

WHOLE INDUSTRY STRATEGIC PLAN – CALL FOR EVIDENCE

Evidence to Great British Railways

1 February 2022

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the consultation and to the development of a long term plan for the railway in Great Britain. **Our response focuses on one particular aspect of the railway and overall transport policy – that is the Anglo-Scottish rail routes.**

There have been a number of recent announcements from the UK Government which mostly centre on the railways in England but have significant consequences for Scotland and Anglo-Scottish rail routes. The Integrated Rail Plan resulted in a downgrading of the planned HS2 network and the scrapping of the eastern leg of HS2 to Leeds. Plans to instead upgrade classic routes such as the East Coast Main Line (ECML) are fraught with problems and are unlikely to create the extra capacity for local services and for freight that was a key element of HS2.

For Scotland this means that planned HS2 services to Edinburgh now seem unlikely via the ECML. Scotland will be served by HS2 trains on the West Coast Main Line (WCML) as the new trains to be ordered will be 'classic compatible' so will be able to leave the high speed lines and run on to destinations on the existing (classic) lines. Services are initially planned to Glasgow with a degree of uncertainty about how Edinburgh might be served from the WCML. Journey times to London will see only modest improvements and the replacement of the current Pendolino trains with a capacity for tilt with non-tilting trains will actually increase journey times on the classic network.

Separately the Union Connectivity Review has recommended upgrades to both the ECML and WCML to maintain competitive rail journey times from Scotland to England. These are crucial to reduce rail journey times and create extra capacity for more services. The lack of capacity on the ECML was dramatically highlighted by a recent consultation exercise on improving LNER journey times to London and we responded to this consultation.¹ It became clear that this can only be achieved by removing other services from the route and by existing stations such as Berwick-upon-Tweed having a reduced frequency of stops. Added to that, there remains uncertainty about how to serve new stations such as Reston and East Linton.

Work had been ongoing by Transport Scotland to develop plans to upgrade both the ECML and WCML for extra capacity and to improve journey times. We have been a member of Transport Scotland's High Speed Rail Partnership Group for many years and were party to the plans being developed which clearly need co-operation by those on both sides of the border. However we now know that the development work ceased around two and a half years ago.²

Before the pandemic there were over a hundred daily flights from Central Scotland to London with the modal share between air and rail being 70% air 30% rail. Added to that, there is no current capacity for extra local services and freight. This leaves ambitions for decarbonisation and modal shift from road and air to rail without any clear strategy or way forward. A recent report featured in the Independent newspaper on 19th January showed that cutting rail journey times from Edinburgh and Glasgow to London to 3 hours would enable rail's modal share to grow to 75%. France and Germany have developed

¹ <https://transform.scot/blog/2021/08/05/strategic-review-needed-of-edinburgh-newcastle-local-passenger-services/>

² <https://transform.scot/blog/2021/10/26/from-plane-to-train-achieving-modal-shift-in-anglo-scottish-travel/>

clear strategies to convert domestic air journeys to rail and we need a similar approach from both the UK and Scottish Governments.

Germany has developed an ongoing programme of upgrades to the rail network to reduce journey times – this is being achieved by a mixture of new build cut-offs and upgrades to existing routes. A similar approach is now required here over the timeframe of the Whole Industry Plan. Clear interventions should be developed within the timeframes identified however we do not support a timeframe of 30 years for reduction of journey times to 3 hours. We propose that the necessary work should be undertaken in a staged manner for completion by 2035.



Scotland's alliance for sustainable transport

Transform Scotland
5 Rose Street, Edinburgh, EH2 2PR
t: 0131 243 2690
e: info@transform.scot
w: transform.scot

The logo for Transform Scotland, featuring the word "transform" in a bold, lowercase sans-serif font, with "scotland" in a smaller, lowercase sans-serif font below it. The letters "o" and "r" in "transform" are stylized with a circular arrow around them. The logo is set against a background of a large, faint, blue graphic of a person walking, composed of many thin, parallel lines.

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We campaign for walking, cycling and public transport to be the easiest and most affordable options for everyone. Our diverse membership brings together public, private and third sector organisations from across Scotland. We are a registered Scottish charity (SC041516).