Scotland is of the firm belief that environmentally sound management of buildings has long term financial benefits as for example the costs of providing energy can be reduced in the long term and the cost of major repairs can be all but eliminated.

Forward Scotland suggests that the Scottish government works with the franchisee and Network Rail to consider the long term future of rail way premises and to embed the principles of sound environmental management into the franchise agreement.

**Question 21 – what should we consider in station and community regeneration?
Please think about**

- **The size of the station**
- **Facilities which reflect the needs of each community**

Given that there appears to be two questions here in relation firstly to station regeneration and secondly to community regeneration we will concentrate on community regeneration.

The size of the station in terms of its floor area is largely a consequence of history rather than current passenger footfall. Therefore some of the largest spaces are contained in low footfall areas. Some of our smallest stations also have disproportionately high footfalls.

What needs to be identified are stations that have the greatest potential to reconnect with the community. Stations where there is a large percentage of unused/underused space should be identified.

Scoping studies for those should look to the nature and needs of the community sector in the vicinity of those stations to identify where there is the potential of a viable community champion.

Robust business plans are required to ensure that any regeneration activity has a longer term future.

Forward Scotland believes that it is essential that work is done to identify the areas of greatest potential.

Question 22 – where should we concentrate our efforts on the station community regeneration fund?

On the 2014 commonwealth games hosted by Glasgow

- Glasgow is expecting a large number of international visitors when it hosts the commonwealth games in 2014. With major investment in the road and rail infrastructure, a dedicated games route network and free travel for anyone holding tickets for that days games

On new technologies

- We recognise the easier it is to interconnect with other forms of travel, the more likely passengers will be to travel by train

The decisions taken on the fund's spend should be Scotland wide and focussed around the needs and opportunities within the station network. In addition, Forward Scotland believes that this evidence should be backed up with a formal feasibility study which identifies railway stations with the greatest potential to contribute to community regeneration, cultural heritage, community participation and economic development.

Forward Scotland believes that it would be “short-termist” to concentrate the efforts of the community regeneration fund on single events which are focussed on narrow areas of Scotland's railway network. Equity needs to be reflected in the station community regeneration fund and whilst Glasgow has significant passenger footfall and will have a substantially increased footfall in 2014, the benefit of the games will largely be felt in the city. The current scale of the fund does not lend itself to making a significant contribution towards the costs of the 2014 games. Therefore we believe that the improvement of stations, where Commonwealth Games activity is focussed, either for accommodation or sporting activity, in the city is a matter for Network Rail, SPT and Glasgow City Council.

Forward Scotland believes that relatively peripheral stations in cities and areas with lower passenger footfall across the network offer the greatest potential in terms of sustainable development. These station developments could reconnect communities and their railways, provide viable employment, facilitate social interaction, and provide support to railway staff. It is of course vitally important that improvements are done to the highest practicable environmental standards to minimise revenue running costs.

Forward Scotland recognises that there are a number of isolated examples of community regeneration activities e.g. Pitlochry and Uddingston. We are also aware of groups across

Scotland in the earliest stages of engaging with the railway industry, these include Arbroath, Cupar, Kilmarnock, Kirkconnell, Saltcoats, and Wemyss Bay.

Forward Scotland urges the Scottish Government to commission a feasibility/scoping study of Scotland's railway stations to identify where there is greatest potential for sustainable community 'ownership' and collaboration..

CONCLUSION

Forward Scotland is very keen to continue working with national and local Government and its agencies to further sustainable development among communities. Our experience in coordinating a wide range of projects and identifying new approaches to foster thriving communities will support the Government's goal of pursuing sustainable economic growth.

It is clear that the £70m re-investment of Scotland's railways presents opportunities for progress towards a more sustainable transport system through restoration of railway station buildings and innovative partnerships between the railway franchisee, the community and voluntary sector and small businesses to provide improved services to passengers and to help create and maintain vibrant station premises which encourage more people to use the railway network.

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to this discussion and we look forward to supporting the work of the Scottish Government in promoting sustainable development. We would be pleased to meet with you if clarification or further detail is required.

Frazer Scott

Chief Executive

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