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RUS Consultation Response

About HRP

The Highland Rail Partnership is a not for profit company funded by:

Argyll and Bute Council, English Welsh and Scottish Railway, Forest Enterprise Scotland, Freightliner, Friends of the Far North Line, Friends of the Kyle Line, Friends of the West Highland Line, Great North Eastern Railway, Highland Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, HITRANS, Keith & Dufftown Railway, Moray Council, Perth and Kinross Council, First ScotRail, Strathspey Railway Company

The aim of the Partnership is to develop the passenger and freight railway. Our recent achievements include: Tain Commuter, Beaulay Station, extra West Highland trains, Wick/Kyle Sunday services, Arrochar Commuter, Invernet, lineside loading of timber, and the return of road salt to rail.

The HRP area is defined Helensburgh and Gleneagles north, Keith west. The organisation is based at Lairg Station in Sutherland.

HRP is a co-sponsor of the Highlands and Islands Room for Growth capacity study and the H&I Rail Demand Study.

Response to the Draft Scotland RUS

1. We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Draft Scotland RUS and acknowledge its importance in planning for the future alongside the National Transport Strategy/Rail Strategy and the HLOS process, which will in turn lead to Network Rail's permitted expenditure being set by ORR in the next Control Period.

2. While we understand the rationale for studying the sixteen route sections, we chose to undertake our own mini-RUS across the Highlands and Islands area entitled 'Room for Growth' alongside a demand modelling study, as the area had been omitted from the Scottish Strategic Rail Study and other pieces of work. A summary is attached.

While many of the projects are fairly modest, the proposal for more frequent Inverness-Perth-Edinburgh services, in a faster journey time is of national importance.

3. We are pleased to see the prominence given to our report in the draft RUS. We note that 6.5.7 states that *'it is possible that the key recommendations could be incorporated within the final strategy'* and would urge this to be put beyond doubt.

4. The publication of the draft Freight RUS is also noted. An increase in rail freight services across the area is a key part of our transport strategy

5. We wish to comment only on the Gaps that impinge on the Highland services:

Gap 1 Queen St High Level- additional 6 car platform capacity will assist any future lengthened West Highland services. The passenger concourse area should be suitable for leisure travellers with cycles/rucksacks etc.

Gap 4 EARL- The rail link to Edinburgh Airport will be particularly important to Inverness-Perth-Edinburgh services. We note that new rolling stock required should help to facilitate Inverness-Edinburgh in 2h45, a key Room for Growth output.

Gap 5 Haymarket - a key interchange for business users from the north, and when rugby internationals are played. Improving the concourse and access will have a real passenger benefit. The additional platform provides further flexibility to turn round trains short at times of perturbation.

Gap 6 Waverley- the additional capacity proposed will assist us in our aspiration for more frequent Edinburgh-Perth-Inverness services, while passenger circulation space is vital for this key tourist gateway station.

Gap 13 Edinburgh/Fife/Aberdeen- An increase in signalling capacity across the Forth Bridge and Hilton-Ladybank upgrading will enable Inverness-Perth-Edinburgh hourly services to run without conflicting with the demand for Fife service enhancements. We would urge this programme to be accelerated.

Gap 14 Edinburgh-Fife - comments as above.

Gap 15 Lightly used stations - 6 of the 10 stations noted are in the HRP area. We have some sympathy with the view that the renewals programme for these stations may need to be reviewed in order to avoid unnecessary expenditure. It may be that derogations can be sought on standards, or that judicious timetabling can be used to concentrate services on a single platform. It should be noted however that industry tools such as LENNON cannot account for every user, particularly when tourist passes are used.

Gap 17 Inverness-Aberdeen- we welcome the move to 6 car platforms at Inch and Elgin. We would also wish to add that while hourly services across the whole route are desirable, in the shorter term HRP is working on the Invernet II project, which includes a new halt at Dalcross Airport. An additional loop at Dalcross would help to increase capacity across the whole route.

Gap24 GARL- Glasgow Airport Rail Link, while easing surface access from Central Scotland, increases capacity between Paisley and Glasgow which will benefit rail services to the ferry terminals of Gourock, Wemyss Bay and Largs.

Frank Roach
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