



Scottish Council for
Development and Industry

POLICY SUBMISSION

DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT
WEST COAST MAIN LINE FRANCHISE CONSULTATION

April 2011

SCDI is an independent and inclusive economic development network which seeks to influence and inspire government and key stakeholders with our ambitious vision to create shared sustainable economic prosperity for Scotland.

For more information on this response please contact the SCDI Policy Team at

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West Coast Main Line Franchise Consultation

1. SCDI is an independent membership network that strengthens Scotland's competitiveness by influencing Government policies to encourage sustainable economic prosperity. SCDI's membership includes businesses, trade unions, local authorities, educational institutions, the voluntary sector and faith groups.

Introduction

2. SCDI's *Blueprint for Scotland*¹ is our vision for the Scottish economy, highlighting 21st century connectivity of our infrastructure as a key policy priority. SCDI therefore welcomes the significant improvements to the West Coast rail network in recent years, but continue to call for further improvements in cross-border connectivity. The Blueprint also calls for the introduction of high speed rail between central Scotland and London. This would make significant changes to the usage of the existing West Coast Main Line.
3. Over the period of the last West Coast franchise, Glasgow has grown significantly in terms of its employment, number of hotels and cultural and tourism offering. In addition, its business sector mix has changed, with an increasing financial services sector. This results in the requirement for greater business and tourism travel into Glasgow. The West Coast Main Line is a key route to connect Glasgow to the rest of the UK and is an important aspect of future growth in the economy of the West of Scotland
4. The number of connections between Scotland and London by air has reduced over recent years, and is likely to continue to do so as the UK's hub airport, Heathrow, edges closer to peak capacity and travellers are more concerned about their carbon footprint. It is therefore increasingly important to ensure high-quality, reliable and quick rail travel to London from Scotland.
5. SCDI therefore welcomes consultation on the West Coast Main Line Route Tender and offers comments and recommendations over the following areas:
 - a. Franchise length
 - b. Frequency, speed and capacity
 - c. Ticketing and integration
 - d. The 2012 Olympic Games and 2014 Commonwealth Games
 - e. Freight services
 - f. Other strategic issues

Franchise Length

6. In our Blueprint for Scotland, SCDI welcomed the UK Government's commitment to grant longer rail franchises. SCDI believes that longer, carefully structured

¹ www.scdi.org.uk/blueprint

franchises could deliver additional private funding for improvements in train and station infrastructures where the life of assets can be 30 years or more.

7. Extended length franchises would improve integration by giving train companies greater responsibility over stations, maintenance and trains, and deliver maximum benefit for passengers and the public purse by incentivising investments from the private sector.
8. SCDI believes that the proposed 14 year timescale to coincide with the proposed 2026 introduction of the HS2 service is of an appropriate length.

Frequency, speed and capacity

9. SCDI believes that the speed and frequency of connections between Scotland and major cities of England are a key component of the future growth of Scotland's economy. Rail connectivity has a crucial role to play in this and SCDI wish to see intercity services timetabled for quick connectivity between major business and tourism hubs. Capacity and competitive journey times on Anglo-Scottish routes are key priorities for Scottish business and tourism due to the size of the UK market.
10. The West Coast Main Line should service the major hubs in the North of England, yet this should not unduly reduce journey times from Glasgow to London. We propose that at least one Glasgow–London service every two hours stops only at Preston as part of an hourly Glasgow–London service in both directions. This will increase the attractiveness of central Scotland as an accessible business destination and Preston-only stopping will help to reduce overcrowding on London–Glasgow services.
11. SCDI welcomes plans to lengthen Birmingham–Glasgow services to reduce overcrowding, but further recommend removal of some adjacent inter-urban stops to increase speed, reduce short-stop commuter usage and tackle overcrowding. SCDI would like to see rail as the main means of connection between Manchester Airport and Glasgow. This requires new services, electrification and longer trains, but also further work to remove some stops.
12. SCDI continues to call for shorter journey times on the West Coast Main Line, including aiming to reduce Glasgow–London times below the psychologically important 4 hour barrier. Improvement works could reduce the Glasgow to London journey time to 3 hours 30 minutes.
13. A 4 hour Edinburgh to London Service is shortly to be introduced on the East Coast Main Line. SCDI consider that a similar early morning service between Glasgow and London could be specified within the West Coast tender.
14. SCDI has previously suggested beginning construction of the high speed route between Glasgow and Carstairs at an early stage, reducing conflicts between local and Anglo-Scottish trains, and improving the Carstairs junction. If this

happens, the new franchise holder would need to plan to minimise passenger inconvenience.

15. SCDI strongly supports early moves towards 11-car train sets to provide additional capacity on the West Coast Main Line. We expect the new franchise holder to bring enlarged train sets into operation with the minimum of passenger inconvenience as quickly as possible.

Ticketing and Integration

16. Further steps to encourage peak travel spreading and efficient use of rail infrastructure should be explored, including a review of fares policy and fares transparency to assess the impact of current fares on all markets, including tourism and business travel.
17. The roll-out of smart ticketing, integration of the West Coast rail network with other transport modes and networks, and investment in facilities which improve the travelling experience for passengers, whether from Scotland or visitors, is clearly important in maximising the benefits of infrastructure investment for the Scottish economy.

The 2012 Olympic Games and 2014 Commonwealth Games

18. With the Olympic Games taking place very shortly after the commencement of the franchise period, all bidders should be involved in planning now for the efficient and seamless delivery of services during this crucial period – particularly important since Glasgow is a host city for part of the 2012 Olympic football tournament.
19. The failure of the tender consultation to specifically mention the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow is a cause for concern. It is essential that the future West Coast Main Line operator prepares for significant demand for rail travel during the Commonwealth Games period in 2014.

Freight services

20. SCDI supports allowances being made for an increase in freight paths and depots. Whilst market conditions can have a significant impact on freight volumes, SCDI does not wish to see a scenario where freight movement is constrained by rail capacity.

Other Strategic Issues

21. The operation of the West Coast Main Line must be closely aligned with the operation of other Scottish routes and the East Coast Main Line, as well as with plans for High Speed 2.

22. SCDI strongly supports the construction of a dedicated high speed rail line between London and Glasgow/ Edinburgh. As various reports have demonstrated, inclusion of Scotland within the high speed rail route is necessary to maximise the economic and environmental benefits of this major investment. SCDI accepts that it will be delivered in phases and has called on the UK and Scottish Governments to work together to begin planning the route in Scotland.
23. SCDI wants to see services between Glasgow and Euston receiving priority during disruption caused at Euston by the construction of HS2. This is because of the economic imperative of the Glasgow-London connection and the potential cost to the Scottish economy caused by any disruption.
24. SCDI wishes to see the new franchise holder continue improvements in reliability, punctuality and service quality.
25. SCDI would expect to see the new franchise holder strive to continue the recent trajectory in passenger numbers growth and passenger satisfaction.

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