

[National Assembly for Wales](#)

[Enterprise and Business Committee](#)

[Inquiry into the future of the Wales and Borders Rail](#)

Evidence from RAGES (Rail Action Group East of Scotland) – WBF 96

There are actually very few rail user groups in Scotland – RAGES (Rail Action Group East of Scotland) is one that I know of – most other groups have a "friends of ... " type format. CRAG is really a campaigning group.

I hope, however, that the following comments on your three areas of interest (see below) might be helpful.

(1) there was quite an extensive consultation on "Rail 2014" – though some of the ideas floated (such as closing stations close to each other) proved to be controversial and were quickly dropped. Nevertheless, a good many of the points raised by railway groups and other bodies in response seem to have been incorporated in the Draft Invitation to Tender just issued by Transport Scotland.

(2) the Draft Invitation to Tender document is extremely detailed – no doubt for good reasons. It does, however, show why tendering for services is a costly process – both for the government and the bidders. Directly operated railways might be a better option – especially as many bids come from foreign-owned state railways.

Many of the things asked of bidders are actually more the responsibility in effect of government and Network Rail. Placing responsibility for new electric rolling stock acquisition and depot provision on the franchisee, for example, might seem as if it acknowledges that the operator is best placed to determine such things rather than government – but, in truth, these assets will long outlast the franchise period and asking the bidders to procure these means that decisions on these vital matters have been delayed and that they probably can't be delivered to the timescale outlined.

On the other hand, encouraging observation coaches on scenic lines etc. is something that should be strongly supported – but left to the operators to deliver.

Re. smart ticketing, specifying that the majority of journeys should be made this way by April 2019 seems to leave a lot of hostages to fortunes lying around. My

guess it that it won't be so easy – and that it's, in any case, important that travel by rail isn't de-personalised by such technology. Already many passengers in Scotland pay far more than they need to for their tickets by the lack of personal advice when purchasing on the internet or from automatic ticket machines.

Finally, I think that there's a role for cities and regional bodies to have a greater say in transport provision. Transport Scotland is a very centralised body. Whilst one ScotRail franchise makes sense, monies and powers should be devolved below the national level to get greater "ownership" and local accountability. As in the past with Strathclyde Passenger Transport, these bodies could become co-signatories of the franchise.

(3) SQUIRE has, on the whole, been a good thing. However, a target-setting culture is one where micro-management prevails and there's a real danger that you begin not to see the wood for the trees. If something's not a target, it doesn't get attention. Thus a piece of chewing gum or litter on a seat or carpet or one strip light out in a train is a disaster – but not losing hundreds of thousands of pounds through uncollected fares on a single line (the North Berwick line, especially between Musselburgh and Edinburgh) where no SQUIRE target is in place. Maybe Passenger Focus could do some work with passengers and managers on reviewing current targets and perhaps setting some new ones.

Lawrence Marshall

Chair

Capital Rail Action Group

Edinburgh