

# FRANCHISING POLICY STATEMENT

Response to Transport Scotland consultation

11 February 2021

## 1. The Policy Statement.

We welcome the policy statement and note the need for Ministers to take decisions, in the near future, to ensure the continuity of ScotRail services.

In the absence of a new long-term structure for the railway, it is clear that interim measures must be put in place. The Scottish Government has made clear its desire for greater devolution of powers over the railway in Scotland and to move away from the previous franchising system. Given that position and the urgent need for interim measures it appears to us that either a Direct Award or the Operator of Last Resort must be put in place. We support the introduction of appropriate interim measures and it is vital that these measures ensure the smooth continuity of services.

## 2. The Future Role of the Railway in Scotland.

Looking in more detail at the future role of the railway both in the interim and long term we set out below a series of critical aspects which we believe should guide policy on the role of the railway in Scotland:

### Climate Change

There is absolutely no doubt that climate change poses a series threat to the world — and Scotland is no exception. Whilst progress in reducing harmful emissions has been made across many sectors, transport remains as the stand-out sector where virtually no progress has been delivered. The vast majority of transport emissions within Scotland arise from road transport and it is a fallacy to suggest that simply converting the car and goods vehicle fleets to electric propulsion is the answer. This will not deliver an efficient, sustainable or equitable transport system. Emissions harmful to health will continue from the particulates derived from vehicle tyres and brakes, inactive lifestyles will continue, and congestion will remain the same or increase.

The railway and the public transport system as a whole has a major role to play in enabling modal shift to a more sustainable system. The announcement in 2020 of a decarbonisation plan for the railway is very welcome but this must be accompanied by investment to increase capacity in the network.

### Road Congestion and Poor Local Air Quality

The impacts of the dominance of road transport have already been referred to in the section above but it is worth stressing the fatal consequences arising from the over-reliance on road transport. Alongside the accidents which kill and seriously injure many thousands each year, poor local air quality further adds to the death toll. Meanwhile, the coronavirus pandemic has served to highlight the added vulnerability to the virus of those with existing breathing difficulties.

Rail remains a much safer, cleaner and more efficient means of transport for passengers and freight.

## Public Transport Integration

To deliver significant modal shift to rail it should form part of an integrated public transport system, easy to use where there is seamless integration at key nodes and tickets cover the whole journey. Bus transport is likely to remain the dominant mode for most journeys but rail should form the backbone of the system connecting Scotland's cities, urban areas to cities and providing vital transport to locals and tourists in rural areas.

## Fares and Ticketing

A key element of Scotland's railway in the 21st century should be a reformed ticketing system which is seen by the user as simple and easy to both use and understand. It is widely believed that the traditional five days a week commuter market will not return and so flexible fares for regular commuters are required. Anomalies that lead to split ticketing and single fares not much less than returns should be removed. Special promotions should be designed to promote use on rural and lesser-used lines, and overall the fares policy should be one that is seen as fair across Scotland and attracts people to use the railway.

## Strong Marketing to Rebuild Patronage

Given the impacts of Covid — and the unfortunate messaging which led to people seeing the train and public transport generally as an unsafe means of transport — there will be an urgent need to rebuild patronage through strong marketing campaigns. The immediate focus should be to regain existing passengers, but beyond that ongoing promotion is required to deliver real modal shift to public transport. A partnership approach should be adopted by working closely with others such as visitor attractions, major employers and community rail partnerships.

## Modernisation of the Industry and Committed Long-Term Investment

There is a pressing need to modernise and streamline the structure and working practices of the railway. This should create a platform for more efficient forward planning of infrastructure and operations and lead to reduced costs.

Aligned to this is the need for a long-term investment plan that delivers not just decarbonisation but greater capacity for passenger and freight traffic. This requires government spending plans to clearly prioritise sustainable transport modes for future investment. There is no point whatsoever in declaring an ambition to make "the train quicker than the car between Scotland's cities" (as the Scottish Ministers did in NPF3) and then spending billions of pounds creating greater road capacity which will inevitably lead to modal shift away from the railways to the car and lorry. It is imperative that we see a review of existing capital expenditure plans to prioritise investment in transport infrastructure that will reduce, *not increase*, emissions and inequalities.

## 3. Summary.

In conclusion, we support the interim measures outlined to ensure continuity of rail services. However, we have outlined a series of critical aspects affecting both the railway and transport in general that we believe need to be addressed as part of any interim and long-term structure that is created.

# Scotland's alliance for sustainable transport

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