



Scottish Council for
Development and Industry

POLICY SUBMISSION

NETWORK RAIL WEST COAST MAIN LINE ROUTE UTILISATION STRATEGY

March 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

Campsie House
17 Park Circus Place
Glasgow
G3 6AH

e james.alexander@scdi.org.uk

t 0141 332 9119

Scotland Rail Route Utilisation Strategy

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* is our vision for the Scottish economy and it highlights 21st century connectivity of our infrastructure as a policy priority. SCDI welcomes the significant improvements to the West Coast rail network in recent years for which Network Rail is to be congratulated. 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. SCDI therefore welcomes consultation on the West Coast Main Line Route Utilisation Strategy and offers the following comments and recommendations.

Methodologies and Forecasting Approach

4. The West Coast Main Line is in part very close to capacity, with passenger numbers scheduled to increase. The Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2014 will prove a further challenge to the West Coast Main Line.
5. As stated in our response to the Scotland RUS, SCDI believes that Scottish and UK transport models should be reviewed to improve their accuracy in quantifying the real economic benefits of investment and alignment between economic growth strategies and Network Rail's priorities.

Frequency and speed

6. 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.
7. The West Coast Main Line should service the major hubs in the North of England, yet this should not unduly reduce journey times 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.

8. SCDI welcomes plans to lengthen Birmingham–Glasgow services to reduce overcrowding, but further recommend removal of some adjacent inter-urban stops to reduce commuter usage and hence further 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.
9. SCDI continues to urge Network Rail to look for ways to shorten 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 by the end of the next decade. One suggestion would be to begin 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. Improvement work at Carstairs must bring together the Scotland RUS and West Coast RUS.
10. High-speed rail is unlikely to be fully operational within the next 20 years. If improvements to services are not sustained in the meantime, the contribution of cross-border connectivity to the economy will not be maximised and the existing West Coast Main Line must continue to increase capacity and reduce journey times. The West Coast Main Line has the opportunity to undertake incremental and comparatively inexpensive improvements which would act as stepping stones on the way to a full high-speed rail line and, once High Speed 2 is built, would provide fast inter-regional travel where there is large scale demand.

Ticketing and Integration

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

Freight

13. Enhanced freight clearance between Doncaster and Carstairs on the East Coast Main Line will provide an alternative to the West Coast Main Line for cross-border freight services and release capacity for increased West Coast passenger services.
14. Electrification of the Whifflet and Shotts line may also offer opportunities to increase the options for access to central Scotland freight terminals, providing

diversionary routes, reducing journey times, creating new opportunities for modal shift to rail freight and reducing pressure on the West Coast Main Line.

Terminal Capacity

15. Longer-term decisions on increased or new terminal capacity for lengthened trains and high-speed services are vital. We suggest that action is taken in good time to address capacity issues at Glasgow Central.

Other Strategic Issues

16. The West Coast Main Line Route Utilisation Strategy must be closely aligned with the strategies for Scotland and the East Coast Main Line, and with plans for High Speed 2. Particular synergy must be developed over improvement plans for Carstairs.
17. 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.
18. SCDI strongly supports the construction of a dedicated high speed rail line between London and Glasgow/ Edinburgh. As Network Rail has shown in its reports, 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.
19. 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.

James Alexander
Policy and Communications Manager
Scottish Council for Development and Industry