

Meeting of the Cross Party Group on Rail in the Scottish Parliament **Minute of the meeting held on Tuesday, 10th March 2015, 5.30pm**

Present:

John Mason MSP (SNP; Glasgow Shettleston), Neil Bibby MSP (Labour; West of Scotland), John Finnie MSP (Independent; Highlands and Islands), David Stewart MSP (Labour, Highlands and Islands), Allan McLean (Secretary), Peter Strachan (Serco), Lawrence Marshall (Capital Rail Action Group), Alan Moir (ASLEF), Roderick McDougall, Allison Cosgrove & Ken Sutherland (Railfuture Scotland), Jim Harkins (APPLRG-Hoc), Iain MacDonald (Light Rail UK), Vic MacKinlay (Light Rail Transit Association), Stewart Leighton (RailQwest), Gordon Martin, Phil McGarry & Michael Hogg (RMT), Stephen Young (SYA), Barie Forrest (RAGES), Trevor Roberts & Rosemary Blumfield (WCR 250), Niamh Hegarty (Network Rail), Frank Roach (HITRANS), Iain Wilson (FSR), Robert Samson (Passenger Focus), Duncam McKay (Weber Shandwick), Nigel Kirby (Siemens), Colin Howden (Transform Scotland), Gary Clark (SCoC),

Apologies:

Patrick Harvie MSP (Green; Glasgow), Eric Guthrie (TACTRAN), Norrie Innes (Action Barras Calton), Richard Ardern (Friends of the Far North Line), Bill Forbes & Ian Richard (Railqwest).

Welcome from the Chair:

John Mason MSP welcomed the members of the group to the meeting and noted the apologies which had been sent in on behalf of those who were unable to attend. A sederunt was pass around to note the names of those in attendance.

Apologies were read out and the minutes of the previous meeting were approved. John introduced the Serco's Managing Director of the Caledonian Sleeper service, Peter Strachan, who was to deliver a presentation on the new franchise.

Presentation from Peter Strachan of Serco:

A presentation was made by Serco's Caledonian Sleeper Managing Director Peter Strachan on the new Sleeper franchise that is to start from 14:00 on 31 March 2015 and run for 15 years. He spoke of Serco's international roles in service provision and outlined the vision, mission and values for the Caledonian Sleeper franchise building an "iconic experience".

He described it as a unique opportunity to transform the overnight services into a brand that would showcase the best that Scotland can offer. Mr Strachan spoke of the order for 75 new coaches to be built by 2018 by CAF and locomotives that will be supplied (with drivers) by the GBRF company. The simple-to-navigate website would offer a 12-month booking horizon for the first time on a regular basis in the UK.

Already pre-launch advertising had featured the “stag” logo that will be used to promote the Sleepers. The franchise operators had already linked with Chambers of Commerce along the routes served, plus Visit Scotland, Visit England and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Existing rolling stock would continue until the new vehicles arrived but there would be immediate changes including new uniforms, new menus, a new Arran Aromatics guest pack and a special Caledonian Sleepers tartan.

Questions for Peter Strachan of Serco:

Mr Strachan answered a series of questions raised about details of the franchise plans. Outlines follow **(with summaries of Peter Strachan’s answers in brackets!)**

- 1) Stephen Young commented on delays to passengers at London Heathrow Airport and the high cost of hotels in London. **(A range of prices would take account of the market for travel overnight compared to a night in a London hotel plus travel. Advertising already highlighted airport security issues by saying rail passengers would be “whisked not frisked”.)**
- 2) John Finnie MSP asked about Inverness maintenance staff. **(No redundancies of staff employed directly by Caledonian Sleepers.)**
- 3) Gordon Martin of the RMT union was concerned about the fragmentation of the rail industry. **(No current plans for cuts. Apprentices would be taken on.)** Mr Martin also indicated that early boarding of trains would require attention to rosters which had to be negotiated. **(Reassurances given on the subject.)**
- 4) Roderick McDougall expressed concern about disruption arrangements for passengers, including refunds in the event of delay. **(Reassurances given.)**
- 5) ASLEF’s Alan Moir asked about through-ticketing. **(Industry standards would be honoured.)**
- 6) In response to other questions, Mr Strachan said rolling stock was owned by Rolling Stock companies. Class 92 electric locomotives **(south of Edinburgh and Glasgow)** and Class 73/9 rebuilt diesel locomotives **(for north of Edinburgh)** would be hired from GBRF. Drivers would be employed by GBRF and other staff would be on the payroll of Caledonian Sleepers.
- 7) In response to other questions, assurances were given over stopping patterns, the power of locomotives to be used, and the full funding of staff pensions through a special section of the Railways Pension Fund.
- 8) Phil McGarry of the RMT union queried the fitness of Serco as a company to provide a public service **(Mr Strachan responded positively.)** Mr Strachan answered various issues raised by trade union representatives.
- 9) John Mason MSP asked about the company structure. **(Not heavily centralised.)**

- 10) Colin Howden was concerned about consultation with stakeholders. **(This will take place.)**
- 11) Ken Sutherland asked about the mix of different types of overnight accommodation on the trains and how many seats and berths of each type there would be. **(Internal layout still being finalised.)**
- 12) Barrie Forest asked about alternative terminals in London instead of Euston. **(Kings Cross or preferably St Pancras were possible in future when Euston was being rebuilt for HS2.)**
- 13) Lawrence Marshall asked about a possible Birmingham “hub”. **(West Midlands market a possible idea for the future.)**
- 14) Allison Cosgrove of Railfuture Scotland asked about the provision of hairdryers and showers. **(Mr Strachan gave assurances on availability of these but said that passenger surveys indicated that availability of toilets was regarded as of greater significance than on-train showers.)**
- 15) John Mason MSP asked about through-ticketing with Eurostar, for example to Brussels. **(Not yet in the system, but talking with Eurostar.)**

At the end of the Q&A Mr Strachan was thanked by the Chair and attendees for his time, presentation and answers.

Date of Next Meeting & AOCB:

The date of the next meeting was set at April 28th 2015 at 13:00 in Committee Room 6.

As there was no further business to attend to the meeting was called to an end.