

Response by Perth and Kinross Council to Transport Scotland Consultation on Initiatives related to the ScotRail Franchise Extension

Perth and Kinross Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Transport Scotland consultation on Initiatives related to the ScotRail franchise extension and offers the following response.

1. Which of the Priced options do you think best support the delivery of Scotland's Railways?

Perth and Kinross Council very much welcomes the intention to introduce additional limited stop services between Glasgow and Perth. We would also wish to see service enhancements on the route between Perth and Edinburgh via Fife, in order to provide passengers with better travel options and to promote sustainable travel.

2. Is our schedule for new service introduction right?

Perth and Kinross Council believes that the schedule for new service introduction is acceptable.

3. Which future priced options would you wish to see Transport Scotland develop?

In addition to the answers at 1 above, we would very much welcome the introduction of pilot schemes to incentivise modal shift of commuters and the introduction of additional customer service staff at major stations. Passengers welcome the extra help and reassurance that customer service staff provide and desire to make journeys quickly and efficiently, with journeys connections being as seamless as possible. Wi-fi technology should also be rolled out across the network particularly on the major regional routes as this provides an additional benefit to both business and leisure passengers.

4. Where should we concentrate our efforts on improving services, in particular journey times?

This is more a matter of ensuring that the appropriate level of investment in infrastructure is made to ensure that the track and signalling can cope with the demands of today's railways. As such this is more a matter of close liaison with Network Rail to ensure that major infrastructure works are carried out as efficiently as possible.

5. How can buying a ticket be made easier?

Full consideration should be given to embracing the emerging new technologies such as mobile internet options and text options for mobile phones and other handheld devices. Integrated ticketing options, perhaps via a smartcard should also be considered.

However, it is also important to consider those passengers who have not embraced the new technologies on offer and more customer care staff to provide advice at stations should also be considered.

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

It is important that local communities feel that the station “belongs” to them. Therefore local consultation should take place to ensure that the facilities at stations can best be aligned with the aspirations of the local community.

7. How could the station environment be improved?

Good lighting and safety features such as CCTV are essential elements in providing a pleasant environment in which passengers will feel safe and secure. A visible staff presence also helps to reassure more vulnerable passengers as to their own personal safety.

8. How could signage be improved at stations?

Signage needs to be easily understood and clearly seen by all sections of the public, including those who may have disabilities. Information boards should also be provided providing information on local points of interest, such as hospitals etc.

9. How can we improve assisted travel at stations?

It is important that the duties imposed on the franchisee under the DDA are complied with and to this end, consultation with local disabilities groups should be encouraged. A staff awareness programme should also be implemented.

10. Do you have any ideas for further ‘RaiLinks’?

It would be useful to consult with local NHS trusts with regard to establishing links between rail stations and hospitals. It would also be useful to include GP clinics in more rural areas.

11. Which pilot scheme changes to fares should we make to encourage modal shift?

The current range of railcards offering reduced fares is adequate. More integrated ticketing offering unlimited bus/rail travel within a defined geographical area would be welcomed by passengers as a way of making travel as seamless as possible, so encouraging modal shift. Consideration should also be given to offering reductions to passengers who make regular journeys on a particular route throughout the year, but who would not currently benefit from weekly or monthly season tickets.

12. When travelling on the train, how could passengers' experiences be improved?

It would be useful to have more luggage space on trains on major regional routes and a dedicated cycle storage facility should be considered, especially on major tourist routes such as the West Highland Line. On-board staff also need to have access to up to date information to enable them to provide passengers with details on interchange and connection possibilities and any problems that may occur.

13. Where should we concentrate our efforts in improving the Anglo-Scottish sleeper service?

Better co-ordination with local feeder trains to ensure that interchange options are maximised would be of benefit to passengers.

14. How could we improve the travel interchange at stations?

Integrated bus/rail ticketing would be of major benefit to passengers, particularly in encouraging a shift to more sustainable means of travel. Good signage and the provision of safe walking and cycling routes will help to encourage these activities. The provision of cycle racks and lockers should also be considered. Waiting facilities should be kept clean and tidy and should present a welcoming atmosphere. Accessibility issues should be addressed as part of an Equality Impact Assessment of stations.

15. What should our connectivity priorities be?

Wi-fi technology should be introduced where it is feasible to do so. Power points for laptops, mobiles and other handheld devices should be provided on trains. Given the popularity of 3G mobile internet technology, consideration should be given to entering into discussions with mobile phone operators to provide this facility on board trains.

16. Would wireless internet technology significantly benefit passengers?

Wireless internet technology would be a significant benefit for passengers. Business passengers could connect with their office and carry out work on the way to meetings etc. Students could work on coursework and projects while visiting friends or family. Leisure passengers could research possible places of interest. There is therefore enormous marketing potential in providing this benefit, particularly as the marketing can be tailored to suit many differing types of market.

17. Would you pay for this service?

Passengers could be persuaded to pay for the service, if they were assured of a fast and reliable service.

18. Where should the Edinburgh – Glasgow Smartcard pilot project take us?

This pilot project should be viewed as the test-bed for the new technology, ensuring that the project is technically feasible. If the uptake of the scheme is deemed to be successful and the technology can be proved to be effective, then it should be used as the basis for a future national scheme. It can also be used to determine whether integrated ticketing options with local bus operators can be implemented.

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

A full scale Environmental Impact Assessment should be carried out on all aspects of the operation to see where environmental benefits can be achieved.

20. How should the Environmental Improvement Works budget be used to further improve our carbon footprint on the railways?

Please see the answer to question 19 above.

21. What should we consider in station and community regeneration?

Station and community regeneration is best carried out in conjunction with local community groups.

22. Where should we concentrate our efforts on the Station Community Regeneration Fund?

Please see the answer to question 21 above.

23. What additional services or projects in furtherance of the Commonwealth Games bid commitments do you feel would most benefit the city during the games period?

While it is important to ensure that the Commonwealth Games are a success, it is also important to remember that Gleneagles will be hosting the Ryder Cup in 2014. It would be useful to consider these two major sporting events in tandem, especially as they take place also consecutively.

24. What aspects of the Project Manager's role are priorities to ensure the successful delivery of the projects?

The project manager should ensure that a wide ranging consultation exercise is carried out with all stakeholders to ensure that resources can be most effectively utilised for the benefit of all users.

25. Do you think that any of the improvements and enhancements proposed above will have either a positive or adverse impact on equality groups?

If enhancements are carried out in consultation with equalities groups then they can have a positive impact.