



ScotRail Sleeper Franchise

Transform Scotland position paper

10 October 2013

1 Introduction

- 1.1 These comments are additional to those made in response to the Rail 2014 consultation and reflect the current situation where Transport Scotland is seeking to let the Sleeper as a separate franchise.

2 Marketing the Sleeper

- 2.1 The current Sleeper services enjoy a loyal following but are something of a 'well kept secret' to the vast majority of the travelling public. The new franchise offers an ideal opportunity to relaunch the services with a more varied and comprehensive offering.
- 2.2 Scottish Government Ministers have indicated that they wish see the Sleeper services represent a quality image of Scotland, being not just a means of transport but more a symbol of the best of what Scotland has to offer tourists. With effective marketing the Sleeper can become part of every Visit Scotland promotion much as is the case with the iconic Glenfinnan viaduct.
- 2.3 There is clearly a market for top-class rail travel and this is amply demonstrated by the many charter train operators who offer full 'Pullman style' dining trips. Indeed many of these trains head to Scotland so that passengers can enjoy the many scenic rail routes whilst travelling in style. Further evidence of the potential market for lines such as the West Highland is demonstrated by Open Access operator West Coast who now run two daily trips from Fort William to Mallaig. Effective marketing has created passenger numbers on this line which may well be greater than at any time in its history.
- 2.4 It is essential for the new operator of the Sleepers to work in conjunction with Visit Scotland, hotel operators and others such as West Coast Railway, bus and ferry operators to offer comprehensive packages which include rail travel, accommodation and add-on trips such as the Jacobite train.

3 On-train facilities and Service

- 3.1 As indicated above there is a 'top end' market for first class rail travel, including full dining facilities. First class en-suite cabins should form part of the offering in the refurbishment of the existing stock or purchase of new coaches. However, other markets also exist and four-berth couchette type cabins, two-berth cabins and seated coaches should also be provided. Some form of refreshment/dining facility should be offered to all those travelling.
- 3.2 Passengers will usually be travelling with luggage and additional facilities should be offered for those with bikes, prams or other items of large luggage.

4 Timetable and Connections

- 4.1 Onward connections are a key part of the overall travel package and it will be important to offer seamless journeys by working with bus and ferry operators to sell through journeys. Similarly, timetables should ensure that key connections are made.
- 4.2 Within Scotland the Sleeper services provide important internal train services using the seated accommodation and it is important to maintain and develop this market. For example, the Fort William

Sleeper offers the opportunity to travel to Edinburgh via an evening train or an early morning departure from Edinburgh. Full catering on this train may well open up new markets within Scotland.

5 Station Facilities

- 5.1 Facilities at the six main departure and arrival stations of Euston, Edinburgh Waverley, Glasgow Central , Aberdeen, Inverness and Fort William should be appropriate for those making a lengthy overnight journey. These key stations provide the opportunity to showcase the Sleeper with distinctive branding, waiting lounges with refreshments, welcome hosts and shower facilities. At the many rural stations served in Scotland the Sleeper is a key service bringing valuable economic benefit and connectivity. The current Scotrail station adoption scheme has been a great success in bringing life back to stations as well as creating a welcoming environment. Any new operator of the Sleeper should seek to build on this so that each station served provides a safe and attractive arrival or departure point.

6 Tickets and Availability

- 6.1 Combined with a re-launch of the services and more effective marketing is the need for ticket availability to be significantly enhanced. We have heard a number of stories of difficulties encountered by those wishing to book on Sleeper services (on Scotrail's own website). Tickets need to be easily available via all operators booking systems and through other agencies such as hotel booking sites.
- 6.2 Tickets themselves should offer a range of price options and should be available well ahead of the planned travel date. As those seeking to make the Sleeper travel part of their holiday will wish to book months ahead then booking facilities should allow for this. Those who prefer to book at short notice, such as people travelling on business, should be offered appropriate facilities. These might include discounted berths where these are still available or preferential rates for regular travellers. For greater flexibility packages that allow one-way travel by Sleeper with return by day train should also be available.

7 Providing for passengers with disabilities

- 7.1 There will be a requirement for the Sleeper coaches to comply with disability legislation. The necessary modifications should be made when the existing fleet is being refurbished or any new coaches designed accordingly.

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Transform Scotland is the national sustainable transport alliance, campaigning for a more sustainable and socially-just transport system. Our membership includes bus, rail and shipping operators; local authorities; national environment and conservation groups; consultancies; and local transport campaigns. Transform Scotland Limited is a registered Scottish charity (SC041516).

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