

NATIONAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK FOR SCOTLAND 2

Discussion Draft

The opportunity to respond to this document is welcomed, in this response three rail associated matters, two freight and one passenger are suggested to the Scottish Government as being worth further study.

1] Scotland as a 'landbridge' between Ireland and the Continent.

The document recognises the opportunity to develop Scotland as a landbridge between Ireland and the Continent via the Scottish ports of Cairnryan/Stranraer and Grangemouth/Rosyth and considers rightly that it would be more sustainable if such traffic moved by rail. This however will not happen unless the rail route between these ports is improved to give the customer, i.e. the road haulier, what they want and need.

It is suggested therefore that a feasibility study is undertaken to ascertain the costs and benefits of re-activating the mothballed freight terminal at Stranraer Town Yard to act as an intermodal terminal for road and rail traffic passing to and from Ireland and the Continent.

In association with this the study should include the costs and benefits of gauge clearing the route between Stranraer and Grangemouth/Rosyth to accept 9'6" containers on conventional wagons.

At a recent workshop held jointly by the Road Haulage Association and the Rail Freight Group for small to medium sized road hauliers to encourage consideration of rail services for trunk movements it emerged very clearly that what hauliers wanted most from rail services was piggyback, i.e. the ability to load a trailer or accompanied vehicle onto a train for the trunk haul.

In undertaking the gauge clearance study for 9'6" containers the study should be extended to include the feasibility, costs and benefits of clearing the route for piggyback traffic.

A good starting point for such studies would be to use work already done.

There exists a major piece of work, 'The Feasibility of a Piggyback Network for the British Isles' which is a report prepared for the Piggyback Consortium by MDS Transmodal and Servant Transport Consultants in association with Environmental Resource Management in April 1994, the document reference(MDS) is 15293R. It describes in considerable detail the locations where clearance work would be required and the nature of the work, costings are also given although by now these will be well out of date.

Whilst clearance to piggyback standards would not be cheap it should be noted that European funding is available for projects of this nature linking nations, crossing national boundaries, improving access to and from peripheral areas and reducing emissions. With regard to accessibility there would be substantial time savings for freight traffic between Ireland and the Continent with the combination of road-ship-rail-ship-road compared with movement throughout by ship from Ireland to the Continent, this applies particularly to container traffic.

From the haulier's viewpoint the introduction of this service gives the opportunity to revise operating methods reducing the number and costs of drivers. Where a driver accompanies his vehicle throughout the time spent on rail has a value as a rest period.

There would also be a revenue stream from the charges made for use of the service. From a purely Scottish viewpoint there would be a reduction in lorry miles and associated emissions, a restraint on freight traffic on less than adequate roads south of Ayr and the creation of employment in Stranraer, Grangemouth and Rosyth.

Looking at long term trends such as fuel prices, Drivers' Hours, the availability of drivers, the need to constrain emissions and the possibility of road pricing the attraction of a piggy back service to the haulier will increase.

The Scottish and Irish Governments acting together could make a very strong case to Europe for maximum funding not only to improve access but on the basis of reductions in emissions – perhaps making it clear that the intention would be to emulate the Swiss model where lorries passing through Switzerland do so - on trains.

2] Haulage of Coal Traffic Hunterston/Ayrshire and Longannet/Cockenzie by Electric Traction

The recent and very welcome announcement of the intention to electrify routes in the Dunblane-Glasgow-Edinburgh triangle leads to consideration of the benefits of comparatively modest extension of this electrification to include haulage of power station coal from Falkland Jctn,(Ayr) and Hunterston to Longannet and Cockenzie(in the latter case if the life of the station is extended).

A starting point would be to ascertain if electric traction allows the haulage of longer and or heavier trains and if the haulage characteristics of electric traction with regard to acceleration and braking would improve line capacity.

In addition to potential railway operating benefits there would be a substantial reduction in emissions using electric rather than diesel traction.

There would also be efficiency benefits through electric locomotives using regenerative braking feeding current back into the electrical network.

In such an examination it would be desirable to test a number of scenarios using different prices for oil and electricity and the value of the reduction in emissions to ascertain at what point or in which combination of circumstances electrification becomes viable.

A minor beneficial by-product of electrification of the freight only line from Hunterston to the former Parkhouse Jctn,(halfway between Ardrossan South Beach and Saltcoats)would be the ability to provide a half-hourly rather than hourly service between Glasgow Central and West Kilbride, Fairlie and Largs rather than terminating alternate trains at Ardrossan Town or Ardrossan Harbour. Passenger carryings would increase and the robustness of the Largs service substantially improved.

3] Diversion of Caledonian Sleeper Service from Euston to St. Pancras.

In Paragraph 120 the document acknowledges that the recent opening of the Eurostar terminal at St. Pancras offers opportunities for easier rail journeys between Scotland and the Continent.

This is certainly the case however the attractiveness of rail compared with flying would be enhanced by the diversion of the Caledonian Sleeper services from their present terminal at Euston to St Pancras allowing cross-Platform interchange between Scottish and Continental services in particular this would be very attractive to travellers from the Continent wanting a holiday in Scotland. This project would also be eligible for funding from Europe

It is understood that First ScotRail are examining this proposal – they should be encouraged.

In conclusion I would emphasise that these are matters worth examining rather than definite project proposals the latter would only come about if feasibility studies indicated that they should be developed.

Bill Ure.

